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Onstage and Beyond the Stage
Historical Theatre Costumes and Everyday Fashion in Early Nineteenth Century Vienna
Part Two: The Influence of Medievalist Stage Design on Women's Dress

Background Information/Previous Research

By the late eighteenth century, a reform movement in German-speaking theatre promoted costumes with greater historical accuracy. Yet motivations to appear aesthetically pleasing, plus the fact that most costumes were made of accumulated stock pieces worn in multiple productions rather than built from scratch, hindered faithfulness to past styles. Women's costumes demonstrated a greater dependence on contemporary silhouettes than men's, leading to a marked gender difference in the accuracy of Biedermeier stage costuming. Notably, though, most of the prescriptive and descriptive source material on these costumes came from male designers and critics. Last semester, I found that the influence of everyday fashion on stage costumes was so pronounced that costumes from two different productions performed within a few years of one another often shared a greater resemblance in silhouette than costumes from the same production decades apart. Yet despite this inextricable connection to current styles, I noticed that Biedermeier critics expressed concern over the historical accuracy of costumes, in both specific reviews and more general, theoretical texts. Some authors stressed a strict adherence to historical sources, while others allowed for some artistic license to suit the tastes of the audience. Previously, I explored how women's Biedermeier fashion trends affected costumes in productions set in the Middle Ages and antiquity. Now, I am researching the reverse of this process: if and how historical theater costumes affected everyday fashion in Vienna between 1815 and 1848. With a specific focus on medievalism in Biedermeier-era arts and aesthetics, I find that historical characters onstage, such as Maria Stuart, influenced women's dress beyond

the stage, as part of a dynamic relationship between theater producer and consumer in early nineteenth century Vienna.

Historiography and Medievalism in the Romantic Period

While early-nineteenth-century Europe developed its own sense of aesthetics, its artistic expression sought a connection to the past. A new historical consciousness had emerged in Europe during the Enlightenment.¹ Enlightenment thinkers often viewed history as a chain of events leading to a lofty goal, but by the nineteenth century, historians began to see their discipline as less teleological. They periodized and nationalized history, analyzing events through the lenses of time and place. This new perspective affected critics' assessments of historical inspiration in art and literature. For instance, at the turn of the nineteenth century, Friedrich Schiller published his *Maria Stuart* (1800) and *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (1801), set in sixteenth-century England and fifteenth-century France, respectively. Critics initially praised the artistic liberties that Schiller took with historical details in these tragedies, because they believed his version of the story could convey a more profound, pedagogical truth for audiences. However, as philosophers Herder, Humboldt, and Hegel, among others, emphasized the value of historical fact over historical moralism, criticism of these late Schillerian dramas increased.² Theater costumes followed a similar turn towards historical accuracy in the 1800s, as directors like Carl Graf von Brühl at the Prussian Nationaltheater stressed that designers should consult ethnographic studies, artworks, and other cultural sources to properly clothe actors.³ Adolf

¹ Hans-Ulrich Mohr, "The Picturesque: A Key Concept of the Eighteenth Century," in *The Romantic Imagination: Literature and Art in England and Germany*, ed. Frederick Burwick and Jürgen Klein (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 241.

² Kathy Saranpa, *Schiller's "Wallenstein," "Maria Stuart," and "Die Jungfrau von Orleans": The Critical Legacy* (Rochester: Camden House, 2002), 33-35.

³ Gretel Wagner and Ekhart Berckenhagen, *Bretter, die die Welt bedeuten: Entwürfe zum Theaterdekor und zum Bühnenkostüm*, (Berlin: Kunstbibliothek Berlin, 1979), 150-151.

Bäuerle, publisher of the *Wiener Theaterzeitung*, echoed Brühl's emphasis on research and accuracy in Austrian costumes and sets, because he believed that stage design could teach an audience about the fashions and customs of other time periods.⁴ Thus, nineteenth-century critics did not deny that historical references in theater served a pedagogical function; rather, they stressed that proper depictions in a production's design and content could convey historical facts rather than moral truths.

While this new factual function for history surfaced in the first half of the nineteenth century, not all historical eras received the same emphasis in art and aesthetics. Indeed, the Middle Ages held a particular place in the Romantic imagination. Scholars regard Wilhelm Heinrich Wackendroder's and Ludwig Tieck's 1796 *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* as one of the founding documents of German Romanticism.⁵ This series of theoretical treatises highlighted medieval rather than classical art as its ideal, especially in relation to German and Christian identity, and led to an increase in aesthetic and scholarly interest in the Middle Ages.⁶ Medievalism made its way from art into politics in the Biedermeier era and could be radical or reactionary, liberal or conservative, as it contrasted the capitalist, industrializing present with a feudalistic past.⁷ It was not just bound to German-speaking areas but encompassed much of Europe, with England constituting another center of medieval mania.⁸ However, Romantic Medievalism did have a particularly nationalistic strain, as German-speaking regions sought a sense of identity after Napoleon's conquest and reorganization of

⁴ Adolf Bäuerle, "Aphorismen für Schauspieler und Freunde der dramatischen Kunst," *Wiener Theaterzeitung*, 25 May 1815, 192.

⁵ Mohr, 270.

⁶ Gerda Heinrich, *Geschichtsphilosophische Positionen der deutschen Frühromantik*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1976), 123.

⁷ *Ibid*, 101-102.

⁸ Elizabeth Fay, *Romantic Medievalism: History and the Romantic Literary Ideal* (London: Palgrave, 2002), 2.

Central Europe.⁹ In fashion, efforts to develop a uniquely German Tracht in opposition to foreign styles increased after the Napoleonic Wars, with enthusiastic support from some Viennese authors like Karolina Pichler.¹⁰ This “altdeutsche Kleidung” demonstrated medieval aesthetic influences and constituted some of the first fashion illustrations in the *Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunst, Literatur, Theater und Mode (Wiener Zeitschrift)*.^{11, 12} Although altdeutsche Tracht never caught on among the general German-speaking population in post-Napoleonic Europe, it demonstrates the confluence of medievalism, nationalism, and dress in the early nineteenth century.

While altdeutsche Tracht conveyed a sense of German identity, it also resembled the “Gothic” fashions popular in England at the same time. This trend arose in Great Britain around 1812 and included sixteenth-century Tudor and Elizabethan and seventeenth-century Stuart styles, as well as more medieval features.¹³ Prominent components of the British Gothic trend included slashing, fabric puffs, lace collars and cuffs, ruffs, and vandyked borders.^{14, 15} Although dress scholars do not mention the term “Gothic” in relation to Viennese style, similar attributes appear in German and Austrian designs of the 1810s. For instance, the altdeutsche Tracht depicted in the *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* in 1814 includes a vandyked stand collar and glove cuffs and slashing on the puffed sleeves and hem (see fig. 1). An illustration of “Pariser und Wiener Frauenkleidung” from the same publication in 1821 depicts women in ruffs and stand collars, a clear “Gothic” (though actually Elizabethan) fashion reference (see fig. 2). The

⁹ Heinrich, 124.

¹⁰ Erika Thiel, *Geschichte des Kostüms: Die europäische Mode von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin: Henschel, 2010), 308.

¹¹ Max von Boehn, *Die Mode: Menschen und Moden im neunzehnten Jahrhundert (1818-1842: Biedermeier)* (München: Bruckmann, 1919), 153.

¹² Gerda Buxbaum, *Mode aus Wien: 1815-1938* (Wien: Residenz Verlag, 1986), 195.

¹³ Penelope Byrde, *Nineteenth Century Fashion* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1992), 29-30.

¹⁴ Lucy Johnston, *Nineteenth Century Fashion in Detail* (London: V & A Publishing, 2009), 46.

¹⁵ “Vandyking” refers to a style element in which fabric is cut at the edges into V-shaped points.

fashion plate also features small, puffed oversleeves, which resemble two such extant garments in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, noted by curators to display clear references to historicist “Gothic” or Renaissance-based styles (see fig. 3-4).^{16, 17} Therefore, whether through British influence or a sense of German nationalistic medievalism, “Gothic” fashion elements pervaded Viennese dress in the early Biedermeier period.



Figure 1. “Teutsche National-Frauentracht, nach zwei verschiedenen Formen,” *Journal für Literatur, Kunst, Luxus, und Mode*, Weimar, March 1815, Kupfertafel 7-8.



Figure 2. “Modebilder Pariser...Wiener,” *Journal für Literatur, Kunst, Luxus, und Mode*, Weimar, November 1821, Kupfertafel 31.

¹⁶ Johnston, 44.

¹⁷ Sharon Sadako Takeda, *Fashioning Fashion: European Dress in Detail, 1700-1915* (New York: Prestel, 2010), 84.



Figure 3a,b. “Jacket (and sleeve detail),” United Kingdom, ca. 1818, Victoria & Albert Museum.



Figure 4. “Women’s Spencer Jacket and Petticoat,” France, ca. 1815, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Fashion Influences in Biedermeier Vienna

Most Viennese women certainly did not wear altdeutsche Tracht during the Biedermeier era; rather, they took part in an international fashion industry with a distinctively local flair. The 1814-1815 Congress of Vienna spurred the development of “Wiener Mode,” or a uniquely Viennese style.¹⁸ At the same time, intercultural contact at this grand political gathering homogenized the European fashion industry, which had fragmented during the previous decade of war.¹⁹ Post-Napoleonic nationalism nevertheless inspired Viennese sartorialists to resist French trends in the 1810s, but by the 1830s Paris had recovered its place as center of the German- as well as French-speaking fashion worlds.²⁰ Even the *Wiener Zeitschrift*, which Gerda Buxbaum credits as establishing the uniquely Viennese fashion industry, contained reports on Parisian as well as local styles. The publication would sometimes label tasteless or unattractive

¹⁸ Buxbaum, 25.

¹⁹ Byrde, 32.

²⁰ Buxbaum, 57.

trends as French, though, while elevating Austrian designs.²¹ Therefore, women in Vienna did not dress themselves in isolation but rather according to international trends, with a consciousness for national identity.

Viennese fashion did not develop in geographic isolation in the early nineteenth century, nor did it arise as an isolated aesthetic form. Indeed, the costumes actresses wore on stage influenced what audiences donned on the streets. As the cult of stardom developed in Biedermeier theater, society ladies imitated the costumes of these new celebrities.²² Viennese fashion labels often designed the costumes of actors, singers, and dancers, launching them as fashion icons, and female theatergoers would copy part or all of their onstage ensembles – whether or not the actual performance was a box office success. Moreover, theater magazines, fashion plates, and society journals portrayed popular stage protagonists and often included precise descriptions and sewing patterns in these reports.²³ Thus, these styles reached not only the elite women who could afford to attend the theater but also a broader range of consumers.²⁴ Indeed, Buxbaum argues that onstage styles offered a platform for sartorial experimentation and convinced women of the wearability of certain trends, such as extravagant jewelry or fanciful sleeves.²⁵ Theater costumes supported Viennese women in creating their own unique sense of style during the early nineteenth century. As Max von Boehn argues, “Das Zepter der Mode war von der Herrscherin Frankreichs an die Bühnenköniginnen übergegangen.”²⁶ Buxbaum echoes that Biedermeier actors had the function of establishing “eine nationale von Paris unabhängige

²¹ Buxbaum, 108-109.

²² Kerstin Moser, “Des Schauspiels neue Kleider – Überlegungen zur Integration kostümtheoretischer Ansätze in die theaterwissenschaftliche Methodik,” diss., (Universität Wien, 2013), 6-7.

²³ Buxbaum, 301-302.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 297.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 304.

²⁶ Boehn, 135.

Mode,” adding “Wiener Modelle auf der Bühne hatten den besten Propagandaeffekt.”²⁷ Hence, even if entertainers did not specifically portray Austrian characters, their costumes spurred the development of a local sartorial identity, as female consumers imitated the styles of the Viennese stage.

Case Study: Maria Stuart

Friedrich Schiller’s *Maria Stuart* premiered at the Weimarer Hoftheater in 1800 and first played at the Burgtheater in Vienna on December 29, 1814.²⁸ Adolf Bäuerle reported that the January 1815 performance he attended was so popular that he had to buy a standing ticket, and much anticipation surrounded the show even before Madame Löwe stepped onstage in the main role.²⁹ As Schiller’s Stuart left an impression on Viennese audiences, her name also made its way into local modes. On May 15, 1820, Bäuerle’s *Theaterzeitung* reported that Madame Ehlers was guest-starring in the role of Maria for the first time in Vienna, at the k.k. Hoftheater nächst der Burg.³⁰ On May 25, a mere five days later, the *Wiener Zeitschrift* published an image of a “Perkalkleid a la Maria Stuart,” based on a design by Viennese dressmaker Gottfried Röhberg (see fig. 5). It is uncertain if the few days between Ehlers’ debut and the Perkalkleid’s publication would have provided Röhberg with enough time to design this dress inspired by her performance. However, Schiller’s play ran in Linz in 1819 and reopened London in later that year, so Stuart certainly occupied a place in Austrian and greater European cultural consciousness in 1820.^{31, 32} Moreover, the enthusiasm surrounding Ehlers’ Vienna debut may

²⁷ Buxbaum, 323.

²⁸ Bäuerle, “Den 29. Dezember,” *Wiener Theaterzeitung*, 17 January 1815, 22.

²⁹ Bäuerle, “Über die Vorstellung der Maria Stuart im Theater nächst der k. k. Burg am 21sten Jänner 1815,” *Wiener Theaterzeitung*, 2 February 1815, 45.

³⁰ Bäuerle, “Neuigkeiten,” *Wiener Theaterzeitung*, 23 May 1820, 247.

³¹ “Correspondenz-Nachrichten,” *Wiener Theaterzeitung*, 28 September 1819.

³² Graf von Riesch, “Central-Zeitungslektüre,” *Wiener Theaterzeitung*, 13 April 1820, 180.

have encouraged the *Wiener Zeitschrift* to feature this fashion sketch on this day. Nevertheless, it is unclear why exactly this garment bears Stuart's name, from either the image or the description. No extant costume designs can be clearly traced back to Ehler's 1820 performance. Heinrich Friedrich Müller did publish a series of costume sketches for *Maria Stuart* in Vienna in the 1810s or 1820s, which contain clear Romantic Gothic style tropes, such as stand collars, puffed sleeves, and pointed waists (see fig. 6-8).³³ However, one cannot easily ascertain if Röhberg's dress design also exhibits these elements. It lacks slashing, puffs, or lace, featuring a row of ruffles along the collar and hem, instead. The ruffles at the shoulders could actually form small, puffed oversleeves in the Gothic mode, a style which does feature in Müller's costume designs for Maria Stuart and Queen Elisabeth, but one cannot tell for sure. Röhberg's bodice and waistband present similar challenges. Boehn mentions that waistlines lengthened in the German-speaking world in 1820 with a so-called "Maria-Stuart-Gürtel."³⁴ In 1830s England, pointed bodices were also termed "a la Marie Stuart" (see fig. 9).³⁵ However, the seated position and the long scarf covering the bodice obscure any belt, point, or lack thereof at the figure's waist. Although the design's specific connection with the onstage heroine thus remains mysterious, the concurrent performances of *Maria Stuart* and the publishing of design imply that Schiller's play could have inspired this fashion trend, in style or in name only.

³³ Archives are not in agreement about the exact dating of these costume renderings. The Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung at Universität Köln associates them with either Vienna or Prague as a place of origin – although the designs are all labeled "Wien" at the bottom – and the year 1816. In contrast, the Wien Museum estimates that they were published between 1825-1835 and connects them with the performances of Schiller's *Maria Stuart* in 1821. Thus, it is possible that these images represent the costumes worn in the original 1816 production in Vienna, the 1820 performance in which Ehlers starred, neither, or both – as theaters often reused costumes. In any case, it is fairly certain that the Müller sketches stem from the first few decades of the nineteenth century and thus constitute a legitimate source for comparison with the 1820 "Perkalkleid a la Maria Stuart."

³⁴ Boehn, 115.

³⁵ Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion 1: 1660-1860* (New York: McMillan, 1989), 60.



Figure 5. "Modenbild XXI: Peralkleid a la Maria Stuart," Gottfried Röhberg, *Wiener Zeitschrift*, 25 May 1820, 513.



Figure 9. "Dinner Dress," United Kingdom, ca. 1830-1836, Northampton Museum, in Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion 1: 1660-1860* (New York: McMillan, 1989), 60.



Figure 6-8. "Maria Stuart," "Maria Stuart," and "Elisabeth," Heinrich Friedrich Müller, Wien, 1816-1835, Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung, Universität Köln.

In addition to this dress, numerous styles named after the Scottish queen remained popular in Vienna throughout the Biedermeier period. Buxbaum reports that Viennese women again donned a “Kleid a la Maria Stuart” in 1826.³⁶ Other trends included a huge, strengthened lace collar known as a “Maria Stuart” or “Medici” Kragen in 1834, a hairstyle called a “Coiffeur Maria Stuart” in 1843, and “Maria Stuart Börsen” as belt adornments in 1844, which the *Wiener Zeitschrift* claimed were “nach einem Original der unglücklichen Königin von Schottland.”^{37, 38} Schiller’s *Maria Stuart*, in the Burgtheater’s repertoire in 1845-1846, continued to inspire hair, dress, and accessory styles.³⁹ The *Wiener Zeitschrift* predicted that curls “a la Maria Stuart” would become popular in winter 1845, a hair configuration that included a net of leaves worn at the back of the head, with beetles sewn on in gold thread, seeming so lifelike that “man glaubt, sie müsten jeden Augenblick davonfliegen.”⁴⁰ The connection between such a fanciful style and Scotland’s doomed queen is unclear and does not surface in any surviving costume designs, though the historical Stuart does appear to wear gold netting in her hair in a 1558 portrait (see fig. 10). Maria Stuart bonnets became popular in Vienna the same year, and in contrast to the curls “a la Maria Stuart,” seem truer to both real paintings of the queen and 1840s costume designs. The *Wiener Zeitschrift* described this bonnet as made of tulle, with a point going down to the forehead, which extends out to the side and is decorated over the ears with red ribbon.^{41, 42}

³⁶ Buxbaum, 57.

³⁷ Ibid, 59; 63; 64.

³⁸ “Modebericht,” *Wiener Zeitschrift*, 26 December 1844, 2064. As Börse can translate to “wallet” in historical Austrian German, one can assume this accessory was a purse that hung from a belt. This common feature of medieval women’s clothing would be consistent with historicist Gothic trends

³⁹ The *Wiener Zeitschrift* reports productions of *Maria Stuart* on October 12th and October 18th 1845, and February 15th, October 12th, September 20th, and November 22nd and 29th, 1846 for instance.

⁴⁰ “Modebericht,” *Wiener Zeitschrift*, 30 October 1845, 868.

⁴¹ In addition to its Viennese popularity in 1845, this style of bonnet was one of the most beloved in Paris in 1846, worn to the theater, concerts, and dinners, according to the *Wiener Zeitschrift* section on “Pariser Moden,” 30 April 1846 (344). Stuart bonnets in 1840s Paris could also have origins in the stage, as an opera about the Scottish queen, with text by Teodor Dune and music by Niedermeyer, played in Paris in December 1844 (“Auswärtige Correspondenz,” *Wiener Zeitschrift*, 3 January 1845, 7).

⁴² “Pariser Moden,” *Wiener Zeitschrift*, 8 October 1846, 806.

A 1578 portrait shows Stuart in a bonnet which similarly dips forwards in the front (see fig. 11). So does a character sketch of Julie Rettich from about 1845, as well as the first image in a series of Mandlbogen, Viennese-printed paper dolls for children based on theater costumes (see fig. 12, fig. 13).^{43, 44} In addition to Maria Stuart bonnets and curls, bodices with velvet “Brandenbourg” trim, edged with amethyst buttons, made an appearance in Vienna in 1845.⁴⁵ In fact, Buxbaum argues that these medieval-inspired trends specifically became “modern” after performances of *Maria Stuart*.⁴⁶ Thus, whether these styles took their aesthetic inspiration from costume designs or portraits of the historical queen, plays about Stuart kept her relevant to the Austrian public consciousness in the Biedermeier period. Unfortunately, one cannot make a direct visual comparison between theater costumes, original portraits, and fashion plates, though, as only written descriptions of these styles remain in the *Wiener Zeitschrift*.



Figure 10. “Mary, Queen of Scots,” Francois Clouet, ca. 1558, Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 11. “Mary, Queen of Scots,” after Nicholas Hillard, 1578, National Portrait Gallery London.



Figure 12. “Julie Rettich – Rollenbild als Maria Stuart,” Franz Gerasch, ca. 1845, Wien Museum.

⁴³ Although I could not find evidence of Rettich playing Stuart in Vienna, the *Wiener Zeitschrift* does report in the “Auswärtige Correspondenz” section of its August 18, 1845 issue that she had guest-starred as the titular character in Schiller’s play in Linz.

⁴⁴ Auguste Stich, a German actress famous for playing Stuart, is also depicted in a bonnet of this style in a character portrait (see fig. 14).

⁴⁵ “Modebericht,” *Wiener Zeitschrift*, 26 June 1845, 504.

⁴⁶ Buxbaum, 305.



Figure 13. “Th. Costumes No. 85: Maria Stuart,” M. Trentsensky, Wien, ca. 1832-1868, Wien Museum.



Figure 14. “Auguste Stich als Maria Stuart,” J. Lanzidelli, Wien Museum.



Figure 15. “Modebild XXXIX: Hohes Kleid a la Stuart,” F. Böhlinger, *Wiener Zeitschrift*, 30 September 1847, 781.

In fact, the only other image of a garment named after Maria Stuart in the *Wiener Zeitschrift* appeared in 1847, entitled “Hohes Kleid a la Stuart” (see fig. 15).⁴⁷ However, like earlier Stuart-style designs, even the sketch of this “Hohes Kleid” does not offer an immediately apparent connection to its namesake. The only marginally medievalist element in the dress is the scalloped edging on the skirt and collar, which slightly resembles the vandyked borders of the “Gothic” style. The dress “a la Stuart” also has a deep, pointed bodice, similar to the 1845 Rettich sketch, but this waistline was standard among womenswear in the 1840s. Indeed, the dress offers no further obvious similarities to the Rettich image, nor to any of the images of Stuart in Mandlbogen (see fig. 13; 17-19).⁴⁸ The one attribute that could earn this dress the “Maria Stuart” designation is the rows of scallops around the upper arms, which look a bit like puffed oversleeves. Puffed oversleeves were a feature of “Gothic” Romantic style and appear in costume designs for the play throughout the Biedermeier period, including the Müller depictions, the Mandlbogen, and the Rettich sketch. Indeed, the two rows of scallops on these potential oversleeves resemble the layers of ruffles on the 1820 “Perkalkleid a la Maria Stuart,” providing further evidence for this sleeve style as the source of the garment’s name. Moreover, the description of the 1845 Maria Stuart bodice in the *Wiener Zeitschrift* mentions “Oberärmel von genähten Spitzen...dazu eine wunderschöne diamante Armbinde,” which could also indicate the presence of oversleeves.⁴⁹ If these quasi-oversleeves are the reason for this Maria Stuart moniker, these dresses represent continuity in the aesthetic imagination of this historical character across decades, not only in theater costumes but also in women’s fashion.

⁴⁷ In 1847, a Stuart-style “Kopfputz” also became popular in Vienna, of which no image exists (Buxbaum, 81).

⁴⁸ The Mandlbogen constitute part of the Wien Museum’s collection and are all imprecisely dated between 1832-1868. However, the similarity between the dress worn by Königin Elisabeth in plate number 86 (see fig. 17) and a portrait of Auguste Koberwein-Fichtner as the character in an 1845 Burgtheater production of Schiller’s *Maria Stuart* (see fig. 16) indicates that at least some of the Mandlbogen costumes must date from the 1840s.

⁴⁹ “Modebericht,” *Wiener Zeitschrift*, 26 June 1845, 504.



Figure 16. "Frau Kobberwein-Fichtner als Königin Elisabeth," Franz Gerasch, ca. 1845, Wien Museum. Figure 17. "Th. Costumes No. 86: Maria Stuart," M. Trentsensky, Wien, ca. 1832-1868, Wien Museum.



Figure 18. "Th. Costumes No. 87: Maria Stuart," M. Trentsensky, Wien, ca. 1832-1868, Wien Museum.



Figure 19. "Th. Costumes No. 89: Maria Stuart," M. Trentsensky, Wien, ca. 1832-1868, Wien Museum.

Case 2: Agnes Sorel

Ideally, I would like to create the same kinds of comparisons between theater costumes and fashion illustrations of Agnes Sorel, another a medieval stage heroine of the Biedermeier period. Sorel featured as a character in Schiller's 1801 Die Jungfrau von Orleans and held the titular role in numerous operas. Moreover, trends named after Sorel arose in Vienna, such as the "Coiffure 'a la Agnes Sorel'" in 1832 and the Agnes-Mantel and Agnes turban of 1843.⁵⁰ However, while the Wiener Zeitschrift mentions these trends by name, I have not yet found any images of them, from which to make fashion-to-costume comparisons.

Conclusion

Although theater costumes appear to have influenced Biedermeier fashion trends in the case study of Maria Stuart, it is impossible to determine the exact impetus of such styles, and the lack of visual sources or detailed descriptions of early-nineteenth-century garments complicates this search for sources. One cannot even certify if such styles come directly from theater productions or if historical figures like Maria Stuart merely occupied a place in the general medievalist milieu of the Romantic era, so that directors staged plays about them and designers also named styles after them. At the very least, continued performances of Schiller's play and other productions featuring the historical character certainly bolstered public awareness of Stuart in first half of the nineteenth century, so that Viennese women wore garments evoking a Scottish queen, two-and-a-half centuries after her death. Moreover, the fact that many styles were named after Maria Stuart, the titular character, indicates that these performances served as a primary inspiration for these trends. Indeed, I have not come across a single garment labeled "a la

⁵⁰ Buxbaum 59, 63-64.

Elisabeth” so far, even though the entire era in which Mary Stuart lived and from which many of these style elements originated bears this British queen’s name, not her Scottish rival’s. Given the lack of incontrovertible textual or visual connections, such inferences provide the best evidence for the impact of costume design on women’s dress in the Biedermeier era.

This influence of theater costumes on fashion indicates a dynamic, two-way relationship between Viennese women and the productions they witnessed. Theater audiences did not just passively absorb entertainment but actively engaged with the historical figures onstage, choosing to emulate their style or name their garments after dramatic heroines. Viennese garment-makers and -wearers may have embraced Maria Stuart because they admired her character traits, appreciated her costumes’ aesthetics, wanted to associate themselves with monarchical power, or for a myriad of other reasons, all of which demonstrate agency and participation on the part of theatergoers. Indeed, the popularity of such styles can uncover women’s reception of theater in an era in which they rarely designed costumes or published critical reviews themselves.⁵¹ Fashion is one of the most accessible, omnipresent, and personal forms of artistic expression, as everyone must choose what they wear every day. On the one hand, as my previous research showed, contemporary silhouettes profoundly influenced theater costumes in early nineteenth-century Vienna. On the other hand, this paper demonstrates that onstage styles also influenced everyday dress. Therefore, theater was not just prescriptive or pedagogical, as Enlightenment and Romantic thinkers desired, but part of a circular aesthetic exchange that conveys how female fashion enthusiasts regarded history and identity in the Biedermeier era.

⁵¹ After Johann Schick, publisher of the *Wiener Zeitung*, died in 1835, his wife ran the periodical for the next three years. Until Friedrich Witthauer took over the publication in 1838, Schick’s widow represented one of the few female leaders in theater and fashion criticism (Buxbaum, 118).