PRESSING SOCIAL ORDERS

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European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 852205). This publication reflects only the author's view, and the Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

David Bebnowski: "Pressing Social Orders", in: Pierre-Héli Monot, David Bebnowski, Sakina Shakil Gröppmaier (eds.): *Activist Writing: History, Politics, Rhetoric*, Zürich: intercom Verlag (2024), 115–127.

PAMPHLETS – COUNTERPUBLICS

In 1848, a wave of revolutions swept through Europe. Beginning in France in February and spreading throughout Europe from March on, the revolutions carried with them a belief in the power of popular sovereignty and national citizenship. The uprisings opened up avenues for different disenfranchised groups to voice political demands. Discussions about belonging, participation, and the extension of citizenship rights emerged and put the focus on those who had formerly been excluded. Rippling across the Atlantic, the revolutionary wave also had an impact in the United States and reminded Americans of the ideals of their own revolution of 1776.[1]

During these years, the seeds of different movements started to sprout. Workers set up the early institutions of the labor movement, and abolitionism was given a boost. Notably, women were beginning to enter the public sphere as a self-conscious political group. In Germany and the United States, this entrance into the public arena of politics was marked by the fabrication and publication of two pamphlets. On May 20, 1848, at the height of the German revolution, the writer Louise Otto-Peters (1819-1895) published her *Address of a Girl* [German: "Adresse eines Mädchens," D.B.] simultaneously in different newspapers in the state of Saxony and paved the way for a first women's movement in Germany. Almost two months later, at the momentous Seneca Falls Convention, which ran from July 19 to 20, the *Declaration of Sentiments* was first read aloud and subsequently turned into a pamphlet. Mainly authored by Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), the document and the convention are commonly seen as the foundation of the women's movement in the United States.[2]

It is not surprising that these pamphlets were published at the height of the revolutions of 1848. Pamphlets draw on conflicts, articulate contention, and put forward divisive political claims, all in a spirit of total commitment that is contemptuous of the middle ground. Pamphlets address the public at large, but are not written in a bid to get a favorable reception from all who read them. On the contrary, pamphleteers know that their writing will polarize the public and they set out to antagonize people, thus deliberately creating or at least deepening rifts in the public sphere. In other words – and playing on the similarity between the printing press and pressure – pamphlets *press* social orders. They apply political pressure and offer ideas by means of which societies might be (re)formed.[3]

The *Address of a Girl* and the *Declaration of Sentiments* both featured these characteristics. However, the texts differed markedly in their style, demands, and

1 Timothy Mason Roberts: *Distant Revolutions: 1848 and the Challenge to American Exceptionalism*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press (2009).

2 Louise Otto-Peters: "Adresse eines Mädchens, an den hochverehrten Herrn Minister-Oberländer [1848]", in: *Frauenemanzipation im deutschen Vormärz: Texte und Dokumente*, ed. by Renate Möhrmann, Stuttgart: Reclam (1978), pp. 199–202; Elizabeth Cady Stanton: "Declaration of Sentiments [1848]", in: *National Park Service / The First Women's Rights Convention*, https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/declaration-of-sentiments.htm.

3 George Orwell, Reginald Reynolds (eds.): *British Pamphleteers, Vol. 1: From the Sixteenth Century to the French Revolution*, London: Allan Wingate (1948), pp. 7–18, Jason Peacey: *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, London, New York: Routledge (2016); Bernard Bailyn: *Pamphlets of the American Revolu-*

in the scope of their demands. Somewhat correspondingly, whereas the American women's movement immediately gained traction and was able to institutionalize itself, the German women's movement was stopped short by the state's reaction. In fact, if we consider the immediate repercussions of the *Address*, we might ask if the German pamphlet was successful at all.

By analysing these differences, my aim is to offer a conceptualization of the interplay between pressure and the press by means of a historical close reading of the pamphlets against the background of their respective locales and medial environments. This conceptualization will seek to differentiate between the resources, sources, and direction of pressure. First, as far as the resources of pressure are concerned, we need to identify the social forces exerting it. We have to turn inward and see pressure as a compressing force that consolidates collective actors. What kind of actors put forward pamphletary claims and reacted to the assertion of pressure? Regarding the sources, we need to interrogate the pamphlets on their content and their rhetorical force. What claims and argumentations were made and how were they presented in order to build pressure? Lastly, drawing on the antagonizing nature of pamphlets, with regard to the direction, we need to ask who the pressure was directed against. Who was the target of pamphletary accusations, and who did the authors think pressure needed to be exerted on?

It is by drawing on these important historical cases that I am able to empirically ground the theoretical argument at the core of this essay. I argue that the collectives that get mobilized by pamphlets and in turn apply pressure have to be regarded as counterpublics. The potential to mobilize counterpublics – or the lack thereof – can be seen as a condition of success for pamphletary claims and the formation of the women's movement. An analysis of the three dimensions of resource, source, and direction of pressure will help to explain the differences in content of the two pamphlets and these distinct dimensions will also offer insights into the different modes of reception in Germany and the United States.

RESOURCE

"As a critical term, [...] counterpublic signifies the collectives that emerge in the recognition of various exclusions from wider publics of potential participants, discourse topics, and speaking styles and the resolve that builds to overcome these

tion, Vol. I (1750–1765, Cambridge, MA: Belknap (1965); Karl Schottenloher: *Flugblatt und Zeitung: Von den Anfängen bis zum Jahre 1848*, Munich: Klinkhardt & Biermann (1985 [1922]); Daniel Bellingradt: *Flugpublizistik und Öffentlichkeit um 1700: Dynamiken, Akteure und Strukturen im urbanen Raum des Alten Reiches*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner (2011); Luc Boltanski: *On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation*, Cambridge: Polity Press (2011); Julian Hanna: *The Manifesto Handbook: 95 Theses on an Incendiary Form*, Alresford, Hampshire: Zero Books (2020); for an introduction to the relatedness of press and print in connection with the German term "Druck": David Bebnowski: "Mit Druckerzeugnissen Druck erzeugen: Flugschriften als Quellen für die Intellectual History der Neuen Linken als Konfliktgeschichte", in: *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 48/1 (2023), pp. 163–194; see also the working definition of pamphlets in the ERC project "The Arts of Autonomy", Pierre-Héli Monot: "Pamphlets", www.artsautonomy.net/research.

exclusions."[4] This quote by media theorist Robert Asen highlights the act of recognizing one's own exclusion from broader publics and the bid to overcome a feeling of marginalization as a collective effort. The seemingly inconspicuous act of recognizing demands closer attention, offering as it does an extension of theories of counterpublics. The problem with many such approaches, as Asen argues, lies in their focus on the objective fact of exclusion, which results in the ascribing of all too unifying identities to such counterpublics.

A description of the dynamics inherent to the creation of counterpublics demands an emphasizing of real, experienced history and the concrete motivations of people. Theories of the connection between pamphlets and its counterpublics must account for the more private notions of becoming aware of one's own exclusion as an individual. Reacting to this feeling is a precondition for joining forces with like-minded actors that effectively connects the most private spheres (mind) with more public ones (community, state/society).[5]

Pamphlets offer opportunities to study these dynamics of recognizing and organizing. Since counterpublics are also publics, their formation follows similar mechanisms. Pamphlets also address huge publics and the customarily noncommercially driven circulation that delivers them to their audiences lies beyond their control. Thus, the formation of counterpublics through pamphlets hinges on the susceptibility of their readers and offers a way to think about "popular philological" practices of reading and cognition.[6]

Michael Warner has theorized this mechanism by relying on Althusser's notion of "interpellation."[7] People feel spoken to by certain demands because certain predispositions make them responsive. This is exactly what recognizing an exclusion from the dominant public sphere means. An easily overlooked implication of this responsivity is that counterpublics are always in a sense already there and that they come into being under specific circumstances. In other words: counterpublics are not created, they get *mobilized*.

Counterpublics are a constant feature of feminist theory, often subverting male-centered distinctions between what is public and what is private. One such example is Nancy Fraser's oft-quoted concept of a "subaltern counterpublic sphere." According to Fraser, subordinated social groups in counterpublics generate counterdiscourses to the hegemonic public discourse. Even though they function independently of wider publics, their aim is to influence them. Seen in this light, counterpublics often serve as transmitters that strengthen certain standpoints and thereby enrich – and essentially democratize – public discourse in general.[8]

4 Robert Asen: "Seeking the 'Counter' in Counterpublics", in: *Communication Theory* 10/4 (2000), pp. 424–446, p. 438.

5 Mette Birkedal Bruun: "Towards an Approach to Early Modern Privacy: The Retirement of the Great Condé", in: *Early Modern Privacy: Sources and Approaches*, ed. by Michaël Green, Lars Cyril Nørgaard, Mette Birkedal Bruun, Leiden: Brill (2021), pp. 12–60.

6 See Pierre-Héli Monot's "Art, Autonomy, Philology: Research Parameters" in this volume.

7 Michael Warner: *Publics and Counterpublics*, New York: Zone Books (2002), p. 77.

8 Nancy Fraser: "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy", in: *Social Text* 25/26 (1990), pp. 56–80, pp. 67–68; for a discussion of

Such "spill overs"[9] into public discourse are the goal of every counterpublic discourse. They are a result of the assertion of pressure by counterpublics and the responsiveness of wider publics. The confrontational stands pamphlets take in order to influence public discourse can be seen as indicators of the tension between particularity and universality proceeding from antagonisms within the demos. Seen from this angle, pamphlets are often media that express the demands of those who are excluded from political representation.[10] The assertion of (feminist) pressure on the broader public discourse thus relies on the mobilization of a counterpublic that is based on politicizing tenable social conflicts. Both the *Address of a Girl* and the *Declaration of Sentiments* were attempts to publicize conflicts and demonstrate the structural and political advantages and disadvantages of mobilization.

SOURCE

"Every event in history has a beginning, a middle, and an end; it just depends on where you pick up the thread and what story you choose to tell."[11] This quote by historian Lori Ginzberg points to the perpetual quest for origin stories and the almost unattainable goal of singling out incidents that gave rise to the women's movements. In fact, women did engage in politics by petitioning or supporting related movements, and also by publishing politically inciting literature well before 1848. However, the draftings of the *Declaration of Sentiment*s[12] [in the following "*Declaration*"] and the *Address of a Girl* [in the following "*Address*"] claim central roles in the history of the women's movement in the United States and Germany. As short, poignant, and ultimately easily accessible texts, they provided an early basis for feminist argumentations that people were able to come back to. In this sense, the texts enabled an intergenerational "communication without those present" that regenerated the movement over time.[13]

multi-dimensional concepts of publics and "partial publics" as analogous concepts to counterpublics Elisabeth Klaus, Ricarda Drüeke (eds.): *Öffentlichkeiten und gesellschaftliche Aushandlungsprozesse: Theoretische Perspektiven und empirische Befunde*, Berlin: De Gruyter (2017).

9 Charles Taylor: *Philosophical Arguments*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1995), pp. 279–280.

10 Jacques Rancière: *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1999); in line with this thinking, Rita Felski, on whom Nancy Fraser's work draws, offers a much more poignant relationship between publics and "subaltern counterpublic spheres" Rita Felski: *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1989), p. 166.

11 Lori D. Ginzberg: *Untidy Origins: A Story of Women's Rights in Antebellum*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press (2005), p. 5.

12 Rudolf Schlögl: *Anwesende und Abwesende: Grundriss für eine Gesellschaftsgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit*, Paderborn: Konstanz University Press (2014).

13 For a critical discussion of the Declaration and the role of the Seneca Falls Convention, see Lisa Tetrault: *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848–1898*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press (2014); to gain an impression of the topicality of a pamphlet over a long period of time, see Pierre-Héli Monot: "The Book of Mozi: Chapter 39. 'Against the Confucians'", in: idem: *The Arts of Autonomy: A Living Anthology of Polemical Literature*, vol. 8, Munich (2023).

Drafted for the first Women's Rights Convention in the United States, the *Declaration* comprised lists of demands and resolutions much as other early feminist documents had done before it. What set the *Declaration* apart was its call for radical equality. Pointing toward the sources of pressure, the pamphlet voiced a combination of demands for universal suffrage, freedom to choose one's occupation, and female property rights. In addition, the document was resolute in style and rhetoric. Much of its power was derived from the decision to inscribe women into the "Declaration of Independence" of 1776. In doing so, the pamphlet followed in the footsteps of Olympe de Gouges' *Declaration of the Rights of Women*, which had been modeled on the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* of 1789. Especially within the revolutionary context of 1848, this outlining of disparities between men and women provided a formidable means of building pressure.

Regarding these characteristics, the familiar notion of "inscription" into history can be taken quite literally in the case of the Seneca Falls *Declaration*. Stanton and her co-authors adopted much of the preamble of the 1776 document while making small but decisive changes. In the second paragraph, the claim that all men were created equal was extended to include women, which made a big difference. Distinctly female demands were made manifest, signalling that women were no longer willing to be subsumed under the will of men. The last sentences of the preamble were subject to the most radical modifications and saw a transforming of the relationship between men and women into one of suppression and exploitation. The authors exchanged the political arena of formerly constitutional demands for questions of acknowledgement and followed up on this by replacing the source (King of Britain) and the object of oppression (states) with men and women:

> Such has been the patient sufferance of the *women under this government*, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand *the equal station to which they are entitled*. The *history of mankind* is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of *man toward woman*, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over *her*.[14]

The rhetorical brilliance of these maneuvers became apparent in the sixteen demands. Just as in the "Declaration of Independence," all of them began with the word "he" – which now meant that *all men* were accused indiscriminately. Thereby, without specifically mentioning the word, the *Declaration* outlined an early conceptualization of patriarchy. This willingness to antagonize readers gave the *Declaration* its pamphletary tone. The closing sentences made it clear that the authors were expecting to encounter hostility: The "great work before us" would be accompanied by "no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule." Having anticipated such rifts in the larger public, they aimed squarely at mobilizing a counterpublic. Ideally, the people who would gather to form this

14 Stanton: "Declaration of Sentiments [1848]". The italicized parts show the changes made to the *Declaration of Independence*. For a complete transcript of the latter, see: www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript.

resource of pressure would mostly be women, who were suffering under the "disenfranchisement of one-half the people of this country."

More than fifty years prior to the *Declaration*, the notion of an exclusion of half of the population from the public sphere had been popularized by Mary Wollstonecraft and other early feminists. It was also voiced in a similar way by Louise Otto-Peters in her *Address*. Scandalizing the race-to-the-bottom dynamics of wages under capitalist competition, she maintained that a raise in male wages alone would result in the "complete dependency" of women, who were largely not free to choose their occupation. Unavoidably, such a move would result in "declaring one half of mankind ["*Menschheit*," D.B.] as immature and as children."

To compare the foundational pamphlet of the American women's movement with the individually authored *Address* is to discover many differences. Louise Otto-Peters played on her social role as a woman to underline her commitment. As a well-known novelist and poet, she insisted that she had penned her request not in spite of being, but *because* she was a woman. The author described the lending of her voice to those who did not have sufficient courage to advocate for their own cause as her "holiest duty." Moreover, she concurred, albeit in a precautionary manner, that history "taught that those who forgot to think of their own rights were forgotten all together."

Otto-Peters' individual authorship as well as her confidence in being a voice for other women generated a pamphlet of a distinct format. The Saxon author drafted her text as an open letter, a form found throughout the history of pamphleteering. In fact, Émile Zola's *J'Accuse...!* (1898), one of the most influential pamphlets of all time, arguably marking the birth of the modern intellectual, was published in a newspaper as an open letter to the French president. Open letters have addressees and therefore clearly identify those who are responsible. And indeed this is exactly what the writer and poet had in mind with her *Address*.[15]

The main addressee of Otto-Peters' *Address* was the "esteemed minister [Martin, D.B.] Oberländer," who served as Minister of the Interior in the post-revolutionary liberal government in the German province of Saxony. Otto-Peters was thereby attempting to assert pressure on a political representative known to be sympathetic to social reforms aimed at ending the pauperization of large parts of the population. Aside from Oberländer, the document also called on the labor commission that had been installed by him as well as making a general appeal to "all workers." These addressees indicate that Otto-Peters was attempting to carve out a place for women in the labor movement that was about to take shape.

Just as the *Declaration* did, the *Address* expressed an astute sense of patriarchal domination that was supplemented with materialist criticism of conservative family models. After arguing that the working conditions of female workers were even worse than those of their male colleagues, Otto-Peters warned that the way out of this misery could not lie in an increase in male wages alone. This notion was expanded by the most polemical part of the *Address*, in which the early feminist

15 Pierre-Héli Monot: "Émile Zola: 'J'Accuse...!': A Commented Bilingual Edition, Including Contextual Sources and a Facsimile Copy of Émile Zola's Manuscript (Version 1.0)", in: idem: *The Arts of Autonomy: A Living Anthology of Polemical Literature*, vol. 1, Munich (2022), pp. 13–40.

argued in a materialist fashion that women would either marry and live unhappy lives with unhappy children or eventually resort to prostitution – which in turn meant binding women economically to the "vices of men" and further fostering their dependency.

But even if Otto-Peters drew conclusions that could be regarded as unnecessarily sexually explicit and imbued her reasoning with a confrontational edge, her pamphlet arrived at political conclusions that were decidedly tamer than those of the *Declaration*. Whereas the American women launched into a full-frontal attack on men and presented the authors as being prepared for strong reactions, Otto-Peters tried to win men over as allies. This writer made a concerted effort to forge a connection with organized labor, appealing to male workers to support her demands on rhetorical grounds: "... are these not your wives, sisters, mothers, and daughters, whose interests are to be protected just as well as yours?" Here, the source of pressure ultimately lay in *empathy*.

DIRECTION

The immediate local press coverage in the region surrounding Seneca Falls made it abundantly clear that the emerging reading public was indeed to develop in the highly antagonistic way that had been anticipated by the authors of the *Declaration*. Thus, the pressure extended outward in different directions and factionalized the public.

Many newspapers, along with those readers who had sent letters to their editors, wasted no time in rejecting the women's demands. The Rochester-based *Daily Advertiser* stated "no objections to a woman's *asserting* what her rights are, provided she stops there." The high-circulation *New York Herald* intuited that the women's demands would revolutionize society as a whole, and polemicized that "we do not see by what principle of right the angelic creatures could claim to compete" with men in different occupations. Others regarded the *Declaration* as the "most shocking and unnatural incident ever recorded in the history of women" or feared "the reign of petticoats." In at least one instance, Elizabeth Cady Stanton reacted staunchly against insinuations that the women's demands went against nature.[16]

These examples show that the women themselves were put under pressure by the male-dominated hegemonic public. As stated above, this sort of pressure has a part to play in the formation of counterpublics, in that it helps to consolidate collective actors. Referring back to the assumption that counterpublics are mobilized by drawing in those who already feel excluded and are able to identify with

16 See all these sources in: *Elizabeth Cady Stanton Papers: Miscellany, 1840-1946; Scrapbooks; #1, 2 of 4*, mss41210, box 9, prepared by Susan B. Anthony, Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, https://www.loc.gov/item/mss412100154; and *Elizabeth Cady Stanton Papers: Miscellany, 1840-1946; Scrapbooks; On the Woman's Rights Convention [1848]*, mss41210, box 9, prepared by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, https://www.loc.gov/item/mss412100152.

certain claims, we can also trace this process in the reactions to and the immediate history of publication of the *Declaration*.

Shortly after the convention at Seneca Falls, the *Declaration* was published in a report on the conference. This report was printed in the offices of the abolitionist newspaper *The North Star*, which was edited by Frederick Douglass in Rochester, New York. The former slave and public intellectual had also attended the meeting and was the likely author of an article on the convention.[17] This connection to the anti-slavery *North Star* underlines the fact that abolitionism and the political networks of abolitionists was a breeding ground for American feminism. Interestingly, the title "*Declaration of Sentiments*" had also served as the title of the 1833 founding manifesto of the American Anti-Slavery Society, which again demonstrates the way in which the *Declaration* set out to reappropriate history in order to further the political cause of women.

Other groups that were also advocating for abolitionism became avid supporters of women's rights. First and foremost, it was the religious minority of liberal Quakers that fueled abolitionism as well as the burgeoning women's movement. Aside from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, all the organizers of the Seneca Falls Convention were Quakers. In fact, it was a Quaker meeting close to Seneca Falls that had inspired Lucretia Mott to travel to upstate New York and reconvene with her long-time friend Stanton in order to plan the convention.[18]

It is worth noting that the coming together of these different progressive actors was no coincidence. In fact, the region of Seneca Falls provided fertile ground for the emerging women's movement. The Rochester area, in which the city was located, had been transformed into a bustling commercial region thanks to the building of the Erie Canal. Many people from the coastal cities of New York and Boston were drawn to this region that was to become a home for reformers. One of them was Elizabeth Cady Stanton, accompanying her husband, who was running as a candidate for the newly founded Free Soil Party. Another was Frederick Douglass, who, at the beginning of 1848, had set himself up in Rochester and started to publish *The North Star*.[19] At Stanton's request, this influential intellectual had attended the meeting and, thanks to an impassioned speech, had pushed through the resolution for universal suffrage that was deemed too radical by some attendees.

These findings demonstrate that intersectionality was an important factor in the development of feminism from the early stages on. At a time when women's positions in virtually all aspects of social life were subordinated to men,

17 *Elizabeth Cady Stanton Papers: Miscellany, 1840-1946; Scrapbooks; #1, 2 of 4*, mss41210, box 9, prepared by Susan B. Anthony, Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, https://www.loc.gov/item/mss4121100154; and *Elizabeth Cady Stanton Papers: Miscellany, 1840-1946; Scrapbooks; On the Woman's Rights Convention [1848]*, mss41210, box 9, prepared by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, https://www.loc.gov/item/mss4121100152.

18 On the background of the draftees and the meeting: Judith Wellman: *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman's Rights Convention*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press (2004), pp. 183–208.

19 Waldo E. Martin: *The Mind of Frederick Douglass*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press (1984), p. 15.

accounts of other subordinated social groups standing up against these injustices provided opportunities for women to criticize their own oppression as unjust. Unfortunately, this insight receded in at least some parts of the U.S. movement, as it increasingly began to focus on white middle-class women.[20]

Intersectionality, albeit of a different order, was also at the center of Louise Otto-Peters' *Address*. Whereas in the United States, racial conflicts and abolitionism served as stepping stones for the movement, in Germany it was class relations and the labor movement that played a similar role.[21]

Since workers – many of them women – had revolted in the textile mills of Silesia in 1844, the years leading up to the unsuccessful revolution of 1848 in the German lands had seen intense debates pertaining to the "social question." Living in Meissen, in the heart of the rapidly industrializing regions on the border between Saxony and Silesia, Otto-Peters had been part of these discussions. Many of her writings, such as the 1846 novel *Castle and Factory*, commented on the untenable working conditions of textile workers in Silesia and Saxony. Once her 1847 poems had catapulted her into the limelight, the *Address* constituted what was the apex of the writer's politico-intellectual interventions until that point.

At the end of the document, the author demonstrated that she was well aware of the connection between pressure and the press when she wrote that the press would be the only means by which she would be able to have an "effect on the common" ["*Wirkung für das Allgemeine*," D.B.]. Many newspapers in Saxony fulfilled Otto-Peters' wish that the pamphlet be reprinted for the sake of the "good cause." Underscoring the connection to labor, the writer had also approached her local newspaper, the *Meissener Wochenblatt* ["Meissen Weekly"], the *Saechsische Vaterlandsblätter*, founded by revolutionary Robert Blum, and the Leipzig-based *Arbeiter-Zeitung* ["Worker's Newspaper"], the very first labor newspaper in the German lands, in a bid to have her pamphlet published. Well received among women, who were approaching Otto-Peters on the street, it might be said that the attempt to target them with the *Address* was successful. The author was also was invited to meet with the minister she had addressed.[22]

The *Address*, however, did not provoke a debate comparable to that caused by the *Declaration*. The German publications were of use in that they infiltrated the public and dispersed the message. At the same time, all of these newspaper publishers were based either in Saxony or in Leipzig. This is illustrative of the differences in the German and American cases and their respective public spheres with regard to size and shape as well as political customs.

20 Estelle B. Freedman: *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*, New York: Ballantine Books (2003), pp. 78–79.

21 Myra Marx Ferree: *Feminismen: Die deutsche Frauenbewegung in globaler Perspektive*, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung (2019), p. 50.

22 Beyond these three newspapers, the *Address* was republished in at least three others: the *Leipziger Zeitung* (28 May 1848), *Der Volksfreund* in the Saxon city of Rochlitz (7 June 1848), and the journal *Freikugeln* (30 May 1848), which was based in Leipzig. I retrieved the information on the publication history of the document from Constanze Mudra at the Louise Otto-Peters Gesellschaft in Leipzig (via email, 28 August and 1 September 2022). For Otto-Peters' own account see: Louise Otto-Peters: "Selbsterlebtes: Skizzen aus Haus und Welt [1880-1890]", in: *Digitales Deutsches Frauenarchiv*, Digitalisat 7, https://www.digitales-deutsches-frauenarchiv.de, pp. 26–30.

Whereas on the North American continent thirty states had by then merged into a single nation, the German revolution of 1848 marked an attempt to bring such a state into existence. Whereas Stanton and her collaborators were able to address women across the entire nation, Otto-Peters' appeals were restricted to the much smaller confines of the Kingdom of Saxony. Her appeal to the Minister of the Interior and to the masses of workers in Saxony went as far as it was possible to get. Limited to these addressees, the public that was able to form by virtue of the pamphlet was decisively smaller than the actual audience convened by the *Declaration*.

Moreover, suspiciously omitted from the *Address* was the central feature that the *Declaration* had become famous for: the call to give the vote to women. For German women at that time, however, this demand was barely within the realm of possibility. In spite of declaring their intention of introducing democratic procedures at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the German states never did so. Even though demanding the vote was central to the German revolution of 1848, it took until the 1890s for the German women's movement to demand universal suffrage. Louise Otto-Peters was no exception to this rule. Further, the emphasis laid by the *Address* on a modicum of material security for women can be seen as an attempt to attain social participation through financial gains rather than any formal principle of equal political rights. The pamphlet actually expressed a desire for economic independence – a core value of the bourgeoisie.

With regard to the scope of the readership, it is worth mentioning one crucial aspect of pamphleteering. Revolutions in general, and indeed the American Revolution in particular, can be considered golden periods of pamphleteering that result in floods of "counterpublic literature."[23] Thus, while pamphleteering in the United States had become a cornerstone of democracy and civil society, comparable literary-activist phenomena were scarcely to be found in Germany.

Ultimately, the *Address* was part of the short-lived revolutionary period between the 1848 revolution and the restoration of the German Confederation in 1849. It was only at that time, when the bourgeoisie was vehemently pressing for political change, which also encompassed the freedom of the press, that a considerable number of pamphlets vying for social change emerged in the German states. Only then was it possible for female writers to openly break into the public sphere.

Even during this time, women were subject to censorship laws within the German states. Different women's newspapers founded by activists such as Louise Aston, Mathilda Franziska Anneke, and Louise Dittmar were shut down after printing only a few issues. Louise Otto-Peters' own paper, the *Frauen-Zeitung* [*Women's Newspaper*], established in 1849 and published in Leipzig, was the longest-running of them all, although remaining in print for just three years. In 1853, however, the state of Saxony issued a law that prohibited women from

23 Michael Warner: *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1990), p. 26.

serving as editors – this targeted Otto-Peters specifically, as she was the only woman to work in this capacity.[24]

VOICE

The similarities and many differences between the *Declaration of Sentiments* and the *Address of a Girl* underline the connection between pressure and the press. However, they also make it clear that social orders can only be subjected to pressure when the public sphere allows arguments to be evoked freely, as those who recognize their social marginalization need to be summoned and brought together. Only then can counterpublics form and exert pressure on societal structures.

Pamphlets and their impact on the public can be used as keys to unlock and contextualize historical conflicts and help us broaden our understanding of the material conditions for contentious politics. Whereas the *Declaration* was able to mobilize a counterpublic almost immediately and proved to be key in igniting a feminist movement, the formation of a feminist counterpublic by means of the *Address* in Germany proved to be far more difficult.

The reasons for these differences lie in their widely diverging political environments and traditions. The United States had been a democracy for over seventy years and pamphleteering was deeply interwoven with the civic traditions of the country. Germany, by contrast, was an authoritarian amalgamation of smaller states under absolutist rule. While the timing of the publication of both pamphlets in 1848 points toward the connection between pamphleteering and revolutionary times, the fact that Louise Otto-Peters drafted her letter during the revolutionary interregnum points to the idea that some political liberties and lifted restrictions need to be in place in order to successfully "pamphleteer." And so the history of both pamphlets demonstrates the threat that a free public sphere posed for authoritarian states and underlines just how crucial the free circulation of ideas was for pressing social orders.

Aside from these differences, both cases suggest that the counterpublics mobilized by the pamphlets, or those intended to be mobilized, revealed a considerable overlap with already existing counterpublics. Whereas in the United States the abolitionist movement provided a framework through which to transmit feminist demands, in Germany the early labor movement played a comparable role. At its very inception, therefore, the women's movement was displaying considerable intersectionality with other oppressed groups – a fact that should be remembered in times of intensely fought and divisive cultural wars.

The material fabric of the societies and political structures was imprinted on the pamphlets. This also extends to the style of the pamphlets. The degree of polemicity in the case of the American *Declaration* was higher than the timid appeal to authority of the *Address*. It is tempting to interpret these differences as an

24 Ute Gerhard: *Frauenbewegung und Feminismus: Eine Geschichte seit 1789*, Munich: C.H. Beck (2020), p. 35, 43.

expression of what we perceive to be a distinctly American brand of trust in freedom and a comparatively high democratic self-consciousness. Read in this light, the exaggerated reaction of the state of Saxony to Otto-Peters' demands proved that the reticence she exhibited in her open letter was not unfounded.

With regard to the creation of knowledge in feminist counterpublics, both pamphlets present us with clear analyses of male domination. They demonstrate that an understanding of gendered power structures prefigured notions of patriarchy that became commonplace with the feminist "second wave" of the 1970s. However, the manifold delineations between different stages in the development of feminism point toward the need for contextualization when it comes to specific historical conflicts. Pamphlets can be used as tools that do just that. By defining pamphleteering as an activity that is principally defined by its function of applying pressure and not merely by a certain medial format, analyses can easily extend into the digital publics of today.