Schwarz Rot Gold is the New Black
The Production of Patriotism in German Fashion
- The Case of Eva Gronbach

Magister thesis
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Abstract

This thesis is a theoretically guided empirical discussion of fashion and its role within the production of national identity in Germany. In recent years, a new patriotism in contemporary German fashion could be observed, starting with the fashion designer Eva Gronbach in 2001. I will approach the term patriotism with the aid of one of Michel Foucault’s key terms, the notion of the episteme. In my case study, singular fashion images from three consecutive collections by Gronbach are examined with regard to their role in the discourse of German patriotism. But I am not only interested in the “how” of this discourse. Building up upon Antonio Gramsci’s notion of “cultural hegemony”, I also explain the recent rise of this fashion patriotism. Thus, my discourse analysis of Gronbach’s fashion becomes embedded in social struggles and transformations in Germany. Argueing that fashion is a discursive practice that can show up as well as promote changes in discursive formations, I assume a dialectical structure-agency conception: On the one hand the case of Gronbach hints at the deeper structural problematic of patriotism and social cohesion which allowed Gronbach to become popular. On the other hand, this structure is also produced via discursive practices such as Gronbach’s. The what I term “inclusionary patriotism” comprises cultural normalisation. Thus, the case of Gronbach demonstrates a “constrained heterogeneity” with regard to the discourse of patriotism in Germany, in which diversity is only acceptable within certain discursively constructed limits.

Keywords: fashion, fashion image, visual representation, patriotism, discourse, discourse analysis, discursive formation, discursive practice, episteme, cultural hegemony, national identity, Germany, constrained heterogeneity
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I. Introduction

I.1. Topic

This thesis is concerned with contemporary fashion collections and their relation to the discourse of national identity in Germany. In my case study I will focus on fashion images from the collections of the designer Eva Gronbach and how they visually represent and construct national identity. The Historian Mary Fullbrook notes that:

National identity is – always and everywhere – a social, cultural and most of all a political construction, and as such is essentially contested. It should not be reified as a reality floating somehow above the maelstrom of political debate and struggle, or the clash of competing moral values. Collective identities are malleable and constantly changing according to experience and circumstances (Fullbrook 1999).

Thus, national identity is discursively constructed and has an important political dimension. But national identity is not only produced within political or media discourses. Also everyday practices such as pop culture and fashion play an important role in the production of national identity.

Since the beginning of the 2000s, a wave of attributes considered as German has become visible in German fashion collections. Some young designers use traditional folk costume as sources of inspiration and modernise it. The cashmere Dirndl by Antonia Zander (2007/2008) can serve as an example of this. Others employ a more mythical-romantic approach: The models wearing fashion by Blutsgeschwister (Blood-siblings) often look like figures from a fairytale by the Gebrüder Grimm (Brothers Grimm). The designers of Maegde und Knechte (Maidens and Menials) print little German poems on their pieces, whereas Frank Leder approaches German history in a critical way involving topics that are otherwise often ignored in fashion and pop culture such as student unions or hinterland culture.1

Looking at for instance British fashion, a thematisation of national identity in fashion collections is nothing new.2 But in Germany things are different: After the Holocaust and Hitler’s conception of a “racially pure” ethnic community, German national identity is a highly sensitive topic. In the following I will refer to this new trend as fashion patriotism. The term patriotism is here employed in a descriptive,

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1 I see Leder’s unique strategy as critique through over-identification. In his fashion images he thematises the rather problematic aspects of „Germaness“ such as philistine hinterlanders or right-wing student unions in a way that is so bold and exaggerated that it is pure irony again. Due to the limited scopes of this thesis it cannot be explored here, but certainly bears fruitful material for future studies on German fashion.

2 Already since the 1970s British fashion designers are pre-occupied with national identity. The Union Jack printed “Anarchy in the UK” shirt from the Seditionaries Collection from 1977/1987 by Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren can serve as an example for this. The preoccupation with British national identity took on an intensified form in the 1990s as for instance many collections of Vivienne Westwood and Alexander Mc Queen demonstrate. (e.g. McQueen’s Highland Rape (spring/ summer 1995) is preoccupied with the “rape” of Scotland by the British, whereas Vivienne Westwood in her collection On Liberty (autumn/ winter 1994/1995) focuses on British riding and hunting traditions.
rather than normative way. It serves to classify the new search for national identity in fashion. The related term nationalism, on the other hand, must not be confused with patriotism. But this will be discussed later. For now it is enough to clarify that I here use the two terms in two different ways.

The most important actor in this fashion patriotism is certainly the designer Eva Gronbach: Gronbach prints national symbols on shirts, skirts and dresses and lets her models stroll down the catwalks in the German national colours. With her diploma collection Déclaration d’amour à l’Allemagne from 2001 she was the first designer who dared to focus on German national identity.\(^3\) Thereby, she was able to make “Germanness” her own trademark. This is already embodied in her logo, which consists of a stamp displaying her name and the Imperial German Eagle (image 1).

![Image 1: Gronbach logo](image1.png)

Gronbach herself states that her collections are a form of “soul transformation, a healing process” regarding her own German heritage (Gronbach 2009). Dissatisfied with Germany, she had left the country to study in Belgium, where she developed a new “tender longing” towards her homecountry that she wanted to explore in her creations. Moreover, she had been intrigued by the taboo to express German patriotism. According to Gronbach, “fashion in all its superficiality and ephemerality is the perfect material. Fashion is always political. Fashion is always a statement, either a concession or a rejection, but there is no beyond fashion” (Gronbach 2009). Regarding the fact that Germany still in many countries is reduced to its Third Reich history, Gronbach’s collections can be seen as the creation of a more positively connotated picture of her homecountry. Gronbach rejected “old, negative connotated terms such as “German pride” in favour for “soft, loving expressions” (Gronbach 2009). However, my analysis is not concerned with an interpretation of Gronbach’s personal intentions, rather, her collections are examined with regard to their role within the broader discourse of German patriotism.

The way Gronbach thematises “Germanness” in her consecutive collections from 2001 to 2003 is increasingly bold and provocative: in her first collection, Déclaration d’amour à l’Allemagne (2001), she

\(^3\) Earlier, there have been only singular tendencies, e.g. in the field of the fashion press: Already since the end of the 1990s, and in an intensified form since 2003, a range of new German fashion magazines emerged. German-titled magazines such as “Achtung” (Attention), “Deutsch” (German), “Blond”, or “Liebling” (Darling) can serve as examples for the backturn to a local wording and picture language.
focused on national identity in a still very subtle way: although the collection has been photographed in the German embassy in Brussels, there are only some hints clearly indicating a thematisation of Germany. Rather than employing national attributes in the fashion pieces themselves, “Germanness” is mostly represented through the chosen background and the colour schemes: On one picture a model is posing in front of the German flag (image 2), another one shows a model in front of a photography of Johannes Rau, the then Federal President (image 3).

The fashion pieces themselves display very soft colours such as pink, beige, mixed with grey or black. Soft are also the chosen fabrics: felt and fur is combined with clean jersey and flowing tulls. Regarding the colour language of the overall pictures, there is a soft mix of recurring black, golden and pink shades. (Red is only used as lipstick). Thus, a rather soft new image of Germany is drawn. Also some prints give references to Germany, but in a very decent way: For instance a felt mini skirt is imprinted with the slogan “Die verlorene Ehre” (the lost honour), a reference to Heinrich Böll’s novel Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum (1974), which tells the story of a respectable woman that becomes object of the yellow press due to her connection to a criminal. In a similar way Germany has fallen from grace through the Holocaust.

One year later, Gronbach reworked this collection to make it popular in her homecountry. Indeed, her resulting second collection, Liebeserklärung an Deutschland (2002), could gain some attention from the German fashion press. This collection has been photographed in the old German chancellor’s office in Bonn, but it was still rather subtle as the pieces themselves mostly display a pure black and white colour scheme, as well as the play with transparent layers and naked skin underneath.
In 2003 Gronbach became so popular that she has been broadly featured also in German mainstream newspapers, and invited to discussions about national identity in political talkshows. Thereby, she reached popularity among broader strata of the German population. In her “big break-collection” *Mutter Erde Vater Land* (2003), she used the national attributes in a very bold way: Complete Sweaters in the German national colours and boldly printed shirts and skirts with her Imperial Eagle logo and the slogans “Schwarz Rot Gelb” (black red yellow) or “Mutter Erde Vater Land” (mother earth father land) can serve as examples for this (e.g. image 4 & 5).

In 2004 and the two following years, the search for national identity has been still very present in the German media. However, in fashion it took on a different form, that, again, becomes most clear by looking at Gronbach’s collections: Since 2004, rather than displaying German patriotism in general (such as employing national colours and symbols), Gronbach now focuses on more specific subtopics that relate to Germany. For instance *My new police dress uniform* (2004/05) is a transfer of the bold national attributes employed in Mutter Erde Vater Land to a new topic, the German police (image 6).4

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4 It has to be clarified that this is a fashion collection and has never been worn by the police.
Later collections focus for instance on the disintegrating German coal mining industry, *(Glück auf, 2005 and Glück auf 2006)*, German and international surveillance politics *(My file, 2005/2006)*, the global violation of human rights as for instance in the US-prison camp in Guantanamo Bay *(the sacrosanct, 2006/2007)*, or the German cabaret artist Karl Valentin *(Zu Ehren von Karl Valentin, 2007)*. Regarding the use of national attributes in the actual fashion pieces, these more recent collections become more and more subtle again. In 2008 Gronbach also designed the corporate uniform of the European high-speed train Thalys, which is worn by the staff since January 2009 *(image 7)*.⁵

However, the term fashion is in this thesis treated in a two-fold way, that is, not merely with regard to clothing-fashion, but also in the broader sense of an overall fashion that involves all sorts of pop culture.⁶ In 2003 the search for “Germanness” had permeated the whole range of popular

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⁵ Although also Gronbach’s later collections certainly bear interesting material for scholars that are interested in German fashion, due to the limited scopes of this thesis they cannot be explored in more detail here.

⁶ The American fashion sociologist Yuniya Kawamura distinguishes between clothing (the actual, tangible garment) and fashion (an intangible idea, a symbolic product). With respect to the term fashion she draws a second subdivision between fashion as an overall concept that can occur in all aspects of social life (and is not bound to the actual fashion sector) and clothing-fashion, that is, an abstract idea that relates to concrete fashion phenomena such as garments or
culture. Lots of German bands started to sing in German and in their lyrics called for “a new German pride”, a range of cinema movies and books covered the topic of history in a new way that involved a narration of the Nazi-perspective “from the inside”, whereas “Young German Art” currently is very successful on the international art market.

Thus, among other pop cultural disciplines the concrete field of fashion design is only one aspect of the overall new search for national identity in German pop culture. Yet, it is a crucial one as the new pop patriotism became first of all visible in Gronbach’s diploma collection *Déclaration d’amour à l’Allemagne* (2001). Thus, Gronbach’s patriotic fashion has been roughly two years ahead of the general pop patriotism.

My argument is that fashion is a discursive practice that can mark transitions within broader social and political discourses, but at the same time can also promote them. In the last years I observed a patriotic turn that now takes part also within the overall media and everyday discourse on national identity within Germany. For instance in 2009 we face a strong media discourse focusing on the 60 years jubilee of the German Bundesrepublik in a rather soft, patriotic way. This has not been the case in 1999 when Germany became 50 years old, which would have been a “rounder anniversary”. This discursive transformation in fact started with Gronbach’s collection from 2001. Hence, the German patriotic turn took part first of all in clothing fashion (since 2001), then in popculture (since 2003), and last but not least also in the contemporary media as well as in everyday discourse. Thus, I argue that the discursive turn to German patriotism in fashion has been like a “dry run” for the broader public discourse on that topic.7

Fashion is here seen in relation to the broader discourse of national identity in Germany. Due to its easy accessibility and high distribution in the population the discipline of fashion bears great material for the analysis of social and political discourses. It is often argued that fashion reflects the beliefs of the society and epoch it derives from (e.g. Vinken 2004, Wilson 2007), that it acts out its repressed desires and fears (Evans 2007 and even excels in anticipating the future (Lehmann 2000, Benjamin 2002). But fashion is more than a mere indicator of social streams and tendencies.

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7 This is not meant in an intentionalistic way. Rather, through a turn in the fashion discourse, German patriotism becomes naturalised and thus, also more acceptable within related broader discourses.
8 The British fashion theorist Elizabeth Wilson argues that fashion is a modern phenomenon that is intrinsically connected with the birth of capitalism. The Frankfurt School theorist Walter Benjamin in his Arcades Project also sees fashion as a phenomenon situated in the modern city. Barbara Vinken, a contemporary German fashion scholar, shows how fashion trends are informed by cyclical revivals of past styles. Her colleague Ulrich Lehmann argues that fashion creates a changing present by constantly leaping back into the past. This concept is borrowed from Benjamin’s “tiger’s leap”. The British fashion scholar Caroline Evans also draws heavily on Benjamin, arguing that what has been repressed by Enlightenment’s rationality and other modern phenomena came back in the form of “haunting”, that is,
Rather, it takes on an active role within the latters: Eva Gronbach’s increasingly provocative collections from 2002 and 2003 constitute a turning point regarding the discourse on national identity in Germany. They had their own impact on this discourse as the (media-) debates they caused smoothed the way for other designers and popcultural actors to focus on “Germanness”, so that since 2003 the expression of a patriotic feeling for Germany became more and more acceptable, also in general public discourse.

Although there is a growing literature that argues for the importance of scholarly research of fashion, in the academic world as well as in public discourse, more often fashion is still rejected as vulgar or unimportant. It is argued that fashion is superficial and therefore cannot be taken seriously. But it is just the ongoing underestimation of this field that also opens up great possibilities for the analysis of (not only) contemporary discourses: Because fashion is not taken seriously, this field enjoys a certain discursive freedom. Due to its playful character, fashion can act out things that are not “sayable” within “serious” political and media discourses, because these are strictly regulated by, for instance, “political correctness”. For a long time, expressing patriotic sentiments for Germany in the political and media discourse has been problematic. Thus, utterances that did not correspond to this discourse regulations have been sanctioned. But patriotism has been acceptable in fashion, because in this field discourses are not as strictly regulated as in others.10

Thus, fashion inhabits a crucial role within social and political discourses. To oppose the rather crude crypto-moralist perspective of fashion as a form of “false consciousness” (e.g. Baudrillard), in recent fashion theory there is a tendency to emphasise the consumer’s potential of agency and “free choice” in the field of fashion. (e.g. Kawamura 2006).12 This argument is ambitious in arguing for fashion studies, a field that in fact has long been ignored and underrated. On the other hand this argumentation easily tends to disembed fashion phenomena from their material reality.

Discourses that become visible in fashion relate to historical processes and are involved in

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9 To some extent the same is valid for popular culture. But the discursive freedom (clothing-) fashion enjoys is probably greater than that within other popular cultural disciplines. The fact that the first tendencies towards the new popular cultural search for national identity in Germany became visible in the field of fashion and the distinctness this discourse took on in this field hints at this.

10 This is not supposed to mean that fashion is a discourse regulatory-free zone. Rather, fashion is not as strictly regulated as other fields and therefore lends itself to display shifts and tendencies within general discourses before they can occur in other fields of social life.

11 Crypto-moralist means a hidden, rather than an explicit moralist position. To assume that there is a false consciousness also implies that there would be a true nature of the human being from which it is alienated through e.g. capitalism.

12 Yuniya Kawamura makes a point that Japanese teenage consumers of fashion whose own created styles in recent years have been adopted by the fashion industry all over the world have become the new producers of fashion. But her argument is unbalanced. Kawamura is so ambitious in emphasising the consumer’s active role in creating new styles that she ignores that regarding social power structures this potential is in fact a very limited one.
social struggles. The British Visual Culture theorist Malcolm Barnard argues that fashion is a form of nonverbal communication that on the ideological level maintains and legitimates social power relations:

That is, fashion and clothing are ways in which inequalities of social and economic status are made to appear right and legitimate, and therefore acceptable, not only to those in positions of dominance, but also to those in positions of subservience. The term used to describe this situation is ‘hegemony’ (Barnard 2008: 42).

Barnard does not forget to underline that fashion and dress, at the same time, can also challenge and resist existing power relations. According to Barnard, a specific dress or fashion can even simultaneously maintain and contest existing power relations.¹³ For instance on one image from Déclaration d’amour à l’Allemagne the model poses in front of a photography of Johannes Rau, former German Federal Chancellor. The photo is situated, slightly higher than the model’s head, on the white wall behind the model. It seems as if Rau, representing political power, protects her in a fatherly and good-willing way (image 3). On the other hand the stiff way the model stands in front of the photography of the German politician and her empty, almost liveless, facial expression also contains a certain amount of irony: Standing stiffly in her enormous grey felt coat she looks as stiff as the frame of the photo of Rau, which is also grey, a colour that is commonly associated with accuracy and bureaucracy. Hence, surprisingly enough, fashion as a discursive (and material) practice excels in both, the legitimation and contestation of social power relations. Fashion is no political void. But the fact that it is held for one bears, from an analytical perspective, the advantage that fashion to some degree becomes free of discourse-regulation, and then it excels in marking transitions of broader political discourses. These discourses, expressed in fashion or in other parts of social life, always also have to be seen in the context of social power relations, which they can naturalise or contest.

I here assume a dialectical relationship between structure and agency with regard to fashion: the broader patriotic revival here forms the deeper structure that produces and enables the fashion patriotism, which in return reacts on the patriotic structure and reproduces it (via singular acts of agency). Only ten years later, after the fashion discourse, the patriotism also involved the media and political discourse. Thus, fashion is both: a seismograph with regard to social and political discourse transformations and a discursive practice that actively plays its own part within these broader discourses.

¹³ Barnard gives the example of high heels that at the same time can be a shackle and a liberation, because, put very simply, meaning is never fixed but always context-dependent (Barnard 2008: 42pp).
I.2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

In this work, fashion is seen on two different levels of abstraction: On the highest level of abstraction the term fashion serves to name the overall phenomenon of the new patriotism in German pop culture. It is plain to see that the new German pop patriotism is a broader fashion that needs to be explained. Before this discourse started, a patriotic feeling towards Germany was hardly ever thematised in German popular culture (since roughly 1968). I therefore assume that the new search for national identity in pop culture must be seen in relation to historical and contemporary social and political events and tendencies in Germany. Therefore, on the first level of my analysis I want to find out how the new popular cultural patriotism relates to social struggles and political events in Germany.

Second, on the more concrete level of my analysis the focus shall be explicitly on singular, exemplary images from Gronbach’s earlier fashion collections, and their role within the discourse of national identity in Germany.

RQ I
How do social struggles and recent events relate to the rise of the new patriotism in German pop culture (as an overall fashion)?

From this research question I draw the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis I

The new patriotism in German pop culture counters symptoms of social disintegration in Germany. Patriotism works to unify people on the ideological level and thus stabilise the social formation. Gronbach’s playful way of thematising German national identity makes a patriotic sentiment more acceptable. Thus, fashion can naturalise German patriotism. Thereby, those strata of the German population that are consuming fashion and popular culture (and this also includes consuming fashion images, reading articles about Gronbach, and watching political talkshows to which she has been invited) become consensually re-integrated.\textsuperscript{14}

RQ II
How is the new fashion patriotism produced and reproduced in Gronbach’s collections and in what

\textsuperscript{14} This does not mean that fashion is \textit{strategically} employed for hegemonic stabilisation. Rather, from the variety of existing discourses, those that fit best into the existing relations of domination are selected and stabilised. Karl Marx also describes how certain social relations are produced and maintained “behind the backs” of the actors.
way does the way of its production change from 2001 until 2003?

From this research question I draw the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis II
The new patriotic pop discourse started in 2001 with Gronbach’s collections and increased in intensity and popularity until its climax in 2003. By then, the new patriotism had involved the whole range of German popular culture. At the same time Gronbach’s works reached their highest degree of distribution within the German media and population. Thus, broader strata of the German society could be consensually re-integrated through Gronbach’s fashion patriotism. This second hypothesis thus builds up on the first one, as the ideological re-integration through fashion is also connected with social struggles in Germany. I here assume that the way patriotism is produced changes within Gronbach’s collections from 2001 until 2003. In my case study I will analyse in what way this change takes place concretely.

So I will not merely ask how but also why this phenomenon became visible. Thus, a pure discourse analysis is insufficient. To explain the new search for national identity in German fashion the influence of social struggles on the phenomenon has to be explored.

1.3. Objectives

With this thesis I aim at a theoretical discussion of fashion. In this respect fashion will not only be discussed in my concrete case study on Gronbach’s fashion images, but also throughout the rather abstract previous chapters. Thereby, I focus on fashion’s role as a discursive practice within the broader discourse on German national identity. With this in mind I will approach the notion of patriotism with the aid of one of the key terms by Michel Foucault. Thus, the case of Gronbach is employed as a material, and the used theories as tools to build up upon my own theoretical implications about fashion.

1.4. Motivation and Contribution to Fashion Studies

The new search for national identity in contemporary fashion and popular culture has not been analysed yet. Unfortunately, in Germany the fields of popular culture and fashion are still widely

15 In fact, I could only find one earlier essay about Gronbach, written by the German fashion theorist Ingrid Loschek
ignored within scientific research. As neither the phenomenon nor the material at hands has been analysed yet, my study can offer interesting and fruitful insights into the construction of national identity in Germany, and the role contemporary fashion plays in it. Moreover, fashion as a popular cultural discipline is easily accessible and widely spread among diverse stratum of the population. Therefore, instead of focusing on elitist circles of society a discourse analysis of fashion images makes it possible to take into account also how the discourse of national identity relates to some stratum of the population to which the consumption of for instance art or “high culture” is not accessible. Especially in 2003 Gronbach has been broadly featured within the German mainstream media. Her fashion images thus have been spread not only among fashion insider circles.

Fashion Studies is an interdisciplinary discipline and offers a variety of different possibilities to approach a specific topic. However, my angle is a critical one, which also takes into account social struggles that are often ignored within the field of fashion studies. For that purpose my theoretical-methodological combination of discourse analysis (by Michel Foucault) with critical theory (by Antonio Gramsci) is fruitful and original: Rather than merely analysing the “how”, also the “why” of the alternation of discourses can be explored. Still rather rare in the field of social sciences it is an approach that offers great possibilities as for instance the works of Fairclough, Sum 2006, Griesser / Ludwig 2008 and Adolphs / Karakayali 2007 demonstrate. This study shows how this critical discourse analysis (CDA) can be made accessible for the field of fashion studies. My theoretical-methodological model can be used as a framework to analyse fashion images with respect to discursive transformations. Thus, my

for the online pages of the German cultural institution Goethe Institut (Loschek 2006). But this essay treats fashion in a journalistic rather than academic way, that is, Loschek describes and classifies instead of analyses Gronbach’s collections.

However, it is important to mention that the new patriotism is not a unique German phenomenon. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union it was roughly at the same time that for instance a new national discourse turned up in the Eastern European countries. But not only Eastern Europe, also Western and Northern European countries are becoming increasingsy racist and nationalist. In recent years national populist parties have even joined governmental coalitions in several European states. Nationalisms are often covered by patriotism. Patriotism is a term that is more acceptable as will be clarified in the next chapter. Nationalism (and patriotism) thus is a pan-European or even international trend. Hence although in this study I focus on Germany I might come to conclusions that may bear also a certain validity and relevance on a broader European or even international scale.

The British Linguist Norman Fairclough is one of the main figures within the school of critical discourse analysis that developed in the 1990s in Lancaster. After the linguistic turn in social science in the 1980s Fairclough argues that language is the main means to create and maintain social power relations, not merely on the discursive but also on the material level. Hence, he combines French discourse analysis with critical theory and thus, contributes to a more balanced approach to language. The Cultural Political Economist Ngai Ling Sum (also part of the Lancaster School) combines Foucault and Gramsci to develop a critical approach that goes beyond the scopes of the nation state towards an Neo-Gramscian integration of the international economic order. She advances Gramsci’s notion of the “integral state” (civil society and political society) to the “Integral World Economic Order” (production order and civil society) which is stabilised by the “intermeshing of hegemony of production and production of hegemony” (Sum 2006: 1-2) on a global scale. Also in recent German theory Foucault and Gramsci have been mixed in a fruitful way: Griesser and Ludwig identify several important overlappings between hegemony-theory and the governmentality approach, whereas Adolphs and Karakayali combine the Gramscian and neo-Gramscian terms passive revolution (Gramscian) and counter hegemony (neo-Gramscian) with Foucault’s theory of governmentality to find out to what extend the term hegemony is still valid today.

In this study I focus on discursive transformations with respect to national identity in Germany, but my theoretical-
contribution is not only empirical but also theoretical.

I.5. Sources

The sources I use are pictures I got by Eva Gronbach herself as well as additional images I downloaded from her homepage, which she explicitly permitted. Three of Gronbach’s collections are cornerstones within the changing patriotism in contemporary German fashion: *Déclaration d’amour à l’Allemagne* (2001), *Liebeserklärung an Deutschland* (Déclaration of love to Germany, 2002) and *Mutter Erde Vater Land* (mother earth father land, 2003). I chose one image per collection that I consider the most representative for each collection.

One problem of my analysis is that this choice as well as the whole process of interpretation is subjective, although I try to be as reflective as possible with regard to my own author position. This is a general problem of discourse analysis, according to a post-positivist science comprehension as a fashion scholar I am myself part of the discourse.

I see the images as representations and constructions of German national identity, and I will critically discuss their aesthetics. Although I think that fashion shows provide fruitful material regarding national identity as well I will not focus on them in this work because in contrast to fashion images (which have been widely spread within the German media) they are only accessible to a very limited audience.

Further, I give some references to newspaper interviews with Gronbach. I also myself conducted an interview with her in May 2009, from which I quote excerpts. This interview has been conducted in German; a transcript basing on my personal notes is attached.

I.6. Structure

In the second chapter some terms and definitions shall be given, with a focus on the distinction of the two terms patriotism and nationalism and their implications for my theoretical discussion of fashion. In the third chapter my theoretical-methodological model will be developed, consisting of a combination of Foucault and Gramsci on the theoretical level, operationalised for Gronbach’s fashion images with a discourse-analytical method. The fourth chapter builds up on the theory, giving an historical overview of German patriotism and nationalism and situating my analysis in its historical and social context. First, I will focus on the broader history of nationalism and sum up the scholarly research on this topic I consider as the most important for this thesis. Then, I will concentrate on the history of German patriotism and the methodological model might be applicable also for a host of other issues in identity politics.
discourse on “Germanness” within Germany from the German Kaiserreich until today. This also includes the recent rise of the new patriotism in fashion and pop culture and its relation to social struggles in Germany. The fifth chapter consists of my case study, a concrete analysis of singular fashion images, embedding them in the broader process of production and distribution of national identity in the different collections and the social context of this process. Last but not least, in Chapter six some conclusions shall be drawn.

Thus, all in all, I will work from the abstract to the concrete and back to the abstract. The rather abstract first chapters are followed by a concrete case study in chapter five. In the next steps, the results from the analysis of fashion images are contextualised and historicised.

II. Terms and Definitions

The notion of nationality always is an idealistic category because there are no biological or physical features that define nationality. Nationality therefore only exists in an “imagined” way (Anderson 2006). Nationality is constituted by the sharing of a common life-world. The term life-world refers to a pre-scientific experience of community, which can express itself in, for example, a common language and culture. Although the term nationality can be treated in a scientific manner, it is pre-scientific in nature as it is based on a certain shared experience of being. By referring to this pre-scientific experience the organisation of political communities becomes possible.

Speaking on a very abstract level the nation is always constituted through the use of common signs. National symbols have a double-function: they are not merely means to create an imagined community inwards, but also express the sovereignty of the state outwards. The common sign system enables the emergence of a national hegemony. On the other hand, the national sign system can take on a discourse-regulatory function: as a certain “regime of truth” it determines which utterances are acceptable and which are not. Those who do not conform to the rules imposed by the nation discourse are sanctioned. Fashion as a discursive practise is involved in these ongoing discursive processes. But as I have argued fashion enjoys a certain freedom from discourse-regulation, and thus can act out new tendencies in the general discourse on national identity earlier than other parts of social life.

Nationality as an experience of being has to be distinguished from nationalism as a political movement. Nationalism is the prime tool to create an “imagined community” and to allow it to act as a

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19 This is also a combination of the two different styles of work of Foucault and Gramsci: Foucault, who focuses on the micropractices of power, that is, put very simply, the power relations within everyday life (and thus, mainly works from the concrete to the abstract) is already often used in recent fashion theory. In contrast Gramsci, whose theories are (among the Frankfurt School) one of the main influences on the works of the Birmingham school of Cultural Studies (e.g. Hall), is still often ignored in the field of Fashion Studies. Contrasting Foucault, Gramsci concentrates on the macropractices of power. In this respect he rather works from the abstract to the concrete.
Nationalism always aims at the creation or preservation of a nation. It is directed both inwards and outwards: a projection of sovereignty outwards, the creation of a more or less homogenous population inwards. It is thus a genuine political movement.

The material I am about to examine here does not have an explicit political agenda (Petersen 2004). Thus, it rather operates on a more emotional level of discursive identity formation. But these discourses over collective identity do not have an explicit outwards-dimension: the relation to other nations and the sovereignty of the nation-state is of no concern to them.

Nationalisms are, due to their external dimension, potentially conflictory, since they are based on the idea of the superiority of one nation over the other. Patriotisms, on the other hand, are mutually compatible since they are based on the “contentness” of one nation with itself. Implicitly, patriotism does of course include the supposed necessity to defend one’s fatherland against threats from the outside. But it does not include the idea of an autonomous political entity endowed with prerogatives over the interests of other nations.

Patriotism is not the same as nationalism: it means a love of one’s native country and a willingness to sacrifice oneself to defend it, but it need not invoke the idea of a self-conscious nation (…), nor need it imply that the country in question should enjoy political self-determination (Craig 1998: 658).

Patriotism is thus understood as an apolitical, inwards-directed principle for organising autonomous human communities. It is thus a way of seeing and understanding the social world, and of making sense of social relations. It is a glue which can keep human communities from fragmenting into an anarchic individualism. Patriotism thus is also a socio-cognitive mechanism, which is one way of allowing human societies to be constructed.

Patriotism is socially more acceptable than nationalism. No German fashion designer could possibly succeed with an artistic message, which posits the superiority of the German nation-state over other nation-states. Thus, patriotism can be defined as the idea of complacency and relative homogeneity of a society, which does not suppose an intrinsic superiority over other such societies.

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20 Nationalism is essentially based on an existentialist and communitarian understanding of politics, the idea of a subconscious and prescientific understanding of a community delimited from other communities. Politically left theorists have historically utilised a similar idea in the notion of “solidarity”. Thus the primary difference between these political camps is the physical borders of solidarity: a limited community for conservatives, a universal community for socialist theorists. The former emphasis the role of language and limited cultural customs; the latter employ an anthropological universalism.
III. Theory and Methodology

I combine a two-layered theoretical model with a discourse analytical method. In my case study I will do a discourse analysis of single fashion images to find out how national symbols are employed within these pictures and how their visual representation changes between 2001 and 2003. But as I want to analyse the “how” and the “why” of the contemporary discursive transformation of the patriotism discourse in German fashion, a pure Foucauldian discourse analytical approach is insufficient. Therefore, the method must be embedded within the wider context of social struggles. For that purpose, my theoretical model combines two different theories, which will be discussed in the following.

Foucault defines discourses as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 1972: 49). According to Foucault, discourses are governed by epistemes, which are epistemological paradigms.

By episteme, we mean, in fact, the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems; the way in which, in each of these discursive formations, the transitions to epistemologization, scientificity, and formalization are situated and operate; the distribution of these thresholds, which may coincide, be subordinated to one another, or be separated by shifts in time; the lateral relations that may exist between epistemological figures or sciences in so far as they belong to neighbouring, but distinct, discursive practices. (Foucault 1972: 191)

Only via these discursive formations can we produce knowledge of the world (which is, of course, historically specific). Epistemes thus structure our experiences. Similar to Thomas Kuhn’s theory of the “structure of scientific revolutions”, Foucault assumes an iterative process of different modes of thought.21 According to him, knowledge and the way knowledge is produced, is governed by certain rules. These rules sometimes form an organic and structured whole, which is when we speak of epistemes.

I consider patriotism as an episteme. Patriotism can be interpreted as a certain mental and epistemological framework for making sense of the world, a “mental map”. It structures discourses and plays an important role in subjectivation-processes, since it divides the world into those, which belong to an imagined community, and those who do not. As Foucault states, the process by which individuals become subjects is contingent on discourses (and later, during his genealogical period, on Power/Knowledge). For example, in Madness and Civilisation, Foucault describes the discursive formation of the psychopathological subject. The “madman” is produced through discourses. These discourses are not

21 The US-American Science Historian Thomas Kuhn helped me with understanding Foucault as Kuhn’s notion of paradigm is quite similar to Foucault’s episteme: Both assume an iterative process of different modes of thought. But whereas Foucault focuses on diverse processes of subjectivization, Kuhn concentrates on scientific paradigms.
fixed but change, and with them also the way the psychopathological subject is produced changes. The great ruptures in the discourses about madness mark the points where one episteme disintegrates and another one begins (Foucault 2001).

In a similar manner does patriotism as an episteme work towards the constitution of subjectivity. During the heyday of nationalism in the early twentieth century, patriotism pervaded all aspects of culture and science. Before the catastrophes of 1914-1945 (and partially also during this period), it was predominantly connected with concepts of progress, development and unity. In Germany, a certain romantic and heroic patriotism was to be found in all displays of popular culture at the beginning of the twentieth century.

I assume that since 1968 this episteme of patriotism has entered into a crisis. The catastrophes of 1914 - 1945 cast a damp over nationalism, a term that is since then inextricably linked with war and cruelty. But in Germany due to its historical role also patriotism as the counterpart of nationalism is since then problematic. Thus, patriotism as a mode of thought cannot function anymore as a coherent tool to make sense of the world. Therefore roughly from 1968 until 1989 all debates in the German political and public sphere (except from the debates on the far-right) have been subject to strict anti-nationalist discourse-politics that also contain an anti-patriotic dimension. However, between 1945 and 1968, things have been somewhat different: After World War II Germany became quickly politically rehabilitated within Europe, and the issue of nationalism and its unsavoury consequences have been mostly concealed by the German elites. Thus, since 1968 the episteme of patriotism in Germany has entered a crisis. The formerly nationalistic episteme of patriotism was altered by a rather anti-nationalist discursive formation that has been active roughly from 1968 until 1989.

But since the beginning of the 2000s, a patriotic revival was to be found that became visible first of all in German fashion and pop culture. In recent years also the German political and media discourse is permeated with new questions for German national identity, from diverse political positions. Thus, the current episteme is fragmented and incoherent: On the one hand the patriotic recourse to “Germanness” can be seen as an attempt to use a traditional instrument for making sense of the world. On the other hand this instrument is crisis-prone and does not work in a coherent way as it used to once. Today, patriotism as a mode of thought is more complex and crisis-prone than ever. Neither is it coherently linked with progress and unity (as it used to during the heydays of nationalism and patriotism), nor is it rejected in public discourse in a more or less coherent way (as it used to from 1968 until 1989) or simply ignored.

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22 Until the present day in German media discourse and everyday linguistic use, the term nationalism has a strong negative connotation and is mostly rejected in favour of its more positive connotated counterpart patriotism. Even nationalist groups on the far-right often prefer to speak of patriotism instead nationalism with the purpose to make their racist beliefs appear more acceptable.

23 But this strict anti-nationalist phase only started with the 1968-debates and the big coalition since 1969 in which the Social Democratic Party commissioned the new Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt in Germany. For instance Brandt’s genuflection of Warsaw in 1970 in front of the memorial of the ghetto riot is an important symbolical gesture.
In this work, fashion is being understood as a discursive practice. In this way, it can be seen as playing a role in the formation of subjectivity. The fashion-discourse analysed here is governed by the (contemporary) episteme of patriotism. This is not a matter of simple subsumption. Rather, fashion can critically relate to the (old) nationalistic episteme. For instance the models posing for the collection *My new police dress uniform* (2004/05) visibly have different skin colours and ethnical backgrounds (image 6). Thus, in Gronbach’s fashion patriotism a “racial” exclusive conception of German national identity is refused in favour of an inclusive one.

Fashion, in all its ambiguity, displays the fragmentation of the contemporary episteme. I show that fashion is a field that bears a certain resistance to discourse-regulations, and therefore makes visible new discursive tendencies within a society before they show up in other fields of social life. Embedded in the Foucauldian discourse analysis, the results of my analysis of fashion images are thus a seismograph for contemporary transitions in the discourse of national identity in Germany. They show how the episteme of patriotism, if we still can speak of one, is formed today.

Foucault does not focus on historical processes of transformation. Discourses are not explicitly rooted in historic processes. For instance, in *The Order of Things* Foucault describes iterative epistemes, which take on a life on their own and are not rooted in material structures and processes. Foucault for example does not show how the invention of the printing press might have influenced the formation of discourses. In short, Foucault tends towards a disembedding of discourses. Thus in his archeological method, Foucault examines how epistemes alternate but he does not offer an explanation for this alternation. Therefore, to work towards my first research question, the “why” of the new patriotism in contemporary German fashion, a pure discourse analysis is insufficient.

Foucault unfortunately does not deliver a theory of epistemic transformations. Thus the recourse to Gramsci is very fruitful, because this combination can explain phenomena of stability, transition and crisis. When an episteme disintegrates and no new episteme has yet emerged, an epistemological and discursive crisis ensues.

Gramsci’s historic bloc is a concept similar to Marx’ concept of “social formation”, although more historically specific. A historic bloc is a stable mode of social development.\(^\text{24}\) Gramsci draws a distinction between the direct domination through the institutions of political society (for instance law, police, military) and the indirect consensual integration by civil society (family, school, trade unions, media et al.). Coercion is the institutionalised form of power that originates in the “political society”. Hegemony,

on the other hand, for Gramsci takes part within the cultural institutions of “civil society”. A historic bloc is thus reproduced by hegemony and coercion.

Gramsci developed the Leninist model of political hegemony into “cultural hegemony”. Gramsci’s notion of cultural hegemony can be applied to all cultural institutions and products and is therefore of more interest here than coercion. Hegemony refers to a mode of societalisation through the naturalisation and universalisation of particularist ideologies: It is “a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity and in all manifestations of individual and collective life” (Gramsci 1971: 328). It is thus a certain world-view in people’s heads that is produced and reproduced through all forms of social practices.

Two of Gronbach’s collections have been photographed in governmental buildings: Déclaration d’amour à l’Allemagne (2001) in the German embassy in Brussels, Liebeserklärung an Deutschland (2002) in the old Federal Chancellor’s office in Bonn and in a third she thematises another institution of political society, the police (My new police uniform, 2004/05). This implies a certain romantisation of political power. But the thematisation of political society in fashion, that is, a part of civil society, also leaves space for irony: For instance in one image from Liebeserklärung an Deutschland a model sits in a conservative-looking conference room, wearing only a white blazer and a traditional Burschenschaftler-Mütze (student unions’ cap) in the German national colours, looking straight into the camera (image 8). Student unions are traditionally exclusive for men, a women wearing this accessory in the bold national colours thus is an ironical reference to this masculine hegemonic tradition and challenges it.
Like patriotism (and the new fashion patriotism is here seen as a hegemonic tendency) hegemony functions as a social “glue” through which diverse strataums of society can be (re-) integrated. Hegemony thus prevents society from falling apart. According to Gramsci the less it is possible to re-integrate the subaltern group into society through material concessions, the more important becomes hegemony, that is a consensual integration on the ideological level.

The new hegemonic tendency that Gronbach’s fashion patriotism produces and reproduces is based on the ideological common-sense assumption that a German patriotism should be acceptable again after the years of shame since 1968. Thus, Gronbach’s collections challenge the strictly regulated overall discourse on German national identity, but they also naturalise the new patriotic sentiment towards Germany.

In the same example the model has her finger on a cancellation button, just about to press, a clear hint to power. But the straight and stiff way she sits seems like an ironisation of this power, a winking reference to the cliché of German stiffness and bureaucracy. This is what post-Gramsician theorists name counter-hegemony, the subaltern answer to the hegemonic group (e.g. Adolphs / Karakayli 2007).\(^{25}\) The play between hegemony and counter-hegemony is also expressed in the ambitiousness of fashion: On the one hand Gronbach only became that popular because her work fitted in the hegemonic structure of the new pop patriotism. On the other hand the image shows that within this hegemonic structure there is also room for agency, that is, a critical and ironic self-reflection of this deeper structure.

Both a hegemonically structured historic bloc and an episteme imply a certain discursive and epistemological order. Cultural hegemony implies a certain order of discourse in which the particular interests of a certain group or class become universalised. Both concepts imply a certain ordering of human experience, although, unlike Gramsci, the archaeological method does not explicitly focus on power relations. They also imply that our knowledge of the world and of society is always historically and socially specific and epistemologically filtered and restructured. Thus, the discursive formations of patriotism themselves are situated within specific historic blocs.

\(^{25}\) The counter-hegemon offers a politico-ethical program opposed to that of the hegemonic group.
Theoretical model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Epistemes of patriotism (own interpretation for Germany)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>episteme I: radicalising nationalistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. anti-nationalistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. new pop patriotism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gramscian historic blocs (interpretation: Cox 1987)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. liberal world order (1648-1866)</th>
<th>II. rivalising empires (1880-1945)</th>
<th>III. pax americana US-american world hegemony (since 1945)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1789</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>1871</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hence, I will employ Gramsci to embed the Foucauldian discourse analysis historically and materially. This is very important because rather than just describing the contemporary episteme of patriotism, I also want to find an explanation for the new search for national identity in contemporary fashion and popular culture. This becomes possible with the aid of Gramsci as his theory enables an integration of national and international social and political influences on the new popcultural patriotism in Germany.

I have introduced my theoretical model as a two-layered one, but thereby no layer shall be prioritised. My model can also be imagined as a picture: Foucault concentrates on the inside, on the micropractices of discourse, and Gramsci forms the frame: the embedding of the discourse analysis in historical processes and the macropractices of power.

In this thesis Foucault is not only applied on the theoretical level, but also used as a method. As Neumann argues, discourse analysis is a method that combines an analysis of the linguistic and the material (Neumann: 2000). Here, the linguistic refers to texts and the material to social contexts. The British linguist Norman Fairclough marks out two problems with classical Foucauldian discourse analysis: First, the lack of concrete analysis of practice, that is, the analysis of concrete instances of texts in Foucault’s work tends to an ignorance of diversity in discourses and fails to explain resistance and discursive transformations (Fairclough 1992). Second, the Foucauldian discourse analysis tends to a disembedding of discourses from their social reality. Thus, Fairclough corresponds with what I already said above. To reintegrate texts and other elements of social practice in a dialectical way, Fairclough, heavily drawing on Foucault and Gramsci, proposes a model of critical discourse analysis as a method to analyse concrete texts embedded in their social context. He sees text in its broadest sense, which also
includes visual representations (Fairclough 1992:28).26

Methodological model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context (social conditions of the production of German national identity in fashion)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction (process of production of German national identity in fashion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text (fashion images)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: based on Fairclough (1992: 25)

Thus, complementary to Foucault, I apply Fairclough empirically: First, on the level of text, I will describe and interprete one fashion image representatively for each of the chosen collections. Thereby, the images shall be analysed with regard to how they produce German national identity, in what way political power is visually represented and which role irony and ambiguity play in them. This analysis will be structured by the different components of the pictures: the actual represented fashion pieces, accessories, models/styling and the chosen background/ location. Second, on the level of interaction, this analysis is contextualised into the broader process of production of national identity in Gronbach’s fashion: the different ways to produce German patriotism in the different images will be compared with each other and put into the context of distribution of Gronbach’s consecutive collections. Third, on the level of context, this analysis will be eventually embedded in the social conditions of the production of German national identity in fashion, that is, social struggles and events influencing Gronbach’s fashion patriotism. But, rather than separating the second and the third level of analysis, I will integrate them into one single step of analysis. Thus, a higher degree of proximity between the fashion discourse and its social conditions will be achieved.

Therefore, before I start with the case study, the historical context of German nationalism and patriotism must be clarified in the following chapter.

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26 The work of the French semiotician Roland Barthes also corresponds with this broader notion of text, as Barthes in his extensive writings on fashion focuses on both fashion images and the corresponding descriptions from fashion magazines. He demonstrates how certain images convey a certain national “myth”, which replaces, for him, the concept of ideology. (Barthes 1972:142) He describes how the connotation of a specific denotation becomes naturalised in order to fix the cultural meaning of certain symbols. The denotation also masks the connotation. (Barthes 1977:51) Thus meaning is brought in “through the back-door”. Thus a seemingly innocuous symbol can function as a Trojan horse for a specific meaning.
IV. Historical Context
IV.1. The History of Nationalism and Patriotism

Nationalism (and parallel to it also patriotism) is one of the most important influences on European history of the nineteenth and twentieth century. It emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century in Europe and spread in the course of the nineteenth century. The formation of modern national states was intrinsically connected to the birth of democracy. Nationalism strongly relates to the French Revolution from 1789 that popularised the idea of a sovereignty of the people.

The formation of nation-states altered the formally feudal system, ruled by kings and feudal lords. Through nationalism more and more people became connected to each other in an imagined way. With the rise of the nation state a form of group belonging originated that went beyond the scopes of face-to-face interaction. Thus, through the idea of the nation state an increasing number of people could be subjected to power. According to Max Weber the modern state is subject to a triple-determination, as it combines a territory, a people and a centralised monopoly of violence (Weber 2006: 657pp). Michel Foucault also writes about the formation of the modern nation. According to him, the sovereignty over a territory as the primal expression of power was replaced in the eighteenth century by a rule over a population. This complex form of power that alternated the rather subsumptive power of sovereignty is basically what Foucault names governmentality (Foucault 2009). Nationalism (and patriotism) can arouse strong feelings of solidarity and social cohesion. Because it conveys this strong feeling of group belonging, it promises sameness through unity – and within this unity the participation in power (Jeismann/ Ritter 1993: 22p)

Nationalism is also intrinsically connected to the birth of the capitalist world system. The anthropologist Ernest Gellner locates the emergence of nationalism in the turn from the agrarian to the industrialised era. According to him it was not until the crossing to capitalist industry society that a homogenous culture evolved that permeates and defines the whole of society (Gellner 1983).

Gronbach also gives a range of references to historical events that relate to diverse international nationalisms and patriotism: In Déclaration d’amour à l’Allemagne (2001) a model is photographed in front of the German flag; the way she poses reminds strongly of paintings displaying the French revolution (see case study).

In Liebeserklärung an Deutschland (2002) a model displays the classical Napoléon pose (see case study), the hairstyle of another one reminds of representations of the French national heroine Jeanne d’arc (image 9). In the same collection the way fur is employed as one of the key fabrics reminds of the fashion at the time of the Russian revolution, another signifier for a patriotic sentiment that is linked with unity and progress (e.g. image 10).
IV.2. Nationalism and Patriotism in Germany

The formation of a German nation was on the agenda since the revolution of 1848. Still, a de facto German nation was not founded until the foundation of the Kaiserrreich of 1871. Before the outbreak of World War I strong national sentiments prevailed in Germany. As World War I was looming over the horizon this national sentiment degraded into militarism and chauvinism. The first German republic was declared in 1919 with Friedrich Ebert as president. The resulting Weimar Republic was a very fragile construction due to conflicts between the conservative elites and social democracy and socialist groupings oriented towards soviet Russia. The old elites preferred a constitutional monarchy whereas the groups left of the social democracy preferred a soviet style Räterepublik. The German social democracy took a position in between these two.

In the view of conservative and militarist elites, the German army was “undefeated in the field” and was brought down by treason at the homefront (“Dolchstoßlegende”). This referred to the minimal anti-war movement in Germany and was a powerful tool for discrediting the political opponent.

Between the two wars the flames of chauvinist nationalism were fueled by economic crisis. On 30 January 1933 Hitler was elected Reichskanzler. In Germany this is conveniently called “Machtergreifung” (grasp for power), which neglects the fact that Hitler enjoyed considerable support by

\[27\] I would define chauvinism here as a political attitude that despises the out-group.
the population and several political parties. Hitler’s coming to power would not have been possible without the treaty of Versailles. After World War I Versailles was a symbol of “national shame” as it implied a peace on the victors’ conditions. Thus there was a considerable contradiction between the chauvinist nationalism and feeling of superiority that had built up since the beginning of the twentieth century, and the humiliation of Versailles. Hitler’s new nationalism also had a very strong anti-communist component. The thread posed by the German communists to the stability of Germany was employed by Hitler to rally the Germans under the umbrella of power. It is interesting that Gronbach in her first collection, *Déclaration de l’amour à l’Allemagne* (2001) used the colour red, which is commonly associated with Communism only as lipstick (or in the German flag in the background), whereas black and golden are lavishly used for the actual fashion pieces. Only in one picture the model wears a pink dress, but even this pink is mixed with white through the vichy checks pattern and it is covered by a transparent lace of tull (image 11). Thus, red can only be used together with white, a signifier of innocence. Of course a comparison of Gronbach’s patriotism with Hitler’s nationalism is out of place here, but it seems that Gronbach, although I would situate her rather on the moderate left of the political spectrum, distances herself from far-left tendencies in this collection. Foucault also writes that not only the things that are said, but also the things that are not said, and how this silence is distributed, have to be taken into account within discourse analysis (Foucault 1978: 27). Thus, references to class struggles and the far-left are sanctioned by the deeper structure of the current episteme and cannot be acted out within Gronbach’s fashion patriotism.

![Image 11](image11.jpg)

Image 11 (Déclaration d’amour à l’Allemagne)
German nationalism from the beginning of the twentieth century until 1945 took on a racist form. In this respect it greatly diverged from the nationalism of the late nineteenth century. Since although German nationalism from 1871 until the beginning of the twentieth century had a paternal form it was nevertheless organised around granting social rights and formal equality to an “imagined community”.28 In this regard great advances were made in the German welfare system under Bismarck. The process of industrialisation during the nineteenth century which e.g. Marx and Engels describe had caused great social distortions up to this point. The idea of Bismarckian nationalism sought to alleviate this problem. Thus the early phase of German nationalism under Bismarck was especially oriented towards the inside of the nation to work against social disintegration, whereas since the beginning of the twentieth century nationalism took on an aggressive form that was mostly oriented towards the outside, descending into racism and the notion of the superiority of the “Aryan race”.29 Nevertheless, Bismarckian nationalism also had an external dimension and an explicit political agenda and is therefore classified here as nationalism, rather than patriotism.30

After World War II, German nationalism was obviously discredited although many former Nazis were granted high positions within the new Federal Republic.31 This problem was not restricted to the Federal Republic of Germany as it also extended to the GDR.32 Since 1945 the discourse about German nationalism was connected with the so-called “Schlussstrich-Debatte”. This debate revolves around right-wing actors denouncing German political culture for being “obsessed with guilt” (“Schuldkult”). They demand that an end should be put to the discussion about German responsibilities in World War II and in the Holocaust. On the other end of the spectrum there are far-left groups whose political world-view is largely based on the phrase “Deutschland, halt’s Maul!” (Germany, shut up!). These groups formed their

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28 I would define paternalism as a form of social organisation with strict hierarchies and the duty of the elites to care for the subaltern to a certain extent.

29 The term “race” can only be refered to as an imagination as biological studies have shown that hardly any genetical differences exist between for instance Asian, black and white people. It is often refered to to naturalise these imagined racial differences, a process that often takes on a devaluating or marginalising form. For instance Hitler tried to “prove” anthropological differences between the different “races” with measurements of head sizes. Therefore I use this term only with quotation marks. Further in this context it is interesting that in right discourses in Germany „racial” differences have been substituted by “cultural differences”. For instance regarding migration politics the attempts to reduce migration of Turkish people in Germany is nowadays justified by “cultural differences” rather than “racial differences” because the latter is not “sayable” anymore.

30 The external dimension of Bismarckian nationalism showed itself in the Franco-German war of 1871 and the German colonisation of parts of Afrika. Also internally Bismarckian nationalism was socially contested.

31 This includes politicians with a Nazi-background like Hans Globke (state secretary of chancellor Konrad Adenauer 1953-1963), Hans Filbinger (chief minister of Baden-Württemberg 1966-1978 and Bundesratspräsident 1973-1974), Kurt Georg Kiesinger (chancellor 1966-1969) and Theodor Oberländer (federal minister for expellees, refugees and war-damaged 1953-1960). There were also many leading jurists which had tried to obtain juridical legitimacy for the NS-regime but remained unharmed after World War II such as Theodor Mauoz (leading professor of constitutional law and Bavarian minister of cultural affairs 1957-1964), legal philosopher Karl Larenz, and the civil rights lawyers Ernst Forsthoff, Herbert Krüger and Carl Schmitt. Other figures include Reinhardt Gehlen, first president of the German Federal Intelligence Service, and the philosopher Martin Heidegger.

32 For many decades the GDR saw itself as being based on a strict anti-fascist foundation. But in recent times in the German media there is a strong discourse arguing that this was not the case.
anti-national consensus largely after Germany’s involvement in the Yugoslavia-war in the 1990s, echoing the phrase by Willy Brandt “Never again shall war emerge from German soil”.33

First tendencies of a new German patriotism turned up more or less simultaneously with the “Wende” (turnaround) in 1989. But these tendencies focused on the population, and avoided direct patriotic terms referring to the German nation.34 Maybe it started already with the chanting of “We are the people“ at the Monday demonstrations in the former GDR, which then, shortly before the unification, changed into “We are one people“ (Weisbrod 1996). In 1999, the year of the 50th anniversary of the German Bundesrepublik, a patriotic media discourse on that occasion had not been possible, after the Yugoslavia-war it would have seemed somewhat misplaced. One could also embed this phenomenon in a wider discourse of patriotisms in Europe, of which, for instance, the Eastern European social movements (after the disintegration of the soviet social model) were an example.

Not only nationalism, also patriotism is an efficient tool to unify people. In the context of the social disintegration processes that took part in Germany the huge social marketing campaign “Du bist Deutschland!“ (You are Germany) can be seen as an attempt to counteract against this loss of social cohesion. It started in 2005 and was displayed on billboards and in newspapers. The highly controversial social marketing campaign has been brought forth by 25 important media companies and the Bertelsmann AG, a think tank of the German capital, with the aim to “encourage positive thinking and a new German national sentiment“. This marketing campaign has been highly controversial and a lot of ironic pranks referred to it. Another marketing campagne, the “Initiative Deutschland – Land der Ideen” (Initiative Germany – country of ideas), aiming at “the establishment of a positive image of Germany domestically and abroad” started on the occasion of the men’s soccer world championship in 2006. This peacefully running event had taken place in Germany and caused a great patriotic sentiment in this country. The Initiative Deutschland is a co-operation of the government and the German economy, represented by the Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (federal association of German industry) under the patronage of Federal President Horst Köhler. Both campaigns show how the political middle tries to win back the prerogative of interpretation in respect to the term patriotism. Gronbach in 2006 also co-operated with the Initiative Deutschland and designed a white soccer t-shirt imprinted with the slogan “Ich bin ein Fan von dir” (I am a fan of you) in the national colours (image 12).

The new patriotism must also be seen in the context of recent political debates around the issue of immigration: Intriguingly, the term “Leitkultur” (leading culture) became very popular in the German media in the same timespan as analysed here. In the early 2000s the then parliamentary party leader of the

33 “Von deutschem Boden soll nie wieder Krieg ausgehen”, transl. kb. This phrase was very important in German political culture after World War II as it was the base for the anti-fascist consensus of the social democracy and the groups left of it.
34 I classify these tendencies as patriotism because they have been clearly directed towards the inside of the nation and happened on a rather emotional level, although the call for the unification of course also contained a certain longing for political self-determination.
conservatives, Friedrich Merz, used this term to call for an adaption of immigrants to German culture, and thus started a highly controversial debate.  

Related to this, roughly in 1999 started the so called Kopftuchdebatte (headscarf debate) around the question whether muslim women in Germany should be allowed to wear a headscarf in public institutions such as for instance in schools.

Moreover, in 2008 the Einbürgerungstest (naturalisation test), a highly controversial test that immigrants have to pass to get the permission to live in Germany, passed legislation.

IV.3. The New Popular Cultural Patriotism in Germany

This patriotic turn also became visible within German pop culture. The Berlin-based band MIA marks the point where the new search for national identity occured within the field of pop music. The band became popular in September 2003 with their controversial hit “Was es ist“ (What it is), a joyful hymn on Germany that called for a new national self-consciousness. Since then there has been a flood of young German bands that refused the employment of English songtexts in favour of German ones. Juli, Silbermond, Wir sind Helden, and 2Raumwohnung can serve as other examples for this new trend to sing in German among young bands. In 2004 the release of the song “Wir sind wir“ (We are us) by the songwriter Peter Heppner and techno dj Paul Van Dyk caused a new controversy: In the video clip Heppner walks along wrecked houses, rubble women (Trümmerfrauen), one-legged war-homecomers,

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35 This term originally goes back to the German Political Scientist Bassam Tibi, who invented it in the late 1990s to describe a consensus of social values on a European scale. The German conservatives as well as politically related newspapers later interpreted Tibi’s notion in favour of their political concepts, from which Tibi himself stands aloof.
and scenes of *The wonder of Bern*, a film that refers to the patriotic sentiment caused by the German victory of the men’s world soccer championship in 1954. The song also calls for a new pride to be German. Since then German hits appeared on the radio in an intensified way, electro song compilations as *Neue Heimat* (new homeland) and a new record label called *Sing Deutsch!* (Sing German!) emerged.

Probably influenced by the beginning of the Iraq war and the German refusal to participate, there has been a strong discourse to resist American influences and counteract against “the loss of our identity, our mental heritage” (Inga Humpe, 2Raumwohnung 2006)\(^36\) Thus, the pop phenomenon also has to be seen in the context of a new pan-European patriotism as an opposition to US-american cultural hegemony. Gronbach for instance collaborates from time to time with other European designers and institutions: In 2009 she invited the Belgian designers Jessi Lecomte and Le fabuleux Marcel de Bruxelles to her studio. She also designed the new uniforms of the Thalys-staff, a pan-European high-speed train, going between Germany, Belgium and France (image 7).

Also in the field of contemporary German TV and cinema film the pop-patriotism became visible: Since 2003 a range of TV-productions displayed a rather romantic and uncritical picture of German history. Regarding cinema three movies can be mentioned as the probably most important, popular and also controversial examples: Firstly, Sönke Wortmann’s *Das Wunder von Bern* (The wonder of Bern) from 2003 tells the story of Germany’s unexpected victory at the football world championship in Bern in 1954. The protagonist is a returned-home German war prisoner. One year later, in *Der Untergang* by Bernd Eichinger for the first time in the history of German cinema Hitler is represented as the scenic central figure. In the same year, also in *Napola - Elite für den Führer* (Elite for the Fuehrer) by Dennis Gansel, a film that takes place in a Hitler Youth boarding school in the “German Reich“, the Nazi-world is narrated from the inside.

Since the beginning of the 2000s also in German mainstream literature, authors as for instance Dagmar Leupold, *Nach den Kriegen* (After the wars), Monika Jetter, *Mein Kriegsvater* (My war father) or Thomas Medicus, *In den Augen meines Großvaters* (In the eyes of my grandfather) demonstrated an interest in the experiences of the parents’ or grandparents’ generation. Their works displayed a new problematisation of the German suffering from guilt. In 2004 one scandal work that claimed the discovery of a Nazi-pornography scene, presented the Germans as mere victims: But Thor Kunkel’s *Endstufe* (Final Stage), although highly present in the media in 2004, did not become a success.

In contemporary German art national attributes are more present: In the last decade a new generation of artists drew a lot of international attention to themselves: Norbert Bisky, Tim Eitel, Neo Rauch, and Jonathan Meese can serve as examples for a new use of German national symbols. These

\(^{36}\) Although Germany officially refused to participate it was later found out that support was landed in the form of logistics and reconnaissance.
artists look back on lots of world wide single exhibitions and achieve high prices at the international art markets. Their art is also displayed in a range of international group exhibitions on “Young German Art”, such as D-Light. Young German Artists in New York or Heimweh (Nostalgia), an exhibition of the London-based gallery Haunch of Venison, both in 2004, to name just two examples. Before, a preoccupation with the Nazi-history in German art had taken on a rather dark and radical ironic form as in the works of painters as Martin Kippenberger or Anselm Kiefer. Joseph Beuys is also one of the few artists who worked already very early on that topic.37 Gronbach in her first collection gives many references to him, as she used felt, a material, which extensive use is typical for Beuys.38 Beuys is famous for his quote “Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler” (every human being is an artist) and his concept of “Soziale Plastik” (social sculpture), the idea of a creative co-determination of society through art (Ermen 2007:37). Thus, he sees art in a broader notion. In a similar way also Gronbach’s fashion can be seen as art in the broadest sense. Her collections are, also in a Beuysian sense, actively involved in the overall social discourse of German patriotism. Although it is never explicitly stated, it seems as if Gronbach herself also sees her fashion as a form of art: One of the felt pieces from Déclaration d’amour à l’Allemagne (2001) is a huge coat imprinted with the words “Kunst ist schön” (art is beautiful, image 3). This is a reference to a quote by the German cabaret artist Karl Valentin, another important source of inspiration for Gronbach. The quote goes on “…macht aber auch viel Arbeit” (but is a lot of work too), probably an ironic self-reference to the actual creation, production and distribution process of the collection.

Thus, the pop patriotism peaked in 2003, a crucial year for the phenomenon at hands. Here, national as well as international factors play their part: The beginning of the Iraq war and the opposition to the US led to a strong debate about the necessity of resisting American influences. Further, on March 14 2003 chancellor Gerhard Schröder in a governmental declaration announced the agenda 2010, and with this massive cuts in social services.39

Further, there had been a big flood catastrophe in Germany in autumn 2003. The German population felt great empathy for the flood victims, therefore it can be said that the catastrophe in a way unified the nation. Also Bundeskanzler Gerhard Schröder could benefit from his support programmes for

37 Beuys problematises the holocaust e.g. in his installation „Auschwitz Demonstration“ (1956-1964).
38 Gronbach herself states explicitly that she has been inspired by Beuys (Petersen 2004).
39 Most important is certainly the initiation of Hartz IV for the first January 2005. Hartz IV is a colloquial expression for “the fourth law for modern services at the workplace”. This law aimed to reform the employment services and to reduce the number of unemployed. Hartz IV was in fact a large cutback of the unemployment assistance and led to social decline and poverty among some strata of the population. There had been widespread protests against this legislation; the far-right jumped this bandwagon and sometimes proclaimed a new “national socialism” against the poverty increasing effects of Hartz IV. The English language does not distinguish between the two. Hitler-Germany was a “Nationalsozialismus”, whereas many right-wing groups use the term “nationaler Sozialismus”, which is basically a legal trick. The German far right has a long-standing tradition of jumping the bandwagon of other movements. For example hip hop, gothic music and social movements. They also tend to use more and more left symbols like the Che Guevara couterfeit or the Palestinian scarf. Also at demonstrations we tend to find more and more “autonomous nationalists”. In this respect the German far right is more trotskyist than many far left movements.

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the flood victims. It is said that, in spite of the agenda 2010, the two main reasons for his re-election in 2003 had been the official refusal in the Iraq war and his help for the flood victims.\(^{40}\)

Fashion is intrinsically connected to history. In constantly recycling past styles, fashion “disturbs a linear history, and is capable of revealing the relevance of the past for the present” (Wilson 2007: 277). In this respect fashion shows that the history of nationalism has a great influence on contemporary discourses on patriotism. This is especially the case in Germany; otherwise national identity would have been thematised by fashion designers much earlier as the British example shows. On the one hand since the catastrophes of 1914-1945 the expression of a patriotic sentiment for Germany is problematic. On the other hand patriotism from the start has been a great tool to unify people, especially in times of crisis and insecurity. Since the turnaround in 1989 in Germany crisis tendencies occurred that led to processes of social disintegration: a high unemployment rate, poverty among large strata of society and a health insurance system that was said not to be working anymore. Thus, there was a need for a new patriotic discourse to work against these symptoms of social disintegration on the ideological level. Fashion here plays a crucial role: The need for a change of the discourse of German national identity was embodied in fashion, “most marginalised of all arts” (Wilson 2007: 277), before it became visible in other cultural fields. Hence, Gronbach brought her patriotic collections to the German runways just when the time had been right for it and thus, was able to become popular with it.

But fashion is not merely an ideological tool that can stabilise a social order. At the same time it can be also self-reflective and critical: With her collections Gronbach challenges the discourse about German national identity. Although she calls for a patriotic sentiment, she also clarifies that this patriotism should not be an exclusive one. In this respect it was very important for Gronbach to present her creations on non-white models.\(^{41}\) She states that her fashion expresses her longing for a Germany that is a peaceful community integrating all cultures (Gronbach 2009). Thus, Gronbach’s patriotism is decidedly integrative in character.

As nationalism, fashion is a phenomenon of modernity, and as nationalism, it is closely connected to the birth of the capitalist world-system. The fashion theorist Elizabeth Wilson argues that in its ambiguity fashion “speaks capitalism” (Wilson 2007: 14). Fashion is ambiguous, but coherent in this ambiguity. It can act out “the most shocking, the most subversive ideas” of a society (Wilson 2007: 277). Wilson compares fashion to Freud’s psychoanalytical analysis of jokes, dreams or slips of the tongue. These seemingly unimportant acts can embody the individuals’ most treasured beliefs. In this context Gronbach’s success and popularity in the beginning of the 2000s shows that there already existed a

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\(^{40}\) In a similar way also Helmut Schmidt could gain great popularity in the 1970s before he was elected Bundeskanzler: As the Bürgermeister of Hamburg he commanded the Bundeswehr to help during a great flood catastrophe.

\(^{41}\) In a similar way the topic is often presented in the German fashion press. The fashion production “Mehr Farbe wagen” (Dare more colours) by the magazine Stern (2007) in which German celebrities from non-German backgrounds are photographed in German fashion can serve as an example for this.
longing for a new patriotism in Germany. Imaginative in character, fashion, similar to jokes, forms a
territory that is less discourse-regulated than those parts of life that are looked at as more important and
political, thus, the already existing patriotic longing could be acted out in Gronbach’s fashion. Touched
upon the fact that German neo-Nazis use similar symbols as she does in her collections, Gronbach states:

The problem is that we leave national symbols to rightwing fringe groups. I occupy present signs and give them a new
meaning. Thus, the national topic gets a new lightness. For that purpose fashion is ideal, because it is superficial enough
and does not have this deepness and seriousness with which we Germans make our lives difficult. Because fashion
precisely is ephemeral (Petersen 2004).\(^\text{32}\)

This is what Michel Foucault calls a reverse-discourse: the active confession to a formerly negative-
connotated term to give it a new positive meaning (Foucault 1978: 101). Fashion as a seemingly political
void can act out the problematic discourse of German patriotism. But, Gronbach already hints at it herself
in the last quote, as a discursive practice for its own sake, fashion can also naturalise and reproduce
discourses, and thus make them more acceptable, also on a broader scale. Thus, Gronbach’s collections
demonstrate a dialectical relation between structure and agency in fashion. According to Fairclough, due
to ideological diversity in capitalism, ideological struggles between diverse discourse types take place
both \textit{in} and \textit{over} language. This can also be transferred to fashion: As language, fashion “itself is a \textit{stake}
in social struggles as well as a \textit{site} of social struggles” (Fairclough 1992:88, original: language).

V. Case Study
V.1. Analysis of single fashion images
V.1.1. \textbf{Collection 1: D\’eclaration d’amour à l’Allemagne} (2001)

A female model poses in front of the background of a wooden wall on which the German national
flag hangs. She only wears a black teddy, on which some white fluffy wool is sewed on in the area of the
crotch and a straw coronal in which a red flower is woven into on her head. Her skin is light, her hair
black and she wears red lipstick. She looks to the left side, the right leg and arm ankled, holding the
German national flag with her right hand.

\(^{32}\) transl. kb, orig.: “Das Problem ist doch gerade, dass wir diese Symbole Randgruppierungen überlassen. Ich besetze
vorhandene Zeichen und gebe ihnen neue Bedeutungen, das ist eine Art moderner Punk. So bekommt das ganze
nationale Thema eine Leichtigkeit. Und die Mode ist der ideale Ort dafür, weil sie oberflächlich genug ist und nicht
diese Tiefe und den Ernst hat, mit denen wir Deutschen uns sonst das Leben schwer machen. Mode ist eben
vergänglich”.  

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a) Fashion Pieces

The black teddy is like a protecting second skin, tight, black, concentrated on the essentiel. On the bikini area there is some soft white wool sewed in on the teddy. Sewed on at this place it reminds of pubic hair, in German “Schamhaar”, literally translated “shame hair”, a reference to “German shame”. But it is no “real” shame but a shame that is put on. Further, contrasting the black teddy, it is white, a colour that is most oftenly associated with innocence, purity and virginity. Thus, Germany becomes salvated from its historical guilt by shame.

b) Accessories

The straw coronal implies softness, it reminds of little girls that wear flower coronals on their head and thus draws a playful picture of Germany. But it also reminds of jesu’s crown of thorns, his death and resurrection, and thus also thematises a death and resurrection of German patriotism.

c) Models

Her skin is white as ivory, her hair black as ebony, her lips are red. This reminds of snowwhite, a fairytale in which an innocent princess is wrongfully outcasted by her jealous stepmother. This implies that a harmless German patriotism is wrongfully outcasted due to Germany’s historical guilt.

The model holds fast onto the german national flag, which is a signifier for the German nation and its political power. Thus a fatherly image of Germany is drawn: the nation state gives security and stability to the individual.
She poses in the black teddy in front of the flag, just at the place where the black is behind her. Thus, she, with her body, covers the “real” black of Germany. The colour scheme black red gold is also repeated in her styling: black hair and teddy, red flower and lipstick, golden, respectively white (innocent) felt on her teddy.

Especially together with the model’s coronal and the link to the crown of thorns her pose again strongly reminds of Jesu: Her right arm is stretched as at the crucifixion and her facial expression is sorrowful; she looks as she is ready to sacrifice herself for the sins of Germany.

d) Background/ Location

The picture is taken in front of a brown, conservative looking wood wall, probably oak, a tree that is often associated with Germany and represents fortitude and steadiness. It is also often used in traditional and rather conservative German flats and thus also represents a “background of traditions”. But in the picture most of the oak wall is covered by the German flag. Thus, the new patriotism builds up on old traditions but also covers and changes them.

e) Overall Aesthetics

The aesthetics of this fashion image with the German flag in the background reminds of paintings of the French revolution. The painting by Louis-Léopold Boilly (1761–1845) looks very similar to the fashion image: the pose is similar and the flag on the left side.

During the French revolution patriotism was connected to unity and progress. In a similar progressive way is German patriotism represented here. Already the fact that it is represented in fashion means that patriotism now is supposed to be “en vogue”, and thus, progressive and young rather than old and traditional.

The French revolution also brought about a break in the fashion: The revolutionaries refused to wear the aristocratic culottes (knickerbockers), and expressed their intentions with sans-culottes (ankle-long trousers that have been also worn for work). In the fashion image the model wears only a tight teddy, hence no trousers anymore at all. Thus, the revolutionary aspect is put backwards: the long trousers are substituted with naked legs. Naked skin always indicates a certain vulnerability, whereas the tight black teddy seems like a protecting second skin. Thus, beyond the covering, protecting second skin of German shame lies a soft and vulnerable national identity.

It is interesting that the persons in both pictures don’t look straight, but to the side, the French revolutionary to the right side of the image frame, thus, looking self-confidently into a brighter future, relaxing while enjoying his pipe. He is sure about the things to come and enjoys himself and his pipe while they come. The fashion model on the other hand looks rather sorrowful back to the
left (past). Both hold a flag, but the flag of the revolutionary is moving in the wind, whereas the flag of the model is stiff and motionless, a German stuckness in its historical guilt. The French revolution was connected with a strong national sentiment, but this was associated with unity and progress. The fashion image on the other hand rather ironically refers to a German stuckness in the tradition of guilt.

**V.1.2. Collection 2: Liebeserklärung an Deutschland (2002)**

Two female models pose in front of a window. One is black, the other one white. Also the dress is black and white, only the flip-flops are red, respectively yellow. The window has opened louvered blinds through which the garden outside, a stone sculpture and a skyscraper in the background are visible.

![Image 15 (Liebeserklärung an Deutschland)](image.png)

**a) Fashion Pieces**

The model on the left wears a strapless black dress with a transparent white layer on it. The top is tight, the skirt flared, a very female silhouette that reminds of Dior’s new look from the 1950s. The transparent layer looks almost like white curtains. White curtains remind of a home, in which the mother in a rather traditional gender role does the housework and cares for a clean, cosy home. This fits also to the reference to Dior’s very traditional female new look, which was an opposition to the rather masculine dress women wore during World War II due to a lack of fabric and the necessity to work because many men died at the front. But the layer is slotted at the side and the black underneath pops out, maybe an ironical hint to this traditional overcome gender role.
The model on the right also wears a strapless, kneeleng black dress, but this one is not flared, but has a deep slot on the side. Overhead she wears a white blouse from the same transparent fabric as the layer on her colleague’s dress. The blouse is high-necked and tied with a ribbon at the neck. But this high-neckedness of the piece is broken with the fabric’s transparency, which allows a glance on the models’ skin. Further the blouse is shaped wide and flowing and has turtle armpits cutted in one piece with the shirt, covering the whole arm in one piece, thus only the hands pop out. Thus, her arms are like stuck in the blouse, but again the transparency of the piece breaks this stuckness.

The curtain-like transparent white dress layers could also symbolise the iron curtain, politically and economically separating East and the West, which fell with the Berlin Wall in 1989, respectively with the disintegration of the Sowjet Union in 1992.

b) Accessories

Accessories are used sparely; the only ones are colourful flip flops. This flip flops are red and yellow. Together with the black dresses they build a decent reference to the German national colours: black red, gold.

Further flip flops are open shoes: the foot is shown, they remind of the lightness and relaxedness of summer holidays. In flip flops you cannot walk fast but do so in a relaxed laid-back way, like a walk from the hotel to the beach. More often on fashion images models wear skyscraper high heels, but flip flops are flats, the models’ feet are figuratively firmly on the ground. All in all here a link with traditions is implied, but an open and more modern way of dealing with them.

c) Models

Both models display sleek, preppy looking blow-dried hairstyles. In contrast to curls or highly voluminous “Big Hair”, sleek hair is oftenly associated with a straight and “tidy” mind.

The make-up again refers to the German national colours in a very decent way: The model on the right wears bold graphic black eye shadow and natural looking rosewood-coloured lipstick, the model on the right yellow eyeshadow.

They pose in a very natural, rather than glamourous, fashionable way. Both look into the camera and with their pose emphasise the different layers of their dress, and thus the contrasts between black and white: the left model’s left arm is akimbo, withdrawing the curtain-like layer of her dress, so that the black layer underneath becomes fully visible at the side. Thus, the iron curtain is withdrawn in a playful way. The model on the right also ankles her left arm, whereas she puts her right hand under her transparent blouse, a playful reference to the classic pose of the Corsican general Napoléon Bonaparte, who rose in the army during the French revolution and later became French emperor.
d) Background/Location

The picture is taken in a room in the old German Chancellor’s office in Bonn. The models pose in front of a big window. The light comes from the outside and little incidences of light broken by the opened blind-folds fall in at the floor and light up the shadows there. Through the open blind-folds the green bushes in the garden in the background are visible, the colour green here indicates hope for a new colourful and open-minded Germany.

On the right side of the horizon is a skyscraper, the so-called “Langer Eugen”, a building in which the offices of the members of the government have been situated before the governmental move from Bonn to Berlin in the late 1990s. Thus, the building is a symbol for political power. Next to the two models it looks like a third backbone; it thus gives security and structure to the individual.

e) Overall Aesthetics

The windowpane and the open blind-folds separate the image into different little rectangles and give the image a very frontal and clean graphic look. The models are framed by the dark windowpane in the background, only their feet in the red and yellow flip flops fall out of this frame.

This is an image of contrasts: the contrast between black skin and white skin, black and white fabrics, stuckness and transparency, openness and closedness, modesty and largess, the lightness of a day at the beach versus the seriousness of a governmental building.

This image shows a female model in a sportive training suit, perching in a field.

a) Fashion Pieces

The model wears a loose-fitting training suit. Arms and legs are completely covered. The fabric is soft velours, thus, German patriotism again is linked to a certain softness. The trousers are black, the pullover boldly striped in the national colours black red and yellow. On the left arm this stripes go on, the right one is pure black, an aesthetic play with the German colours.

b) Accessories

Again there are only very little accessories: Her shoes are not visible. Additional to the suit the model wears a cap in the national colours; she is thus figuratively protected by German patriotism: In German protected means “behütet” (from the German word “hut”, that is, hat).

c) Model

The model is female and white, with brunette shoulder-long hair and dark brown eyes. She looks directly and straight into the camera, which indicates a certain proudness to be German. She perches on the ground in a field as if she would not pose, but just doing some stretching exercises after a run in free nature. Her make-up is very natural, she has bold dark graphic eyebrows, but her nude look make-up displays a purity, lightness and sportyness. German patriotism is thus naturalised as something innocent and pure.

d) Background/ Location

The picture is taken on a dry field, the grass is yellow and strawish. Some single green plants grow in it, like a metaphore for the new patriotic sentiment growing again on a dried-out ground of German patriotism. In the background there is a clear blue sky only covered with some single little clouds on the right side of the image, the horizon is framed by a line of dark green trees. These natural phenomena again refer to hope and naturalness.

e) Overall Aesthetics

The overall aesthetics of this image is sporty, fresh and young. German patriotism thus is represented as something young, sporty and natural.
V.2. Interaction and Contextualisation

V.2.1. Employment of National Attributes

In *Déclaration d’amour à l’Allemagne* (2001) national attributes are employed in a very decent way: German attributes do not appear in the actual fashion pieces, but are rather formed by the background as for instance the German flag, or the photography of Johannes Rau. In 2001 German patriotism was still subject to strict discourse politics, also in popular culture, thus little hints have been already very provocative. One year later in *Liebeserklärung an Deutschland* (2002) the typical national attributes occur in the accessories: belts, hats and shoes display the colours black red and yellow. Another year later in *Mutter Erde Vater Land* (2003) these signifiers are featured by the actual fashion pieces themselves: Now whole shirts, trousers and pullovers are black red and yellow or imprinted with the Imperial eagle. Thus, looking at the consecutive collections the national attributes shift from the background to the foreground of the images. Further, the more popular the collection, the bolder is the use of national attributes.

But not only the way of their employment, also the attributes themselves change: *Déclaration d’amour à l’Allemagne* (2001) displays a range of elaborate references to history and culture that are connected to national identity. For instance through references to the French and Russian revolution, German patriotism is linked to unity and progress. Further, a strong reference to Jesus’ crucifixion implies a self-sacrifice of the individual for the sins of Germany, and at the same time refers to the recent “resurrection” of German patriotism in fashion.

Not only the overall aesthetics and the backgrounds, also the actual fashion pieces themselves display such references. Here, especially the fabrics play an important role: Fur refers to the Russian revolution, felt is linked to the German artist Joseph Beuys. In *Liebeserklärung an Deutschland* (2002) the given references change: Now German patriotism is no longer linked to internationally relevant topics such as the Bible, or historical revolutions, but rather focuses on German traditions (e.g. the oak wall background or the student unions’ hat in the national colours). Also more recent historical and political events in which Germany plays a crucial role are thematised such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the iron curtain. This takes place in a playful and ironic way.

It is just this irony that lacks the following collection *Mutter Erde Vater Land* (2003) in which German patriotism is produced through a reduction to the well-known German national symbols and colours. This tends to a disembedding of the symbol from its historical meaning; thus, the pure form of the symbol here substitutes its content. The collection is thus rather shallow, easier consumable and more commercial. This corresponds to the degree of distribution of this collection:
Mutter Erde Vater Land has been Gronbach’s breakthrough-collection and reached the broadest audience within the German population. Even people that are not interested in fashion consumed it because Gronbach in 2003 has been featured on a broad scale throughout the whole range of the German media, rather than only in fashion magazines. Thus, the broader distributed the collection, the less elaborate and historically grounded, whereas the used signifiers become bolder and easier accessible. This is what the hegemonic structure that here enables the new German pop patriotism requires: Because Mutter Erde Vater Land is easier consumerable more people can be consensually re-integrated.

The models in Déclaration d’amour à l’Allemagne (2001) hardly ever look directly into the camera, they rather seem dreamy, looking to the side or close their eyes. In Liebeserklärung an Deutschland (2002), although the models still tend to look aside, there are already singular pictures showing the models directly looking into the camera. Thus, a direct eye contact with the viewer is given. This takes part in a rather distanced way, both regarding the actual camera distance to the model as well as the facial expression of the models. But the eye contact becomes very bold in Mutter Erde Vater Land (2003): Now the model looks directly into the camera and also seems much closer to the viewer. Direct eye contact and closeness stand for self-confidence, honesty and trust. Further, the model here looks proud. German national identity now is something one can be proud of; thus patriotism is now acceptable.

V.2.2. Inclusion of Different Cultural and Ethnical Stereotypes

In Déclaration d’amour à l’Allemagne (2001) none of the fashion images displays a black model. Thus, blackness is marginalised. But Gronbach’s diploma collection hasn’t been published in Germany. In contrast Liebeserklärung an Deutschland (2002) already reached a broader range of German fashion insider circles. Due to this popularity the integration of a black model has been crucial. After the holocaust no pop artist or fashion designer could succeed with a pop patriotism that excludes certain different cultures.

But this inclusion of different cultural stereotypes also is connected with an aquired adaption of German cultural norms: Thus, people with different cultural backgrounds are allowed to participate in German patriotism but have to adapt themselves. This also corresponds to recent political events as for instance the Kopftuch-Debatte (muslim headscarf debate) or the Einbürgerungstest (naturalisation test).43

43 The headscarf debate started roughly in 1999 and is concerned with the question whether muslim women in Germany should be allowed to wear a headscarf in public institions such as for instance in schools. The naturalisation test passed legislation in 2008 and is a highly controversial test that immigrants have to pass to get the permission to live in Germany.
The analysed example from *Mutter Erde Vater Land* (2003) shows a white model, but black models are also included into the presentation of this collection. Thus, since *Liebeserklärung an Deutschland* (2002) all images express an ethnically inclusive patriotism. Hence, hegemony here has an explicitly integrative dimension. In spite of that it is also apparent that here ethnical heterogeneity is subordinated to cultural homogeneity.

Regarding gender Gronbach’s fashion discourse, at least in her second collection, *Liebeserklärung an Deutschland* (2001), is also an explicitly inclusive one: On one image a black model sits laughing on a coach with widely spread legs, a pose that is usually in discursive practices rather constructed as typical masculine. Thus the model with her body language mocks stereotypical gender roles (Liebeserklärung an Deutschland, image 17). In the same collection another model wears the student unions’ cap, a head covering that traditionally is only worn by male members of student unions (image 8). Here her exaggeratedly stiff pose has a similarly ironic effect as the laughter of her colleague. On a third image a vulnerable and dreamy looking model stands in front of a conference table in the old Chancellor’s office in Bonn, a place that otherwise is also rather exclusively occupied by men (image 18).

![Image 17](image17.jpg) ![Image 18](image18.jpg)

**V.2.3. Significance of Political Power**

The political power is present in the background of almost all photographies: For instance in the background of one of the images from *Liebeserklärung an Deutschland* (2001) the governmental building “Langer Eugen” is visible in the background. Power is thus visually represented as a structure into which the individual has to place itself. On the image in front of the photography of Rau the head of the
politician is situated only slightly higher than the head of the model, which implies a certain equality between the representants of political power and the individual. It is thus expressed that the problem of patriotism and the belonging to a fatherland should not be left to the politicians, but that every single individual bears a certain responsibility towards its fatherland. The allegory to Jesus’ self-sacrifice (image 2) hints at a similar direction.

Thus, the images imply a patriotism “from below”. Patriotism thus is not the issue of politicians and intellectuals anymore, but the adoption of the individual to the existing power relations is presented as chic. In a picture displaying another outfit from *Mutter Erde Vater Land* (2003) a male model wears a white long sleeve shirt imprinted with the slogan “Schwarz Rot Gelb” (black red yellow) in black letters (image 5). Here it is interesting that the three different colours actually represent political oppositions (the conservative, the socialist and the liberal party). But on the shirt they are all printed “in black and white”. This implies a certain melting down of these political oppositions. Thus Germany’s political differences are all melt down to a German political unity, which expresses the common-sensical assumption that “we Germans are all in the same boat”. Thus, inequal power relations are legitimised through the mechanism of inclusion of for instance ethnical diverse groups. In general Gronbach’s images display a controlled heterogeneity: On the one hand the inclusive patriotism is open for anybody, regardless of cultural origin or gender. On the other hand this opening is tied to the subordination to the existing power relations.

The way power relations are produced in the consecutive collections changes: In Gronbach’s first two collections the symbols of political power are still quite explicit. By contrast *Mutter Erde Vater Land* (2003) is photographed outside in a field and lacks any visible reference to political power. As Fairlough puts it:

> Ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible (...). And invisibility is achieved when ideologies are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the text, but as the background assumptions which on the one hand lead the text producer to “textualise” the world in a particular way, and on the other hand lead the interpreter to interprete the text in a particular way (Fairclough 1992: 85).

Thus, in Gronbach’s most distributed collection the link to political power and the hegemonic aspect of fashion itself is completely covered, and German patriotism is naturalised as something completely unpolitical and innocuous.
VI. Conclusion

This thesis has been concerned with the patriotic discourse in German fashion. Building on a dialectic structure-agency conception, it was assumed that the collections of Eva Gronbach, which have been analysed here, both produce and reproduce a certain hegemonic structure within German society: on the one hand, Gronbach’s collections are an expression of certain deep structural features of this society; on the other, social practices such as Gronbach’s are also about constructing and shaping these structural features. I have shown up several reasons for the occurrence of German patriotism in popular culture and in general societal discourses. Speaking generally, it has been seen that patriotism has the social function of countering symptoms of societal disintegration in Germany. Germany in recent decades has been characterised by a degradation of social and political instruments for mass integration: large organisations such as political parties, trade unions, churches etc. are in decline; on the other hand, social conflicts ensue around a social order which is perceived by many as unjust. Patriotism here serves to heal social conflicts on the ideological level, since its overall message has been and will always be that of social unity and social justice.

Still, comparing the results of the case study with earlier forms of patriotism/ nationalism in Germany, a very important shift could be seen. Where in late nineteenth/ early to mid twentieth century Germany patriotism was defined primarily via “race”, the collections of Eva Gronbach signify a turn towards a plural and inclusionary patriotism. This inclusionary patriotism is open to anyone, regardless of “race”, class or gender, and thus became democratised.

Still, the general hegemonic function of patriotism did in fact remain the same, that is, stabilising tendentially instable forms of social domination. The case study has shown that the price of entering into the new, “inclusionary” patriotism is subordination to forms of cultural and political hegemony.

Thus, the new patriotism exemplified by Gronbach revolves around “constrained heterogeneity”. “Constrained heterogeneity” refers to the allowance and tolerance of diversity under the premise that this diversity does not pose a threat to traditional patterns of societalisation. On the structural level, the allowance of diversity is of course a necessity. In the last decades, Germany was subject to strong cultural, social and ethnic fragmentations and polarisations. Thus, ideology also changed.

It has also been seen that Gronbach stands for a patriotism from below. Her collections aim at establishing patriotism as a new chic. The allegory to Jesus in Image 2 maybe epitomises this whole approach, which revolves around the idea that social unity is to be created from bottom up, and it is up to each and everyone to construct it. Patriotism is thus no longer to be an issue of intellectuals, journalists and politicians. Quite the contrary: the new patriotism now emerges from below. I have given a host of examples from German popular culture exemplifying this point. This “conservative turn” in German
popular culture can of course be seen as a counter-movement to ideological disintegration. In fact, as Gramsci puts it, the objective crisis of a society merely opens up the possibility for the respective actors to bring forth profound change to this society. But the way this change plays out is always contingent on social struggles. Thus, the crisis of German society opened up an ideological gap, which was partially filled by this “conservative turn“ in popular culture.

Gronbach marks a turning point in German popular culture, which has been bordering on the apolitical during the decades beforehand, with some rather left-leaning exceptions sticking out. Gronbach fittingly characterises her quest for patriotism as a “tender longing” (Gronbach 2009). As suggested here by the recourse to Foucault, this longing might as well be the search for new socio-cognitive patterns for making sense of the world. As processes of individualisation and disembedding from traditional social relations take place, patriotism offers a way out of this social dis-orientation.

Without condemning this re-orientation, a critical theory perspective has to take into account the wider consequences of this new patriotism. The work of Gronbach seems to be based largely on the idea of a German “Leitkultur“ (leading culture), a word, which has been very popular in the German media and political discourse during, intriguingly, the same timespan examined here. Thus, the diversity postulated in Gronbach´s work is merely a superficial one. Gronbach´s diversity is subsumed under a normalising “leading“ culture, which tolerates only certain amounts of deviance.

In discourse analysis, it is not only important what is being said, but also what is not being said. Thus, interestingly, the German debate over the muslim headscarf (“Kopftuchdebatte”) is not being taken up by her, although the thematisation would most certainly fit very well into the general concept of “inclusionary patriotism“. That this topic remains untouched is, in fact, a curiosity. One could only speculate about the reasons for this absence. One speculation might be found in the deviance of Muslim subculture from German “Leitkultur”, thus furthering the idea that Gronbach´s inclusionary patriotism is in fact a normalisation.

To conclude, Gronbach´s patriotism is definitely more refined and more democratised than earlier forms of patriotism. But, obviously, it takes place within the traditional in-group out-group distinction so well-known in the history of nationalism and patriotism; it merely draws the border between these two groups on a different level. What seems like cultural openness and a preference of diversity at first, unfolds as a mechanism of cultural normalisation at second glance. And thus, the old game of patriotisms continues.
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**Own Interview**

Telephone Interview with Gronbach: May 12th 2009 (transcript on page 47)

**Images**

**Image 1 – 15 & 17**: Gronbach, Eva.
www.gronbach.de (last accessed: 12.08.2009)

**Image 14**: “Sans-culottes”, painting by Louis-Léopold Boilly (1761–1845):
Wikipedia Commons
Appendix

Transcript Interview

Wie bist du eigentlich auf die Idee gekommen, Patriotismus zu deinem Thema zu machen?


Auf deinen Modenschauen und in deinen Modebildern sieht man viele schwarze Models. Warum?