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Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung: “Enough is Enough! Against the Masculinization of Women” (1925)

This article, which was printed in the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* in March 1925, attacks the appearance of the “New Woman,” a feminine type who was closely linked to the cultural history of the 1920s. Owned by the Ullstein publishing company since 1894, the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* was an illustrated mass weekly that usually espoused liberal, cosmopolitan, and politically neutral views. This blatantly sexist critique of the “New Woman” and her chosen form of cultural expression stands out as an exception. The author of this piece seems to find the “New Woman” implicitly threatening because, unlike the youthful “flapper,” she was an adult woman who favored masculine dress and hairstyles. Whereas other Ullstein publications, such as the magazine *Die Dame* [*The Lady*], had previously played an essential role in popularizing the “New Woman,” this article foreshadows the social reaction against the ideal of the emancipated woman.

Enough is Enough! Against the Masculinization of Women

What started as a playful game in women’s fashion is gradually becoming a distressing aberration. At first it was like a charming novelty: that gentle, delicate women cut their long tresses and bobbed their hair; that the dresses they wore hung down in an almost perfectly straight line, denying the contours of the female body, the curve of the hips; that they shortened their skirts, exposing their slender legs up to calf level. Even the most traditional of men were not scandalized by this. A creature like this could have been warmly greeted with the now obsolete pet name *my angel*—for angels are asexual, yet they have always been represented in a pre-adolescent female form, even the archangel Gabriel. But the male sensibility began to take offense at this as the fashion that was so becoming to young girls and their delicate figures was adopted by all women. It did an aesthetic disservice to stately and full-figured women. But the trend went even further; women no longer wanted to appear asexual; rather fashion was increasingly calculated to make women’s outward appearance more masculine. The practice of wearing men’s nightclothes became increasingly widespread among women, even to the point of wearing them whenever possible for daytime lounging.

And we observe more often now that the bobbed haircut with its curls is disappearing, to be replaced by the modern, masculine hairstyle: sleek and brushed straight back. The new fashion in women’s coats is also decidedly masculine: it would scarcely be noticed this spring if a woman absentmindedly put on her husband’s coat. Fashion is like a pendulum swinging back and forth. With the hoop skirt the dictates of fashion brought the accentuation of the female form to an extreme, and now things are moving in the completely opposite direction. It is high time that sound male judgment take a stand against these odious

fashions, the excesses of which have been transplanted here from America. In the theater we might enjoy, one time, seeing an actress playing a man's part if she is suitable for the role; but not every woman should venture to display herself in pants or shorts, be it on stage or at sporting events. And the masculinization of the female face replaces its natural allure with, at best, an unnatural one: the look of a sickeningly sweet boy is detested by every real boy or man.

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