

source of tension between nationalist sentiment on the one hand and international consumption styles on the other. The clarion calls of *Turnvater* Jahn and later Ernst Moritz Arndt for a distinctively German folkloric dress, as well as the anti-French sentiments of a minority of the *Vormärz* bourgeoisie, could not defeat the attraction to French fashion because (or so the book suggests) French designers better captured bourgeois yearnings to the status of Baroque and Rococo aristocrats.

Nevertheless, Belting rarely moves beyond the most straightforward interpretation of her evidence, namely the conclusion that dress signified social distinction and particularly political commitment. Her tendency to quote primary sources at length, in which quotations often take up half a page or more, allows us to capture the impact that different modes of dress had on contemporaries, but it also discourages her from engaging in more extensive analysis. It would have been interesting to know, for example, the source of bourgeois liberal and conservative hostility toward beards. Was it simply because democrats and radicals affected them, or did the animosity toward facial hair draw from long-term cultural aversions and ingrained perceptions of the relationship between facial hair and social position. If corsets were uncomfortable and many doctors decried them as deleterious to women's health, as Belting correctly indicates, why did so many women flock to them in the 1850s and 1860s? She mentions almost in passing that during the *Vormärz*, the corset's division of women into two exaggerated halves mirrored "feudal" social relations, a comment that begs for a discussion of the tension in bourgeois fashion between the assertion of social autonomy and the apparent capitulation to putatively social superiors. Yet even that minimal analysis is lacking for the "reaction," much less the suggestion as to how women who wore corsets actually understood them. Finally, given that Belting frequently refers to the tendency of the middle classes to ape aristocratic lifestyles, or at least lifestyles that they imagined to be aristocratic, it would have been helpful had she situated her book in the broader debate on the German aristocracy and middle classes, especially because it has occupied an important place in discussions of the "failure" of the revolutions of 1848.

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*Antifeminismus im Kaiserreich: Diskurs, soziale Formation und politische Mentalität.* By Ute Planert. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 1998. Pp. 447. DM 84.00. ISBN 3-525-35787-7.

In this revised Tübingen dissertation, Ute Planert traces the origins and development of antifeminism in the complex web of social changes, nationalism, and war in the Wilhelmian Empire from the 1890s to 1918. The account starts

with nineteenth-century definitions of femininity in German dictionaries and in science and then traces antifeminist resentment among the educated *Bürgertum*, the Protestant Church, and various professional groups before 1914. Planert stresses that economic anxieties are only partly to blame for antifeminism, which also drew from fear of modernity and a crisis of masculinity. Antifeminism was boosted by the growth of Germany's bourgeois women's movement and its successes before 1914, as the state and the parties began to recognize the need to integrate women and to improve professional opportunities, at least for some of them. Barriers for women's political participation and educational opportunities were lowered, and the leading liberal and conservative parties established their own women's committees. Planert shows how this, together with anxiety over the sinking birthrate and the victory of the Social Democrats at the 1912 Reichstag elections, triggered the foundation of the German League Against Female Emancipation (often called the "Anti-League" in English-language publications) in 1912. She analyzes the social background of the founders and members and notes the large share of female members (25 percent) as well as their comparatively good representation in the league's leadership. The analysis then focuses on the methods and strategies of the league, which formed alliances with various right-wing and Protestant organizations and launched attacks on the Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine (BDF), the umbrella organization of the moderate bourgeois women's movement.

The First World War initially was heralded by antifeminists as the chance to "repair" hierarchical and dualist gender relations. In fact, the war did more to destroy traditional visions of masculinity and allowed the moderate women's movement to gain nationalist credentials through its generous aid in the war effort. After the defeat and revolution in 1918, with women having received the suffrage, the league entered the racist spectrum on the far Right but faded away quickly, with many of its members joining racist organizations, the German Nationalist People's Party (DNVP), or the Nazi Party. A final chapter synthesizes the findings and adds some interpretation, among others on the motivation of women to join the Anti-League, the crisis of masculinity, and the connections between nationalism and women's rights. The argument in the final chapter is lucid and strong, although I believe some of its ideas should have been integrated into the main body of the text. The book has a very good index of names *and* topics (highly unusual for German books!), and its documentation is extensive. One chapter of thirty-three pages, for example, has 243 endnotes covering sixteen pages. Planert seems to have unearthed every single pamphlet, article, or brochure ever published by organized antifeminists.

The book makes some important contributions. First, it shows the linkage between antifeminist and anti-Semitic ideology in the context of anxieties over modernity and the decline of traditional masculinity. It points out the central place of women's bodies and reproductivity in *völkisch* discourse. Second, it makes a surprisingly good case for the reformability of the Wilhelminian Empire.

The foundation of the Anti-League was a desperate attempt by the most radical antifeminists to stem a tide of reform that, as Planert suggests, might well have led to the introduction of passive communal suffrage for women soon after 1914, had the war not intervened. Despite its networking efforts, the Anti-League remained a very small organization and lost influence quickly. Third, Planert makes some good observations on the politicization of women on the Right, antifeminists or not, before 1914. Women joined the Anti-League because they felt threatened by the transfer of traditional tasks from the family realm to the state and because they resented the possibility that men might be subordinated to (unmarried) women. But behind their engagement was a claim for the autonomy of “their” separate sphere, something on which they agreed with the BDF, and something Planert considers to be connected to the promise of participation inherent in nationalism. Here the book may arouse controversy, but it did convince this reviewer.

Although Planert offers more than an institutional history of the Anti-League, the kind of antifeminism represented in the league — with its proximity to anti-Semitism, radical nationalism, and *völkisch* ideas — structures the analysis. We therefore get a good picture of antifeminist rhetoric and activities in the Protestant, bourgeois, and radical-nationalist milieu, but not of other variations of antifeminism in the Wilhelmian Empire. Although Planert admits the limitation of her study in the introduction, it appears at times that antifeminism was sui generis “protofascist” (I prefer the term “proto-Nazi”). Yet the book focuses only on antifeminism in a proto-Nazi environment and leaves out the antifeminism of the Left or the Catholic political movement.

One issue deserving more discussion is the relation between female antifeminists and the “moderate” wing of the mainstream German women’s movement (mainly the BDF). Planert rightly acknowledges similarities between these two hostile groups. Both stressed, for example, a separate-spheres ideology and the importance of motherhood. Both saw the nation as an extended family in which they wanted women to play motherly roles. But where exactly lies the difference? Planert argues that the mainstream women’s movement worked for a *social* extension of the women’s sphere, whereas the female antifeminists aimed at a *national-political* extension of the women’s sphere (p. 268). In my experience, however, the two spheres are often difficult to distinguish in the political engagement of right-wing women, particularly after 1914. It seems that antifeminist women wanted women’s motherly sphere to be recognized less formally and in more narrow boundaries than the BDF. But maybe party political and larger ideological issues were more important in differentiating the two groups than differences over women’s roles. This is a mind-boggling issue. I am sure that Planert’s book will be a reference point in many future debates.