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Interwar Weimar Film and Masculinity: Challenging the Presumed Crisis of  
Interwar German Gender Discourse from Selected Films from 1925-1931

by

Brandon Metcalf

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
History

Thesis Committee:  
Patricia Schechter, Chair  
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Portland State University  
2022

## Abstract

The First World War altered the view of masculinity held by many in Germany and shredded what many regarded as unchangeable fixtures of German life. For German men, much of the interwar period meant dealing with the losses from the war, reconfiguring what it meant to be a man. This reconfiguration of gender took place in a context of change in Germany. Many women entered the workforce to replace the lost men. The economic downturn and reliance on funding from the United States motivated many within Germany to examine gender roles and to reassemble masculinity to meet changing circumstances.

This project explores this reassembly of gender and masculinity through the lens of film. As a starting point, I examine the historiography of gender crisis within interwar German film. For several decades now, many film historians have analyzed gender in these films and concur about their portrayal of a crisis of masculinity, specifically that men saw themselves as failures. My re-reading of these films suggests that while it is true that many films from this period convey a crisis of gender, a number of filmmakers pushed through crisis to reconfigure and reassemble a coherent vision of masculinity.

This reassembly involved a shift in the class orientation of gender identity. In the group of films I examine, an upper-class orientation of masculinity gives way to a hardened and heroic masculinity projected on to a working-class male protagonist. Furthermore, this hardened and heroic masculinity was projected through characters and stories that functioned outside the left-right political spectrum. Of course, this new expression of idealized masculinity later becomes attached to the Nazis, but this thesis

roots its origins in diffuse cultural and political orientations. I suggest that a potentially wide German audience might have encountered and become familiar with, even accepting of, a reassembled masculinity via film. The filmmakers in this study were not Nazis and this study suggests that the historiography of German interwar film too narrowly attributes the vision of masculinity under National Socialism as a “fix” for postwar and Weimar social problems.

This project, then, explores the narrative and character manifestations of masculinity in German society via film. The filmmakers were not Nazis, and the films were not propaganda pieces in service to the party. My selection of films is comprised of entertainment pieces representing a variety of agendas among filmmakers of the time. As such, this study finds a common theme of reassembled masculinity, moving from a traditional (or “in crisis”) mode of gender to a new hypermasculine mode, notably defined by sexual aggression and violence. The variety and variability discovered in my study has been missing in the historiography of Weimar. Through the lens of film, this thesis recovers a broader and less ideologically driven set of explorations of gender in interwar Germany.

## Dedication

To my Andrew,

There were a lot of ups and downs in the process of writing this thesis. It was not a process I would like to repeat. However, I always knew if there was any problem in any way, that if I was suffering emotionally, you would always be there. It would be dishonest to say that others did not encourage me, but I always knew when you were saying it, I knew it was true. The encouragement you gave me was simple and backed by true feelings. I will always be grateful for that. It is why I love you. Never has there been anyone who I felt truly believed that I could do something and succeed like I felt you knew I could. I will always be in your debt.

Your friend,  
Brandon

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There are many people who I should thank for me getting to finish this project. Primary is Patricia Schechter who was my advisor on this project. Her willingness and ability to work with me through this was a gift that I cannot begin to elucidate here. She created within me a strength to persevere even when it felt like I was drowning. Her wisdom and integrity at pushing me to strive for better created something I could be proud of. Without her this project would not have been as good as it is. The same goes for Joseph Bohling, who when I began as an undergraduate at PSU, revitalized a love I had for history, and pushed and encouraged me to improve. When I first started the graduate program, I chose him as my advisor, and he helped me to broaden my understanding and further nurtured my interest in interwar German history.

Of course, this project would not have been able to get off the ground without support from family and friends who encouraged me to continue in the process although at times it was hard. My father and mother were stalwart and understanding, and my sister always knew when I needed quiet. My extended family and my cousins gave me relief through our tabletop game sessions. They did not press or prod me into talking about the process of this project, allowing me to forget whatever deadline or section was giving trouble that week.

My gratitude extends further to the community I helped to create online and the dear friends that I have gathered in that space. They listened to my complaints about revisions and how annoying they were. People like Karl Scheer, one of my best friends,

was a shoulder for me to lean on when it got tough. I appreciate the whole community at RPG Talk who were there when I needed them.

Without all those people noted above, I would have never begun this project, which I undertook to improve myself and be more than I thought I could be. I have healed the broken child hurt by an education system that made him feel worthless. Now I know that I am not bound by the realities of failures of the past and I am encouraged to look towards the success of the future.

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## Introduction

### Rethinking the Cultural Politics of Masculinity of Interwar Germany

Each generation within a culture leaves behind traces and materials that convey how they viewed the world. Those generations with access to film leave a particular kind of archive. Historians who explore media like radio and film can paint a particularly vivid portrait of the past. The media-informed vision of the past can expand or even challenge how scholars understand a particular place and time solely based on the textual or institutional archive. In the early twentieth century, no one place produced a more vast and varied body of visual work than the Weimar Republic. This body of visual work was itself a product of its context. Notably, film makers and the film industry in Germany looked to the United States for inspiration as they tried to make their way during a time of tumultuous economic and political change.

Scholars have long mined the cultural treasure trove of interwar Germany, especially the Weimar filmscape. Given the stressors operating in Germany after World War I, film historians have explored the Weimar film industry for insights in topics ranging from gender and sexuality, to urban planning and design, to the workings of mass culture. Not surprisingly, this informal filmic “archive” has been examined to explain the rise of Nazism. As early as 1947, before the advent of film as a subject within art history, Siegfried Kracauer, a sociologist, linked the rise of Nazism to the escapist nature of Weimar film.<sup>1</sup> Today, historians acknowledge the limits of Kracauer’s work; its

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<sup>1</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of German Film*, ed. and trans. by Leonardo Quaresima (1947; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

inaccuracies and the fact that he relied on his recollection of films rather than fresh viewings. Moreover, Kracauer based his conclusions on a small set of films and made broad generalizations about the mindset of Germany while ignoring numerous factors among the populace, like a possible rural and urban divide. Writing some 50 years later, film historian Thomas Elsaesser, regarded as a leading authority, challenged the Kracauer thesis. Elsaesser reframed the field by asserting that the connection between film and politics is still open to debate rather than set or predetermined.<sup>2</sup>

Since Kracauer, film history has expanded into many areas of scholarly inquiry, especially the field of sexuality and gender. Within gender and sexuality studies in Weimar film, there are lively debates over issues of interpretation and causality as well as provocative treatments of under-explored film genres. Particularly compelling studies by feminist film scholars have theorized the camera's "gaze" as masculine and possessing. This wide-ranging scholarship focuses on female protagonists, women's bodies, and tensions around sexuality.<sup>3</sup> Masculinity, however, is all but missing from this story of gender and film. Like the general historiography, Weimar film historiography regarding

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), John T. Zagula, "Saints, Sinners, and Society: Images of Woman in Film and Drama, From Weimar to Hitler," *Women's Studies* 19, no. 1 (July 1991): 55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.1991.9978854>. Jans B. Wager, *Dangerous Dames: Women and Representation in the Weimar Street Film and Film Noir* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999). Mel Gordon, *Voluptuous Panic: The Erotic World of Weimar Berlin*, Expanded edition (Los Angeles, Calif: Feral House, 2008). Hans Helmut Prinzler, *Sirens & Sinners: A Visual History of Weimar Film 1918-1933*, 1st edition (London England: New York, N.Y: Thames & Hudson, 2013).

gender falls into distinct categories, that of the New Woman and that of the Man in Crisis.<sup>4</sup>

These two figures are almost unavoidable when discussing gender within Weimar's social context. Authors like Katie Sutton and Michael Hau describe tumultuous gender dynamics in Germany, leading to a single destination: the Nazis gender synthesis. I do not jettison the binary gender framework of male/female in this study; however, I focus on the subject of masculinity in the context of Weimar film as being at least as unstable and dynamic as femininity and gender in general. I question the exclusive and somewhat overdetermined status of the “masculinity in crisis” framework that dominates the literature.

It should also be noted that scrutiny of the “New Woman” or the “Jewish Question” does not play out the same way as that of the “New Man.” In the primary sources, varied representation of the “New Woman” or negative depictions of Jews can be found.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, “Man” is unusually stable, uniform, and positive, the basis from

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<sup>4</sup> Eric D. Weitz, “The Heroic Man and the Ever-Changing Woman: Gender and Politics in European Communism, 1917–1950” in *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, ed. Laura Frader and Sonya Rose (Ithaca, 1996), 311–52. Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001). Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and “New Objectivity,”* 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2001). Susan Laikin Funkenstein, “A Man’s Place in a Woman’s World: Otto Dix, Social Dancing, and Constructions of Masculinity in Weimar Germany,” *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture* 21, no. 1 (2005): 163–91, <https://doi.org/10.1353/wgy.2005.0003>. Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011). Julia Roos, *Weimar Through the Lens of Gender: Prostitution Reform, Woman’s Emancipation, and German Democracy, 1919-33* (University of Michigan Press, 2010)., and Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire, eds., *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s*, 1st edition (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York, NY, United States: Berghahn Books, Incorporated, 2011), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/psu/detail.action?docID=717916>.

which others are measured. Recent scholarship notes that journalistic or advertising images like “The New Woman” were not hegemonic, nor were those of European Jewry before the 1930s.<sup>6</sup> Key for this thesis is the idea that the “New Man” or a masculinity in “crisis” are primarily questions within the secondary sources and scholarship, rather than problems articulated in primary materials.

What do historians mean when they describe masculinity “in crisis” under Weimar? Before the twentieth century, gender descriptors fell into a distinct rhetoric of “manhood” and “womanhood.”<sup>7</sup> As numerous scholars of Europe and the U.S. have shown, the fin de siècle witnessed a sharp shift toward biologized, militarized, and racialized tropes and narratives to explain social sex roles in modern society. This new masculinity, the explanation goes, restored patriarchal authority, tagging it to a particular family, racial, and national order. This restored and revised masculinity helped secure and legitimize an imperial agenda for countries like Great Britain and the United States. However, such restorative projects stumbled in Germany between the wars, especially given the country’s defeat in World War I. Moreover, women gained rights, like voting, and they worked for wages more frequently in the public sector. By contrast, German men seemed depleted by war via injury and death, and were emotionally/psychologically

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<sup>6</sup> Rüdiger Graf, “Anticipating the Future in the Present: ‘New Women’ and Other Beings of the Future in Weimar Germany,” *Central European History* 42, no. 4 (December 2009): 647–73, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938909991026>. & Barbara Hales and Valerie Weinstein, *Rethinking Jewishness in Weimar Cinema* (Berghahn Books, 2020), 16.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003. and George L Mosse. *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. New York, Oxford University Press. and Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, Women in Culture and Society edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

disabled by military failure. This tense situation led some politicians, educators, doctors, and other opinion shapers to wonder in the German case: what makes a man?

Historians have identified these questions as well as answers in Weimar film. It is perhaps not surprising that gender study in film in this period, especially of masculinity, reveals crisis.<sup>8</sup> Yet there is more to the story. Some historians point out that a perceived crisis of masculinity, in Germany at least, had roots in late nineteenth century. George L. Mosse defines this earlier normative manliness as detectable in the modern understanding of masculinity via the “soldier type.”<sup>9</sup> Given this deeper sense of change over time, Mosse is an important foundational text for exploring masculinity during the Weimar era. Many have built upon or refuted his conceptions. Authors like R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt analyze and dissect later notions of hegemonic masculinity, stretching the story forwards and back in time.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the notion of “hegemonic masculinity in crisis” persist in Weimar film historiography, in part due to the need to explain the rise and reception of the Nazis synthesis on gender.

Even reframed as a “history of sexuality” topic within Queer studies (rather than as a “rise of Nazism” topic) Weimar film finds itself in overdetermined explanatory

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<sup>8</sup> Klaus Theweleit and Anson Rabinbach, *Male Fantasies, Vol. 2: Male Bodies - Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*, trans. Erica Carter and Chris Turner, First Printing edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and “New Objectivity.”* 1st ed (New York: Palgrave, 2001), Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, Weimar and Now 17 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany’s Historical Imaginary* (New York: Routledge, 2000), Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 56

<sup>10</sup> R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 829–59.

space. Katie Sutton acknowledges "the 'masculinization of woman' (Vermännlichung der Frau)" as "central to the representations of the changing female ideal in post-World War I Germany."<sup>11</sup> The New Woman's effect on men, already in unstable since the late nineteenth century, sharpened as new interlocutors joined the discussion of sexuality and the sexual future of the nation. Historians of gay and lesbian history have followed suit. For example, Clayton Whisnant categorizes Weimar masculinity as a crisis. Whisnant spotlights the Cinema Law and Law to Protect Youth against Trash and Smut, connecting these laws to the rise of a conservative political agenda and a reactionary sexual order.<sup>12</sup> In this case, the fear of homosexuality created a political opportunity for conservatives. Films in this vein projected a vision of the strong soldier and the supportive housewife, two roles perceived as under threat and in need of restoration to relieve the gender and general "crisis" of Germany.

The widely read scholar of Weimar film Richard McCormick also focuses on gender and sexuality. McCormick takes a broad view, pointing out that gender and sexuality were under adjustment during the republic and that various visions and solutions emerged on the screen.<sup>13</sup> Despite this less acute and determinative framing of gender, McCormick's discussion of iconic films like *Der Blaue Engel* tends to reinforce the "crisis thesis" for masculinity. Missing from these treatments is masculinity as a

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<sup>11</sup> Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Clayton John Whisnant, *Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History, 1880-1945* (New York, NY: Harrington Park Press, 2016), 168-169.

<sup>13</sup> Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and "New Objectivity,"* 3-4.

general subject; for example, of men as objects of desire or as part of explorations of the heteronormative husband and bread-winner roles. In general, Weimar film historiography, like non-film Weimar historiography, grasps masculinity as an historical subject primarily through the category “crisis.”

My study is not the first to question the “crisis consensus” in Weimar culture studies. Natalya Lusty and Julian Murphet, in their introduction to *Modernism and Masculinity* (2014), state that “attempts to examine the category of masculinity have precipitated a defensive response to a perceived question of authority (a reactionary crisis) and a constructive attention to the historical complexities and transformations of manhood, masculinity, and male privilege.”<sup>14</sup> This insight pairs well with the work of Judith Butler. Like R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, Butler takes an “anti-essentialist” approach to gender, viewing sex roles as unstable cultural constructions that are subject to the vagaries of social performance. As will be shown in subsequent chapters, Butler’s orientation provides an antidote to the reflexive association of modernity and “masculinity in crisis” for Weimar Germany.<sup>15</sup>

In fairness, Weimar historiography is a varied body of scholarship. For example, Katie Sutton focuses on women as part of the crisis of gender.<sup>16</sup> Historian Michael Hau explores how trends in medicine and health reveal a range of gendered self-making

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<sup>14</sup> Natalya Lusty and Julian Murphet, eds., *Modernism and Masculinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3.

<sup>15</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Tenth Anniversary Edition* (London: Routledge, 2002), 18-20.

<sup>16</sup> Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, Incorporated, 2011).



projects. Hau traces “German” identity and gender ideals to negative comparisons with “others,” notably the foreign-born man or Jew.<sup>17</sup> Hau also examines sport as a highly charged domain of German men’s success and, in a separate study, connects competitive success in sport and work with ideals of German maleness.<sup>18</sup> Related arguments about sports and gender have been made by Erik Norman Jensen, who additionally points out that sport and competition sometimes unsettled normative male authority rather than reinforced it.<sup>19</sup>

Important scholarly treatments of gender under Weimar involve politics. Sara Anne Sewell shows that ideologically focused rhetoric found in the propaganda of the Communist Party was linked to the gender ideals, especially masculinity, propagandized by this group via violence. Sewell writes: “The creation of a communist male archetype who was working-class, politically resolute, physically fit, battle-ready, and willing to sacrifice his life for the cause signaled a reconceptualization of masculinity that responded to the specific political and social context of late Weimar.”<sup>20</sup> Notably, Dirk Schumann locates the locus of gendered political violence within the small human moments instead of the larger societal “events.” “This ‘small’ violence of street fighting

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 181-182.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Hau, *Performance Anxiety: Sport and Work in Germany from the Empire to Nazism*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 217.

<sup>19</sup> Erik Norman Jensen, *Body by Weimar: Athletes, Gender, and German Modernity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 121.

<sup>20</sup> Sara Ann Sewell, “The Party Does Indeed Fight Like A Man: The Construction of a Masculine Ideal in the Weimar Communist Party,” in *Weimar Culture Revisited*. (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 218.

and hall brawls reflected the absence of a basic political consensus,” he writes, as well as indicated “the partial loss of the state's monopoly on violence.”<sup>21</sup> These studies highlight the fragmentation of Weimar society, revealing the diffuse, intimate, and everyday stressors around German gender expression, especially masculinity.

Much of the work on gender in Weimar Germany has a “rise of Nazism” underpinning. Equally evident is a scholarly consensus that the breakdown in political function and a concomitant rise of social violence evident in the political situation finds its way to the film screen and into movie houses. As noted, Schumann suggests that Weimar political violence points up differing views of masculinity, between those who perceive crisis and those who do not. Additional gender insights come from work on youth and fascism. Alessio Ponzio finds that the Nazi and Italian fascist youth movements shared a heightened emphasis on masculinity, directed toward creating a “New Man.”<sup>22</sup> While Ponzio’s focus is mostly post-Weimar, it is an essential tool for understanding the creation of the “new” fascist man, against the well-established literary and journalistic trope of the New Woman. Following Mosse and others identified here, my study suggests that some of the work of reconstituting or reassembling masculinity occurred during Weimar and can be found in film.

This study asks how, from 1925 to 1933, did film audiences encounter concepts and ideals of masculinity beyond the trope of “crisis”? My film selection surveys

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<sup>21</sup> Dirk Schumann, *Political Violence in the Weimar Republic, 1918-1933* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 305.

<sup>22</sup> Alessio Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man: Youth Training Regimes in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 6.

material wherein a plausible “daily reality” is projected for German viewers and in which a variety of themes, narrative, and characters are visible. I describe how some reassembling of gender ideals, specifically around masculinity, is visible in such films. This material suggests that some of the work of creating a “new man” for Germany takes place before 1933 and is not solely attributable to the Nazi cultural intervention.

By focusing on masculinity, my purpose is to exercise sensitivity about non-binary constructions of gender rather than to marginalize treatments of women or female characters. Masculinity is not a binary, though it is often treated as such. In my approach, I rely on the insights about gender pioneered by feminist scholars of women's history and film.<sup>23</sup> My project considers feminist scholars and critiques around women's depictions in Weimar film and the critiques of the men in the films, both actors and characters, and the men producing these films. This framing leads to three main questions. First: why does covering masculinity in film matter? The answer, as suggested above, lies in the ways in which masculinity, like any other discourse about power or “reality,” is comprised of many different elements. Behind these elements are people who, cognizant or not, are pushing, changing, embodying, resisting, and altering what masculinity “is.” This project shares the historiography's premise in that social cohesion, morality, and political legitimacy are often mirrored or rooted in images of the family,

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<sup>23</sup> Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053–75, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/91.5.1053>, Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), Maurizia Boscagli, *Eye On The Flesh: Fashions Of Masculinity In The Early Twentieth Century* (Avalon Publishing, 1996), Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Tenth Anniversary Edition* (London, United Kingdom, Routledge, 2002), Julia Roos, *Weimar Through the Lens of Gender: Prostitution Reform, Woman's Emancipation, and German Democracy, 1919-33* (University of Michigan Press, 2010).

marriage, conjugality, and sex roles and that film is a significant domain for tracking and evaluating these dynamics.

Secondly, I ask why masculinity matters? What kinds of questions and meanings have been missed in a rush to explain the rise of Nazism and its militarized and racialized gender formulations? As shown above, masculinity matters because focusing solely on a single kind of masculinity means other masculinity stories are missed or misinterpreted. This project does not assert that “masculinity in crisis” is a useless framework for Weimar film study. Rather, I attempt to unpack binary notions of masculinity in the case of Weimar film. Finally, a third question involves film’s connection to politics. How does politics connect to gender and masculinity in film? As Sewell and Ponzio’s work shows, the story of masculinity within political formations during the Weimar Republic (and beyond) is complex. This study does not propose a new link between culture and politics but asks what does a Weimar-era “fragmented” masculinity look like, at least in film? And what have scholars missed in stopping at proving a “crisis”? I suggest they missed a reassembled masculinity via the working-class orientation noted at the beginning of this introduction.

My treatment of late interwar films in Germany showcases masculinity in ways that complicates the historiography of masculinity in crisis, revealing masculinity—like feminist appraisals of femininity—to be multifaceted.<sup>24</sup> In my reading, the films offer

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<sup>24</sup> Julia Roos, *Weimar through the Lens of Gender: Prostitution Reform, Woman’s Emancipation, and Germany Democracy, 1919-1933* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010) and Laurie Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: Germany Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

alternative versions of masculinity not rooted in crisis per se and that resolve via violence that is not readily read as “political.” This project uses eight films of the period (1925-1933), including comedies, historical pieces, and dramas.<sup>25</sup> I selected these films for a multitude of reasons, including restricted research access during the covid pandemic. Some of the films are from my personal collection of Weimar films. Initially, I sought films not yet significantly analyzed by others, but I came to believe this approach would limit my analysis. Moreover, many films from this period are simply lost. Researchers are limited to those few remaining films (approximately 10% of the whole).<sup>26</sup> A handful have been recovered and restored, and those by popular directors like Fritz Lang remain accessible. The result is a mix of well-known films, obscure films, and those that exist in-between. I wanted a range of genres rather than limiting myself to war films or comedies. I also sought films intended for wide viewing at the time as well as those that accent gender protagonists and antagonists and that involve dialogue about different kinds of masculinity.

To reinforce the films as text, this project will be using both primary and secondary sources related to the films. I collected sources showing how the studios sold the film to a broader audience. These materials provide context about how the film characters were understood in their time and place. For example, when a standard

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<sup>25</sup> *Die Verrufenen* [Slums of Berlin] 1925, *Die Unehelichen* [Children of No Importance or the Illegitimate] 1926, *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* [The Love of Jeanne Ney or Lusts of the Flesh], 1927, *Geschlecht in Fesseln* [Sex in Chains] 1928, *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü* (The White Hell of Pitz Palu), 1929, *Menschen am Sonntag* (People on Sunday), 1930, *Westfront 1918*, 1930, *Kameradschaft* (Comradeship or *La Tragédie de la mine*), 1931.

<sup>26</sup> Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema*, 28.

masculine character, like “solider,” appears “less masculine” such a projection reveals something about the director’s views of masculinity. I try to highlight differences between what is seen on the screen versus how masculinity is being portrayed in political rhetoric of the time. By analyzing these films and the various connected pieces, this project uncovers masculinity beyond “crisis.” I spotlight a range of reassemblies of masculinity before the Nazis synthesis. I hope this project will be useful to film historians, political historians, and historians of Germany for its uncovering of a critical, overlooked part of German gender history.

In a contemporary moment where a range of historical actors are attempting to rethink gender, sexuality, and family--from the #MeToo movement to gender fluidity—this project acknowledges the possible uses of gender, notably the so-called fragile masculinity, as a staging ground for fascism in the past and in the present. Gender projects of various sorts can be influenced--or not--by what that culture consumes. In my view, last four years of life in the United States indicates how political fragmentation can damage a society. But what is the connection between gender exploration and official political consequences? The answer is not determinative, neither under Weimar nor today. This project aims to create a work that is both useful as a reference work and as a primer for better understanding variable masculinity in film under a storm of political fragmentation.

The following chapters will lay the groundwork for an approach to masculinity as variable and is not simply a “crisis” under Weimar. The next chapter further explores gender theory as a roadmap to uncoupling gender and masculinity from a single

explanatory framework for interwar Germany. This roadmap sets up chapter two, which explores in detail the assembling of my film “archive.” The separation of time periods and the distinctiveness of genre shape the final chapter which focuses on the argument being made about masculinity. The crisis of masculinity is a subjective one which appears when certain films are the only ones considered. By using a different set of films, my study uncovers other sites of gender exploration as well as what I call the reassembling of masculinity before 1933. As such, my study expands and complicates ideas of gender and masculinity in Weimar, broadening the approach to gender as a subject of historical study.

## Chapter One

### An Intersectional Perspective on Masculinity in Weimar Film

Central to my analysis of gender and masculinity in film in Weimar are works of scholarship that frame gender beyond crisis and that frame gender a priori as “state of binary”: pure or fixed masculinity and pure or fixed femininity. Judith Butler's foundational work, *Gender Trouble*, and her second work, *Bodies that Matter* are key for my approach. Although now 30 years old, Butler's work speaks to modern-day conversations concerning gender. The discourse over inclusion and exclusion and how gender conversations evolve is just fresh and helpful now as 30 years ago. The concept from Butler's work that is most important for this project is “performance.” Performance is key for unpacking gender on screen because film is performance; it's performing a script about identity, meaning, and social roles. The identities or characters might be “fixed” or more wobbly, unstable, and unravelling. The layered and revealing nature of filmic narration and projection lends itself especially well to Butler's framework of gender as performance.

To supplement Butler, I pair her work with Todd W. Reeser's *Masculinities in Theory*. Published in 2010, Reeser's gathers up multiple perspectives on masculinity and gender theory, bringing many conversations together in one book under a post-structuralist lens. The collection covers a wide range of topics from the masculinized body to non-male masculinity to racialized masculinity. Complementing Butler, Reeser intends to destabilize stereotypes of masculinity, affirming that masculinity is fluid rather



than static.<sup>27</sup> This project hopes to accomplish the same but in the Weimar Republic film area. Reeser adds to and supplements the conversation about performance. More importantly, Reeser discusses masculinity as an ideology, which is essential to understanding the ideologically contentious Weimar Republic. Another key element for Reeser is temporality, which concerns the passage of time as essential to discussing masculinity. Blanket masculinity as “fixed” in time (or in the life cycle) disables a more probing analysis of gender and role development. Temporality brings in age and the subjective and objective passage of time to bear. In the case of Weimar, Reeser helps ask who exactly the “crisis of masculinity” applies to? All men? Or only men aged 18 to 35? Temporality allows this project to explore masculinity-in-formation rather than a capital M masculinity.

Along with Butler and Reeser, this project is supplemented by the work of Todd McGowan and his restructuring of Lacan's work, as applied to the cinema, particularly the theory crafting and separation of desire and subject meaning the viewer of the film. McGowan is crucial because he distinguishes and theorizes the role of the screen and that of the viewer. In film criticism, it is relatively straightforward to explain how the cinematographer or director's feelings of masculinity reflect their work. It is there on the screen for the critical eye to see. However, in that discussion, there must be some cognizance that the viewer is not the camera, nor can a critical eye make a blanket statement about a viewer's acceptance of what is on the screen. McGowan complicates

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<sup>27</sup> Todd W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (Chinchester, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2010), 15.

the masculinity on the screen, altering it into a trichotomy, viewer, the camera, and the critic.

Butler, Reeser, and McGowan give this project a kaleidoscopic lens that forms a helpful tool to interrogate what Weimar films are saying when compared, contrasted, and interpreted to one another. Rather than focus on the standard teleological understanding of Weimar masculinity—tradition, crisis, reconstruction—these theorists permit a more wide-ranging, richer, and more varied view of Weimar film and its relation to masculinity. Two scholars of Weimar in particular help advance the questions I want to explore in this thesis: Richard McCormick and Katie Sutton.

In *Gender and Sexuality in the Weimar Modernity*, McCormick uses film and literature to uncover what was occurring with gender and sexuality during the Weimar Era. By comparing these two genres of art, McCormick roots gender crisis (for men and women) in a time of sexual crisis, that is, of marriage, family, and reproduction.<sup>28</sup> Sutton in focuses on women and the emergence of the so-called masculine women. She finds that its causes are not limited to Weimar and its implications go well beyond the regime.<sup>29</sup> In other words, these scholars show that gender issues, including crisis, cannot be solely attributed to the particularities of Weimar, but are multicausal.

Still, many notable works involving film, like *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary* by Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar cinema: an essential*

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<sup>28</sup> Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and "New Objectivity,"* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 5-7.

<sup>29</sup> Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, Incorporated, 2011), 182.

*guide to classic films of the era* edited by Noah Isenberg and Mel Gordon's *Voluptuous Panic: The Erotic World of Weimar Berlin* rely on the New Woman vs. the Man in Crisis framework, underpinned by a need to explain the rise of Nazism. The treatment of men is limited to "crisis." However, even as I contest the idea of the singular Weimar masculinity under crisis, as opposed to many masculinities, I must acknowledge that some structures, institutions, and communities are under crisis.

Often a result of the Kracauerian framework, the typical discussion of masculinity in film under Weimar follows two paths: aspirational or warning. *Der blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*, 1930) is a film that tends to garner the most commentary about the "sexual and social anxieties" of the entire Weimar Era.<sup>30</sup> In *Der blaue Engel*, the heartless cabaret singer Lola destroys the masculinity of the main character. *Der blaue Engel* is a very influential Weimar film and because of this, it has become representative of the era. However, it is one film, and a single film cannot represent the entirety of an era.<sup>31</sup> Performance, as theorized by Butler can help unpack some of these gender constructs.

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<sup>30</sup> McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity*, 15.

<sup>31</sup> Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and "New Objectivity,"* 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2001), Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema*, National Cinemas Series (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), 47-48, Patrice Petro, "Nation Cinemas/National Film Culture: The Blue Angel (1930) in Multiple language Versions," edited by Noah Isenberg, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 255 and 260., Frank Pilipp, "Desire, Deviation, Double Entendre: The Aesthetics of Sexuality in Der Blaue Engel Revisited," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 42, no. 2 (April 3, 2014): 91–104, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01956051.2013.805119>. Scott Curtis, *The Shape of Spectatorship: Art, Science, and Early Cinema in Germany*, Illustrated edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 142.

In Butler's chapter on "Subversive Bodily Acts" in her work *Bodies that Matter*, she elaborates the idea of gender as performance. She notes:

gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality.<sup>32</sup>

Gender then becomes a ritualized act as a repeated performance. A viewer consumes an expression of gender, then recontextualizes within themselves internally, then externalizes what they have taken from that process. In the case of the Weimar Republic, German film directors, writers, and actors gleaned masculinity from life and experiences, as adaptive performance, then through the act of creation, masculinity was reformulated and projected on the screen. Then the viewer can accept, recontextualize, or reject what they see. If one of the hallmarks of modern social identities is that they are taught and observed through mass technologies, then the depictions on screen are emblematic domains for understanding the social construction of gender. This lens of performative masculinity then is key to unpacking the performance on the screen. It is not a single transmission from director to screen to viewer, but a negotiation, or as Reeser put it, a dialogic instance of meaning making.<sup>33</sup> If I accept masculinity as hegemonic and not under negotiation, this project is pointless. However, following Butler, grasping and analyzing masculinity is not a simple one-to-one ratio. Masculinity is understood as a

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<sup>32</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 192.

<sup>33</sup> Todd W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 111.

kind of performance.

Such a framing allows multiple readings for the filmmaker, the performer, and for the audience, then and now. As Butler suggests:

The reading of 'performativity' as willful and arbitrary choice misses the point that historicity of discourse and, in particular, the historicity of norms (the 'chains' of iteration invoked and dissimulated in the imperative utterance) constitute the power of discourse to enact what it names.<sup>34</sup>

At times, masculinity under standard film history discourse becomes rigid and unable to change as the conversation changes. However, the further one analyzes films outside of the Weimar crisis frame, as this project attempts to do, the conception of a teleology of crisis or simple march toward fascist masculinity becomes strained. As Reeser puts it, gender and its performance can break down and can be "revealed as incoherent."<sup>35</sup> As Butler describes, masculinity in crisis can exist or "be read" as a site of plurality.<sup>36</sup>

Historians have well documented such anxiety in interwar Germany. This study presumes that anxiety not as a driver or a "given," but as a context in which many outcomes were floated—notably in the arts—but most of these did not fully emerge in social and political life.<sup>37</sup> There is no finality or end of the discussion to the kind of dialogue that

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<sup>34</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 139.

<sup>35</sup> Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 87.

<sup>36</sup> Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 168

<sup>37</sup> Bruce Arthur Murray, *Film and the German Left in the Weimar Republic: From Caligari to Kuhle Wampe*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 233-235. Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 403-406, Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and "New Objectivity,"* 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 165. Michael Cowan, *Cult of the Will*, 1st edition (University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press, 2012), 19. Scott Curtis, *The Shape of Spectatorship: Art, Science, and Early Cinema in Germany*, Illustrated edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 244.

this project creates and while Butler is speaking to the term "women," her sensibility can be applied to men and masculinity.<sup>38</sup>

Butler's work primarily focuses on the feminist discussions concerning the usage of terms like "women" and how they are applied politically in her own time. While this project focuses men and masculinity, I treat women in the films who express masculine qualities and by remaining sensitive to how the performances surrounding masculinity help identify gender as an ideology not a "thing."<sup>39</sup> While my focus is masculinity, women and female characters abound in this project, often as a sexualized female form and necessary to the general heterosexual framing.<sup>40</sup> The camera's gaze then informs what is seen, in most cases female characters function as an object of male desire.

While often gender in Weimar film fulfills the expected norm of the binary, it is possible that the gaze produced by the camera can become unstable. Following Reeser, a film "can destabilize the very idea of a single type of watcher by embedding a number of gendered looking positions into its eye or by making the very idea of a gendered camera angle suspect."<sup>41</sup> With the idea of the sexualized gaze of the camera in mind, the spectator and the gaze cannot be confused with one another. "This is not to say that subjects never act out of —nor go to the cinema because of—a desire for mastery," notes

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<sup>38</sup> Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 169.

<sup>39</sup> Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 20.

<sup>40</sup> Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 112.

<sup>41</sup> Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 113.

McGowan.<sup>42</sup> Sometimes, there is no cognitive—or documentable—desire to obtain this mastery over said female form or, in the case of this project, a reconfiguring of masculinity. "Even when the subject sees a complete image, something remains obscure: the subject cannot see how its own desire distorts what it is sees," explains McGowan. "The gaze of the object includes the subjects in what the subject sees, but this gaze is not present in the field of the visible."<sup>43</sup> The spectator comes to the cinema for enjoyment rather than for an unconscious desire of the object; however, they may obtain enjoyment from the object. The differentiation between the male gaze of the camera and the psychological understanding of the subject helps to delineate masculinity and the apparent crisis. It is a subjective contextual viewing case rather than something in those films "per se" that determines experiences. In other words, is it the subject who is in crisis or the camera(man)?

In Weimar Germany, numerous factions and considerations bear on the construction of gender, whether primarily in "crisis" or not. Of particular importance is the general problematizing of "the body" in this period. A substantial literature describes how the male body became a flashpoint for discussion, resolving (to some degree) in an idealized "white" form on which the health and viability of the nation depended. Numerous authors have analyzed this factor, yet it seems missing from important and recognized film scholarship.<sup>44</sup> As ideology, masculinity has been a tool for the state,

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<sup>42</sup> Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan* (SUNY Press, 2008), 10.

<sup>43</sup> McGowan, *The Real Gaze*, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), Dirk Schumann, *Political Violence in the Weimar Republic, 1918-*

political groups, or cultural workers, yet Reeser contends that "it is not possible to isolate any given institution as the origin of masculinity."<sup>45</sup> When politics is considered, scholars have trouble assigning anything but reactionary or conservative power to its effect on gender. In most handlings, the crisis of masculinity becomes visible in scholarship primarily as a tool of ideological right wing.

For my purposes, I attend to the production side of the films and try to determine how conditions of production interact with the gender scripts unfolding on screen. I tend to agree that masculinity is not a starting point but a "constant back-and-forth movement between [gender ideas] and institutions."<sup>46</sup> Great care must be taken then to "sourcing" the masculinities seen in the films. Rather than simplifying masculinity concerning a simple binary in a contest with femininity, it also contests itself and the world around it. Attention to ideology helps to uncover that dynamism.

The most slippery category of this project is temporality. Reeser argues that the construction of masculinity can be significantly altered over a short time period in a given context.<sup>47</sup> For me, this means that conceptions of masculinity do not function in some all-powerful unchanging structure. In addition, sensitivity to temporality means a light touch with conclusions, since definitions are always contingent and changing. Butler points out

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*1933: Fight for the Streets and Fear of Civil War*, First edition., Studies in German History ; v. 10 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), and Sara Ann Sewell, "The Party Does Indeed Fight Like A Man: The Construction of a Masculine Ideal in the Weimar Communist Party," in *Weimar Culture Revisited*. (New York: Palgrave, 2011)

<sup>45</sup> Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 41.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 338.



the danger in not allowing a conversation to proceed, that it becomes stagnant and no conversation about a term can continue. Gender can be deemed to be so fluid that it becomes meaningless.<sup>48</sup> Temporality as a concept then, for this project, means defining when and how I am talking about masculinity and to whom I believe this conception applies. In some films, masculinity differs between an adult man, a male child, and a male elder. How those masculinities interact with possible female masculinity is also important. The coding for aging, perceived outward gender expression, and the possibility of ambiguity within, is where temporality becomes revealing.<sup>49</sup> Temporality then allows me to, following Reeser, question “simplistic or essentialist notions of masculinity.”<sup>50</sup>

The above lens of performance, ideology, the camera's gaze, the viewer, and temporality allow me to question the strict and unaltering notions of a crisis of masculinity. My goal is to highlight missing aspects of forgotten or ignored conversations in films and about them. The larger understanding of gender theory allows me to explore how masculinity in Weimar film might be more complex than just a crisis. This approach engenders, no pun intended, a more complex and nuanced understanding of masculinity. Painting with a broad brush and generalizing can be helpful at times but it can also remove nuance. However, using the techniques and guidance described above, I can render a more complex story that does not depict static unyielding masculinity but reveals

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<sup>48</sup> Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 84.

<sup>49</sup> Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 339.

<sup>50</sup> Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 341.

that masculinity, crisis or not, is complicated and, with some consistency, reassembled in film. Rather than unrelenting crisis in need of resolution by the Nazi vision of gender, Weimar film is revealed to also be a space in which German men show who they are and what they believed masculinity could be.

## Chapter Two

### Revising Masculinity: A Case Study Weimar Film Collection

Since the 1950s, three themes dominated both the scholarly and critical appraisals of Weimar films.<sup>51</sup> The first is the categorization of film production across periods, which Sabine Hake describes as three distinct stages of the Weimar Film; 1919-1924 or the Expressionist Years, 1924-1929, the Stable Years, and 1929-1933, the Restructuring.<sup>52</sup> Each period represents or straddles specific time junctures, each comes with specific themes and styles. The second consensus concerns the “foundational critical” writings of Siegfried Kracauer and Lotte Eisner, both of whom wrote in the 1950s. Kracauer was born in the German Empire. After university, he became a cultural critic from the Frankfurt School, a social theory and philosophy school in the Weimar era. He left Germany when the Nazis took over and continued writing from there. In 1947, he published *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. As noted above, this work links the rise of the Nazis to German film. Kracauer does this through the lens attributes to the Frankfurt school idealism along with Freudian and Marx philosophy. He separates German film into four phases, and the results of those phases

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<sup>51</sup> Bruce Arthur Murray, *Film and the German Left in the Weimar Republic: From Caligari to Kuhle Wampe*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and after: Germany's Historical Imaginary*, Film Studies (London ; New York: Routledge, 2000), Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and "New Objectivity,"* 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2001), Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), and Noah William Isenberg, *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide to Classic Films of the Era*, Film and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009),

<sup>52</sup> Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema*, National Cinemas Series (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 28.

through psychological analysis and trends lead to an autocratic inevitability. In essence, Kracauer theorizes his lens through a socio-Fascist lens in which the conditions of Weimar era led to fascism.<sup>53</sup>

Lotte Eisner shares a very similar background to Kracauer, in that she also attended university and then became a critic. She fled Germany in 1933 and spent some time in a French concentration camp. After the war, Eisner then served as the curator of the Cinémathèque Française. During this time, she wrote *L'Écran démoniaque* (lit. trans: The Screen Demonic) or translated into English as *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*. She then analyzed horror in so-called expressionist films, which rendered a foreboding foreshadowing of the Nazis. Both Eisner and Kracauer were Jewish and their experience as refugees powerfully shaped their search for a cause of the rise of the Nazis. Generations of scholars have found Eisner and Kracauer to be persuasive guides for explaining conditions under Weimar and for identifying links to the subsequent regime. Today, despite the advent of feminist and intersectional analyses, Kracauer and Eisner remain important as “founders of the field.” They have been effectively canonized and remain key influences in the film study.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Hake, *German National Cinema*, 29.

<sup>54</sup> Noah William Isenberg, *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide to Classic Films of the Era*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 9-10.

This thesis explores films with minimal “Jewish” content. Antisemitism is an important theme in the study of Weimar politics and culture. My approach questions a static view of “masculinity” by seeking out less explored filmic texts, and in so doing I encounter materials less structured by antisemitism. Without question, there are varieties of antisemitism circulating in this period, and not just on the far right. As author Gary Lease says in his work on German-Jewish intellectual positions on the state and antisemitism, cultural constructs and arguments emerged in dialogue under Weimar. They were not one-sided pronouncements.<sup>55</sup> New work also points out the ways in which film and film making were spaces for certain kinds of Jewish participation and cultural engagement, however fraught.<sup>56</sup> This study takes a different approach, however, exploring films that connect less readily to sources for the tolerance and acceptance of antisemitism in Germany.

The Nazis continue to fascinate scholars of every discipline, and given Kracauer and Eisner’s experiences in Germany, it is not hard to appreciate the urgency of their questions and their conclusions. In film studies, the “nightmare visions and psycho-horrors [of Nazism] have...led to conjectures about society giving birth to these monsters on screen,” notes Thomas Elsaesser. “Testifying to the troubled political reality of post-First-World-War German society or already foreshadowing the ideological turmoil to

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<sup>55</sup> Gary Lease, “Anti-Semitism in Weimar Germany: The German-Jewish View,” *German Politics & Society* 14, no. 1 (38) (1996): 111.

<sup>56</sup> Barbara Hales and Valerie Weinstein, *Rethinking Jewishness in Weimar Cinema* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020), 16.

come, both rang true, depending on whether one thought of the lost war of 1918 or the rise of Nazism at the end of the decade.”<sup>57</sup> The dark and brooding content in many of the surviving and most popular Weimar films that can make a viewer, myself included, wonder about that darkness. Kracauer and Eisner’s work provides a grounding for that horror.

The third theme within Weimar film historiography, as noted above, involves gender: the Crisis of Masculinity and Cult of New Woman. These two concepts come hand in hand, as they have been articulated as a binary in scholarship. I have already described how Richard McCormick, professor of German Film Studies at the University of Minnesota, helped develop the third consensus that a staple of the Weimar film and literature theory is the crisis of masculinity. Drawing on gender theorists like Judith Butler, Patrice Petro, George Mosse, and Klaus Theweleit, McCormick uses theory, including feminist theory, to explore Weimar film. McCormick examines how and why the crisis of masculinity is connected to modernization, that how this crisis is evident over all of Weimar culture even as it functions differently for different groups.<sup>58</sup> Rather than seeing this crisis as explanatory and binary, McCormick instead establishes that Weimar was undergoing a complex reconfiguration of gender in general, rather than an upended crisis for all men equally.

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and after: Germany’s Historical Imaginary*, Film Studies (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 19.

<sup>58</sup> Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and “New Objectivity,”* 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 170.

However, scholars often replace the nuance of his work in favor of the more generalized and narrow lens of masculinity in crisis vs. new woman. As some commentators have observed, a focus on the rigid dichotomy of masculinity in crisis vs. new woman has created a filmic canon that tends to reproduce that binary framing. As it stands in 2021, serious students of Weimar film have a steep mountain to climb if they want to challenge this intellectual heritage of rigid periodization, canonized and even heroic interpretive voices, and an overwhelming definition of masculinity as crisis during the Weimar period as expressed in film.

My interests in masculinity and how it is defined or was defined have forced me to rethink the canon of Weimar films. The need to do so is urgent. For example, there are many articles online that make claims about support for Hitler by the German people.<sup>59</sup> While this project is not directed towards a general audience, and most German historians understand that Hitler's election was a compounding factor, and this thesis continues the work historians seeking to unpack the origins story of popular fascism.

In addition to getting critical traction on the received literature, I have rethought which films should constitute my case study or "archive." The choices are difficult; some films are generally forgotten in favor of more celebrated films. It leaves a small number of films genuinely to analyze. Many of the films I am interested in are careful restorations done by a collaboration between Deutsche Kinemathek – Museum für Film und

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<sup>59</sup> "10 Reasons the German People Elected Adolf Hitler," *Listverse* (blog), February 21, 2017, <https://listverse.com/2017/02/21/10-reasons-the-german-people-elected-adolf-hitler/>. And "How Did Hitler Happen?," The National WWII Museum | New Orleans, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/how-did-hitler-happen>.

Fernsehen, Goethe-Institut, and a partnership between Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) and Arte. However, others are done by groups in the United States like Kino Lorber, sometimes in association with other groups like the above ZDF. Still others are done by the Criterion Collection through Janus films. Another factor in assembling my case study is that films can be costly to access. Moreover, they also require specialized equipment like regionless DVD players to view in the US. Like any sample, films are chosen by authors to advance their own analysis; a few, like *Pandora's Box* (*Die Büchse der Pandora*, 1929), are often a “must” because they are so thematic. Some films are chosen because they are ambitious, striking, or emotionally powerful; these have come to stand for the Weimar filmic legacy. Examples of these films include *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (*Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*, 1922), *Metropolis* (1927), and *the Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, 1920). These are all very visually inventive expressionist films. The artistic excitement and uniqueness of these films causes scholars to choose expressionist films over other films made during the period.

Due to the varied nature and increasingly digital archive on Weimar film both in Europe and in the United States, I have determined to assemble my own archive for this case study. My archive is designed to shift from a standard or even default film “archives” and their attachment to the interpretive scholarly canon. The process required careful deliberation. There were three primary reasons I assembled the archive as I did. The first is the deliberate break with expressionist films; an equally important issue is periodization. Expressionist films take up quite a bit of the scholarly literature, so my





Figure 1. Shot from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), showing the Expressionist Characters and background . Reproduced under fair use.

archive contains no stylized expressionist films. I also selected realistic plot lines and themes over those more associated with what would now be termed a genre film, i.e., horror, fantasy, science fiction, and the like. While these genre films can uncover hidden depth and meanings, many expressionist films fall under a similar “genre film” styling. By contrast, my case study is of films that portray everyday reality, or at least a close approximation to it. The third and final consideration is the role of masculinity and within film through identifiable male characters of the time. While women play a prominent role in many of my selected films, the primary character is a male lead.

As with any archival project, received categories of meaning, value, and interpretation are both enabling and obscuring. I decided to shift my categories of value

to create a fresh configuration of films, putting familiar ones into new conversations with the lesser viewed or commented upon. The standard film categories of genre like “science fiction” are not always advisable, however accessible they might be to the average non-expert reader.

A few words are in order about expressionist film. The best-known example of silent film in the period has become a synecdoche for the entire genre.<sup>60</sup> That image is found in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) (See Fig. 1). The film is shot in a stark black and white palette with a “stagey” setting and highly theatrical performances by the actors. The sets are painted backdrops and the actors are also painted, lending high artifice to the scene. As Thomas Elsaesser put it, expressionism “enlist[ed] the cinema not in issues of realism at all, not even in the quest for ‘truth,’ but in a search for enduringly, fundamentally skeptical, and duplicitously ironic forms.”<sup>61</sup> Elsaesser provides a compelling reading of this genre which has attracted generations of interest. No essay collection on the subject can go by without at least three or four essays devoted to the expressionist films.<sup>62</sup> However, as Sabine Hake points out, “Weimar cinema’s close identification with the early expressionist film and the focus on a few innovative directors has distracted from a popular genre that embodied the period’s productive compromise

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<sup>60</sup> Hake, *German National Cinema*, 37.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and after: Germany’s Historical Imaginary*, Film Studies (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 51.

<sup>62</sup> Noah William Isenberg, *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide to Classic Films of the Era*, Film and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

between art and entertainment: the critical *Zeitfilm* (topical film).”<sup>63</sup> Essentially even scholars recognize the deficiency with the focus on the expressionist films of the early Weimar era.

This deficiency points up the break between the early era of Weimar film, which falls under the mostly expressionist film. This period falls from 1919 to 1924, and is often seen by historians, both film and otherwise, as a destabilized period, recovering from the First World War and the political ruptures occurring like the Beer Hall Putsch. For this reason, my project includes films before 1924 to create distance from the expressionist historiography and to make connections to otherwise overlooked films.

The another breakpoint involves technology. This break occurs in Germany before the Depression around 1929 and involves the rise of sound film or, colloquially, the “talkies.” In 1929, Germany released the first long-form sound film. The industry hesitated until profitability became assured and when competition by sound films released by U.S. producers threatened German market share.<sup>64</sup> In retrospect, sound was a boon to the entire movie industry, but in the immediate race for profits, variety and genre suffered in moviemaking. While 1924-1929 is mainly seen as an era of relative stability vis-à-vis the political situation, it was financially volatile in the landscape of film companies.

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<sup>63</sup> Hake, *German National Cinema*, 46.

<sup>64</sup> Hake, *German National Cinema*, 55.

In Germany, critics and reviewers of film understood the medium as an art form; another set of tensions bubbled among film makers, between the expressionist camp and the genre film camp. According to some, film-as-art was considered an already perfected form, including by big German studios like UFA GmbH.<sup>65</sup> Specific narrative formats, like romance and the marriage plot, came to the fore (notably in Hollywood). Major studios in Europe hedged their bets by leaning on comedy, nostalgia, and provocation, less towards the edgy, “arty” expressionist form.<sup>66</sup> My film selections cut against the idea of “the talkies” as an ideological and content-based turning point in Weimar film. Instead, I see dialogue-as-continuity in the realist themes between the two eras of 1924-1929 and 1929-1933. My study includes films from both eras. Sound, while a sizeable technological advancement, has more through-line from the *Zeitfilme* and its realistic theming.

Another factor that is important to the linkage of 1924-1929 and 1929-1933 is the entrance of the United States into the German movie marketplace. While the ban on importing films from outside Germany was lifted in 1921, the cash influx from the U.S. through the Dawes plan in 1924 changed the shape of German cinema.<sup>67</sup> In much of Europe, the Dawes Plan and the United States’s entrance into the European cinema market changed film. “By 1927, [U. S. companies] owned German theater, operated distribution offices, and purchases stock in German production companies,” concludes

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Hake, *German National Cinema*, 58-59.

<sup>67</sup> Hake, *German National Cinema*, 34.

Bruce Arthur Murray.<sup>68</sup> It would not be until later, under Nazi control, that American importation and exportation of film would shift to exclusively German hands. This shift was not only economic but cultural as well. Many critics argued for and against the intrusion of Americanism into vast swaths of German culture.<sup>69</sup> My archive is assembled by holding some of this contemporary critical debate to the side and instead seeks widely viewed films that the German public seemed to enjoy, including American-style cinema. “Largely indifferent to these debates [concerning the Americanization of the industry], mass audiences valued Hollywood films for their pronounced physical humor and strong emphasis on action and suspense.”<sup>70</sup> Box office numbers in Germany showed that audiences were more interested in film as entertainment than complicated art pieces.

The broken economy of the global Depression affected film making, and five years of Americanization of the German film industry and monopolization also left an imprint. The presumed proclivity for formulaic narratives under Weimar crucial because it points to a film’s success with a general audience, if not as a work of art. My archive responds to the question: “is this a film for a critic or a film for a people?” in Germany. The vocal minority of critical opinion does not represent the silent majority, and I am interested in some of what that silent majority saw on the screen. Finally, in trying to provide a fresh reading of masculinity and men within these films, I try to grasp things that might have resonated with the audiences in their own place and time rather than the

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<sup>68</sup> Bruce Arthur Murray, *Film and the German Left in the Weimar Republic: From Caligari to Kuhle Wampe*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 59.

<sup>69</sup> Hake, *German National Cinema*, 48.

<sup>70</sup> Hake, *German National Cinema*, 48.

things subsequently privileged within academic scholarship. These more simple, sometimes formulaic, sometimes American-influenced conventional narrative films from different times during Weimar comprise the bulk of films under consideration in this thesis.

The two eras of 1924-1929 and 1929-1933 have something else in common. While they did feature a technology change, as noted before, they were a kind of genre film, *Zeitfilm*, which contained topical content from social issues of the day such as poverty or homelessness. Films on real-world topics rather than the fantastical subject matter found in films like *Metropolis* (1927) are at the heart of my study. While *Metropolis* is an amazing work of art as an expressionist film it has been widely studied for many years. Instead, the film I selected evolved in a context where key decision makers quietly affirmed that the business and political realms should be separate. The editor of liberal magazine *Lichtbild-Bühne*'s Hans Wollenberg stated that film should be just entertainment and have no connection to the outside world.<sup>71</sup> This message was a typical, if self-serving stance at the time. Some, like Axel Eggebrecht, who wrote for many publications including the *Berliner Tageblatt* and *Die Weltbühne*, a weekly magazine, and believed that the internationalism of film was bringing stagnation to the industry or even "ruining" film.<sup>72</sup> Throughout is a distinct fear of communist influence in

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<sup>71</sup> Bruce Arthur Murray, *Film and the German Left*, 69.

<sup>72</sup> Axel Eggebrecht "Filmdämmerung? (The Twilight of Film?)" in *Die Weltbühne* 22, no. 6 (February, 9, 1926) in *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907-1933*, ed. Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, and Michael Cowan, trans. Alex H. Bush. From (University of California Press, 2016), pp. 301-306 & A.K. "Schluss mit Hollywood? (Done with Hollywood)", in *Filmtechnik* (January, 24, 1931), 1-2 in *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907-1933*, ed. Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, and Michael Cowan, trans. Tara Hottman. (University of California Press, 2016), pp. 309-311.

the medium, more than any other political issue. That said, it should also be noted that Germany and the Soviet Union produced numerous films in Germany.<sup>73</sup>

Economic stability and appeasement of studios from the U.S. thus provides the context for my case study of Weimar film. It meant the focus in 1924 changed for cinema and that a fragile consensus on political neutrality in service to profit actually allowed for the production of films that could be quite “political” but were justified on other grounds. This well-documented shift toward profit-motivated cinema, directed the film industry towards the middle-class, even mass audiences. “[The middle-class] needs and desires found privileged expression in cinema and its cult of surfaces, its celebration of moment and change, its unabashed sensationalism and sentimentality, and its emphatic promotion of social mobility, material cultural, and vernacular modernism.”<sup>74</sup> The middle-class consumer then became adjudicators of cultural relevance and, in a sense, of importance. Film in Weimar no longer was the purview of critics and artists. For this reason, this project treats 1924-1933 as a single period because the changes that resulted from Americanization to audience changes meant that film became more available to a more significant population sector and, at least tentatively, reflective of that population. These genre films portrayed a sense of the world that middle-class people lived in rather than on the fantastical for pure entertainment or high art. As such, they are overdue the close reading this thesis offers.

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<sup>73</sup> Hake, *German National Cinema*, 49.

<sup>74</sup> Hake, *German National Cinema*, 51.

The final selection criteria in this study focus on male leads, characters, and protagonists. The phenomenon of the “Woman’s Film” has been well studied for the Weimar period.<sup>75</sup> As noted above, scholars and critics have grappled extensively with gender and even masculinity as part of the gender binary to femininity. However, male characters and “masculinity” is often stranded in “crisis,” left unpacked and unexamined. Sometimes the crisis is conveyed by political rhetoric, or that of medical science, or of “the arts.” When unpacked, masculinity is usually exposed as primarily the ploy of conservatives and, eventually, the Nazis. However, both conservatives and liberals, Nazis and Communists in Weimar, used the male body to envision standardized practices of what a good man looks like and how he operates morally, economically, sexually, and politically.<sup>76</sup>

Following Butler, I suggest that masculinity—sometimes rendered as “the Body” in certain films—exists in multiple frames: as an ideological construct, as a screen for various projections and fantasies, as an object, and as “experience” variously understood.

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<sup>75</sup> Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), John T. Zagula, “Saints, Sinners, and Society: Images of Woman in Film and Drama, From Weimar to Hitler,” *Women’s Studies* 19, no. 1 (July 1991): 55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.1991.9978854>. Jans B. Wager, *Dangerous Dames: Women and Representation in the Weimar Street Film and Film Noir* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999), Mel Gordon, *Voluptuous Panic: The Erotic World of Weimar Berlin*, NONE, Expanded edition (Los Angeles, Calif: Feral House, 2008), and Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/psu/detail.action?docID=717916>.

<sup>76</sup> Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), Dirk Schumann, *Political Violence in the Weimar Republic, 1918-1933: Fight for the Streets and Fear of Civil War*, First edition., Studies in German History ; v. 10 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), and Sara Ann Sewell, “The Party Does Indeed Fight Like A Man: The Construction of a Masculine Ideal in the Weimar Communist Party,” in *Weimar Culture Revisited*. (New York: Palgrave, 2011)



When “The Body” is cinematically framed as masculinized in Weimar film, it is that of a white body, a German body, which is nonetheless fraught and unstable.<sup>77</sup> Typology was critical in the Weimar medical world; morphological body types were associated with psychological profiles.<sup>78</sup> Such typologizing did not just occur in the medical or elite spheres but is evident in my sample films and other structures, making its way into a more general public sphere. Through hygiene museums and commercial health entrepreneurs, to only mention two, the concept of a muscular, male body was advertised as key to personal success and betterment; a fit, muscular body meant living a successful life.<sup>79</sup> It is almost impossible to separate masculinity, the crisis, men, and the body from one another in multiple cultural and political realms, including and beyond film. German typologies and morphological studies of the male (and female) body generally sought to identify the strongest contributors to society, eventually favoring “racially” German people.

Foucault’s concept of biopower and biopolitics is helpful in this area. Bodily capacity for work, thought, and reproduction, termed “bio-power,” was a focus of institutional interest in Germany, directed at obtaining maximum outputs for the nation.<sup>80</sup> The body must serve the state; a muscular, fit body is better. The muscular, fit body was

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<sup>77</sup> Robert Heynen, *Degeneration and Revolution: Radical Cultural Politics and the Body in Weimar Germany* (Boston, United States: BRILL, 2015), 476, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/psu/detail.action?docID=2006464>.

<sup>78</sup> Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany*, 164-65.

<sup>79</sup> Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany*, 186.

<sup>80</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, Reissue edition (New York: Vintage, 1990), 143.

celebrated in a man; the feminized male body was stigmatized and feared.<sup>81</sup> Some films, like *Geheimnisse einer Seele* (*Secrets of a Soul*, 1926) or *Geschlecht in Fesseln* (*Sex in Chains*, 1928), showcase a certain sense of male insecurity, gesturing toward a crisis of masculinity. Again, this project does not intend to say there was no crisis but rather to bring nuance to the subject, with some intellectual distance from the expressionist genre discussion which dominates the field.

Given the above concerns, my sample includes the following: *Die Verrufenen* (*Slums of Berlin*, 1925), *Die Unehelichen* (*Children of No Importance or the Illegitimate*, 1926), *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* (*The Love of Jeanne Ney or Lusts of the Flesh*, 1927), *Gesechlecht in Fesseln* (*Sex in Chains*, 1928), *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü* (*The White Hell of Pitz Palu*, 1929), *Westfront 1918* (1930), *Kameradschaft* (*Comradeship or La Tragédie de la mine*, 1931). These films are my core set of “texts” of the era. My focus on male leads and male characters outside the expressionist genre lends itself to a fresh look at how the “normalizing male gaze” of the camera typifies or shapes male characters, not just female ones. While this project focuses on male actors and characters, women characters are essential as part of the normative gender binary. The unstable (“hysterical”) female body is usually indexed to the instability of the gender binary construct. This thesis asks, “What about men?” It must be stressed that while there is a binary gender distinction here, male and female, I remain sensitive to moments where that binary becomes fuzzy and thus available for deeper examination. The stories I have

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<sup>81</sup> Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany*, 153.

selected are about those men (or boys) and how they confront the various life situations within those films.

To summarize: The following choices informed my assembled case study of films from Weimar. First, I chose on non-expressionist films because expressionist films are the already amply discussed within the “crisis” mode of scholarship. The second choice of the combining two eras, 1924-1929 and 1929-1933, derives from the shared concern about and response to Americanization in German cinema and film. While one era, 1929-1933, becomes destabilized, the earlier era of 1919-1924 is even more destabilized, featuring more expressionist films than the *Zeitfilme* or films in keeping within the genre. The final decision I made is that this archive uses films that solely feature a male lead as the main character rather than in a supporting role. This focus allows a sharper concentration on masculinity while not ignoring the presence of women and the presence, however unstable, of the gender binary. This archive lends itself to a refreshed discussion of gender crisis and what I see as a concomitant reassembling of masculinity in the period. My sampling permits a rightsizing of the masculinity crisis in order to view that crisis as a feature of the Weimar Republic rather than a fixture. Gender in film, like gender in any other domain, is treated as an ongoing, multisided process, rather than a linear one, with a presumed resolution. It is too easy to assume that once the Nazis come into power, masculinity becomes static. Gender is not stable, at least not for long. Even if a government asserts itself as a stability structure, society’s concept of gender still evolves with time. According to my case study, Weimar masculinity was not in grave crisis, but instead, underwent reassembly along a number of lines of development,

notably class. More ominous threats to German society lurk in the background of my film archive and only later and in other venues would these threats challenge all of Weimar.

### Chapter Three

#### Transformation of Masculinity in Weimar Film: Stoic Lower Class to Sexual Hero

My chosen sample of realistic genre films run the gamut, from mountain climbing to romance dramas. My sample eschews fantasy and horror in order to showcase nature and more or less normative life situations like marriage, death, crime, and family life under Weimar. My reading relies heavily on character development and narrative rather than the set, costuming, or other filmic aspects of the genre. The result highlights male protagonists and their social struggles and interactions with an accent on masculinity and gender.

My focus challenges Weimar film scholarship by showing, through character development and narrative through-lines, masculinity's successful transformation and reassembly rather than crisis, breakdown, and chaos. It is the case that gender evolves. The argument in this project is that crisis manifests change differently, while reassembly, which is the term I use for gender transformation in films, maneuvers around gender in multiple ways. In the films that showcase primarily crisis, the male character is either undone through mental anguish at their emasculation, is dead, or is left in a situation where it would be better to be dead. In my sample of films, male characters are variously reassembled in terms of their gender script and social identifiers. They generally end up in a better situation than when they began, either in better living conditions or with increased power (at least over individuals). Both crisis and reassembly are factors of historical change that result in a modification of gender. The crisis is part of the plot, but other changes such as reassembly occur concurrently.

Following McCormick I frame gender crisis as broadly social.<sup>82</sup> This project agrees with most of his findings. Weimar has a distinct sense of anxiety surrounding gender and sexuality, evident in the discussions surrounding women and queer people.<sup>83</sup> However, the films that McCormick chooses raise more questions than they answer. The notable films featured in McCormick's work are from director G. W. Pabst.

The most prominent among Pabst's works are *Geheimnisse einer Seele* (Secrets of a Soul, 1926) and *Der Blaue Engel* (The Blue Angel, 1930). These films showcase an undeniable case of humiliation to male figures and characters. They are both films where the hero suffers emasculation, sometimes involving the character's mental breakdown or sometimes the character's death. In *Geheimnisse einer Seele*, the plot surrounds a man having a nervous breakdown and surrounding nightmares, which include jealousy between his friend and his wife. A psychologist saves Martin, the main character. In *Der Blaue Engel*, the main character falls in love with a cabaret performer, whom he marries. However, he becomes jealous of his new wife, and he ends up being sexually humiliated and then dies.

These two films feature main characters who are intellectual, upper-class men. They were both released after 1925, which fits this project's aims. However, this project attempts to break from that notion by splitting with other scholars and focusing on other

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<sup>82</sup> Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and "New Objectivity,"* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 6.

<sup>83</sup> Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York, NY, United States: Berghahn Books, Incorporated, 2011), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/psu/detail.action?docID=717916>. & Clayton John Whisnant, *Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History, 1880-1945* (New York, NY: Harrington Park Press, 2016).

films. By doing so, this project finds a distinct figure amongst another set of films that feature not a defeated hero but a successful one. I suggest that this reassembled hero becomes available to and embraced by those of both right and left political orientation: an urban working-class man who is neither afraid of violence nor emasculated.<sup>84</sup> Both Communists and Nazis tried to gather the working class under their platforms and used propaganda that showcased a class-based style of masculinity.<sup>85</sup> With that in mind, the character arc of these class-marked figures starts to make cracks in the wall of “monolithic” masculine crisis as depicted in Weimar film.

A few more words of context are in order. As noted in previous chapters, from 1925 to 1931, the German film industry was in turmoil. By 1925, there was much worry that films were taking a cultural nosedive and an authentic “German” film practice seemed threatened by Americanization of style. Kurt Pinthus, a prominent critic, claimed film attracted the lowest common cultural content: “mediocre films full of nonsense.”<sup>86</sup> Another strand of context in Weimar involved class-based moral concern. These

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<sup>84</sup> Sara Ann Sewell, “The Party Does Indeed Fight Like a Man: The Construction of a Masculine Ideal in the Weimar Communist Party,” in *Weimar Culture Revisited*, ed. John Alexander Williams (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) and Edward B. Westermann, “Drinking Rituals, Masculinity, and Mass Murder in Nazi Germany,” *Central European History* 51, no. 3 (September 2018): 367–89, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938918000663>.

<sup>85</sup> Raymond C. Sun, “‘Hammer Blows’: Work, the Workplace, and the Culture of Masculinity among Catholic Workers in the Weimar Republic,” *Central European History* 37, no. 2 (2004): 245–71, Timothy Scott Brown, *Weimar Radicals: Nazis and Communists Between Authenticity and Performance* (Berghahn Books, 2009), 150, Alessio Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man Youth Training Regimes in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, George L. Mosse Series in Modern European Cultural and Intellectual History (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2015).

<sup>86</sup> Kurt Pinthus “Ufapalst (Ufa Palace),” in *Das Tage-Buch* 40 (October 3, 1925), 1504–1505, in *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907–1933*, ed. Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, and Michael Cowan, trans. Christopher M. Geissler. (University of California Press, 2016), pp. 170–172.

concerns typically identified a tepid middlebrow culture or pampered do-nothing elites—both lacking in moral authority. A film’s moral messages is important for this project and my claims about a reassembled and functioning masculinity. Given the stylistic differences between art film and genre film, the latter were a more effective delivery mechanism for moral messages, whether hidden or not.<sup>87</sup>

In my view, the notion of “sides” to the moral debate over film in Germany is overdrawn. Members of many of elite society discussed the moral danger of films, believing that having no law governing film could allow the most significant amount of harm to the adult populace and arguing that the government must do more to protect its citizenry from this perceived danger, especially women.<sup>88</sup> It was clear that people saw that film could influence those who consumed it. That conversation occurred among government officials or critics and also took place more broadly, in the larger societal context. This situation made for contentiousness within the Weimar film industry in 1925, when the first film in my study was released.

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<sup>87</sup> Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema*, National Cinemas Series (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 42.

<sup>88</sup> Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007) p. 246 and Albert Hellwig “Lichtspiel und Staat (The Motion Picture and the State),” in Heinrich Pfeiffer, ed., *Das deutsche Lichtbildbuch: Filmprobleme von gestern und heute* (Berlin: August Scherl, 1924), 1504-1505, in *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907-1933*, ed. Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, and Michael Cowan, trans. Tara Hottman (University of California Press, 2016), pp. 246-247



*The Foundation of a Man: From Stoic Denial to Heroic Violence*

A primary example of the class-oriented critique of masculinity is *Die Verrufenen: Der fünfte Stand* (*The Notorious: The Fifth Estate* or *Slums of Berlin*, 1925), directed by George Lamprecht and starring Bernhard Goetzke and Aud Egede-Nissen. In the significant texts of German film scholarship, George Lamprecht does not get much mention. If an author discusses him, it generally concerns Lamprecht's donation of his film collection to Berlin in the 1960s. Lamprecht does not get much recognition outside of Germany, compared to Lang. Lamprecht's films are not show-stopping productions. Lamprecht's films are realistic and focus on the suffering of the underprivileged classes.<sup>89</sup> He worked by approaching his subjects through a lens of social realism and was influenced by the artist Heinrich Zille. Zille produced drawings and photos that referenced the working class. As one historian put it, Lamprecht "sought to make [films about the] working-class milieu, moving firmly into domestic spaces, into tenement interiors."<sup>90</sup> Lamprecht intended to bring the realities of the working-class to the screen. His work was not strictly documentary but realistic in the sense that he, like the artist Zille, sought to represent and thereby dignify, rather than ignore, difficult social conditions.

Lamprecht's characters are figures that the audiences could relate to in some sense. As Rolf Aurich and Wolfgang Jacobsen state: "he intended his audiences to

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<sup>89</sup> It might also be the case that many of Lamprecht's films have only been recently restored and given the ability to purchase.

<sup>90</sup> Amanda M. Brian, "Art from the Gutter: Heinrich Zille's Berlin," *Central European History* 46, no. 1 (March 2013): 28–60, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938913000022>.

sympathize with his protagonists."<sup>91</sup> These films had a name during the era, and they got their name from Heinrich Zille. As discussed above, Zeitfilme or Zillefilme focused on topical subjects such as homelessness or illegitimate children. "These films stood apart from the mass of escapist fare — the countless military farces, ethnic comedies, rural melodrama, and sentimental Heimatfilme (literally: homeland films) — by actually engaging with contemporary problems in even a conciliatory fashion."<sup>92</sup> The issue of contemporary problems is precisely what George Lamprecht and his screen writer Luise Heilborn-Körbitz were trying to accomplish with their series of films.

My story of reassembling Weimar masculinity begins with Lamprecht's first film. *Die Verrufenen* tells the story of Robert Kramer (Bernhard Goetzke), a well-off man who confesses that he committed a crime. It is unclear to the viewer whether he actually committed this crime or somehow was forced to confess; equally cloudy are the circumstances surrounding the act. Robert serves three years in prison and is then released. By the time Robert returns to his life, his girlfriend has married and his family has disowned him. With nowhere to go, he must go to the streets. From the historical standpoint, such a plot is credible for its time. Losing class status or money haunted Berliners and other urban dwellers before the "stabilization" in 1925 by the injection of money from the United States. Hyperinflation in 1923 particularly jarred the middle class and it was all too easy to fall into poverty. Most scholars agree about the economic

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<sup>91</sup> Rolf Aurich and Wolfgang Jacobsen, "Humanity: The Dimensions of Gerhard Lamprecht's film narrative," *Die Verrufenen (Der fünfte Stand) & Die Unehelichen* Insert, (Germany, Deutsche Kinemathek – Museum für Film und Fernsehen & Goethe-Institut, 2012).

<sup>92</sup> Hake, *German National Cinema*, 46.

precarity of this time that the "middle class, to so many Germans the stable core of society, seemed to be disappearing before their very eyes."<sup>93</sup>

The protagonist's loss of status could reflect the standard narrative of masculinity in crisis, especially in the German context. Richard McCormick attributes this anxiety to the changing notions of gender, "the traditional order and the individual's fixed sense of identity became de-stabilized, unleashing a new fluidity that inspired both fear and desire—fear of the new and uncertain, and desire for liberation from traditional norms."<sup>94</sup> A crisis of masculinity existed; men (and some women) felt threatened by the changing gender norms or a sense of loss of patriarchal power. In his study of Lamprecht, McCormick uses the term castration for Kramer's situation—that of a wealthy man who becomes homeless and exiled by his former life. For McCormick, Robert Kramer's "castration" supports the "masculinity in crisis" thesis: an unmitigated and unfixable breakdown.<sup>95</sup>

However, this sense of unfixable, irremediable crisis is not borne out in *Die Verrefufen*, nor does castration fit the character of Robert Kramer. In the film, Robert meets Emma (Aud Egede-Nissen), a sex worker who helps and uplifts Robert. Emma brings him out of the moral desperation in which he finds himself. Emma assists Robert in finding a job at a factory. Later, Emma gets taken away by her brother after they commit a murder. Robert continues his work in the factory until he finds himself in a

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<sup>93</sup> Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy: New and Expanded Edition*, 138.

<sup>94</sup> Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and "New Objectivity,"* 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 21.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.



Figure 2. Shot from *Die Verrufenen* (1925), showing characters Boy and Gustav.  
Reproduced under Fair Use.

managerial position. When Robert returns to Berlin, he seeks out Emma, who is dying, and he proclaims that she is the only woman he loves. Robert Kramer's character does not even approach typified crisis. Robert does not die because of his status loss or because of a scurrilous woman, nor is he publicly, irredeemably humiliated. Instead, Robert regains his masculinity throughout the film, with the help of Emma. That Emma serves the male character's development and dies, without making demands of her own, reinscribes the sexist, patriarchal order in which womanhood is sacrificed to a rehabilitated and "corrected" working class masculinity, even to the point of death.

The dichotomy between the two male leads in the film highlights the vision of masculinity that *Die Verrufenen* is trying to show. The direct translation *Die Verrufenen*:



Figure 3. Shot from *Die Verrufenen* (1925), showing Robert Kramer. Reproduced under fair use.

*Der fünfte Stand* means the Notorious (plural): The Fifth Estate. With knowledge of the four estates established in Europe, here the fifth estate refers to the destitute, whom Robert joins. I think a better translation of the title may be the Disreputable rather than Notorious. The first character introduced is Disreputable. The viewer sees Gustav, the brother of Emma, released after three years in prison. He knew Robert while they were in prison together. One of Gustav's first acts is to tell a group of children that studying is a waste of time because you will have to work. Gustav fits the criminal type in an expressionist film. He has painted eyes and makeup, which give the character more sinister features (see fig. 2). Silent films like this were typically shot in black and white and the extra heavy application of makeup would set off actor's features in sharp contrast.

However, this seems not the case for *Die Verrufenen*. A few moments later, Robert emerges from the prison. He also has some powder on his face and mild black eye makeup (see fig. 3) but the makeup is not as intense or as dark as Gustav's. The makeup leads the viewer to see them differently. One is good, Robert, and one is evil, Gustav.

The third character, Emma, must be considered between Gustav and Robert. In the film, Emma serves as a moral guide for Robert. Through her, Robert receives a new identity, rooted in working-class masculinity. With his reassembled gender identity, Robert, by the film's end, seems energetic and proud of his accomplishments. The female figure of Emma does not ruin him, nor has he become feminized or castrated by her. Instead, Robert's industriousness returns, allowing him to attain a modest but stable economic masculinity, with Emma's encouragement. The film's crisis of masculinity is class-based: the middle-class society failed to help Robert after his incarceration. Instead, a working class sex worker helps him. She does not corrupt Robert nor emasculate him sexually; there is no castration. Instead, her love provides a motivator and anchor for Robert. Emma runs against character type: a sex worker who saves rather than ruins a man. For example, in *Pandora's Box* (*Die Büchse der Pandora*, 1929), the central character Lulu's uninhibited sexuality brings ruination to herself and her boyfriend. Lulu dies, and the male lead is left penniless and stranded away from home in London.<sup>96</sup> But Lamprecht's vision of realism might reflect market circumstances where earnestly doing

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<sup>96</sup> Robert Heynen, *Degeneration and Revolution: Radical Cultural Politics and the Body in Weimar Germany* (Boston, United States: BRILL, 2015), 95.  
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/psu/detail.action?docID=2006464>.

the best one can should be rewarded. In *Die Büchse der Pandora*, sex workers are contaminants and corrupters. “In art and in discourses of social hygiene, she [sex worker] was depicted most commonly as a shocking figure bearing the degenerative marks of modern life.”<sup>97</sup>

Emma is the opposite. Lamprecht and the writer Luise Heilborn- Körbitz were likely aware of the situation surrounding sex workers in the Republic and perhaps wrote against type. Emma revives Robert from his failed state. The general theme here is sacrifice, or at least acting on behalf of others. All of the main characters in the film are working-class or even underclass. Unlike Emma and Robert, Gustav refuses to deny or sacrifice his vices or his lifestyle of criminality in exchange for a better chance at life. Thus, he is removed from the film, and disappears into a foreign country. Emma, however, is not given a choice as to whether she wants a better life. It is in her nature is sacrifice. Her efforts are acknowledged by Robert, who gives her money for her escape Germany after Gustav’s crime. Lamprecht’s vision stops short of full redemption for Emma. When she returns to Germany, she must die so that Robert, who also must sacrifice for his redemption, can continue unimpeded. The Emma character’s role a sacrificial tool for male development is consistent in my film sample. Here a woman’s life is sacrificed to reassemble a workable gender identity for the male protagonist.

Morally, sacrifice is a primary point of *Die Verrufenen* and two visions of masculinity with the film exemplify that concept. The plot focuses on Robert’s downfall and recovery, with Gustav as the foil. By occluding the details of Robert’s arrest and

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<sup>97</sup> Heynen, *Degeneration and Revolution*, 160.

conviction, the film has an easier time recovering him as a figure who deserves a second chance. Gustav is an actual criminal and thus serves as a lesson in lousy morality. Gustav is a type of selfish and self-serving masculinity, using one's masculine power to gain what one wants. This negative masculinity becomes apparent on-screen when Gustav forces Emma to help him commit a crime against a wealthy man. After the deed, Emma returns to Robert to plead for help. Robert repays the favor earlier shown him and gives the siblings money to escape from Germany without facing prison for their crime. Robert sacrifices his love for Emma and through the diligence of his work ethic, he rises in status. Gustav acknowledges only his own desires, the masculinity he embodies is selfish and lazy. In *Die Verrufenen*, paid work constructs and stabilizes, even alters a man. For Lamprecht and Luise Heilborn-Körbitz, the reassembling of masculinity is forged through a work ethic, for even labor at a lowly job permits a man to honor his debts to others and regain his self-respect by contributing to rather than harming society or other people.

By redeeming humble, working-class masculinity in this fashion, *Die Verrufenen* works a moral reversal in German society. In general, the urban upper class was seen as morally better than the urban lower class because the lower classes lived in environments that led to social degradation (in Emma's case, prostitution). Rejection and escape would be the proper response to degrading circumstances and upward mobility should be rewarded. As Murray points out, social mobility in Weimar was thought to reward those with "high moral standards and [those who] resisted the temptations of alcohol, sex, and crime. Those who strove relentlessly to improve their standard of living would



succeed."<sup>98</sup> *Die Verrufenen* rewards working-class masculinity on its own terms. Robert does not drink in excess, nor does he attempt to violate Emma or use her, and unlike Gustav, he commits no crimes that the audience can see. It is his own higher status family of origin that betrays him. The film's connection of economic stability to morality in the character of Robert Kramer suggests George Lamprecht's reassembly of masculinity. While there is no indication that Robert gave into supposed "morally degrading activities" prior to his prison sentence, the audience sees that he does not afterward, and thus rather than succumbing to the degradation of Zille films placed on the urban lower class, Robert instead sacrifices his love of Emma, and she sacrifices herself for him. Sacrifice redeems this class-based version of reassembled gender identity, notably more successfully for masculinity than for femininity.

Lamprecht explored a related set of concerns about urban, class-based corruptions like alcohol, illicit sex, and crime in *Die Unehelichen* (*The Illegitimate or Children of No Importance*, 1926). This film shares some of the moral concerns found in *Die Verrufenen*, namely, that social degradation within the sphere of the lower class should be met with condemnation and removal. *Die Unehelichen* examines a different problem: illegitimate children left in the foster care system. At the beginning of the film, four-year-old Frieda, six-year-old Lotte, and 13-year-old Peter live together with a couple called the Zielkes. The Zielkes serve as sources of disreputability, like the criminal figures from *Die Verrufenen*. The father drinks while the mother forces the children to work; both mistreat

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<sup>98</sup> Bruce Arthur Murray, *Film, and the German Left in the Weimar Republic: From Caligari to Kuhle Wampe*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 82-84.



Figure 4. Shot from *Die Unehelichen* (1926). Scene shows Peter in the Gambling Hall. Reproduced under Fair Use.

the children. Peter and his "siblings" rely on the kindness of neighbors rather than their "parents." However, Peter gets into nefarious activities like stealing money and going to bars. In one scene, Peter and a young friend enter a gambling establishment, although there are signs posted about the age restrictions on such a place (see figure 4). While Peter gets into trouble, his middle "sister" Lotte succumbs to a cold and dies. A local tailor (Eduard Rothauser) and his wife (Elsa Wagner), along with a rich woman, Frau Berndt (Hermine Sterler), determine to get Frieda and Peter away from the Zielkes's corruption. The concerned older people get what they wish for. Because of evidence of Lotte's mistreatment, the police take Frieda and place her with a new family. Meanwhile, Frau Berndt takes Peter to live with her, to have a better life. The new parents remove

Peter and Frieda from the destitution of the slums and the two are adopted into places that are more friendly to children.

During Peter's stay with Frau Berndt, his masculinity is reassembled. Frau Berndt treats him well. Peter is well fed; he is allowed to play in a safe environment rather than on the urban street where temptation lies. Here degradation is coded by Lamprecht as toxic and to be avoided rather than to be endured and potentially redeemed (as in Robert Kramer's story). By rescuing Peter from the urban slum, Frau Berndt removes him from contamination. He is cleaned up and plays with others of his age. Rather than being rough or entering places of degradation, the play is gentle and his attitude towards his friends, both new and old, is affectionate. No more crawling around the streets, trying to pick money out of gutters or going into bars and gambling to survive. He does not have to work or beg for money like the Zielkes made him do. Peter has been excised from the degradation of the urban slums, which means his masculinity can be reassembled. However, this effort is compromised when Peter's actual father, Lorenz (Bernhard Goetzke), intervenes and takes him away.

Masculinity is reassembled again when Lorenz takes Peter from Frau Berndt. Peter's upbringing disappoints Lorenz. Frau Berndt tells Peter to be brave as he leaves with his father. Lorenz is a riverboat captain and forces Peter to row this barge daily. When Peter becomes exhausted helping his father, Lorenz tells him, "Ach was, daran gewöhnt man lich. (Come on, you'll get used to it.)." The masculine work ethic here is not redemptive but subordinating: to work and deny the realities of the body is a properly "masculine" education in gender. Lorenz extracts free labor from his son, but the film

releases Peter from these unjust terms of work. Peter escapes from his father and returns to Frau Berndt. However, his father asks the police to retrieve him. Lorenz explains to his neighbors: “Wenn der Bengel zurückkommt, werde ich ihm seine vornehmen Flausen schon austreiben (When that kid gets back, I’ll beat those fancy ideas out of him).” While *Flausen* means silly or fancy ideas, it could also mean dainty or delicate. This effeminacy is further reinforced by a few moments later when Lorenz is speaking to Frau Berndt when she returns with Peter and Lorenz says, “Es ist Ihre Schuld, dass er so verweichlicht ist und zu keener Abreight taugt. (It is your fault; he is so weak and cannot work).” The word *verweichlicht* can mean soft, but it is also a term for effeminate or colloquially, in some places, means sissy. Peter is too much like a girl for Lorenz’s liking, unfit to help him perform the associated masculine habits of hard labor. In the father’s mind, an upper-class lifestyle will soften Peter, making him effete. In such a setting, the son will become educated and clean and reject the unjust labor conditions of lower-class labor that Lorenz wrongly associates with feminization. The film next stages Peter’s near suicide, attempted in order to avoid returning to his father. Lorenz’s neighbors intervene and save Peter from drowning. As in Lamprecht’s other film, sacrifice redeems and reassembles masculinity, and Peter is doubly saved. His father relents and Peter returns to Frau Berndt’s home.

*Die Unehelichen* and *Die Verrufenen* suggest several themes within the reassembly of masculinity in realist Weimar film. Men can be both like Robert Kramer and like Peter, that is dignified in humble labor or respectable in more middle-class settings. The key is honoring forthright and just relationships for getting money and

surviving. *Die Unehelichen* is about children and not about adults. The film's premise might signal Peter as a child rather than a man at age 13. However, puberty often signals as a sign of maturation. For Lorenz, his child is old enough to work and do a “man’s job” all day, and that work is coded masculine. To describe Peter as effeminate or delicate is to suggest an alternative notion of reassembled masculinity. In *Die Verrufenen*, to survive, Robert changes his life. Both male characters must adjust, learn, and sacrifice to rectify the moral means to make his way in the world.

The notion of young adult masculinity brings the concept of temporality into the discussion; about whose masculinity is the film talking? Is *Die Unehelichen* trying to tell Weimar in the 1920s that masculinity is different for a child compared to a full adult male? No, it is not. However, nothing about how Lorenz or Peter act in the films requires differentiation. Nothing that Frau Berndt says or does would make the viewer think *Die Unehelichen* says masculinity is different for a man vs. a boy. What it does show is a range of reassembled masculinities. In *Die Verrufenen*, work, humble and dedicated, was sufficient to redeem masculinity; in *Die Unehelichen*, Peter is socialized to a gentler masculinity, coded middle class. The viewer understands that something has changed. That necessity of change in both characters suggests that class-based change, whether upwards or downwards—and even in opposition to one’s father—can result in a redemptive and functioning reassembled masculinity.

A brief look into sport under Weimar adds dimensionality to the notion of reassembled masculinity. Erik N. Jensen has examined the gendering of sports, particularly how one finds a spectrum of masculinities within that world. In the realm of

sports, there are two primary masculine contests, like those found on the screen in *Die Verrufenen* and *Die Unehelichen*. Peter fits well with the masculinity described among tennis players. The Weimar sporting world saw tennis as a noble sport drawing upon the aristocratic rake's stereotype.<sup>99</sup> Commentators saw this “noble masculinity” as soft rather than hard. “The male tennis player of the 1920s clearly incorporated elements of this earlier sensitive masculinity into his own self presentation, particularly the emphasis on the aesthetics of movement.”<sup>100</sup> When Frau Berndt adopts Peter, he starts a transformation towards effete masculinity. Peter’s gentleness towards Frau Berndt and his affectionate attitude is like that found in tennis's gendered sociability. This masculinity was the sensitive masculinity, something prescribed as noble or upper class, but Lamprecht revalues this brand of masculinity for the character Peter.

Lamprecht’s Robert Kramer, by contrast, lives in denial of life’s pleasures, even love. Robert does not drink to excess, nor does he engage in a sexual relationship with Emma, whose job is sexual. Jensen points out that Germans “associated male athleticism with a strict denial—of food, alcohol, sex, and pleasure—that physically and psychologically hardened the sportsman for competition.”<sup>101</sup> This denial aspect, and the fact that directors had an interest in the denial or sacrificial social morality, describes Robert effectively. He hardens himself to become more competitive within his new class and reassembles his masculine identity in ways that allow him to survive. His stoic

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<sup>99</sup> Erik Norman Jensen, *Body by Weimar: Athletes, Gender, and German Modernity* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 8.

<sup>100</sup> Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 12.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

masculinity never complains about a bodily hit or a sacrifice but takes it and moves on. The sacrificial dimension links the working-class labor of Robert with a reassembled masculinity that seems to draw elements from successful male athleticism under Weimar. In Lamprecht's handling of gendered morality, gentle or noble masculinity and stoic self-denying masculinity are both redemptive models and represent two reassembled masculinities in realistic genre films in the mid-1920s.

The next film in my case study reworks the redemptive or self-sacrificing model of working-class masculinity, reassembling it in more "heroic" terms. As a number of scholars point out for this period, the ability of upper-class German masculinity to speak for or stand for the "nation" was exhausted; both the political left and right agreed in this assessment. In this context, lower-class masculinity became linked to the work of the nation through various modes of heroism. Historians of photography have traced the shift in dominant images of men and masculinity in this period and the reinvestment in the ideal of the hero, especially the war hero. "The organized pacifist movement was politically contained by the ruling Social Democrats and effectively moribund," Dora Apel has written. And "war imagery shifted dramatically away from the antiwar statements in graphic art and painting toward heroic imagery in hugely popular patriotic photography albums."<sup>102</sup> This focus on heroism coincided with the Americanization of the movie industry and resistance to it.

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<sup>102</sup> Dora Apel, "Cultural Battlegrounds: Weimar Photographic Narratives of War," *New German Critique*, no. 76 (1999): 49, <https://doi.org/10.2307/488658>.

By telling stories of redeemed and reassembled masculinity on screen for Germans, directors took a stand in favor of authentic German manhood and departed from the convenient happy-go-lucky accidental and often comic hero of the American style. This stern, sacrificial masculinity stood in stark contrast to what Hollywood offered at the time and highlighted “films [notable] for their pronounced physical humor and strong emphasis on action and suspense.”<sup>103</sup> Americanization, or American influence, brought a particular kind of masculinity into German audiences that coincided with the political transformation towards heroism as an antidote and site of resistance.

One such film that reveals this reassembling of masculinity around the heroic is *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* (The Love of Jeanne Ney or Lusts of the Flesh, 1927). G. W. Pabst directed this film and it stars Édith Jéhane and Uno Henning. Pabst was a prolific Weimar director. He is responsible for some of the greatest works of the Weimar era, such as *Die Büchse der Pandora* (*Pandora's Box*, 1929). Pabst loved films that dealt with people set in real places during actual historical events.<sup>104</sup> Realism lends authenticity to the subject that he tackles and places his work among the New Objectivists. While director Gerhard Lamprecht was also a New Objectivist, Pabst was the most well-known. While many New Objectivist film makers were left in orientation, the movement had no direct political affiliation. “There is considerable agreement that the term [New Objectivist] cannot be used to define a particular artistic school or movement; neither, for

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<sup>103</sup> Hake, *German National Cinema*, 48.

<sup>104</sup> Hans-Michael Bock, “Georg Wilhelm Pabst: Documenting a Life and Career,” in *The Films of G. W. Pabst: An Extraterritorial Cinema*, ed. Eric Rentschler, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 219.



the matter, can it be applied to a particular political movement.”<sup>105</sup> The movement rejected the expressionist movement and focused on recognizable social issues. For Pabst, this meant that what was on the screen was what the viewer needed to know, bringing a film to a common cultural space rather than making it high art.

While Pabst’s films generally aligned with his social sensibility *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* stands out as a “Hollywood” style production, including a conventional “happy ending.”<sup>106</sup> *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* almost fits into an international blockbuster format. J. Hoberman, a film critic, describes *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* as “an ambitious attempt to synthesize Soviet montage, Hollywood action-melodrama, and German mise-en-scène.”<sup>107</sup> The movie tells the story of Jeanne Ney, the daughter of a diplomat, and Andreas, Jeanne’s lover, and a co-conspirator in her father's murder. Andreas urges her to flee Russia before the Red Army occupies the town. Jeanne does so and Andreas follows her to Paris, as does Khalibiev, the true perpetrator of Jeanne's father's death. Andreas has come to Paris to organize sailors for the communist party. Jeanne goes to live with her uncle Raymond (Adolph Edgar Licho) and his daughter. Khalibiev attempts to steal a diamond that ends up in Raymond's home through a series of events. Khalibiev kills Raymond and absconds with the diamond, framing Andreas. The police arrest Andreas:

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<sup>105</sup> Richard W. McCormick, “Private Anxieties/Public Projections: ‘New Objectivity,’ Male Subjectivity, and Weimar Cinema,” *Women in German Yearbook* 10, no. 1 (1995): 3-4, <https://doi.org/10.1353/wgy.1995.0036>.

<sup>106</sup> McCormick, “Private Anxieties/Public Projections,” 6.

<sup>107</sup> J. Hoberman, “Opening Pandora’s Box,” *The Criterion Collection*, accessed September 17, 2021, <https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/458-opening-pandora-s-box>.

however, Jeanne discovers Khalibiev is the actual murderer and thief. In the end, the police free Andreas and arrest Khalibeiv, and Andreas and Jeanne rejoin in love.

The film is notable for its portrayal of Andreas. He represents a particular figure of Leftist masculinity, a communist. Robert in *Die Unehelichen* and Peter in *Die Verrufenen* have no political leanings, while Andreas does. Pabst's Jeanne is flatter, more of a "plot piece" than a fully realized character. Jeanne is accidentally heroic. Khalibeiv tries to advance on Jeanne sexually when she is on the train with Khalibeiv. She rebuffs him, exposing the diamond he stole from Raymond in their tussle. Jeanne fits the stereotype of a comic hero. Her accomplishments are accidental rather than purposeful. She barely holds agency in her own life, constantly assaulted by men like the soldiers in the small town, her uncle, or Khalibeiv. Pabst styled his film to feature a female main character but the story's structure requires heroic men like Andreas to protect her. A female without a protective heroic male will fall prey to domestic or foreign sexual assaults.

Andreas becomes that hero for Pabst, and thus becomes another successfully reassembled masculine character in Weimar film. The original novel's author, Ilya Ehrenburg, decried *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney*, but Pabst maintained he had little choice to Americanize the film to please Universum-Film GmbH, the major German studio.<sup>108</sup> Andreas is a character that has a multiplicity of forces acting upon him: spreading communism, protecting Jeanne, and maintaining his own heroic masculinity. As J.

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<sup>108</sup> Eric Rentschler. "The Problematic Pabst: An *Auteur* Directed by History," in *The Films of G.W. Pabst: An Extraterritorial Cinema*, ed. Eric Rentschler, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 8.



Figure 5. Shot from *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* (1927) showing characters Andreas (Center) and Crimean Servant. Reproduced under Fair Use.

Hoberman said above, there are the Soviet, American, and German styles in this movie.

Each of them is an axis of the masculinity in which Andreas finds himself in this film.

Soviet as a heroic soldier, American as romantic lover, and German as a tragic figure all

blend to configure Andreas's masculinity in this film. The largest of these forces in

Andreas' life is a heroic soldier. It is the thing that drives him to act for most of the film's action.

It is, in fact, the situation that Andreas is first found. He is in a bar with his fellow communist supporters (see fig. 5). The group converses about the situation they are facing in which someone is snitching on their supporters. Here Andreas plays the heroic soldier, heroic in that his primary interest is protecting his men and their lives. The list

represents a threat to him and his. For Andreas to maintain that heroism, he must keep his violence in check. He must be careful in his actions to maintain his moral status as a good and heroic soldier. When Andreas and his sidekick confront Jeanne's father, believing him to be the traitor to their cause, his sidekick shoots Jeanne's father, not Andreas. Jeanne's father shoots Andreas, but he only suffers a grazing wound. Unlike his partner, there is a sympathetic look in his eyes. Andreas understands but regrets what happened. Andreas and Jeanne meet for a few moments before she leaves, and he must decide whether he chooses the party or Jeanne, and he chooses the party. It becomes a decision of duty or love and the theme of sacrifice is again accented.

While the film storyline foregrounds the romantic relationship, the "real plot" is about authentic masculinity and what such entails. While Andreas is not German, the film is German, and Pabst was speaking of and for the German Left. For the German communist party, especially in 1927, their message differed from the beginning of the decade. In 1924, the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany - KPD) started the Rotfrontkämpferbund (Red Front Fighters league - RFB) which was a paramilitary organization. The RFB drew the party towards a more hyper-masculine violent streak than it had done in previous years.<sup>109</sup> Pabst's film acknowledges a gendered, indeed heroic, struggle against the perceived enemies of the Communist Left.

In terms of the scholarship, politically motivated violence from the KPD or RFB is absent in discussions about German masculinity. Instead, discussions center on

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<sup>109</sup> Sara Ann Sewell, "The Party Does Indeed Fight Like a Man: The Construction of a Masculine Ideal in the Weimar Communist Party," in *Weimar Culture Revisited*, ed. John Alexander Williams (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 205.

conceptions of violence in Conservative or Nazi practices within Weimar. As author Sara Ann Sewell says in her conclusion, "the creation of a communist male archetype who was working-class, politically resolute, physically fit, battle-ready, and willing to sacrifice his life for the cause signaled a reconceptualization of masculinity that responded to the specific political and social context of late Weimar."<sup>110</sup> The new masculinity of the Communists is equivalent to that of the New Objectivists, who saw a connection to the lower-class as holding promise for a reassembled and workable German masculinity. In the years prior to the filming of *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney*, this stoic masculinity linked to the lower class was being replaced with one that was more heroic, more the man of positive action rather than "negative" action, like restraint or sacrifice. As I will discuss below, outward action often involved violence, harm, and moral compromise—additional elements of reassembled masculinity in this period.

Thus, the active heroic, albeit still sacrificial masculinity in Andreas's character answers the stoicism expressed by Robert in *Die Verrufenen*. Violence, especially as self-defense or the "fair fight," found expression in sport, notably boxing. "In this, the fighter seemed to channel the brutality of an entire era that witnessed the battlefield slaughter, street fighting, and political assassinations," argues Jensen. "In the case of the male fighter, the media often attributed this violence to the fighter's lower-class origins, whether real or imagined."<sup>111</sup> While *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* does not have what would

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<sup>110</sup> Sewell, "The Party Does Indeed Fight Like a Man," 219.

<sup>111</sup> Erik Norman Jensen, *Body by Weimar: Athletes, Gender, and German Modernity* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 39.

constitute action scenes nor is involved sports per se, there is violence connected to Andreas' lower-class status and communist orientation. Violence is central to Andreas' involvement in the shooting of Jeanne's father, the threat of communist fighting, and the scenes of the revolution-torn Russian town. Some Weimar culture critics, particularly "high-art purists," saw boxing as a threat to truly refined aesthetics.<sup>112</sup> However, most scholars agree that "working-class masculinity had begun to challenge the hegemony of the middle-class variant in the 1920s, and German boxers led the charge."<sup>113</sup> For my purpose here, violent masculinity was lower class in tone and orientation.

*Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* adds to this conversation but includes the political element of the working-class from a political (communist) perspective. Pabst's reassembly of gender portrays masculinity changing from the stoic version to a more violent version, via the working-class. Andreas, being a soldier, is also part of separate "class;" all soldiers, regardless of class origins are linked to violence in service to the nation or cause. There are many nuances within violence, whether committed by an individual or state, for example. For the purpose here, violence is a broader categorization of activity that is occurring on a wide, everyday basis in Weimar.<sup>114</sup> It would not be accurate to state that Germany was any more violent than any other European city, however, there was a particular encounter with violence for many urban Germans under

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<sup>112</sup> Theodore F. Rippey, "Athletics, Aesthetics, and Politics in the Weimar Press," *German Studies Review* 28, no. 1 (2005): 89.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>114</sup> Sace Elder, *Murder Scenes: Normality, Deviance, and Criminal Violence in Weimar Berlin* (Ann Arbor, United States: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 3.  
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/psu/detail.action?docID=3414912>.

Weimar. Through both urban conditions and the popularity of boxing, violence filtered heroism through the lens of the lower class. For filmmakers, these three became interconnected. Acts of violence became heroic, and violence was lower class, which associated heroism with lower-class masculinity.

*The Transformation of a Man: Sexuality and Heroism to Aggression*

As portrayed in the above films, directors working in realism increasingly attached masculinity to action rather than sacrifice or stoicism, specifically to heroic, often militarized, violence. As a rebuttal to the Hollywood trope of the accidental or comic hero, Weimar realism film authenticated the German case through the class struggle, linking male protagonists to the lower class. From 1928 through 1930, the efforts by directors and writers in the next set of three films extend my theme of reassembled masculinity via particular modes of violence. These films introduce a factor missing from the prior films that of sexuality, while in both *Die Verrufenen* and *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney*, the stories involve love and romance rather than “sex.” This next group of films also involves masculinity’s entanglement with modes of heroism, whether of sacrifice or action. Gender is reassembled and, as I have shown, masculinity evolves. It is never static and far from disabled by “crisis.”

The first film is 1928's *Geschlecht in Fesseln* (Sex in Chains), one of three prominent Weimar films which depicted male homosexuality. The Nazis placed the film on a censored list in 1933.<sup>115</sup> William Dieterle directed the film and was the primary star,

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<sup>115</sup> Head of the South State Film Office to the State Commissioner Wagner in München, March 13, 1933,

while Mary Johnson, Gunnar Tolnæs, and Hans Heinrich von Twardowski serve in important supporting roles.

*Geschlecht in Fesseln* takes up the problem of “the prison homosexual.” A standard media and sociological trope since at least the 1890s, this film updates the dilemmas of the modern state and the regulation of sexuality around the question of “Germanness.” *Geschlecht in Fesseln* tells the story of a newlywed couple, Franz, and Helene, who are having difficulty making money. Franz is an engineer but he struggles to find work; like the Robert Kramer character, nothing is certain economically. Franz and his wife might lose their middle-class life. Helene (Mary Johnson) must take up paid work at a restaurant, where she is harassed by male customers. Franz, who is visiting Helene at work, gets into a fight with one such man and in the resulting fight, kills him. Franz is arrested and sentenced to three years in jail. As an inmate, Franz encounters four other men who are all sexually frustrated in the jail because they cannot see their women.

The film portrays the couple’s situation as equally disturbing to gender and family norms: both husband and wife become destabilized sexually. As a prisoner, Franz suffers due to the lack of sexual intimacy; Helene also falls into crisis without her husband at home. Helene comes to the prison begging to see her husband. Back at home, she sleeps with a friend of her husband’s (played by Gunnar Tolnæs), who had been helping the couple after Franz’s imprisonment. As that happens, Franz and a fellow prisoner Alfred





Figure 6. Shots from *Geschlecht in Fesseln* (1928) showing Franz in prison, in two different scenes. Reproduced under Fair use.

(Hans Heinrich von Twardowski), resort to a homosexual tryst. During a visitation allowed by the warden, Helene wishes to talk about her affair, but she does not, while Franz finds himself sexually incapacitated and cannot make love to his wife. When Franz is finally released, he returns home and admits he no longer loves her, which she thinks means that he knows about her affair. However, Alfred visits them soon after, bringing a bouquet for Franz. Helene understands and Franz, distressed, sends Alfred away. Helene finds Franz draped over a gas heater, she comes to him, and he tells her he cannot live anymore, and she refuses to leave him. He opens the valve, and they die in each other's arms.

*Geschlecht in Fesseln* is one of the most sexually explicit films in this collection. It deals with sexuality in a way unique to my case study. William Dieterle's most explicit intention is to showcase the perils of the prison system, especially one that would punish a man for defending his wife from assault. Thwarted or distorted masculine energy needs release in the form of sexual expression. Without such sexual expression, men will become crazy, as the film clearly says through one of the other prisoners. While Helene has her own sexual crisis, the film is much more about Franz and his psychosexual breakdown and its effect on marriage. Early in the film, Franz can put off the supposed temptations of prison by imagining his fiancé easily (see fig 6., left). While later, when

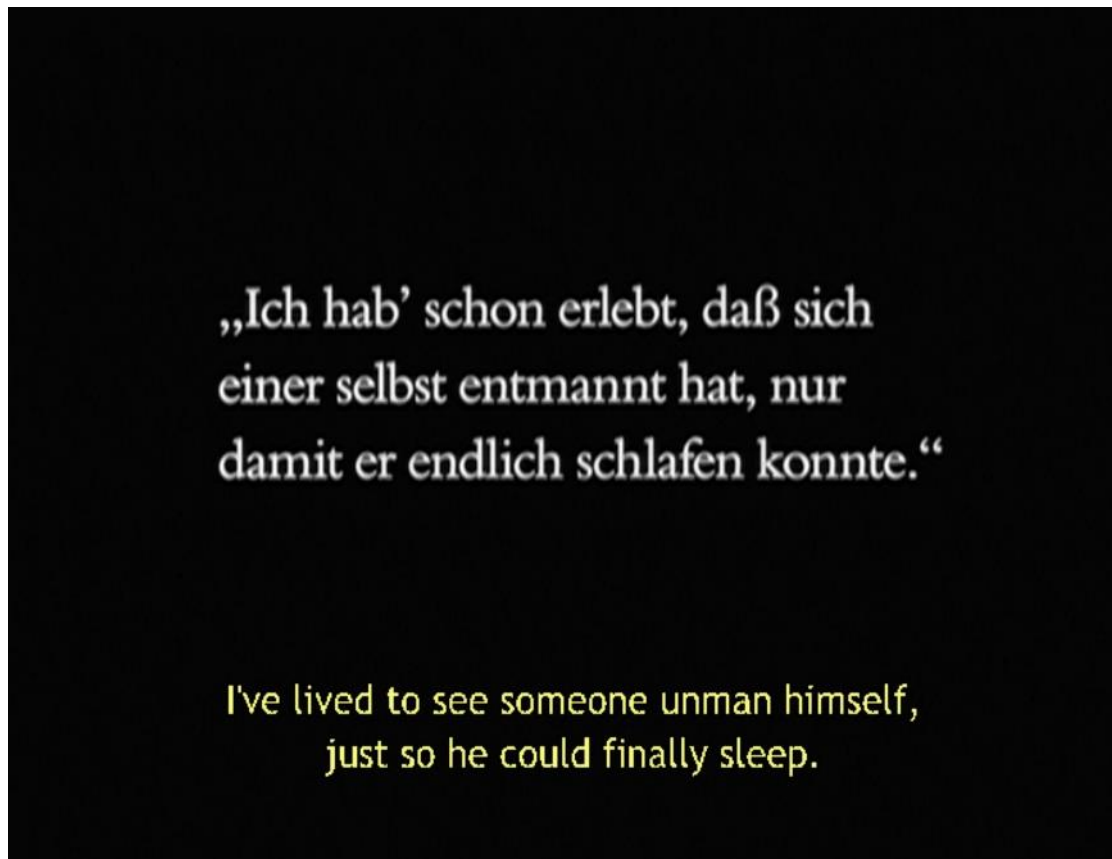


Figure 7. Intertitle with caption from *Geschlecht in Fesseln* (1928). Reproduced under fair use.

the prison places him in solitary confinement, Franz must create or draw her on the wall so that Franz can imagine her (see fig. 6, right). All the above is predicated on a mention by an elder prisoner about sexual occurrences in prison. He “speaks” a line as they are bedding down, which puts fear into every other man in the room (see fig. 7). The term *entmannt* is clear; while the intertitle subtitles read *unman*, the more direct and more precise translation would be to emasculate. The meaning is obvious; one man lets another sexually penetrate him. Here in this film, to take on a woman's role creates a crisis. The fear here is of emasculation through homosexual acts.

Homosexuality, and sexuality in general, is crucial when considering the reassembly of masculinity within this film. Franz, his masculinity, and sexuality are also deeply connected to his class status. Franz and his wife are teetering on the brink toward the lower class. Franz struggles to find work, while Helene herself must also work. If Franz or Helene were of higher-class status, neither harassment nor the resulting death of the perpetrator would have occurred, at least not in the same way. Franz protects his masculinity and sexuality and that of Helene's by defending her through an act that can be heroic in a certain sense. Yet this performance of his masculinity is punished and this distorted situation leads to further gender distortion, "unmanning" himself through the same-sex intercourse. The film portrays a German society that would punish proper self-defense and home-defense of a man over his wife; the unfair caging of Franz leads to the irredeemable (and avoidable?) homosexual tryst that requires punishment via death. Helene's gender distortion seems derived from infidelity; her moral failure for succumbing to Rudolf's advances is her (self) indictment leading to suicide. Both husband and wife are condemned because they fail to be faithful in their relationships. For Franz, it was gay sex, and for Helene, it was her infidelity. However, that they die in each other's arms committing suicide seems to reassemble if not masculinity per se, at least the notion of mutual sacrifice for a properly functioning and morally redeemed marriage. This otherwise wasteful and avoidable dual suicide is required, Pabst suggests, to keep in place the linchpin of the heterosexual marital union and its gendered roles.

Homosexuality in men became a divisive topic during the Weimar period. Many doctors and psychologists had a differing understanding of homosexuality. One of the

most famous doctors of the Weimar era who spoke about homosexuality was Magnus Hirschfeld. Hirschfeld was a famous sexologist who believed in psychological and biological explanations for homosexuality.<sup>116</sup> What we would call “sexual orientation” was an inborn trait, and some people were simply more predisposed to homosexuality. While it is popular to name Hirschfeld as accepting of homosexuality, his “diagnosis” and “treatment” deserve mention here. Hirschfeld promoted corrective testicle transplants that he maintained would fix problems with effeminate men or other men who had sexual performance issues.<sup>117</sup> Other doctors and psychologists believed homosexuality was a temptation-based behavior rather than a medical or health disorder. A person who was homosexual could tempt a child or adult into homosexuality. Eduard Spranger, a psychologist of the era, “believed that homosexuality resulted from seduction” and that certain acts and behaviors could incline or even drive a person towards homosexuality.<sup>118</sup>

In Dieterle’s film, the lack of a heterosexual outlet for the masculine drive inside the prison resulted in the men seeking relief where they could find it. The next year, 1929, the Reichstag Committee voted to repeal Paragraph 175, which decriminalized sexual acts between men, suggesting some sort of acceptance of homosexuality. However, scholars like Laurie Marhoefer have noted that “the reform...intended foremost as a crackdown on seduction and selling sex, not as a decriminalization of male-

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<sup>116</sup> Javier Samper Vendrell, “Adolescence, Psychology, and Homosexuality in the Weimar Republic,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 27, no. 3 (2018): 406, <https://doi.org/10.7560/JHS27303>.

<sup>117</sup> April Trask, “Remaking Men: Masculinity, Homosexuality and Constitutional Medicine in Germany, 1914-1933,” *German History* 36, no. 2 (June 2018): 182-183, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gerhis/ghy013>.

<sup>118</sup> Javier Samper Vendrell, “Adolescence, Psychology, and Homosexuality in the Weimar Republic,” 412.

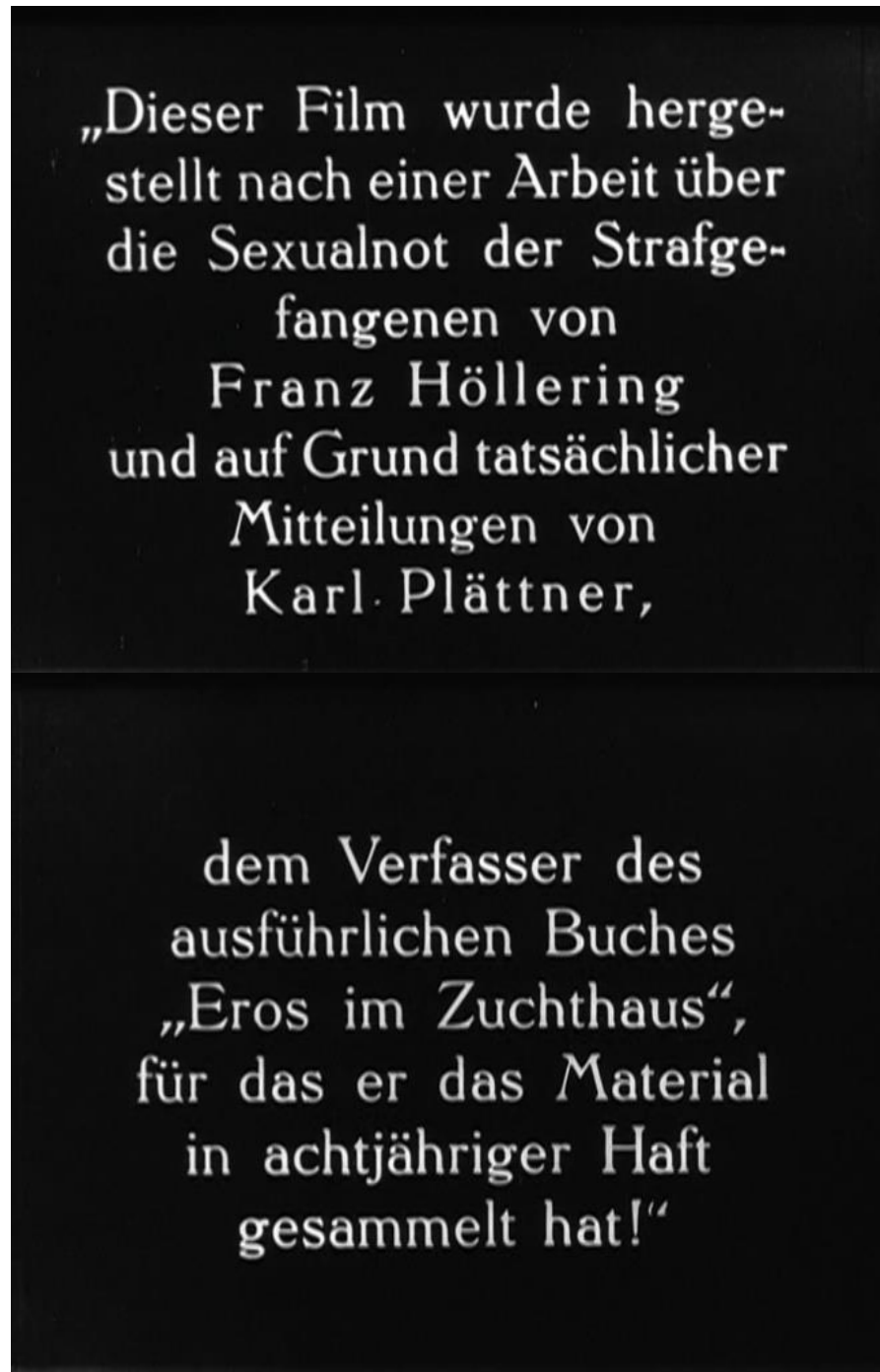


Figure 8. Introduction titles from *Geschlecht in Fesseln* (1928). Introduction explains that film was based on the work of *Franz Höllering* from actual statements by Karl Plattner. Reproduced under Fair Use.

male sex.”<sup>119</sup> Weimar saw homosexuality as the opposite of masculinity. It was

stereotyped in such a way that seemed to link it to submissiveness and vulnerability.<sup>120</sup>

Rather than the heroic notions of strength and violence accented in reassembled masculinity in this project, homosexuality was feminized and seen as improperly directed masculine energy and behavior.

The directors and writers for *Geschlecht in Fesseln* seem to have shared this understanding of sexuality. At the beginning of the film is an introduction which reads, "this film is based on a work about the sexual desire of prisoners by Franz Höllering, and on actual statements by Karl Plättner, the author of the detailed book 'Eros in Prison,' the material for which he collected during his eight-year imprisonment." (see fig. 8) *Eros in Prison* provides a graphic portrayal of life in prison during the Weimar Era. The film's source text "gives graphic accounts of the sexual practices prevalent in prison settings, including male-on-male rape, prostitution, and group orgies."<sup>121</sup> While the incident in *Geschlecht in Fesseln* between Franz and Alfred differs from what Plättner describes in his text, the connections to masculinity are suggestive. A man's masculinity in Weimar connected to his sexual desires, including, in the limited Hirschfeld sense, the existence of homosexuality in human sexual behavior. However, the social consensus remained heteronormative. There is no fear of the out-of-prison homosexual in the film but rather the fear separating a man from his desire. This reassembled vision of masculinity thus took on additional sexual aspects. The transforming masculinity began in 1925 as the stoic lower class. However, by 1928 conception of masculinity adopted heroism and sex

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<sup>121</sup> Christian Rogowski, "The Dialectic of (Sexual) Enlightenment: Wilhelm Dieterle's *Geschlecht in Fesseln* (1928)", *The Many Faces of Weimar Cinema: Rediscovering Germany's Filmic Legacy*, ed. Christian Rogowski (Rochester, United States: Boydell & Brewer, Incorporated, 2010), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/psu/detail.action?docID=3003669>.

as aspects of masculinity, distancing itself from stoicism and denial. Indeed, *Geschlecht in Fesseln* views denial of sex outlet as distorting unto death. Franz and Helene's deaths are punishment and moreover, unnecessary (“unheroic”?) sacrifices had society adequately supported their heteronormative, middle-class marriage in the first place.

The notion of sacrifice in *Geschlecht in Fesseln* is unheroic. The only way for Franz and Helene to redeem themselves was to sacrifice their own lives. This notion of sacrifice has been a feature of some of the films covered. In the case of Robert Kramer, he denies himself indulgence and sacrifices everyday in order to recreate himself. While in *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney*, Andreas must sacrifice his life in Eastern Europe with his comrades to obtain what he desires: success for his communist comrades in France and Jeanne's love. However, self-sacrifice functions as a kind of heroism, which is where a film like *Die weiße Hölle vom Pitz Palü* (The White Hell of Pitz Palu, 1929) adds to this discussion of gender.

The directors and writer use masculinity in the outdoors to show the nobility of sacrifice. In this case, it is not individual or familial sacrifice; rather a sense of a larger whole or collective is involved, in which the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few. The reassembling of masculinity that takes place in this project coalesces in the mountain film genre. Two directors directed *Die weiße Hölle vom Pitz Palü*, G.W. Pabst, who directed the narrative scenes, and Arnold Fanck, who directed the natural documentary-like mountain scenes. The press acclaimed this film during its release, noting that the addition of Pabst's human dimension to Fanck's mountain scenery action



shots made for a film with broad appeal.<sup>122</sup> The film stars Gustav Diessl as Dr. Johannes Krafft, a mountain climber who loses his wife in the first scene, while Leni Riefenstahl plays Maria Maioni, and her fiancé Hans Brandt is played by Ernst Petersen. This project's version of the film is the recut version that the Nazis did in 1933, which removed all the scenes that featured a Jewish film star Kurt Gerron. However, the German Film Archive restored the film entirely but is only available for significant import.

The plot of *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü* is melodramatic. Dr. Krafft's and his wife, also named Maria, are on a mountain climbing journey. A mountain guide warns Dr. Krafft not to climb but does anyway, resulting in his wife's death. A few years later, Hans and his wife Maria are on a mountain climbing journey. They soon meet Dr. Krafft. The mountain guide, Christian (Otto Spring), tells Dr. Krafft, who still searches the mountain for his wife's body, that some students are planning to climb the same place where his wife died. Krafft must stop them. Maria convinces Hans to go along with Dr. Krafft, and she goes along with the men. Because of the limited bed space in the cabin, the three of them slept in the same bed; the limited bedspace results in Hans becoming jealous of the doctor. Hans, who is less experienced and still panged by jealousy, leads the excursion, which results in an injury. Dr. Krafft attempts to lend aid, but he becomes injured also. They find an ice cave to wait for rescue. During the night, a crazed Hans attempts to kill himself but is stopped by the doctor, and in the resulting fight, Maria must

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<sup>122</sup> Hans-Michael Bock, "Georg Wilhelm Pabst: Documenting a Life and Career," in *The Films of G.W. Pabst: An Extraterritorial Cinema*, ed. Eric Rentschler, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 224.



Figure 9. Fight scene from *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü* (1928). Maria stands in the back ready to assist, while Hans and Krafft fight in the foreground. Reproduced under Fair Use.

tie her husband up (see fig. 9). The fight results in Dr. Krafft deciding to give his coat to the delirious Hans, and then he climbs to a ledge where he waits to die. Afterward, the guide rescues Maria and Hans, who reads the note instructing him to save the young people and leave Krafft for dead. The guide takes Maria and Hans back down the mountain, saving them but leaving the doctor to his fate.

Some would argue that by allowing a woman on the mountain and with traditions of the Alps as a place of masculine regeneration, Fanck helped to feed into the crisis of masculinity, and that Riefenstahl's mere presence was a destabilizing threat.<sup>123</sup> I disagree

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<sup>123</sup> Hans-Michael Bock, "A Strange and Foreign World: Documentary, Ethnography, and the Mountain Films of Arnold Fanck and Leni Riefenstahl," in *Folklore/Cinema: Popular Films as Vernacular Culture*, ed. Sharon R. Sherman and Mikel J. Koven, (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2007), 59.

with this reading because the Nazis reissued *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü* in 1935, and the only change was the removal of the Jewish actor. Why would they reprint if the film whose treatment of masculinity seems so contrary to the Nazi government's hypermasculine ideal? It seems that despite the Maria character, this film is "about" men and the masculine realm. Regardless of the Maria character's heroic actions or her incursion into the mountain, Hans refers to Maria (Riefenstahl) as ein Mädchen (a girl). Her presence is not a threat to either Dr. Krafft or her fiancé. Krafft is an experienced climber, thus experienced overall, versus Hans, an inexperienced climber, and intimidated by Krafft. The film suggests that experience and jealousy, both prevalent tropes in melodramas, are the drivers of the drama rather than Maria representing an encroachment on male territory by a "new woman."

The outdoor setting that *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü* showcases was often seen as regenerative during the interwar period.<sup>124</sup> There is power in the shots and scenery that Fanck shows. The fascination of the Weimar era with the mountain film reminds one of earlier German Romantic obsession with nature.<sup>125</sup> While not necessarily divine as in the Romantic era, some specific factors of the outdoors held Germany's attention during the interwar period. It was a space, especially in film, which allowed for an expression of untrammelled masculinity, primarily through the danger of mountain climbing. The expression of masculinity in *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü* is the act of heroic sacrifice,

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<sup>124</sup> Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 318.

<sup>125</sup> Eric Rentschler, *The Use and Abuse of Cinema: German Legacies from the Weimar Era to the Present* (New York, UNITED STATES: Columbia University Press, 2015), 94  
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/psu/detail.action?docID=1985510>.

while the feminine heroism is Maria's stalwartness and the moral compass. Maria's role is to validate the need for Dr. Krafft's sacrifice. Maria recognizes that to ensure her and Hans' survival, an extreme act must occur: Dr. Krafft's "suicide." Dr. Krafft's suicide is a vehicle for him to pass a reassembled masculinity onto Hans, allowing Hans to live fully. Hans now has the experience; thus, Dr. Krafft is no longer needed.

*Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü* becomes a story about Germany during the 1920s. Krafft represents Old Germany prior to First World War Germany. He has already lost so much, i.e., his wife and his youth. In contrast, Hans represents the new, post-war Germany. The young new wife who represents the New Woman who can climb mountains, complementing but not challenging her husband's authority and role. It is a reassembled masculinity in *Piz Palü* that is interesting; any crisis is vanquished by sacrifice. Hans's emotional instability causes him to injure himself, while Krafft's self-sacrifice saves young Germany from making drastic self-injuring choices. The volatility of the 1920s between the political violence and financial inflation certainly injured Germany, including its self-image. As a non-threatening, right-sized New Woman, Maria rescues Hans during the altercation between him and Dr. Krafft. Maria serves as a plot device in this film. Her character creates necessary tension between Hans and Dr. Krafft and highlights generational change. The wife guides her husband toward proper forms of sacrifice and action. Unlike Franz in prison, Hans has not succumbed to some evil but instead only temporarily become destabilized out in nature. With Maria's guidance, he chooses wisely and survives due to the necessary (if not strictly "heroic") sacrifice of Krafft. Thus masculinity does not so much break down from stress or "crisis" but is

reassembled in a companionate marriage in which the couple overcome the limits of the older generation and successfully climb the mountain of life.

Typically, the idea of self-sacrifice and the more significant genre of *Bergfilm* seem like a precursor to Nazism. Much scholarship makes connections between Nazi and the *Bergfilm* with fascist images on the screen.<sup>126</sup> As hinted at elsewhere, the atrocities of the Nazis have overshadowed some of the cultural variety within Weimar history, along with that of film history. However, Nazism and Communism shared many of the same cultural elements, like conceptions about the body; idealizing masculine strength, power, and masculinity. It is the same with the *Bergfilme*. Newspapers that leaned from communist to conservative nationalists acclaimed *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü* as universally loved by German audiences.<sup>127</sup> *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü* then received acclaim from political parties typified by ideological stonewalls, who had fought and killed each other in the streets only a few years before. Even “*Die Rote Fahne* celebrated *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü*, as ‘undoubtedly one of the [greatest] German films’ ever.”<sup>128</sup> The notion of heroic sacrifice was not a uniquely fascist stance. The film’s reception suggests that a range of reassembled masculinities could travel across

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<sup>126</sup> Rentschler, *The Use and Abuse of Cinema*, 91-92.

<sup>127</sup> Hans-Michael Bock, “Georg Wilhelm Pabst: Documenting a Life and Career,” in *The Films of G.W. Pabst: An Extraterritorial Cinema*, ed. Eric Rentschler, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 224.

<sup>128</sup> Eric Rentschler, *The Use and Abuse of Cinema*, 95.

ideological spectrums and political affiliations. Similarly, the conception of heroism, and within heroism, the idea of sacrifice, could be put to “apolitical” uses.<sup>129</sup>

Heroic sacrifice is not the only element of note in the reassembling of masculinity found here. As noted in my discussion of *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney*, there was a discussion of the communism’s body politics and the relationship to masculinity in the physical fit category. This discussion, along with temporality, fits here with *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü*. Dr. Krafft represents the older generation of Germany, while Hans represents the newer. Temporally, their masculinities differ. Some in Weimar, particularly the New Objectivists, prized youth over experience.<sup>130</sup> However, it was not just the New Objectivists who felt this way. Youth was a platform for Hitler as well. While it was later after he came to power, his platform focused on the youth in Germany.<sup>131</sup> In the mountain genre film, three factors tie it into the general mise-en-scène of Weimar: athletics, nature focus, and youth obsession.<sup>132</sup> *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü* fits perfectly into the obsession with bodily health and by the Weimar era, more of the population could enjoy leisure activities because of the reduction in working hours.

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<sup>129</sup> Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003). Sara Ann Sewell, “The Party Does Indeed Fight Like A Man: The Construction of a Masculine Ideal in the Weimar Communist Party,” in *Weimar Culture Revisited*. (New York: Palgrave, 2011). Robert Heynen, *Degeneration and Revolution: Radical Cultural Politics and the Body in Weimar Germany* (Boston, United States: BRILL, 2015). Laurie Marhoefer, *Sex, and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis* (University of Toronto Press, 2015).

<sup>130</sup> McCormick, “Private Anxieties/Public Projections,” 6.

<sup>131</sup> Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man*, 6.

<sup>132</sup> McCormick, “Private Anxieties/Public Projections,” 5.

Mountaineering became less of an elite activity; nature could be accessed across class and fewer working hours meant the lower class now could enjoy at least some of the activities associated with leisure and cultivated “fitness.”<sup>133</sup>

In Weimar, movements related to health and beauty, like the Life Reform (Lebensreform) and Body Culture (Körperkultur) specifically, were gaining traction concurrently with these films.<sup>134</sup> These movements spread across class and political boundaries. No longer was the idealized masculine figure strictly connected to a single class. He was heroic and sexual, but he was now drifting away from only the lower class of Robert Kramer. This reassembled masculine figure is no longer in denial of the world's pleasures. He has escaped his class boundaries by acting out in the countryside, mountains, and natural environment, which are the inheritance of “all Germans.” This New Man belonged, potentially, to everyone.

*Menschen am Sonntag* (People on Sunday, 1930) continues the reassembling of masculinity via a discussion of the body and its connections to heroism and, even more so, to sexuality. The film was directed by Robert Siodmak and Edgar G. Ulmer and was written by Robert Siodmak and his brother Kurt and Billie (Billy) Wilder before the latter became famous. The crew of *Menschen am Sonntag* was young, mostly under thirty, besides camera operator Eugen Schüfftan. Due to the age of the crew the film is regarded to convey a young male German's view of Berlin at the beginning of the

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<sup>133</sup> Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 177.

<sup>134</sup> Heynen, *Degeneration and Revolution*, 453.  
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/psu/detail.action?docID=2006464>.

Depression and before the Nazi takeover. This film represents a temporal notion because it speaks solely to the younger adult male masculinity, while connected to the masculinity that has been reassembled in the films of my case study.

This younger male film crew also reassembled masculinity at the turn of the decade in the film *Menschen am Sonntag*. All the actors in the films are amateurs, none are professional. The film stars four main characters, and one side character: Erwin Splettstößer, Brigitte Borchert, Wolfgang von Waltershausen, Christl Ehlers, are the principal cast while Annie Schreyer serves as a side character. This film fits somewhere between amateur drama and a quasi-documentary. There are many shots of Berlin or places near and around Berlin, besides the action on the screen related to the story. It gives a sense of Berlin as a space and a time of an in-between world.

The version of the film that I review here is the Criterion Collection version; most of the film comes from a print in the Netherlands film museum, Cinémathèque Suisse, the Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique, and the Fondazione Cineteca Italiana. It was all put together and restored is the version that this project uses. The film's story follows a rather typical melodrama plot of boy meets girl. Wolfgang meets a pretty woman, Christl, and invites her to an outing. Here the film introduces Erwin, who does not want to go to the cinema with his girlfriend, Annie. When he arrives home, they fight about the film outing before destroying each other's picture of famous actors or actresses. In this moment the filmmakers treat the audience to the view inside of the apartment. It should be noted that these characters inhabit lower to lower-middle-class professions. They are not intellectuals, nor are they upper class. Wolfgang is a wine salesperson, while Erwin is a



taxi driver. Brigitte, who we meet later, is a record salesclerk, and Christl is a film extra. While not particularly well off, none of them live in destitution, like in *Die Verrufenen* or *Die Unehelichen*. While small, Erwin and Annie's apartment is comfortably situated compared to where Robert or Peter live for most of their films. The masculinity has moved out of the slums and into a cleaner, less threatening urban space.

The urban space, however, is not free from the embattled masculinity that is found throughout this project. When Wolfgang arrives, the fight is souring between Annie and Erwin. His presence represses the feud, putting that situation on the back burner. Wolfgang's arrival supersedes the couple's plans; male bonding is more important than issues between Erwin and Anna. Again, returning to the age of the filmmakers, male bonding, for them, superseded the dating relationship. As seen earlier with characters like Emma or Helene, the woman's job is sacrifice, a tool for further male progress. This pattern continues as a factor of reassembled masculinity. The two men enjoy a beer and plan to go out the next day. Wolfgang meets up with Christl, who has brought her friend Brigitte. The group travel by train to the Wannsee. Erwin waits in a plaza for Annie; she never shows up. So, he goes alone, following the other three.

The group heads out to the Wannsee and enjoys the day, including flirting, joking, swimming, and listening to music. While Wolfgang and Christl are interested in one another, her annoyance at his flirting causes him to turn his affections to Brigitte, the two of them "make love" in the woods. To end their day, they take a paddleboat, and Erwin and Wolfgang flirt with other girls to the annoyance of both Christl and Brigitte. They return home, with Erwin finding Annie still asleep to his annoyance. The final shots are

of Berlin and intertitles which say, "And then on Monday... it is back to work... back to the everyday... back to the daily grind... Four... million... wait for... the next Sunday. The end."

While this film may seem like a simplistic melodrama involving a double date, a deeper analysis reveals the filmmaker's notions of gender that connect to the reassembled masculinity traced through this study. The contrast between Erwin and Wolfgang's physicality is where this analysis begins, particularly when the film reaches the scenes at the beach. There is a scene of Erwin removing his clothes to get into his bathing costume. He is flabby and unathletic (see fig. 10). Erwin never really gets with Brigitte or Christl. Although he attempts, they rebuff him. In comparison, Wolfgang can lift Brigitte and swim in the river (see fig. 11).



*Figure 10.* Shots from *Menschen am Sonntag* (1930). These shots feature character Erwin undressing for a day at the beach. Reproduced under Fair Use.



*Figure 11.* Shot from *Menschen am Sonntag* (1930). It shows Wolfgang lifting Brigitte into the air. Reproduced under Fair Use.

His masculine performance is more successful at enticing women; Brigitte and Christl are interested in Wolfgang over Erwin. Other scholars have observed the difference between Erwin and Wolfgang's as well.<sup>135</sup> However, Noah Isenberg claims that while Wolfgang and Erwin's exploits, as he calls them, are rebounded, and Christl and Brigitte stand their ground.<sup>136</sup>

I cannot entirely agree with his reading of the film. Two factors fuel another reading of this film, the first is sexuality, and the second is violence. While these themes have appeared in previous films in this study, in this film violence is linked to sex. *Menschen am Sonntag* suggests sexual violence. As noted in the discussion on violence while analyzing *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney*, violence was a hot topic for urban Berliners. When Sace Elder examined domestic violence in Weimar, she found that German society made it acceptable and normal for couples to have violent domestic conflicts.<sup>137</sup> Again, not that Berlin or Weimar were more violent than any other European city *per se*, but violence occupies a distinct place in everyday life and the German imaginary. In this film, explicit violence occurs between male and female characters.

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<sup>135</sup> Carrie Collenberg-Gonzalez, "Rape Culture and Dialectical Montage: A Radical Reframing of *Menschen Am Sonntag* (1930)," *Feminist German Studies* 35 (2019): 85–109.

<sup>136</sup> Noah Isenberg, "People on Sunday: Young People Like Us," The Criterion Collection, accessed September 27, 2021, <https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1904-people-on-sunday-young-people-like-us>.

<sup>137</sup> Sace Elder, *Murder Scenes*, 188.



Figure 12. Shot from *Menschen am Sonntag* (1930). In this scene Wolfgang is helping Brigitte swim. Reproduced under Fair Use.

Like sexuality in *Geschlecht in Fesseln*, *Menschen am Sonntag* conveys a paternalistic view of relationships. Dutch physician Theodor Hendrik van de Velde published a book called *Ideal Marriage* in 1926; he wrote that men and women both desire a sense of male aggression, which was attained through sex.<sup>138</sup> According to Dr. Van de Velde, a man had an animalistic need for sex. Franz, in *Geschlecht in Fesseln*, needs sex so badly that he corrupts himself by sleeping with another man. In *Menschen am Sonntag* the character Wolfgang represents a reassembled masculine desire: his built body and athletic nature give him the sexual magnetism that Erwin lacks. Velde's rhetoric

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<sup>138</sup> Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 300.

promoted lectures and a series of three books; it resonated with Germans.<sup>139</sup> People were interested in sex, how to improve their marriage, and how sex and marriage connected. The embedding of aggressive sexuality within heterosexuality is notable in this film's reassembled masculinity.

Control also plays a role in the character of Wolfgang, achieved not through restraint but by domination. Christl rebuffs him in their swimming. She is not interested in playing with him or fooling around. However, Brigitte, who appears coquettish or innocent, is more interested in Wolfgang. Wolfgang's seduction of Brigitte begins with a scene of his controlling her while she swims. He picks her up and holds her as if she is a child, then treats her even more like a child by guiding her in "swimming lessons." (see fig. 12) He completely controls her. There is no resistance here from Christl. Wolfgang is a man; therefore, he has his desires, and she submits. The seduction continues during the film. However, the seduction becomes violent.

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<sup>139</sup> Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 303.



Figure 13. Shot from *Menschen am Sonntag* (1930). In this Brigitte is trying to run from Wolfgang. Reproduced under Fair Use.

In a later scene, Wolfgang chases Brigitte and Christl, they split up, and he chooses Brigitte, whom Wolfgang finds more open to his advances. They find themselves in a clearing of sorts during the subsequent chase, where Wolfgang begins his seduction. Brigitte runs again, wishing to escape from Wolfgang (see fig. 13). When he goes to kiss her, she tries to stop him by putting her hand on his face (see fig. 14, top). They end up kissing because of Brigitte's acquiescence from Wolfgang's forcefulness. The camera cuts away, and when it returns, the viewer is left to see Wolfgang standing over the sprawled and disheveled form of Brigitte (see fig. 14, bottom). Here the worlds of violence and sexuality crash together. Brigitte lies on the ground, crumpled. Carrie Collenberg-





Figure 14. Shots from *Menschen am Sonntag* (1930). These two scenes show Brigitte and Wolfgang's sexual tryst. The first on the right is resistance. The second on the left shows the aftermath. Reproduced under Fair Use.

Gonzalez, a professor of German Studies at Portland State, explains that while journalists called the film romantic, it seems sexually violent.<sup>140</sup>

This scene points to a historical acceptance by the filmmakers, along with the film's success, to a reassembled masculinity that includes aggressive sexual desire, a disturbing extension of normalized domestic violence among Germans at this time. The reassembling of masculinity finds a new plateau with *Menschen am Sonntag*. Robert Kramer has been superceded by Wolfgang. Denial, sacrifice, and stoicism have disappeared, and sexual domination takes center stage.

These three films, *Geschlecht in Fesseln*, *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü*, and *Menschen am Sonntag* show how reassemblings of masculinity started in this project and transformed up to 1930. These characters are certainly not upper class by any means. They keep their roots in the lower class, but appear more respectable, less living in the gutter. This reassembled masculinity in these films took cues from the medical, scientific, and consumer sectors, and could be appropriated politically. These types are Franz, who tries to protect his wife, and Hans, the mountain climber, and the athletic swimmer that is Wolfgang. Linking these reassembled masculinities is the notion of sexual release for men. One finds this notion in Franz in both his desire for his wife and his homosexual encounter, his overwhelming desire for sex. In Hans's jealousy of Dr. Krafft is driven by his desire for Maria. The Wolfgang character takes this new grounding of masculinity in sexual release even further. He takes the violence and sexuality and combines them. It

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<sup>140</sup> Carrie Collenberg-Gonzalez, "Rape Culture and Dialectical Montage," 103.

becomes normalized; gone is a denial of masculine desire (Robert) or moralistic message about the dangers of succumbing to untrammelled sexual desire (Franz).

### *The Real Crisis: War and Conflict*

The added stressors of the Great Depression might have mitigated the direction of reassembled masculinity around sexual desire and violence. However, I suggest that the economic downturn strengthened this association by invoking the specter of a new war. That is where G. W. Pabst's film *Westfront 1918* (1930) finds itself. *Westfront 1918* is a film that depicts the trenches of the Western Front in World War I. The film's communist leanings gained the director the "red Pabst."<sup>141</sup> This was another film that ended up on the list of forbidden films of the Nazis, which they marked as containing communist, Marxist, or pacifist content.<sup>142</sup> It had been more than ten years since the end of the war, but many, including those on the Left, remained uncertain about that war's results for Germany.<sup>143</sup> The war hung over Weimar for many reasons; it was not just the right wing that fixated on the war and its legacy. For Pabst, the thesis, one may say, was showing the realities of war, just like *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), which was released near the same time. *Westfront 1918* has a bleaker tone, serving more as a warning to society.

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<sup>141</sup> Hans-Michael Bock, "Georg Wilhelm Pabst: Documenting a Life and Career," in *The Films of G.W. Pabst: An Extraterritorial Cinema*, ed. Eric Rentschler, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 224.

<sup>142</sup> Head of the South State Film Office to the State Commissioner Wagner in München, March 13, 1933, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich. <https://www.filmportal.de/material/brief-an-den-staatskommissar-der-landesfilmstelle-sued-frauennot-frauenglueck>

<sup>143</sup> Michael Geisler, "The Battle Ground of Modernity: Westfront 1918," in *The Films of G.W. Pabst: An Extraterritorial Cinema*, ed. Eric Rentschler, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 224.

The message is that war is not the answer to solving the world's problems, with significant implications for men and masculinity. While Pabst's message in *Westfront 1918* seems to be that war is terrible, it does not shy away from positively showing aspects important to this project, particularly aggressive masculinity linked to sexuality. Pabst's film concerns itself with the weaknesses of pacifism and his fear of war rather than the root causes of war. In this film, the transformation and reassembling of masculinity takes center stage through a heroic and sexualized male protagonist.

*Westfront 1918* features Der Bayer (The Bavarian) (Fritz Kampers), Karl (Gustav Diessl), Der Student (The Student) (Hans-Joachim Moebis), and Der Leutnant (The Lieutenant) (Claus Clausen) as the main characters of the film. The film is split between the first half prior to Karl's military leave and his return. In the first half, they explore the realities of war, and the second half involves the death or maiming of every character. The first few minutes are lighthearted then, suddenly, war. The casual and ambush quality of war provides the danger, as three characters find themselves trapped under debris during an artillery accident from their own side. The military gives Karl leave and returns to find his wife in bed with the Butcher. The world to which he returns has changed, and for the worse. Back on the front lines, the war proceeds as if nothing has happened "at home." During battle, The Student gets killed; he dies in a crater of muddy water, stabbed and choked by a French soldier. As Karl returns, the Allies have launched a major offensive. While Karl and the Bavarian are trying to defend their line, they are both injured. During this time, the Lieutenant loses his mind and ends up in the same hospital as Karl and the Bavarian. Both Karl and the Bavarian succumb to their

injuries, with Karl uttering, "we are all guilty." As Karl is covered up, a wounded French soldier next to him says, "comrades, not enemies."

In the film's opening scene, masculinity reassembled to embody aggressive sexuality appears. The film depicts a group of soldiers who have invaded a young French peasant girl's home. The opening dialogue involves this nameless soldier accosting Yvette, a young peasant girl. The scene is like *Menschen am Sonntag* in tone; Yvette seems passive and doll-like in the arms of the soldiers (see fig. 15). Their masculinity is overpowering Yvette, and she can barely fight back against the slews of commentary from the nameless soldiers and the Bavarian.



Figure 15. Shots from *Westfront 1918* (1930). These three shots show the sexual playful and violence interactions between Yvette and the soldiers. Reproduced under Fair Use.



*Figure 16.* Scenes from *Westfront 1918* (1930). They showcase Bruno and the Bavarian fighting over Yvette. Reproduced under Fair Use.

Then, the Bavarian accosts Yvette, which results in her playfully slapping him on the body. The scene to the viewer appears a playful romp with frightening undertones.

Another soldier, Bruno, then grabs Yvette off the Bavarian, holding on. They pull her between the two of them, all three of them laughing before the entire scene devolves into a play fight between Bruno and the Bavarian, which allows them to express their aggressive masculinity in this mock fight with each other (see fig. 16).

The concept of play fighting is reminiscent of the earlier discussion of boxing in Weimar and notions of athleticism that include violence. While the fighting is play, the Bavarian jokingly says, “Care to step outside?” as he and another soldier fight over Yvette. Here Pabst shows acceptable, constrained violence as male posturing for other men. Recall that some medical professionals in Weimar endorsed aggressive sexual desire as a positive characteristic in men. In this important scene, no officers or soldiers step in to stop the aggressive sexual romp. Perhaps tolerance for stretching norms is apparent in Pabst’s framing of war time stressors; aggressive sexual masculinity is acceptable if contained. Like other the women in this project, Yvette functions not as a fleshed-out character but as a tool for expressing male aggression. As the story unfolds, Yvette become the tool for male heroic sacrifice. During the film, she and der Student develop a romantic relationship, gentle kisses in the basement and explorations of sexuality in the dark. She becomes the ideal for which der Student fights; he agrees to act as a messenger, a dangerous mission which ends with his death in the muddy puddle. Gentleness and love are not rewarded here; instead, sacrifice lies dying in the puddle. The Bavarian, the joking aggressor of masculinity, provides comic relief and eventually



*Figure 17.* Scene from *Westfront 1918* (1930). In this scene Karl returns to his bedroom with his rifle to confront his wife and her young lover who he found in bed. Reproduced under Fair Use.

succumbs to his wounds from his service in battle. Der Student's death is tragically gruesome, the Bavarian's is tragically heroic. Neither are particularly redemptive.

Outside of a redemptive narrative, all that's left to the film's reassemblage of masculinity is a baseline of aggressive sexualized in a lower-class context. In *Westfront 1918*, the character Karl is shown on leave, returning home to find his wife in bed with the Butcher. Karl hears laughter and thinks his wife is just laughing. However, he finds his wife and the Butcher, who is trying to leave. There is a brief argument between Karl, the Butcher, and his wife. Distraught, Karl leaves the room. Shaken by what he has seen, he knocks over a rifle leaning against a chair. Then Karl's eyes widen with realization; he





*Figure 18.* Scene from *Westfront 1918* (1930). A scene in which Karl and his wife converse about her infidelity. Reproduced under Fair Use.

picks up the gun and returns to the room (see fig. 17). Karl orders his wife to remove the blanket from herself; he looks to the Butcher and motions for him to do it. The Butcher rips the blankets away from Karl's wife, showing the viewer she is in her bedclothes, implying a consensual aspect to the situation. Karl sees a draft note for the Butcher on the table and understands or sympathizes. The Butcher, like Karl, has been betrayed by the same woman and he lets the Butcher leave. The film again accents male bonding and elicits sympathy from the viewer. Karl's wife tries to explain that she is not at fault for infidelity, but Karl will not hear it (see fig. 18). Pabst suggests that women are weak and

not responsible for their actions. No one punishes the Butcher who slept with Karl's wife. The sole explanation is war, and war is pain and betrayal, so enjoy what one can while one can. Pabst asks the audience to not to judge the act of infidelity. Unlike the suicide of Franz in *Geschlecht in Fesseln*. In *Westfront 1918*, illicit sex is an essential and accepted part of reassembled masculinity. In addition, war hurts the middle and lower classes the most. They are the ones dying on the front lines. The class relation then becomes the tool for Karl's acceptance and understanding of the Butcher's sexual transgression. Karl understands the horrors of war and its danger, especially in 1918. He excuses the infidelity of his wife and refrains from using the rifle. What Pabst does not say is that aggressive masculine sexuality is bad; war is the monster here.

At no point does *Westfront 1918* say men should not be aggressive, nor does it condemn the sexual violence of the characters in the film, though Pabst seems to endorse restraint rather than more killing in a context of war. The depictions of war became a valuable tool for expressions of anxiety surrounding life in late Weimar.<sup>144</sup> The fears of the returning economic instability of the Depression and precarious political situation were common fears for many directors and authors. It was not just the front line that was of concern, but the war at home, between political factions fighting to the death in the streets in the early to mid-1920s. There was fear surrounding the uncertainty of reconciliation, rather than a disabling of masculinity per se. The fighting between the Bavarian and the other soldier discussed earlier is interrupted, not by a wagging finger

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<sup>144</sup> Michael Geisler, "The Battle Ground of Modernity," 100.

but by a siren of a bomb dropping—the fear of an encroaching larger conflict not of overly aggressive individual men.

This encompassing fear of war was the basis of Pabst's next film. Much like *Westfront 1918*, *Kameradschaft* (*Comradeship* or *La Tragédie de la mine*, 1931) shows the elements of a reassembled masculinity traced in this project. Those traits are heroism and sexuality. However, *Kameradschaft*, more so than *Westfront 1918*, deals with the lower class. While Pabst gained the title of Red Pabst from the so-called pacifist film of *Westfront 1918*, *Kameradschaft* fits more with the ethos of global cooperation and power to workers than *Westfront 1918* did. It was a French-German co-production film. This film serves Pabst's developing ideals of pacifism and solidarity between Germany and France, a big point of *Westfront 1918*. The film tells the story of a mining accident, taking inspiration from the actual events of the 1906 Courrières mine disaster, which killed over one thousand miners. In that event, Germans came to the aid of the French miners and helped save them. Much like *Westfront 1918*, the Nazis hated this film.<sup>145</sup> However, curiously unlike *Westfront 1918*, *Kameradschaft* does not appear on the list of proposed films that display tendencies affronted to the Nazis, even though it appears more communist in feeling than previous films in this study.

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<sup>145</sup> Hans-Michael Bock, "Georg Wilhelm Pabst: Documenting a Life and Career," in *The Films of G.W. Pabst: An Extraterritorial Cinema*, ed. Eric Rentschler, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 224.



*Figure 19.* Scenes from *Kameradschaft* (1931). In these scenes we find shirtless miners going about their day-to-day activities sweating under the earth. Reproduced under Fair Use.

In this film, Pabst puzzled out a vision of masculinity that rejected war without sacrificing the properly male power to protect and defend. This reassemblage of masculinity was rooted in the working-class but extends beyond. The setting opens at a mine on the border between France and Germany post First World War. Germany is on one side and France on the other, even underground. A fire starts in the French mine section leading to worries about more explosions and fires amongst some wives and mothers. The worst happens, and a mine collapse occurs on the French side after gas catches fire. The resulting blaze traps many French miners underground. A group of Germans led by a man named Wittkopp (Ernst Busch) volunteer to go to the French side and help rescue their fellow miners. Another group of Germans breaks through on the German side and enter the French side of the mine to rescue those trapped. The rescue is arduous, but they rescue many, if not all, the survivors. After the rescue, the workers hold a large celebration where the miners make speeches about how miners are united and can work together. Underground, however unbeknownst to the workers, the top brass of the mines reconstructs the gate that separated the mines, thus again separating the mines.

*Kameradschaft* showcases the heroic and body-focused masculinity that has been a key element of reassembled gender identity in the films in this study. Unlike most of the other films, however, sexuality in *Kameradschaft* is not expressed between the characters but between the men and the viewer. The front lines in *Westfront 1918* serve as masculine space, in *Kameradschaft*, being under the earth is even more so a space of masculinity, devoid of women. Mining connects directly to the ideals of working-class masculinity, and in this work, the mine accident aided Pabst in media and promotional

literature, highlighting with the masculine and heroic reputation of the miner.<sup>146</sup> Pabst also returns to the conversation of New Objectivity and its admiration of lower-class masculinity. Mining represented the authentic masculinity elaborated by intellectuals like Pabst and Bertolt Brecht.<sup>147</sup> This feeling of lack among the upper classes contextualizes Pabst's interest in lower-class toughness and heroics in sports like boxing.

There are many scenes of men working in the film's first quarter, shirtless and sweating in a cramped, dark place (see fig. 19). For obvious reasons, the mine scenes were all shot on a stage and were not actually in a mine; actual bodies carry most of the cues of mining labor and exertion. As mentioned earlier, strengthening the male body was critical in Weimar. "The health of the nation, so virtually every political or party proclaimed, rested on healthy bodies and an active communion with nature."<sup>148</sup> Mining was not just "work" it was labor in intimate connection with the earth and with other

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<sup>146</sup> Thomas Miller Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904-1951*, Comparative and International Working-Class History (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1998)., Robert Morrell, *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg : London ; New York: University of Natal Press Zed Books, 2001), Hanna Diamond, "Miners, Masculinity and the 'Bataille Du Charbon' in France 1944-1948," *Modern & Contemporary France* 19, no. 1 (2011): 69–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09639489.2010.540004>, and Stephanie Ward, "Miners' Bodies and Masculine Identity in Britain, C.1900-1950," *Cultural and Social History* 18, no. 3 (May 27, 2021): 443–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2020.1824599>. Ben Clarke, "'Noble Bodies': Orwell, Miners, and Masculinity," *English Studies* 89, no. 4 (2008): 427–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00138380802011370>.

<sup>147</sup> Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 51.

<sup>148</sup> Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 318.



*Figure 20.* Scene from *Kameradschaft* (1931). This scene shows Jean rescuing Emile after the mine explosion and collapse. Reproduced under Fair Use.

men. During the later rescue scenes, when Jean (Daniel Mendaille) is rescuing Emile (Georges Charlia), they are shirtless and trying to survive until rescue can come and save them (see fig. 20). The scenes of these men surviving and clawing their way out of the tunnels even pantomimes boxing, struggling with earth and one another. Like boxers, the miners must take “hits,” like accidents and other dangers, and survive by hitting back,



*Figure 21.* Scenes from *Kameradschaft* (1931). These two shots are from the miner's locker room and showers, in which there are multiple shots of nude, unclothed, and dressing miners. Reproduced under Fair Use.



defending themselves and others.<sup>149</sup> Survivability is essential to lower-class masculinity, reminiscent of Robert Kramer's adjustments for survival in *Die Verrufenen*. While the survival and danger are different, Robert's survival is more of a mental adjustment. The miners are portrayed as extremely physical, extending the theme that a man must make himself and his body fit for survival.

It is here in *Kameradschaft* where the reassemblage of masculinity changes. I suggest that masculine gender crisis in Weimar involves the fear not of castration, to return to Richard McCormick, but a fear of the inability to survive. The power of survivability was found in the working-class body and the will to survive was heroic. This working-class masculine figure was physically fit and powerful compared to weak upper-class intellectuals. The scenes above show how physically fit and ready to work these men are. This power or need for a physically fit body becomes more apparent with Pabst's shots of nude men removing the grime from their working bodies (see fig. 21). The shots serve no purpose but for the eyes to observe the routine care of the working class male body in the nude. The male body comes to the forefront of the film.

The shower scene then creates visual proof of the miner's body and physical power to survive. Everyone must bathe and keep clean, but the miner's care of the body carries the extra weight of essential labor in the earth. This reassemblage of masculinity has moved from 1925, with surviving prison, to this scene of men showering, surviving a tragedy in the earth itself. The characters in the earlier films show comparatively little

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<sup>149</sup> Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 51.

indication of their physicality about their masculinity. The centering of the physicality in masculinity is not only part of the conservative vision of gender. An effectively reassembled masculinity on the screen as fit, able, heterosexual, and lower-class is widely visible in the films in this study. Both the left and right embraced gendered images which depicted failed men as ill-fit, either fat or sickly thin, while the communists themselves depicted Social Democrats as something akin to an anti-Semitic depiction, bulging eyes, and rail thin.<sup>150</sup> The heroes of Pabst's film are not bumbling intellectuals. Pabst could draw on a range of physical and forceful elements in reassembling the masculinity of the miner, including sport and nature. In *Kameradschaft*, the women are nothing but shadows. The characters are dance partners, fearful wives, and worried mothers who are barely given a line. The women who do talk express fear at the mine collapse worry about their husband's safety, never mentioned is the potential loss of livelihoods. Women characters serve as an image of beauty on screen, a romantic interest, and an expression of the audience's worries for the male characters. She stands on screen in the shadow of a reinvigorated man. By 1931 *Kameradschaft* gives this project the final reassembled image of masculinity under Weimar, and it is far from in crisis: heroic, skilled in survival, physically fit and (hetero)sexualized, tested primarily among and by other men.

*Conclusion: Aggressively Heroic and Lower-Class: The Man of Germany's Future*

These eight films provide a glimpse into a range of reassembled forms of masculinity visible in films of Weimar Germany during the 1920s. Gender "crisis" is not

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<sup>150</sup> Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*, 320-21.

the denouement for male characters in these films. In general, the film makers centered on an imagined lower-class masculinity and projected that image on a range of social settings and environments, from nature to labor, from urban streets to battle fronts. These reassembled masculinities were consistently linked in film to male heroism, at first sacrificial and constrained and then increasingly active, even violent. Rather than collapse into “crisis,” the reassembled masculinities in these Weimar films are notable for their ability to overcome obstacles with “obstacles” frequently personified as either absent, resistant, or foolishly compliant women.<sup>151</sup> Women serve as tools to further the men’s progress toward revitalization, either through sacrifice (including suicide) or by allowing men to express naturalized aggression. In 1925, when Robert in *Die Verrufenen* steps out of prison, a working-class masculinity already existed; he just needed some direction and coaching from Emma. It was not until later, at the end of the decade, that the fear of militarized masculinity and the apparent loss of the older middle-class masculinity became manifest in these films. For many film historians, the perceived crisis of masculinity shifted near the end of the decade through another reckoning with loss. In the hands of directors working in the realism mode, masculinity was reassembled into something new in comparison to the masculinity of the intellectual type. Gender was rooted less in the mind and more in the body, eventually encompassing normalized sexual aggression against women. Some Weimar films “end” with crisis and disabled or destroyed male characters. By contrast, my study of these eight films points out that a workable, recognizable masculinity emerged by each film’s end, and the viewer could

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<sup>151</sup> Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*, 321.

leave the theater at least moderately comforted by that resolution despite the sometimes disturbing content of the rest of the movie.

I have suggested that these films show a multi-sided approach to coherent and reassembled masculinity, and that a working-class orientation settled into film's repertoire by the decade's end. I have tried to portray complex masculinity in Weimar film by stretching the received scholarly understanding of what a "crisis" is and how it might be resolved or navigated. This gender trouble, to quote Judith Butler, mainly works itself out among men—as friends competing for female attention, as prisoners, as soldiers, as miners, or as sons and fathers in a family or quasi-family setting. It is temporal because it belongs to young men and is performed in that other men must see it manifested as "social proof" and social permission. Thus, the reassembled masculinity inheres not in heterosexual "success" with women but as performed for and adjudicated by men, among men, for men. While Weimar was experiencing an explosion of gender exploration, it kept the patriarchal tone, with men arranged in a hierarchy or competition, sometimes with "proof" via the sexually dominated female body.

This study explores flexible gender reassembly, specifically of masculinity. It remains important to remember that gender can be mobilized as a political banner; typically, those on the right ascribe to the gender binary, and those on the left tend to accommodate flexibility. In Weimar, those on the left and right admired aggressive heroic masculinity, which helped different populations of men to imagine surviving uncertain economic and political circumstance. It serves to remind those in the present to be mindful of hidden rhetoric touching gender, whether in politics or culture. Film can be

enjoyed without critical thinking; it was during Weimar and is today. This study has suggested that not all labels of gender “crisis” are well grounded or all encompassing. Consumers of culture, including film, would do well to be skeptical of the label of “crisis,” no matter the political source or orientation. This study of Weimar film shows that reassembling masculinity amidst social and political crisis neither caused nor prevented the Nazi synthesis of gender. Instead, it invites a critical reading of gender constructs like masculinity, whose outlines continued for years after the fall of the Weimar Republic.

### **Conclusion: The Meaning of Masculinity: Germany then and the World Now**

Gender and sexuality are fundamental topics of Weimar historiography. Scholars have recovered histories of women and queer people because Weimar was a time of change, including gender experimentation. It is clear from various sources that there were discussions in many disciplines about the role of women or the role of men, whether masculine women were women, whether gay men were men. As stated in the introduction of the film analysis section Richard McCormick describes the Weimar era as an exploratory crisis.<sup>152</sup> Many Germans were trying to analyze what was not working and how they could improve it. There were reactions against those bucking the old guard, often based on fear. Gender change was happening in Weimar, and I have hesitated to call it a crisis. Crisis has an implicit tone of disaster or catastrophe. The problem is that for a long time, the scholarly discussion of this period remained in a binary. Both masculinity and femininity were described as monolithic structures and the crisis of that structure paved the way for the Nazi synthesis on gender.

Clearly, from work done here, that is not exactly the story. While the Nazis engaged with the rhetoric of working-class masculinity to further their control over Germany, it did not solely belong to them. By recognizing the masculinity that characters like Peter or some of the characters in work by Richard McCormick, a wider historical view of masculinity is revealed. The concept of this heroic working-class masculinity

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<sup>152</sup> Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and "New Objectivity,"* 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 6.

typified in these films remained patriarchal in its portrayal of male protagonists' domination of women.

Strictly speaking, the Weimar period of course precedes that of National Socialism. However, determining causality remains a subject of debate. A period of gender exploration or even crisis of gender cannot be the "strict cause" for the rise of Nazism. As historian David Lindenfeld says in his thoughts on causality as it relates to end of the Weimar Republic, humans in general to look for patterns in history and then make inferences.<sup>153</sup> It would be tempting to see the reactions from Nazis to Queer forms of expression as linkages to causation. This thesis questions events in its own time, the (arguable) rise of the acceptance of differing gender and sexuality in the twenty-first century to the election of Donald Trump.<sup>154</sup> A sensitivity about gender exploration and the cracks and opportunities for authoritarianism informed this project.

Film is a powerful tool for deconstructing gender because the directors and writers are often operators and influencers within their societies. The economic and cultural elements of film have been accessible to historians as sources; these sources include biographies on the filmmakers or stars, reports from the studios, interviews with stars or the filmmakers, etc. Given the amount of documentation in the film industry, ascribing intentionality and making linkages to social movements and groups characterizes the scholarship. For the majority of the directors examined here, they were leftists for their time. Conservatives have more links to what some would describe as a

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<sup>153</sup> David F. Lindenfeld, "Causality, Chaos Theory, and the End of the Weimar Republic: A Commentary on Henry Turner's *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power*," *History and Theory* 38, no. 3 (1999): 299.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, 298.

story of “traditional” masculinity. However, as shown by the analysis, what some might describe as “traditional” masculinity linked to domination or violence, was furthered by filmmakers who were not Nazis. This is not to presume that leftists must be nonviolent or create ideologically pure art. However, my study reveals a broader context of reassembled masculine identities that the Nazis later employed.

In today’s post-modern era of rapid consumption and consumerism, society is overwhelmed by intense stimulation from Twitter notifications to email alerts to text messages.<sup>155</sup> There is an intense pressure to consume media to keep up with the conversations happening with friends or family, whether studio-owned or independent productions. It is solely not just enough to be aware. Ideology operates on many levels, both conscious and unconscious, and to assume that being aware is enough to resist whatever a piece is trying to do is ridiculous.<sup>156</sup> This conception is not an attempt to moralize media and point towards some mythical perfect media utopia but rather one effort to understand, appreciate, and remember that ideology is powerful and also flexible.

The directors, through these films, created a figure that represented a particular perception of masculinity. There was a performance of masculinity on the screen, heroes who acted and performed a certain way. Those heroes could serve as a symbol concurrently for political groups. While I tend to agree with Butler’s theory of

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<sup>155</sup> As I personally write this conclusion, I have received twenty emails solely for the purpose of advertisement.

<sup>156</sup> Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan* (SUNY Press, 2008), 13.



performance related to gender, the project has undoubtedly shown that performance is quite multifaceted in the case of Weimar. While Butler locates gender as numerous performances over time, this analysis complicates that further. Many performances are happening, and those performances are happening simultaneously. And, at the same time, competing and alternatives are appearing and disappearing in sports, films, and politics. Each of these areas is separate but joined. They work together to create the figure of masculinity found in the final film. Much like Todd Reeser pointed out, there is no single source for masculinity.<sup>157</sup>

*Conceptions of Masculinity: From here and beyond*

As mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, discussions of gender and sexuality have come to the forefront of the political conversation, with even nations themselves weighing in on the conceptions of masculinity. In September of 2021, the Chinese government requested that certain entertainment companies remove instances of entertainment where men were perceived as effeminate and wanted to promote a masculine ideal.<sup>158</sup> This rhetoric is on the rise in the world. Even here in the United States, Senator Josh Hawley delivered a speech claiming that the men of the U.S. are under attack by the Left, who are seeking to effeminize them through specific modes of

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<sup>157</sup> Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 41

<sup>158</sup> “China Orders Gaming Giants to Cut ‘effeminate’ Gender Imagery,” France 24, September 9, 2021, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210909-china-orders-gaming-giants-to-cut-effeminate-gender-imagery>.

entertainment.<sup>159</sup> Some felt similar anxieties in the Weimar era. The loss of the war and New Woman led many to question what made a man. Many like Bertolt Brecht found the boxer as a new symbol of masculinity. The boxer then gained status as a symbol of this new masculinity. In an important collection of essays on postwar German masculinity, author Michael Kimmel contextualizes the shame and silence, the “dominator and dominated” experience of postwar German masculinity.<sup>160</sup> Following the lead of these scholars, this thesis demonstrated that a reassembled working-class masculinity is a part of the Weimar era.

This thesis also endorses the notion of the diversity within masculinity, even within the domain of a class-based (i.e. working-class) masculinity. In the anthology *Conceptions of Postwar German Masculinity*, “Masculine identity is neither stable nor intransitory but rather is historically determined, thus subject to the material conditions of class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion.”<sup>161</sup> This project develops a conception of masculinity linked to an image of the working-class. While the image is operative as working-class, men and women of the middle or upper class helped develop and create it, and many of them did not come from lower-class backgrounds. The working-class

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<sup>159</sup> “Senator Hawley Delivers National Conservatism Keynote on the Left’s Attack on Men in America,” Senator Josh Hawley, accessed November 24, 2021, <https://www.hawley.senate.gov/senator-hawley-delivers-national-conservatism-keynote-lefts-attack-men-america>.

<sup>160</sup> Michael Kimmel, “Afterword,” in *Conceptions of Postwar German Masculinity*, ed. Roy Jerome, (SUNY Press, 2001), 314-15.

<sup>161</sup> Roy Jerome, “Introduction,” in *Conceptions of Postwar German Masculinity*, ed. Roy Jerome, (SUNY Press, 2001), 4.

masculinity then transforms over time as it is unstable, becoming operative and recognizable as something similar to what Nazis conceived of masculinity.

*Culture and Symbol: Nationalizing the Masses*

The final theme in my conclusion discusses the conception of symbols and their relation to culture. In considering the culture of Weimar, like many interwar European nations, film and commercialized leisure seemed to open up participation across class. The lower classes now enjoyed more leisure time than the earlier eras during the Weimar era. This freedom meant that more diverse groups of people were engaging with cultural products like film or music. These products leave multiple markers on the viewer or participant. For film studies, the question is when does the object become the symbol that can “stand for” a people, time, or era? When does the screen image transmission become the symbol used by a political movement?

It is useful to remember George L. Mosse’s theorization: that a symbol can operate as a delivery mechanism for an identity.<sup>162</sup> Decades of scholarship have made very clear how certain images on the screen during Weimar developed into a symbol for the Nazi party by its operatives. The contribution of this thesis is to suggest that reassembled masculinities in Weimar genre film had both multiple sources and ambiguous purposes (politically). Film makers drew from the sports world, from emerging social science and medicine, and from the world of leftist moral idealism (and

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<sup>162</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich* (H. Fertig, 2001), 7.

more).<sup>163</sup> In seeking to explain the horrors and excesses of the Nazis, Mosse (and others) argues for the essential continuity of the development of the National Socialist movement.<sup>164</sup> While Mosse's work is now verging on fifty years old, it is still vital to outsiders of German history and popular history at large. Kracauer established the idea that Weimar culture contained numerous the warning signs about what was ahead. Based on my reading of lesser-known genre films during Weimar, this thesis challenges the idea that there is a fundamental continuity to the development of Nazi symbology as absurd.

### *Moving Forward: The Future of Masculinity*

Masculinity is still an important topic to cover from a historical standpoint, and it needs consideration when discussing gender and sexuality. The deconstruction of types of masculinity from the past as “performance” helps unpack the gender binary. Genre films under Weimar suggest that some people may have considered a particular identity as morally correct or the best, the reality, however, is other reassembled masculinities existed. Understanding the broader history of diverse gender and sexuality continues to underpin the need for this history to be available to the broader public. An undertaking, although small, like this project describes how a group of filmmakers explored, examined, and reassembled gender constructs, especially masculinity. The subject of

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<sup>163</sup> April Trask, “Remaking Men: Masculinity, Homosexuality and Constitutional Medicine in Germany, 1914-1933,” *German History* 36, no. 2 (June 2018): 181–206, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gerhis/ghy013>.

<sup>164</sup> Mosse, *Nationalization of the Masses*, 19.

masculinity has been extremely relevant in the early twentieth-first century and will continue to be relevant for years to come.

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