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*Selbst gesponnen, Selbst gemacht*: Traditional Clothing and the Manipulation of Identity in  
Germany

Athena Hills

History 471: Senior Seminar

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Father Heinrich Hansjakob, a German priest, describes a beautiful fall Sunday in the rolling mountains of the Black forest. A group approaches, and he describes their beautiful clothing and austere appearance, such as the hand-made wool stockings, blue dress, and long braided hair of a young farm girl, accompanied by a man in a sharp felt hat. They discuss the virtues of their clothing as they idle through the hills of the forest, laughing at their rejection of modern fashion trends. It seems like a scene out of the most typical imaginings of the German speaking world, fitting into the idealized stories portrayed in films like *The Sound of Music*, and conjuring further images of mountains, oversized containers of beer at Oktoberfest, pretzels, sausages, and other items and practices inextricably tied to the Germanic ideal. However, this view of Germany and its clothing presented by Father Hansjakob is not written with the intent to spark joy. Rather, this image is a form of political propaganda, not meant to entertain, but to argue that the very clothing these individuals are wearing is a means to prevent industrialization, loss of religion and morality, and to assert the identity of a land that had, at the time of this text's publication in 1892, existed for a mere 21 years. Hansjakob's overarching arguments here apply not only to his home region of Baden, but to the whole of Germany and Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century, when lands became obsessed with the creation of national identities.

Across southern Germany and into Austria, the clothing of the largely rural, farming, and deeply religious individuals of the countryside, known more precisely as *Tracht*, became a means of asserting German identity in the face of crises. These crises arose in increasingly stronger episodes as the German government, often out of touch with the realities of the agrarian German populations, began industrialization efforts, implemented new religious and societal structures, and worked to create a 'unified' German people and match or overtake the power and

success of their longer united neighbors. However, Germany was a land comprised of previously unaffiliated and often warring states, and thus unification and subsequent modernization resulted in heavy social debate and conflict. In response to this modernization, which seemed to threaten these regional and agricultural lifestyles, many in the bourgeoisie placed increased emphasis on *Tracht* as a physical symbol of resistance. In later years and through to the modern day, many social and political groups widely manipulated and promoted the meanings behind *Tracht* as a way to starkly assert their ideals in the face of modern German development.

The phrase “*Selbstgesponnen, Selbstgemacht, Rein dabei ist Bauerntracht*” translates directly to “Self-spun, self-made, purity at hand is the farmer’s costume,” and is to this day a phrase that best represents the overall ideal pre-unification state of those in southern Germany. This ideal would later become the social goal for innumerable social and political groups in post-unification Germany. The local and individual production of traditional clothing highlighted this ‘self-spun, self-made’ goal, acting as emblems of regional pride and craftsmanship, traits highly valued in rural communities. This *Bauerntracht*, or traditional farming clothing, developed over time by region in pre-unification Germany, has innumerable different origins and time periods, and is generally the basis for all *Tracht* styles regardless of region. For instance, the most iconic of all *Tracht* styles are the male *Lederhosen* (literally ‘leather pants’) and the female *Dirndl*, falsely synonymous with all of Germany but regionally specific to the peasantry of the Kingdom of Bavaria. The origins of both the male and female *Tracht* of this region are rooted in functional and regional factors; leather as a material for pants was accessible to rural farmers, and could survive the long and strenuous wear necessary for a poor person who could not replace clothing often. The *Dirndl*, a form fitting dress with a wide bottomed skirt, always

incorporates an apron, protecting the dress underneath from the dirt and damage of a farming woman's life. West of Bavaria, the most iconic form of *Tracht* is the *Schwarzwälder Bollenhut*, a large hat worn by the Protestant population not only to distinguish themselves from their Catholic neighbors, but to display the skills of the regional craftsmen of Baden, whose specialty in straw-weaving developed into increasingly elaborate hats.<sup>1</sup> The red puffballs which adorn the hat are massive, requiring a plastered base to hold their weight, and are worn with a high necked blouse with massively puffy sleeves and a black bodied dress adorned with small colored embroidery. The outfit is worn exclusively by unmarried Protestant women of the Gutach region, as married women wear hats with more austere black puffballs, and is an absolute icon of the Black Forest.

What is most important to note about the origins of these pieces of clothing is that they are incredibly region-specific, originate from the lower classes and share no concrete or singular origin. Across Germany the types and variations are almost innumerable, as is evidenced in various *Trachtensammlungen*, or Costume Collection books. One collection, from German illustrator Albert Kretschmer titled *Deutsche Volkstrachten* published in 1870 with his own original illustrations, contains about 90 distinct regional costumes.<sup>2</sup> A later collection of illustrations published by cigarette manufacturer G. Zuban in 1933 contains no less than 198 costumes, dividing the clothing types even further into specific trades and sexes for each regional category.<sup>3</sup> All the types of clothing in the Zuban publication are those of workers, with farmers

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<sup>1</sup> Wall text, *The Hat of All Hats*, Schwarzwälder Freilichtmuseum Vogtsbauernhof, Gutach, Baden-Württemberg, Germany.

<sup>2</sup> Albert Kretschmer, *Deutsche Volkstrachten: Original Zeichnungen mit erklärendem Text*, (Leipzig: J.C Bach's Verlag, 1870), 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Deutsche Volkstrachten: Eine Sammlung Deutsche Trachtenbilder*, (München: G. Zuban Cigarettenfabrik Aktiengesellschaft, 1933), 4-6.

being the most heavily represented social group. The upper classes have no representation in the world of *Tracht* due to the fact that the upper classes of Germany had from the mid-1600s onwards emulated the clothing and cultures of France,<sup>4</sup> largely ignoring the culture and folkways of their own region's lower-class people in favor of the more 'prominent' cultures of Europe, with France being the most predominant in courts and noble houses. However, the ruling and wealthy in Germany would eventually come to appropriate *Tracht* in later time periods, removing the clothes from their origins or inventing origins entirely in order to fulfill political or social ideals.

This rural regionalism of *Tracht* in contrast to the common French fashion of the upper classes is extremely important in that the wearing of this peasant clothing immediately stated where one was from in Germany. It highlighted what one's profession and religion was, and thus what their morals and lifestyle were. *Tracht*, as clothing globally does according to anthropologist Hilda Kuper, acted as and continued to act as "a universal and visible cultural element consisting of sets of body symbols deliberately designed to convey messages at different social and psychological levels."<sup>5</sup> This visibility made *Tracht* the perfect vehicle for social and political groups to assert their own ideals about German identity and morals. What *Tracht* of varying types meant to convey was constantly in flux, changing in definition and representation based on time, the group manipulating the meaning of certain types of *Tracht* and what crises they faced.

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 66, 73-74.

<sup>5</sup> Hilda Kuper, "Costume and Identity," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15, no. 3 (1973): 348, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy-eres.up.edu:2048/stable/178260>.

The earliest and strongest iteration of this shaping and redefinition of the wearing of *Tracht* in the face of crisis comes from pre-unification Germany in 1810, through the work of nationalist writer Friedrich Ludwig Jahn titled *Deutsches Volkstum*. The work stands to assert German identity in the time where Napoleon marched across Europe virtually unchecked, seizing control of Germanic territories and cities across what was then the Holy Roman Empire. Eventually, after devastating Prussian troops at the battle of Jena and Auerstadt, and with welcome from a population eager to accept the liberal ideals of the French Revolution, Napoleon was able to openly march his troops into Berlin. Jahn and other nationalist Germans, such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, became outraged, openly opposing French occupation as taxation and conscription worsened, all while Napoleon's status and territory grew. Jahn, like other nationalists across Europe at the time, believed in the right for a German nation united by culture, language, and, in order to physically embody their opposition to France and foreign values, the wearing of a *Volkstracht* or 'people's costume.' Jahn states that for too long, Germany had long flocked to new, almost always French fashion trends, and, as he cites from Martin Luther's works, "hung there like fools."<sup>6</sup> This still held true in the high powers and bourgeoisie households of all German principalities at the time including Prussia, where French clothing was still the epitome of culture and class. Jahn viewed these fads as "a new calamity,"<sup>7</sup> which "uglied" the people and marred national character. *Tracht*, in his opinion, was the "inevitable fulfillment of...clothing,"<sup>8</sup> representing true German character and morality, and pushing back against the encroachment of French domination.

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<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, *Deutsches Volkstum*, (Ferdinand Hirt im Breslau, 1810), 66.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

This idea of clothing as a means of national expression became the obsession of not only bourgeois Germans in the late 19th and early 20th century, but the obsession of the upper classes across Europe. Nations growing in power attempted to form histories and myths of shared culture as nationalist historian Micheal Wirtle states, across “cultural, linguistic, and ethnic lines,”<sup>9</sup> to unite people behind tales of past unity that often did not exist in reality. However, the definition of a ‘nation’ and what it constitutes, as nationalist historian Benedict Anderson states, was “an invention on which it was impossible to secure a patent.”<sup>10</sup> Any individual or government could then use vehicles like language, food, or dress as a means of manipulating and defining national character.

For upper class Germans, *Tracht* were the perfect means for creating this cultural and historical character. The wearing of these clothes visually embodied, in the eyes of nationalist Germans, not only the proud, non-French origins of the German people, but the value of agricultural life and rural community of the past, which increased in importance thanks to the Romantic artistic movement. This view was of course, highly idealized, and all regions across Germany had experienced chaos, warfare, and crisis, both rural and urban. Regardless, the upper class ignored these realities in favor of an idyllic past and view of peasant life, which would lead them to further appropriate and construct the physical and political identity of *Tracht*.

This continued construction of identity through clothing from bourgeois society is best evidenced by the 1842 wedding of Prussian Princess Marie to the Bavarian Crown Prince Maximilian. The ceremony, which took place in Bavaria, ignored the higher power of Prussia

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Wintle, "Emergent Nationalism in European Maps of the Eighteenth Century" in *The Roots of Nationalism: National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe, 1600-1815*, ed. Jensen Lotte, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 271.

<sup>10</sup> Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised ed. (London ; New York: Verso, 2006), 67.



and focused solely on constructing a Bavarian narrative. The Prince demanded a peasant couple from each minor region of Bavaria be found to be married in *Tracht* on the same day as the royal wedding, supposedly to represent the pride taken in the culture and history of the area. However, a couple could not easily be found, as this idea ignored many realities faced by the peasantry of the region at the time, such as poverty, the rarity of couples who owned traditional clothes of quality, and traditional marriage customs. The styles of costume too, once couples were found, were often augmented or given new pieces and details, so as to better fit the historical and aesthetic ideals of the royal orders.<sup>11</sup> This falsification represented the ways in which *Tracht* could be used to strengthen a political goal and vision, an argument not at all unlike Jahn's claim that traditional clothes were a means to push back against French influence and power.

*Tracht* would continue to be an idealized emblem of southern Germany due to a vast series of political, social and economic shifts that occurred in the mid-19th century. Crises of government, religion and city growth, in combination with ideas of united national identity, would lead Germans to create new political meanings behind the wearing of *Tracht*, making regional clothes into regional emblems of pride.

This process began through the work of authors like Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, and the later 1848 March Revolution, in which nationalist fervor created a united Germany that failed to remain alive in the face of Prussian domination. Despite this failure of the people to create a united nation state, Germans continued to battle with the question of national identity. Who was German, and what made one German? What was German culture? The answer to these questions came through the continued construction of a falsified past and unified history like that seen in

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<sup>11</sup> Regina Bendix, "Moral Integrity in Costumed Identity: Negotiating 'National Costume' in 19th-Century Bavaria," *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 111, no. 440, (1998): 136–140, *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/541938](http://www.jstor.org/stable/541938).

the 1842 peasant wedding. Artistic movements upheld similar narratives, and the works and philosophies of Goethe, Schelling, Caspar David Friedrich, and other artists became synonymous with German identity. These works, part of the German Romantic movement, placed an extreme emphasis on nature, connecting the beauty of nature to the work of God in a way that rejected the overbearing, rationalist ideas of the Enlightenment.<sup>12</sup> This emphasis on nature factored into *Tracht*, which were synonymous with rural regions. The upper classes adopted these ideals most heavily, as they connected previous nationalist obsession with the cultural history of Germany with this focus on nature and the ‘rural values’ of pre-industrial Germany.

This idealization of nature would factor into the idealization of *Tracht*, and became increasingly important as the 19th century continued. Germany at last unified under former Prussian prince Wilhelm I in 1871, after the defeat of France in the 1870 Franco-Prussian war. It is important to note that this unification, as historian Peter E. Quint states, “was not the result of progressive or popular movements but rather the product of unification from above, through war...and political finesse.”<sup>13</sup> The southern states of Germany had not elected to unite with the north but were united by force, which would result in conflict most heavily in regions such as Baden, Württemberg and Bavaria. These states, who had sided against Prussia in the 1866 Austro-Prussian war over unification of the German Confederation, were still in a tense political relationship with the establishment of the North. They still viewed themselves as individual nations, but were now under the control of a Prussian King as the emperor, or *Kaiser*, and a militaristic Prussian constitution they had no say in creating. This assertion of unification and

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<sup>12</sup> Bruce Matthews, "The New Mythology: Romanticism between Religion and Humanism," in *The Relevance of Romanticism: Essays on German Romantic Philosophy*, ed. Dalia Nassar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Peter E. Quint, "The Background of German Unification," in *The Imperfect Union: Constitutional Structures of German Unification*, ed. (Princeton University Press, 1997), 9.

law from above only served to further alienate the southern regions, which would ultimately lead *Tracht*, representative of non-Prussian pride, to become a popular visual motif after unification.

The peasantry and poor in these resistant states like Bavaria were still the majority, and the imperialist ideals brought on by the Prussians, such as economic expansion, caused severe social issues as the 20th century carried on. Industrialization, formerly a goal Germany could not achieve due to regional disunion, boomed in order to fulfill the ‘blood and iron’ military ideal, and to strive towards matching with the capitalist powers of France and England that Germany had long envied. This created, as historian Brett Fairbairn states, an economic market which “re-ordered the lives of citizens and the structures of communities, undermining incompatible social institutions, forcing the transformation of others, and creating new ones.”<sup>14</sup> This reordering highlighted pre-existing tensions of interest in Unified Germany, creating further political and regional conflict and sparking the creation of many political groups both for and against the continued mechanization and industrialization of the German landscape. These economic crises were felt most strongly in cities like Munich, where the diminishing quality of life for the growing urban population had solidified in the minds of the southern populous that modernization brought only poverty through and immorality. Upper-class Germans in response romanticized the untouched regions of Germany and the agrarian population there more and more as industrialization grew, as these lands were “associated with...ostensibly harmonious and healthy communities”<sup>15</sup> that were able to sustain themselves and had a far higher quality of life. *Tracht* thus became symbols of an idealized economic system as well, clothing that stood against the faults and failures of city lifestyles.

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<sup>14</sup> Brett Fairbairn, “Economic and Social Developments” in *Imperial Germany 1871-1918* ed. James Retallack (Oxford: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2008), 62-63. ProQuest Ebook.

<sup>15</sup> Fairbairn, “Economic and Social Developments”, 69. ProQuest Ebook.

Religious conflict also grew, as cultural shifts towards secularization and how it could be combated by Christians divided formerly at-peace Protestants and Catholics. Conflict was most heavily concentrated in the southern regions, where these differences were most common due to the fact that Protestants and Catholics lived in close proximity to one another, and due to the fact that the Prussian government was almost entirely Protestant. The issue of religion, as historian Christopher Clark states, “acquired a new and heightened significance...[and] transcended the divide between politics and everyday life.”<sup>16</sup> Holding on to religion and emphasizing its importance became imperative to religious groups, either threatened by aggression from their fellow Christians or, as they entered the 20th century, increasing secularization from the large cities of the north. Most threatening to these groups were the effects of the *Kulturkampf* or ‘culture battle,’ implemented by the extraordinarily powerful Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. The work used a policy of ‘negative integration,’ creating a national identity through things the people were not, as opposed to the things they shared in common, such as language and cultural similarities. For instance, The *Kulturkampf* openly asserted that groups like the Catholics, loyal to the pope, could not be simultaneously loyal to the German nation; those who were Catholic were not German, a sort of ‘enemy within,’ according to Bismarck.

In creating such a conflict of identity, Bismarck ignored the reality of regionalism and created greater fissures in the newly formed state, the opposite of his intention to more clearly define and unite the people under a singular identity. Those in rural communities, especially Catholic communities, turned to wearing *Tracht* as a form of physical protest, as rural communities and their specific *Tracht* had always been seen as representative of “tradition...[and

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<sup>16</sup> Christopher Clark, “Religion and Confessional Conflict in *Imperial Germany 1871-1918: Short Oxford History of Germany* ed. James Retallack (Oxford: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2008), 84. ProQuest Ebook.

of] loyalty to monarchy and Christian religion.”<sup>17</sup> Catholics thus in wearing *Tracht* visually pushed back against Protestantism by wearing local clothing like the now world-famous *Dirndl*, a physical political and religious protest against the oppression of the *Kulturkampf*.

Those in the south continued to provide the strongest political, religious, and social resistance to Imperial Germany’s new policies like the *Kulturkampf*, and did so through the continuing idealization of rural regionalism in contrast to the stark militarism of their new Prussian government. The upper classes, with their romantic-era obsession with nature, feared the loss of rural lands and lifestyles to modernization as well, despite the fact that most of Germany remained starkly rural, and the fact that they as the upper classes never participated in such communities or traditions.<sup>18</sup> The wearing of *Tracht*, clothing always associated with a peasant and supposedly peaceful lifestyle, thus was manipulated to allow individuals to openly display their willingness to hold on to an identity, albeit a constructed and false one. *Tracht* themselves became physical statements of southern economic ideals, political alignments and religion, and those who wore *Tracht*, despite their falsified history, represented what was the seemingly last bastion of ‘true’ German culture and morality in an increasingly dirty, industrial, and secular society.

These socio-political arguments are most clearly visible in Father Heinrich Hansjakob’s argumentative essay, *Unsere Volkstrachten: Ein Wort zu ihre Erhaltung*, (Our People’s *Tracht*: a Word on Their Preservation), published in Freiburg im Breisgau in 1892. Hansjakob was a fiery speaker and political leader with “a romantic outlook of his homeland [the Black Forest] in folk

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<sup>17</sup> Fairbairn, “Economic and Social Developments”, 69-70.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

history, and repeatedly stood up against social grievances.”<sup>19</sup> As a Catholic leader and romantic, Hansjakob followed the late 19th century trend of romanticizing the religious and social past of the Black Forest, and led monumental efforts to establish clubs dedicated to the wearing and preservation of *Tracht* in and around the city of Freiburg im Breisgau. These efforts were similar to other *Tracht* groups established across southern Germany, such as in Bavaria,<sup>20</sup> a similarly rural, conservative, and Catholic region. Hansjakob and his associates worked to form such clubs and increase the wearing of *Tracht* so as to preserve a number of ideals they, like many southern Germans, felt were being lost in the face of a changing German society and in the offensive attacks from the *Kulturkampf*. Hansjakob states in his pamphlet, “I say we must wish for and further their [*Tracht*] duration first through interest in our farmers, thereafter through interest in religious, regio-political, and social life, and finally through interest in the art and poetry of the people.”<sup>21</sup> In this sentence alone Hansjakob highlights all the elements of society conservatives and romantics in the southern regions of Germany felt they were losing to modernization. In stating that it is these things one must understand and find interest in to wear and preserve *Tracht*, he demonstrates how the wearing of *Tracht* had fully become a physical and social political statement.

Though *Tracht* was still almost entirely regional, falsified from the upper classes, and not ever representative of Germany as a whole, increasing nationalism would attempt to transform the message of *Tracht* into a national peasant costume in the 20th century. Jahn’s 1810

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<sup>19</sup> Wall Text, “Porträt des Pfarrers Heinrich Hansjakob,” *Black Forest Stories*, Augustinermuseum, Freiburg im Breisgau, Baden-Württemberg, Germany.

<sup>20</sup> “Aufruf zur Bildung eines Vereins zur Erhaltung der Volkstrachten für Stadt und Landbezirk Freiburg,” *Freiburger Zeitung*, 7 May 1893.

<sup>21</sup> Heinrich Hansjakob, *Unsere Volkstrachten: ein Wort zu Ihrer Erhaltung von Heinrich Hansjakob*, (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder’sche Verlagshandlung, 1892), 12.

*Deutsches Volkstum* had argued not for the preservation of regional identity like Hansjakob's work, but for a national German identity through a "universal folk costume."<sup>22</sup> His final assertion as to why such a national costume was necessary landed on a key concept of nationalism that would come to dominate life in Germany. Jahn's final argument for folk costume conceptualized a nation in which "no foreigner shall be permitted to wear *Tracht*,"<sup>23</sup> even those citizens who had become naturalized Germans. In the socio-political chaos which ensued in Germany after the first World War, as nationalist fervor and economic chaos turned the people to facism, this idea would resurface in its ugliest form, with *Tracht* becoming a costume of racial exclusion. Only those of 'true' ethnic German origin were permitted to wear traditional costume, even if they had been citizens of Germany and Austria for generations. The idealization of *Tracht* as representative of identity was taken beyond the regional realms of the South and applied to the whole of Germany, with disastrous and racist connotations as the Nazi party defined Germans as a narrow, specific ethnic group.

The rise of both the Nazi party and their emphasis on *Tracht* could not have occurred without the reshaping of German national identity through the events and aftermath of World War I. The First World War is typically understood as an event wholeheartedly supported by all Germans, openly welcomed as a means of strengthening national power and military might. However, like unification, the decision to go to war was made from the top, with the declaration of war falling to "a small cadre of decision makers...all of whom had been appointed by Kaiser Wilhelm II...and were not in any way representative of German society."<sup>24</sup> Opinions from the

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<sup>22</sup> Jahn, *Deutsches Volkstum*, 67.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey Varhey, "War and Revolution" in *Imperial Germany 1871-1918 Short Oxford History of Germany* ed. James Retallack (Oxford: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2008), 242, ProQuest Ebook.

urban population again stood at odds with the rural population, with those in cities showing far more emphatic support and concern for the war effort than those in the country.<sup>25</sup> While this could have stemmed into divisions similar to those in the *Kulturkampf*, Germans instead formed “a sense of national unity, which transcended class and regional differences.”<sup>26</sup> Previously only tentatively united under a top-down government, Germans of all religions and regions united with the goal “to preserve their fatherland in a war of defence”<sup>27</sup> against their European rival powers of France and England. This severed the in-fighting of the earlier eras, as Germans turned against the French and English instead of one another, allowing national ideals to overcome regional conflict.

However, the war ended disastrously, and instead of being lifted together in pride, Germans were laid low as a nation. Their military might had failed, and millions of men had perished in combat. Thousands of civilians faced abhorrent poverty and starvation, all to lose the war, the *Kaiserreich* structure of government and to face unbelievable reparations demands from their victorious neighbor nations. This in turn made the German populous incredibly bitter and isolationist, which would only worsen as the blame for warfare remained squarely on Germany.

This embitterment did not cause Germans to criticize their leadership or to focus on the future, but instead led them to focus on the past. Many found it “difficult to move forward”<sup>28</sup> from the destruction of war, which in turn would affect the way Germans viewed their own history. Individuals like former military leader Paul Hindenburg, who was massively at fault for the failings of wartime efforts, created internal enemies, placing blame on historically targeted

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<sup>25</sup> Varhey, “War and Revolution” in *Imperial Germany*, 244.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 262.



minorities such as the Jews. His *Dolchstoßlegende* or ‘Stab-in-the-Back Legend’ claimed that German socialists and Jews (who were often seen as a singular entity, despite vast differences of opinion and culture) had ignored their duty to the German war effort or openly worked to undermine success on both the homefront, Eastern fronts and Western fronts. This view, in tandem with the widespread hunger and destruction present in post-war society, created a strengthened sense of nationalism that did not unite Germans in tragedy and push them to move forward, but rather led them to “a new emotional investment in the nation rather than one’s hometown.”<sup>29</sup> This shift led Germans to turn against both their neighboring nations and their so called ‘internal enemies’ and to look to the past as a representation of a more perfect society, a world of romanticism, natural beauty and harmony.

However, Germans never had perfect peace or unity prior to the war. This newly instilled sense of cultural unity and inability to move forward historically resulted in an emphasis on German culture and a ‘folksy’ society, which had existed only in the idealized worlds of Romantic-era art and poetry.<sup>30</sup> For instance, the historical city of Weimar was chosen as the new capital after the collapse of the *Kaiserreich*, as it was imbued with the spirit of German cultural heroes like Goethe and thus with the constructed cultural history established by the bourgeoisie. Youth groups like the *Wandervogel* or ‘wandering birds’ joined together on hikes, believing a return to the natural world as the proper way to live, shunning the modernization of industry and war in favor of the outdoors.

The increased emphasis of the wearing and politicization of *Tracht* stemmed from this idyllic view of the past and focus on culture and nature in the post-war era. War had forcibly

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<sup>29</sup> Varhey, “War and Revolution” in *Imperial Germany*, 261.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

modernized society, worsening industrialization and conditions for the poor in cities, forever reshaping German social life. As the new Weimar Republic abandoned Monarchic tradition and embraced democracy, many conservatives felt emotions similar to those in immediate post-unification Germany. As women began to enter the public sphere, secularization continued to increase under the more liberal Weimar government, and socialist parties gained greater power, conservatives saw a need to again return to a more ‘pure’ past, again supposedly found in the rural, peasant culture of bygone eras, despite the fact that these regions had always been in some way touched by social and political strife. Clubs and associations for the wearing of *Tracht* like those founded and supported by Hansjakob Heinrich saw continued membership and increased funding, with one Austrian group founding a special newspaper specifically for the wearing of traditional clothes in 1921, the *Österreichische Alpine, Volks- und Gebirgs-Trachten-Zeitung* or the ‘Austrian Alpine People’s Traditional-Mountain-Clothing Times,’<sup>31</sup> which would run for over two decades.

*Tracht* in the Weimar era maintained popularity not only through clubs and associations, but through a nation-wide fascination through the rise in media relating to the concept of *Heimat*. Loosely translating to ‘homeland’, the term refers specifically to rural regions and agricultural roots. It stood for, as historian Paul Cooke states, “the rural province, the Bavarian Alps, The Black Forest, or the Lüneberger Heath...for tradition and family and cultural roots that seemed to resist urban cosmopolitanism, foreignness, and progress.”<sup>32</sup> Again the regions of most focus here are all where rural values and lifestyles remained, idealized by conservatives in the increasingly

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<sup>31</sup> *Österreichische Alpine, Volks- und Gebirgs-Trachten-Zeitung*, “Ein Grüß an die Trachtler!” January 15, 1921.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Cooke, “The Heimat Film in the Twenty-First Century: Negotiating the New German Cinema to Return to Papas Kino.” In *Generic Histories of German Cinema: Genre and Its Deviations*, ed. Fisher Jaimey, (Boydell and Brewer, 2013), 223-224.

modern ‘Golden 20s’ of Weimar Germany. The values in *Heimat* media, which included mostly novels and films, presented a “utopia shrouded in nostalgia”<sup>33</sup> embodied through the pure characters in films, always clad in *Tracht*. These clothes thus were, as they had been since before unification physical markers of their regional purity in the face of foreignness and modernization.

This idealization of the past would only deepen as further social crises arose and new parties further emphasized the importance of rural German culture. The first of these crises hit the Weimar Republic in October of 1929 with the start of the Great Depression. Bank crises, mass unemployment, and levels of inflation on an unimaginable scale led to massive political dissatisfaction.<sup>34</sup> Angry citizens turned to the growing *National Sozialistische-Demokratische Arbeiters Partei*, or the National Socialist-Democratic Workers’ Party, known infamously as the Nazi Party, as the solution, especially when this widespread poverty remained rampant into the 1930s. Claims of future economic stability in combination with the iron leadership of a young Adolf Hitler satisfied many, allowing the party to become the most powerful in the nation by 1930.<sup>35</sup> After the then President Hindenburg’s somewhat forced selection of Hitler as the new chancellor of the Weimar Republic in 1933, power was ceded entirely to the Nazis. Hitler swiftly used this new position to pass legislation which dismantled the Weimar Republic and allowed him absolute control. This absolute dictatorship would then give the Nazi party the ability to shape and manipulate historical and social narrative, for decades to come, a narrative which strongly included *Tracht*.

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<sup>33</sup> Cooke, “Heimat Film” in *Generic Histories of German Cinema*, 224.

<sup>34</sup> Manfred Görtemaker, *Die Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Von der Gründung bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt a. M., 2004), 150.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 146 -149.

Nazi party expanded quickly used this new found power to expand the pre-existing idea of a 'folsky' German society to an extreme degree, making an emphasis on German cultural and racial heritage a political goal. The very first goal of the '25-Point Program' introduced by Hitler in 1930 for instance, stated a desire to "...further the consolidation of all Germans on the basis of the self-determined right of the people for a pan-Germany,"<sup>36</sup> ultimately proposing all Germans join together in a singular facist Nation-state. This idea of the 'German people' relied heavily on the false folk image of generations past, again recalling an imagined world in which all Germans had once lived together in communities united by rural harmony. The Austrian government would also emphatically embrace this pan-German identity, accepting and indeed welcoming their annexation in 1938. As the Nazis continued to construct their idealized society and economy, they lauded the status of farmers and other agricultural individuals as the epitome of German and Austrian culture, the ideal people who rejected modernity and worked hard for the good of the 'Fatherland'. While these ideas were not new and had been said of rural Germans by previous generations, the Nazis would add the extremely toxic element of race, implying rural, farming Germans and indeed all Germans were only valid if their blood was 'pure' and free of other races.

This worship of rural farming culture and the inclusion of racial purity became a key element to Nazi idealization of the countryside and its dress. The structure of Nazi culture and facism in general was militaristic power, but not everyone could be involved in the military directly. German society under Nazism, having placed emphasis on the greatness of the German people, became increasingly isolationist, desiring an independence from foreign trade and thus

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<sup>36</sup> Görtemaker, *Geschichte Der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 151.

potential foreign influence. As a result, those who worked in agriculture, who allowed Germans to feed the population without need for trade relations, were worshipped as supporters of the ever-glorified military, the backbone of national pride. The propaganda and art of this period demonstrates this worship clearly: in Hans Schmitz-Wiedenbrück's 1937 triptych *Workers, Farmers, Soldiers*, the figure of the farmer, clad in *Lederhosen*, looks out at the viewer, creating a connection encouraging the support of the military by implying that even the rural farmer was a key element in the structure of the Third Reich, worthy of inclusion of a pseudo-religious art piece.<sup>37</sup> The viewer is meant to connect with the farmer, who in his humble farmer's clothing is physically placed below the military men at the center of the triptych. The viewer was to understand that although the military was the epitome of Nazi society, the *Tracht*-wearing working classes supported them below the military socially but essential to its function.

Schmitz-Wiederbrück's choice to depict of the farmer in *Tracht* was not an isolated case, as the association between *Tracht* and the ideal Germany under Hitler became ingrained in art and media, much like the way in which *Heimat* ideals swept the nation after World War I. Works like Leopold Schmutzler's *Working Maidens Returning Home from the Fields* created an idealized world in which farmers dressed in *Tracht* supported the Reich economically and culturally, producing food and upholding traditionalist elements of 'pure' German culture like the wearing of traditional costume.<sup>38</sup> This association of loyalty to the Nazi Nation state and *Tracht* is glaringly apparent in the film *Triumph des Willens*, or "Triumph of the Will," seen by many as one of the greatest propaganda films ever made, despite the political controversy behind its glorification of facism by director Leni Reifenstahl. The scene "Farmer's March" looks like

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<sup>37</sup> Hans Schmitz-Wiedenbrück, *Arbeiter, Bauern, Soldaten*, 1937, Öl auf Leinwand, New York, 'Neue Galerie'.

<sup>38</sup> Leopold Schmutzler, *Arbeitsmädchen vom Felde heimkehrend*, Öl auf Leinwand, 1940, 157 x 130 cm, 1940, Berlin, Deutsches Historisches Museum.

something out of Heimat film and literature, with hundreds of *Tracht*-wearing men and women marching together through the country and into Nüremburg to present Hitler with their harvest, all while folksy traditional music plays a merry tune.<sup>39</sup> The scene ignores the inherent regionalism and religious connotations of the various costumes, instead showing the *Tracht*-wearing parade as a hive mind. Together as one these farmers do their civic duty to the Fatherland, delivering crops and fervently worshipping the *Führer*, emphatically shaking Hitler's hand and giving the *Sieg Heil* while in traditional costume. Even Austrians participated in this acceptance of *Tracht* as Nazi clothing: the April 1938 issue of the *Österreichische Alpine, Volks- und Gebirgs-Trachten-Zeitung*, immediately following annexation, lauded Hitler's supposed love for traditional costume and rejoiced in their *Tracht* wearing as a group means of expressing love for their new 'Pan-German' identity.<sup>40</sup> *Tracht* and Nazi ideals were now one: traditional costume had come to represent entirely the ethnic and social ideas of Nazism, overlooking the reality of the varied and religious past of traditional costumes in order to establish a cultural background that would support their mythology and also justify the reduction of women in society and extreme racial exclusion.

*Tracht* mythology, in order to fit within the falsified Nazi ideal of German history, necessarily required its all its wearers to be 'pure' Aryan Germans. And of course, absolutely no Jews would be permitted to wear *Tracht*, despite the fact that many did and had for years worn *Tracht*, as they too were citizens and members of rural communities, proud to express their regional roots through their traditional clothing. Marjorie Perloff, a Jewish woman in Austria and a child at the time of the Nazi Reich's dominance, described how her family had always worn

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<sup>39</sup> Leni Riefenstahl, dir., *Triumph of the Will* (1935; Romulus, MI: Synapse Films, 2001), DVD.

<sup>40</sup> *Österreichische Alpine, Volks- und Gebirgs-Trachten-Zeitung*. "Heil Alldeutschland!" April 1, 1938.

*Tracht* on vacation, with her father lauding the qualities of regional simplicity and goodness the clothing had come to be associated with in prior eras. She forlornly states in her memoir, under a series of photos of she and her family in *Tracht*, that “there would be a new Nazi government...that would pass a law forbidding Jews to wear *dirndls* and *Loden* suits (a traditional men’s costume of the region of Tirol).”<sup>41</sup> Perloff’s attachment to the wearing of *Tracht* and the morality and pride she attached to it were as real as those held by Germans and Austrians of non-Jewish ancestry. However, in the hands of the Nazis, who manipulated the meaning behind traditional clothing to fit within their own narratives, this piece of her personal family identity was formally erased in order to uphold the racist ideology and historical claims of the *NSDAP*.

Both following and prior to the 1938 passing of the law forbidding Jews from wearing *Tracht*, German media used traditional clothing as a weapon against Jewish people, depicting them as criminal and scheming in modern clothes against good, true Germans in *Tracht*. The strongest example of this can be seen in the vitriolic children’s book *Der Giftpilz*, or ‘The Poisonous Mushroom,’ published the same year as the law forbidding Jews from wearing *Tracht*. The book intends to ‘educate’ German children on identifying Jews, why they were to be feared and hated, and how they were like a poisonous mushroom, seemingly harmless but in actuality incredibly dangerous. In addition to being overtly stereotypical and racist, the book shows a clear distinction between the ‘crooked’ and evil modern Jew and the ‘good’ pious German, the target of ill-intent from the Jewish people. The very first page depicts a mother and young son in *Tracht* picking mushrooms in the woods, with the mother explaining the ways in which Jews in

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<sup>41</sup> Marjorie Perloff, *The Vienna Paradox: A Memoir* (New York: New Directions Books, 2004), 39-41.

Germany are like a poisonous mushroom. A later page shows a Jewish man, clad in modern clothing, talking to a peasant couple clad in *Tracht* as he supposedly swindles them out of their farmland. A small boy stands watching, wearing his *Lederhosen* and solemnly swearing future revenge against the Jews.<sup>42</sup> This choice to depict Jews as clad in modern clothes in contrast to the folk-costume wearing, 'pure' Germans intentionally imbued the wearing of *Tracht* with anti-Jewish sentiment.

The Nazi idealization of *Tracht* also played a part in the heavy scrutiny and sexualization of women in traditional clothing. Ideal women in the Third Reich were not to be valued for beauty or fashion sense, as cosmetics and trendy fashion, almost always associated with France, represented to the Nazis a "moral degradation of German women,"<sup>43</sup> according to historian Irene Guenther, an expert in German women's fashion in the Third Reich. The ideal female role was, totally and completely, to work within the home and produce children to support the militaristic demands of the nation, with children becoming "cannon fodder for the coming war."<sup>44</sup> Physical strength and hard work were valued over beauty, as it was these qualities that supposedly made one a more able bearer of many children. *Tracht* and the rural women who wore them were perfect vessels with which to express these expected values and moral standards for women in the Reich. The rural woman in *Tracht* had all of these qualities, with "her physical strength...willingness to bear hard work and to bear many children...[and] her handmade traditional folk costume...recalled a mythical, untarnished German past,"<sup>45</sup> seen as, fertile,

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<sup>42</sup> Ernst Hiemer, *Der Giftpilz (Nuremberg, Stürmeverlag, 1938)*.

<sup>43</sup> Irene Guenther, *Nazi Chic?: Fashioning Women in the Third Reich* (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2004), 98.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.



unsullied by outside influence and willing to bear all of this work while in *Tracht*, the proud costume of her people.

Like many other contradictory or impossible concepts from Nazi ideology, these ideas held little to no resemblance to the actual day to day lives of rural farming women in the Reich. The expectation that traditional clothing was to be handmade, so as to avoid foreign influence over fashion and industry. This ignored the reality that making these very ornate and expensive clothes and then wearing them for often very difficult and dirty work was simply not realistic. Nazism had even promoted that the very materials for the *Tracht* be self-spun by rural women, reflecting to an extreme the *selbst gesponnen, selbst gemacht* ideal of previous eras. However, to be expected to create homemade costumes, bear and take care of as many children as one could and run a farm in this era was impossible for women. Many instead could only focus on farm work, having fewer children than the as-many-as-possible expectation of the Nazi party. With farming and child rearing alone leaving little to no time leftover to do much of anything else, hand spinning and sewing traditional costumes was out of the question.<sup>46</sup>

The Nazi idealization and politicization of *Tracht* also overlooked the inherent regionalism of traditional costume, and instead focused on the *Dirndl* as the ideal pan-German folk costume. The *Dirndl* is specific to the regions of Bavaria and much of northern Austria, and consists of a wide skirt, apron, tight bodice, and blouse underneath with puffed sleeves. This design still remains today and, “while a very popular thing...[it] is a product of National-Socialism”<sup>47</sup> according to author Maritta Adam-Tkalec in an article from the *Berliner Zeitung* recording the *Dirndl*'s Nazi heritage. The *Dirndl* was pulled from its regional roots, and

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<sup>46</sup> Guenther, *Nazi Chic?*, 117-118.

<sup>47</sup> Maritta Adam-Tkalec, “Was Hitler und das Dirndl gemeinsam haben,” *Berliner Zeitung*, 12 September, 2016. <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/berlin/stadtgeschichte-was-hitler-und-das-dirndl-gemeinsam-haben-24725702>.

stripped of any Catholic or regional meaning, as Bavaria had long been traditionally Catholic, becoming a “sartorial symbol of support for Nazism.”<sup>48</sup> Jews were of course still forbidden from wearing the dress, with the Nazis falsely claiming Jews had never done so and always dressed in modern clothing as seen in *der Giftpilz*. In addition to these defilements, the Nazi party contradicted its own ‘self-spun, self-made’ ideal pushed on farming women’s *Tracht*, as *Dirndl* dresses became a staple of mass-produced fashion. This was the final and most significant piece of the manipulation of *Tracht* by the Nazi Party, as it represented the complete and final destruction of the meaning of traditional clothing. The *Dirndl* and indeed all *Tracht*, now “endowed...with political meaning”<sup>49</sup> throughout society, stood not only for rural values and agriculture as they had prior to the *NSDAP*, but were completely a symbol of the Nazis, stripping away their history of religion and regionalism in favor of genocidal racism and the oppression of women.

Perceptions of German identity and its relation to *Tracht* would again shift after 1945, splitting in ways not seen before. The defeat of Germany after World War II had not only devastated Germany, but placed it under the control of the four western allied powers, the United States, the USSR, France, and Great Britain. This takeover first humiliated German pride much in the same way the forced reparations payments of World War One had, but instead of fervent and blind nationalistic fervor, German ideological opinion was split, resulting in its eventual fracture into two separate nations, socialist East Germany (the *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* or *DDR*) and democratic Western Germany (the *Bundesrepublik Deutschlands* or *BRD*). Eastern Germany, located in the upper northwestern corner of Germany, did not focus on tradition as

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<sup>48</sup> Guenther, *Nazi Chic?*, 111.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

heavily as the southwest due to its communist ideals and focus on modernization. However in West Germany, the question of identity flourished as a nostalgia for the past similar to that in the early 20th century developed, fueled by Americanized consumerism, tourism, and film culture. This fervor for all things ‘traditional’ would grow, carrying on the once Nazified identity of *Tracht*, calling into question its meaning and utilizing it to market a global craze for German culture that persists through to the modern day.

The earliest iteration of this nostalgia for the past developed out of the *Heimatfilme* movies of the immediate post-war era in the 1950s. This movement, much like the *Heimat* craze in the 1920s, relied upon an idealization of the past, providing a space in which audiences could, as film historian Paul Cooke states, “find a new sense of belonging, the traumas of the mass bombing of German cities and the ravages of occupation could be resolved, and the modernity of the burgeoning *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) could be celebrated.”<sup>50</sup> Focused almost entirely in West Germany due to the far different economic and cultural systems of the *DDR*, these films again focused on the idyllic beauty of the countryside and the wearing of *Tracht*. In addition to featuring characters in *Tracht*, these films carried on traditional ideals associated with traditional clothing, such as simplicity, morality, and purity that had existed since their first large commodification leading up to unification in the late 19th century. In addition to maintaining these age-old stereotypes and messages conveyed by wearing *Tracht*, the *Heimatfilm* would manipulate traditional clothing to fit with the glamour of the 1950s and eventually spur on mass tourism that would spill over into the non-German world.

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<sup>50</sup> Cooke, “Heimat Film” in *Generic Histories of German Cinema*, 225.

The clearest example of these characteristics with *Tracht* in film comes from the massive 1950s hit “*Schwarzwaldmädel*” or ‘Black Forest Girl,’ directed by Hans Deppe. The film used a series of “well-trying, but amazingly effective”<sup>51</sup> tropes from previous *Heimat* media to appeal to a war-ravaged generation, providing an escape to “picturesque countryside, clear streams, [and] deep forests...a place to relax, a refuge for the soul,”<sup>52</sup> according to a Black Forest museum’s description of the film’s popularity. The film’s title character, Secretary Bärbele Riederle, is depicted as pure and naïve, a sort of physical embodiment of an escape from modernity for the lead male character, painter Hans Hauser, who came from the city to the ideal and untouched Black Forest. The film places Bärbele in contrast to another woman, Malwine, who wears incredibly modern fashion throughout the film and is pitched as a sort of moral contrast to Bärbele’s purity. Malwine initially falls for Hauser, but is rejected in favor of the ‘purer’ Bärbele. The differences in their clothing are physical signals of their character, with *Tracht* representing goodness and purity, as opposed to the uppity and modern clothing of Malwine, continuing the connection between *Tracht* and moral goodness that had existed at this point for over 100 years.

As it had for generations before, the *Tracht* worn by Bärbele not only physically displayed a set of ideals, but was also manipulated to fit the ideals of the time. Just as the Bavarian royalty adapted traditional costume for the 1842 ‘peasant wedding’ and as the Nazis mass produced the *Dirndl* to make it the emblem of their racial and sexual ideology, filmmakers changed *Tracht* style to fit with the increased glamour and brought about by Hollywood-style of the 1950s. For instance, in *Schwarzwaldmädel*, the instances in which Bärbele wears the

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<sup>51</sup> Wall Text, *Schwarzwaldmädel*, Vogtsbauernhof Open Air Museum, Gutach, Germany.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

*Schwarzwälder Bollenhut*, her hair is uncovered and curled in a chic perm. This is not how the *Bollenhut*, the most iconic and recognizable form of *Tracht* in the black forest, is traditionally worn - the hat always includes a bonnet underneath in which the hair is completely covered. In addition, Bärbele wears a striking red lip and colorfully patterned dress, which stand in stark contrast to the bare faces and black embroidered dresses always associated with this form of dress.

While films such as *Schwarzwaldmädel* did undermine some Nazi ideals about *Tracht* and women, such as the wearing of makeup, Heimat films in the 1950s largely avoided combating the racially and sexually charged legacy of *Heimat* media and *Tracht* in the Third Reich. *Heimat* films had been an extremely popular form of media before and during the Nazi era, with films like the infamous Leni Reifenstahl's *Der blaue Licht* drawing huge audiences, utilizing the same tropes of *Tracht* and rural idyll to take audiences away from reality. While some films in this era did implicate and discuss a sense of post-war trauma,<sup>53</sup> they largely avoided contention in favor of “distract[ing] and amus[ing] cinema-goers”<sup>54</sup> as media like *Schwarzwaldmädel* did. Some media challenging these glossy narratives of rural perfection did emerge in the 1960s and beyond, developing into an ‘anti-*Heimat*’ genre that made ironic criticism of the idealism of *Heimat* films.<sup>55</sup> However these did not focus on *Tracht*, and other media such as soft-porn *Lederhosenfilme* continued the association between *Tracht* and sexualization<sup>56</sup> established by the Nazi breeding ideal thrust upon women. In failing to challenge

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<sup>53</sup> Cooke, “Heimat Film,” *Generic Histories of German Cinema*, 227.

<sup>54</sup> Wall Text, *Schwarzwaldmädel*, Vogtsbauernhof Open Air Museum, Gutach, Germany.

<sup>55</sup> Cooke, “Heimat Film,” *Generic Histories of German Cinema*, 228-229.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

Nazi ideas associated with traditional clothing, these films allowed these ideas to survive into the modern day with highly problematic consequences.

Overall, *Tracht's* age-old association with moral purity and rural idyll survived and indeed thrived through and past wartime. It unfortunately kept its association with female sexuality and Nazism, with only some contention and criticism of the false idyll of *Heimat* emerging from filmmakers in the 1960s. While these associations and criticisms could have spelled the end of the wearing of *Tracht*, the birth of mass Tourism in Germany and Austria would lead to its most powerful manipulation of traditional clothing, turning it from a dated and Nazi-associated fad to a global marketing obsession that would both uphold and add new ideas to the meanings behind the wearing of *Tracht*.

Tourism in rural landscapes and its association with *Tracht* were not new concepts in Germany and Austria. In the early 19th century for instance, the Black Forest became a popular destination for tourism thanks to increased railroad travel and a sharp rise in romanticism,<sup>57</sup> particularly through the scenic paintings of artists like Wilhelm Hasseman. Hasseman's flowery depictions of the Gutach region of the Black Forest led to the idealization of the Black Forest, sparking interest in tourism within the Black Forest region that had not existed previously.<sup>58</sup> However this rise in tourism was not the main motivation behind such depictions. Hasseman and his fellow artists, like the reactionary Hansjakob Heinrich, feared increased modernization and used painting as a means of cultural preservation, including *Tracht* in their art deliberately in order to assert the rural identity of the region in the face of modern encroachment.<sup>59</sup> It is no coincidence that the region of Gutach is the birthplace of the *Bollenhut*, and this form of *Tracht*,

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<sup>57</sup> Wall Text, *Romance and Idyll*, Augustinermuseum, Freiburg, Germany.

<sup>58</sup> Wall Text, *Black Forest Painting*, Vogtsbauernhof Open Air Museum, Gutach, Germany.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

previously isolated only to the protestant women of the town of Gutach, became a national icon of the entire Black Forest.

Though the depiction and wearing of the *Bollenhut* meant to act as a signifier of the age-old archetype of *Tracht* in contrast to modernity, it was appropriated by tourists, a precedent that would again be seen in the post-war economic boom. For instance, in the 1900 painting *Guterachin auf der Wiese* (Gutach Woman in a Meadow) a young girl poses sitting in *Bollenhut Tracht*, with the ever present red-balled hat sitting beside her.<sup>60</sup> This scene however is not actually of a woman from Gutach - rather her pale skin and stiff pose indicate she is a wealthy tourist who intentionally had the painting done to portray her in a ‘peasant’ role.<sup>61</sup> This portrayal underlines the way in which the bourgeoisie of Germany at the time were using and manipulating the meaning behind *Tracht* to imbue it with morality and romantic ideals, and more importantly highlights a form of appropriation in the name of tourism that would be the backbone of the post-war state of *Tracht*.

Post-war economic disaster in the 1920s and the repressive isolationism of the Nazi era had all but ceased mass tourism in and within Germany in the 20th century. However, the post-war era of the 1950s and into the 1960s created an economic boom, spurring a massive rise in German tourism that *Tracht* played a key factor in advertising for. The popularity of *Heimatfilme* like *Schwarzwaldmädel* appealed to West German audiences, who then, with the birth of a stable capitalist economy under the occupying forces, especially through money from American businesses, could travel to rural regions like those portrayed in the movies of the time. However, German tourism alone did not fuel the *Wirtschaftswunder*. Rather, a global rise in

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<sup>60</sup> Franz Grässel, *Guterachin auf der Wiese*, Öl auf Leinwand, 1900, Augustinermuseum, Städtische Museen Freiburg, Freiburg.

<sup>61</sup> Wall Text, *Guterachin auf der Wiese*, Augustinermuseum, Freiburg, Germany.

tourism, especially from ever-wealthier Americans in the emerging middle class, would lead Germans and Austrians to use performed thematic elements of culture, especially *Tracht*, to form idealized cultural regions to fulfill stereotypes about the Germanic world.

The most distinct example of such idealization is concentrated in Austria, where in 1945 Austrian President Karl Renner boldly stated “We love our Heimat, but we need foreigners,”<sup>62</sup> citing the need for economic opportunity in an Austria that was war-torn and now separated from Germany. Controversy abounded as those in the government attempted to both contend with the Nazi past of Austria and create a space in which tourism could abound.<sup>63</sup> The idealized Austria they created was not a modern one - rather, like in *Heimat* media, it relied on a nostalgic view of a perfect past, a past which distinctly included *Tracht*.

Although the mass wearing of *Tracht* amongst tourists would not become popular for a number of decades, traditional clothing would serve as the most popularizing face of Austrian life and culture through the 1965 film *The Sound of Music*. The film centers on a young woman, Maria, who is hired to be the governess for the uptight widower Captain von Trapp and his brood of seven unruly children. The film utilizes many of the same tropes about *Tracht* and *Heimat* as seen in German *Heimatfilme* of the 1950s. For instance, throughout the entirety of the film, Maria is clad in *Tracht*-like dresses, signifying a purity identical to that seen in *Schwarzwaldmädel*, as it is Maria’s down-to earth and country purity that ultimately softens the harsh Captain. In a way exactly like in *Schwarzwaldmädel*, Captain von Trapp falls in love with the humble Maria as opposed to his seemingly more fitting match and fiancé, the ultra-modern Baroness Elba Elberfeld. In one scene, Maria in her simple *Dirndl* dances a traditional folk dance

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<sup>62</sup> Gundolf Graml, ““We Love Our Heimat, but We Need Foreigners”: Tourism and the Reconstruction of Austria, 1945–55,” *Journal of Austrian Studies* 46, no. 3 (2013): 51, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24048738>.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.



with the captain while the Baroness, in an extremely en vogue modern dress, looks on in envy from the sidelines.<sup>64</sup> The film also strengthens this affirmation of *Tracht* as morally superior to modern clothing through the clothing of the seven von Trapp children. When Maria first meets the children, they are clad in identical, modern sailor-like uniforms. In later scenes, when the once militaristic children are finally allowed to run and play, they wear not only *Tracht*, but *Tracht* handmade by Maria, falling perfectly within the *selbst gesponnen, selbst gemacht* *Tracht* ideal of generations past.

*The Sound of Music* not only upheld ideals about *Tracht* that had existed in German media for decades, but introduced them to a global audience what would forever associate *Tracht* with both Germany and Austria. This association would ultimately play an important part in how Germans and Austrians would uphold and reshape their pre-existing identities in the face of both occupation and tourism. As folklore social scientist Regina Bendix states, the “seasonal mass invasion”<sup>65</sup> that developed throughout Europe as tourism increased and brought about massive social change, often forming waves of Americanization. Movies like *The Sound of Music*, which created an idealized alpine, *Heimat*-like space where women in *Tracht* ran through green fields and children sang traditional songs, allowed for German and Austrian settings to not only survive post-war modernization, but to thrive. Stereotypical and thematic settings for tourists, in particular for Americans, were extremely popular in the post-war economic boom, as is evidenced in the opening of heavily thematic spaces like Disneyland.<sup>66</sup> The wearing of *Tracht*,

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<sup>64</sup> Wise, Robert, Ernest Lehman, Julie Andrews, Christopher Plummer, Richard Haydn, Peggy Wood, Anna Lee, et al. 2015. *The Sound of Music*, Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment.

<sup>65</sup> Regina Bendix, "Tourism and Cultural Displays: Inventing Traditions for Whom?" *The Journal of American Folklore* 102, no. 404 (1989): 131-46, doi:10.2307/540676.

<sup>66</sup> Stephen Frenkel and Judy Walton, "Bavarian Leavenworth and the Symbolic Economy of a Theme Town," *Geographical Review* 90, no. 4 (2000): 559-84, doi:10.2307/3250784.

which would otherwise seem outdated in the postwar era, became a key part in making German and Austrian spaces into visually marketable landscapes for tourism.

*Tracht* and tourism now went hand in hand, both giving Germans and Austrians a means to continue the wearing of traditional clothes and profit from it, albeit in simplified forms tourists could understand - *Dirndl* and *Lederhosen* remained the primary forms of *Tracht* represented in media due to their concentration in the more popular Alpine regions of Bavaria and north Austria. More regional costumes, like the *Schwarzwälder Bollenhut*, remained mostly unrecognizable to global audiences. However, this profitability of *Tracht* did not mean that all was well. Rather, since films, media and tourist ventures did not seek to contend with the Nazi ridden past of the German speaking world, the negative meanings behind the wearing of *Tracht* survived. In Austria in particular, the constructed world of post-war tourism has been interpreted as, in the words of Austrian Studies historian Gundolf Graml, a “notion of Austrian reality as hidden, covered up, concealed, camouflaged”<sup>67</sup> under a lush Alpine veneer that appealed to tourists but did not combat Austria’s part in Nazism. *Tracht* were a key part of this veneer and problem; Hitler after all was one of the greatest proponents of traditional costumes, helping to spark the *Dirndl* and *Lederhosen* mass craze. The *Österreichische Alpine, Volks- und Gebirgs-Trachten-Zeitung* annexation issue of April 1938 for instance, praised Hitler’s supposed adoration of Traditional costumes, and the Führer was photographed in his black Nazi uniform shirt on top paired with *Lederhosen* and traditional stockings below.<sup>68</sup> No contention about these or other problematic Nazi-appropriated elements of *Tracht*-culture occurred, as Germans and Austrians instead favored representing the idyllic and now highly profitable *Heimat* ideal over a

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<sup>67</sup> Graml, “We Love our Heimat, but We Need Foreigners,” 51.

<sup>68</sup> Maritta Adam-Tkalec, “Was Hitler und das Dirndl gemeinsam haben” *Berliner Zeitung*, 12 September, 2016, <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/berlin/stadtgeschichte-was-hitler-und-das-dirndl-gemeinsam-haben-24725702>.

war-torn and racist past. Laws like the banning of Jews from *Tracht* remained undiscussed - rather, traditional clothes were either used to appeal genially to tourists in movies like *The Sound of Music*, or remained the intellectual property of right-wing conservatives.

While the wearing and preservation of *Tracht* had always been conservative leaning, with individuals like Hansjakob Heinrich asserting *Tracht* as a means of cultural preservation, the ignorance of the racialized history of *Tracht* has had extremely problematic consequences in the last twenty years and into the modern day. Two separate spheres of *Tracht* ideology have emerged in the past two decades. For one there is the tourist-laden *Dirndl*-aesthetic comeback of *Tracht*, which takes no account of racism or right-wing conservatism, but rather focuses on *Tracht* as a dress for special occasions. While this form of wearing *Tracht* often ignores tradition and origins (there are after all, likely very few American tourists at Oktoberfest who could explain the origin story of the *Dirndl*), it does not highlight a political ideology. The other sphere is wherein the problem lies, as conservative German parties utilize *Tracht* as a means to assert nationalistic, racist and sexualized messages absolutely mirroring those created by the Nazis.

*Tracht* remained the realm of the uncool amongst Germany's youth through the end of the 20th century. As Munich ethnologist Simone Egger states, "at the first Oktoberfest in 1810, [women] showed off their Empire-style French frocks; in 1990, the ladies wore jeans."<sup>69</sup> *Tracht* again, like in pre-unification Germany, was not on trend. The flood of American media into Germany, spurred on by occupation and a booming economy, meant that Western trends dominated, even at Oktoberfest. The festival was not even popular amongst locals until after the

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<sup>69</sup> Jackie Guigui-Stolberg, "Traditional Or Trendy: The Beloved Dirndl is Back again" *German Life*, Aug, 2010, 10-12, <https://login.ezproxy-eres.up.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/612876508?accountid=14703>.

1990s, being previously known as a “festival for jerks”<sup>70</sup> according to locals annoyed by the unruly event. However, modern globalization, in combination with massive growth of the German economy, has led to the development of a modern *Dirndl* comeback, spurred on by the reinvigoration of the concept of *Heimat*<sup>71</sup> and praise for the beauty and flattering cut of the *Dirndl* by designers like Vivienne Westwood.<sup>72</sup> Instead of being appropriated for racism or conservatism, the modern *Dirndl* culture of Oktoberfest in the past decades has manipulated the meaning behind this form of *Tracht* to be largely harmless and flattering.

While this praise of the *Dirndl* and *Lederhosen* as assertions of Oktoberfest-like fun seems innocuous, it again ignores the ever-present racial and historical connotations behind *Tracht* and even serves to uphold many problematic ideologies. For one, the sexualization of women in *Dirndl* has origins in the Third Reich. First spurred on by Nazi reproduction ideals and continued by soft-core pornographic *Heimat* films of the post-war era, the modern *Dirndl*'s sexual nature strays far from its conservative Catholic Bavarian origins. Whereas the original 18th and 19th century *Dirndl* covers the chest area completely, the post-Nazi era *Dirndl* of today is “de-catholicized”<sup>73</sup> and sexualized, low busted and with a shorter skirt.

These titillating alterations, the work of Austrian born *Tracht* designer Gertrud Pesendorfer, the *Reichsbeauftragte für Trachtenarbeit*, or ‘Reich Representative for *Tracht* work’<sup>74</sup> remain today and are incredibly popular. While more conservative *Tracht* organizations frown upon the big-breasted *Dirndl* trend of today, it remains one of the most beloved aspects of

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<sup>70</sup> Gui-Gui Stolberg, “Traditional or Trendy”.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Bethany Bell, “Lederhosen and dirndl dresses make a comeback”, *BBC*, 22 October, 2012, Accessed October 30, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-19976271>.

<sup>73</sup> Maritta Adam-Tkalec, “Was Hitler und das Dirndl gemeinsam haben” *Berliner Zeitung*.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

the dress. In one interview as to why the dress is so beloved from Baden-Württemberg, west of Bavaria and not where *Dirndls* are traditionally worn, the interviewer asks a young man as to why the dress is so beloved. “Good Question,” he begins, as a woman in *Dirndl* in the background jokingly gestures to her chest.<sup>75</sup> However, while this sexy appeal is all well when done by the wearer of a *Dirndl*, it can backfire just as quickly when used as a marketing and political element. The St. Pauli Girl for instance, the busty blonde mascot for St. Pauli Girl beer, wears in all advertisements a strange-two piece ‘*Dirndl*’-like garment that barely classifies as a costume, let alone a form of *Tracht*, utilizing the motif of *Tracht* and female sexuality to sell alcohol. Most shockingly, the right-wing conservative group *Alternative für Deutschland*, in a 2017 election advertisement, showed the voluptuous bust of a woman in *Dirndl* holding a pretzel and a beer. The ad, which reads “German Tradition: World-Renowned and Unsurpassed”<sup>76</sup> problematically uses a literal headless female bust, sexualizing and dehumanizing women while simultaneously diluting German culture as a whole down to three narrow elements found mostly in Bavarian culture.<sup>77</sup> More problematically, in using *Dirndl* to promote nationalism, this ad revived the Nazi-era association between the wearing of *Tracht* and racist, isolationist ideology.

This would not be the first time the ultra-conservative *AfD* utilized *Tracht* as a nationalistic motif; rather they would continue to do so, fully realizing the consequences of the unaddressed Nazi manipulation of *Tracht*. This arose first through the issue of migration to Germany, which in the past decades had increased relatively steadily, with the foreign national

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<sup>75</sup> “Unterschied zwischen Tracht und Dirndl,” YouTube Video, 4:15, Landesschau Baden-Württemberg, October 2 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qZLMNG7w4M>.

<sup>76</sup> Alternativ für Deutschland, “Deutsche Tradition: Weltberühmt und Unerreicht”, Political Advertisement, June 2017.

<sup>77</sup> „Saupreiß“ – AfD-Politiker erntet Spott für Dirndl-Plakat, *Berliner Zeitung*, 31 August 2017, <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/politik/facebook--saupreiss----afd-politiker-erntet-spott-fuer-dirndl-plakat--2825502>

population increasing from 7.3 percent in 1991 to 8.9 percent in 2003.<sup>78</sup> As crises in the Middle East increased in severity, more and more immigrants fled to Germany, with still current chancellor Angela Merkel ultimately seeking to mitigate the issue by passing legislature in 2015 that would allow over 1 million new refugees into Germany.<sup>79</sup> However, in doing so Merkel fueled an already torrid political climate in which, as refugee researcher Mark Tran states, “demonising refugees and migrants is an easy way to win votes.”<sup>80</sup> The *Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)* a far-right party with severely anti-immigrant policies, did exactly that, and became the largest opposition party in the 2017 Reichstag election.<sup>81</sup> In promoting this anti-immigrant sentiment to gain voter trust, the *AfD* utilized the motif of *Tracht* in the exact same way as the Nazi Party, as a means of exclusion and the supposed preservation of tradition while simultaneously manipulating both the appearance and political meanings of traditional clothes.

The most extreme example of this arises in a 2017 political ad, in which three smiling white women stand smiling and giving the thumbs up to passers-by. One is clad in a Bavarian *Dirndl*, the other in a white headdress and dress of the Sorbic people, a slavic group local to central Germany, and the last in the *Schwarzwälder Bollenhut* of the Black Forest. They stand proudly under a text which reads “Colorful Diversity? We have it already!”<sup>82</sup> implying that diversity of clothes is the same as diversity of ethnicity and race. Like the Nazi propaganda that is its predecessor, this piece completely overlooks historical and social detail in order to promote

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<sup>78</sup> Stefan Rühl, "Germany" In *Statistics and Reality: Concepts and Measurements of Migration in Europe*, ed. by Fassmann Heinz, Reeger Ursula, and Sievers Wiebke, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009) 131, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46n2qg.11>.

<sup>79</sup> Mark Tran, "Welcoming Refugees," *The Lancet* 391, no. 10122 (2018): 730.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Alternativ für Deutschland, “Bunte Vielfalt? Haben Wir Schon!”, Political Advertisement, June 2017.

a specific political agenda. The poster used incorrect forms of the *Tracht*, which individuals across Germany, particularly those belonging to *Tracht* organizations and the Sorbic people slammed on social media.<sup>83</sup> Germans belonging to these organizations not only disliked the falsification and cheapening of the *Tracht* featured, but the association between their group and right-wing political goals. One Sorbic man and *Tracht* expert, Lantau, highlighted how “Tracht was abused through National-Socialism,”<sup>84</sup> and how this poster too abuses the message behind traditional clothing, reinvigorating the Nazi-Established ideal of *Tracht* as exclusive to white Germans and a means of ethnic exclusion.

The *AfD* has continued to use *Tracht* as emblems of right-wing extremism at the same time in which *Tracht* have just barely escaped from their Nazi-ridden pasts and become trendy, albeit often hyper-sexualized icons of German tourism, known worldwide and popular at Oktoberfests both in Germany and abroad. Jewish individuals, like the daughter of writer Karen Engel, have embraced the *Dirndl* despite its Nazi tarnishings, proudly declaring in defiance, “I want to signal that I’m Jewish, I’m Austrian, and I’m proud to be both Jewish and Austrian. We live in the 21st century! This should not even be a question.”<sup>85</sup> However, due to the unfortunate lack of discourse about *Tracht* in the immediate post-war period, it is an ever-present question.

Both the Nazi and *AfD* idea of *Tracht* as exclusionary and this positive, ethnically welcoming perspective of *Tracht* have survived, and now are at odds within Germany. What does this mean for *Tracht* and German history? How will Germans contend with the dichotomy

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<sup>83</sup> Angela Seliger, “AfD-Plakat erbost Trachtengruppe,” *Kieler Nachrichten*, September 18, 2017, <https://www.kn-online.de/Lokales/Ploen/Wahlkampf-AfD-Plakat-erbost-Trachtengruppe>.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Karen Engel, “Should a Jewish Girl Wear a Dirndl? (And Other Questions About Jews And Tracht),” *Lilith*, Winter 2013-2014 (2014). <https://www.lilith.org/articles/should-a-jewish-girl-wear-a-dirndl-and-other-questions-about-jews-and-tracht/>.

of meaning behind traditional clothing that has developed from centuries of manipulation, especially now, in the midst of the modern crisis of immigration? If the *AfD* perspective is left unchecked, as the Nazi ideology behind *Tracht* was, it can only mean the unfortunate descent of traditional clothing back into a state of representing hatred and sexualization. The *AfD* and *Tracht*, while not yet synonymous in the way *Dirndl* and Nazis were, are becoming closely linked through political ads and leaders. On the 10th of March 2019 *AfD* Press Speaker Andreas Albrecht Harlaß reposted a photo of a German blogger, Anni-Sophie Schmidt and her husband in *Dirndl* and *Lederhosen*, using expressly Nazi-ridden language to extoll the two as a “wonderful German couple” representative of the “Europe the Fatherland.”<sup>86</sup> The blogger, who did not consent to her photo being shared with such commentary, had to contend with it becoming expressly-right wing propaganda.

If left be, as it was in generations before, this will become the unfortunate fate of *Tracht* in Germany. What was once and in many regions still is a proud non-racialized expression of local and religious pride will become synonymous with hate and exclusion. Individuals who long grappled with their German or Austrian, identity in the face of the Nazi legacy of *Tracht* will again have to relinquish the wearing of *Tracht* to violent racists. Incoming refugees, particularly from the Middle East, will see *AfD* posters that read exclusionary and dehumanizing messages like “Burkas? We Prefer Burgundys,” with three *Tracht*-wearing women proudly declaring their dislike of Muslims,<sup>87</sup> forever impressing in the minds of those newcomers that *Tracht* and racism are synonymous. Overall, this continuation of *Tracht* as a hate symbol, created through

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<sup>86</sup> Aaron Clamann, “Wie ein Paar-Foto bei Instagram zu rechter Propaganda wurde”, *Berliner Morgenpost*, February 21, 2019

<https://www.morgenpost.de/vermishtes/article216707723/AfD-missbraucht-Foto-von-bekannter-Instagram-Influencerin-Fall-hat-ungeahnte-Folgen.html>.

<sup>87</sup> Alternativ Für Deutschland, “Burkas? Ich steh’ mehr auf Burgunder!” Political Advertisement, June 2017.



manipulation and in crisis just as before, could open the door to the theft and misuse of valuable cultural symbols across the world, turning objects of national pride into emblems of exclusion, hate and violence.

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