

WOMEN
IN GERMAN
LITERATURE



Discovering Women's History

German-Speaking Journalists (1900–1950)

Peter Lang

Christa Spreizer (ed.)

Discovering Women's History brings to light the work of a selection of German-speaking women journalists from the first half of the twentieth century who made significant contributions to German life and culture, yet are barely known today. The volume builds upon scholarship on women and culture by focusing on individual journalists who published both within and outside the periodicals of women's organizations and women's magazines, thus offering a sampling of the vastly different perspectives of German-speaking women journalists during this period. The contributors to the volume aim to raise awareness regarding the great range of viewpoints represented by women journalists as well as challenging gender-based stereotypes of women's writing that have traditionally tended to simplify the complexities of women's diverse experiences. The volume closes with Erika Mann's autobiographical fragment 'I, of all People' published here for the first time in the original English.

Christa Spreizer is Associate Professor of German in the Department of European Languages & Literatures at Queens College of The City University of New York. Her research interests include nineteenth- and twentieth-century German literature and culture.



Discovering Women's History

Women in German Literature

Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, University of Oxford
Series Editor

Volume 15



PETER LANG

Oxford • Bern • Berlin • Bruxelles • Frankfurt am Main • New York • Wien

Christa Spreizer (ed.)

Discovering Women's History

German-Speaking Journalists (1900–1950)



PETER LANG

Oxford • Bern • Berlin • Bruxelles • Frankfurt am Main • New York • Wien

Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available on the
Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014934469

Cover image © Bartłomiej Zyczynski - Fotolia.com

ISSN 1094-6233

ISBN 978-3-0343-0747-5 (print)

ISBN 978-3-0353-0624-8 (eBook)

© Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, Bern 2014
Hochfeldstrasse 32, CH-3012 Bern, Switzerland
info@peterlang.com, www.peterlang.com, www.peterlang.net

All rights reserved.

All parts of this publication are protected by copyright.

Any utilisation outside the strict limits of the copyright law, without
the permission of the publisher, is forbidden and liable to prosecution.

This applies in particular to reproductions, translations, microfilming,
and storage and processing in electronic retrieval systems.

This publication has been peer reviewed.

Printed in Germany

Contents

List of Illustrations	ix
Acknowledgements	xi
CHRISTA SPREIZER	
Introduction	I
GODELA WEISS-SUSSEX	
Radical Feminist and Belligerent Journalist Grete Meisel-Hess (1879–1922)	17
CHRISTA SPREIZER	
In Search of the <i>Überweib</i> The Journalism of Elsa Asenijeff (1867–1941)	41
CHRISTA SPREIZER	
‘Das Erwachen der Frau’ Eliza Ichenhaeuser (1869–1932) and the First Wave of German Feminism	67
LISA MARIE ANDERSON	
The ‘Meisterin des deutenden Essais’ Margarete Susman (1872–1966) on the First World War and the November Revolution	93

KERRY WALLACH

Front-Page Jews

Doris Wittner's (1880–1937) Berlin Feuilletons 123

BETH ANN MUELLNER

Roving Reporter, Travel Journalist, Storyteller

Annemarie Schwarzenbach (1908–1942) 147

ELKE NICOLAI

She of All People

The Journalist Erika Mann (1905–1969) 171

JANA MIKOTA

Journalistic Production of the New Woman

Vicki Baum (1888–1960) and Gina Kaus (1893–1985) 205

JANA MIKOTA

Proletarian Literature and the Woman Question

The Journalism of Alice Rühle-Gerstel (1894–1943)
during the Weimar Republic 225

JULIAN PREECE

The Literary Interventions of a Radical Writer Journalist

Maria Leitner (1892–1942) 245

FRANCES MOSSOP

Writing the City

The Berlin of Gabriele Tergit (1894–1982) 267

LYNNE TATLOCK

- 'Our Correspondent in Weimar'
Gabriele Reuter (1859–1941) and *The New York Times* 283

DEBORAH BARTON

- 'Soft' Propaganda for Germany?
The Writings of Ursula von Kardorff (1911–1988) 309

ERIKA MANN

- Appendix
I, of All People 337

- Bibliography 371

- Notes on Contributors 409

- Index 413

Illustrations

- Grete Meisel-Hess, 1913. ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York. 16
- Elsa Asenijeff, 1914. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München. 40
- First International Women's Day. Protests across Berlin demanding the introduction of the women's vote, 19 March 1911. Photograph by the Haekel Brothers. ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York. 56
- Margarete Susman. Courtesy of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York. 92
- Doris Wittner, 1930. ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York. 122
- Annemarie Schwarzenbach, 1933. Atelier Binder – ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York. 146
- Erika Mann, 1927. Photographer: Minya Diez-Duehrkoop. ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York. 170
- Gina Kaus, 1931. Photograph by Trude Fleischmann. ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York. 204
- Vicki Baum, 1931. Photograph by Yva. ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York. 204
- The title page of *Mädchen mit drei Namen* by Maria Leitner, *Die Welt am Abend*, 1932. 244
- Gabriele Tergit, about 1928. Courtesy of Gert Brüning. 266

Gabriele Reuter, about 1885. ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York.	282
Ursula von Kardorff, about 1940. Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dresden.	308

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank the many contributors to this volume for their wonderful work and collegial efforts in bringing it to fruition. I learned much during our extended conversations and e-mail exchanges regarding these writers and the vast field of women in journalism. This volume is by no means exhaustive and offers only a limited sampling of the writers of the period. My colleagues' engaged interest in the history of women and journalism as it relates to German culture is inspiring.

A special heartfelt thanks to Dr Frido Mann, who graciously allowed the publication of Erika Mann's unpublished autobiographical fragment, 'I, of All People' in the appendix to this volume. I would also like to thank Gert Brüning who made available a photo of Gabriele Tergit. I would also like to voice my appreciation to archivists at the Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Dresden; Stadtarchiv Leipzig; Leo Baeck Institute; Berlin Landesarchiv; Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach; New York Public Library; and Granger Collection for their research support.

I would also like to acknowledge the financial assistance provided by the Professional Staff Congress and the City University of New York via a PSC-CUNY Award in the publication of this work and for research support at archives in Germany.

Thanks are also given to Edward Batchelder for his careful reading of the manuscript, support and good humour in the final stages of manuscript preparation. Thank you also to my family, colleagues at Queens College/CUNY and my neighbours who offered their encouragement and support during this rewarding project.

Christa Spreizer
March 2014

CHRISTA SPREIZER

Introduction

Es ist klar, daß es nur eine unvollständige Geschichte sein kann, in die die Wünsche und Interessen nur *einer* Hälfte der Menschheit eingeschrieben werden.

— ELIZA ICHENHAEUSER, *Die Journalistik als Frauenberuf*
(Journalism as a Woman's Profession, 1905)

This book sets out to present a selection of German-speaking women journalists of the first half of the twentieth century who made significant contributions to German life and culture, yet are barely known today. The prescient words by the feminist and journalist Eliza Ichenhaeuser, that the field of journalism can present but an incomplete history if it lacks an account of women's wishes and interests, resonated with a generation of journalists determined to present their experiences in the early twentieth century. Yet, while many scholars have focused on the dense and complex social, cultural and political fields of Wilhelmine (1870–1918), Weimar (1919–33) and Nazi Germany (1933–45), awareness of the prominent role played by German-speaking women journalists has been long in coming. Well into the Cold War period, it seemed a commonly held assumption that women played at most a marginal role in the press.¹ Due in large measure

1 A good example of such an assumption is Isolde Rieger's *Die Wilhelminische Presse* (1957). Although Rieger does mention several women journalists, she comes to the conclusion that 'eine geringe und unbedeutende Rolle spielten im deutschen Pressewesen der Jahrhundertwende die Frauen', which she considered to be the case into the Weimar era. Isolde Rieger, *Die Wilhelminische Presse im Überblick* (Munich: Pohl & Co, 1957), 60.

to the catastrophic events of twentieth-century German history, the reconstruction of women's cultural history in Germany has remained especially difficult when compared to work in other countries such as the United States or Great Britain. The ramp-up to the First World War and Germany's subsequent defeat erased some of the most progressive initiatives of the first wave of German feminism, to be taken up again only in the 1970s by a new generation.² The rise of National Socialism, the Second World War and the Holocaust further destroyed the memory of what had been a complex and vital cultural period for progressive movements such as the fight for women's equality in the personal and public spheres.³ Germany's robust history of social dissent was further compromised by Cold War cultural politics (1949–90) and the need for political and ideological unity within the Federal Republic of Germany (BRD) and the German Democratic Republic (DDR) respectively. Only with the reunification of Germany in 1989/1990 and the opening of previously inaccessible archival records have scholars and researchers begun to address and rectify the dislocations of the historical record caused by Germany's serial economic and political collapses of the twentieth century.

The absence of women journalists from postwar cultural histories is due in no small measure to Germany's tragic history and gender-based inequities, but the diffuse and ephemeral nature of printed media itself has also played a role. Even when newspapers and periodicals could be located, they were often in such a fragile state that sustained use by researchers proved impossible. Almut Todorow, in her pathbreaking study 'Frauen im Journalismus der Weimarer Republik' (Women in journalism during

2 On the discontinuities of women's cultural history, see Sigrid Weigel, "'Woman Begins Relating to Herself': Contemporary German Women's Literature (Part One)", *New German Critique* 31 (1984), 53–94.

3 See the chapters '1919–1933 Etablierung und Ende der Bewegung' and 'Wie ging es weiter?' on the setbacks to the women's movement after World War I in Ute Gerhard, *Unerhört: Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Reinbek, Hamburg, Berlin: Rowohlt, 1990), 333–80; 81–8. See also "The Bitter End" in Richard J. Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany 1894–1933* (SAGE Studies in 20th Century History, vol. 6; London and Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications, 1976), 235–81.

the Weimar Republic, 1991) outlines the hurdles faced by researchers in accessing primary materials despite the pressing need for exactly that sort of empirical study of the period.⁴ This issue is thankfully being addressed by an ever-growing number of media projects focused on making entire archival catalogues and formerly inaccessible newspapers and periodicals available to scholars and the general public online.⁵ Because of these efforts, the path-breaking work done in the 1980s and 1990s by researchers on journalism and German gender politics such as Almut Todorow, Ulla Wischermann, Ruth-Esther Geiger, Sigrid Weigel and others can be expanded in new directions.⁶ Their insights with respect to women's cultural history as it largely

- 4 'Bereits für die Weimarer Zeit kann die historische Kommunikatorforschung nur auf sehr wenig systematisch erhobenes Primärmaterial zurückgreifen, trotz der frühen zeitungswissenschaftlichen Forderungen nach empirischen Erhebungen von Max Weber oder Ferdinand Tönnies [...] Trotz der energischer betriebenen Frauenforschung sind die wissenschaftlichen Kenntnisse über die Geschichte der materiellen und soziokulturellen Lage der Frau noch immer lückenhaft.' Almut Todorow, 'Frauen im Journalismus der Weimarer Republik', *IASL* 16/2 (1991), 84–103, here 87.
- 5 Some recent online projects that make publications and other documentation of women writers and women's organizations available include: the extensive collections on writers of the Austrian women's movement at the Ariadne Projekt of the Austrian National Library <<http://www.onb.ac.at/bibliothek/ariadne.htm>>; the Stiftung Archiv der deutschen Frauenbewegung in Kassel <<http://www.addf-kassel.de>>; the Helene-Lange-Archiv at the Landesarchiv Berlin <<http://www.landesarhiv-berlin.de>>. A digitized version of the archive of the Leo Baeck Institut, New York (DigiBaeck) on German-speaking Jewry is available at <<http://www.lbi.org>>. The Staatsbibliothek Berlin offers the entire archive of the *Vossische Zeitung* <<https://erf.sbb.spk-berlin.de>>. Princeton University's Blue Mountain Project digitizes scarce texts from 1848 to 1923 relating to the emergence of modernity <<http://library.princeton.edu/projects/bluemountain/>>.
- 6 See for example Ruth-Esther Geiger and Sigrid Weigel, eds, *Sind das noch Damen? Vom gelehrten Frauenzimmer-Journal zum feministischen Journalismus* (Munich: Frauenbuchverlag, 1981), Ulla Wischermann, *Frauenfrage und Presse: Frauenarbeit und Frauenbewegung in der illustrierten Presse des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1983), Ulla Wischermann, 'Die Presse der deutschen Frauenbewegung 1848–1918: Anstrengungen zur Erforschung einer fast vergessenen Öffentlichkeit', in Elger Blühm and Hartwig Gebhardt, eds, *Presse und Geschichte II* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1987), 349–63, Ulla Wischermann, *Frauenbewegungen und Öffentlichkeiten um 1900. Netzwerke –*

related to the organized women's movement and the journalistic writings of its leaders (e.g. Helene Lange, Helene Stöcker, Gertrud Bäumer, Lily Braun, Minna Cauer) are being taken up by a new generation of scholars with much improved access to period documents. This has made possible many of the chapters in this volume, which highlight a diverse profile of writers and journalists who published both within and outside the periodicals of women's organizations and women's magazines.⁷ There remains a rich cultural history of women in journalism to be explored, as I hope the chapters of this book will show.

This edited volume seeks to build upon scholarship on women and culture by focusing on individual journalists within the context of the period in which they participated. The concept of 'journalist' is defined broadly here as a writer who regularly placed fiction or nonfiction contributions in periodicals and/or newspapers. These could include book reviews, short stories, serial novels, cultural reviews or other articles associated with feuilleton writing; or nonfiction writing and more traditional reportage such as news articles, political and social commentaries, editorials, and the new field of photojournalism. Further, the writers had to self-identify as journalists, consider their work as a professional pursuit, and have received public recognition for their writings in that their work was reviewed, cited and/or discussed during cultural or political forums and debates. In terms of structure, each chapter considers the journalist's individual articles and other published and unpublished writings within the political, social and cultural contexts of Wilhelmine, Weimar or Nazi Germany. Contributors to the volume, as befits the range of subject matter, approach their subjects

Gegenöffentlichkeiten – Protestinszenierungen (Sulzbach/Taunus: Ulrike Helmer, 2003). Todorow, 'Frauen im Journalismus der Weimarer Republik'.

- 7 Some recent publications which highlight new discoveries regarding the influence of German-speaking writers and journalists include: Despina Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin: Building the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), Andrea Hammel and Godela Weiss-Sussex, eds, *Not an Essence but a Positioning: German-Jewish Women Writers 1900–1938* (Oxford: Lang, 2009); and Gregor Ackermann and Walter Delabar, eds, *Schreibende Frauen. Ein Schaubild im frühen 20. Jahrhundert.* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2011).

from different interdisciplinary perspectives and methodologies. Archival and online resources, when available, are referenced within the individual article and/or the bibliography for each chapter.

These journalists wrote from vastly different personal, cultural, political and ideological perspectives, yet all exerted an influence on a media industry and a society that were in continuous flux with respect to women's role in and relation to German society. It is hoped that the discussion of the journalists here will continue to raise awareness of the wide range of published opinions by German-speaking women in press of the era and thus bring their accomplishments to the fore in contemporary cultural and literary debates. Scholars and students from a variety of disciplines – journalism, history, German studies, Jewish studies, gender studies and media studies – may find this collection useful in their undergraduate and graduate research.

A variety of factors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century – the end of imperial censorship, an increase in literacy, the development of mass media, and the growing prominence and independence of public opinion – allowed women to participate in journalism as never before. The rise of mass social movements, mass culture, the blurring of gender lines, and a national obsession regarding the Woman Question (*die Frauenfrage*) were just some of the topics debated as papers sought to become the purveyors of mass enlightenment and social guidance while generating lucrative revenue.⁸ The urban press empires of Rudolf Mosse (*Berliner Tageblatt*, *Berliner Morgen-Zeitung*), Leopold Ullstein (*Berliner Morgenpost*) and August Scherl (*Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, *Die Woche*) offered publishers, editors and individual journalists unprecedented power with respect to melding the opinions of an increasingly literate and diversified public. They challenged and overthrew the privileged position of the highbrow literary journals of the nineteenth century as the exclusive arbiters of culture. Although largely a male affair in the 1890s, by the early 1900s the percent-

8 See Gideon Reuveni, *Reading Germany: Literature and Consumer Culture in Germany before 1933*, trans. Ruth Morris (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006). See also Karl Christian Führer and Corey Ross, eds, *Mass Media, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New York: Palgrave, 2006).

age of women journalists increased markedly along with the expansion of media and the successes of the women's movement.⁹

During the Wilhelmine period especially, journalism offered women a more attractive alternative to traditional jobs such as school-teaching, domestic work or nursing and was one of the few professions that required no formal educational training. Women journalists began to promote their issues, and themselves, while media took on a new and more influential role within a modernizing society. Their outlooks varied greatly. Chapters by Godela Weiss-Sussex and Christa Spreizer highlight the works of Grete Meisel-Hess, Elsa Asenijeff and Eliza Ichenhaeuser, all writing from vastly different cultural and ideological perspectives in the late Wilhelmine period, a time when women struck out in new directions and took a confident stance regarding the role of women in society. Meisel-Hess, the Austrian-Jewish feminist, was an enthusiast of Nietzsche's teachings and an active member in Helene Stöcker's Bund für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform (League for the Protection of Motherhood and Sexual Reform, BfM). She stood outside the mainstream bourgeois women's movement due to her radical attacks on traditional sexual morality and her advocacy of the libertarian rights of women in newspapers and journals such as *Pan* and the *Berliner Tageblatt* supplement *Der Zeitgeist*, as well as *Der Demokrat* and its two successors *Der Weg* and *Die Aktion*. Before the First World War she advocated positions of the eugenics movement, which, as Weiss-Sussex rightly points out, was a common concern of a wide range of social movements and not just the sinister ideology of the radical right with which it is usually associated. The Austrian feminist Elsa Asenijeff was also an admirer of Nietzsche, going so far as to attempt to care for him in 1897 (to

9 For an overview of the many publications of the first wave of the organized women's movement, see Wischermann, Ulla, 'Die Presse der deutschen Frauenbewegung 1848–1918: Anstrengungen zur Erforschung einer fast vergessenen Öffentlichkeit'. For women's increasing role in the general press, see Ichenhaeuser, *Die Journalistik als Frauenberuf*. See also Eliza Ichenhaeuser's chapter 'Berliner Presse' in Eliza Ichenhaeuser, ed., *Was die Frau von Berlin wissen muss. Ein praktisches Frauenbuch für Einheimische und Fremde. Unter Mitwirkung der berufensten Vertreterinnen auf den verschiedenen Gebieten der Frauenarbeit* (Berlin: H. S. Loesdau, [1913]), 93–100.

the horror of his protofascist caretaker-sister Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche). Yet in contrast to Meisel-Hess, Asenijeff shunned all branches of the organized women's movement, instead advocating the need for an entirely new concept of 'woman' based upon Nietzsche's concept of the 'Übermensch' (which she and other feminists considered a gender neutral term). Her journalism in *Die Gesellschaft*, *Die Zeit* and the Leipzig dailies *Leipziger Tageblatt* and *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* was but one venue for her contrarian and subversive attempts to elevate the status of the woman-artist within patriarchal Wilhelmine society. On the other end of the spectrum was the Romanian-German feminist Eliza Ichenhaeuser, whose work as a journalist was inseparable from her life's mission as a humanitarian reformer. Working closely with Helene Lange and the bourgeois women's organization, the Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein (General German Women's Federation, ADF), she sought to strengthen women's traditional domestic roles while advocating for greater influence in public matters via electoral, educational and professional reforms. She published hundreds of articles in Germany's major newspapers and advocated journalism as a moral mission and professional pursuit in books such as *Die Journalistik als Frauenberuf* (1905). These three women were just a few journalists of the Wilhelmine era, now largely forgotten, who capitalized on the popularity and influence of the women's movement and helped pave the way for the successes of the Weimar New Woman artists, writers and journalists to follow.

During the First World War, conservative and nationalist pressures stymied what had arguably been steady progress in the rights of women and their growing role in society and in the media. Imperial censorship was reinstated, self-censorship was encouraged, and although the influence of women in the press increased in isolated instances as women took over the positions of husbands and male relatives called up to service, the visibility of women's issues declined. The celebration of individualism and heterogeneity seen in the late 1890s and early 1900s retreated as women were called upon to support the home front both economically and ideologically during the war. Germany's catastrophic defeat in the First World War and the severe terms of the Treaty of Versailles cast a long shadow over the formation of the Weimar Republic in 1919 and the passage of a new constitution which included women's suffrage. The period to follow was marked by years of

crisis (1919–23) characterized by hyperinflation, severe economic deprivation, political violence, continuing gender-based conflicts, and the rise of racist ideologies such as antisemitism. Yet this cultural and social turbulence also opened new possibilities for the expression of women's perspectives. The Golden Era (1924–9) is associated with a cultural renaissance in literature, arts and media (especially visual media) and the celebration of new lifestyles and outlooks. Women joined the workforce, wore short skirts, bobbed their hair, used makeup, smoked, drank and frequented jazz clubs. The cultivated image of the Flapper Girl tossed aside social and cultural taboos. The popular press saturated the market with tabloids sensationalizing the latest national and international crises. Local news, crime reports, fashion, sports, and other forms of mass entertainment were juxtaposed with elaborate department store advertisements.¹⁰ The press became highly politicized as political parties and government representatives advocated pro- or anti-Republic positions in their respective newspapers and journals. As women and men enjoyed the liberation of the Roaring Twenties and the influence of American lifestyles, conservatives and reactionaries felt Germany was betraying its history with foreign democratizing and commercializing trends that undermined tradition.¹¹ In the midst of this chaotic yet culturally and intellectually rich ferment, journalists both observed and critiqued Germany's national developments while also taking a keen interest in everyday life in the spirit of New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*). Both the more traditional feuilletonist as well as the new Weimar photojournal-

10 See Bernhard Fulda, 'Industries of Sensationalism: German Tabloids in Weimar Berlin' and Gideon Reuveni, 'Reading, Advertising and Consumer Culture in the Weimar Period' in Karl Christian Führer and Corey Ross, eds, *Mass Media, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Germany*, 183–203; 204–16.

11 Debates regarding the role of the press in the political sphere and especially its role in undermining the influence of government continue to hold the attention of scholars. See for example James Retallack, 'From Pariah to Professional? The Journalist in German Society and Politics, from the Late Enlightenment to the Rise of Hitler', *German Studies Review* 16 (1993), 175–223; Mark Hewitson, *Germany and the Causes of the First World War* (Oxford: Berg, 2004); and Bernhard Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

ist found opportunities for work in avant-garde newspapers and journals, as well as high-circulation boulevard and illustrated papers. The new field of photojournalism was especially apt at capturing the jarring juxtapositions of the era and created a synergy between photography and print that continues to shape journalism to this day.¹²

Within this highly charged atmosphere, many women writers were able to flourish. Chapters by Lisa Marie Anderson and Kerry Wallach highlight the more traditional feuilleton contributions of Margarete Susman and Doris Wittner, respectively, arguably two of the most prominent contributors to liberal German-Jewish periodicals from the 1910s to 1930s. Margarete Susman, as Anderson writes, advocated for a redemptive society based on the revolutionary principles of socialism, humanity and community, as seen in the hundreds of articles she wrote for German, Swiss and German-Jewish newspapers and periodicals. Anderson shows how essays such as 'Die Revolution und die Frau' (Women and the revolution, 1918), 'Die Revolution und die Juden' (Jews and the revolution, 1919), and 'Kriegsbriefe deutscher Studenten' (German students' letters from the front, 1921) displayed Susman's belief in a socialist community where women 'could finally attain a long-elusive development and education' and in which Jews 'could work concretely toward the fulfilment of the messianic promise'. Yet by 1935 Susman was in exile and forced to reconsider the history, and even the very possibility, of a cultural synthesis between Jews and Germans. The feuilletons of Doris Wittner, Kerry Wallach writes, can serve as a key to understanding the liberal Weimar Jewish press and its readership. Wittner supported and defended the talents of Jewish writers, artists and performers in the face of growing antisemitism in Berlin publications such as the *Vossische Zeitung*, *Berliner Tageblatt* and *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, in addition to the *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, *Jüdisch-liberale Zeitung* (JLZ), *Die jüdische Frau* and others. The German-Jewish press was a complex and intellectually challenging cultural arena where

12 See Habbo Knoch, 'Living Pictures: Photojournalism in Germany, 1900 to the 1930s', in Karl Christian Führer and Corey Ross, eds, *Mass Media, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Germany*, 217–33.

journalists such as Susman and Wittner were able to seize opportunities and participate in an exciting yet short-lived era when many believed in the extraordinary possibilities of Weimar society.

Whereas both Anderson and Wallach analyse the work of journalists in the more traditional role of writer and cultural journalist, other contributors highlight the growing presence of women photojournalists in the Weimar era. Beth Ann Muellner's chapter on the 'roving reporter' Annemarie Schwarzenbach considers how Schwarzenbach, very much a part of the 'sensational' world of the 1920s and 1930s with respect to her family, upbringing and lifestyle, offered a unique perspective as a Swiss-German 'New Woman' photojournalist writing mainly for a Swiss audience. Her articles and travel reports, Muellner notes, show rather than tell readers about the world. Muellner observes that the complicated world of the Weimar period, in which nationalism, fascism and militarism was seeping into every facet of life, encouraged women writers such as Schwarzenbach to develop a new awareness of their place in society with respect to their engagement with domestic and foreign affairs. This is especially true in the case of Erika Mann, Thomas Mann's youngest daughter. Elke Nicolai's contribution examines Erika Mann's experiences at the cabaret club Pfeffermühle, an important catalyst for her transition from acting to political journalism during the 1930s. Cars, racing and the freedom of the road are popular subjects in her more light-hearted articles of the 1920s and 1930s, as they were with Schwarzenbach. But after founding the club in 1933, together with her brother Klaus, Therese Giehse and Magnus Henning, her journalism took on a more political tone. She later worked as a correspondent in London for the BBC in 1940, and in 1941 she appealed to German listeners to overthrow the Nazi dictatorship. Nicolai writes that her reportage became her main form of financial support while in exile in the US from 1937 until her return to Europe in 1952. Erika Mann did not keep a diary during her extraordinary life, which gives an even greater significance to her autobiographical fragment, 'I, of All People'. In this unpublished work, she reflects upon the personal and political dislocations of her experiences from 1933 to 1943. It is printed for the first time in its entirety in the original English in the appendix to this book.

Journalism offered an appealing and at times exciting alternative to other forms of employment, but for many, journalism was still poorly paid, as were most professions for women, although in isolated instances women could thrive. Jana Mikota highlights the little-known journalism of best-selling authors Vicki Baum and Gina Kaus that appeared in magazines such as *Die Dame*, *Uhu* and *Die literarische Welt*. Both wrote of the New Woman's changing sexual and social roles, and her new sense of self-understanding within Weimar society. Mikota looks at how Baum and Kaus constructed the New Woman and how their socially critical articles at times reflect conflicted attitudes towards money, influence, identity and the commodification of the New Woman image that was so much a part of their own successful careers. Mikota then examines Alice Rühle-Gerstel's book reviews and articles, which appeared primarily in *Die literarische Welt*. Influenced by Marxism and individual psychology, her unique perspectives on proletarian art and advocacy for working women exposed Weimar Germany's patriarchal structures and its continuing gender-based discrimination. Unlike Vicki Baum and Gina Kaus, Rühle-Gerstel did not write traditionally female-oriented articles on fashion and beauty. They also differed greatly with respect to their personal and professional prospects as life within Weimar Germany deteriorated and the rise of Hitler became inevitable. Gina Kaus and Vicki Baum both made the transition to Hollywood and continued to lead prosperous lives; Rühle-Gerstel committed suicide after the death of her husband while in Mexican exile in 1943. Yet all three reflected common sentiments regarding the need for expanded lifestyle, economic and social choices for women. They were writing at the juncture of changing conceptions of woman and her relations to the fields of commerce, industry, art and gender, and the tensions and ambivalence these topics raised for the New Woman.

Next, Julian Preece adds needed insight into the little-known life and career of the antifascist Hungarian journalist Maria Leitner, who wrote for *Uhu* in the 1920s, was a well-known figure in leftwing circles and promoted by Willi Münzenberg, a leading propagandist for the Communist Party in Germany. Her communist leanings limited her reception in West Germany during the Cold War, an issue that Preece addresses. He makes a convincing

case that her works should receive a wider public audience. Like Brecht, she subverted traditional literary genres to advocate for women's rights and raise awareness of the conditions of the proletariat in works such as her novel *Hotel Amerika* (1927). Preece considers her lesser known dialectical parables that appeared in the short-lived feminist magazine *Der Weg der Frau* (1931–2), the inverted romantic fiction, *Mädchen mit drei Namen. Ein kleiner Berlinroman* (Girl with three names. A Berlin popular novel, 1932) which appeared in *Die Welt am Abend*, and the anticolonial novel fragment, *Wehr Dich Akato! Ein Urwald-Roman* (Defend yourself Akato! A jungle novel, 1932–3) from the *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung*. After 1933, her fiction and journalism appeared in Paris-, Prague-, and Moscow-based exile publications.

Gabriele Tergit is another journalist better known for her novels than her reportage. A pioneering court reporter with the *Berliner Tageblatt* and best known for her social-critical novel *Käsebier erobert den Kurfürstendamm* (Käsebier conquers Kurfürstendamm, 1931), before 1933 she wrote for various Berlin publications such as the *Berliner Tageblatt*, *Vossische Zeitung* and *Die Weltbühne*. The short texts considered by Frances Mossop, in contrast to the social or political commentaries that were typical of her court reporting, present a personal record of her experiences and portrayals of Berlin's urban landscape that resonated with her readers. While in exile she contributed articles to *Prager Tagblatt*, *Bohemia*, *Prager Mittag* and other papers.

In the last years of the Republic, before 1933, Germans deserted the intellectuals and political parties that had become associated with the humiliations and deprivations of the postwar period. Although the Nazi Party controlled less than three per cent of Germany's newspapers during the Weimar period, by 1933 they had consolidated the use of radio, press, cinema and mass spectacle to increase their reach over the masses. The Nazi propaganda ministry gained control over the Reichsverband der deutschen Presse (Reich Association of the German Press) and, with respect to those owners, journalists and editors considered 'racially pure', kept an account of their private and public activities to be sure they followed ministry mandates

and directives in the censorship of the press.¹³ Many writers, journalists, editors and publishers fled Germany or were imprisoned and killed. Others remained within Germany and negotiated the restrictive environment of Nazi Germany via an inner emigration (*Innere Emigration*), or enhanced their careers until the public reckonings of the postwar period.

Within this atmosphere, Lynne Tatlock considers *The New York Times* contributions of the best-selling author Gabriele Reuter (1859–1941), an esteemed German feminist writer of an earlier generation, who between 1911 and 1939 offered the nonacademic American readership of *The New York Times* a look at German life and letters. Reporting from Berlin and Weimar, her contributions in the 1930s chronicled, albeit at times inadvertently, Germany's increasingly compromised cultural scene. Yet despite Reuter's intellectual, social, and even physical limitations (she became nearly blind in her last years), Tatlock observes that she still 'in some sense provided her American readers with an entirely accurate picture of the impoverished German literary field.'

Deborah Barton next considers the legacy of Ursula von Kardorff, who remained in Germany and, in contrast to many Weimar-era intellectuals who paid dearly for their antifascist leanings, enhanced her career during the war at the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*. Barton writes that women journalists such as Kardorff contributed to the war effort via a 'soft' propaganda that blurred the boundaries between culture, entertainment and politics. Such writings contrasted with the 'serious' work of male journalists writing on politics and the war and largely spared women journalists from political scrutiny in the postwar era. Barton looks at Kardorff's newspaper articles, personal correspondence and her well-known work, *Berliner Aufzeichnungen* (Berlin Sketches, 1962; translated as *Diary of a Nightmare: Berlin 1942–1945*, 1966), to trace her strategic manoeuvrings after the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 and her efforts to rehabilitate her own legacy and that of Germany in the postwar period. Although much has been written of the shifting boundaries between culture and politics

13 See David Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

during the Nazi regime and thereafter, few have focused on women's journalism in this critical space.

These chapters offer but a small sampling of the vastly different perspectives of German-speaking women journalists during the first half of the twentieth century. The recent expansion in digital and online resources have enabled the contributors to this volume to demonstrate the robust history of this journalism, but there remains much left to be explored, analysed and debated with respect to this insufficiently documented aspect of German culture. It is hoped that this volume will raise awareness among readers regarding the great range of viewpoints represented by women journalists and also challenge gender-based stereotypes of women's writing.



Grete Meisel-Hess, 1913. ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York.

Radical Feminist and Belligerent Journalist Grete Meisel-Hess (1879–1922)

Grete Meisel-Hess †. Die bekannte temperamentvolle Frauenvorkämpferin und Sozialreformerin ist, 43 Jahre alt, in Berlin [...] gestorben. Sie kämpfte vornehmlich für Gleichstellung mit dem Manne, gegen den Boykott der unehelichen Mutterschaft, für Aufhebung der [...] doppelten Moral. Neben geistreichen Essays und Streitschriften über die Frauenfrage, die, im liberalen Sinne gehalten, aufsehenerregend waren, war Grete Meisel-Hess Verfasserin mehrerer Romane.

This is the bulk of the short obituary for Grete Meisel-Hess, published in *Die Gegenwart* of 21 April 1922.¹ The epithets ‘temperamentvoll’, ‘geistreich’ and ‘aufsehenerregend’ convey a sense not only of Meisel-Hess’s character, but also of the controversies her writings caused. Pointedly noncommittal, the anonymous writer of the obituary concludes with the words: ‘Jedenfalls [!] ist in ihr eine interessante Erscheinung der modernen Frauenbewegung dahingegangen’. Indeed, Grete Meisel-Hess, born in 1879 in Prague, was an unusually outspoken writer of essays and fiction and a belligerent campaigner for social issues. In this chapter, I profile Grete Meisel-Hess as a thinker, writer and journalist and provide an account of the development of her critical thinking and of her writing style and voice. Taking into account

1 I gratefully acknowledge the permission to print material provided by the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach. Thanks are also due to the staff of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (Preußischer Kulturbesitz) and the Archiv Bibliographia Judaica (Universität Frankfurt) for their help, and to the British Academy, which supported my travel to and research at these libraries with a Small Research Grant.

her fiction and her nonfiction monographs, I pay particular attention to her journalistic publications and to the journals in which she published, including *Pan* and the *Berliner Tageblatt* supplement *Der Zeitgeist*, as well as *Der Demokrat* and its two successors *Der Weg* and *Die Aktion*. A picture emerges not only of her individual voice and thought, but also of Meisel-Hess's place in the intellectual movements and affiliations of her time.

Not least because of her liberal sexual politics and her radical feminism, her work caused many a public upset. Educated at a boarding school in Prachatitz, Bohemia, then at a *Mittelschule* in Vienna, and having gone on to attend lectures in philosophy, sociology and biology at the Vienna University,² she started to publish her first fiction and nonfiction texts when still in her early twenties. One of her first more substantial publications was her collection of novellas *Suchende Seelen* (Searching souls, 1902).³ In the novella *Krisis* (Crisis), included in this collection, Meisel-Hess gives us an insight into her aims as an author, as she defines writing as 'das Erblicken, Erschauen des wahren Kerns der Dinge und das Gestaltungsvermögen des *Wirklichen*'.⁴ In view of her later engagement with journalism, it is interesting to read that she contrasts this dedication to truth of the true writer, with the 'Ton einer feisten Verlogenheit der "volkstümlichen" Feuilletons' and with 'journalistisches Schreiben für Geld'.⁵ This idealistic concept of writing is developed into a very ambitious experiment in her novel *Die Stimme* (The voice, 1903), a strongly autobiographical *Roman in Blättern*.

2 See Petra Budke and Jutta Schulze, *Schriftstellerinnen in Berlin 1871–1945. Ein Lexikon zu Leben und Werk* (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1995), 257–8, here 257.

3 Among other short fictional texts published at that time is 'Zwei vergnügte Tage', *Wiener Morgen-Zeitung*, 12 April 1903. For further early writings, contributions, fictional and nonfictional, see Hermann Kosel, ed., *Deutsch-österreichisches Künstler- und Schriftsteller-Lexikon* (Vienna: Verlag der Gesellschaft für Graphische Industrie, 1902).

4 Grete Meisel-Hess, 'Krisis', in G. Meisel-Hess, *Suchende Seelen* (Leipzig: Hermann Seemann Nachfolger, 1903), 105–51, here 121. Many of Meisel-Hess's works are now available online at the 'Ariadne – Projekt "Frauen Bewegung"' at the University of Vienna <http://www.onb.ac.at/ariadne/vfb/bio_meiselhess.htm> accessed 9 January 2013.

5 *Ibid.*, 120 and 132.

Referring to Flaubert's dream of a 'book about nothing',⁶ she aims for a text 'ohne jeden äußeren Rückhalt', one in which 'der Stoff sich [...] auflöste in lauter – Stimme, [...] Seele, Hauch – *anima*'. Such a book would defy any structuring principle ('Vorsatzlos will ich bleiben'), it cannot be written, it will be dictated in an 'ekstatisch[em] Zustand'.⁷ As the reviews of *Die Stimme* quite unanimously confirm, this experiment was however not very successful. Felix Poppenberg notes in his extensive review in *Die neue Rundschau* that the novel did not go beyond a 'zerflatterte und verstrudelte Zetteltechnik' and condemns the 'gaukelnden spektakelnden Pathos verdünnter krampfhaft geschüttelter Nietzschescher Kreszenz'.⁸

Indeed, Meisel-Hess's indebtedness to Nietzsche is revealed very clearly here. Like many other women writers at the time, she saw Nietzsche as guiding the way towards the destruction of obsolete social norms and stifling conventions, and championing the individual's liberation in a way that would allow for fulfilment in the intellectual, emotional and sexual realms.⁹ Maya, the protagonist of *Die Stimme*, is a singer, her voice is conceptualized as her *anima*, an individual's true inner self. Consequently, the loss of voice, the 'Versagen der melodischen Kraft', is an expression of her 'Entfremdung des innersten Wesens', caused by restrictions to her freedom and independence.¹⁰ Meisel-Hess tells the story of the regaining of the voice

- 6 Gustave Flaubert, letter to Louise Colet, 16 January 1852, in Francis Steegmüller, ed., *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert 1830–1857* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1980), 154.
- 7 Grete Meisel-Hess, *Die Stimme. Roman in Blättern* (Berlin: Dr. Wedekind & Co., 1907 (5th ed.)), 5–6.
- 8 Felix Poppenberg, 'Lebensläufe', *Die neue Rundschau* 18 (1907), 1138–41, here 1139. For an example of another review of *Die Stimme*, see Ilse Frapan-Akunian, 'Die Stimme', *Das literarische Echo* 10 (1907/08), cols. 59–60.
- 9 For the importance of Nietzsche's impact on the women's movement, in particular the radical feminists associated with Helene Stöcker and the Bund für Mutterschutz, see Heide Schlüpmann, 'Zur Frage der Nietzsche-Rezeption in der Frauenbewegung gestern und heute', in Sigrid Bauschinger, Susan L. Cocalis and Sara Lennox, eds, *Nietzsche heute. Die Rezeption seines Werks nach 1968* (Bern: Francke, 1988), 177–93.
- 10 Meisel-Hess, *Die Stimme*, 4.

as that of a successful process of individuation, liberation and combination of the protagonist's needs as an artist and a woman.

The theme of the quest for individuation had also dominated her first novel, *Fanny Roth*, published a year previously, in 1902. Here, Meisel-Hess traces the personal development of a young violinist to maturity. Seeing, in Nietzschean cadences, her 'Bestimmung als Künstlermensch [...], Kulturen weiterzubauen und appollinische Erkenntnisse weiterzugeben',¹¹ she has to come to terms with her own sexuality and with male sexual demands in order to gain maturity as a musician and a woman who is in control of her own life. This thinking is based on the Nietzschean demands for a balance and unity of body and spirit, but it is also inspired by Meisel-Hess's reading of Freud. Here and elsewhere, for instance in *Die Intellektuellen* (The intellectuals, 1911), perhaps the first novel describing psychoanalytical treatment,¹² she emphasizes the need of a healthy sexual life for bodily and spiritual health. Because of its open treatment of female sexuality and its advocacy of a life that in many aspects contradicted bourgeois morality, *Fanny Roth* caused a scandal. Richard Wengraf, in *Das literarische Echo*, ridiculed what he saw as her misunderstanding of Nietzsche: 'So wandeln sich [...] in den wirren Köpfen junger Litteraturdamen die erhabensten Gedanken des Meisters in die schauderhaftesten Plattheiten',¹³ he writes, while Richard Schaukal, in his review in *Die Gesellschaft*, expressed his disgust with the hot-house emotionality of the book and its 'Indiskretionen', and attributes its (indisputable) success to the indiscriminate readers' 'Vergnügen am parfümierten Negligé'.¹⁴

11 Meisel-Hess, *Fanny Roth*, 6–7.

12 See Grete Meisel-Hess, *Die Intellektuellen* (Berlin: Oesterheld & Co, 1911), 342–6. On this passage in the novel, see Alfred Bauer-Imhof, [review of] 'Grete Meisel-Hess, *Die Intellektuellen*', *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse* 2 (1912), 288. For further analysis of Meisel-Hess's indebtedness to Freud, see Helga Thorson, 'Confronting Anti-Semitism and Antifeminism in Turn of the Century Vienna: Grete Meisel-Hess and the Modernist Discourses on Hysteria', in Klaus Hödl, ed., *Jüdische Identitäten* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2000), 71–94.

13 Richard Wengraf, 'Frauenbücher', *Das literarische Echo* 5 (1902/03), cols. 97–102, here col. 100.

14 Richard Schaukal, 'Grete Meisel-Heß, *Fanny Roth*', *Die Gesellschaft*, 18/2 (1902), 397.

From very early on, Meisel-Hess complemented her literary output with nonfictional exhortations in public lectures, essays and monographs supporting the cause of women's intellectual and sexual liberation. By 1901, when she was no more than twenty-two years old, the journal *Wiener Bilder* describes her as one of the 'trefflichsten geistigen Vorkämpferinnen der modernen Frauenbewegung' and reports that on the occasion of her lecture on 'Die moderne Weltanschauung' ('The modern worldview') she spoke 'vor einer Zuhörerschaft, die fast doppelt so groß war, als der Fassungsraum des Vortragssaales [des Wissenschaftlichen Clubs] zulassen sollte'.¹⁵

Meisel-Hess cemented her position with the publication of *Weiberhaß und Weiberverachtung* (Misogyny and the contempt for women, 1904), a book which Agatha Schwartz ranks (alongside Rosa Mayreder's work) as one of the two most effective refutations of Otto Weininger's misogynist writings.¹⁶ Turning on its head the pathologizing vocabulary that Weininger uses in his *Geschlecht und Charakter* (1903) to denounce womanhood, Meisel-Hess here criticizes his hatred of women as the results of a 'krankhafter Geist' and an 'abnorme, lebensfeindliche Aversion'.¹⁷ She concedes that the male and female psyche and character differ, and to a certain extent subscribes to the discourse within the mainstream bourgeois women's movement of the time, which stressed the need for women's public involvement to create a balance in a technologically dominated modern society. She claims that both genders are of equal importance, their difference being essential for the creation of a better future. However, she turns against the adversarial view of the two sexes as held by many proponents of the mainstream women's movement, claiming: '[E]s ist geradezu terroristisch, gewisse Züge, Eigenschaften und Anlagen als nur "männliche" oder nur "weibliche" zu bezeichnen, die oftmals weder das

15 Anonymous, review of Meisel-Hess's lecture 'Die moderne Weltanschauung', *Wiener Bilder*, 22 May 1901.

16 See Agatha Schwartz, 'Austrian Fin-de-Siècle Gender Heteroglossia: The Dialogism of Misogyny, Feminism, and Viriphobia', *German Studies Review* 28 (2005), 347–66.

17 This and all following quotations from *Weiberhaß und Weiberverachtung. Eine Erwiderung auf die in Dr. Otto Weiningers Buche 'Geschlecht und Charakter' geäußerten Anschauungen über 'Die Frau und ihre Frage'* (Vienna: Perles, 1904), here 64.

eine noch das andere, sondern nur menschliche sind.' And she concludes: 'Es bedarf keiner "Vermännlichung" des Weibes, um es zu erheben, wohl aber wird eine stete, unaufhaltsame *Vermenschlichung* des Mannes und des Weibes beide einander nur inniger zuführen, ihre Beziehungen vertiefen und adeln und durch natürliche Züchtung eines immer vollendeteren Typus die Gesamtheit heben und der Vervollkommnung näher bringen.'¹⁸

By her mid-twenties, then, Meisel-Hess had distinguished herself as an original voice in the contemporary debate on the position of women, formulating the vision that a new form of humanity be created by transcending dividing lines. Her arguments stood out just as much as her highly polemical, sarcastic style. In contrast to the rather esoteric voice with which she had experimented in *Die Stimme*, she established in nonfictional writings such as *Weiberhaß und Weiberverachtung* a sharp and pugnacious presence that very effectively supported her cause. She does not spare the use of rhetorical questions and exclamation marks, including the occasional 'So?!' to express her exasperation with opinions other than her own, and does not shy away from words such as mendacity ('Verlogenheit') or delusion ('Verblendung') to characterize these opinions, accusing Weininger – rather dashing – 'mit allen Merkzeichen manischer Verblendung an den Tatsachen vorbeigesaut [zu sein]'.¹⁹

In 1908, Meisel-Hess moved to Berlin and became closely involved with the radical feminist Bund für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform (League for the Protection of Motherhood and Sexual Reform, BfM). Headed by Helene Stöcker, the BfM campaigned for the social rehabilitation and the support of single mothers; but much more far-reaching than that, it demanded the improvement of sexual relations between men and women – and combined with this a wholesale attack on traditional sexual morality. Propagating a New Ethics (*Neue Ethik*), based on Nietzsche's revaluation

18 Meisel-Hess, *Weiberhaß und Weiberverachtung*, 8, 70. A very similar statement appears in her 1914 essay *Betrachtungen zur Frauenfrage*: 'Und gerade weil, meiner Meinung nach, Mann und Weib verschieden sind, gerade deswegen müssen wir die äußeren Bedingungen, die beiden bereitet werden, auf eine möglichst einheitliche Basis zu stellen versuchen. [...] Denn das Ziel aller Kultur ist der Mensch – der Vollmensch'. Grete Meisel-Hess, *Betrachtungen zur Frauenfrage* (Berlin: Prometheus, 1914), 3–4.

19 Meisel-Hess, *Weiberhaß und Weiberverachtung*, 64.

of values or ‘Umwertung der Werte’ and on the new scientific insights of evolutionary theory, the BfM criticized the bourgeois institution of marriage in particular as stifling and obsolete.²⁰ Meisel-Hess soon became one of the main propagators of the Bund’s ideas, tirelessly giving public lectures and publishing prolifically. Her rather weighty socio-psychological study *Die sexuelle Krise* (Sexual crisis, 1909) was published by the renowned Eugen Diederichs publishing house in Jena. In this book, which arguably had more impact than any of her others, she attacks the repressive contemporary sexual morality in psychological and biological terms, setting out to explain ‘warum all jene Vorgänge, die ihrer Natur nach lebenserhaltend, lebensfördernd und hinaufzüchtend sind, heute nicht selten zu Mächten der Vernichtung, der Hemmung und der Rückbildung werden.’²¹ To redress this problem, her first and foremost demand is – as she put it more succinctly in an article published in *Der Weg* in 1911: ‘Die Fortpflanzung muss frei werden von der Ummauerung durch die Ehe.’²² And she elaborates:

[Z]ur Mutterschaft könnte in einem gesunden Sexualseystem jede gesunde, begehrte Frau Gelegenheit haben. [...] Daß diese Möglichkeit frei werde, frei vor allem durch ökonomische Sicherung der durch die Mutterschaft am Erwerb verhinderten oder darin unterbrochenen Frau, frei durch die gesellschaftliche Rehabilitierung auch der unehelichen Mutterschaft [...], ist notwendig.²³

Providing an opportunity for motherhood to all women is ‘notwendig’ – and this is stressed in all her writings from this period – not only for the personal fulfilment and individuation of women, but for the good of

20 For more detailed discussions of the Bund für Mutterschutz, see Anette Herlitzius, *Frauenbefreiung und Rassenideologie. Rassenhygiene und Eugenik im politischen Programm der ‘Radikalen Frauenbewegung’ (1900–1933)* (Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitätsverlag, 1995); Edward Ross Dickinson, ‘Reflections on Feminism and Monism in the Kaiserreich, 1900–1913’, *Central European History* 34/2 (2001), 191–230; Nicol Matzner-Vogel, *Zwischen Produktion und Reproduktion. Die Diskussion über Mutterschaft und Mutterschutz im späten Kaiserreich und der Weimarer Republik (1905–1929)* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2005).

21 Grete Meisel-Hess, *Die sexuelle Krise. Eine sozialpsychologische Untersuchung* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1909), viii.

22 Grete Meisel-Hess, ‘Das sexuelle Elend’, *Der Weg* 3 (1911), cols. 740–3, here col. 741.

23 *Ibid.*, 743.

the nation. For Meisel-Hess now combines her references to the ideas of Nietzsche and Freud with a eugenicist agenda. She still insists that the 'Rehabilitierung des außerehelichen erotischen Verkehrs' would enhance people's 'Lebensfreude' and 'Umgangsformen', enthusiastically claiming 'wie würde man da auch für sein soziales Schaffen elastisch und beflügelt'²⁴ – but embeds this ideal of sexual freedom in the framework of one of the great concerns of her time, the improvement of the genetic substance of the population. Sexuality, she argues, should be freed from the context of Christian morality and placed instead in that of Darwinian evolutionary theory and eugenicist efforts. Indeed, in an article in the journal *Der Demokrat* published in 1911, Meisel-Hess declares the planned breeding of valuable life material to be the foremost concern of her generation. And this being so, she argues, the delay on starting a family that is imposed by society's conventions on middle-class men in particular is utterly counter-productive. By the time they have established a position in society that is financially secure enough to start a family, they are old and grey and feeble – and their most valuable genetic material has withered or died – or has been wasted on prostitutes.²⁵ How could this be changed? Several options were proposed by the BfM, but Meisel-Hess favours one in particular: reproduction outside (i.e. before) marriage. 'Die sozial und ökonomisch unabhängige Frau hat', she points out in the programmatic article 'Mutterschutz als soziale Weltanschauung' in *Die Neue Generation*, 'die sexuelle Auslese in der Hand, und einzig hier liegt, so scheint mir, der Schwerpunkt der ganzen Frauenbewegung'.²⁶ She thus combines feminism with eugenics

24 Ibid., 743.

25 See Grete Meisel-Hess, 'Die Liebe ist blind' (Love is blind), *Der Demokrat* 3 (1911), cols. 43–6, here col. 44: 'daß die Menschen, insbesondere die Männer – überhaupt zur Zeugung gelangen, bevor sie verbraucht sind, bevor sie ihre besten Kräfte in der Debauche verausgabt haben, bevor sie am Seuchenherd der Prostitution die köstlichsten Fortsetzungsstoffe des Lebens vergiften, dezimiert, für immer verdorben haben, bevor sie in übermäßig gespanntem Kampf um eine ökonomische Position, auf der man den komplizierten Erhaltungsschutz einer Familie aufbauen kann, alt und grau und matt geworden sind.'

26 Grete Meisel-Hess, 'Mutterschutz als soziale Weltanschauung', *Die Neue Generation* 11 (1911), 150–9, here 153–4.

by arguing that the individuation and liberation of women stands in the service of the improvement of the nation's genetic stock.

It is worth remembering that the eugenic movement was, in the early years of the twentieth century, not the sinister ideology of the radical right, as we tend to think about it in hindsight, but rather a concern shared by a wide range of social movements. The perceived need for the improvement of the population's genetic material was based on an alarming reduction in the birth rate and on the spread of what were then deemed to be hereditary illnesses, such as syphilis, tuberculosis and alcoholism.²⁷ The different groupings that shared this concern all based their thinking on Darwin's theory of evolution, and yet they differed greatly, firstly because their interpretations of Darwin diverged, and secondly, because they translated their eugenic endeavours into contrasting – at times even opposing – social policies. To put it in a rather simplified way, two main branches of the eugenics movement may be distinguished. The first, which included the social Darwinists around Alexander Tille and Alfred Ploetz and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Rassehygiene* (German Society for Racial Hygiene), argued for the selection of the best genetic material, and rejected any 'protection of the weak' as hindering evolution. This direction was incompatible with feminism: as their main aim was to increase the birth rate, women were seen as instruments of their policies and women's interests in individuation were disregarded.²⁸ The thinking of the reformist wing of the eugenicist movement, by contrast, was compatible with socialist as well as with feminist demands, as they did not reduce their interpretation of Darwin's theories

27 See Stefan Kühl, *Die Internationale der Rassisten. Aufstieg und Niedergang der internationalen Bewegung für Eugenik und Rassenhygiene im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1997), 28. Kühl refers to the treatment of this subject in examples of literary Naturalism (Hauptmann, Ibsen, Zola). See also Malcolm Humble, 'Monism and Literature in the Later Years of the *Kaiserreich*', in Christian Emden and David Midgley, eds, *Science, Technology and the German Cultural Imagination* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), 57–79.

28 See Alexander Tille, *Von Darwin bis Nietzsche* (Leipzig: C. H. Naumann, 1895), 231. For a discussion of the controversy between Tille and Helene Stöcker regarding this topic, see Schlüpmann, 'Zur Frage der Nietzsche-Rezeption in der Frauenbewegung gestern und heute', 136.

to a simple and antihumanist ideology of the 'survival of the fittest', but complemented the biological arguments with demands for changed policies in the areas of social care and individual politics. This is the concept of eugenics embraced by the BfM.

Needless to say, the BfM and Grete Meisel-Hess stood outside the mainstream bourgeois women's movement, organized by the umbrella organization Bund deutscher Frauenvereine (Federation of Women's Associations, BdF) – not, it is important to stress, because of their eugenicist agenda, but because of their attack on the institution of marriage. Meisel-Hess's writings were excluded from the high-profile exhibition 'Die Frau in Haus und Beruf' (Woman at Home and at Work), staged by the Berlin branch of the Lyceum Club and the BdF in Berlin in 1912. She complained bitterly – but unsuccessfully – about this exclusion, placing an open letter in the journal *Die Aktion*, in which she accused Helene Lange, the head of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein (General Women's Association, AdF) and a major organizer of the exhibition, of despotic behaviour ('Willkür').²⁹ Indeed, how much the exclusion irked her can be seen from a private letter to Lulu von Strauss und Torney, in which she not only complains about Lange's behaviour, but contrasts what she saw as the 'offizielle und verschrumpfte Gehaben der "Organisierten" (die Engländer nennen es zutreffend Spinstertum) von der wahren, von weiblichsten Motiven durchdrungenen Bewegung der Frauen'.³⁰

Clearly, then, the journals of the mainstream women's movement provided no home for her writings, but she pursued her course of vigorously publicizing her ideas in public lectures, monographs and various press publications. The most obvious outlets for her publications were, of course, the journals associated with the BfM, namely *Mutterschutz. Zeitschrift zur Reform der sexuellen Ethik* and *Die Neue Generation*. *Mutterschutz* was published from 1905 to 1907 by J. D. Sauerländers in Frankfurt/Main. Its editor, Helene Stöcker, defined its purpose as analysing and discussing

29 Grete Meisel-Hess, 'Offener Brief an Helene Lange', *Die Aktion* 2 (1912), cols. 232–3.

30 Grete Meisel-Hess, letter to Lulu von Strauss und Torney, 11 September 1912; held in: Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, Handschriftenabteilung, A: Diederichs, HS.1995.0002.

die Probleme der Liebe, der Ehe, der Freundschaft, der Elternschaft, der Prostitution, sowie alle damit zusammenhängenden Fragen der Moral und des gesamten sexuellen Lebens sowohl von der historischen, juristischen, medizinischen wie von der sozialen und ethischen Seite [...]. Sie soll [...] die vorhandenen Schäden und Mißstände auf diesem Gebiet energisch bekämpfen und einer tieferen Einsicht in die Zusammenhänge zwischen wirtschaftlichen und geistigen Faktoren zum Siege verhelfen.³¹

In 1907, however, Sauerländer took exception particularly to this last point, the socioeconomic analyses and views expressed in the journal, and wanted to see the journal's content reduced to the discussion of sexual issues. As Stöcker put it: 'Er wollte alles, was nicht die sexuelle Frage im allerengsten Sinne des Wortes betraf, ausgeschaltet wissen, worauf ich selbstverständlich im Interesse des Bundes nicht eingehen konnte.'³² As Stöcker refused to comply with Sauerländer's demands for a less radical concept of the journal, the publisher handed the editorship to the physician Max Marcuse, who was a member of the Bund, too, but less interested in social matters than those of sexual health. Marcuse continued the journal under the title *Sexual-Probleme*, changing its direction and purpose considerably – and Helene Stöcker responded by founding *Die Neue Generation* in 1908 and went on to edit this new journal as a straight continuation of *Mutterschutz*.³³ Indeed, Stöcker's statement on the direction of the journal

31 Helene Stöcker, editor's preface to *Mutterschutz* 1/1 (1905), 1.

32 Helene Stöcker, 'Zum Titel und Verlagswechsel der Zeitschrift', *Die Neue Generation* 1 (1908), 39.

33 Emphasizing the aspect of continuation, the new journal started off with the number 4, referring to what in fact was the first year of its publication, i.e. 1908. Initially, it was published by the Berlin company Oesterheld & Co. After the death of Erich Oesterheld in 1920, it transferred to *Der Neue Geist* in Leipzig for the years 1921 to 1922, was then printed (in 1923) at the newly founded Verlag der Neuen Generation (which shared its address with Helene Stöcker's home address in Berlin), and was, with an interruption in the years 1924–5, taken on for the final years of its run (1926–32) by Ernst Oldenburg, Leipzig. With the beginning of the Nazi regime, the journal had to shut down its operations. See Gudrun Hamelmann, *Helene Stöcker, der 'Bund für Mutterschutz' und 'Die Neue Generation'* (Frankfurt/Main: Haag + Herchen, 1992), 118–19.

in its first issue made clear that function and programme were identical with that of its forerunner:

Wir haben vom ersten Tage unserer Bewegung an unsere Aufgabe als eine doppelte aufgefaßt; ebenso sehr als eine Aufgabe der sexuellen Reform wie der Sozialpolitik und der modernen Kultur überhaupt. In der Verbindung von praktischer sozialer Arbeit und der Umwertung der Moralbegriffe sehen wir den wesentlichsten Zug des Bundes für Mutterschutz und seiner Zeitschrift.³⁴

Publishing in *Mutterschutz* and *Die Neue Generation* was of course not an ideal way for Meisel-Hess to reach a wider audience. However, the two journals fulfilled a double purpose: while certainly functioning as organizational publications, and thus attracting a circle of readers who already shared at least some of the writers' convictions, *Mutterschutz* (just as *Die Neue Generation* later on) was also available for purchase in all bookshops for the interested general public.³⁵ Opening out the journal's stance, too, Stöcker in fact defined the mission of *Mutterschutz* as a 'Diskussionsorgan, in dem die verschiedensten Meinungen zu Worte kommen sollten'.³⁶ With an average print run of 3,000 copies, it was certainly no mass publication, but it reached a reasonable radius – as well as a sizeable number of advertisers who placed their products here: the proportion of advertising to edited copy was an astonishing one to six.³⁷ Meisel-Hess contributed many texts to both journals, among them the manifesto-like article 'Mutterschutz als soziale Weltanschauung' cited above.³⁸ At the same time, however, she actively opened up other avenues for publication.

34 Cited after publisher's advertisement for microfiche edition of *Die Neue Generation* <<http://www.haraldfisherverlag.de/hfv/HQ/hq06.php>> accessed 27 September 2011.

35 See Hamelmann, *Helene Stöcker, der 'Bund für Mutterschutz' und 'Die Neue Generation'*, 79, fn. 4.

36 Helene Stöcker, editor's preface to *Mutterschutz* 1/12 (1905), 506.

37 See Hamelmann, *Helene Stöcker, der 'Bund für Mutterschutz' und 'Die Neue Generation'*, 87.

38 Hamelmann lists contributions by Meisel-Hess for the years 1907, 1909, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1919 and 1920. See *ibid.*, 204.

One such avenue was afforded to her by the Deutscher Monistenbund (Association of German Monists), another organization in the spectrum of free-thinking reformists' movements. After several years' preparation by Ernst Haeckel, the 'German Darwin',³⁹ the Deutscher Monistenbund had been founded in 1906 in order to promote, as Paragraph One of its founding document put it, 'eine in sich einheitliche, auf Naturerkenntnis gegründete Welt- und Lebensanschauung'.⁴⁰ Paragraph Two proclaimed the members' willingness and duty of a 'Stellungnahme zu den Kulturfragen des öffentlichen Lebens mittels Flugschriften, Büchern und Vortragsveranstaltungen'. And indeed, a very energetic programme of propaganda, teaching and publicity ensued, with the aim to gain as many followers as possible both among the general public, but also through collaboration with other reformist organizations. In 1909, at the annual Monistenkongress in Magdeburg, the so-called Weimarer Kartell (Weimar Cartel) was formed, bringing together various groups, among them the Deutscher Freidenkerbund (German Association of Free Thinkers), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für ethische Kultur (German Society for Ethical Culture), the Komitee Konfessionslos (Committee Confessionless), the Deutscher Monistenbund – and the BfM.⁴¹

Concurrently, the journal *Das monistische Jahrhundert* was founded and published, under the editorship of the head of the Monistenbund Wilhelm Ostwald, by Ernst Reinhard in Munich. In comparison with the journal that had been associated with the Bund from its foundation in 1906, the *Flugschriften des deutschen Monistenbundes*,⁴² this new publication

39 For further information on Haeckel, see Horst Groschopp, *Dissidenten. Freidenkerei und Kultur in Deutschland* (Berlin: Dietz, 1997), 246–58.

40 This and the following quotation are cited after Andreas Daum, *Wissenschaftspopularisierung im 19. Jahrhundert: bürgerliche Kultur, naturwissenschaftliche Bildung und die deutsche Öffentlichkeit 1848–1914* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998), 217.

41 See Rosemarie Nöthlich, Heiko Weber et al., 'Weltbild oder Weltanschauung? Die Gründung und Entwicklung des Deutschen Monistenbundes' <http://www.uni-jena.de/unijenamedia/Downloads/faculties/bio_pharm/ag_didaktik/Noethlich_Weltbild_oder_Weltanschauung.pdf>, 42; accessed 2 February 2013.

42 Up to 1911, twenty-seven issues had been published of the *Flugschriften des Deutschen Monistenbundes*. Numbers 1 to 10 were published bei Breitenbach, numbers 11 to 27

reflected the widened perspective of the movement. Beyond contributions on the sciences and medicine, it carried articles on the pacifist movement, agrarian, educational and sexual reform and the protection of mothers. Among the contributors were prominent writers such as Ernst Mach, August Forel and Wilhelm Bölsche, as well as Helene Stöcker and Grete Meisel-Hess. Participation in this journal certainly offered an opportunity for widening the reception of Meisel-Hess's writings – an opportunity she grasped with enthusiasm. Indeed, by 1912, when the Monistenbund counted around 7,000 members,⁴³ she was considered eminent enough for a postcard to be printed on the occasion of the annual meeting held in Magdeburg showing her portrait as one of five 'celebrities' attending the meeting.⁴⁴

Meisel-Hess continued to explore other avenues, too. Her novel *Die Intellektuellen* was published in 1911 by Oesterheld & Co, and was widely reviewed in the contemporary press. While clearly a *Tendenzroman*, it was also valued as a crucial 'Kulturdokument unserer Zeit',⁴⁵ 'ein kluges Buch',⁴⁶ one that 'dringt zu den tiefsten Gründen unserer Zeit',⁴⁷ and helped to cement her position in the intellectual circles of Berlin. In Horst Groschopp's words: 'Und als [Meisel-Hess] sich dann mit [...] dem Zeitroman *Die Intellektuellen* in die damalige Berliner Literatur- und Wissenschaftsszene einmischte, stand sie endgültig im Rampenlicht als Verfechterin weiblichen Aufbegehrens.'⁴⁸ In this and subsequent years, she continued to publish both essays and short fiction in various journals,

by the Verlag des Deutschen Monistenbundes (Berlin, Hamburg, Leipzig, München). See Nöthlich, Weber et al., 'Weltbild oder Weltanschauung? Die Gründung und Entwicklung des Deutschen Monistenbundes', 30, fn. 53.

43 Ibid., 57.

44 See postcard held in: Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, Handschriftenabteilung; A: Diederichs, HS.1995.0002. Among the other portraits shown are those of Rudolf Goldscheid, Head of the Austrian Monistenbund, and the author and philosopher Otto Gramzow.

45 Bauer-Imhof, review of 'Grete Meisel-Hess, *Die Intellektuellen*', 288.

46 Marie Holzer, review of 'Die Intellektuellen', *Die Aktion* 3 (1912), cols. 171–3, here col. 172.

47 Friedrich Alafberg, review of 'Die Intellektuellen', *Das literarische Echo* 14 (1911/12), cols. 427–8, here col. 427.

48 Groschopp, *Dissidenten. Freidenkerei und Kultur in Deutschland*, 239.