

Chapter 4

THE MATERNAL SPIRIT



The most powerful women's organization in Imperial Germany, the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* (BDF; Federation of German Women's Associations), embraced the female surplus as a central element of its program of social reform. The moderate activists who led the BDF not only employed the female surplus as a means of strategy, they also linked the concept to a maternalist vision that permeated all aspects of their reformist agenda.¹ Through an assertion of the primacy of the family, an interpretation of capitalism that emphasized the impact of economic change on middle-class households, and the advocacy of professional opportunities, moderates articulated a belief in the transformative power of spiritual motherhood. In doing so, they promoted a metamorphosis of the surplus woman from a figure unvalued and unmarried into a being who could sustain cultural renewal by wedding herself to the needs of the greater society. Moderate discussants of the woman question presented multifaceted solutions to the dilemmas that women confronted in the modern age. But all of their proposals rested upon two firm principles: first, work had to replace marriage as the primary occupation for displaced middle-class women; and second, this work would infuse the German nation with the blessings of spiritual motherhood. The female surplus served as the catalyst for both of these core principles of moderate German feminism.

The reformers of the BDF wrote with conviction about the depth and impact of the demographic crisis. In 1910, Alice Salomon pronounced in *Die Gartenlaube* that "when the German woman's movement came into being, it was at first quite predominantly a question of the *unmarried*. Women who did not find maintenance and a life's purpose in marriage demanded the right to higher edu-

cation, to independent professional activity.”² Anna Pappritz lamented that “not every girl’s fate turns in such a way that it leads to a happy marriage.”³ According to Helene Lange, Germans were witness to a new condition: “They saw around them girls who were forced by economics to stand on their own feet and did not know where they were supposed to find a place ... in German working life ... They saw others who ... had to languish in emptiness because of unbreakable tradition and insurmountable prejudice.”⁴ By appealing to sympathy, moderates hoped to catalyze a demand for change. Such compassionate rhetoric rendered the targets of reform as victims caught in emotional and economic distress.

But the argument was more sharply honed than a simple portrait of pain; it also sounded an urgent note by arguing that the dilemmas faced by unwed women were unique to this time in history. Lange claimed that Germany at the turn of the century was marked by “the spiritual and economic plight of the girls ‘*aus guter Familie*’ ... One must consider: never, as long as there has been a German history, has the daughter of the socially leading circles worked for an outside employer for money—never, except in cases of personal misfortune.”⁵ Lange and her fellow reformers had seized upon a powerful theme that would elicit the sympathies of those familiar with Gabriele Reuter’s popular novel, *Aus guter Familie*, which had sent the message that the “carnage [and] murder of Germany’s daughters must end.”⁶ By stressing the trauma of enforced solitude, calling on history, directing her concerns toward the upper-classes, and evoking a beloved tragic heroine, Lange sought to craft a movement borne out of necessity.

Yet a danger lurked in this type of argument. If only the unmarried encountered such challenges in the industrial age, how could women like Salomon, Pappritz, and Lange claim that they represented the interests of all women? Indeed, their vision was greater, their campaign more strategic. The *Frauenüberschuß* (female surplus) was interlaced with the ideology of spiritual motherhood to establish a distinctive platform from which to call for women’s rights. The chapter first looks at how mainstream women’s rights advocates employed the concept of spiritual motherhood and then examines the response of anti-feminists to the notion of single women as spiritual mothers.

Spiritual Motherhood and Female Activism

Historians have convincingly demonstrated the importance of maternalism to the evolution of European women’s movements.⁷ Emphasis upon “a woman’s identification as mother—in contrast to that of wife—which still subordinated her—offered an incontrovertibly powerful platform on which to base claims for emancipation and social recognition.”⁸ German activists argued that a more just and compassionate society could be formed by tapping into the female capacity for motherhood through work and volunteerism. A growing consensus has emerged that in comparison to other Western contexts, “German feminists ... appear to have been particularly inclined to use the concept of ‘spiritual motherhood’ or

‘organized motherhood’ as the basis for their demands for social and political reform.”⁹ Yet, as historian Nancy Reagin has observed, “terms like ‘morality’ and ‘spiritual motherhood’ were politically ambiguous, capable of being incorporated into a variety of political agendas.”¹⁰ The ambiguity inherent in the notion of spiritual motherhood contributed significantly to its widespread use by moderates, who believed that woman’s maternal energies could fundamentally alter the nature of schools, state, workplace, social relations, and the home. Such a wide grasp was best served by a broad definition. In the present discussion, spiritual motherhood is defined as the belief system asserting that the female capacity for motherhood holds a profound power that can transform society and culture.

The ideology of spiritual motherhood offered great potential energy to the moderate movement by providing a vision for the future that could correct the problems of the present society and also occupy women in the morrow. This belief system held at its core a notion of female difference from men, a difference that made women exceptional and powerful. This robust emphasis upon gender distinctiveness reflects a key contrast from the women’s movements of England and the United States. Those of continental Europe exhibited a much stronger focus on “elaborations of womanliness; they celebrated sexual difference rather than its similarity.”¹¹ Spiritual motherhood emanates throughout the panoply of books, speeches, pamphlets, and journals of the German women’s movement. For these notions to take hold, women and society both had to embrace a vision of female exceptionalism.

Spiritual motherhood contributed both ideology and strategy to the women’s movement. By celebrating the inherent maternal nature of females, mainstream activists could logically seek the expansion of female rights while simultaneously maintaining that the preservation of family and marriage was central to their mission. Such a posture moderated the tone of calls for change and formed the principal rhetorical stance of the BDF. Established in 1894 as an umbrella association of professional, charitable, and local women’s clubs, the BDF formed the organizational heart of the moderate women’s movement. The BDF leadership asserted that, “The women’s movement regards the sacred nature of marriage and the reinforcement of family life as the necessary foundation of all social relations.”¹² Marriage was not just acceptable, or useful, or even laudatory, but sacred. A 1912 expansion of the BDF’s “Principles and Demands” utilized exaggeration to make a similar point: “Can one really believe that thousands of serious-thinking women—at least half of them wives and mothers—band together with their eyes open, in order to destroy the family, the foundation of all human communal life, in which the woman is still more firmly rooted than the man?”¹³ The question reaffirmed the woman’s primary connection to the family—if not the woman, who else?

Anna Pappritz cited the search for a happy home life as the reason for improving female education: “Every girl longs to one day find the man to whom she can devote her love and trust, who will become her refuge and support for life. Her *own household*, husband and children are not only the *goal* of each girl’s *desires*, but they are also her natural life’s work.” Destiny played a significant role in achiev-

ing one's vocation: "But not every girl's fate turns in such a way that it leads to a happy marriage. Many thousands as unmarried [women], relying only on themselves, must find their life's purpose in professional work. But this life need not be joyless."¹⁴ Every girl wanted to marry, but not every girl could. Pappritz's interest in public morality led her to warn against the dangers that surrounded women who desperately wanted to be a mother and wife, but were prevented by circumstance from doing so. Moderates responded to such a predicament by promoting work that could engage maternal resources and change the world in the process.

Yet a dilemma resounded in advocating women's work while simultaneously arguing that the female *Beruf* (vocation, calling) remained primarily that of wife and mother. What prevented mothers from infusing the world with maternalism from their positions in the home? Indeed, mothers could do so through their families. But what of those who could not? The answer rested in the female surplus. Unable to marry or to assist their families, too many women had been robbed of traditional occupations. In her study of *Women Clerks in Wilhelmine Germany*, historian Carole Adams found that "in justifying the rights of unmarried women to employment," leaders of all-female clerks associations "were reduced to citing economic and demographic trends that necessitated employment for single women. They explained that housework had become easier and that family circumstances often required additional household income."¹⁵ Anna Pappritz described the consequence of a woman being forced away from her domestic vocation: "The consequences of this development are worse still ... for the morality of the people, because the valuable female influence which once in and through the house had educational and moral effects has been dismissed. The 'guardian of tradition' has been relieved of her office."¹⁶

Proving the displacement of the guardian of tradition entailed a very specific understanding of the impact of economic change upon women. The interpretation of the capitalist marketplace set forth by the BDF maintained that middle-class women, especially but not only the unmarried, had been rendered useless in the home through the advancement of consumer society. By using such an economic justification for their cause, moderates established a dynamic platform from which the movement gained urgency: women left the home because they had no choice. This forced departure demonstrated how essential it would be for women to reform the society that had treated them so unjustly. Pappritz charged that "the living conditions of the female youth have changed enormously in the last fifty years. In earlier times, the largest majority of girls out of school stayed as daughters of the house in the protection of their parents' house, where they found occupation as helpers to mothers until they created their own household by marriage." Capitalist consumerism and commodification had changed women's history: "Now many of those chores ... have moved into the factories, and thus the female youth are pushed from the protection of the parents' house into independent employment."¹⁷

In a parallel vein, Helene Lange cited economic realities as the justification for female university study. Since the late 1890s, individual women of means had

been able to apply for limited instruction at some German universities. Baden officially opened its universities to female matriculants in 1900; Prussia and most other states followed by the end of the decade.¹⁸ In asserting her case for female higher education, Lange in 1890 looked at British and North American universities and found Germany sorely in arrears. When asked why German women pursued university admission, Lange responded: “To answer the question ... is to give all the reasons for the great woman movement ... Material wants—the liberation of hand labor by machine labor, and the increasing tendency of men to remain unmarried, leaves a great number of women without visible means of support.” Lange went on to add a class component to her version of economic history: “The same circumstances create an intellectual want in circles where financial aid is not needed, and this want is equally hard to bear.”¹⁹

This explanation of the origins of the women’s movement brought together the key elements that propelled it forward: economic change, the resulting female surplus, and a bourgeois sensibility. Lange implicitly assumed that intellectual malaise existed only ‘in circles where financial aid’ was not needed. Gertrud Bäumer expressed the same class-consciousness in her discussion of female teachers as emerging from the “educated middle-class.”²⁰ Alice Salomon expanded upon Bäumer’s observation by directly linking the emergence of females as professional teachers to the female surplus: “When the state first began to employ women as teachers, the applicants mostly ... [had been] pushed into independent employment through the economic conditions of our time, in case they did not arrive at marriage—or because they had not arrived at marriage.”²¹ Salomon did not expand upon her reference to the ‘economic conditions of our time,’ but assumed that her middle-class audience, readers of *Die Gartenlaube*, was well versed in the trajectory of the economy in the industrial age.²² The story of the unmarried single woman seeking occupation outside of the home would be just as familiar.

Economic change forced a woman into the public sphere and devalued her very person. The following passage from a BDF publication conveys well this self-understanding of the moderate women’s movement:

The development of modern industry, which today manufactures most life necessities outside of the house ... has taken away most housework ... Along with the devaluation of her working capacity, the woman is in a certain sense devalued in the home; instead of becoming a producer ... she instead sinks to simple consumer. The patriarch of the working and middle class is today no longer in a position to provide necessary maintenance for adult daughters, single or widowed sisters, or other female relatives, in uncounted cases not even the wife, because the return which they formerly offered through ... the production of domestic necessities ... has been abolished. As a result, these women are simply forced by the impulse of self-preservation to provide for their own maintenance. By modern industry they are pushed *into* industry, the women of the middle class as well, into earning a living for themselves and frequently also for their families ... The cultural development will not allow itself to be stopped.²³

Echoing the sentiments of socialism—if not its politics—the BDF argued that the familial relationship was being diminished to its economics rudiments. If the

unwed female could no longer offer a return for her presence in the home, she could not remain part of the household. Patriarchs forced unattached women out into the workforce. Who would advocate their cause? Enter the women's movement!

The displaced bourgeois woman formed an essential component of the BDF's worldview. In the organization's reading of history, middle-class women simply were not accustomed to working outside of the home. At the same time, they also were more likely to gain greater leisure by the expanded availability of consumer goods. But leisure breeds sloth, or at least the suspicion thereof. Bourgeois women became the aching visible victims of the modern age due to their inability to take on new forms of work, either through individual incapacities or structural prohibitions. Men were also unintentionally to blame; in "the unpropertied middle-class, the man only comes late to an income which allows him to establish a family."²⁴ Or were his intentions perhaps more reproachable? Helene Lange contended that bourgeois men waited longer to marry "in keeping with their social status and favorable economic circumstances ... at the same time, thousands and millions of men exercise the freedom of their sex outside of marriage."²⁵

Faced with all of these challenges, women had to band together to seek relief. The bourgeois women's movement "originated out of out of economic momentum, out of the plight for women created by the transformation of goods. As a result, the women's movement had to draw the necessary social, legal, political, and ethical conclusions, to seek the right means to establish a remedy."²⁶ In a 1900 publication, the BDF linked the concurrent rise of trade unions and the women's movement: "The age-old wisdom that *unity makes strength* has never ... attained such universal meaning as in our time." Only by coming together could women ward off the catastrophes wrought by capitalism: "Affected by technical and industrial upheaval and forced into the labor market from the sphere of activity defined by the closeness of the home ... and forced to a self-awareness, women could not long shut themselves off from the necessity of organization in the interests of the individual as well as the whole." The BDF's explanation for the rise of the women's movement rings similarly to that of trade unionism and socialism. But the bourgeois orientation of the BDF emerges in their description of the transition from middle-class charity to feminist activism: "Quite timidly, in the shadow and under the protection of church associations ... the first women's associations ... developed for charitable purposes which then gradually emerged into independent establishments for the purpose of material and spiritual elevation and the liberation of their own sex." Who led this movement? "Certainly, those who first set out on the path of self-help were naturally not the most severely affected, the proletariat women, but instead the perhaps somewhat more independent bourgeois women."²⁷

The BDF acknowledged its bourgeois advent while also attempting to demonstrate its partnership with proletariat women. Just as trade unions emerged from the devaluation of the individual, surely no set of individuals had more reason to unite under a common banner than women—that is, displaced women. Marital status was once again implicit in this description; those women forced to

self-awareness after being turned out of the home might not have been explicitly single, but they were implicitly alone—or at least they were before they found common cause in the women's associations. And the women's movement intended more than simple fellowship. Their mission was no less than the full right to personhood for all women: "The bourgeois women's movement, coming from a broader and more general point of view that the woman question is a question of all women, aspires in theory and practice and in every direction to the full right of the personhood for each."²⁸

Maternalists believed that work provided the surest path to that personhood. More than anything else, moderate activists shared their commitment to expanding professional opportunities for women. Marie Stritt, speaking at the 1912 Berlin *Frauenkongress*, argued that the most obvious way to remedy the damage wrought by industrialization to family and society was through "the development of new compensated professions for women."²⁹ Fifteen years earlier, the BDF had declared as one of its leading goals "to seek to influence public opinion, the circles of power, and legislative bodies ... above all, in various practical associational activities, to support the opening of all professional paths that are not in contradiction with the disposition of the woman."³⁰ The BDF's call to activity was suffused with maternalist sensibility. The caveat that all professions must conform to the 'disposition of the woman' tempered what might otherwise have been a radical campaign. A woman's *Beruf* had to embody and enhance her essential female disposition. Women thus could not be considered as threats to male professionals because the female calling could only be met in those professions reflecting the maternal disposition.

The BDF insisted that their organization pursued work for women only because numbers left them with no other choice: "According to the last occupational census in Germany from the year 1907, 9½ million women are individually employed, i.e., about one third of all adult women overall. Of these 9½ million, 2.82 million are married and 6.18 million unmarried women. 55% of all female employed persons are under the age of thirty, the others are over thirty." Female activism emerged as a result: "The conditions which these numbers illuminate were not arbitrarily sought after and created by the women's movement; rather it is much more the reverse. The participation of women in employed life was brought about by economic circumstances, over which the women's movement has no influence." Facing circumstances beyond their control, the organized female response took the form of a social movement, striving to "lighten the obvious damage and abuses that this increasing employment can bring to the women themselves and to family life, and to establish women's occupations in such a way that they become useful for the well-being of the people and satisfying for the women themselves." Such satisfaction could only come with regret: "But ... within the women's movement it is clear that it is impossible to turn back this development and reestablish the old ways of life."³¹ The BDF saw Germany and its women as being swept along by the currents of modern society; the women's movement fortuitously arose out of the fomentation. The program proposed was

twofold: to alleviate the trauma caused to women and the family, and to create suitable work. If these two could be done concurrently and in keeping with the female disposition, then the moderate women's movement would have created a new maternalist world that looked to the past for inspiration.

Calling for women to work served practical ends. First, the omnipresent displaced women would have direction: "Only when she sees her *life's purpose* in her profession will she feel the *joy* and pride of an occupation which provides a person with *internal security* and *true self-respect*."³² Second, even if middle-class women married, they might very well one day need to work. Helene Lange used basic demographic analysis to prove the point. In a discussion of the necessity of vocational training, she pointed out that the 1900 census exhibited 126,000 more women than men in the 16 to 30 age bracket, while in the cohort extending from 50 to 70, the overage of unmarried women totaled 514,000. To Lange, the numbers meant that "the woman question that results from these population conditions is before all other things a widow question, resulting from the earlier mortality of men."³³ Many women would one day have to work, regardless of marital status, so education had to prepare them for that reality: "Today in Germany we confront a state of affairs in which a third of the life span of all adult German women will be spent in employment, with two-thirds still belonging to the work of the family."³⁴ The preeminence of family life was secured, but work still loomed as an unwanted reality for many.

Alice Salomon encouraged female vocational education in order to prevent discord among women:

Should the woman then *choose* between profession and marriage; should the adult female sex disintegrate into the celibate employed and the unemployed wives, who would have to face each other alienated like two worlds whose sets of interests are separate, whose feeling of solidarity must remain undeveloped? How should it be determined from the beginning who must be raised as the unemployed wife and be equipped with knowledge of domestic science and pedagogy for her future responsibilities; and who should become employed, permanently unmarried and therefore be exclusively educated and trained for the profession?

Proper training would prevent such division: "Since nobody can forecast the future, nor that of a girl's life possibilities, the broad circles of the population must compensate themselves in educating daughters for occupations in which they will find employment through their work, in case they are not offered sustenance through marriage."³⁵ The foreboding dichotomy so ably presented by Salomon between the wed and the unwed, the domestic and employed, suggested a future that no audience except the most virulent vilifiers of the *alte Jungfer* (old maid) could happily envision. But if women simultaneously were trained to be both wives and professionals, both the individual woman and the greater society would benefit. Only the tenets of spiritual motherhood could bring forth such harmony. Maternal qualities were to be enhanced and strengthened for dispensation in the world, whether in the home or in specifically female professions such as teaching, child care, clerical work, nursing, midwifery, or social work.

The female potential to transform German society lay in the maternal capacity that existed whether or not a woman actually reproduced. The public sphere would be reinvented by a fresh female presence once unwed women, fully confident of their nurturing gifts, engaged in maternalist vocations. Maternal power could change the family, the culture, and women themselves. An 1898 BDF pamphlet argued that the female nature transcended marital status and literal motherhood. This possibility opened the door to a new understanding of womanhood: "What has been previously meant by femininity is by no means *the natural* quality of the female, but instead partly attributed by well-meaning idealists, partly an occasionally quite doubtful and contradictory composition of all possible characteristics, conditioned directly from her dependency, much more *instilled than innate*." This proto-deconstructionist reading of femininity based its advocacy of women's rights on an assertion of woman's illimitable nature: "*Genuine femininity means genuine motherliness, but it is protection-granting, not protection-seeking, thus it requires not weakness, frailty, [and] helplessness, but instead strength, health, determined thinking and treatment.*"³⁶ Feminine strength entailed the freedom fearlessly to become whatever it was that fate asked of a woman and it mandated the confidence to greet that fate, alone, if necessary. The BDF's vision celebrated female potentiality and promised that, in a maternalist society, women would no longer have to be victims of economic forces beyond their control. Though the surplus woman did not embark down an autonomous path voluntarily, once compelled upon it, the independence gleaned from her maternalist nature could be her salvation.

Such independence reconfigured the family by creating better mothers, better marriages, better opportunities for marriage, and, in a serendipitous twist, even better old maids. If female career opportunities could be expanded, Alice Salomon believed that "the eternally prevailing laws of nature are not artificially restrained, healthy sensuality is not suppressed, and in this way the teacher is liberated from emotional isolation."³⁷ Hoping that she might one day wed but choosing a professional vocation in the meanwhile (instead of running to teaching as refuge once she failed to marry), the bourgeois single woman of the future would be a more natural, sensual, and connected individual than the aberrant, frigid, and solitary *alte Jungfer* of the past.

As for marriage, moderates maintained that the employment of women improved the venerable institution in two ways: it might make marriage more likely, and it definitely would make marriage more honest. First, a woman who could provide her suitor with an income in those early years of wedded life improved her marital prospects considerably.³⁸ Second, a working woman could avoid the oft-repeated complaint that, due to the frightening prospects of finding a spouse, women had little choice but to marry anyone who asked them. If a woman had an income or at least had been trained for a profession, she would be open to a new sort of partnership. "They no longer have to marry the first good thing that comes along (because he will provide for her a *livelihood*), since they see no other life goal before them."³⁹ An independent woman would be better positioned to

realize her female vocation by choosing a husband based upon a shared vision of the future. The BDF “Principles” echoed this belief: “The unity of marriage should be based on the fact that the spouses thus recognize each other as equal personalities.”⁴⁰ The BDF’s narrative of the origins of the women’s movement again came into play. Change had been forced upon them, but once faced with the fact that conditions would not revert back to tradition, women, family, and marriage had to be redefined. The foundation of that redefinition rested in the independence of the working woman, always cast in terms of her genuine femininity and motherliness.

If a woman married, the family would be strengthened by an empowered maternal presence. The BDF held that “the more efficient female worker, the materially and morally independent woman and mother is also the better woman and mother, more faithful to her responsibilities. Under all circumstances, one would rather—and more easily—fulfill obligations which one takes on voluntarily, than those forced.” Maternalism brought volition to vocation; a woman who understood her calling would feel empowered in pursuing it: “Instead of becoming alienated from house and family, the independent woman who married her husband not to be ‘provided for,’ but out of true inclination and appreciation, who gave life to her children out of her own free resolution, not out of dull subordination ... will fulfill her responsibilities to this husband and these children, to this home that she helped to create and maintain ... all the more joyfully. The freer woman will be happier, therefore also will possess the capacity to make others happy, in greater measure than the unfree.”⁴¹ The BDF leadership and literature did not attempt to unravel the tangles implicit in locating the female *Beruf* in the home while also asserting that a woman could best fulfill that natural calling by training to stand outside of it. The terms ‘efficient female worker’ and ‘morally independent woman’ reflected and enhanced the bourgeois domestic sphere—and all of this in a text arguing for expansion of female employment. The BDF placed the female back where she belonged, but she had been renewed and invigorated by the new self-awareness brought on by her struggles.

The world at large could be transformed by the ideology of spiritual motherhood. How to enhance the culture of all society? Return to the truest female essence: “If the woman wants to exert the influence on the morality of the people ... then she must ... place her work into the service of public institutions, busy herself with child protection, youth education, and welfare work, and she must set her entire strength on working for the development of these institutions.” The rapid pace of German industrialization and urbanization made this work essential: “Such a large social and cultural state of emergency still prevails in our time that it is almost unimaginable, an emergency which demands the help of women, because in this area only the work of the woman can lead to the goal.”⁴² Expelled from their traditional domain, women would reconstruct all of German society as their new private sphere, infusing the culture with maternal protection, instruction, and care. In their banishment, surplus women had been forced to

catalogue their skills; thereafter, they could help to protect all others from the very type of disruption that had compelled them to change the world.

Anti-feminism and the *Alte Jungfer*

Great social debates invariably invite a reactionary response; the women's movement of Imperial Germany was no different in this regard. Historians have reflected on the powerful chorus of anti-feminism that arose in Germany, especially in the last decades of the *Kaiserreich*.⁴³ Anti-feminist thought did not originate in Imperial Germany, but it was certainly fueled by discussions of economic displacement and female sexuality at the turn of the century. Hostility against single women developed a new object of antagonistic rhetoric with the rise of women's associations, which featured unmarried females prominently among their leadership. The BDF and its constituent associations became places of activism and sisterhood for their members—but not without inviting new expressions of anti-feminism.

The leadership of German women's associations received plenty of abuse from satirists who viewed them as a collection of old maids. An 1897 picture book entitled *Die Berlinerinnen* included a chapter on "The Ladies of the Association."⁴⁴ Written by novelist Ulla Hirschfeld Wolff under the pen name G. von Beaulieu, the chapter offers a portrait of two iconographic members of a women's association: "the adjutant," usually an officer of the organization, and "the sentimentalist," an active participant too timid to hold a leadership role. Wolff's adjutant and sentimentalist mirror caricatures of the shrew and the romantic.⁴⁵ The adjutant is "an independent *Fräulein* who could not be satisfied in being the family aunt and aid in cases of sickness, but instead required an activity which could make use of her entire time and strength."⁴⁶ Wolff offered a physical description: "The female adjutant ... always [travels] in coach ... She does not wear dainty patent leather shoes, but rather rough leather boots and galoshes, along with a weather-proof raincoat over a black, unassuming, and seldom modern or chic dress. Her only decoration is a watch chain, a solid golden chain as upright ... as her entire existence."⁴⁷ This scrupulous character nevertheless tended toward the extreme, for the adjutant was so fearful of being ridiculed that she transformed into a *Mannweib*.⁴⁸ "Because she does not want to become like the well-known miserable fright, the '*alte Jungfer*,' she becomes tomboyish and manly. Her exterior is severe, her character rather inconsiderate. She is not gaunt and ghostly as the unmarried woman once was, but instead red-cheeked, tanned, and fully rounded, of indestructible health."⁴⁹

The adjutant is pitiful despite her gruffness:

Look at this girl ... then you will perhaps understand why her eyes are so clear and penetrating—she sleeps eight to ten hours, as long as the darkness sinks along with her vain dreams ... Yearning desire ... [or] a foolish thought never surface in her composed, intel-

ligent head. Clear and cool! When the morning comes and with it the sobering light of day, she opens her rested eyes and ... works like crazy. She has a good heart ... and goodwill for all. She is not a woman who concentrates herself on one person ... because she sees nothing else but him alone ... who is sun, air, and light. She is good-natured and helpful, but she never loses her head, naturally still less her heart; her keen eyes espy every wrinkle you have, every fleck on your clothes (while hers—incidentally—are an atrocity). If she is one day missing from the assembly, if one no longer sees her galoshes and her reliable umbrella in the corridor of the president, then she is gone ... [the obituary provides] no word of love and respect, only of diligence.⁵⁰

With her galoshes, woeful costume, and diligence borne of emptiness, the adjutant is hardly a figure worthy of respect. She also is hardly a woman. The severe appearance and masculine character make her a coarse nonentity—forgotten as soon as her life ends.

Another old maid emerges in Wolff's depiction: "Completely different from this is the type of the charitable old *Fräulein*. Although she devotes herself to association life with passion, it has to compensate her for everything else. But she has something of the whining and pitiful in her." The life of the sentimentalist is imprinted by the path not taken: "Certainly the memory is like a shadow. The sentimentalist had loved, but oh! so platonically; for she is *aus so guter Familie*⁵¹ ... The *Fräulein's* entire life is an almost, everything passing her by." Volunteering simply fills the hours: "Even in the association, she stands as an almost. She does not play a role there for she is too shy, too sensitive. Her illness hinders her as well; she cannot do much, though she would like to. Despite all, only activity in the association gives her a purpose in life, a support; it fills the hours that she steals from her illness."⁵²

Satirists and detractors of the women's movement viewed bourgeois female organizations as the great ersatz. Women's organizations were not to be taken seriously because they offered only a desperate attempt to replace the intended female destiny of family and home. The depressing traits of the membership negated any diligence and devotion affiliates might bring to a cause. Though the adjutant and the sentimentalist differed in character, they shared an overwhelming emptiness. Any association populated by such hollow figures had to be itself void of meaning. Wolff's depiction condemned middle-class female associational life by rendering it innocuous. The chapter concludes by describing the hesitancy of a young woman, "blonde Gretchen," to become a member of a woman's association: "She joins only if she cannot find a husband to whom she is able to give her entire self, if she resigns herself to her fate and white hair mixes into her smooth blonde part; then she becomes ill and feels lonely and unhappy, then—perhaps—she becomes a member of an association, just like the sentimental, timid *alte Jungfer*."⁵³ Neutered in Wolff's depiction, associational activity was at best a surrogate occupation.

Such a view of female organizations was widespread among casual, unsympathetic observers of the women's movement. Not quite benign, Wolff's presentation made light of bourgeois women's associations by presenting them as sororities

of the solitary. Michael Hau's *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany* places this sort of ridicule in the cultural context of the *Kaiserreich*. Hau argues that anti-feminists of Imperial Germany "tried to defend traditional *bürgerliche* [bourgeois] norms for the sexes. They denounced deviations from these norms and claimed that a lack of a clear sexual identity was a sign of degeneracy that was expressed in a person's physical appearance." Social commentators especially emphasized "feminized men and masculinized women" as signs of a society in danger of decay. Hau maintains that these sorts of arguments had "considerable appeal for feminists as well," since they could then use the decrepit old maid as a springboard for reform.⁵⁴ Depicting female physical aberrance offered dual utility, as both feminists and anti-feminists utilized the stereotype of the old maid in assessing the woman question.

A prominent, if short-lived, anti-feminist organization was the *Deutsche Bund zur Bekämpfung der Frauenemanzipation* (DBBF; German Federation to Combat Women's Emancipation). In inaugurating this new group, Professor Ludwig Langemann declared in 1913 that the *Frauenbewegung* (women's movement) was not a movement of women at all, but instead a *Jungfrauenbewegung* (movement of virgins, connoting old maids).⁵⁵ The group publicized its formation in newspapers throughout Germany. One announcement proclaimed that female activism was solely the product of "only the most contentious *alte Jungfer* and a few ambitious married ladies."⁵⁶ The DBBF utilized the statistics presented by religious activist Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne in support of its view of the women's movement as decidedly unbalanced: "[She] has recently demonstrated statistically that of one hundred German girls, 89 manage to marry."⁵⁷ Langemann asserted that the unwed eleven were not nearly significant enough to merit a social movement: "From this number one thus sees with surprising clarity that the entire middle-class women's movement can establish no foundation among the broad classes ... where marriage numbers are still greater than 89%, but instead [the women's movement] is exclusively found in the narrow but influential stratum of the educated middle-class who demonstrate low marriage numbers."⁵⁸ Langemann held that while the unmarried might be pitied, they absolutely could not be given credence as leaders of a movement that represented only a minority interest.

The DBBF believed that unmarried women had cleverly chosen skillful allies to assist in their campaign for expanded rights. Against the majority, "the *Jungfrauenbewegung*, along with the assistance of *Salon* ladies, concerns itself with preventing millions of well-intentioned wives from forming the destiny of the German people."⁵⁹ According to the critique, the idle ladies of the *Salon* had united with forsaken single women in a self-interested crusade to force their will upon the remainder of German womanhood. The debauched culture of bourgeois bachelors also offered no small measure of support to the uppity female mission. The philosopher Eduard von Hartmann criticized single men for what he termed "self-serving isolation which now escalates more and more in the male world" and argued that if all men who could marry did so, "the female competi-

tion in male professions would completely stop.” The conflation of *Salon* ladies, idle bourgeois singlewomen, and self-indulgent bachelors made for an elite affair. As von Hartmann put it, “in the lower classes a *Jungferfrage* does not exist.”⁶⁰

Preoccupation with the standing of the male bourgeoisie also fed anti-feminist critique of women’s legal rights. The DBBF condemned attempts to expand the property rights of wives by arguing that, “marriage will be degraded to a community of income and thus will be shaken to its core.”⁶¹ Married women needed to guard against the invasive tactics of the women’s movement: “*In order to help the unmarried gain power against their own family interests, wives should declare themselves to be in solidarity with the Jungfrauen.* Such is the main task of the unmarried, at all costs to demonstrate the communal interests between the married woman and the employed woman.”⁶² And the costs were far too high. According to the DBBF, the *Jungfrauenbewegung* threatened the intrinsic social and moral order of Germany: “The small but powerful group of employed single women in community with a few meddling *Salondamen* make the serious attempt to tear our mothers out of their natural sphere and to push for benefits for the unmarried in the political arena. *A greater assault on the cultural life of the German people is difficult to imagine.*”⁶³ The anti-feminist league was long on criticism and limited in practical responses. Relying on stereotypes and convention, they directed their rhetoric at single and *Salon* women and portrayed them as dangerous threats to the social order.

The perceived threat contained significant potency. For the DBBF, the ladies of the women’s movement were not the harmless, aimless souls of Wolff’s Berlin; these women were unnatural. If the *Jungfrauenbewegung* gained acceptance, a deviant thread would be added to the German social fabric. Another anti-feminist, a Dr. Rüge of Heidelberg, wrote in 1910: “There is no women’s movement, but only a ... raging revolution of those who cannot be women and do not want to be mothers. The women’s movement of today ... is a movement which consists of *old maids, sterile women, and Jewesses*, but those who are mothers and who fulfill the duties of the mother are not present.”⁶⁴ These activists could not—or worse—chose not to fulfill the natural calling of motherhood.

Anxiety about birth rates indeed fueled German anti-feminism. As German birth rates declined (along with those of Western Europe), eugenic advocates and nationalists blamed middle-class women for letting self-interest get in the way of marriage and (multiple, highly educated, and racially desirable) children. The existence of a women’s movement interested in expanding female opportunities outside of the home fueled eugenically driven interest in and anxiety about the health of the nation. As Ann Taylor Allen has observed in her history of German maternalism, “because family limitation was clearly most successfully practiced among the middle class, physicians, politicians, and moralists attacked middle-class women ... The feminist movement was denounced for allegedly encouraging middle-class women to refuse motherhood.”⁶⁵ Such critiques looked past the maternalist ideology of the German women’s movement in order to present a more extreme and threatening picture of female activism.

In the eyes of the DBBF and their like, something was deeply wrong with those women who stood alone, something profoundly in violation of the human order. Langemann offered a similar appraisal in his critique of female suffrage: “In a presumptuous manner ... *Fräulein* Helene Lange [has] pronounced that through female suffrage, the male culture will become a human culture.” Langemann argued instead for conserving the extant culture: “The human culture as we know it today is based on the natural division of labor, in which men contribute their responsible work in the community and the state, the women in home and family. The *Mannweiber* who demand women’s voting rights will degrade our culture to a *Suffragettenkultur*.”⁶⁶ Though the term *Mannweiber* was employed a few sentences distant from discussion of Helene Lange (the most widely published and recognized female activist of her time), the impugning of Lange’s sexual nature was more direct. Langemann craftily hinted at the contemporary discourse of sexuality and sexual deviance⁶⁷ while lauding the family as the natural female realm. Langemann lumped Lange and her compatriots into a camp of *Mannweiber*—creatures to be shunned, feared, and ridiculed in order to eviscerate their power.

Both mild and virulent anti-feminism plagued the moderate women’s movement. When the prewar women’s movement found itself under attack by groups such as the DBBF, female activists found themselves at times forced to soft-pedal the plight of unmarried women. Singles were too easily marginalized, lampooned, and vilified. As the twentieth century progressed, moderate advocates of women’s rights became increasingly cognizant of and responsive to the ways in which their opponents adeptly utilized hyperbole to incite rancor toward unmarried women. Maria Wendland, a women’s rights advocate from Bonn, put it this way: “It is a long proven, cheap and extraordinarily convincing means of condemning a thing by making its representatives ridiculous.”⁶⁸ The attacks of the DBBF and their colleagues were based on long-held animosity toward unmarried women, bolstered by contemporaneous curiosity regarding sexual deviance, and galvanized by fear of the organized women’s movement. Faced with this arsenal of opposition, mainstream activists found themselves forced into two paradoxical rhetorical tasks: first, partial acceptance of stereotypes of single women in order to soften their edges and invert their meanings; and second, denial of single women as the sole concern of the movement while simultaneously asserting the important creative role of the *Frauenüberschuß*.

The old maid, sometimes funny and sometimes sad, lives in the writings of moderate women’s rights advocates. In her autobiography, Helene Lange described “the type ‘*alte Jungfer*’” as “upright daughters or sisters full of sacrifice and goodness, but of such narrow-minded opinions and, at the same time, sentimental views of life, that healthy children always respond to them with contradiction or are provoked to peals of laughter ... probably an expression of unconscious dislike of expression to internal feelings, which went against conventional style.”⁶⁹ Though pronouncing the type extinct by 1930, Lange’s description suggests that she was familiar with and had internalized the myriad satires of *alte Jungfern*. Her

very use of the term reveals a belief that these types had authenticity—if only in an earlier time.

The old maid represented what the movement hoped to move away from and provided evidence as to the urgency of the reformist agenda. Helene Lange's apprentice and life partner, Gertrud Bäumer, saw the *alte Jungfer* as a very real inhabitant of the past. Bäumer, in 1914, described the earliest female teachers in the following manner:

In the beginning there were three forms, all more or less taken along by fate: first, the governess, who was a poor *Fräulein aus guter Familie*, and with her bit of girls' school knowledge went through strangers' homes along the path of self-denial; second, a type of institutional lady in the higher girls' schools institutions ... and finally: a coarse, harmless aunt, widow, or *ältere Jungfrau*, who often with natural maternal talents would teach small children the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic ... Candidates for all three posts were provided in swarms by the educated middle-class, from teachers and country parsons to the daughters of the poor nobility. All had to be filled with a feeling of thankfulness from their deepest hearts that after thwarted life's hopes, fate and noble people still had given them the privilege of making themselves useful in modest ways.⁷⁰

Bäumer evoked Gabriele Reuter's Agathe Heidling and located the old maid in the middle-class.⁷¹ By categorizing single women in well-worn stereotypes, Bäumer and Lange presented the *alte Jungfer* as someone well known to them rather than as a bogeywoman. Writing in 1914 and 1930, respectively, they confidently presented the old maid as obsolete. Yet by so freely using the archaic term, they continued to validate a perception of the single woman as silly, crude, lonely, addled, and endlessly defined by her (untapped) sexuality. In perpetuating the language, Bäumer and Lange revealed how very much representations of *Altjungfertum* informed their conceptions of womanhood, their understanding of the women's movement, and perhaps even their own self-perceptions. The old maid was the other against whom they defined their movement toward the future.

Not all moderate activists believed that the *alte Jungfrau* was extinct. Maria Wendland objected to the hostile description of the old maid, but saw her as vitally important to the women's movement: "Admitting that most advocates of female voting rights are '*alte Jungfern*' ... I nonetheless would like to speak quite decidedly against the fact that they are still supposed to be 'disgruntled and sullen.' Why in all the world? Certainly some of them might fit that description." But Wendland maintained that far more sullen women were to be found among those who "spend one half of their life waiting in vain for their desired suitor and then, without any life's purpose, aimlessly waste the other half in bitterness."⁷² Wendland took a rather strange stand in this passage by accepting the term *alte Jungfer*, but objecting to its inequitable application. And if a few disgruntled and sullen old maids existed—well, disgruntled and sullen folks were to be found everywhere, married or not. Wendland responded to the anti-feminists by disarming them. By adopting their language with only minor correctives, she undermined a broader condemnation of the unwed. Single women, even *alte Jungfern*,

predominated in the women's movement. But they were far happier than those single women who stayed outside of the women's movement and languished in romantic hopes for a life that had passed them by.

Beguiling though such a rejoinder might have been, moderates could not accept the charge that theirs was a *Jungfrauenbewegung* if they ever hoped to escape the demographic trap that Langemann had set for them. Eleven percent of women could not attempt to transform the world. The answer for most moderate advocates of women's rights by the late *Kaiserreich* was fairly straightforward: to appeal to married women by sympathetically conveying the plight of the unmarried. If successful, all women could be united under the banner of spiritual motherhood. They sought to replace marital status with maternal capacity as the dominant signifier of femaleness. In order to remove marriage from the center of the discourse, moderates convincingly had to describe why the plight of single women had the catalyzing power to transform *all* women's lives, and all of German society as well. They thus needed to explain the roots of the most pernicious stereotypes regarding single women and then account for the disproportionate presence of the bourgeois unwed in a movement that intended to serve the needs of all women.

Leading bourgeois activists embraced the stereotypes and made them their own, employing a temperate tone in their campaign for women's rights. They did not confront anti-feminists with vitriol. Instead, they conceded a shared truth, but provided a sympathetic explanation of its origins. Single women might sometimes be dilettantish or defeminized, bitter or useless. But such traits did not emerge *because* they were single, or even because they were women. Changing times had created female superficiality: "One responsibility after another was taken from [the woman's] sphere of activity and she limited herself to the work which remained within the house, until finally her life became empty and bleak and she squandered her inactive capacities in informal entertainments, artistic dilettantism, and playing at charity."⁷³ Women might seem foolish on occasion, but only because current affairs had forced them to folly; improve their economic status and the fatuous would become functional.

Helene Lange expanded this argument by warning that if women were incompletely educated, they might risk losing their femininity in an attempt to survive in the changing world. Misguided female teachers who too strenuously sought to imitate their male counterparts could be a problem: "The partially educated teacher seeks to achieve success by forcefully suppressing her nature in a helpless imitation of the male type, something which is considered by her alone to be effective. Particularly when combined with the routine of many years, the partial education produces a distorted image of the female teacher which reminds one of a sergeant." Not quite a *Mannweib*, but a deviant nonetheless. Lange continued, "Partial education leads either to materialism ... or to a dead dogmatism ... Partial education makes one conceited, one-sided, and arrogant; it lets be regarded as something suspect the set of small duties in which the lives of most women once moved and in which they still will move for a long time."⁷⁴ Lange's

sergeant echoes Wolff's adjutant. Women who sought to cast off the stereotypical attributes of weakness only emerged as a new extreme, one belittled even by those who campaigned for women's rights. But moderates like Lange made an important distinction: masculine character evolved from improper education rather than unmarried status. Once again, women's rights advocates granted verity to a damaging stereotype, but commandeered its consequences to create support for their own movement.

The women's movement maintained that any compassionate observer of German society could understand why the single woman might become embittered. Lange's 1890 book *Higher Education of Women in Europe* concluded with reference to a Cologne newspaper column that had ridiculed urban single women. The antagonistic article raised the following gloomy vision: "In Berlin, a great number of weary, gray old women of scarcely thirty years creep about in the attempt at acquiring a man's education; all vivacity of feeling, all womanly emotions, and physical health besides has left them." Physical decline again ruled the old maid. The article continued: "Truly educated and cultured men avoid them, uneducated ones flee them ... and the healthy natural women shun their society. Thus these girls stand like hermaphrodites between the two sexes." The article employed the usual tactics, neutering its subjects as it established their aberrance. In response, Lange wistfully observed that "at first reading, one is inclined to laugh over this unmitigated nonsense, especially when one lives in Berlin and looks in vain for 'creeping, weary old women of scarcely thirty.'"75

But in a masterful stroke, Lange proceeded to adapt to her own ends the language of the Cologne Gazette. Her response is worth quoting at length:

But no, not quite in vain. We see such old women; pale, hollow-chested sewing girls and factory hands, poor working women leading emaciated children by the hand, and by them we are reminded at every step of an unpaid debt of society. We also see rich women who while away their days in fancy pleasures, women whose heads are empty and whose hearts are dead. But among the intellectually hard-working woman I personally know not a single one who could be classed among the decrepit old women. It is possible that there are a few, and it would be astonishing if there were none under the *present* circumstances. And then the reply would suggest itself, why should not a woman have the right to ruin her health in pursuing intellectual studies or devoting herself to a satisfying and remunerative profession, as well as a sewing girl or a factory hand, or a woman in the whirl of society? But there is still another reply: *If* she is ruining her health, what else is the cause but the fact that she is obliged to work ten times harder than might be necessary because the assistance offered to men is denied her?

If the 'imbittered [*sic*] woman', upon whom the author looks down with the feeling of the proverbial Pharisee, becomes deeply unhappy, it is not owing to her intellectual aspirations, for her aspiration is as high and as pure as—say, as that of man; but it is owing to the fact that she is everywhere rejected with her claim upon work, useful work; not even for the education and instruction of her own sex is she taken into consideration in earnest. No wonder if she becomes imbittered. There is but one thing which does imbitter—vain aspiration for work and usefulness.⁷⁶

Lange usurped her opposition's platform both by describing the reasons for the women's movement and in establishing a call for reform. Her argument shifted the blame from the women themselves to a society that offered them no relief. The passage appropriated each component of the Cologne argument and enlisted it in favor of expanded women's rights: work, not stagnation, made women old; lack of education, rather than inherent dilettantism, led women to trifle; health decayed due to overwhelming burdens; and bitterness emerged because all hope had been quashed. The solution to this decline was clear: give these women useful and manageable work.

The female surplus served the moderate women's movement well. By employing the term *alte Jungfer* and admitting that single women sometimes exhibited characteristics of dilettantism, weakness, masculinity, or bitterness, these activists used parody to demonstrate a crisis. A more complex vision of the unmarried woman began to take hold through their rhetoric. Moderates argued that single middle-class women had been forced from the home and unless new paths were opened to them, they would likely become pitiful. The best candidates to strike such new paths were vibrant, modern, sensitive, and mostly unmarried women who stood as living counterexamples to the old maids they chastised.

Still, moderates did not want their movement to be dismissed as a *Jungfrauenbewegung*. The appropriation and inversion of the old maid paradigm was accompanied by less subtle attempts to dismiss charges that the movement itself was solely populated by single women. Even if those single women could be redefined as key reasons for social change, moderate women's advocates recognized the stringent limitations their movement would face if it could be written off as only the concern of the demographically deprived—a demographic minority, at that. With the onset of war in 1914, these concerns would come to dominate the rhetoric of the moderate women's movement and result in the surplus woman receding from the discourse.⁷⁷

In the prewar *Kaiserreich*, mainstream activists took several approaches in responding to charges of a *Jungfrauenbewegung*. Marianne Weber in 1910 attacked the stereotype directly: "The former common view, that the women's movement is a movement of *alten Jungfern* or childless women, has long been proven by the facts for that which it is: drunken gossip."⁷⁸ Weber argued that though single women might be more visible, they did not form the majority of the movement. Assessing the composition of all of the constituent associations of the BDF and excluding "female teachers and nurses who are respectively restricted from marriage by express regulation due to the nature of their particular professional responsibilities," she discovered that "more married women and mothers are found among the *chairwomen*, those personalities who ... have the great burden of the continuing work and therefore also have the predominant *influence on the conduct* of the women's movement in their hands, than are found in the general population statistics of married women (roughly 70%) among the age groups to which the women's movement addresses itself."⁷⁹ Yet Weber's denial of the centrality of single women weakens upon closer inspection. By omitting from consideration

the key groups of teachers and nurses, and then limiting her examination to only the chairwomen and not to the entire membership of the BDF, Weber presented a fairly convoluted argument. Despite the thin case made, Weber's position is significant in its eagerness to disown single women in favor of the married.

The BDF itself occasionally engaged in similar repudiation of the single woman. An 1898 association pamphlet entitled, "What the Women's Movement Wants for Women," asserted that "the woman question is not simply a question of poverty and income, nor simply a question of the unmarried who could not find a 'breadwinner' . . . instead it is at the same time a moral and a legal question of first rank, and both in its practical and moral meaning is a *life question for all women*." Sanctification of the domestic sphere followed: "Regarding the fact that the married woman and mother has to fulfill a continually more important cultural mission than the unmarried, she still appears in greater measure than the latter to be involved in the development and solution of the woman question." The BDF did not provide evidence to back this claim. Instead, it offered a simple response to the oft-repeated claim that, "Whoever could solve the marriage question, that is to marry all women of marriageable age, would thus have solved the question of female employment for the most part."⁸⁰ The pamphlet refuted marriage as the sole solution to the woman question, even as it affirmed marriage as a most important female cultural mission: "In any case, the widespread opinion that the solution would be reached by all women marrying, rises out of the most unfortunate superficiality and lack of understanding."⁸¹ Discussion of women's rights extended beyond issues of marriage and work and shed light on the moral and cultural mission of the German nation. In making this argument, the BDF presented unmarried women as subordinate to the married and nullified charges of a *Jungfrauenbewegung*.

Moderate advocates of women's rights attempted to channel hostile visions of old maids in an attempt to create a movement for all women. One assessment of the German women's movement summarized the moderate position by explaining that "as far as it is not just a pastime of idle ladies, the women's movement of today originates from a deep state of emergency for the entire development of economic life, and in no way just the ambition of several striving *Mannweiber*."⁸² Later forms of feminism would repudiate the portrayal of both 'idle ladies' and '*Mannweiber*,' but the moderate women's movement of the *Kaiserreich* depended on precisely those types of derogatory characterizations to inspire a transformation of both the female sphere and German society. Stereotypes conveniently demonstrated prejudice against women to which moderates believed most fair-minded people would object. And by admitting to a hint of truth within the stereotypes—truths that their movement would seek to amend—the moderates also created a comfortable vision of their project. Who wanted to be surrounded by the bitter, the masculine, the foolish, and the hopeless? The public did not want old maids around and the BDF sought to make them disappear. They would do this through an expansive program of reform intended to provide opportunities for women and to infuse German society with the virtues of spiritual motherhood.

* * *

The BDF based their historical interpretation of the rise of the women's movement on a belief that capitalism had expelled a sizable cohort of women, most of them unwed, from the home. But the resulting movement was far more broadly based: once single women were forced from the domestic sphere, the world beyond would not and could not be the same. Compelled by circumstances it did not invite, the moderate women's movement sought a reconfiguration of home, family, nation, and society. The moderation that characterized the mainstream German women's movement is apparent in their approach to the discourse about single women. The unmarried could be pitied and even ridiculed, but they could not be deserted. Rather than making a radical claim of equality, moderates instead issued a simple call for the recognition of special and rather sad circumstances. The rhetoric of the moderate women's movement reflected a maternalist vision in which women were celebrated because of their difference from men. Because single women were perhaps most different of all, they most required recognition and assistance.

Anti-feminists used the notion of displaced women to charge that the leaders of the women's movement pursued a self-interested project intended only to comfort the aberrant and unwanted. Moderate activists responded to these charges by themselves employing the stereotype of the *alte Jungfer* in order to show that eradication of the old maid gave the women's movement a purpose with which everyone could agree. In this way, the *Frauenüberschuß* provided a vital springboard for the women's movement and its opponents. The female surplus had forcibly sparked the women's movement, but its advocates argued that the demographic event ultimately was not the movement's *raison d'être*. Moderate reformers instead found that purpose in spreading the gospel of spiritual motherhood.

Notes

1. The term 'moderate' is employed in this chapter to denote the organized German women's movement as represented by the BDF. For a discussion of the historiography regarding the division between moderate and radical feminism, see Jean Quataert, "Writing the History of Women and Gender in Imperial Germany," in *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870–1930*, ed. Geoff Eley (Ann Arbor, MI, 1997), 51–55.
2. Alice Salomon, "Die Zölibat der Lehrerin," in "Die Welt der Frau," *Die Gartenlaube* 16 (1910): 241; emphasis in text; Salomon (1872–1948) is the founding mother of professional social work in Germany (See chapter 5).
3. Helene Lange Archiv, Landesarchiv Berlin (hereafter HLA); Nachlass Anna Pappritz, Karton 1 Mappe 2. Anna Pappritz, *Hinaus in das Leben. Ein Geleitwort für junge Mädchen* (München, undated), 5; Pappritz's (1861–1939) activism centered on the movement to abolish state regulation of prostitution.
4. Helene Lange, *Fünfzig Jahre Frauenbewegung* (Berlin, 1915), cited in Helene Lange, *Lebenser-*

- innerungen* (Berlin, 1930), 103. Lange (1848–1930) was the most prominent moderate activist of her time (See chapter 5).
5. *Ibid.*
 6. Linda Kraus Worley, “Girls from Good Families: Tony Buddenbrook and Agathe Heidling,” *The German Quarterly* 76(2) (2003): 201; see chapter 1 on *Aus guter Familie*.
 7. See Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds., *Mothers of a New World* (New York, 1993); Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950* (Stanford, CA, 2000), 236–242. The German case is established in Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800–1914* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1991), and Irene Stoehr, “‘Organisierte Mütterlichkeit’. Zur Politik der deutschen Frauenbewegung um 1900,” in *Frauen suchen ihre Geschichte*, ed. Karin Hausen (München, 1987), 254–279.
 8. Offen, *Feminisms*, 236.
 9. Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey, “Introduction,” in *Gender Relations in German History*, eds. Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey (Durham, NC, 1997), 22.
 10. Nancy Reagin, *A German Women’s Movement: Class and Gender in Hanover, 1880–1933* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1995), 3.
 11. Karen Offen, “Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach,” *Signs* 14(1) (1988): 124. For a comprehensive discussion of gender difference and gender equality as leitmotifs in the writing of women’s history, see Gisela Bock, “Challenging Dichotomies: Perspectives on Women’s History,” in *Writing Women’s History* (Bloomington, IN, 1991), 1–23; on difference-based feminism in the German context, see Karin Hausen, “Öffentlichkeit und Privatheit: Gesellschaftspolitische Konstruktionen und die *Geschichte der Geschlechterbeziehungen*,” in *Frauen Geschichte-Geschlechtergeschichte*, eds. Karin Hausen and Heide Wunder (Frankfurt a.M., 1996), 81–88.
 12. HLA-BDF, Karton 49, Mappe 221, “Grundsätze und Forderungen der Frauenbewegung,” May 1907.
 13. HLA-BDF, Karton 54, Mappe 245, “Grundsätze und Forderungen der Frauenbewegung auf dem Gebiet der Ehe und Familie,” in *Grundsätze* 1912, 1.
 14. Pappritz, *Hinaus*, 4–6; emphasis in text.
 15. Carole Elizabeth Adams, *Women Clerks in Wilhelmine Germany* (New York, 1988), 96.
 16. HLA-Nachlass Anna Pappritz, Karton 1 Mappe 2. Anna Pappritz, “Frauenarbeit und Volkssittlichkeit,” *Volksgesundung durch Erziehung* 7 (1911): 2.
 17. Pappritz, *Hinaus*, 12.
 18. On the history of this process, see Patricia Mazón, *Gender and the Modern Research University: The Admission of Women to German Higher Education, 1865–1914* (Stanford, CA, 2003).
 19. Lange, *Education*, 121.
 20. Gertrud Bäumer, *Die Frau in Volkswirtschaft und Staatleben der Gegenwart* (Berlin, 1914), 162; quoted in Lange, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 118; Bäumer (1873–1954) was Lange’s life partner and chairperson of the BDF from 1910–1919, later serving as a representative of the DDP in the Weimar Reichstag; on Bäumer’s life and work as a reformer, see Kevin Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-Politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890–1914* (Cambridge, MA, 2000), 104–147.
 21. Salomon, “Zölibat,” 242.
 22. On the bourgeois orientation of *Die Gartenlaube*, see Kirsten Belgum, *Popularizing the Nation: Audience, Representation, and the Production of Identity*, in *Die Gartenlaube, 1853–1900* (Lincoln, NE, 1998).
 23. HLA-BDF, Karton 54, Mappe 245, BDF pamphlet “Was die Frauenbewegung für die Frauen will,” 1898; emphasis in text.
 24. Salomon, “Zölibat,” 242.
 25. Helene Lange, *Die Frauenbewegung in ihrer modernen Problemen* (Leipzig, 1908), 3.
 26. HLA-BDF, Karton 77, Mappe 310, Der Bund deutscher Frauenvereine, *Offiziellen Pressbericht über den Berliner Frauenkongress*, 27 February through 2 March 1912.

27. HLA-BDF, Karton 54, Mappe 245, Der Bund deutscher Frauenvereine, *Eine Darlegung seiner Aufgaben und Ziele und seiner bisherigen Entwicklung*, vol. 5, *Schriften des Bundes Deutscher Frauenvereine* (Frankenberg, 1900), 5–6.
28. *Ibid.*, 6.
29. BDF, “Pressbericht.” Marie Stritt (1855–1928) was chair of the BDF from 1899 to 1910; from 1911, she headed the *Verbandes für Frauenstimmrecht* (Association for Women’s Voting Rights); on Stritt’s contentious term as chairwoman of the BDF and her resignation as a result of the BDF’s rejection of the *Bund für Mutterschutz*’s application for membership, see Repp, *Reformers*, 124–126; for a recent biography of Stritt, see Elke Schüller, *Marie Stritt: Eine ‘kampffrohe Streiterin in der Frauenbewegung* (Königstein im Taunus, 2005).
30. BDF, “Was die Frauenbewegung.”
31. HLA-BDF, Karton 49, Mappe 219, Anna Pappritz, “Grundsätze und Forderungen der Frauenbewegung für die Erwerbstätigkeit der Frau,” in *Grundsätze und Forderungen der Frauenbewegung*, ed. Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine, special edition of vol. 1 (Berlin, 1912).
32. Pappritz, *Hinaus*, 6; emphasis in text.
33. Lange, *Frauenbewegung*, 6.
34. *Ibid.*, 11.
35. Salomon, “Zölibat,” 241; emphasis in text.
36. BDF, “Was die Frauenbewegung”; emphasis in text.
37. Salomon, “Zölibat,” 242.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*; emphasis in text.
40. BDF, “Grundsätze,” 1907.
41. BDF, “Was die Frauenbewegung.”
42. *Ibid.*
43. See Ute Planert, *Antifeminismus im Kaiserreich* (Göttingen, 1998), and Roger Chickering, “‘Casting their Gaze More Broadly’: Women’s Patriotic Activism in Imperial Germany,” *Past and Present* 118 (1988): 156–185.
44. G. von Beaulieu [pseud. Ulla Hirschfeld Wolff], “Die Vereinsdame,” in *Die Berlinerinnen* (Berlin, 1897), 318–336; Wolff (1850–1924) was a Jewish novelist and playwright, best known under the alias Ulrich Frank.
45. See chapter 1.
46. *Ibid.*, 330.
47. *Ibid.*, 329–330.
48. See chapter 2 for a sexological typology of the *Mannweib*, or virago.
49. Wolff, “Vereinsdame,” 330.
50. *Ibid.*, 331–332.
51. “From such a good family,” eliciting Gabriele Reuter’s novel; see chapter 1.
52. Wolff, “Vereinsdame,” 332–333.
53. *Ibid.*, 336.
54. Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890–1930* (Chicago, 2003), 56.
55. Ludwig Langemann, *Auf falschem Weg. Beiträge zur Kritik der radikalen Frauenbewegung* (Berlin, 1913), 2.
56. Cited in HLA, Papers of the BDF (hereafter HLA-BDF), Karton 13, Mappe 45, Maria Wendland, “Zur Frauenemanzipation,” *Bonner General Anzeiger*, 23 June 1912.
57. On Gnauck-Kühne, see chapter 8.
58. Ludwig Langemann, *Der Deutsche Bund zur Bekämpfung der Frauenemanzipation* (Berlin, 1913), 6.
59. Langemann, *Weg*, 8.
60. Eduard von Hartmann, “Die Jungfernfrage: Schluss,” in *Die Gegenwart* 35 (1891): 133.
61. Langemann, *Bund*, 10.

62. Langemann, *Weg*, 2–3; emphasis in text.
63. Langemann, *Bund*, 12; emphasis in text.
64. HLA-BDF, Karton 13, Mappe 45; cited in Marianne Weber, “Zur Frauenbewegung,” *Heidelberger Zeitung*, 10 December 1910; emphasis in text; Rüge’s comments reflect the deep strain of anti-Semitism in anti-feminist thought; see Planert, *Antifeminismus*, 93–96.
65. Allen, *Feminism* (1991), 189.
66. Langemann, *Bund*, 12.
67. See chapter 2.
68. Wendland, “*Frauenemanzipation*.”
69. Lange, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 29–30.
70. Bäumer, *Frau*, 162; cited in Lange, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 118.
71. On Reuter’s *Aus guter Familie*, see chapter 1.
72. Wendland, “*Frauenemanzipation*.”
73. Pappritz, “Frauenarbeit,” 1–2.
74. Helene Lange, *Die höhere Mädchenschule und ihre Bestimmung* (Berlin, 1881); cited in Lange, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 150–151.
75. *Cologne Gazette*, 14 October 1888; cited in Helene Lange, *Higher Education of Women in Europe*, trans. L.R. Klemm (New York, 1890), 183.
76. *Ibid.*, 183–185; emphasis in text.
77. See Conclusion.
78. Weber, *Frauenbewegung*; Marianne Weber (1870–1954) had a varied and important career in the moderate women’s movement; she wrote several books and articles on philosophy and sociology, and played an active role in the BDF, serving as its chair from 1919 to 1923; the wife (and cousin) of Max Weber, she is best known for her 1926 biography of her husband; for a discussion of Marianne Weber’s views on marriage in the context of the sexual reform movement, see Andrew Bonnell, “Robert Michels, Max Weber, and the Sexual Question,” *The European Legacy* 3(6) (1998): 98.
79. Weber, *Frauenbewegung*, emphasis in text.
80. Max Haushofer, “Die Ehefrage im Deutschen Reich,” in *Der Existenzkampf in modernen Leben*, ed. Gustav Dahms (Berlin, 1895), 63; quoted in Amy Hackett, “The Politics of Feminism in Wilhelmine Germany, 1890–1918” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1976), 41.
81. BDF, “Was die Frauenbewegung”; emphasis in text.
82. HLA-BDF, Karton 14, Mappe 45, “Für und wider die Frauen,” *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 27 June 1912.