STUDIEN ZUR MATERIELLEN KULTUR

Karen Ellwanger

A Change of Clothes in Politics? – On the vestimentary staging of gender in political space

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Karen Ellwanger: „A Change of Clothes in Politics? – On the Vestimentary Staging of Gender in Political Space“

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Table of Contents

I Change of material 3

II Men's bodies, clothing and politics 4

III The other side of politics: First Ladies 7

IV Women politicians 11

V The new heroes` clothes 16

VI Style check 17

Bibliography 20

I Change of material

In 1998, the year that the government changed in Germany, the clothing of German politicians became the object of public debate for the first time. Although chancellor Helmut Kohl's ill-fitting suits had been earning one or other mocking or even solicitous comment for 16 years, all remarks dripped off a waterproof anti-fashion surface. Georg Seeßlen has lately pointed out, in his marvellous inspection of the Red-Green wardrobe, that Kohl's suits went from being 'a sign of a flaw of power to a sign of power itself' which did not constitute itself out of a correct relation between material and skin, form and content' (*cf.* Seeßlen 1999).

The new go-getters of the new politics, however, promised vestimentary contour. Outfits would be well-fitted and at the same time flexible and mobile: no friction loss. Suits set about to speak elegantly, confidently and articulately instead of to mumble or stammer. To the new table of values belonged being up-to-date, hip, and to show this to the world. The new rulers vowed to bring to politics a 'strong feeling of contemporaneity', in whose acquisition Simmel perceived at the end of the nineteenth century the chief charm of modern fashion (*cf.* Simmel 1983 [1911]), and so to set Germany's stagnating course in synch with the great demands of modernity – elegantly, swiftly, supply, and above all with style.

Clinton, in his first campaign for the Presidency, had already demonstrated what an indispensable energy, what a fund of newsworthiness, dwelt in vestimentary appearances in a media democracy at the twilight of the millennium. In his staff, media and outfit advisors worked closely together. The effects of sartorial profiles, kinds of material, colour combinations and collars forms were given precise analysis, and gestures were brought into harmony with sleeve cuts. The work of professionals. The President's new clothes then symbolised not only trustworthiness and authority (more

sophisticated than that of his predecessor), but also an expansion of the spectrum of softer, brighter and more textured materials, which looked as if they could receive influence from outside. They suggested flexibility, a capacity for perception, and access instead of insulation. The body of the President gave the impression of being more present and showed itself to be in fact, as we now know, partially more accessible.

The Lewinsky media affair during Clinton's second term made plain the shifts and contradictions of these changes in the presentation of the political. Noteworthy is the extent to which Clinton underlaid his official appearances with secret messages. The President himself expanded his vestimentary competence and capacity of communication, but not in the service of political representation but rather of private purposes.[i] That yellow tie which he wore to his hearing was only apparently the tested sign of national confidence; it was, as one of Monica's many textile gifts[ii], a document of material exchange. It was this reinterpretation and subversion of the only recently vestimentarily expanded language of politics that was punished as a breach of trust.

In the end, Clinton faced the confusion not by submitting to be the media star of a media voyeurism that he could no longer control (a position with connotations of powerlessness and femininity), but rather by re-masculinising himself[iii] – successfully, as American polls show. The question remains: Who controls the image in democratic politics? Who designs the new outfitting and its staging?

II Men's bodies, clothing and politics

Here, I should like to call to mind that clothing makes the body visible, invests it with meaning, and that this body[iv], perceived through clothing, has a long tradition as a metaphor of social order.[v]

In Western culture political institutions have been visualised through images of the body (cf. Laqueur 1996 [UAS 1990]) that has long been imagined as monosexually masculine (including its 'feminine' shadings). The body, its head and members, was the central frame of reference for idea of political action in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially with regard to theories of monarchy. Remarkably, such images did not simply disappear with the advent

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i The same objection was made about Raissa Gorbatschowa. (I refer here to the commentary in the Russian and German press after her death in the summer of 1999.) The problem was not that she wore clothes which were more fashionable and elegant, and decidedly more expensive, than those of her predecessors, but that she used them to further her private ambitions and those of her husband instead of for the sake of the nation, the community.

ii For a list of the textile objects that Clinton and Lewinsky gave one another as presents, see the records of the Starr Report, published on the Internet. I am grateful to Heidi Helmhold, University of Dortmund, for this reference. The giving of textiles or the dressing in clothing of the partner as a sign of attachment is obviously on the increase – an indication of changed ideas of partnership within structurally changed practices and conduct with clothes (highly associative pieces of clothes that have or could tell a story,show signs of wear, etc., are integrated into the outfit). *Cf.* the case studies conducted in 1996/97 by the Project Seminar 'Life Style Research – How Couples Dress' (K.E. and students) at the C.v.O University of Oldenburg. By the way, Doris Schröder-Köpf gave her husband a tweed suit as her marriage present.

iii One of the means of this re-masculinisation was the manner in which the military strike was presented to the public. It should not be left unmentioned that the uniforms of the American arms at this time were undergoing a 'feminisation', as the press put it, in the sense of a circumcision of masculinely connotated, no longer effective pieces of equipment. We thus have here to do with a re-masculinisation of a politician by means of a military that found itself in the process of a emasculisation – a curious kind of balance.

iv Using the example of the nude in painting, the American art historian and fashion theorist Anne Hollander makes plain how much perception of body forms, proportions and poses were determined by fashions of dress (*cf.* Hollander 1979 [1975]).

v Mary Douglas has drawn attention to the making of analogies in a pre-modern society that appears strange to us today between the treatment of the body, its orifices and accesses and the treatment of territorial boundaries, and so raised questions about the image of the body in modern societies (*cf.* Douglas 1981 [1970]).

of the Enlightenment and parliamentary democracy, as they seem to have for a long time. They lead a tenacious twilight life in the collective memory and were then re-vitalised in modified form in late modernity. 'As a persistent local phenomenon', writes Terry Eagleton, 'the body corresponds to the postmodern scepticism towards grand narratives as to the Pragmatist preference for the concrete'. The body provides 'a way of knowing that is more intimately and intensely oriented to the inner sphere than is the so vilified rationality of the Enlightenment' (Eagleton 1997, p. 32). Turner observes a connection between contemporary entrepeneurial culture and the concrete body: 'In the managerial class, in order to be successful it is important to look successful, because the body of the manager is symbolic of the corporation' (Turner 1984, p. 112).

Whereas the body as a symbolic frame of reference is reckoned to the longue durée of the history of mentalities, the function and effect of individual corporeal techniques change more swiftly. This may be seen by a glance at the history of diets. 'The history of diet', writes Turner, 'attempts to show that dietary management emerged out of a theology, developed through a moralistic medicine and finally established itself as a science of the efficient body' (Turner, pp. 103f). The real change lies in this, that the goal of dieting was originally the surmounting of desire, whereas dieting in consumer societies retains, even promotes and aestheticises desire. A control of desire in the interior of the body was transformed into the presentation of the effects of dieting – mobility, tautness, fitness, competitiveness and the capacity for pleasure – on the surface of the body. The connection between capitalistic accumulation and ascesis is replaced by the techniques of corporeal regulation of a 'calculating hedonism', the subordination of desire to the rationalisation of the body. In this way, hedonism becomes compatible with ascesis: this is the main message of Josef Fischer's drastic and, in spite of all the fun of jogging, visibly sacrificial loss of weight in the context of a 'lean state' (which Kohl could hardly embody). Whether this message will be much good as the latent model for the reduction of social benefits in favour of the prospective fitness and competitiveness of the state remains to be seen – like the inspiration that the perpetual motion of jogging can furnish for a foreign policy of mobilisation.

Fischer's still oppositional figure of 1994 drew attention to the imagination of untimely wishes and the hedonistic vitality of body that overflowed outwards from the inside, that transgressed boundaries marked by textiles and seemed to allow no place for clothing. His campaign and governmental body points, in its new correct fit, to the competence for a new outfitting. This act of outfitting stands in a long tradition in the history of clothes.

Western clothing, based on cut, may be reckoned to the potentially violent corporeal techniques; it compels, enables or prevents, underscores or cloaks, posture, gestures and freedom of movement. In the public and political domain of the nineteenth century, at the time of the construction of the nation-state, this occurred by highly differentiated means according to sex. The cut, material, texture, profile, plasticity, but also the production and distribution of women's clothing differed fundamentally from that of men. This debouched in a gender polar outfitting into 'femininity' and 'masculinity' hitherto unknown in the history of dress (*cf.* Perrot 1994).

Whereas a broad part of the population increasingly came in the course of the nineteenth century to regard the conspicuous concern with the body, clothing and the historical assignment of fashion to the feminine, modern fashion ingeniously succeeded for nearly two centuries in making the middle-class man's body disappear. The distinctive differences in status remained legible, but their vestimentary implementation was minaturised (*cf.* Sennett 1983) and placed especially in the transitional region from head to trunk. Thus

light-dark contrasts in the area of the throat, collar and tie, optically separated the zone of rationality and 'sublimation', the head, from the rest of the body; and since the second half of the nineteenth century, the long cravat has suggested, discreetly and on formal occasions covered by waistcoat and jacket, the male sex.

Just this outfitting of middle-class masculinity not only proved to be the prototype of a costume for the public space of the street, but also successfully served as equipage and interpretation for the specific domain[vi] for the political that developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is interesting that the clothes of parliamentarians were soon no longer a subject of political discussion (in contrast, for instance, to the Heckerhut of the 1848 Revolution, which had become an emblem of the revolutionary challenge), but appeared to be something entirely neutral, matter-of-course, and that naturally accrued to the homo politicus. Shoulders had to be padded, the outer lapels of the jacket strongly and the underside only slightly reinforced, so as to combine the impression of natural uprightness with the appearance of free movement and ease created by the loose fall of the material: the triumphant naturalisation is the result of the tailor's higher art.

vi 'Domain' is here meant as a clearly circumscribable social situation with defined tasks, such as, for example, the parliament. Domains of this sort are established through the constant repetition of continually similar sequences of actions in specific forms of interaction over a long period (cf. Brinkmann to Broxten 1996, p. 26). Thus the North German League established in 1867 not only a constitution but also rules of procedure – proposal, debate, voting – and a spatial arrangement, which were adopted in 1871 with the founding of the German Empire and are still in effect today. The President of Parliament and the parliamentary clerks, the representatives of the Federal Council and the lectern, are set opposite the MPs, who are divided into sections 'Right', 'Centre', and 'Left'. The loge of the King and those for diplomats are today the area reserved for the press and the public. I have culled this information from the catalogue of the exhibition *Fragen an die Deutsche Geschichte* (‚Questions on German History', Berlin 1996), organised by the German Parliament with the intention of reconstruction the 'ways to parliamentary democracy'.

This development is not matter-of-course. At the time of the French Revolution clothing was explicitly politicised and the object of numerous debates and regulations. The corset, associated with the aristocracy and worn by both men and women, was burned as a feudal straight-jacket (cf. Thiel 1980). Even small distinctions in clothing, such as shoes of a certain make or a hat of a certain form, stood for political positions. Lynn Hunt has emphatically pointed out, in her analysis of the symbolic forms of political practise, that vestimentary signs were not simply metaphors or the expressions of political positions, but means of producing and making conscious political ideas: a 'political battlefield' (Hunt 1989 [USA 1984], p. 72).

The desire for an effective presentation of the French Republic, coupled with the assumption that clothing could (self-)educate the people, occasioned republicans to commission the artist and deputy David to design national costumes. A national costume was to be created so as to translate the idea of equality into action. David's heroic-historicising proposals[vii] dropped out of the picture after the death of Robespierre. But the aesthetic idea of equality so asserted itself without regulations in the ever darker and simpler dress of middle-class men of the nineteenth-century that the psychologist and fashion historian Flügel speaks of a class-crossing 'great masculine renunciation' (Flügel 1930, p. 117).

Part of David's commission was to design clothing for the (male) representatives of the people; this project came up again and again. Thus the officials of the legislature were to be provided with red capes (which in fact happened), not to mask their role, as Hunt has observed, but rather as a 'means of fostering the knowledge of natural truths' (Hunt, pp. 99ff). On the one hand, this costume

vii Jennifer Harris has described the suggestions of the Renaissance in the short tunics and tight trousers, and of the ancient world in the capes; but also the influence of the theatre (quoted by Hunt, p. 98).

should make the legislators more aware of their appearance and more serious, and as a result render the political process improved and more all-embracing. On the other hand, it should separate the political sphere from others and exhibit the difference between the representatives of the people and the people themselves, so that 'the sessions are no longer disturbed by those in the gallery who suppose they possess the same voting rights, and who in the past have been dressed quite similarly to the representatives below in the chamber' (Hunt, p. 101).[viii]

David's red tunics, which were sufficiently striking to make the dignitaries recognisable but differed as little as possible from the design for the national costume, represent a dilemma that marks the presentation of the political sphere in parliamentary democracies to this day: the representatives of the people should look like the people and be their transparent image, for they are part of the people; on the other hand, they must also represent something that Seeßlen has called 'more-than-the-people'.

Last semester I asked students: 'How in your opinion should politicians dress themselves?'; and heard in reply formulations that exactly reproduce the previously mentioned contradiction: Politicians should 'express the changes in society' and therefore 'represent in their dress all social groups, including sub-cultures'. On the other hand, politicians should 'not be aloof, yet serious and believable', and should have a kind of professional dress corresponding to their 'important and responsible' role.[ix]

viii This function of the dress of politicians invites an inspection less of their public parliamentary appearances than those at the Party conferences of the Greens, where a similar effect has come to the fore only since the election.

ix All quotations from the written questionnaire of the seminar 'A Change of Clothes in Politics', C.v.O. University of Oldenburg, Summer Semester 1999.

How is that to be brought about? A glance at pictures of sessions of German parliaments, also those of the twentieth century, reveal an unquestioned uniformity of variation in the small differences of men's civilian dress. Although details occasionally betray contemporary fashions and now and then, on closer examination, also something like a party style, in the long view the clothing gives the impression of being astonishingly expressionless and monotonous, and so resistant to the idea of further historical changes or the changeability of social structures that we usually suppose to be the proper terrain of politics. Is this the stuff of representation in parliamentary democracies?

III The other side of politics: First Ladies

The present legitimation crisis in politics, which has thrown up anew the question of the symbolic presentation of power and its continuity in modern societies, has recently drawn attention again to Kantorowicz's theory of the two bodies of the king. In addition to the king's frail and mortal body there was, argues Kantorowicz, the idea of another, supra-temporal body, which was represented on the marble slabs of sarcarphogoi recumbent above the mortal remains, stamped on coins or publicly displayed in statues. This second body of the king had the function of materialising the life and cohesion of the community and guaranteeing the continuation of rule and power (*cf.* Kantorowicz 1990 [1957]).

Silke Wenk has put forth the thesis that, in modernity, it is not the male politician, but rather the allegories of the state personified as women that represented (and still represent[x]) the community and the nation as a whole (*cf*. Wenk 1996). These monuments have, often

x Exemplary is Silke Wenk's interpretation of Henry Moore's plastic *Large Two Forms* as an allegory of the social state (*cf.* Wenk 1997).

enough in the literal sense, taken the vacant place of the dismantled representations of kings. The presentational potential of female allegories rests precisely on the exclusion of women from active political participation and the therewith associated 'purity' and 'integrity' in contrast to the dirty business of representing divergent partial interests. Ideas of the 'nation' (Anderson), the domain of politics and the 'imaginations of femininity' " (Bovenschen) as the other side of politics are not only contemporaneous, but also developed in relation to each other.

Similar reflections have been suggested in middle class histories in regard to the re-arrangment of the body of the queen Marie Antoinette and the presentational function of the robes and hair-styles of the queens Luise and 'Sisi'. This inscription of middle-class femininity onto the bodies of queens became, according to the historian Regina Schulte, the medium for a 'transformation of the monarchy itself' (Schulte 1998, p. 81).

In the following, I should like to draw a connection between the embourgeoisied queens and the First Ladies of the German Federal Republic. In Germany, by contrast with the U.S.A., 'First Ladies' refers to two groups:

First and officially, the wives of the Presidents of the Federal Republic. They make plain that a male politician alone, even if specially commissioned to do so, cannot represent a state. The spouse of the President makes of her husband a man[xi], but further represents something indispensable that goes beyond the representative duties of her husband.

Second, the wives of the Chancellors, the inofficial First Ladies. They too must complementarily make their husbands, represent them as, men with a family, but above all they must embody his politics and his party.[xii] This function was not so important at the beginning of the Federal Republic (see Adenauer), but has increasingly become important parallel to the development of a media democracy and the accompanying changes in the function and appearances of the Chancellor.

My thesis is that today the tasks of the wives of the President and the Chancellor have come to approximate one another. And this especially in the governments of the new Social Democrats, who no longer wish to represent their old clientele but rather a 'new centre' which their generalisations rhetorically, if not actually during campaigns, aim at stylising into 'all Germans'.

It is obvious that the condition which joins together the threads of allegory, queens and First Lady is to keep away from active politics: Elli Heuss-Knapp laid down her own parliamentary mandate, and Hiltrud Schröder did not become the First Lady. Yet modern First Ladies are permitted to have a profession and even, within certain limits, to practice it – non-partisanly; I recall here Veronica Carstens (CDU), of whom it is said that she led a 'double life' as a practicing physician, commuting daily to her 15 km distant surgery (*cf*. Krause-Brewer). Being in the eye of the press, however, is a new profession for the First Ladies.

The First Ladies of post-war Germany have styles of dress that take up where the former left off and point to different views of the crossing of femininity with politics.

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xi In France, the image of a successful man politician, from Pompidou through Mitterand to (as was recently made public) Jospin, further requires relationships with women reported more or less discreetly in the press in the tradition of 'mistresses'.

xii It was not by chance that Cherie Blair wore, at the Blairs entry into Downing Street in 1997, a red suit that appeared to give a frame and meaning to the tiny red diamonds on her husband's not quite definable blue-red chequered tie. Source: Foto, Museum of London.

Here, I should like briefly to sketch a few selected patterns.

The first is the prototype provided by Elly Heuss-Knapp: skirt and blouse, without frippery, present the image of a politics of energetic public aid that means to repair social problems and suggests that these can be alleviated by personal intervention. The wife of the first President of the Federal Republic had studied economics and is said to have been a brilliant rhetorician; she foucssed her activities on "Müttergenesungswerk". One may detect here traces of the political concept of an 'enlarged motherliness' present in the early women's movement, with which Mrs Heuss-Knapp had close contacts. Her first biographer describes her as the daughter of her father, who couldn't cook and had little interest in her outward appearance. With respect to dress, she is said to have taken a 'masculine' functional approach: 'The main thing is that it be clean, neat and appropriate to the occasion' (Jünglings & Roßbecks 1998). Interesting is that this distance towards 'feminine' clothing goes together not only with professional competence but also with a staging that relies on textile metaphors.[xiii] An obituarist in the Süddeutsche Zeitung of July 21, 1952 writes: 'What lately gave her, with all her warmth and motherliness, something majestic and a little aloof was the nearness of death. [...] The life of this women was very modern. [...] Elli Knapp, who as a little girl in the 1890s already carried needle and thread with her in order to mend the tears in the clothes of her playmates, was always ready to help, and out of this helpfulness grew her interest in social problems'.

A reflection of this pattern may be perceived in Christiane Herzog, the housewife and organiser, who always bought her clothes and those of her husband double so as to have everything ready in both Bonn and Berlin. 'I am a skirt, blouse and suit women', she said of herself, 'and shall never become a total dress woman' (Welser 1998, p. 270). Marianne von Weizsäcker, who was criticised for her sedate clothes (shirt-blouse dresses; thus a compromise between dress and skirt/blouse), also belongs in these ranks (*cf.* Nayhaus, p. 258).

A second pattern, that of affluent Germany at the end of the 1950s and in the 1960s, is illustrated by the wardrobe of Wilhelmine Lübke. Lübke was often photographed in an evening dress or furs. The demonstrative display of consumption through the then already somewhat fusty-seeming conventional finery (at the same time Jackie Kennedy was displaying modernity through sober, youthful Parisian chic) did not remain unquestioned. The press complained about extravagance when Lübke took her hairdresser with her on all her trips, even to 'distant Africa'. Thus Lübke's biographer Hilde Purwin remarks that this First Lady took 'her duty to represent the Federal Republic impeccably where-ever she was [...] very seriously, perhaps a trifle too seriously' (Purwin 1998, p. 66). The clothing of other First Ladies was set in deliberate contrast to Lübke's vestimentary gestures so as to demonstrate business-likeness, nearness to the people, and practical energy directed to the feasible. Thus Christiane Herzog has related with amused distance that she discovered a safe measuring 1,20 x 2 metres behind her wardrobe in the residence in Bonn, which

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xiii In pre-modern societies, textiles and their production were a medium of solidarity with society. It may seem at first a paradox that precisely soft, formable textile materials have in nearly all societies been assigned the further function of representing the continuity of power. The ethnologists Weinert and Schneider have pointed out, however, that these frail, fragile and yet tough objects can meaningfully store time and represent associations about the brittleness of power, the endangerment of continuity, and finally the triumph over the transitory (*cf.* Schneider &Weiner 1989).
Whereas textiles were for a long time only somewhat invested with gender-specific connotations, the nineteenth century established a commonly accepted assignment of textiles and 'femininity' to the site of intimate domesticity. It is the achievement of Carola Lipp and her research group to have reconstructed the inter-crossing of textiles, femininity and the public sphere: the revolutionary women of 1848 stitched flags in the new political space of the town hall.
One must concede, however, that it was not until the entry of the Greens into the German parliament in 1983 that one could see women 'knitting and weeping' at a place of political dispute (*cf.* Spiegel Spezial 1999).

had evidently been installed at the insistence of the insurance company for Lübke's furs.

More modest versions of this pattern, of a more 'tasteful', reserved sort described as 'natural', were Hilda Heinemann, the wife of the first Social-Democrat President of the Federal Republic, and Veronica Carstens. Like Lübke, they wore all the vestimentary insignia of conventionally prestigious femininity in the forms of materials, cut and genre (many evening dresses). Thus for everyday purposes Veronica Carstens was 'simply dressed, without make-out and at most wearing a small pearl necklace' (Krause-Brewer, pp. 210ff) (and, as photos show, often in frilled collars). She owned, however, 'very beautiful state dresses', in part self-designed. Her predilection was for pastel colours and filmy materials like organza and chiffon with delicate floral patterns. At the wedding of Lady Diana and Prince Charles, she wore a light brown dress with frills and a hat of the same colour.

Rut Brandt began a new pattern: she was 'modish' in a way that sought to fetch almost something of Jackie's elegance to Bonn. This means that modernity became the presentational goal of vestimentary appearance, and with it changed stylistic means (coarsers material, stronger colours, high-contrasted patterns, minimalist collars and more daring combinations; the majority of published photos show everyday clothes). That was the first (and, I believe, last) time that the clothing of a First Lady stood so unambiguously for a new departure in politics; Brandt's clothes commented on the politics of her husband. This threw up a problem: is the scanty coat of no-nonsense modernity sufficient for the presentation of a state community? Brandt's own party registered doubts; for example, criticism was directed at Brandt's 'white silk dress in the latest fashsion' which she wore to the Berlin Press Ball in the accompaniment of her husband who wore a dinner jacket (Ahlers 1998, pp. 135ff). Light is cast on the German relation to clothing and fashion as media of national presentation by the fact that Rut Brandt was never sponsored by the national fashion industry, by contrast, for instance, to Claude Pompidou.

The force of communal charisma in Wenk's sense seems to be etiolated in present-day First Ladies; their vestimentary messages are pallid. Christina Rau is described as reserved, with a 'nearly English understatement'; 'her priority is the family' (Binder 1999). Her husband, who 'prizes her home-cooking above all else', likes to have her, as she has put it in an interview, 'on the ground' (instead of athletically high above sky-diving). There are no visions; she lives and works earnestly, but from day to day. Doris Schröder-Köpf is more colourful, but behind her tight-fitting clothes, which can not in any case sustain grand gestures, she appears shrunk. She plays the discreetly double-burdened women and has the role of being the up-to-date one, fashionable, but not conspicuous; her husband stages himself with more decision. Doris Schröder-Köpf appears to regard it as necessary to place identifying marks: the scarf round the throat, the short suit, the pussy-footing shoes, which give her (as has often been noted) the aspect of a student of economics. It is possible that the problem lies not with her, but with representing the new Social Democrats. When Blair's wife donated a Bordeaux-red suit to a London exhibition, the English press (and the Welt) described it as lacking expressiveness. Could it be that the new Social Democrats, who have no top positions for women politicians, no longer have even a proper place for staging femininity?

Elisabeth Binder has interpreted Christina Rau's manner as one of calm confidence, 'almost post-feminist'. The problem is only that, up to now, there has been no sign of representing feminism whatsoever on the part of the First Ladies. If it has existed at all, one is apter to find it in homeopathic doses among the professional women politicians.

IV Women politicians

Women active in politics seemed for a long time to have been discharged from the duties of representing feminine connotations through their dress. They have even seen themselves compelled (at least up to a few years ago) to demonstrate their competence and ambition through vestimentary restrictions (and often enough narrowness): the attitude of 'I have more important things to do than occupy myself with such externals'.[xiv] (This may also have been a relief.) But the precisely right fashion abstinence demands presentation. And the scope of its presentation is narrow and yet ambiguous.

Women entered late (shortly before or during the Weimar Republic) the already firmly established and masculinely moulded domain of politics.[xv] This process took place nearly simultaneously with the abandonment of sexually polar designed clothing. The partial readjustment of 'masculine' and 'feminine' dress was brought about predominantly by a new ordering of women's clothes – the entry of women into the fashions of modernity.[xvi]

xiv It is astonishing that people who are deliberately and voluntarily public figures avail themselves of a cloak of invisibility, as biographers of both women and men politicians have shown. 'Whole stretches of life', writes the design theorist Ingrid Heimann, 'are passed in clothes that are unintentional, unplanned and not really present. [...] One can recall essentially only what was practically necessary. I [too] was convinced that this practical minimum could be found beyond all development of forms. [...] The pressure to make real the history of one's own dress is discharged with the claim that its form is timeless' (Heimann 1991, pp. 91ff).

xv Women were of course already politically active before in a broader sense; and they remained so even under the exacerbated conditions after the roll back against the 1848 revolution, that phase from 1854 to 1908 when in Germany 'female persons' were expressly prohibited from taking part in politics and organising themselves politically. Here, I am referring to the narrow definition of the masculinely shaped sites of parliamentary politics: parliament, party and government.

xvi As a mass phenomena, this radical change established itself after 1920. Since then, structures and means of design that are now regarded as 'masculine' have found a firm place in women's dress. In another place I have given a detailed treatment to the structural changes of women's clothes at the time of the breakthrough of modernity (*cf.* Ellwanger 1994).

At last they had a specific, professionally designed and so fashionable, legitimate outfitting for the public and professional world. The most spectacular feature was the extension and eroticising of mobility, whose emblem was the exposed female leg, clad only in gossamer stockings. The specific investment of the stockinged female leg as equally feminine and modern, however, is a further indication that Western dress, in spite of all its changes throughout the twentieth century, rests on an aggressive and clearly distinguishable female-male schema, which is not a mere historical residue and upon which the oppositional style continues to stand to this day.

'Feminine' clothing finds itself in the force field of diverse vestimentary structures. Women politicians cannot avoid setting themselves in relation to them. First, 'feminine' clothes mean established (though changing) formal characteristics and articles of clothing – classically, the full dress or, since the 1920s, the more or less knee-length skirt, high-heel shoes, soft collars, widely cut or otherwise striking decolletés, bright or cheerful colours, flowing materials, and appliqués. Signs of femininity that hail from the in many respects pre-modern dress of the nineteenth century can thereby be revitalised in ever changing combinations with the new. (When these older signs are naively adopted without regard to their historical relations, they result in the formal wear of several First Ladies.) The background in which these marks cohere is, on the one hand, the extensive absence of vestimentary signs of professional authority and, on the other, the need to keep visible the pains one takes so as to be well dressed and well turned-out.[xvii] In distinction to this, we should bear in mind the naturalising tendency of the continuingly successful optical authority-demanding of the man's suit, an effect that was harboured even in the form of the quite stiff, civil servant grey envelopes of the Kohl years

xvii The English historian of fashion Elisabeth Wilson goes so far as to surmise in this a connection with old ideas and practices that expressed practical sacrifice through dress, and particularly through self-imposed appliqués and restrictions, etc.

(which quite likely cost their wearers a good deal of discomfort and trouble) and that made the power associated with this dress seem natural – and in its latest Red-Green nonchalance increasingly so.

Second, bound up with 'feminine' dress is the change and malleability of fashion; in the twentieth century too the contour of women's clothes have continually and strikingly shifted. Kaja Silverman has pointed out that this, in comparison with the vestimentary stability and apparently timeless contours of the male body, has created the impression of an unstable and less coherent female body (*cf.* Silverman 1986, pp. 147f).

In this sense Josef Fischer's drastic reshaping is 'feminine'. He has succeeded, however, in re-interpreting it as a logical develoment by positioning it beyond a change of 'fashion' (the Green combination outfit was regarded as an overcharged style, not as a fashion, and the suits of the Hessian minister manifestly hemmed him in and called for alterations). This development debouched in a suit that was at the same time highly fashionable and demonstratively traditional, and whose fit is so good and yet allows so much freedom of movement that further fundamental changes have been obviated.

The subversive potential of dressing fashion through its de-naturalising effects has been pointed out repeatedly (*cf.* e.g., Vinken 1994): precisely because fashion shows itself as something artificial, it plays with the producibility and transformability of gender. One should bear in mind, however, that the fusion of fashion with the recently revitalised implicit and explicit dress codes in the domains of power works tenaciously against these invoked effects.

Third should be mentioned the great range of variation with respect to occasion and situation, mood and intention. This has reached a point within the vestimentary developments of late modernity that 'feminine' dress has become only one ingredient in the wardrobe of a woman, which is a spectrum comprising just as much 'masculine' components and is realised in situation specific combinations (*cf.* Ellwanger 1991). This variety harbours a remarkably complex potential for presentation, but is also the crucial test.

It is in this historically developed multiformity that the great dressing problem of women politicians appears paradoxically to lie. Women entered the sphere of politics not only late, but also individually; as a heterogeneous minority[xviii], they could not cultivate a common form of dress in parliament. Women politicians have responded to this challenge with diverse strategies.

In the Weimar Republic, the first women members of parliament staged themselves straightaway in 1919 as a group, even if the picture is in the tradition of school class photographs. The later photograph documenting the celebration for the new constitution on the floor of the Reichstag on August 8, 1924 shows ladies dressed in white on a tribune who, though invited guests, are reminiscent from a distance rather of those processions of maids-of-honour which, since the French Revolution, have been part of political celebratory culture. What is really new and remarkable here are the women representatives, immediately recognisable by their fashionable clochehats, who contribute very visibly to shaping the optical image of the occasion.[xix]

It was very different in the post-war Federal Republic. A photograph of the four 'mothers' of the Basic Constitutional Law (Abb. 1) shows right off at the beginning of 1949 the contradictoriness of the vestimentary staging and self-staging of women that prevailed in the political sphere. It is worth examining this photo closely. In a semi-cicle round the

xviii The lowpoint of this proportion of female delegates was the 7th Bundestag (BT)/1972 with only 5,7% women. Today the quota is 30% (14. BT seit 1998).

xix Both illustration from Fragen an die Deutsche Geschichte (*cf.* Deutscher Bundestag, p. 213 and p. 221.

Image 1: „Die Mütter des Grundgesetzes"

manuscript (the Basic Constitutional Law) stand the four women delegates of the parties that worked together in 1948/49 in the parliamentary council. They are photographed from the hips up. The women are looking not at the viewer, but rather pensively at each other; one gazes self-obliviously into nothing. The moment is 'dignified': against a black backdrop, all four are dressed in black; the only contrast comes from their faces and light-coloured collars. The collars are each different: in addition to the 'masculine' white lapel collar (Elisabeth Selbert/ SPD), may be seen an inserted white bip and necklet (Helene Wessel, Zentrum), a small black lace decolleté that ends in a brooch (Friederike Nadig/ SPD), and finally the collarless, light-coloured not unfashionable shoulder embroidery, in the manner of the 1940s, with a meander ornament (Helene Weber/ CDU). Specific party styles seem not yet to have developed. Striking is that none of the women is wearing a jacket – in the women's dress of the time it had long been adopted as a component of the professionally oriented suit. The black dresses and the tops tucked into the skirts furnish the stuff of 'motherliness'. Finally, all have adopted from men's dress the optically assimilating, sober and (here) theatrical colour black that makes the body almost disappear, but no longer all the authority-commanding black-white contrast at the neck, while none have taken over further insignia of masculine power (such as the padded shoulders or layered clothing on the upper body). At the same time, these women demonstrate, in their (as it appears) womanlike Sunday clothes, a distance to the signs of social power borne by fashionably elegant women's dress.

This carefully staged group photo is undoubtedly demanding respect. Its tendency to present femininity within the political sphere through the renunciation of vestimentary signs of dominance and attention was carried further by a few representatives in the form of an increased show of distance from power. They made themselves visible as Others and yet immediately capable of being overlooked through signs such as decorated, not really contoured, invariably light-coloured or patterned, high-necked and more rarely decolleté tops. In 1972, the year in which the German parliament contained the lowest number of women, a CDU representative rashly generalised that they were 'all pious little mothers, the type of a social worker'; the cameras at any rate ignored them and instead focussed on 'the arriving knights with their impassive loser's faces' (Marielouise Jurreit in Brigitte 3/1973).

A small sampling of the self-chosen portraits of women representatives in Kürschner's Volkshandbuch for the 13th German parliament shows

that, in 1994, of the 36 of 177 who present themselves in very different contexts without jackets, a stalwart group (mainly from the CDU, but also from the SPD) carry forth the old traditions of dress. They make visible that they are still not seriously competing for power.

If we look at photos of the plenary sessions of parliament into the 1980s, we see that the majority of women representatives, who were in any case few, used opposite means of making themselves invisible, and presumably with other intentions. Row after row of nothing but dark, discreetly padded shoulders and white, square-edged collars. Pictures of party conventions, such as that in Godesberg in 1959, show much of the same: one can locate precisely two ladies with light-coloured tops; the rest, amidst the crowd of men, cannot be discerned with the naked eye.

Of course, the stripping off of every sign of vestimentary femininity in the German parliament ran up against limits, not always (one may surmise) self-chosen ones. The ladies were a *homo politicus* only when sitting down, from the waist up. If they made for the speaker's lectern, the skirt came to light that the parliament, against all social trends to informality and the influence of the women's movement, imposed upon its women members. Liselotte Funcke and Hedwig Meermann caused astonishment, and Lenelotte von Bothmer a tumult ('undignified and shocking', quoted in the taz of September 9, 1999), when they appeared in trouser-suits.

Along with Ingrid Heimann, I should like call the widespread strategy of optical adaptation by the successful taking over of established 'masculine' vestimentary signs of dominance in the region of the upper body, but also below in the regions of the skirt and the tip-toes, as an attempt to 'creep into' the domain of power. In the pictures of the members of the current session of parliament in Kürschner's Volkshandbuch, which show only a part of the upper body, throat and head, only 11 of 45 CDU women, 9 of 105 SPD women, one Green and one PDS woman are wearing the austere combination of a prim jacket over a white blouse with lapel collar.

Annemarie Renger is the prime example of a politician who has confidently re-fashioned her wardrobe in the course of her career from 'feminine' to rather 'masculine', but who has retained selected 'feminine' stylistic devices so as to attenuate the force of her outfit. The path that her political biography has tread may be gauged from its starting-point in 1949: a photo shows Renger as Schumacher's secretary; she is standing and taking dictation, leaning on the radiator and balancing a stenographic pad. Schumacher is sitting. Renger's girlish floral dress with a small collar of the same material is redolent of a kitchen apron. Two stripped appliqués accent the horizontal plane and the sihouette forms a reduced New Look that, together with the thin material, expresses a moderate femininity without giving the impression of all too much contour.

In 1972 Annemarie Renger became the 'first women President of the Parliament' (Süddeutsche Zeitung, December 14, 1972); the SPD press service speaks of the 'rapidly progressing emancipation of women'. The women members of parliament, according to Renger in her inaugural address, 'do not wish a special position'. Renger is wearing a dark suit of sturdy wool with a white shirt-blouse, lapel collar, cuffs and a necklace – austere, masculine, elegant. The elegance lies in precisely the sophistication of the materials and the details that alludes to the social-fashionable and the political-dominant from a fund of 'feminine' and 'masculine' stylistic devices. In view of this, Renger could afford to integrate frilled collars into her tailored suit-shaped appearance, which she did with an inimitable nonchalance.[xx]

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xx And so precisely through this combination lets appear something of that former aristocratic-masculine privilege to wear such jabots which seems paradoxical to us today. (*Cf.*, e.g., Thiel).

Today, the most widespread dress strategy of women politicians is a modified further development of Renger's method: the rising of the acceptance of structurally 'masculine and business-like' elements of dress and the claims connected therewith through their combination with 'feminine' elements like loosely falling jackets instead of stiff jackets, slender necklaces, pastel colours, soft collars and always shawls, which shield rather than separate the transition from head to body. This way of dressing corresponds to a social trend to pseudo-informality; the conspicuous investment of the throat region, for whose marking several design elements are generally used, identifies it nevertheless as the clothing of a women politician. Nearly half the CDU women, a good half of the SPD women, and most of the women of the Greens and the PDS wear variants of style.

The small differences, however, are heavily invested. The manner in which the shawl is twined round the neck instead of accommodatingly draped, the dangling earrings of various colours, the purist roughness of the pullover, and the collarless T shirt under the jacket have become integrated relics of the alternative and women's movement style, which made their apperance in parliament in 1983 with the Greens.

Above all, rejection of the classical head-body separation by abandoning the maculinely connotated lapel collar under the jacket is also one of the first lasting vestimentary changes among men politicians since the existence of the German parliament. The combination of T-shirt and sports jacket appeared for a long time to be firmly bound up with the Green's changed understanding of politics, but has today established itself in a non-partisan manner among women representatives. Angela Merkel's favourite on-the-air outfit at present consists of black trousers, black T-shirt and a flashy unicoloured jacket as an eye-catcher.

Drawing these observations to a close, I should like to consider briefly the proposal for a dress code made by President of Parliament Süßmuth and her Vice President Hirsch in 1997 (NWZ, September 13, 1997), because 'one sometimes has the feeling that a few of the members do not understand that the floor of parliament is not some restaurant, but a place where decisions concerning the future are taken'. Decisive, according to Hirsch, is 'that the dignity of parliament be maintained'. The appropriate wrapping for the men members is clearly designated: at least a tie (this runs contrary to the innovation of the Greens) and a sports jacket, or better a suit.

And the women? There is no appropriate or even ideal outfit for women politicians. Only a list of negatives has been issued: no super mini-skirts, plunging necklines, T-shirts with advertisement or slogans, no shorts.

The problem of this lack of definiteness lies not only in its failure to relieve members of the daily choice in front of their wardrobes; on the contrary, men representatives tell in interview of a minimal kit: two sports jackets to a pair of trousers, one of them dark. Even the currently propagated and fashionable unicoloured tie, which is matched to the colour of the shirt, is being pitched for its promise of simplification: 'I no longer go through the morning stress of whether the tie matches or not', reports a young manager of the new fashion on the internet.

Much worse is the dilemma that faces women's dress in present power relations, which empirical studies about the effects of clothing have invariably confirmed: socially effective women's dress is counterproductive in areas where the impression of professional competence, professionalism and assertiveness should be conveyed. Conversely, professional dress at social occasions does not have a positve effect.[xxi] For the multifunctional man's suit, which creates the

xxi The often copied 'classic' of an empirically supported dress guide: John T. Molloy, Women's Dress for Success (*cf.* Molloy, 1977).

impression of being simultaneously professional, trustworthy and (if we are to believe the American historian of dress Anne Hollander) even sexy, no such dilemma exists. If the man politician removes his jacket and loosens his tie, there are still the dark trousers, white shirt and tie: a combination that, through its incompleteness (an long established indication in films of homey intimacy and humanity) keeps the complete suit present while it directs the gaze to the act of removing the jacket as a gesture of confidential closeness, a closeness that at the same time stands in the pictorial tradition of jovial male communities.

Woman politicians, on the other hand, must undress completely in order to generate informality. The combination of skirt or trousers with shirt-blouse does not give the impression of being sufficiently incomplete, but is read rather as the usual outfit of many professional groups (for example, secretaries) and associated with the surrender of power and its representation.

The extent of this dilemma becomes plain when we reflect that, according to newer studies of the decision-process in the work-world, the majority of all relevant agreements occur informally.

Applied to the domain of politics, this finding points to the fact that the significance of parliamentary debate has long been shifted. Debates do not bring about decisions, but rather serve to legitimate before the media previously taken, non-public decisions (*cf*. Brinkmann to Broxton, pp. 23f).

V The new heroes` clothes

It was only at the end of the 1980s that dress for women and men became, in those factions of Germany society which like to count themselves part of the 'information and service society', the new late modern middle-class, an indispensable sign not only of status, life style and individuality, but also of professional competence: a proof of the capacity for innovation, creative potential, an expanded and targeted perception and the ability to present oneself and to make choices and decisions. These are also political virtues.

Following Blair, Schröder partially took over the personnel and methods of Clinton's campaign advisory staff. Dressing competence and fashion were discussed publicly for the first time in a German election campaign and since then have been prominent means of presenting the political in German society.

Slowly, a certain competence in fashion reporting looked in at the editorial offices of the newspapers ZEIT, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, and Welt – nor did the newspaper taz fail – even in the previously rather dry-as-dust political department. A gaze, focussed above all on men's fashion, that suddenly afforded close insights into the state of political culture in the transition from the Bonn to the Berlin Republic.

Schröder's traditionless Italian suits already drew attention to themselves during the election campaign, and after the change of government were taken at first as evidence of a new departure in politics, only somewhat later to be seen as a sign of his ensnarement in externals that produced the desired effect. With the message encoded in his dress, the Chancellor means to tie in with many things, and the spectrum of forms, colours and, above all, ways of wearing his clothes is correspondingly broad. When Schröder appears among the people, he does so in shirt-sleeves, in the old tradition of the SPD; on construction sites he wears a hard-hat; and on holidays he sports a light-coloured combination. His outfit therefore gives the general impression of being somewhat less formal (he seldom wears a waistcoast; rather a single-breasted suit), and his suits do not fall so

supply as Fischer's do and always retain a certain stiff contour. Since Schröder's spectacular appearance in the lifestyle magazine Gala shortly before the outbreak of the Kosovo War, he appears to have grown libidinally together with his suits; there are shades, cut-backs, but no real style alternatives.

In his Gala self-presentation he appears in a coat with a turned-up collar, which is a curious pose for representing a open, civilian statesman and is reminiscent rather of a general. Dramatic light-dark contrast, view from above to below, isolation and contextlessness in an empty room all fix him into the attitude of a statue. With this staging, in which the tools of the photographer are remarkably always in the picture (in contrast to the illusionist appearances of Trittin and Schäuble), Schröder forfeited his naturalisation: this was, I believe, a greater problem than the designer brands. It confirmed what the public knew but didn't wish to see to accurately – that pictures are constructed.

Fischer's dress moves within a narrower (in comparison with Schröder's), strictly conservative and correct spectrum, which accentuates his investiture with political power. Precisely through this emphasis on tradition Fischer maintains a certain distance to his former clothing, which is stressed again through the contrast to his jogging togs, with which he arrives in every city to which he travels. Thanks to invariably dark, very supply falling and extremely light material (so that he can wear a three-piece suit even in 40 C temperatures[xxii]), Fischer gives the impression, as has already been observed, of casualness and everything-as-usual.

By avoiding public, recurrent eye-catchers (like Walter Momper's scarf or Fischer's own former trainers, which are now in a museum), his new clothes distance him from both the emblematic use of dress by the Greens and the idea that the purpose of clothing is to represent individuality.

Since the begining of the Kosovo War Fischer has often worn trust-inspiring blue shirts. On the day of perhaps the greatest danger of the escalation of the war, June 2, 1999, he let himself be photographed again, for the first time ouside a Green Party conference, in a black T-shirt and a grey double-breasted suit (photograph in the newspaper taz).

Although the bulk of attention has been given to men politicians of the new government, the women have not been overlooked – heaven forbid: they have on the contrary been targeted. They give the impression of defensiveness. Precisely they appear not really to feel at home in their clothes and certainly to dare no vestimentary presentation that carries a political message. They adhere to the old belief that too great an attention to dress, the display of dressing competence and sartorial perfection, is feminine in a manner that harms their political chances in the eyes of the public. Which, alas, is true.

VI Style check

Recently, Silke Wenk has set the presentation of the gowns of American First Ladies in the most visited section of the Smithsonian Museum in Washington in the tradition of the representation of national community through feminine allegories; she speaks of 'forces of persistence and fixing' (Wenk 1999, p. 40). Wenk is referring to an exhibition of formal clothes that the wives of American Presidents have worn at important historical moments (mainly Presidential

xxii For this and many other suggestions I am indebted to Lutz Unterseher's acute powers of observation.

Inaugerations). In favour of Wenk's thesis speaks the sacral-suprahistorical manner of the presentation (the clothes are illuminated like a cathedral treasury) and the line-up suggesting continuity, open at then end for the robes of the latest First Lady.

I should like to propose for consideration, however, that in the overwhelming number of recent medial presentations neither First Ladies nor their outfits are treated as icons. The clothes of current First Ladies and those of women politicians have come to approximate one another. Both groups are shown in day suits, and increasingly in trousers: work clothes, a job like any other. Not that dress has therefore become less important – on the contrary. Useful here is a dress guidebook that comes to the aid of the problem group. Under the rubric 'Politics & Fashion', a woman's magazine offers a column entitled 'First Ladies' Fashion'. German fashion companies from comma to bernd berger present style concepts with comments for women in politics. A sampling: Wieczorek-Zeul – 'Keep away from big flowers', Doris Schröder-Köpf – 'new motto: high-class', Gunda Röstel – 'more colour, please'. This advice, which includes the stripping off of the insignia of the women's movement (for example, the dangling ethnic-earrings: Heide Simonis – 'quick jewellery check'), is justified by the invocation of national economic interests: 'to publicise the quality of German fashion to the outside world' (elle 4/99, pp. 130ff). In the Internet we were given the opportunity to rise ourselves to the position of advisors in the summer of 1998 – Hilary Clinton's hair style was to be voted on per mouse click: respectable bob or something perter?

Whether woman politician or political wife – the presentation of 'politics' is no longer granted the respectful distance of a security zone. Towards the end of the Kohl era, a glossy magazine presented the '100 Most Important Women in Germany', each one with small photo and short text in the stlye of 'ins' and 'outs'. Hannelore Kohl was able to wrest an honourable place in the front ranks, somewhere after Anne-Sophie Mutter and a women executive manager; Marianne Herzog and Ingrid Matthäus-Maier were on the list, but far behind.

In spite of all ostensible scolding of Schröder, it stands out in the medial presentation that it is the women in politics who are summoned before the court of judgement and receive the brunt of criticism about dress. Although in the election campaign of 1998 men and women representatives of all parties equally got what was coming to them in the ZEIT – 'Fashion Desert Bundestag' was one headline (June 25, 1998) – in diverse rankings of well or badly dressed politicians, women generally occupied the lower places. There can be no such thing, it seems, as an all-round well-dressed woman politician. After the election, progress become material was a men's bonus ('Men's Fashion Institute Lauds Minister', FAZ October 30, 1998). Wolfgang Joop gendered the watershed of fashion competence before and after the Red-Green victory blatantly, credulously and with homely imagery: 'The new government knows that dress is a message. Mrs Süßmuth and Hannelore looked like cuckoo-clocks; Fischer and Schröder are modern' (Tagesspiegel December 5, 1998).

A German illustrated magazine recently made it clear who lays claim to being in charge of the image of women in politics: 'Bunte Conducts a Style Check' (Bunte 27/99, pp. 118f). It was the day of the G-8 summit in June on which the magazine imagined a 'fashion summit': 'Big entrance of the ladies who had travelled to Bonn and Cologne at the side of the eight most powerful men in the world'. All eight First Ladies in their travelling outfits are shown successively in large photographs (seven, by the way, wore trousers); in their evening wear they are shown only in small format. The textual commentary is always set up in the same order: 'Trouser-suit /suit', 'Shoes', 'Hair-style'. Without further ado and smugly, Bunte assigns marks – U.S.A.: 'Unflattering. The waisted jacket emphasises the hips'; Japan: ‚The hair-style is somewhat too severe. Just comb it back behind the ears'. Hostess Schröder-Köpf represented

Germany to the magazine's satisfaction: 'Suit and trouser-suit impeccable'. But 'ankle-strap shoes would have been prettier with her slender legs'.

How to explain this overbearing presumptuousness? What has subjected the clothed bodies of First Ladies to this shamelessly classifying gaze? The total loss of the former aura cannot be overlooked – politics in its feminine outfit is merely commonplace. This trivialisation, the effect of the dwindling power of politics with respect to the economy, appears to be handled on the bodies of the wives of politicians.

It is different with the presentation of men politicians. In the election year 1998, as always before elections, there was a striking freshet of pictures of hetero-couples to be seen[xxiii]; this showed not only political wives in their complementary, but also individual women or men politicians at, for instance, podium discussions or in work groups which, through cropping the image, were made into their partners. After the election, however, the top politicians went their own ways in self-presentation. The gentlemen today like to stand alone on stage, so as to represent the whole.

In the already mentioned non-partisan masculine self-staging in Gala, this trivialisation is at the same time confirmed and hyperboised into the monumental. Even Schäuble, photographed from bottom view on glassy, empty surfaces, steers his wheelchair 'as if it were a light aircraft and not a handicap'.[xxiv]

Compare with this the presentation of von Herta Däubler-Gmelin in the same publication: it shows her mobility, her integration in daily work, her localisation in concrete interiors and outside spaces.[xxv]

Until recently, it seemed unthinkable that the clothes of men politicians should be worth placing in a museum. But now an exhibition in London displays Tony Blair's Marks&Spencer suit with its red-checquered tie alongside Cherie Blair's suit. Fischer disposes of his biographical props that 'are no longer in circulation'[xxvi] at the Berlin Historical Museum. The present as the possibility for political action shrinks ever more rapidly: the suit that Fischer wore in May during the paint bomb attack at the Green Party conference on Kosovo is already history, heroic witness of a historically significant but past moment. Or is a textile sign of solidarity with the grass roots? Or rather the solidarity with Kohl's project of a museum of national history as the appropriate site for the collective memory – now of the Berlin Republic?

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xxiii Datenbasis: alle Abbildungen von PolitikerInnen - exemplarisch wurde die Zeit vom 23.2. bis 3.3.1998 ausgewählt - in: FAZ, FR, taz, Bild, Weserkurier. Ich danke Patricia Mühr für die sorgfältige Dokumentation.

xxiv Photo: Wolfgang Wilde for Gala. The illuminating commentary on the picture is from the taz, September 15, 1999.

xxv 'Noch schneller ist sie nur in Turnschuhen' (i.e., She could be faster only in trainers). 'Stars&Stories', Gala 21/99. In the seminar 'Kleiderwechsel in der Politik', Martina Meinen described Däubler-Gmelings illustrated outfit as follows: '[She] wears an earth-brown trouser-suit with a somewhat lighter, reddish stripe pattern. The trosuers are based on a cut with straight legs. It sits loosely and allows a good deal of freedom of movement without visible restrictions. The jacket has classical lapels, consisting of a collar component and pointed lapels that extend to about the width of a palm above the navel. The shoulders are formed by a discreet, but visible, padding. The spherical shape of the sleeves provides mobility. […] The material of the trosuers-suit resembles the material of a man's suit, and is presumably worsted wool mixture. The soft gloss of its surface makes a soft impression that diminishes somewhat the severity of the cut. The material is sturdy, with little creasing tendency, without seeming stiff'.

xxvi A criterion, according to the museum theorist Pomian, for becoming a museum piece – or alternatively rubbish.

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Image 1: Photography: Erna Wagner-Hehmke „Die Mütter des Grundgesetzes (Mothers of the Basic Constitutional Law)“ (Bestand Erna Wagner-Hehmke, Haus der Geschichte, Bonn).