Gender and the Cultural Impact of War in Weimar Germany:

Moral Degeneration and Regeneration

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ABSTRACT

The increased anxiety over blurred gender roles led to feelings of a national moral decline in Weimar Germany. Germany's defeat in World War I was the catalyst for the revaluation and ultimate reestablishment of traditional gender roles. The *Verwilderung der Sitten* (Degeneration of Morals) debate played out in the economic, political, social and cultural realms. The majority of Germans understood their culture and values within the cultural reflectors of the time-literature, art, fashion, the press, and film. These mediums offer a unique glimpse into how contemporaries understood the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate. I use five tropes to demonstrate the preoccupation with changing gender roles as a symbol for moral degeneration or regeneration in Weimar Germany. The New Woman, the Weimar Prostitute and the Hysterical Veteran symbolize the degenerate, defeated, emasculated Germany because they all three transgress established gender roles. The *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate also included two figures of regeneration whom represented traditional gender roles. The Nietzschean Soldier and German Mother offered a cure to the changing gender roles and suspect morality through their adherence to conventional morality.

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DEDICATION

I want to thank my parents Socorro Obregón Warner and Clinton Warner for teaching me my love of history, imagination and travel. Also thank you to my sisters, especially Shauna Warner, for their love and support. And finally I want to thank my adventure partner, best friend, and spouse, James Moore MacAllister, Jr. I could not imagine completing this dissertation without your unconditional love, constant encouragement, and belief in me.

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INTRODUCTION

> This development has so accelerated in the years since the outbreak of the world war that one can already, without exaggeration, identify the death and dismantling of the culture into which the elder among us were raised as children and which then seemed to us eternal and indestructible. If the individual has not himself changed (he can do this within two generations no more than any animal species could), then at least the ideals and fictions, the wishes and dreams, and the mythologies and theories that rule our intellectual life have; they have changed utterly and completely. Irreplaceable things have been lost and destroyed forever; new, unheard-of things are being imagined in their place. Destroyed and lost for the greater part of the civilized world are, beyond all else, the two universal foundations of life, culture and morality: religion and customary morals. Our life is lacking in morals, in a tradition, sacred, unwritten understanding about what is proper and becoming between people.
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> -Hermann Hesse, *The Longing of Our Time for a Worldview* (1926)

Hesse lamented the end of an era that began with Germany's defeat in the Great War. The author's nostalgic view represented a generation of thinkers, writers, artists, and social critics who thought World War I fundamentally transformed German culture and society. [1] According to Hesse, the most obvious change in postwar Germany was in the basic morality of the nation. For a country that prided itself as a pious nation, this transformation was especially alarming.

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[1] Felix Gilbert, *A European Past: Memoirs*, *1905-1945*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1988), 64-65; Vicki Baum, *It Was All Quite Different, Memoirs of Vicki Baum.* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1964), 3; George Grosz, *George Grosz: An Autobiography.* Translated by Nora Hodges. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1946, 1955), 32.

Germany's shocking defeat in World War I sparked nationwide concern over the decline of the nation and a surge of degeneracy. Established gender roles were the most visible symbol of the respectable morality of Germany before the defeat in war. Any real or perceived change to traditional gender roles was threatening because it could damage the morality of the nation at large. During Weimar Germany, the *Verwilderung der Sitten* (degeneration of morals) debate was so significant because it was a debate about the national identity and future of Germany. Much like in interwar France, changes to gender roles signified the ruin of a civilization, a civilization without sexes. [2] In Weimar Germany, changes to gender roles led to fears over the ruin of *German* civilization and culture. There was a very powerful nationalistic element in the debate on moral degeneration and corollary debate on how to regenerate the ravished nation. Germany's defeat in World War I produced a national crisis over concerns of moral degeneration, expressed in the debate on changing gender roles.

The German populace grappled with how to rebuild a moral and just society out of the ruins of wartime destruction. Artists, filmmakers, social observers, authors, doctors, members of the Reichstag and journalists all used gendered rhetoric to talk about the war's meaning and impact. During the Weimar Republic there was a marked increase in periodical, fictional, and political discourse. "By the mid 1920s over four thousand newspapers, tabloids, magazines, weeklies, and illustrated papers were published in Germany. Berlin, which had no fewer than fifty

[2] I am indebted to Mary Louis Roberts's discussion of gender roles as a symbol for the ruin of civilization in her seminal study *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1994).

daily morning papers, dominated this interwar publishing scene, producing over 30 percent of all German periodicals by the late 1920s." [3] Germany's defeat in World War I caused a preoccupation in the newly increased press with what the war had really meant. Part of exploring what the war meant included an emphasis on morality in the wake of wartime destruction.

Included in this literature, what I will call the postwar *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate is a fixation on gender roles. I chose the term *Verwilderung* because of its important connotations in the German language. I have translated *Verwilderung der Sitten* as degeneration of morals but it has alternate meanings, which also apply to this dissertation. *Verwilderung* literally means wildness. It can apply to becoming wild, barbarization, a state of neglect, increasing unruliness and dissipation as well as degeneration. The *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate was fundamentally a debate about morality losing ground, becoming overrun with wildness and dissipating to a state of neglect and barbarism. That wildness was trying to take over, to bring chaos and disorder to the surface of German politics, economics, and social life. *Verwilderung* was an untamed element that can apply especially to sexuality in the Weimar Republic. That wildness threatened to overtake and permanently transform the moral fabric of Germany.

Many of the gendered representations, included in the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate, were disturbing to the general public because they portrayed women as powerful and men as weak. Other literary and artistic representations were

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[3] Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011), 9.

criticized for blurring the sexual difference between the two sexes and thus provoked widespread anxiety. The changes in fashion were also a very public reminder of the change to gender roles, particularly for women. The notion of moral degeneration and regeneration is extremely prevalent in the cultural realm of film, novels and art during this period. I propose to examine the debate on gender roles within the cultural context as a set of reactions to the war's impact on German national identity, morality and culture.

National Narrative, Identity and Memory in Germany

The *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate formed an essential part of Germany's national identity as the nation struggled to come to terms with the defeat in the First World War. In Benedict Anderson's book, *Imagined Communities,* he defines the nation as "an imagined political community-and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nations will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives an image of their community." [4] Anderson's work was so pioneering because of his emphasis on imagination. National narrative and identity are constructed, shaped and preserved by human imagination. Furthermore, Anderson argues that people invent nations because they provide legitimate value, a cause that is somehow superior and deeper than the surface reality of politics. [5] In this way nationalism is seen as a construct of the people, not just the politicians.

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[4] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* Revised Edition (London: Verso, 1983, 1991), 6.

[5] Ibid., 3.

Nationalism depends on moral legitimacy, otherwise it is simply aggression cloaked in various justifications. This last point applies especially to Germany in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Before the 1871 political unification, Germans had a sense of cultural unity and a shared memory, leading to an official collective narrative and an unofficial identity. In many ways the Germans constructed their nationalism in contrast to others. Unlike the French in particular, German nationalists created an identity as more plebian, something that came from the vast majority of peasants who worked the land. [6] German nationalists, such as Johann Fichte, argued that this made Germans unique, the only ones to have an original essence, something uncorrupted by society. [7] This uncorrupted element implies German superiority that rises above national borders. In contrast, German nationalists painted France as the degenerate nation, collapsing on itself, while Germany continued to rise. Germany was supposed to be militarily, spiritually, and morally superior to other nations, especially that degenerate France. This superiority was seemingly solidified in Germany's victory during the Franco-Prussian war and subsequent political unification in 1871. After unification, Prussian culture, morality and authority dominated the other German states. Germany's intense industrialization was also tied to their ability to make war and their national identity. As a unified nation, Germany was literally forged in war. Thus, another victorious war would prove

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[6] J.L. Talmon, *Romanticism and Revolt: Europe, 1815-1848* (London: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967), 126-128.

[7] Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 96.

Germany's power to the world. However, Germany did not win World War I and the established power structure collapsed. This was a devastating blow to the supporters of the monarchial regime who loathed the alien governmental system put in place during the Weimar Republic.

The debate over how to heal the defeated nation appears regularly in Western European and Weimar Republic discourse. The debate in Germany was more intense than in the victorious nations because they suffered a surprising and humiliating defeat. Germans could wonder what a victory would have meant and created illusions of grandeur that were not a reality in the victorious nations. [8] Germans could therefore blame the loss in World War I for the changes and chaos associated with the Weimar Republic. Although both the Austrian-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires were also on the losing side of the war, Germany was by far the most powerful of the Central Powers. Germany was the strongest member of the alliance and therefore the war was to be won or lost on Germany's ability to wage war. Consequently the defeat was more detrimental to Germany's national narrative and identity than it was to either of the already failing Central Power empires. Within Germany, the defeat produced an increase in doomsday discourse about the future of the nation and society.

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[8] For a comparative view of post-World War I Europe see Matthew Sharpe, Rory Jeffs, and Jack Reynolds. *100 Years of European Philosophy since the Great War : Crisis and Reconfigurations*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2017. Print. Philosophical Studies in Contemporary Culture ; Vol. 25. For the British case see Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

Monarchists, conservatives, and militarists wanted nothing more than to return to the upward trajectory of the late 19th century Bismarckian Germany, before the devastating defeat. They wanted a return to the past because that is when they controlled Germany's fate. The monarchists and military had seen World War I as yet another venue to showcase their grandeur. The war was supposed to unite a nation divided over regional, religious, and class differences. Doctors and politicians actually saw war as an opportunity to combat possible peacetime degeneration. Peacetime meant a lack of direction, a focus on individualism and too much idle time for young men. [9] War was a chance to provide a common goal, a cause greater than any individual divisions. Instead, defeat in World War I shattered Germany's long tradition of monarchical rule, ushering in a completely foreign governmental system. The shift from a monarchy to a republic transformed Germans from subjects into citizens virtually overnight. This defeat in the First World War meant Germans needed to demonstrate their superiority in other ways besides militarily since the nation suffered such a dramatic and unexpected loss. This ushered in an increased period of anxiety over the morality of the nation, expressed through the German national identity.

The idea of democracy and the Weimar Republic itself were first identified with the humiliation of the defeat in war and the hated Treaty of Versailles. Many Germans even referred to it as the *Diktat* of Versailles, since they did not have any

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[9] Jason Crouthamel, *The Great War and German Memory: Society, Politics and Psychological Trauma, 1914-1945* (Lancaster: University of Exeter Press, 2009), 15.

part in its creation. [10] This general feeling of disillusionment in the country was directly caused by the loss in World War I. The loss seriously damaged the triumphant national narrative and identity of the nation. Germany's defeat in the war led to a heightened political and cultural debate over what went wrong in the nation and how it could be repaired. The debate was not just political; rather it had a decidedly moral element.

Moral Degeneration and Regeneration

Historians such as Sander Gilman, Robert Nye, Daniel Pick, and J. Edward Chamberlain locate degeneracy in the nineteenth century. The notion of medical degeneracy was prominent in explaining social problems as evidence of a decline to a lower type. Gilman and Chamberlain explain that during the nineteenth century degeneration was set up as dialectic to the idea of progress. The authors elucidate how degeneration theory gained popularity because "hope was looked after by the idea of progress, and seemed to be the tenor of the times. But fear-fear was contagious." [11] It was precisely this fear that made moral degeneration an overwhelming topic of concern in Weimar Germany. Nye asserts that the medical

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[10] Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: the Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), 14-16; Konrad Hugo Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 43; D.J. Goodspeed, *The German Wars, 1914-1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company Boston, 1977), 262-263 & 274; Golo Mann, *The History of Germany Since 1789,* trans. Marian Jackson (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968), 336.

[11] J. Edward Chamberlain and Sander Gilman, eds., *Degeneration: the Dark Side of Progress* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), xiv.

model of degeneration lost its influence at the end of World War I in France. [12] The opposite was true in the case of Germany. After World War I the medical model of degeneracy was even more powerful as it seemed especially relevant. Although during the fin de siècle Europeans were obsessed with the idea of degeneracy; Europeans were still the dominant civilization in which they controlled most of the world. [13] World War I shattered that control in Germany as they lost their empire and fell into economic and social turmoil. Germany's defeat in World War I was the culmination of degeneracy fears in Germany. Degeneracy theorists seemed like prophets in the postwar hedonism of Weimar.

In Germany, the most famous of the degeneration discourse is Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West,* (1918) a two-volume account of how eight great civilizations eventually declined. Spengler's last example is the European case, which he argued was nearing its final demise in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Spengler's work was popular throughout Europe. In Germany alone 100,000 copies were sold by 1926. [14] Although much of Spengler's work predated the Great War, the conclusion that the European epoch was nearing its end certainly found a receptive audience after the destruction and violence of the First World War. Spengler seemed clairvoyant, realizing before most that Germany was doomed to fall into a degenerative state. Spengler was an example of conservative

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[12] Robert Nye, *Crime, Madness, & Politics in Modern France: the Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 338.

[13] Chamberlain and Gilman, *Degeneration,* 19.

[14] Joll J., "Two Prophets of the Twentieth Century: Spengler and Toynbee" *Review of International Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2 (April 1985), 94-95.

Germans who feared degeneracy would spread like a cancer to the rest of the healthy, moral population.

It was not just conservative monarchists who saw Weimar Germany as degenerate. The Weimar Republic was assaulted by disparate and often opposing groups of unsatisfied citizens who all found the new government lacking. The traditional right, including monarchists, the Christian churches, the aristocracy, upper bourgeoisie, and the military rallied against the republic. It was an unacceptable governmental system for them, forced on Germany from the victorious European powers. After initial support, part of the traditional left, including socialists, communists, and anarchists, also rallied against the Weimar Republic. Socialists and communists thought the Weimar constitution did not go far enough in establishing equality and disestablishing the old order. They blamed the right for getting Germany into a war the nation could not win. The right and left disagreed vehemently on what course Germany should follow; but they agreed on the fact that they did not support this republic. Thus, the Weimar Republic was besieged from multiple sides, whom saw it as degenerate and in need of regeneration.

Regeneration was the idea that Weimar Germany was not yet beyond repair. The idea that Germany could heal itself from the squalor in which it fell was fairly popular. Regeneration meant overcoming harsh conditions to become glorious once again. One of the clearest examples of the concern over moral degeneracy and the need for regeneration is the dramatic rise in morality leagues. In April 1919 there were 63 organizations whose express purpose was to combat the moral laxity of

Weimar Germany. By 1927 that number rose to 349. [15] Such a dramatic increase highlights the importance of morality in Weimar Germany. Weimar contemporaries were clearly very concerned about the state of morality in a post-World War I German society. The members of these leagues believed it was their duty as German nationalists to save the nation. Cornelie Usborne argues the rise in these organizations was due to the general agreement that Weimar Germany was in the midst of a crisis of degeneration. She explains that the rise in prostitution spread of venereal disease, increase in pornography and rise in alcoholism led to fears of degeneracy, "symbolizing general national decline as well as an unwelcome leveling out of class and sex differences. [16] Class and sex differences were a vital part of German national identity, which was why the blurring of those differences was seen as a sign of moral degeneration.

Germany's defeat in World War I provoked a crisis over moral degeneracy in postwar Germany. Degeneracy theory derived its power from the rising societal authority of medicine and science during the nineteenth century. [17] The legitimacy accorded to medicine and science only increased with the advent of the twentieth century. Germany's defeat in World War I was the culmination of degeneracy fears and it was expressed in the cultural realm as a crisis threatening the nation as a whole. Taking a cue from the medical model, an array of dissatisfied social critics, politicians, and doctors used degeneracy theory to argue an individuals' or groups'

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[15] Cornelie Usbourne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany: Women's Reproductive Rights and Duties* (London: Macmillian, 1992), 74-75.

[16] Ibid., 78.

[17] Chamberlain and Gilman, *Degeneration,* 166.

immorality would spread like a contagion to uninfected parts of society, eventually infecting the entire population. [18] Others saw it as going from the group to the individual. For instance, a German doctor, Edward Reich argued the general moral climate of a society could lead to degeneracy in an individual, eventually causing the collapse of the state itself. [19] Whether degeneracy spread from an individual or the general climate was a moot point, it still spread. Therefore if either an individual or the basic moral climate of society was degenerate, it could infect the population and nation. Nationalists called for an end to the immorality of Weimar in order to save Germany from ruin. While many agreed that Weimar Germany was overcome with degeneracy, it was not a permanent state. The degeneracy of the Western Europe, and Germany specifically, was most often debated in terms of morality in the postwar world. Morality was intimately linked to traditional gender roles in Weimar Germany.

Gender, Class and Sexuality

An imperative objective in this study is to highlight the centrality of struggles over the role of gender as the dominant motif for discussions of crisis and regeneration. For the purpose of this dissertation I use Joan Scott's definition of gender. She writes, "Gender is a constitutive element of social relations based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying

[18] Ibid., 60.

[19] Ibid., 77.

relationships of power." [20] Gender was the principal way in which identity was understood in the Weimar Republic. Gender roles formed the basis of the family, which was in turn the basis of the state and society. In Weimar Germany concerns over gender roles were concerns over the moral vigor of the nation.

The debate on the degeneracy of Germany and the possible restoration of the nation meant a debate on how to preserve established gender roles for men and women. The Great War transformed those roles permanently. For the first time in German history, women were politically enfranchised in 1919. The historian Claudia Koonz explained, "In Germany, women's suffrage, like democracy, came as a by-product of chaos and defeat rather than as the immediate result of a long and hard-fought battle." [21] Women's emancipation was therefore viewed as *Verwilderung* taking over Weimar Germany. This radical political alteration was part of the continual upheaval of modernity, which the Great War accelerated. It was not just the shock of modernity that caused the crisis in gender roles; rather Germany's defeat in the Great War was the rupture that created increased anxiety over any change to traditional gender roles. In the case of Germany, the traumatic loss was *the* shock of modernity. Not only the war, but also the defeat in the war was a calamitous turning point in German history. Women's officially sanctioned inclusion into the public sphere of politics created an atmosphere of increased anxiety over gender roles. The war created newly independent roles for women, shifting their

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[20] Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis" reprinted in Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History.* Revised Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 42-43.

[21] Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 22.

idealized role as self-sacrificing mothers and wives. Women's altered gender roles, along with the military defeat, engendered a crisis of masculinity in Weimar Germany. The transformation of women's increased independence and the simultaneous emasculation of men led to despair over German civilization's future.

Degeneracy was intimately linked to the double standard with regard to men and women's sexuality. Double standards allow the group with the most power to define what constitutes permissible behavior and to exercise sexual rights that they explicitly denied to others. This is exactly the case with the gendered double standard in the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate. The double standard was women were to remain sexually chaste until marriage while an essential part of masculinity was the exploration of sexuality outside of the marital bed. German bourgeois culture obsessed over issues of respectability with regard to both class and gender. These notions of sexual respectability dually oppressed bourgeois women. In this climate, the family emerged as the central cultural institution of the newly developed bourgeoisie in Germany. [22] This is why gender roles were so important for the survival of the nation and why symptoms of degeneracy were taken so seriously. The heightened shift on sexual respectability occurred during the late eighteenth century, as the bourgeoisie distinguished themselves from both the aristocracy and working classes through their sexuality. The bourgeoisie espoused sexual control and purity as proof of their own moral superiority. This dissociated

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[22] David Blackbourn and Richard Evans, *The German Bourgeoisie: Essays on the Social History of the German Middle Class from the Late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1991), 115.

them from the immoral sexuality of the aristocracy and working class. [23] Sexual continence gave the bourgeoisie an identity of their own, which they then used as cultural hegemony.

A large part of the bourgeoisie's cultural hegemony was their manipulation of the national narrative and identity. German national identity was intimately linked to moral superiority. That moral superiority was demonstrated through strict control and supervision of bourgeois, female sexuality. The ascendency of the bourgeoisie in German culture made morality a vital aspect of German nationalism. Bourgeois Germans resented the loss in World War I as an interruption in their triumphant master narrative of control, morality and power. The increasing moral degeneration of Weimar Germany was viewed as a sickness capable of contaminating the entire population. The combination of political, economic and social tumult created an atmosphere of the unknown in the Weimar Republic. A brief sketch of the events influencing and creating the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate in the interwar years will lead to a greater understanding of the motives of the artists, writers and filmmakers under review in this work.

Politics and Economics

The years between the two world wars in Germany were fraught with problems. There was a revolution, failed coups by the left and right, along with massive unrest due to economic hardship and political disunity. More than anything

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[23] Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*, trans. Stuart McKinnon-Evans (New York: Berg, 1989), 31; Isabel Hull, "The Bourgeoisie and It's Discontents: Reflections on Nationalism and Respectability" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 17 (1982), 248.

else, these years lived in the shadow of defeat. The twentieth century was supposed to be the German century. After their defeat in World War I, Germany was adrift in loss and regret. Scholars disagree if Weimar was a break or continuity between Wilhelmian Germany and/or Nazi Germany. The reality is that it was both continuity and a break. The Weimar Republic was a persistence of Wilhelm's Germany in that many of the bureaucrats and army officers continued in their jobs as before. In addition, Wilhelmian morality continued to dominate Weimar society. The Weimar Republic was however, also a break because after all it was a republic, not a monarchy.

What's in a name? The Weimar Republic was named after the city it was created in, but perhaps that was not an arbitrary choice. The historian Peter Gay writes that republicans deliberately chose Weimar because it was the city of Schiller and Goethe. Weimar recalled the other side of German national narrative, the one of the land of poets and thinkers. It was this essence, this national narrative that Germans wanted to identify with after the harsh defeat of World War I. The Romantic Age seemed to possess a sort of redemptive quality that could soften the defeat of World War I. Other scholars point out that it was chosen arbitrarily because there was too much turmoil in Berlin.

1918 was the end of World War I and the beginning of the Weimar Republic. The four long years of fighting during the Great War left Germany with more than two million men dead, and more than four million men disabled. The high command of the German Army realized the war could not be won and agreed to an armistice and the formation of a civilian government in late September. In early November, a

naval mutiny in Kiel triggered the November Revolution, creating civil conflict within Germany. It was the final crisis for the Kaiser's government. Just six days later on November 9, Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated, ending the imperial system and the rule of the House of Hohenzollern. With the Kaiser's abdication, a republic was proclaimed, led by Social Democrat Friedrich Ebert. The first act of the new republic was to sign an armistice officially ending World War I. The unexpected defeat in the Great War left most Germans with feelings of disenchantment and resignation. The population's shock over the defeat in war was compounded by a completely foreign system of government and almost immediate threats from within the country. The power behind the Kaiser was the High Command of the German Army, led by Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and his Quartermaster-General, Erich von Ludendorff. Although the army maintained the only real power, they willingly handed power over to the civilian government. The new civilian government was a scapegoat and associated with losing the war. It was unpopular from the beginning as both the conservative and liberal wings attacked it for not going far enough in the direction they desired.

The new republic's legitimacy was called into question in January 1919 with the Spartacist uprising led by Communist Party (KPD) members Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. The KPD leaders hoped to build a communist stronghold in Germany based on the Soviet model. The German Army and the *Freikorps* violently suppressed the Spartacist uprising and Luxemburg and Liebknecht were executed. Having withstood a thwarted revolution from within the country, the new republic had to contend with the terms of defeat. On June 28, 1919 the new civilian

government accepted the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. The acceptance of the *Diktat* of Versailles was widely unpopular in Weimar Germany. [24] The terms of the treaty included ceding resource rich Alsace-Lorraine to France, ceding lands in the east to Poland, giving up all of its colonies and demilitarizing the Rhineland. The German Army was largely reduced and reparations were very high. Finally, Germany had to take complete responsibility for causing World War I. This war guilt clause in the treaty was particularly offensive to the defeated German people. After years of suffering and so many dead, the German populace resented having to take the entire blame for World War I. The Treaty of Versailles was widely unpopular in the Weimar Republic from the very outset. Since the Weimar Republic government was responsible for the signing of the treaty, the new government's popularity was low. The unpopularity of the Treaty of Versailles created an environment ripe for spreading the *Dolchstoßlegende* (myth of the stab in the back). This myth, cultivated by the German High Command, basically blamed the socialists, Jews, and women for not having the fortitude to continue the war. This way the German Army could maintain that they did not lose the war, rather the will of the people on the home front collapsed. The fact that the German Army still occupied some foreign soil at the time of capitulation only added to this false legend.

Several factors created a dire economy in Germany following their defeat in World War I. The Kaiser's government took loans to pay for the war instead of using taxation. The war had of course been very expensive to carry out and

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[24] Gay, *The Outsider as Insider,* 14-16; Jarausch and Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories,* 43; Goodspeed, *The German Wars, 1914-1945,* 262-263 & 274; Mann, *The History of Germany Since 1789,* 336.

demobilization added another expense. German industry was heavily concentrated in such areas as iron manufacturing and had to be retooled for peacetime. Also the loss of territory meant a loss in revenue and job availability. In January 1920 the exchange rate was 64.8 marks to the dollar, up from 8.9 marks the following year. This economic uncertainty did not help the new republic gain any support. In March of the same year, right wing political and military forces attempted to overthrow the government in what became known as the Kapp Putsch. When the Kapp Putsch failed due to a general strike of workers in Berlin, the new government officials were relieved. Just a few weeks after the failed Kapp Putsch, communist uprisings had to be put down by the government. The Weimar Republic was literally besieged from the right and left. In addition, France occupied the Ruhr to enforce reparation payments, which then led to a miner's strike in April. It seemed that the new republican government could not control the population it was supposed to govern. German war reparations were greatly reduced in June 1921, but they still struggled to pay any amount.

1922 was a watershed year in the Weimar Republic as hyperinflation caused an economic crisis. It became so severe that money printed in the morning was useless by the afternoon. In an attempt to recover economically, Germany sought to establish normal relations with its former enemies. Germany's foreign minister, Walther Rathenau negotiated the Treaty of Rapallo in April, establishing economic and military cooperation with the Soviet Union and Germany. The treaty was unpopular in Germany and a far-right group assassinated Rathenau in August 1922. Rathenau was already very unpopular for stating it was Germany's duty to follow

the terms of the Treaty of Versailles the previous year. Rathenau's assassination was linked to *Dolchstoßlegende,* as he was targeted partly because he was Jewish. Rathenau's assassination stands apart because he was such a visible political figure, but between the years 1918 and 1922, there were 376 political murders in Germany. [25]

In January 1923 French and Belgian forces occupied the Ruhr region in order to pressure Germany into paying reparations. By August one dollar exchanged for 4.6 million marks, with hyperinflation peaking at 4.2 billion marks to one dollar by November. Again the Weimar Republic was attacked from both sides. Communist uprisings in October failed to gain popular support and in November the Nazi's Beer Hall Putsch had to be suppressed. This is when Adolf Hitler was arrested, sent to prison and the NSDAP was banned. At the end of 1923 the United States enacted the Dawes Plan, which stabilized the German currency by introducing a new temporary currency, the *rentenmark.* Gustav Stresemann stepped down as chancellor in November, after serving a little more than three months in the position. Stresemann is just one example of the ever -revolving political door in the Weimar Republic. Instability and disorder reigned in politics during the interwar years as political positions shifted constantly.

The following year in the 1924 elections, the far right and far left gained seats in the Reichstag elections, at the expense of the government's coalition parties. It seemed that there was less and less middle ground in Germany as the populous shifted to either extreme. In December Hitler was released from prison in time for

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[25] Anton Gill, *A Dance between Flames: Berlin between the Wars* (London: John Murray, 1993), 24.

the January 1925 lift on the ban on the NSDAP. Then in February 1925, the one stable political figure of Weimar Germany, President Ebert died. He had been president since the creation of the Weimar government and his loss further strained the fragile government. Following Ebert's death, Paul von Hindenburg was elected Reich President and the German Army reasserted its power. In December, the Locarno Treaties were signed, which stated that Germany will not wage war against either France or Belgium and the current borders are to be preserved.

In April 1926 Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Berlin to guarantee their mutual neutrality in case a third party attacked either country. In the same year Germany was allowed to join the League of Nations. The following year in 1927, the Inter-Allied Military Commission stopped their oversight of Germany. These two factors contributed to a growing sense of autonomy in the Weimar Republic. In 1928, Germany, France and the United States signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact, renouncing war as a legitimate means to settle disputes. Other nations followed their lead. Germany's unemployment remained at 650,000 at the end of 1928.

That unemployment skyrocketed to 1.3 million in September 1929 and continued to climb after the U.S. stock market crash triggered the worldwide Great Depression. This meant that U.S. banks called in all foreign loans. The economic crisis caused the coalition government to dissolve, as they could not agree on how to best combat the growing unemployment. In September 1930 unemployment in Germany reached over three million. The devastation continued in 1931 when the Darmstädter and National Bank collapsed. The stock market closed for a few months

and unemployment was 4.5 million. At the close of 1931 the republican government declared a national emergency.

The final years of the Weimar Republic were fraught with more economic turmoil with no reprieve in sight. In 1932 Hindenburg was elected Reich President, beating out the runner up Adolf Hitler. In the July Reichstag elections the Nazis got 37.8% of the votes, more than doubling their seats. Unemployment reached 5.1 million in September 1932, growing to 6.1 million by January 1933. General Kurt von Schleicher resigned as chancellor in January because of the unemployment crisis. Hindenburg appointed Hitler as chancellor after much persuasion from his inner circle. On February 1, 1933 the Reichstag was dissolved. At the end of February the Reichstag fire gave the Nazis the pretense they needed and emergency measures suspended all civil liberties. The Communist Party (KPD) was also banned and around 4,000 communists arrested. In March the last free elections of the Weimar Republic resulted in the Nazis winning 44% of the vote. On March 23rd Hitler used the Enabling Act to gain dictatorial powers and effectively end the Weimar Republic.

The repeated political challenges to the authority of the government of the Weimar Republic added to the general feeling of uncertainty and anxiety. The German people felt disillusionment with regard to politics after World War I. Furthermore, the almost constant economic turmoil in Weimar Germany added to the German peoples' distrust of their government. "The threat of disorder and social upheaval simply caused the middle classes to become increasingly reactionary, to embrace the old authoritarian attitudes and to look to the military as saviors of the

national interest." [26] The middle classes clung to traditional gender roles and conventional morality as a safeguard against all of this chaos and social upheaval. Traditional gender roles were seen as a cure for the degeneracy surrounding the German people. Changes to gender roles could be used in the debate on morality to express the German peoples' fears and anxieties in a way others could easily understand. Much of that debate existed in the ever expanding cultural realm of Weimar society.

Weimar Culture

This debate on moral degeneration and regeneration existed both inside and outside the formal political realm. This study will make use of official government policies but will focus on the morality debate surrounding those policies in the cultural realm. The cultural realm encompasses a wide range of sources considering the artistic flourishing in Weimar Germany. Using film, artwork, literary representations and fashion as text in the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate allows for a nuanced cultural history of the impact of the defeat in World War I on gender and national identity in Germany. For literary representations, fashion and film I looked at reviews and popularity. Artwork is slightly more difficult to ascertain the popularity of, although critical reviews are available for some. The artists, filmmakers, fashion designers and writers dealt with the degeneration and possible regeneration through gendered discussions of societal roles. The images and texts

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[26] Karl Leydecker, editor, *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic: Intersections of Literature and Politics* (New York: Camden House, 2006), 5.

that highlighted independent women and dependent men presented a threatening view of society that many hoped to repair.

Weimar Culture was innovative. German culture had always been held in high regard both within and without the country. The defeat in war brought challenges to the dominance of traditional German culture as other avenues of creativity gained a foothold. In post-World War I Germany, mass culture became the prevailing norm. Before culture was thought of something for the wealthy, privileged bourgeoisie. With the democratization of politics, came the democratization of culture. Democratization meant a culture that was more accessible, affordable and geared towards a larger segment of the population. It also meant the increased influence of American culture. "The infatuation with America implied a rejection of the recent German military past and disillusion with humanistic values." [27] It was precisely this American influence that many traditionalists in Germany feared. America was considered immoral and its influence looked upon by many as an invading army-set on destroying the very foundation of German culture. America was associated with materialism, immorality, and barbarism. Americanism encapsulated *Verwilderung.*

The culture of the Weimar Republic is infamous. Weimar is synonymous with depravity, excess and escapism. At the same time, Weimar culture is a sign of vitality and hope. It perfectly captures the duality of the Weimar Republic. Most commonly associated with the modern urbanity of Berlin, the Weimar Republic has taken on

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[27] Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, eds*., The Weimar Republic Sourcebook.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 551.

mythic proportions as a symbol of degeneration and disillusionment. The dominance of Berlin in Weimar culture cannot be overstated. In 1871 the population of Berlin was 800,000 and by 1925 Berlin's population reached four million. [28] The culture of Berlin was urbanized, industrialized, and modern. There were automobiles, radio programs, telephones, and the expansion of the rail system. All of these signs of modernity were welcome to some but seen as extreme upheaval and Americanization by others. Germany's defeat in World War I formed the backdrop to this cultural proliferation in the Weimar Republic. The loss in the Great War was the most profound and influential aspect in the work of artists, writers, and filmmakers who struggled to define what the war had really meant. This preoccupation with the war and subsequent defeat provided the artists, writers, and filmmakers with ample material. An essential part of the cultural debate surrounding the war was the issue of gender identity. Debate concerning gender identity became a primary way to embrace, resist or reconcile oneself to changes associated with the Great War.

Expressionism was the prevailing form in the arts immediately following the war. "Characteristic of expressionism is an oscillation between messianic optimism and apocalyptic despair, which was perfectly in tune with the times during the chaotic period of military defeat and the revolutionary events of 1918-1919." [29] This oscillation demonstrates the importance of both degeneration and regeneration within the cultural realm. Both moral degeneration and moral regeneration were

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[28] Leydecker, *German Novelists,* 11.

[29] Ibid., 10.

significant themes in Weimar Culture because they represented the two extremes of expression. The art form, Expressionism, gave way to the new dominant form in the arts, coined *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity). The *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists turned away from the past and created a new, more realistic, cynical approach to art. The German writer and cultural critic, Siegfried Kracauer explained, "Cynicism and resignation are the negative side of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*; the positive side expresses itself in the enthusiasm for the immediate reality as a result of the desire to take things entirely objectively on a material basis without immediately investing them with ideal implications." [30] *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists emphasized resignation and disillusionment because it was the prevailing mood of Weimar Germany. *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists were concerned chiefly with their present reality, capturing it as a photographer might and leaving it as testimony. Male painters, such as Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, George Grosz, and Ludwig Kircher all used their experience fighting in World War I to convey the horror of trench warfare. Female painters such as Jeanne Mammen, Gerta Overbeck, and Grethe Jürgens similarly used their first hand experience to construct and depict a New Woman who was multi-faceted. The art of Weimar is modern, with no rear view mirror. It was pioneering, creating something new out of the rubble of defeat.

Writers were also effected by the defeat in World War I. In an essay on memory, Ester Leslie points out that a windfall of biographical accounts came out about the experience of the war and home front around ten years after the end of

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[30] Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 165.

World War I. She argues there was an extreme fascination with trying to reshape the meaning of or the meaninglessness of the war. Leslie maintains in the Weimar Republic memory was under siege, as if Germans were engaged in a living battle with the past. [31] More than anything else this defeat influenced the Weimar Republic. Writers and war veterans such as Ernst Jünger and Erich Remarque wrote about the war as a defining moment in their young lives. Bertolt Brecht famously created his plays and performance theater to frustrate and confront the audience. He did not offer an escape from the entire trauma, instead he insisted on introspection and reflection. Other authors were not so obvious as Brecht in their confrontation. The authors Vicki Baum, Irmgard Keun, and Else Ury all offered an escape of sorts with their exciting storylines. Interwoven in that seemingly escapist literature were real issues with regard to morality and gender identity. Part of the democratization of Weimar culture meant a larger readership, increased leisure time, and improved literacy. [32] Many novelists also had their novels appear in serialized form in popular magazines or newspapers. All of this meant more opportunity for writers to tell the stories they wanted to; to a much larger and more accessible audience.

While Brecht and other writers tried to confront their audience, many only wanted an escape from the chaos and heartache of inflation, unemployment, and political instability. Weimar cinema offered such an escape. There were an average

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[31] Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz, eds., *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 123.

[32] Leydecker, *German Novelists,* 12.

of 250 films produced each year during the Weimar Republic. The most popular films were fantastical ones like *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *Nosferatu.* These Expressionist films were pure fantasy at a time when Germans needed a reprieve from reality. The film and cultural critic Kracauer argues, "the films of a nation reflect its mentality in a more direct way than other artistic media" because they reflect collective memory. [33] Kracauer gives two main reasons for the importance of film as a reflector of mentality. First, he sees films as a collaboration between writers, the director, actors, and technicians rather than the work of an individual. Second, he sees the film industry as appealing to and satisfying "existing mass desires." [34] Weimar cinema explored darker themes than Hollywood as a result of the intense aftermath of the war. Americans fought in World War I but not for four continuous years. The war was also not fought on American soil, so it was not as dominant in American psyche. The opposite was true for Germany as the defeat in war, rising inflation and rampant unemployment surrounded them in everyday life. Because Germany was so impoverished following World War I, German film companies had to contend with a smaller budget, leading to simpler or less extravagant sets and a smaller cast. While Weimar film is typically lauded as a time of unprecedented freedom and expression there were limitations. In May 1920 the *Lichtspielgesetz* (Cinema Law) created a review board, to ensure all films were deemed acceptable. This newly created law gave the board the authority to ban any

[33] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 5.
[34] Ibid.

film it chose to. [35] The fact that there was a Cinema Law demonstrates the importance of film and its effect on morality in Weimar Germany.

Historiography and Chapters Mapped

Works on the Weimar Republic are prolific. [36] The first to examine culture as an outward expression of a peoples' mentality was Siegfried Kracauer's classic work, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (1947). Kracauer, born in 1889, has the unique position as a firsthand observer as he lived and worked in Germany until the Nazi seizure of power. Kracauer's study is an attempt to understand mass behavior and the collective mentality behind such behavior. He maintains, "popular magazines and broadcasts, bestsellers, ads, fashions in language and other sedimentary products of a people's cultural life also yield invaluable information about predominant attitudes, widespread inner tendencies." [37] While Kracauer realized the importance of cultural mediums as an expression of a people's collective mentality, he did not address how notions of gender and morality are connected to that collective mentality. He also did not include any in-depth discussion of art or literature in his work.

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[35] Clayton Whisnant, *Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History, 1880-1945* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2016), 169.

[36] Walter Laquer, *Weimar: A Cultural History, 1918-1933* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1974); Keith Bullivant, editor, *Culture and Society in the Weimar Republic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977); Katharina von Ankum, ed., *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[37] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler,* 6.

It would take another two decades for a historian to follow in Kracauer's work by trying to discover the collective mentality of Weimar Germany. Peter Gay's work, *Weimar Culture: the Outsider as Insider* (1968) is still one of the foundational cultural histories of the time period. According to Gay, Weimar culture struggled with how to deal with modernity and to express what he calls "the hunger for wholeness." [38] A powerful part of the hunger for wholeness was the quest against moral degeneration. In Gay's work one can feel the regret, the lost opportunity before everything went horribly wrong with the Nazi dictatorship. The sense of tragedy and sorrow is palpable throughout Gay's book. Gay argues it was ultimately the depression that caused the Weimar Republic to fail, not its inherent instability. [39] This is where Gay differs from other historians who portray Weimar as doomed to fail from the outset. Similarly to Kracauer, Gay also did not address gender in his cultural history. In addition, Gay's use of culture is not inclusive. He privileges successful, Berlin based male artists, authors and filmmakers to the detriment of others who were actively engaged in creating Weimar culture.

In Detlev Peukert's study, *The Weimar Republic: the Crisis of Classical Modernity* (1987) the author agrees with Gay that the economic depression destroyed the Weimar Republic. However, Peukert sees the political crises as just as important to the dismantling of the Weimar Republic. [40] The economic and political crises were too much for the young republic to deal with simultaneously. I argue the

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[38] Gay, 66.

[39] Ibid., 119 & 133-134.

[40] Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: the Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), xi.

cultural and social crises of moral degeneracy were just as important as the political and economic crises, to the eventual downfall of the new government. With the defeat in World War I, German national identity of triumphant militarism was broken and Germans sought refuge in repairing the morality of the nation. It was how they understood the changes associated with the war.

In his study, *Culture and Inflation in Weimar Germany* (2001), Bernd Widdig sites the massive inflation of Weimar as the dominant reason the Weimar Republic is identified with the trauma of defeat from World War I. The images of women lined up at the grocery store for hours and women and men pushing wheelbarrows full of money are seared into the memory of German national narrative. [41] Widdig is not just a detached scholar since his grandfather fought in both world wars for the twice-defeated fatherland. He recalls how his grandfather spoke of inflation as if it were a mental illness, the Weimar Republic as "godless times, a hellish carnival, with plundering and riots . . . and painful hunger." [42] Widdig argues the massive inflation did not create a shared trauma that strengthened nationalism and solidarity, like in the mutual suffering of the Napoleonic Wars. Instead it created an atomized society of survivors, dividing instead of further uniting the German people. [43] I agree with Widdig's characterization of Weimar society as one of atomized survivors. This atomization allowed the Nazis to manipulate the German populace much more so than if they had bonded together in their trauma.

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[41] Bernd Widdig, *Culture and Inflation in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 5 & 11; Harold James, *A German Identity, 1770-1990* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 128.

[42] Ibid., 3-4 & 7.

[43] Ibid., 49.

While Kracauer, Gay, Peukert, and Widdig's works are essential to understanding the Weimar era, they do not address the unique position of women or how central gender was to the German identity and morality. Feminist historians sought to fill this void with several key studies of women in Weimar Germany. One of the most poignant and early studies of women in the Weimar Republic is the anthology, *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (1984), edited by Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan. [44] The overriding theme of the book is that despite a vociferous debate, the reality of women's lives did not change during the Weimar Republic. The title of the collection of essays contains the editor's argument-that women's biological differences predetermined their fate during the two time periods under investigation. Their conclusion was based on Nazi Germany's reestablishment of traditional gender roles. I agree that the result of the debate on morality was the reestablishment of these traditional gender roles but that does not negate the importance of the debate. It was the rhetoric on gender roles, including the New Woman, which formed a central part of the much larger *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate. While *When Biology Became Destiny* is rich with Weimar history, it does not use art, literature and film as text, nor does it use archetypes to explore morality.

The debate in the Weimar Republic about changing gender roles and morality inevitably led to a discussion on reproduction. Both Atina Grossmann and Cornelie Usborne enriched the historiography of women in Weimar Germany with

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[44] Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan, ed., *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984); Frevert, *Women in German History.*

exceptional studies on the reproduction debate. [45] Usborne's work is a case study of reproductive policies during the Weimar Republic while Grossmann's work demonstrates the continuity of Weimar's reproductive policies with those of Nazi Germany. While reproduction is not the focus of this current study, it played a vital role in the debate on moral degeneration and possible regeneration. This was especially true for women. Pronatalists and members of the Christian churches were the most obvious proponents of the struggle against depopulation. Monarchists, politicians, writers and doctors also joined in the pronatalist cause, highlighting the severity of depopulation as a moral crisis in Weimar Germany.

Depopulation was one of the chief features of the supposed moral degeneration that befell postwar Europe. Mary Louise Roberts's study *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (1994) is a first-rate analysis of depopulation and the impact it had on gender identity. I am indebted to Roberts for her use of fashion and popular fictional literature as text. In addition, her assertion that "the postwar debate on women helped to shape both identity and behavior, and thus must be recognized as having its own integrity as an object of historical investigation" is vital to my argument. [46] Roberts also stresses the Great War, unlike other feminist historians who use the war as the backdrop rather than the focus of their studies. While Roberts's study is centrally about the obsessive debate over female identity, masculinity does play an important role in the

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[45] Usborne, *The Politics of the Body*; Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: the German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[46] Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes,* 14.

perception of a civilization without sexes in postwar France. This present study hopes to flesh out the debate on masculinity as well as femininity.

While studies on women in Weimar Germany are fairly numerous, the same is not true for studies on masculinity during the Weimar Republic. The older general histories are of course very male centered. However, they do not address masculinity as a social construct. Klaus Theweleit's two-volume works, *Male Fantasies* (1987, 1989) were the first to tackle the subject of a beleaguered masculinity after the defeat of the war. Theweleit's controversial work emphasizes the specific anxiety of *Freikorps* members rather than the larger male population. George Mosse and Richard McCormick are other forerunners in the subject, publishing their studies in the mid 1990's. [47] Mosse focuses on nationalism, sexuality and the impact of the two World Wars on German history. McCormick takes a much more cultural approach, examining gender in film and art. The work of Mosse was influential for Paul Lerner and Elaine Showalter, who both wrote on the phenomenon of hysteria in World War I veterans. [48] Although they build on Mosse,

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[47] George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985); George Mosse, *The Image of Man: the Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). For McCormick's work see Richard McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and "New Objectivity"* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Richard McCormick, "Private Anxieties/Public Projections: "New Objectivity," Male Subjectivity, and Weimar Cinema" in *Women in German Yearbook,* vol. 10 (1994).

[48] Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Paul Frederick Lerner, *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

Lerner and Showalter take a much more medically centered focus in their work. This study hopes to integrate the work on masculinity and femininity to draw a more complete picture. One cannot appreciate a complete gendered argument when only one gender is the topic.

This debate on gender roles and morality helped shape both identity and behavior, and thus must be recognized as having its own integrity as an object of historical investigation. The Weimar Republic is often divided into the postwar inflation, the stable period and the depression and rise of the Nazis. This study does not follow particular chronological division because the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate continued throughout the fourteen years of the republic's existence. However, economic uncertainty played an important role in the urgency of the debate. Since the economic situation in Weimar Germany was so precarious, gender roles were scrutinized throughout the entire interwar period. Historians use the words "trauma," "tragedy," and "unwanted child" to describe the Weimar Republic. One must be careful to not write Weimar's history with hindsight, as if it is tragic because it led to the Nazi dictatorship. Scholars must view Weimar as contemporaries saw it. It was a traumatic time, a time of rebuilding and reshaping of the German nation after such a devastating loss. But it was also a time of rebirth and creation. This is particularly true with regard to the cultural proliferation of Weimar Germany.

This work is divided into two sections, one on moral degeneration and one on moral regeneration. To gain a deeper understanding of how morality was discussed in the cultural realm, I have used five tropes of people in Weimar

Germany. As Mosse writes, "Stereotyping meant that men and women were homogenized, considered not as individuals but as type." [49] German society set up stereotypes as both an ideal to aspire to and as a dangerous warning of what not to be. Stereotypes allowed men and women to discuss morality in Weimar Germany in a very concrete manner that could easily be understood. The first section of this study examines moral degeneration and its connection to a decidedly female urban setting. Three distinct figures of moral degeneration-the New Woman, the Hysterical Veteran, and the Weimar Prostitute-illustrate the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate in the cultural context. The three figures transgressed conventional gender roles in their appearance and behavior. This blurring of sexual difference was key to their label of moral degenerates. The debate on moral degeneration and crisis was extremely prevalent in postwar Germany, leading to a corollary debate on moral regeneration. Part Two emphasizes the possibility of regeneration through the female landscape of the countryside. In the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate, it is the countryside that has the ability to heal the defeated nation. The two figures of regeneration are the Selfless Mother and the Nietzschean Soldier. The Selfless German Mother and the Nietzschean Soldier represent the traditional constructs of femininity and masculinity. Because the two regeneration figures adhere to the conventional ideal of gender, they have the opportunity to save Germany from further moral abyss.

The five chapters on the tropes of moral degeneration and moral regeneration all follow the same basic format. The five archetypes are first

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[49] Mosse, *The Image of Man,* 6.

introduced with either a visual or written text in order to explore the mentality of the German populace. I then look at the debate surrounding the trope as either a figure of moral degeneration or regeneration based on traditional morality and their idealized gender role. I also look at the specific historiography surrounding each of these archetypes in order to place myself within the field of research. Each trope is then examined in detail using the subsections of art, literature and film. My use of material in each of these three cultural fields is highly selective. I chose specific works that highlighted each of the archetypes with regard to gender and morality. In choosing the sources, I cast a wide net over the cultural realm in Weimar Germany. This means that highly successful Berlin based artists, such as Otto Dix are used in conjunction with others, such as Gerta Overbeck, who was far removed from the money and popularity of Berlin. In the field of literature I include modernist classics such as Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* alongside the extremely successful and more approachable novels of Vicki Baum. In choosing films I focus on various production companies and include both blockbusters and lesser known but important independent films. I chose my material specifically to include as many female creators as male. This was very important to explore gender and morality from both perspectives.

CHAPTER 1: THE NEW WOMAN

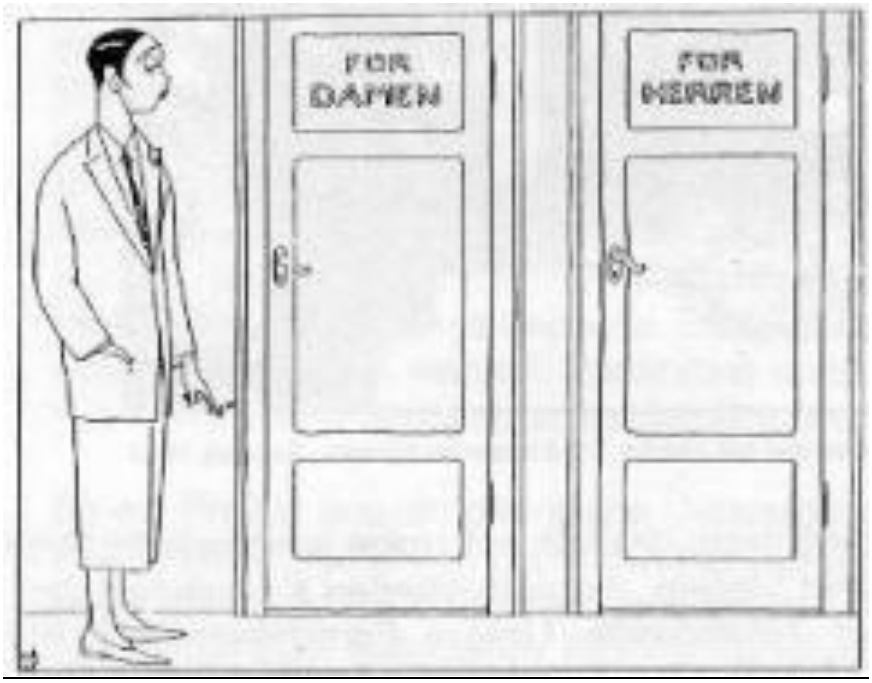

Figure 1.1. "Lotte at the Crossroads" ***Simplicissimus*****, 4 May 1925, 79.**

The satirical journal, *Simplicissimus* published the above cartoon "Lotte at the Crossroads" in 1925 at the height of the most politically and economically stable period during the Weimar Republic. The cartoon reinforces the notion that the two sexes and thus the two genders are completely distinct. There is no third door or alternative that allows a person to combine aspects of the two. The New Woman must choose which door she identifies with. The cartoonist drew a masculine looking New Woman who stands in front of two bathroom doors, one marked "for ladies" and the other "for gentlemen". The joke is that Lotte must decide which of the two genders she identifies with. The cartoonist implies that the New Woman ponders this decision, represented by her standing still and pausing. The cartoonist suggests that the New Woman is at a crossroads between the two genders and must

make a final choice. Lotte is clearly a New Woman, exemplified by her pageboy haircut or *Bubikopf,* tuxedo jacket, men's tie, flat shoes and ever-present cigarette dangling from her fingertips.

The cartoonist captured the essence of the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate by illustrating the way in which the general populace viewed the New Woman. She was supposedly at a very real crossroads in German society. Conservative critics blasted the Weimar New Woman for her transgression of established gender norms. The Weimar New Woman transgressed the traditional, bourgeois role of innocent daughter, dutiful wife and selfless mother through her political, economic and sexual liberation. Because the Weimar New Woman blurred the lines of conventional gender roles she was labeled a symbol of moral degeneracy. The cartoon, "Lotte at the Crossroads" accuses the New Woman's of rejecting her traditionally assigned gender role through her masculine appearance and behavior. The prevailing idea was that if a New Woman dressed masculine then her behavior would also be masculine. In Weimar society, the rejection of traditional femininity endangered the already beleaguered health and virility of the German culture and people. Thus, the New Woman was a threat to the German peoples ability to regenerate themselves and recapture their lost glory.

The Weimar New Woman was a transitory figure in post-war Germany. She was an urban, independent, young, unmarried, stylish, employed woman who represented the future of German society. She would literally reproduce the next generation of German men and women, thus her importance was amplified. Since the demographic future of Germany heavily depended on the New Woman's

acceptance of her traditional role as mother, her sexual liberation was the most threatening aspect of the New Woman's post-war identity. Traditionalists painted a very apocalyptic vision of Germany's future if the New Woman did not procreate and combat the demographic shortage caused in part by the losses in World War I. Therefore contemporary morality issues, such as abortion and birth control, took on a heightened and immediate significance. The changes in fashion were a very visible symbol of a New Woman's sexual liberation. Conservative, nationalistic forces tried to control the Weimar New Woman's sexuality in an effort to repopulate the nation and bring social stability through the reinforcement of traditional gender roles.

The New Woman's choice of going down a masculine or feminine road had significance beyond just what gender she identified with. The impact of her choice was the determining factor in the larger *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate. The debate posited the New Woman at a crossroads of morality. If Lotte chose the door marked "for ladies" she would lead a traditional feminine life of servitude, sexual monogamy and sacrifice. Within the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate the choice of an established gender role meant a choice for morality and traditional values. For Weimar New Women the choice of morality meant sexual unavailability until marriage to ensure a woman remained desirable in the marriage market. This precluded use of birth control and certainly access to abortion. Traditional marriage was based on the sexual double standard that upheld the notion that women should remain virgins until marriage while their male counterparts explored sexuality through various women of a suspect morality. After marriage ideally women would devote

themselves to one's husband and children. Devotion to one's family included not working visibly outside the home for wages.

During World War I women worked for the first time in many jobs previously held by men. Total war mobilization relied on women's labor but that labor was supposed to be temporary. The war ministry's guidelines for demobilization called for women to relinquish their jobs as soon as possible to make room for returning vets. [50] The War Ministry made it seem like these New Women held their jobs in lieu of the veterans returning home. Most commentators expected women to feel relief at the prospect of returning to the home. Some women enjoyed the freedom and autonomy of making money outside of the home. For other women it was simply an economic reality; they had to work to support their families. The debate on women's visible labor was closely linked to the larger *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate. Women visibly working outside the home was a sign of moral decay because ideally women would stay home and raise their families while men provided for them. The fact that men could not adequately provide for their families or that women wanted to work was seen as a rejection of respectable, German, middle class values. Critics blamed women's refusal to go back into the home upon the end of the war as a loss in morality.

If Lotte chose the door marked "for gentlemen" it meant she would follow the typical masculine role of independence and individualism. Within the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate, New Women's choice of a masculine path was a path of

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[50] Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan, ed., *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 48.

immorality. It meant that New Women would continue to work and delay or entirely forgo having children. In addition, the New Woman's choice of the masculine road further eroded German men's security and confidence. New Women's sexual, political and labor liberation created additional anxiety among German men. Critics argued that the New Woman's masculine identification negatively impacted the basis of German society, the family by confusing the two gender roles. Once a New Woman chose the "for gentlemen" path, her only hope of regeneration was motherhood or the love of a good man.

The term New Woman was not a Weimar creation. The term originally applied to suffragettes during the fin de siècle. The pre-World War I New Women fought to end women's oppression in marriage, the labor market and politics. They believed political emancipation was the first step in securing a more self-reliant future for themselves. The pre-war New Woman wanted to establish an independent self. These New Women argued proper education and career training were important steps in ending bourgeois women's parasitical existence. They followed a Wollstonecraftian argument that education would free them from their complete dependence.

The post-World War I New Woman could differ considerably from their predecessor. [51] The postwar New Woman was not a monolithic figure as the term encompassed a spectrum of different women. The spectrum of Weimar New Women included independent women who rejected the traditional domestic sphere in favor

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[51] I chose to use the label, New Woman over Modern Woman, because it is the word contemporaries used to describe the increasingly visible woman in Weimar Germany.

of a more autonomous existence. There were also New Women who rejected heterosexual relationships, favoring lesbian relationships. The spectrum also included New Women who desired frivolous lives of leisure and were perfectly content to rely on men to provide it. These parasitical Weimar New Women were apathetic towards politics and saw employment as a necessary temporary stage before finding a man rich enough to take care of them. This latter flippant attitude incensed the original New Women who felt the Weimar New Woman was a slap in the face to all their hard fought gains. Thus, many of the older generation of feminists echoed the conservative social critics in their damnation of the post-World War I New Woman as a figure of moral degeneration. [52]

Despite the differences among the Weimar New Woman, "the factor unifying the multiple and often contradictory accounts of this cultural phenomenon is her role as a symbol of transformation and rupture: she represented a crisis in gender roles that was, in turn, a response to the shock of modernity." [53] The New Woman was a symbol of transformation and rupture because she was a phenomenon only possible within a Republic. She was a symbol of rupture because she was allowed to vote and have a say in politics and economics. Within Weimar Germany, the shock of modernity included Germany's defeat in the Great War and the subsequent economic devastation that followed it. The war and rampant poverty that followed was the impetus that created increased anxiety over any change to traditional

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[52] Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: the Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), 99; Bridenthal, Grossmann and Kaplan, *When Biology Became Destiny,* 11.

[53] Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011), 6.

gender roles. Germany's loss in World War I was not just a military or economic loss; rather it was the end of Germany's triumphant cultural narrative.

Germany's defeat in World War I meant German men failed in their roles as defenders of the nation and protectors of its women. If men failed in their role as protectors, how were German women supposed to continue their dependent status? Germany's economic nightmare following the end of the war meant German men failed in their roles as providers. These two failures provoked extreme feelings of anxiety in the male population, exacerbating the criticisms of the New Woman as a figure of moral degeneration. The New Woman seemed to rise triumphantly out of the ashes of male emasculation. Thus this led to criticisms in the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate that the New Woman was a type of bloodsucking black widow, gaining her strength and power by draining that of men's.

Much of the criticism of the New Woman as a black widow and symbol of moral degeneration was explicitly linked to the economic crises of the early and late 1920s. Many believed Germany's defeat in war was the catalyst for moral degeneration in Weimar society. However, that defeat alone could not impact the moral climate in the way it did if it were not for the economic devastation that accompanied it. The economic disaster of the early and late 1920s created unique circumstances in Germany and tested the peoples' values. The journalist and social critic Hans Ostwald wrote a tract entitled, *A Moral History of the Inflation* in 1931. The author overtly linked the economic hardship in Weimar Germany with a degeneration of morals. Ostwald stated that during the intense inflation immediately following the war, the family was in decline because of women's

complete transformation in the new republic. He specifically cites women's refusal to return to her traditional role in the home upon the end of the war as crucial to the collapse of morals in the post-war society. [54] Ostwald sees a direct correlation between women's return to their traditional domestic sphere and the regeneration of the family. Ostwald's conclusions are representative of a large segment of the population in the Weimar Republic. It truly seemed to contemporaries that women were suddenly working outside the home instead of concentrating on their domestic responsibilities. That was not actually the case. Women's work outside of the home remained virtually constant from 31.2% in 1907 to 35.6% in 1925. [55] However, it was the type of labor they engaged in that caused such condemnation from the public at large. Women's work in domestic household labor and farm work fell as their work in the industrial sector and white-collar employment rose. [56] This meant that women's labor became progressively more visible. They were not visible working on family farms or in a private household as servants except to a very limited portion of the population. But everyone living in a city or town noticed their presence in the white-collar service sector because they dealt with them on a consistent basis as bank tellers or salespersons.

There is a plethora of historiography on how much the Weimar New Woman was actually an agent of change or just a media creation. In 1984 Renate Bridenthal,

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[54] Hans Ostwald, "A Moral History of the Inflation" (1931) in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook,* ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 77-78.

[55] Peukert, *The Crisis of Classical Modernity,* 96.

[56] Ibid.

Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan published the first full-length study of women in Weimar and Nazi Germany. Their title, *When Biology Became Destiny*, summed up their view that women's position did not undergo a significant change during these years. Historians followed up with case studies of women's reproductive rights, or the New Woman as femme fatale in Weimar Germany. [57] Marsha Meskimmon was the first to use typologies of different women as a way of exploring how female artists negotiated the subject of women in their art of Weimar Germany. Barbara Kosta also uses the rich visual culture of Weimar Germany, but her focus is on cigarettes and advertising appealing to the New Woman. [58] Lastly, Katie Sutton's book filled a void in the Weimar literature by examining the phenomenon of the masculine New Woman as a complete spectrum. This included chapters on the increasing participation of women in sport, queer female identities in the media and the masculinzation of fashion. [59] Whether or not the Weimar New Woman represents a watershed in women's role in Germany is not the aim of this present study. I hope to build on the various specialty studies, as well as the more broad

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[57] For reproductive rights see Cornelie Usbourne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany: Women's Reproductive Rights and Duties* (London: Macmillian, 1992); Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: the German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); For women as femme fatale see Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989); Barbara Hales, "Woman as Sexual Criminal: Weimar Constructions of the Criminal Femme Fatale" in *Women in German Yearbook,* vol. 12 (1996).

[58] Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Barbara Kosta, "Cigarettes, Advertising, and the Weimar Republic's Modern Woman" in *Visual Culture in Twentieth-Century Germany: Text as Spectacle,* ed. Gail Finney (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

[59] Sutton, *The Masculine Woman*.

monoliths of the New Woman in Weimar Germany. I will look at the New Woman as a symbol of moral degeneration in the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate following World War I. My focus on both the visual and written cultural sources of Weimar Germany, show us that Weimar contemporaries best understood the rupture of society in gendered terms.

The New Woman was so dangerous to the morality of the nation because she was not someone on the fringe of society such as the Weimar Prostitute or the cabaret performer. Rather, she was an integral part of the social and moral fabric of the recently defeated nation. This meant she could not be easily ignored. The New Woman emphasized the crisis of degeneracy in Weimar Germany precisely because she formed a significant and visible faction of "respectable" society. The New Woman was degenerate because she challenged the conventional division of space along gender lines, including her entrance into politics and employment. Furthermore, she blurred gender lines through her appearance and was criticized for her frivolous consumption. Finally, the New Woman was degenerate because she had sex outside of marriage and delayed or refused to have children. Conservative critics contrasted the sexually liberated, urban, public New Woman with the virginal or maternal Wilhelmine woman in order to highlight the New Woman as a symptom of modern moral degeneracy.

Contemporaries identified the New Woman first and foremost by her outward appearance of *Bubikopf*, knee baring skirt, rouged face, and cigarette dangling from her hand. Because a woman looked like a New Woman did not mean she automatically was a white-collar office worker who was sexually liberated. The

New Woman's fashion was the height of style, which meant bourgeois woman who never worked also adopted the style. Similarly, working class women used a portion of their income to mimic the fashionable New Woman. This made it increasingly difficult to determine a woman's class based on her outward appearance. This confusion led to more criticism and heightened anxiety as class lines were blurred along with gendered identifications.

The androgyny of the New Woman's fashion is crucial to understanding why they were targeted as a symbol of moral degeneration. Fashion is the most central feature of outward gender construction. While traditionalists lambasted immodest aspects of women's fashion, the trousers and smoking jackets were even more criticized as aping masculine style. Women who wore these "masculine" fashions were subject to criticism and labeled feminists and/or lesbians (usually the two were/are conflated). Some women adopted the most feminine aspects of the New Woman fashions as a type of defense against these accusations. [60]

The horror some men and women felt at this transgression of fashion to established gender roles is best exemplified by an exert from the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* (*BIZ*), the most popular publication of its kind in Weimar Germany. The article, "Enough is Enough, Against the Masculinization of Women" was published in 1925. This in itself is interesting because this was the height of stability in Weimar Germany. One might expect such an article to appear in the economic turmoil of the early or late 1920s. It was just as important during this period to reassert traditional gender roles in order to preserve the stability Germans fought so hard to achieve.

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[60] Ibid., p. 41.

Thus the blurring of gender roles, and women's subsequent immorality has the dangerous potential to topple the current permanence.

> What began as a playful game in women's fashion is gradually becoming a distressing aberration. At first it was like a charming novelty: that gentle, delicate women cut their long tresses and bobbed their hair; that the dresses they wore hung down in an almost perfectly straight line, denying the contours of the female body, the curve of the hips; that they shortened their skirts, exposing their slender legs up to calf level. Even the most traditional of men were not scandalized by this. . . But the trend went even further; women no longer wanted to appear asexual; rather fashion was increasingly calculated to make women's outward appearance more masculine. And we observe more often now that the bobbed haircut with its curls is disappearing, to be replaced by the modern, masculine hairstyle: sleek and brushed straight back. . . Fashion is like a pendulum swinging back and forth. With the hoop skirt the dictates of fashion brought the accentuation of the female form to an extreme, and now things are moving in the completely opposite direction. It is high time that sound male judgment take a stand against these odious fashions, the excesses of which have been transplanted here from America. [61]

The article was influential in the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate in that it was widely read. It is representative of a larger body of evidence that finds any masculine traits abhorrent in women. The author's tone is very condescending in the above article. From the very first sentence he downplays fashions importance as a symbol of gender construction by calling it "a playful game." This infantilizes women and their increasing emancipation from the domestic sphere. The author also emphasizes that when the New Woman's fashion was still feminine or even asexual it appealed to

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[61] "Nun aber genug! Gegen die Vermännlichung der Frau," *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* (March 29, 1925)

men. This implies that women should dress primarily to attract men. According to the author only the New Woman's adoption of masculine fashion is offensive. The author insists the asexuality of the fashion was acceptable, but not the masculinzation of it. He is so offended by women imitating men in their fashion that he wants men to band together to put an end to it. Again, this infantilizes women who must be punished as petulant children by their angry fathers. He does not demand that women take action against the new trends in women's fashion. Rather, men must put women as a group in their place. This denies women any agency. The closing reference to America suggests immorality will result from women imitating men, even if it is only in regards to fashion. The New Woman's association with modern, frivolous consumption was intricately linked to the Americanization of German culture. For Weimar contemporaries America represented industrial and technical progress along with violence and an absence of culture. America as a nation was so new that it simply did not have the same cultural roots as Europe. Germany did not unify until 1871 but its cultural heritage was much older. Germans therefore prided themselves as deeper, more soulful than their European and especially their American counterparts. America also symbolized soulless materialism and lax gender roles. [62] Germans considered American culture to be without boundaries of respectability. The New Woman was increasingly associated with irresponsible materialism that seemed to capture her lack of morals. The above

[62] Walter Laquer, *Weimar: A Cultural History, 1918-1933* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1974), 32-33.

BIZ article illustrates the magnitude of fashion in gender construction and morality of society.

The author of "Enough is Enough, Against the Masculinization of Women" condemns women for appearing too similar to men. According to him, women must maintain some degree of femininity, which is intimately linked to artificiality. In Friedrich Nietzsche's work, *Beyond Good and Evil* the philosopher argues women's "great art is the lie, her highest concern is mere appearance and beauty." He continues, "Let us men confess it: we honor and love precisely this art and this instinct in women." [63] Nietzsche's comments are a culmination of a Western European tradition of simultaneously criticizing and praising artificiality in women. According to the German philosopher, artificiality is what men truly desire in women. In *The Second Sex,* Simone de Beauvoir echoes Nietzsche's sentiments on the disingenuousness of women. She argues that prior to World War I women's fashion was created precisely to highlight female artificiality. [64] The tropes of makeup, curls, hoop skirts and corsets were all meant to highlight the difference between the male and female body. The new post World War I fashion blurred the distinction between the two sexes and thus caused extreme angst. [65] It was a shock for veterans returning home to see the new fashion of Weimar. It seemed they returned to a civilization without sexes due to the androgyny of women's fashion.

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[63] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future,* trans., with commentary by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 132.

[64] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A Knopf Inc, 1952), vii.

[65] Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1994), 69.

Not all of the New Woman's fashion was androgynous. Many New Women sought to accentuate their sexuality in the post-war fashion of short skirts and bare arms. The hemline on women's skirts continued to rise until; in 1926 the knee was reached. [66] Critics who found the extra skin morally offensive viewed this openly sexual style with dismay. Revealing clothes were yet another symbol of immorality in the new hedonistic Weimar culture. These critics likened the New Woman to prostitutes because they seemed to be displaying and selling their bodies to the highest bidder.

The new styles in fashion also blurred class lines. Upper class women emulated the bourgeoisie or working class women who drove the new fashion. They no longer wore such distinctive formal clothing that demarcated them from the lower classes, mostly because they could not afford to. Working class and lower class bourgeois women tried to disguise their poverty and desperation through emulating the fashion of film stars and aristocratic women. This was all shocking to the public who could no longer tell a woman's class standing based on her appearance. That did not mean fashion lost its importance. One sees the centrality of the New Woman's fashion throughout the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate. Attaining the new fashion and maintaining a facade of respectability was a vital driving force in the lives of many New Women. The authors and artists of the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate constantly reference fashion as a sign of emancipation or dependence. The post-war, New Woman fashions were symbols of emancipation because they allowed women unprecedented freedom and mobility. New Women could be much

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[66] Laquer, *A Cultural History,* 31.

more active in the new, less restrictive clothing. Conversely, the new fashions could also be signs of dependence because many New Women could not afford to buy them with their own money. Therefore, some New Women continued to rely on men for their latest styles, often trading their bodies as a commodity. Fashion was a very powerful visible symbol of moral degeneration in Weimar Germany. The changes in fashion were the most obvious, visible change to women's changing gender roles and were an easy target for many social critics. We see the debate on fashion and morality throughout the debate on the New Woman in Weimar Germany.

Art

The debate on New Women's fashion was a symbolic debate on immorality caused by the changes brought about by World War I. Fashion was the most obvious outward symbol of gender identity and was therefore the most visible sign of a person's morality. If a New Woman transgressed conventional notions of respectable attire for a woman, her morality or possible immorality came under intense scrutiny. There were very specific rules about what a respectable German woman wore in public, and what she did not. Many of the rules applied to one's class, but others were specific to a woman's marital status, age, residence and motherhood. When New Woman began to press against these established rules it especially made the older generations anxious and uncomfortable. Many artists, authors, journalists, social critics and filmmakers explored the trends in New Women's fashion as an avenue to discuss changing morality and shifting gender roles in post World War I Germany. In particular, artists focused on fashion in their

depictions of the New Woman as a symbol for rupture because they had only a visual context to work within.

I look at four different artists' renderings of the New Woman in order to gain a more complete picture of this multi-faceted phenomenon. Otto Dix, a World War I veteran, offers a male perspective on the new female icon, the New Woman. Jeanne Mammen, Grethe Jürgens, and Elsa Haensgen-Dingkuhn all New Woman themselves, offer a female viewpoint on the same image. All of the four artists identified with the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement, then popular in Weimar Germany. They also all lived through the horror of World War I and the subsequent political, economic and social turmoil of the Weimar Republic. The four artists lived in and drew their inspiration from four different cities, making their art a valuable primary source from which to gain a deeper understanding of the New Woman. Mammen's city of Berlin influenced all other German cities, as it was the cultural capital of Weimar Germany. Trends in art and fashion started in Berlin and spread throughout the rest of the country. Although they lived in different cities Dix, Jürgens, Haensgen-Dingkuhn and Mammen all portray the New Woman as an urban, public phenomenon. The New Women in their art cannot exist in the countryside. She is an independent, sexually liberated creature of consumption. Dix and Mammen both illustrate the New Woman's comfort in the public sphere without a male escort. The four artists also emphasize the New Woman's relationship to fashion in their paintings.

Otto Dix (1891-1969) was born near Dresden, Germany. Dix credited his mother with inspiring his early interest in art. She was a poet in her youth before becoming a seamstress to help support her working class family. Dix's father, an

iron foundry worker and his seamstress mother encouraged their son to pursue his artistic endeavors, sending him to apprenticeship for an artist when he was only fifteen. At the end of his apprenticeship, Dix enrolled in an art school in Dresden. Along with many men of his age, Dix volunteered for World War I and was discharged in 1918 after becoming wounded. After the war ended, Dix expressed the disenchantment many German people felt in the aftermath of the defeat and the ensuing chaos. Dix was put on trial for obscenity for his painting *Girl in Front of the Mirror* (1921) although he was eventually acquitted. [67] The painting was of a youthful, beautiful woman looking into the mirror and seeing a dying, skeletal, old woman looking back at her. The fact that Dix was tried in a court of law for obscenity shows just how important art was to the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate. Dix moved to Berlin in 1925 so he could be more active in the art world and record the debauchery of the city.

The iconic portrait of Sylvia von Harden, painted by Dix, best exemplifies the asexual fashion of the New Woman. Dix based his painting on the Weimar journalist von Harden, who sat for the artist many times. Von Harden recalled that Dix exclaimed, "He must paint her" because she captured the *Zeitgeist* of Weimar. [68] Sylvia von Harden was certainly a New Woman. She was independent, worked for a living and had a fluid view of sexuality. Von Harden lived with a man and had a child

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[67] Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann, eds., *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919-1933* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Munich and New York: Delmonico Books, 2015), 307.

[68] Sylvia von Harden, "Erinnerungen an Otto Dix" in *Frankfurter Rundschau,* March 25, 1959, unpaged as quoted in Sabine Rewald, *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 134.

out of wedlock, but she was also engaged in lesbian relationships during the same time.

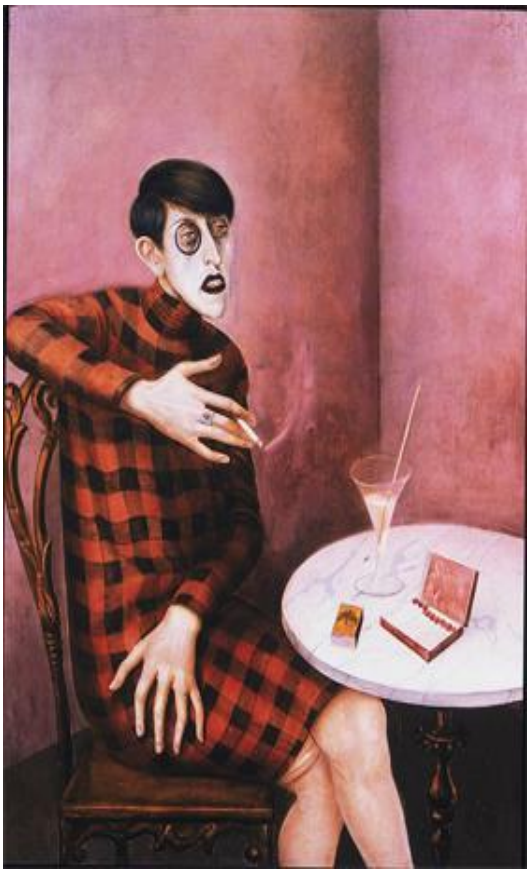

Figure 1.2. Otto Dix, *Bildnis der Journalistin Sylvia von Harden (The Journalist Sylvia von Harden)* 1926.

In the portrait von Harden wears a dress but it is not feminine in any way. The dress is loose fitting and in a bold print. Furthermore, her silk stockings are consciously illustrated with one bunching up around her knee. This is not a sexualized picture of the New Woman's fashion. Von Harden's sexual identification as a lesbian further complicates the portrait. Some critics complain Dix overemphasizes von Harden's masculinity because she is a lesbian. The *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists did often paint in caricature, exaggerating the features of all their subjects. However, one cannot dismiss the criticisms of Dix's portrait. Many

conservative critics and commentators saw the masculinzation of the New Woman as a sign of moral degeneracy. Dix's version of Sylvia von Harden plays into the conservative criticism. Dix was a left wing artist, making the criticism even more troubling. The only jewelry von Harden wears is a ring on her middle finger, clearly not an engagement or wedding ring. Her hands are disproportionately large and spread open. She also wears the *Bubikopf* severely, not in the longer, sexier version with curls a la Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel.* This was precisely the *Bubikopf* criticized in the article "Enough is Enough, Against the Masculinization of Women."

Von Harden sat many times for the portrait, which Dix sketched before painting it. Dix consciously thought about how he wanted to portray her as the symbol of the *Zeitgeist* of Weimar*.* Dix clearly placed von Harden in a public setting and even more significantly, she is alone. Von Harden does not have an escort; the table she sits at only has one drink-hers. Von Harden is therefore out in public alone, dressed in androgynous fashion, drinking alcohol and smoking a cigarette. Dix highlights von Harden's cigarette by enlarging her hands and placing a full box of cigarettes on the table. The cigarette itself was an emblem of both modernity and cultural degeneracy in Weimar Germany. The German scholar, Barbara Kosta, points out that for a woman to smoke in public was a complete break with tradition. [69] The association of cigarettes with luxury and indulgence is what critics found most degenerative about the New Woman's consumption of the item. During the rampant inflation of the early 1920s and the depression in the late 1920s the New Woman's

[69] Barbara Kosta, "Cigarettes, Advertising, and the Weimar Republic's Modern Woman" in *Visual Culture in Twentieth-Century Germany: Text as Spectacle,* ed., Gail Finney (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 134-135.

consumption of cigarettes was viewed even more negatively. Critics blasted the New Woman's selfish and unhealthy habit as an impediment to the regeneration of a moral society. For instance, in 1924 the German gynecologist Robert Hofstätter wrote a full-length study about the detrimental effects of smoking on women's health. He did not write a similar study on the effect of smoking on men's health. Hofstätter claimed women who first took up the habit of regular smoking were perpetually unhappy and that smoking was a form of "masculine protest." [70] He reasoned that women were dissatisfied with their life and therefore wanted to usurp anything masculine in an effort to attain power. Although he recognizes a phenomenon of dissatisfied housewives, Hofstätter does not suggest a reorganization of gender roles that might possibly cure this. Instead he blames women for their own unhappiness with their situation.

Jeanne Mammen (1890-1976) depicts much different New Women than Dix did in his portrait of von Harden. Mammen is the best example of a Weimar artist showing the full spectrum of New Women in her art. Mammen does not paint only one type of New Woman; instead she demonstrates the varied differences among these women labeled New Women. Mammen moved from Berlin to Paris when she was only five, and began her art studies at the prestigious Academíe Julian. Mammen traveled from Paris to Brussels, Amsterdam and Rome before the start of World War I forced the German family to flee France for good. The French government confiscated Mammen's father's wealth and the family struggled with poverty. Mammen put her art education to good use, working as an illustrator for various

[70] Ibid.,135-36.

popular magazines, such as *Die Dame, Uhu* and *Simplicissimus*. [71] During the Weimar Republic she made enough money from her illustrations to afford an apartment in Berlin she shared with her sister. Mammen lived in the Berlin apartment for the next 57 years. She said, "I have always wanted to be just a pair of eyes, walking through the world unseen, only to see others. Unfortunately, one was seen." [72] Mammen's paintings convey her desire of an observer, they seem as if someone took a snapshot and shared it.

Mammen was not only a New Woman herself but she also constructed the image of the New Woman in the popular press. She is one example of New Women's agency. The New Woman was not a passive recipient of the new fashion or items geared for their consumption. The New Woman was an integral part of the creation process of the modern consumer culture in Weimar Germany. New Women worked in retail stores, banks, offices, hair salons, and fashion magazines. Women also consciously represented the New Woman in their art and literature. Women in Weimar Germany therefore formed a vital part of creating, encouraging, changing and critiquing the New Woman. The French philosopher, Michel de Certeau's work on consumption is useful in regard to understanding how New Women in Germany functioned as active agents. Certeau argues that consumption is a form of production because the consumers are making decisions, asserting whatever limited power is available to them. Following Certeau's logic, consumption is not

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[71] Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 183.

[72] Ibid.

mindlessness, nor a passive receiver of culture. Rather if one views consumption as production then the New Woman becomes a creator of her own image. [73] German women, including those labeled New Women, made choices everyday what to consume and not to consume. Women's everyday choices of consumption impacted the larger Weimar society even more so than men's since they were the primary consumers within the family structure. Within the economic devastation of Weimar Germany, women's choices with regard to consumption were even more important. Mammen is one example of a New Woman who actively molded the malleable identity of the New Woman.

Jeanne Mammen's portfolio from the Weimar years contains numerous pictures of New Woman in a variety of activities such as, eating lunch, playing card games, dancing, working, spending time at the beach, getting their nails done, smoking and getting ready for the evening. Mammen shows a full range of activities of everyday life in Berlin. The unifying theme of these women is the city of Berlin. Mammen's New Women are clearly urban, dressed in the latest fashions and typically pictured together. Mammen overwhelmingly painted New Women together to illustrate their sense of community. She also did not include many men or any children in her paintings of Berlin society. Instead, she focused on New Woman as individual subjects.

Mammen's art is full of lesbian relationships. Mammen's portrayal of lesbian relationships and lesbian clubs made her critics assume she was a lesbian. She never

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[73] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 165-166.

confirmed her sexuality, instead trying to remain an observer of life so that she could paint it. Anxiety over declining German birth rates and the attempt to preserve the traditional German family caused many to criticize homosexuality as morally degenerate. In her painting, *City of Women,* Mammen uses bright colors and an onslaught on images to convey the spirit of Weimar Germany. The energy of Berlin is palpable in this painting. It seems as if everyone is in motion in this brightly colored painting centering on a lesbian relationship. The two central figures are clearly out at a nightclub in Berlin. The background is full of men and women drinking, smoking, laughing, and dancing. The clothing of the background people, along with the decorations streaming across the painting, conveys an atmosphere of a celebration.

Figure 1.3 and 1.4. Jeanne Mammen, *City of Women* 1926 and Jeanne Mammen, *Café Nollendorf* 1931.

The two central characters in *City of Women* are drastically different, illustrating the spectrum of New Woman in Weimar Germany. The woman facing the audience is very feminine in style. She wears a pink frilly dress, has on jewelry and touches up her makeup with a gold compact. She is the trope of a New Woman, with her *Bubikopf* hairdo, slender figure and frivolity symbolized by her compact. Mammen paints her as a narcissist, interested in herself over all the celebrations surrounding her. Despite her preoccupation, the viewer gets a distinct feeling of sensuality from the relationship between the two central figures. The other main figure in *City of Women* is much more masculine than the redhead. The masculine figure wears mainly black, as opposed to pink. She does not wear her hair in the more feminine *Bubikopf* style of her companion. Rather, her pageboy hair is slicked back, with a masculine hat topping her head. Out of the two central figures, the masculine New Woman is the one to convey a feeling of desire. She leans into the redhead suggestively. While these two New Woman seem engaged in a sexual relationship, their interaction with each other does not express intimacy necessarily.

Contrastingly, Mammen's *Café Nollendorf* is a very intimate scene. Café Nollendorf was a lesbian nightclub in Weimar Germany. Mammen uses a more muted color pallet to show the normalcy of the scene at the lesbian bar. People enjoy the music but this is not a raucous party like in *City of Women.* The only man in the painting is the musical entertainment. Two females appear to be working in the club, earning their own money and exemplifying the New Woman. The heavyset woman is in a black and white uniform, much like an old style maid. She is perhaps

the hostess, greeting people as they come in. The other worker in the painting is a very slender and young New Woman holding a tray of drinks. The waitress has a *Bubikopf* hairstyle and a revealing dress, showing her knees and bare arms. Two other figures of women are seen in the background. One sits alone and wears her hair in a feminine *Bubikopf* with a dress and high heels. The other figure is female, and the viewer sees only her legs.

The lesbian couple in the background is locked in a very intimate embrace while they dance. Both New Woman wear long dresses to accentuate their slender frames and both wear their hair in a *Bubikopf*. The embrace of the women is loving and sexual. One has her arm pulling the other in, with her hand resting on the other's bottom. The two women hold each other tightly in a lover's embrace. All of the women seem very comfortable in this club. Mammen' *Café Nollendorf* normalizes lesbian relationships much more so than her work, *City of Women.* It shows that lesbians can be together in an intimate situation and express their feelings for each other. A queer relationship was still illegal in Weimar Germany. Mammen painted many lesbian New Women during her time as an observer in Weimar Germany. She illustrated a book on lesbian love in 1931. Mammen's numerous paintings of lesbian New Women challenged the traditional morality of her time. They were a testimony of another available path for some and a sign of rampant moral decay for others.

Another artist who considered herself as a recorder of daily life was the painter, Elsa Haensgen-Dingkuhn (1898-1991). Haensgen-Dingkuhn was born into a wealthy family and enjoyed an education suitable to her social standing. She was part of the first class of female art students to be admitted to her art school as actual

students. She remained in Hamburg and married a fellow artist in 1922. The fact that Haensgen-Dingkuhn hypenated her name was evidence that she thought differently about marriage than most of her counterparts. For a woman in Weimar Germany to hypenate her name and privilege her own career was highly unusual. Haensgen-Dingkuhn's paintings from the Weimar period are incrediably varied. She painted family scenes, children playing, people working, prosititutes, and New Women out enjoying themselves.

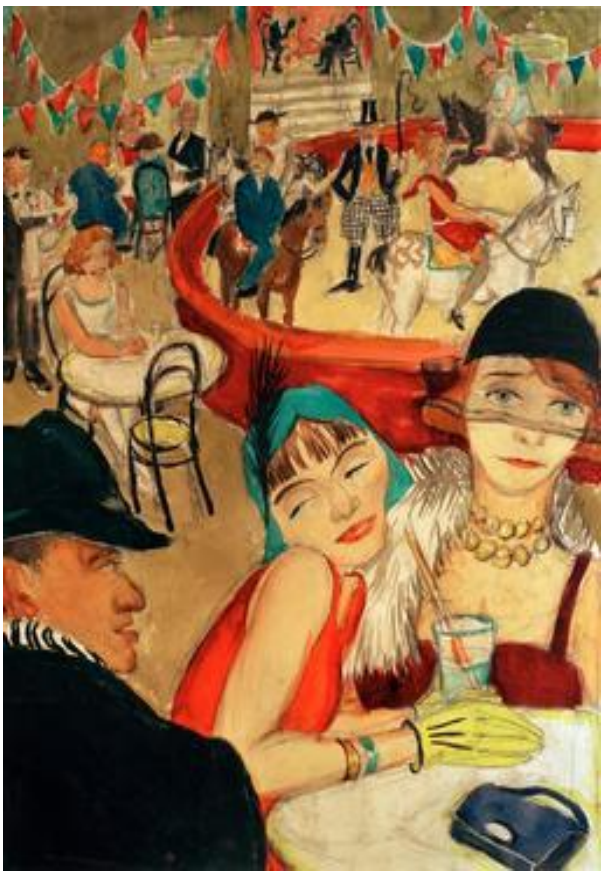

Figure 1.5. Elsa Haensgen-Dingkuhn, *Hippodrom auf St. Pauli* 1932.

Her painting *Hipprodrom auf St. Pauli* was a colorful look at the world of carnival and circus. She located her New Women in Hamburg, rather than Berlin because that is where she was familiar with. Living in Hamburg most of her life,

Haensgen-Dingkuhn sought to represent German life outside of Berlin. With this painting, the artist demonstrates that Berlin is not the only exciting place in Germany. Hamburg too has new public entertainments where New Women could enjoy themselves. The two New Women in the painting are the quintessential New Women in their choice of fashion. They both wear the *Bubikopf* hairstyle with sleek hats and jewlery. Both these women wear revealing dresses with the arms bare. They finish their look with makeup, fur, pearls and gloves. The purse of one New Woman lays on the table, signaling consumersism. Again, to apply Certeau, these two New Women are choosing what to spend their money and time on. They are demonstrating agency. These two New Women are together at the carnival socially. Their relationship to the man at their table is questionable. The New Woman sitting closest to him appears to flirt or engage with the man while the one further away looks bored with his presence. He certainly does not appear to have come with the two New Women. They, much like Sylvia von Harden, are out drinking alchohol in public without a male escort.

Their finery during the economic depression of 1932 seems very odd. More than five million Germans were out of work this year and the political instability was frightening. Yet here are these two women and many others enjoying a carnival. Haensgen-Dingkuhn chose a carnival setting to illustrate the escapism inherent in Weimar society. It did not matter that unemployment skyrocketed, the mark was near worthless and factions on the political left and right attacked the government; these people were celebrating. Haensgen-Dingkuhn shows a background packed with people either working in or enjoying the carnival. The fact that they are at a

carnival also seems incongrous with the year 1932. These were dire years for the Weimar Republic, economically and politically. The escapism of carnival was a reflection of the utter disillionment felt by the majority of the German people. New entertainments such as carnival, cinema, and cabarets offered a chance to forget about the bleak reality of their lives.

Much like Jeanne Mammen and Haensgen-Dingkuhn, the artist Grethe Jürgens (1899-1981) was also a keen observer of daily life in Weimar Germany. Jürgens was born into a middle class family in Hannover, Germany. Her father was an educator and her mother stayed at home to raise Grethe and her siblings. During the Weimar years, she had to quit art school in 1922 because her family did not have enough money to support her. Jürgens worked in advertising and illustrating to support herself while she continued working on her craft. In this way she was New Woman herself. She recalled, "We worked, we painted. We were often together….I am not a woman of the world, I did not travel much. We sat in Hannover and did not feel like we were innovators, only that we were different than the Expressionists who belonged to a higher art movement. We were simple, we had almost no money, but we were together and rode our bicycles out into the countryside." [74] Jürgens conveys a sense of community when she speaks about working and spending leisure time together. She, Gerta Overbeck and other artists were part of a group in Hannover who worked and exhibited together. It is interesting that Jürgens did not

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[74] "Grethe Jürgens biography", Google, accessed March 6, 2019, http://www.fembio.org/english/biography.php/woman/biography/grethe-juergens/

consider herself a woman of the world or an innovator. She also downplays her achievements by privileging Expressionism as somehow a higher art form.

Figure 1.6. Grethe Jürgens, *Self Portrait* 1926.

Jürgens's *Self Portrait* is quite modern. She frames herself with a lightbulb, flowers and an industrial window. The lightbulb signifies knowledge, science and progress. Jürgens aligns the New Woman with traits not typically associated with her. Jürgens uses the lightbulb to illustrate how essential science, technology and modernity are to the New Woman. She consciously wants to show her as a sign of progress, a creature of reason and rationality. In this way, Jürgens combats the criticisms of the New Woman as a creature of frivility and consumption. Her New Woman not only consumes, she also creates. The inclusion of the flowers symbolizes

femininity and nature. Jürgens uses these symbols of femininity to illustrate the full spectrum of New Women.

Jürgens's New Woman is dynamic. She appears very athletic. She has a *Bubikopf*, like the other New Women of Dix, Mammen, and Haensgen-Dingkuhn. Jürgens chose to paint herself as a serious New Woman with purpose and focus. She, like many of the artists of Weimar Germany, struggled financially and sought employment in a more stable environment. Jürgens worked as a commericial artist at the Hacketal Wire and Cable Works in Hannover. She was so impoverished that she had to live in a lodging designed for pure bread dogs, she referred to it as a dog kennel. She used her art, such as *Self Portrait,* to demonstrate the diversity and spectrum of the New Woman who was not always frivilous and carefree. She emphasized her independence and employment in her work, *Self Portrait*. She is not surrounded by children, a husband, or a home. Rather, she is alone and presumably at work. Art from and about the New Woman challenged the notion of her as a symbol of only immorality.

Dix, Mammen, Haensgen-Dingkuhn, and Jürgens all had very different perspectives on the New Woman. This demonstrates the spectrum of New Women who lived during the Weimar Republic. Although the New Woman was a spectrum, she still had unifying traits, such as her outward appearance. One can see the fashion of the New Woman in all of the four artists' work. In addition, these women are all in public, urban settings. Much like the female artists, female authors complicated and enriched the portrait of the Weimar New Woman through their literary tales.

Literature

Similarly to art, the literature about and from the New Woman was also quite complex and encompassed a wide-ranging spectrum. The New Woman was not a simplistic monolith. Literature was highly valued in German culture; it was the domain of some of the greatest German cultural achievements of all time. With changes to education and increased access to material, the literate audience grew in post World War I Germany. The rapidly expanded readership did not apply exclusively to periodicals and journals. In fact, the novel grew in importance during the Weimar Republic, as writers increasingly used this genre to express political and social views. [75] The novel was a safer genre than periodicals because the author's views could be embedded within their fictional characters. Thus, authors could in a certain manner hide behind fictional characters.

Some of the most celebrated German authors of all time, such as Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse, wrote during the Weimar Republic. These particular authors were widely read, but they also took years to write their works. Other authors, such as Vicki Baum and Irmgard Keun, churned out easy to read novels and developed their own fan base. While not as lauded as Mann or Hesse, Baum and Keun had large, mostly female readership that makes their take on the New Woman particularly interesting since they were their target audience. Both Baum and Keun actively created and shaped the public perception of the New Woman with their very successful novels.

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[75] Karl Leydecker, ed., *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic: Intersections of Literature and Politics* (New York: Camden House, 2006), 1.

Baum and Keun are emblematic of female writers who addressed the New Woman in their writings during the Weimar Republic. Baum (1888-1960) was one of the most prolific and successful authors writing on the new moral climate of Weimar Germany. In her memoirs, Baum recalls how her mother encouraged her independence through the establishment of a career. Baum's mother hoped she would become a successful musician in order to avoid complete dependence on a man. [76] By 1916 Baum was divorced, remarried and pregnant. She became the breadwinner in her family through the popular success of her novels. [77] Although Baum was married and had children, she was in many ways a New Woman herself. She earned her living by her own hand after the economic inflation erased her families' former wealth and upper class status. Baum was also a young, stylish woman who had rather unorthodox views of sexuality and marriage. Her unorthodox view included divorce, which she herself did despite the stigma. The author Keun (1905-1985) represented the typical Weimar New Woman even more than Baum. Keun was born into an affluent family and enjoyed a privileged childhood. Keun worked as a typist in an office while she attended acting classes. [78] It was fairly common for New Women to work in an office while they pursued a more exciting career. After appearing in a few stage productions Keun decided to give up acting to pursue her writing full time. In some ways Keun's novels of a New

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[76] Vicki Baum, *It Was All Quite Different, Memoirs of Vicki Baum* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1964), 103.

[77] Ibid., 83.

[78] Lynda King, *Best-Sellers by Design: Vicki Baum and the House of Ullstein* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 93; Ursula Krechel, "Irmgard Keun: die Zerstörung der Kalten Ordnung; Auch eon Versuch über das Vergessen weiblicher Kulturleistungen" *Literaturmagazin* 10: 103-28.

Woman's life are autobiographical or at least based on her own firsthand observations. She published her first novel, Gilgi when she was only twenty-six years old, becoming a young, single, successful woman in Weimar Germany.

Although both Baum and Keun have several novels that feature a New Woman, two novels from each author are particularly important in their portrayal. Baum's novel, *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer,* (1928) will be the primary novel of Baum's under investigation in this study. It is the story of Helene, a New Woman devoted to her studies in chemistry, as an avenue for independence. Baum's other novel *Menschen im Hotel* (1929) will provide supplemental evidence for the New Woman. *Menschen im Hotel* centers on various characters coming in and out of the best hotel in Berlin. The New Woman in this novel is Flämmchen, a single young woman who works irregularly as a secretary but hopes to be an actress. Keun's novel *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (1932) is the story of Doris, a girl from the countryside who moves to Berlin in hopes of making a better life for herself. This will be the primary referent of Keun's work for this study. Keun's other novel *Gilgi-eine von uns* (1931) will provide supplemental evidence. The novel features the struggles of the New Woman, Gilgi. The title illustrates Keun's identification and empathy with Gilgi's plight. *Eine von uns* means one of us, meaning the author clearly sees Gilgi as a stereotypical New Woman who she relates to. It could be the story of any New Woman. All four of the novels were written during and set in the Weimar Republic. They were also extremely popular, with *Helene* selling more than 105,000 copies by 1932 and *Gilgi* selling 30,000 copies in the first year it was

published. [79] Therefore, the novels and the New Woman in them form a critical role in the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate. I will examine the four novels with regard to how the New Woman is a figure of moral degeneration, specifically in her inclusion in the public sphere, her selfishness, her consumption and especially her sexuality.

Driving the plot of all four novels is the economic turmoil in Weimar Germany. Helene, Flämmchen, Doris and Gilgi must all struggle to make enough money to support themselves without the support of their families. The four New Women confront moral dilemmas directly related to the economic inflation of the Weimar period. Flämmchen and Doris want a man to support them so they can become bourgeois wives who live in leisure. While Flämmchen and Doris desire a dependent marriage eventually, both New Women enjoy the process of finding their mate. These two characters see their value as seductresses and are willing to do virtually anything to survive in the difficult circumstances of the Weimar Republic. On the other hand, Helene and Gilgi value their independence much more than the other two New Women. Helene and Gilgi view personal discipline and education as essential in achieving that independence. For Doris and Flämmchen, men with money provide opportunities to avoid a monotonous, boring job.

Keun's protagonist Doris is the quintessential New Woman. She leaves the countryside and her poor family to seek fame and fortune in the city of Berlin. Doris's mother provides the inspiration for Doris to leave her poverty stricken background. Doris wonders why her mother, who was once attractive and young, settled by marrying Doris's father. Doris sees this as a waste of her mother's life.

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[79] Krechel, *Irmgard Keun*, 106.

Doris desperately wants to find a man to take care of her so she can concentrate on trying to become a famous actress. Doris wants to be a famous actress because she sees it as a beautiful, exciting life, not because she is a committed thespian. She unabashedly and consciously uses her sexuality to attract men. Doris uses her sensuality to get what she wants. She repeatedly flirts with her boss to get out of fixing her mistakes as a typist. When he makes overt sexual advances, Doris pretends she is offended because of her impeccable morals. [80] When Doris's boss pressures her again she laughs in his face and demands one month's salary to not report him. [81] In these two instances Doris does not compromise herself sexually. She also demonstrates her agency through not only her refusal to have sex with her boss but through her financial demands. She exploits her bosses' weakness to her advantage. At this point in the novel Doris still lives at home and is not as desperate as she will later become. She still has some consideration to at least appear to adhere to bourgeois values. It is an illusion, but it is one Doris tries to maintain.

Soon after Doris arrives in Berlin she reflects, "things are looking up" then lists her new clothing as proof. Doris emphasizes the material and detail of her clothing as proof she now looks like a member of the bourgeoisie. Doris believes the right type of appearance is the path to a better life. Only later does the reader find out Doris stole her new clothing from one of her lover's wife. [82] Throughout her stay in Berlin Doris repeatedly trades sex for material comfort, including food, alcohol,

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[80] Irmgard Keun, *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (*The Artificial Silk Girl* 1932), trans. Kathie von Ankum (New York: Other Press, 2002).

[81] Ibid., 17-19.

[82] Ibid., 66 & 71.

cigarettes, clothing or a warm bed to sleep in. She looks down on prostitutes, not even wanting to speak to them because she thinks they are lesser than herself, without making the obvious connection that she does the same thing they do, only she is less honest about it. [83] Doris views men as a resource to use. She views her body and sexuality in much the same way.

Similarly to Doris, in *Menschen im Hotel,* Flämmchen is under no illusion when a wealthy business manager, Preysing asks her to accompany him to London as his secretary. Flämmchen knows she will also be his mistress on this trip. Before Preysing asks her to go on the trip, she drops repeated hints about trips with various men, implying that she was sexually available for the right price. She reasons, "After all, a self-respecting person could not take a thousand marks and a journey to England and a new costume and much else besides, and give nothing in return." [84] Flämmchen sees her good looks and sexuality as a tool to be traded for financial reward. She actually feels obligated to give Preysing something more than her secretarial assistance for such an extravagant venture. Flämmchen sees Preysing as a viable option to solve her current unemployment. Doris also feels obligated to give something to the men who buy her things. She repeatedly wonders why Ernst allows her to live in his home and takes care of her without expecting anything in return. She seems to want him to want something from her; she does not understand his altruistic behavior.

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[83] Ibid, 106-107.

[84] Vicki Baum, *Menschen im Hotel* (1929) 28th edition. Berlin: Ullstein, 1991), 220-221 & 265.

Keun best illustrates the New Woman's political indifference through the character of Doris. In one of Doris's biggest gaffes, she pretends to be Jewish because she thinks the nationalist politician she's trying to seduce wants her to be one. He is a member of the Nazi party and promptly dumps her. [85] Keun published her novel in 1932 just before the Nazi seizure of power and was well aware of their popularity in the Reichstag. Doris demonstrates her complete ignorance of the monumental events taking place around her when she makes this heinous blunder. Keun uses her protagonist to criticize the New Woman as self-absorbed and oblivious to the powerful events surrounding her.

Doris, Flämmchen, Helene, and Gilgi all have progressive views on sex and marriage. The four New Women engage in sexual encounters outside of the institution of marriage. Doris sums up the view of many New Women when she wonders why "if a young woman from money marries an old man because of money and nothing else and makes love to him for hours and has this pious look on her face, she's called a German mother and a decent woman. If a young woman without money sleeps with a man with no money because he has smooth skin and she likes him, she's a whore and a bitch." [86] Keun uses this speech by Doris to point at the hypocrisy of the sexual double standard. Doris's speech explicitly critiques bourgeois marriage as a form of prostitution. Bourgeois women essentially traded the exclusive sexual rights to their body for material comfort. Earlier in the novel Doris reunites with her first love, the now married Hubert. Hubert chastises Doris

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[85] Keun, *The Artificial Silk Girl,* 37.

[86] Ibid., 73.

for having sex with him before marriage telling her, "when a man marries, he wants a virgin." [87] Doris seethes over his advice that she is not decent enough for marriage when Hubert was guilty of the same behavior.

Despite the frequent casual sex, neither Doris nor Flämmchen deals with an unwanted pregnancy in the respective novels. Helene and Gilgi are not as lucky; both become pregnant by their weak-willed boyfriends. Both Helene and Gilgi do not want to burden their boyfriends with an unwanted child, seeing the pregnancy as their sole responsibility. However, neither wants to endure the social stigma and challenges of having a child out of wedlock. Baum describes how Helene belly flops repeatedly and tries to concoct a mixture to produce an aborticide. [88] The old widow she rents a room from realizes her desperation and recommends someone to help her with this problem. Baum gives the impression that there is a vast illegal network that most German citizens have access to for an abortion. Baum and Keun describe the abortion network as frightening, unsanitary, and dangerous. Helene encounters dingy back rooms where she hears unbearable screaming. One "doctor" even sexually molests her during an examination and she flees. Helene is such a product of bourgeois orderliness that she even pays her fee for this disgusting encounter. [89] Another "doctor" takes her money but when she returns for the procedure the police are on their way because a woman died during her abortion. Baum repeatedly emphasizes that this network is one of desperation and tragedy. The legitimate

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[87] Ibid., 14.

[88] Vicki Baum, *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* (1928), (Munich: Wilhelm Heyne, 1956), 114-115.

[89] Ibid., 135.

doctors are simply too expensive for Helene, although that does not stop her from begging for their mercy. One such doctor, Frau Gropius tries to dissuade Helene, telling her abortion is immoral and "one has no right to take the easy way out." [90] Although Baum seems to ultimately agree with Gropius she does show how difficult it is for women to control the size of their families. Both Baum and Keun sympathize with poor women whose only access to abortion is this criminal underground network. Keun uses Gilgi to express even more radical views on abortion. Gilgi says women should not have to have a child they do not want, regardless of economic circumstances. [91]

Abortion was part of the larger depopulation debate. Conservative critics labeled abortion as selfish, degenerate behavior. In an effort to stymie the decreasing population, politicians and health reformers worked towards increasing the control over sexual reproduction. They saw sex reform as a battleground to fight the decadence of the New Woman. Pronatalists tried to show New Women as selfish, using abortion as a convenient method of birth control. Of course there was nothing convenient about an illegal abortion. However inconvenient, it was a widespread problem. Estimates of abortions in 1931 are one million annually, with ten to twelve thousand ending in a fatality. [92] Artists, social critics and journalists highlighted stories of young women punished for seeking abortions and the horrible conditions

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[90] Ibid., 144.

[91] Irmgard Keun, *Gilgi-eine von uns.* Berlin: Verlag GmbH, 1979 (1931), 117.

[92] Atina Grossmann, "The New Woman, the New Family and the Rationalization of Sexuality: the Sex Reform Movement in Germany, 1928-1933" in *Powers of Desire: the Politics of Sexuality* ed., Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 157.

they faced. Both Baum and Keun highlight the danger of illegal abortions and the hardship of keeping a child in such dire economic circumstances.

Neither Helene nor Gilgi go through with their planned abortions. They both make the choice to have a child out of wedlock and without the support of the babies' fathers. Everything Helene does is for the benefit of the future of her child. She falls in love with her child even before he is born. Baum implies he somehow fulfills her life and gives it purpose. [93] Helene endures countless struggles before eventually finding financial success and love. The man Helene eventually loves is broken by a femme fatale type and needs her much like her son does. Helene only finds true happiness when she rejects her role as a New Woman, becomes a mother and eventually falls in love. Thus, Helene encompasses a selfless, nurturing role to both her lover and her son. Baum's novel is one of triumph, but not one of triumph easily found. It is the hardships Helene must endure that ultimately make her life worth living. [94]

In her memoirs, Baum recalls how the largest publishing house, Ullstein, refused to publish *Helene* for several years. Baum was under contract with Ullstein and could not seek another publisher. Only after *Helene* won first prize in a literary contest, judged by none other than Thomas Mann, did Ullstein relent to publishing it. Baum recalls how Ullstein delayed its publication because it "was worse than pornography, something sensationally indecent and swinish." [95] Ullstein delayed

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[93] Vicki Baum, *Helene,* 206-207 & 221.

[94] Ibid., 308.

[95] Baum, *It Was All Quite Different,* 259.

publishing *Helene* because it was so threatening. It was so threatening because it was the story of a New Woman who chose an alternative path of premarital sex, education, and a career. Ultimately, Helene and Gilgi both find salvation in their role as mothers, sacrificing their independence as New Women in a reaffirmation of their traditional feminine role. But the very idea that they arrived at the traditional feminine role through an alternative path was threatening enough to make the novels seem subversive.

Contrastingly, Doris and Flämmchen are punished for their transgressions of the established feminine role. Doris rejects her role of dutiful daughter early on in the novel. She sees her mother's life as a wasted failure because she ended up with a husband who could not adequately provide for his family. Doris also rejects Hubert's assertion that a woman must remain a virgin before marriage if she hopes to marry a bourgeois husband. Finally, Doris is the antithesis of a selfless mother. She is entirely consumed by herself. Doris's punishment is that of an outcast. At the end of the novel she has no support system, having alienated everyone that showed her kindness. She is entirely alone and without prospects when the novel ends. Flämmchen must latch on to another married man when Preysing is arrested for murder in Baum's novel. She continues her parasitical existence as a figure of moral degeneration. All four New Women from the two New Women authors reference the changing gender roles in Weimar Germany. They act as symbols of rupture because of their views challenging traditional morality. Authors had the advantage of cloaking their ideas of morality within the storyline of fictional literature. The same

was true in the realm of film, as screenwriters and directors used their films to explore changing morality in the face of economic hardship in Weimar Germany.

Film

The silent films, *Die freudlose Gasse* (1925) and *Die Büchse der Pandora* (1929), both directed by G.W. Pabst, pick up many of the same themes found in Baum and Keun's novels about the New Woman. The two films explore the New Woman's morality in the wake of economic turmoil and the limited choices it brings with it. G.W. Pabst (1885-1967) was born to a working class family in Austria. His father was a railroad official and sent Pabst to study acting in Vienna. Pabst continued his education by traveling to the United States to work as an actor and director in New York City. When World War I broke out, Pabst was interned as a P.O.W in France. He remained at the camp until he was released in 1919.

Both Pabst directed films were made in Weimar Germany and set in post-World War I Germanic cities. Once again, the war and subsequent poverty play a major role in both films. *Die freudlose Gasse* and *Die Büchse der Pandora* both center on the struggles of a protagonist New Woman who must make decisions of morality in desperate circumstances. The protagonist of *Die freudlose Gasse* is Greta, played by a young Greta Garbo. The protagonist of *Die Büchse der Pandora* is Lulu, played by the American film star Louise Brooks. G.W. Pabst directed both films and offers strikingly different views of the New Woman. I will begin with a brief plot overview of each film before moving on to an analysis of the films in conjunction with one another.

Die freudlose Gasse is set in post-World War I Vienna. The story centers on the New Woman Greta and how she must overcome her families' desperate economic circumstances. The film begins with a written declaration that "poverty and hunger effect people's characters." The message of the movie is clear, Weimar Germany's extreme poverty transformed the morality of the people. Everyone's morality is suspect because the economic threat of starvation and homelessness is so pressing. Pabst shows images of exhausted women and children waiting in line overnight in hopes they will be able to buy food the next day before it sells out. He juxtaposes these images of desperation with images of laughing, jovial frivolous consumption in the near by cabaret. The juxtapositions serve as a condemnation of the wealthy in society. Those who can afford to drink, dance, flirt and smoke, all the while oblivious to the poverty stricken streets that surround them. Pabst depicts the two sides of poverty and wealth as polar opposites, as if society is split into good and evil.

Greta works as a secretary during the day at a fairly small office. She is exhausted from working all day and then waiting in line at the butcher's shop all night. Greta is not a carefree New Woman such as Doris and Flämmchen. Greta has a younger sister and a retired father to care for. Since her mother is dead she must fulfill the conventional feminine role of caretaker and nurturer. Greta's outside labor is respectable because it is done in service to others, specifically her family. Throughout the film, Greta is a model of discipline, selflessness and integrity. Her morals are beyond reproach, she is a chaste virgin. *Die freudlose Gasse* is primarily a

film on morality. Greta is the model of female chastity until certain events force her to alter her personal morality.

When Greta's father receives his pension, he insists she use some of the money to buy a new coat since hers is so worn. She chooses a much too expensive fur coat that makes her feel beautiful. Much like Doris, Greta finds happiness in how the fur coat makes her feel. She looks like a real bourgeois lady in the coat, which is what she and every New Woman dream of. However, on her first day wearing the fur coat into the office her boss makes aggressive unwanted advances on her and she has to fight him off. She succeeds but he fires her, telling her he does not want "girls of your kind" working for him. He implies that she only has a fur coat because she prostituted herself to get it. Of course he only fires her after she rejects his sexual advances. Adding to the families' problems, Greta's father loses his remaining pension on foolish investments and the family is completely destitute. Greta's family is forced to rent part of their house to a young American Red Cross worker. However, after her younger sister steals from the renter, his friends insist he move out.

Figure 2:6: *Die freudlose Gasse* (*The Joyless Street*) 1925

Finally, her families' hopeless poverty forces Greta to take a job at the local cabaret. She clearly detests selling herself into disrepute but sees no other choice. The other female performers enjoy dressing in the scantily clad costumes, getting their hair and makeup done and meeting wealthy men. The cabaret is full of New Women in dresses that bare their arms, back and knees. All the New Women have their hair cut in the *Bubikopf* style and wear lots of makeup. Greta dresses in the immoral costume of the cabaret dancer and waits to go on stage when the American Red Cross worker confronts her. He is horrified that she would work in such a place, throws money at her and storms out. He is interested in her romantically only when he considers her a poor girl with impeccable morality. His interest dissipates

immediately with the discovery she would work in a cabaret. Greta's father also comes to the cabaret to save his daughter's reputation once he figures out she is there. Her father explains to the Red Cross worker that his families' desperation is his own fault. Thus, Greta's morality is once again beyond reproach. The Red Cross worker promises to make a life with her, saving her from an immoral path.

Die Büchse der Pandora is set in post-World War I Germany. Lulu, like Greta is a young, beautiful New Woman who wears her hair in the new *Bubikopf* style. That is where their similarities end. Lulu is the polar opposite of Greta with regard to morality. When the film opens, Lulu lives in a very nice apartment, paid for by her wealthy lover, Dr. Schön. Lulu is happy and carefree, having the freedom to not work and still maintain a bourgeois lifestyle. However, Lulu has a rival for Dr. Schön's affections. Dr. Schön tells Lulu they must end their romantic involvement because he is engaged to a respectable bourgeois New Woman, Charlotte. Charlotte wears the styles of a New Woman but her father is wealthy enough that she does not work. Charlotte's father warns her that her fiancé has a bad reputation because of his association with the morally corrupt Lulu but Charlotte insists on the union.

Figure 2:7: *Die Büchse der Pandora* (*Pandora's Box)* 1929

Lulu does not accept Dr. Schön's rejection because she does not want to work for a living. Lulu does not appear to be heartbroken over the rejection; she dismisses it because she realizes her sexual power over her lover. Dr. Schön encourages his son to hire Lulu in his revue that Schön will pay for, as a way of distancing himself from Lulu. However, the ruse fails when Charlotte catches her fiancé embracing Lulu backstage at the revue they attend in support of Schön's son. Charlotte promptly dumps Schön because of his continuing immoral behavior. Charlotte values her family's reputation too much to risk it on her fiancé. Schön accepts Charlotte's rejection and marries Lulu instead. Their happiness is short lived because Lulu embarrasses her new husband by dancing erotically with a woman and flirting with men at their wedding reception. Schön is so humiliated by Lulu that he demands she kill herself and in the ensuing struggle he dies. Lulu's carefree, easy existence comes to an end and she must flee the police.

Lulu goes on the run with Schön's son Alwas, who happens to be in love with his dead father's wife. Lulu and Alwas run out of money and get involved in a gambling scheme to pay off someone who threatens to out them to the police. However, Alwas gets caught cheating at gambling and he and Lulu are even more desperate than they were before. Lulu has no other options and becomes a prostitute to earn money. She has the unfortunate luck to pick up Jack the Ripper as her first customer and he kills her. Alwas leaves Lulu just before Jack kills her, presumably because he cannot support her decision to prostitute herself. Thus, Lulu dies alone, murdered by a man who targets poor prostitutes.

Lulu and Greta both face the extreme poverty of post-war Europe. They also both live in the countries of the defeated Central Powers. Both films are centrally about how economic desperation forces people to take immoral actions, simply to survive. Greta is the breadwinner for her family, as her father is retired and her sister too young to work. Lulu has no familial support system and must use her sexuality to support herself. Both Greta and Lulu are finally forced to consider prostitution as a viable option at a time when options are very limited. Greta demonstrates considerable agency throughout the film as she takes actions to save her family. Greta does not beg anyone for help instead, she relies on herself. She illustrates the ultimate female traits of selflessness, sacrifice and nurture. Greta's devotion to her family trumps all other factors. Lulu also demonstrates agency but in a different way than Greta. Lulu also relies on herself but she would rather charm a rich man to take care of her than work. Lulu takes the easier way out and thus she is morally degenerate and ultimately must pay for her degeneracy.

Greta's morality is only saved through the intervention of her patriarch and future husband. The Red Cross worker explicitly rejects her when he believes her morality is suspect. When her father offers proof to the contrary her suitor is relieved. Greta is once again deserving and worthy of his love and financial assistance because she maintained a respectable bourgeois morality. Her suitor was ready to walk away and abandon her to a life of prostitution if she was morally compromised. He found her undeserving if she worked at the cabaret, despite the fact that he and his friends were there as patrons. The sexual double standard persists and the dangerous New Woman redeemed through the love of a good man.

He loves her precisely because she was sexually unavailable and therefore worthy of his interest. On the other hand, Lulu is punished for her transgression of respectable bourgeois morality. She dies at the hands of a man who kills prostitutes. Prostitutes were the most visible and extreme figures of moral degeneration in Weimar Germany. Therefore, Lulu's death as a prostitute is the ultimate punishment for her immorality.

Concluding Comments

Critics labeled the New Woman a creature of degeneration because she rejected the traditional feminine role of innocent daughter, dutiful wife and selfless mother. She was neither of the three. The New Women of Weimar Germany worked, had sex outside of marriage, and used birth control or abortion to delay motherhood. Pronatalists vilified the New Woman for not embracing motherhood as her ultimate destiny. Many of these choices, including a delay in starting or extending a family were based on economic uncertainty. That however, did not excuse the New Woman's behavior from being criticized.

The population decline was seen as a catastrophic symptom of a diseased, defeated, morally degenerate Germany. Those that advocated a return to a regenerated, morally pure Germany through a vigorous population policy were termed pronatalists. Pronatalism is the ideology that a nation's survival is essentially determined by their ability to stimulate the population. While another war was not inevitable in the Weimar Republic, the possibility of one certainly provided an impetus for pronatalists to argue from. Pronatalist ideology directly involves the State stressing the duties of marriage and procreation while at the

same time stigmatizing those persons who failed to have children as morally degenerate. [96]

During the Wilhelmine era, the declining birthrate was viewed with some concern. But it was the defeat in World War I that caused those concerns to skyrocket. Pronatalists viewed the New Woman's birth strike so direly because of the losses in the Great War. Approximately two million German men died during World War I with another four million more wounded physically or psychologically. In addition, Germany experienced a loss of around ten percent of their total population due to territorial concessions. Exacerbating this loss of population and already declining birthrate was the dramatic statistic that during the four years of war, the German birthrate was half of what it had been in 1910. [97] All of this caused a spiked increase in protonalist policies and rhetoric.

The New Woman was the chief target of pronatalists who blamed her for the cultural decline of the nation and therefore the birthrate. In July 1915, the Ministry of the Interior released an official memorandum on the decline of the birthrate. They reasoned this decline was "caused not by physical but by cultural decline, the signs of which were to be seen in sexual immorality, materialism, hedonism and particularly the dissemination of birth control." [98] The fact that they released this in the midst of a two front war, demonstrates just how important the decline in birthrate was viewed. Furthermore, the emphasis on cultural decline is very

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[96] Usborne, *The Politics of the Body,* 4.

[97] Peukert, *The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, 7 & 88.

[98] As quoted in Usborne, *The Politics of the Body,* 17.

indicative. The Ministry of the Interior could hardly blame physical factors-such as the absence of men or the decreased nutrition due to rations and war mobilization-so they blamed cultural decline instead. The Ministry of the Interior also privileges the dissemination of birth control as the overriding cause of cultural decline. One still could not advertise it, but the mere fact that it was available was the chief reason for cultural decline, according to the Ministry of the Interior.

The decline in birthrate was not something unique to Germany. Pronatalists viewed it as a degenerative disease that infected all of Western Europe. Similarly to France, post-World War I Germany experienced an extreme, apocalyptic message about the need to repopulate, to replace the fallen soldiers. [99] The death of so many German men during the war created an unequal sex ratio. Women within prime childbearing years now had much fewer prospects for finding a husband and starting a family. [100] This surplus of women created additional unease because they were no longer attached to men, and therefore symbolized a crisis in the family. Pronatalists viewed the New Woman's decision to delay or forgo motherhood as an attack on the German nation. They blamed women's political emancipation and

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[99] There has been much more work done on the depopulation crisis in France than in Germany. See Cheryl Koos, "Gender, Anti-Individualism, and Nationalism: The Alliance Nationale and the Pronatalist Backlash against the Femme Moderne, 1933-1940" in *French Historical Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3 (Spring, 1996), 699-723; Karen Offen, "Depopulation, Nationalism, and Feminism in Fin-de-Siècle France" in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 89, no. 3 (Jun., 1984), 648-676; Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*.

[100] Julia Roos, *Weimar Through the Lens of Gender: Prostitution Reform, Women's Emancipation and German Democracy, 1919-33* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2010), 4.

increased entry into the workforce for the demographic decline. [101] Pronatalist criticisms ignored the fact that many women and men chose not to expand their families in a time of economic disaster. Pronatalists considered the situation so dire that the rampant inflation and unemployment were only secondary to expanding the population at any cost.

Much of the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate was mediated, reinforced or criticized in the cultural realm of Weimar Germany. Artists, filmmakers, authors and journalists tried to come to terms with what they saw as a whole new world. World War I was a rupture that transformed the traditional angel of the house from the Wilhelmine era into a Weimar New Woman. The New Woman was a visible and shocking manifestation of the immorality of the defeated republic. Many male artists such as Otto Dix and G.W. Pabst express anxiety and fear when confronted with the New Woman and her rupture to German culture. Many female artists such as Jeanne Mammen, Grethe Jürgens, Elsa Haensgen-Dingkuhn, Vicki Baum and Irmgard Keun challenge the assumption of the New Woman as a parasite on German culture. These female artists were instrumental in the creation and construction of a New Woman identity based on the self and the present. Perhaps because the female artists had to support themselves during such dire economic circumstances these women understood the importance of demonstrating an alternate path in their writing or art. These avenues were somewhat safe as New Women artists could disguise their radical views within their art form.

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[101] Atina Grossmann, "The New Woman" in *Powers of Desire,* ed., Snitow, Stansell and Thompson, 156-157.

CHAPTER 2: THE WEIMAR PROSTITUTE

> Woman, however, forms herself according to the will of the man. Otto Weininger divided the female species into mothers and whores. Many a poor, young streetwalker belongs, despite all the external devastation, to the species of mother, and the clairvoyant would place many a well-bathed, nicely dressed mother of three reluctantly conceived offspring into the other category. An overwhelming majority, however, belongs in the middle and vacillates between whoredom and motherhood. If a fortunate fate smiles upon her so that such a vacillating creature acquires the strong, protective, shaping love of an unspoiled man, then motherhood will release her from the drive to prostitution.
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> -Thomas Wehrling, "Die Verhurung Berlins, "Berlin Is Becoming a Whore" *Das Tage-Buch* 1 (November 6, 1920)

Wehrling grounds his argument in Weininger's categorization of woman as either mothers or whores in an effort to legitimate his pseudo-scientific claims of morality. According to Wehrling, however, not all hope is lost. If the fates smile on a woman, motherhood has the power to transform her into a morally acceptable woman. Wehrling does not give women a free pass in morality for simply having children. Instead he believes there are many women in Weimar Germany whose true nature is whoredom, who are falsely passing as respectable mothers. Wehrling also posits the contrary that many Weimar Prostitutes are naturally mothers but economic and social circumstances have forced them into an unnatural state. The true hope then for women lies with men, as Wehrling believes women conform to men's wills. While this idea of conforming to men negates any agency or free will on

the part of women, it also removes any blame from them. If they vacillate between whoredom and motherhood it because women are conforming to men's wills.

Wehrling sees motherhood as a panacea for prostitution. According to the social critics line of thinking, motherhood cures the drive in women to prostitute themselves. The critic argues both the drive to prostitution and motherhood is inherent in women. Thus, Wehrling believes the majority of women have a dualistic nature that vacillates between motherhood and prostitution. He does not see one drive as more powerful than the other. Rather, the power lies in what man the woman meets and the exertion of his will on her indecision. It is worth noting that motherhood and prostitution are two polar ends of a spectrum for women. One cannot choose both prostitution and motherhood. It is instead an either/or choice a woman must make. The very existence and post World War I proliferation of the Weimar Prostitute therefore endangered not only the morality of the German nation, but also the future populace.

Similar to the New Woman, the Weimar Prostitute symbolizes moral degeneration in Weimar Germany through his or her transgression of gendered bourgeois morality. For bourgeois women (who represent the ideal), sexuality is chiefly about prohibitions to guarantee purity until procreation. The prohibitions reinforce the superiority of those who maintain sexual chastity as the womanly ideal. Female prostitutes are the binary opposite of the idealized, sexually unavailable female. They are not only visibly, sexually available, but sell their sexuality as a commodity. Male prostitutes were even more suspect than their female counterparts, because they typically accepted a passive sexual role. Thus, the

Weimar Prostitute symbolizes an immoral, defeated Germany where corruption, desire, and perversion rule over order, spirituality and morality. [102] They were a very tangible symbol of the disorder that reigned in the postwar years and criticized as such.

Prostitution certainly existed in Imperial Germany, but prostitutes were labeled as deviants on the fringe of normal society. In Imperial Germany, a prostitute was the other, the fallen woman who completed the Madonna/Whore dichotomy. Imperial prostitutes bolstered the patriarchal hierarchy of society by providing men with a sexual outlet to preserve bourgeois women's honor. That clear-cut dichotomy became complicated in Weimar Germany as traditional morals came under scrutiny. The overwhelming prevalence of prostitution in Weimar Germany was an unintended result of the defeat in World War I and the disastrous economic conditions it created. In 1926, there were 100,000 prostitutes in just Berlin. [103] By comparison, in the 1890's Berlin had around 30,000 total prostitutes. [104] Prostitutes no longer remained on the sidelines of mainstream Weimar society; the sheer magnitude of their numbers made their presence increasingly visible and threatening. More problematic, was the fact that formally respectable German women and men turned to prostitution to supplement their incomes in the rampant

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[102] Sabine Rewald, *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 15.

[103] Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, ed*., The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 718.

[104] "German history documents", Google, accessed April 15, 2019, http://www.germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org

inflation of the Weimar Republic. [105] The line between respectable and unrespectable was blurred. This caused considerable anxiety in the general population that was enthralled and engaged in the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate. The rise and spread of prostitution in Weimar Germany was a gendered debate in that prostitutes were seen as rejecting their traditional gender role. For women this meant flouting and selling their sexuality. Respectable women were supposed to maintain virginity until marriage, so any engagement in premarital sex was out of the question. However, prostitutes were not exclusively female.

There was an increasing market for male prostitutes in Weimar Germany. [106] The overwhelming majority of the male prostitutes were young men or boys. The male prostitutes were seen as degenerate because they transgressed the ideal masculine role. Men were supposed to be providers for their family and defenders of their families' honor. For a young boy to engage in prostitution meant for him to assume a passive sexual relationship, something typically associated with women. Also most male prostitutes engaged in homosexual relations with other men. This made them by association effeminate and degenerate. Homosexuality was illegal so the male prostitute was legally non-existent. This meant punishment was more

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[105] Margot Klages-Stange, "Prostitution" (1926) in Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, editors*, The Weimar Republic Sourcebook,* 729.

[106] The subject of male prostitution is an important one. Unfortunately an in-depth discussion of the subject is beyond the scope of this paper as it is virtually non-existent in the cultural realm of Weimar literature, art and film. For information on male prostitution in Weimar Germany please see David James Prickett, "Defining Identity via Homosexual Spaces: Locating the Male Homosexual in Berlin" in *Women in German Yearbook,* volume 21, 2005; Friedrich Radszuweit, *Männer zu verkaufen: Ein Wirklichkeitsroman aus der Welt der männlichen Erpresser and Prostituterten* (1931).

severe if found out, but there was no legal jurisdiction of the morals police over male prostitutes. [107] Respectable, bourgeois society viewed homosexuality as degenerate because it was seen as an attack on traditional morality and ideal masculinity. In October 1929 there was a concerted effort to remove Paragraph 175, which prohibited homosexual relations between men. The law had been in place since the founding of the German Reich in 1871. A Reichstag committee recommended Paragraph 175 be stricken from the law and replaced with a new law. The proposed law had three parts, the first part made sexual relations between adult men and men under the age of 21 illegal. The second part of the proposed law made it illegal for an employer, teacher or authority figure to coerce homosexual relations. The third part of the proposed law made it illegal for any male to sell sexual favors. [108] Many gay activists criticized the new law for making the age of consent for men 21 while the age of consent for women was 16. The historian Clayton Whisnant explains, "The law against male prostitution only criminalized male homosexuality in another form, since many gay men were driven to pay for sex by a lack of sexual opportunities." [109] The Reichstag committee's proposed change to the law never took effect as the German government had to deal with the economic depression and rampant unemployment. However, the discussion around Paragraph 175 demonstrates that ideas of morality were at the forefront of politics, economics,

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[107] Christine Schönfeld, editor, *Commodities of Desire: The Prostitute in Modern German Literature* (New York: Camden House, 2000), 6.

[108] Clayton Whisnant, *Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History, 1880-1945* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2016), 196.

[109] Ibid., 197.

society and culture. Conservatives argued men who preferred homosexual sex added to the depopulation crisis because their sex was non-reproductive.

It was not only male prostitutes who were connected to the crisis of depopulation. Female prostitutes frequently prevented or ended pregnancy as a matter of necessity. Pregnancy and motherhood simply interfered with their ability to earn a living. Many German conservatives saw the depopulation statistics as a national crisis because of all the war dead. If regeneration of the nation came from repopulation, than prostitutes were a national enemy.

In addition, female prostitutes were not acceptable mothers. Many in Weimar Germany echoed Wehrling's categorization of women as either mothers or whores. The rejection of prostitutes as mothers is intimately tied to their public and available sexuality. In Weimar Germany the ideal mother was a respectable bourgeois woman who did not have to work for a living. Because of the dire economic situation following the war, this was not a reality for most women in Weimar Germany. While a married, working class woman who worked outside the home was not the ideal mother; she was at least acceptable because of her sexual monogamy. The working class mother was a sympathetic figure, unlike the Weimar prostitute. The fact that female prostitutes were sexually available to multiple people made them morally degenerate. Furthermore, that they received money for this sexual access also made them immoral. Thus female prostitutes could not perform the most integral function of traditional femininity-that is to produce and care for a child inside of a familial structure.

It was not just the unproductive sexuality of the prostitute that made her/him a figure of moral degeneration. Prostitutes were also justifiably associated with disease. Their bodies were literally imbued with a contagion that could spread to the healthy German populace. This made them figures of physical degeneration as well as moral degeneration. However, the physical aspect was inseparable from the moral in terms of the Weimar Prostitute. It was not just the fact that their bodies contained diseases that could spread to others, but that it would spread through immoral sexual contact. The moral aspect of degeneration became more important and threatening than the physical degeneration aspect in Weimar Germany. This is evidenced by how devastating it was for a woman to even be suspected of being a prostitute. After German unification in 1871, the Imperial Criminal Code replaced any local variations on prostitution regulation. The Code was largely derived from Prussian Law and granted police the authority to arrest and suspected of prostitution. Furthermore, the police had the right to subject a woman suspected of prostitution to a forced medical examination. [110] The mere suggestion of prostitution besmirched the reputation of a formerly respectable woman and turned her into a social pariah within respectable society. [111]

The Weimar Prostitute displayed their sexual availability unapologetically. It was the public, inclusive, commodified, and non-reproductive nature of their

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[110] Richard Evans, "Prostitution, State and Society in Imperial Germany" in *Past & Present,* no. 70 (Feb., 1976), 110.

[111] Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan, ed., *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 88-90.

sexuality that was so offensive to the general populace. [112] Conservative Germans prided themselves on being deeper, more spiritual and displaying frankness with regard to sexuality; all things that differentiated them from their French and American counterparts. The Weimar prostitute calls this moral superiority into question as more women, girls, men and boys sold their bodies for survival. Berlin, in particular, became synonymous with depravation. The transformation of Germany from the Romantic, spiritual identity to one of libation and degeneration was largely due to the prevalence of prostitution, crime and clientele it brought with it.

Julia Roos's study, *Weimar through the Lens of Gender: Prostitution Reform Women's Emancipation, and German Democracy, 1919-1933,* is the only full length work on prostitution in Weimar Germany. In her study of gender and prostitution, Roos focuses on the inherently asymmetrical power relationships within prostitution itself and within the regulation of prostitution. The regulation of prostitution meant intimate scrutiny of female prostitutes with no corollary scrutiny of the male clientele. [113] Male prostitutes also did not fall under the lens of the morals police because they were illegal and therefore not regulated like the female prostitutes. Roos stresses the debate surrounding prostitution as a subject of investigation, including moral degeneration. However, Roos examines the debate

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[112] Julia Roos, *Weimar Through the Lens of Gender: Prostitution Reform, Women's Emancipation and German Democracy, 1919-33* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2010), 30.

[113] Ibid., 16.

from a political standpoint rather than how the moral degeneration debate on prostitution played out in the cultural and social realm.

Previous works by Ute Frevert, Atina Grossman, and Cornelie Usborne all address prostitution in Weimar but emphasize the reproductive rights debate. Of course the reproductive rights debate is essentially a debate about morality and gender. Those that believe women should not have access to birth control or abortion had various agendas. Some simply wanted the German population rate to rise, to replace the dead or wounded soldiers lost in World War I. Others wanted to preserve the dominance of bourgeois morality that insisted on rigidly defined gender roles. Subsequent historians have built upon the work of Usborne and Grossman; Barbara Hales, Dora Apel, Patrice Petro, and Maria Tatar tackle prostitution but are very specific in their purview. Thus Hales explores women as criminals and the connection of their criminality with their sexuality. Dora Apel addresses the accusation of prostitutes as anti-war. She pairs the Weimar Prostitute with the Hysterical Veteran as she explores both figures of degeneration and their tie to nationals, war and sexuality. Patrice Petro examines melodramatic representations in Weimar Culture. Petro does a close reading of several films, photojournalism Weimar Culture in general as she looks at perception, spectatorship and modernism through the lens of gender. Maria Tatar tackles the violence of *Lustmord* during the Weimar Republic. She examines this very violent act within art, film, literature and the popular press.

While all of these works contribute immensely to the scholarship on prostitution in Weimar Germany, they do not address male prostitution. Male

prostitution is much harder to research because there is not the same amount of representation in Weimar Culture. A recent work by Clayton Whisnant, *Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History, 1880-1945* (2016) aims to fill this void. While Whisnant's work is informative in the political realm it does not focus on how homosexuality was portrayed by artists, writers and filmmakers in the Weimar era. Whisnant's study is also more of a general survey of modern German history so only one chapter tackles the Weimar Republic.

The goal of this chapter is to examine the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate in art, film, and literature as it concerned the Weimar Prostitute. The art historian Marsha Meskimmon argues, "The prostitute acted as a symbol, and a highly ambivalent one at that, within a male, heterosexual economy of meaning; the images and descriptions of prostitutes were not about the experiences of women, they signified the fears and desires of the male subject faced with the commoditization, urbanization and alienation of modernity." [114] I agree with Meskimmon's statement but would add that commoditization, urbanization, and alienation of modernity were all intimately associated with the blurring of traditional gender roles. Thus the way in which artists, writers and filmmakers portray the Weimar Prostitute is an expression of their multitude of feelings over the increasing changes to established gender roles.

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[114] Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 25.

[114] Ibid., 25.

Art

Art is an essential medium in the cultural/social debate on moral degeneration concerning prostitution. The Weimar Prostitute is one of the most prolific and central characters of Weimar degeneration as shown in Weimar art, especially from the *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists. Along with the Hysterical Veteran and the New Woman, the Weimar Prostitute is a caricature of the period. While male *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists such as George Grosz and Otto Dix show the Weimar Prostitute as a diseased, gluttonous outsider; female artists such as Jeanne Mammen and Gerta Overbeck portray prostitutes as working class women who are a part of their community. Dix, Grosz, Mammen and Overbeck were all born in Imperial Germany, during the 1890s. Dix, Grosz, and Overbeck also belonged to the Communist Party at some time during the Weimar Republic. Mammen's family lost their fortune when they fled Paris at the start of World War I and one can assume she shared certain class sympathies with the communist artists. World War I was the most influential event in all of their lives and their subsequent work during the Weimar Republic. All four artists lived in Germany during the Weimar Republic and portrayed the *Zeitgeist* as they saw it in everyday life. They reflect the social changes resulting from Germany's defeat in World War I, especially the economic devastation and gender ambiguity.

Across Europe, artists struggled with how to portray the horrors of World War I and the rapidly changing society around them. This was especially pertinent in Germany as artists sought a way to express their anger, disillusionment and astonishment. The art curator Sabine Rewald argues that Weimar artists differed

from their European counterparts in their loathing of how their society was affected by the war. The artists felt "disgust at having millions die, a society corrupted by greed and power." [115] Germans in particular felt shattered by the changes and the interruption in their national narrative of progress and triumph. Rewald goes on to argue that the disgust of Dix and Grosz demonstrates their humanity. While disgust does represent their humanity, it also demonstrates their anxiety and fear over changing gender roles. The female Weimar Prostitute signified a world in which traditional gender roles ruled and prostitutes offered a *necessary* sexual outlet because *good* women's sexuality needed preservation. The male artists' anxiety, exemplified by Dix and Grosz, is seen in their near obsession with the Weimar Prostitute. Dix and Grosz's art allows one a glimpse into the masculine subject and his attempt to bolster the deteriorating walls of social control.

Both Dix and Grosz frequently feature prostitutes in their art depicting Weimar society. The Weimar Prostitute in the art of Grosz and Dix was not overtly sexual or enticing. She is typically resigned and desperate, having to sell the one commodity available, her body. Alternatively, Grosz and Dix show the Weimar Prostitute as cunning, manipulating the hopeless economic situation to their own benefit. Grosz and Dix thus link the Weimar Prostitute with the war profiteer as a figure of moral degeneration who profited from the misery of their fellow Germans. [116] Dix and Grosz also link the Weimar Prostitute with the Hysterical Veteran as two victims of the war. Whether Dix and Grosz show the Weimar Prostitute as desperate

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[115] Rewald, *Glitter and Doom,* 15.

[116] Dora Apel, "Heroes and Whores: The Politics of Gender in Weimar Antiwar Imagery" in *The Art Bulletin,* vol. 79, no. 3 (Sep., 1997), 369.

or cunning, she is always shown as the degenerate outsider, capable of corrupting society. Dix and Grosz both understand the economic exploitation of the Weimar Prostitute but consciously choose to portray her as a symbol of moral degeneration. As *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists, Dix and Grosz wanted to "shock a self-satisfied, satiated world and the artists' enemies, which included the state, the middle classes, the philistines and authority in general." [117]

Otto Dix (1891-1969) a World War I veteran, was a leading member of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement. He moved to Berlin in 1925 and produced a prolific amount of art on the effects of World War I on German society. A few of Dix's paintings of prostitutes are very well known. Dix depicted many prostitutes partially or fully nude, often engaged in lewd acts with customers. [118] One of Dix's most famous works is the sketch, *Two Victims of Capitalism.* Dix's sketch of a Weimar Prostitute and a Hysterical Veteran was originally titled *Whore with War Cripple*, but was renamed when it appeared in a Communist journal, *Die Pleite.* The original title clearly identifies the two as victims of the Great War, but the changed title is even more accusatory. Dix singles out capitalism as at least partly responsible for getting Germany into a meaningless war they could not win. Like many other Weimar artists, Dix holds big business responsible for profiting from the death of so many of his countrymen.

In Dix's work, *Two Victims of Capitalism* he shows the Hysterical Veteran and the Weimar Prostitute as two symbols of moral degeneracy. Both the Hysterical

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[117] Walter Laquer, *Weimar: A Cultural History, 1918-1933* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1974), 114.

[118] A particularly obscene painting by Dix is *Harbor Brothel* (1926). It is a pornographic scene of two prostitutes engaged in sexual acts with customers in the same room.

Veteran and the Weimar Prostitute use the only commodity they have available to offer the capitalist system, their body. They also both might have been coerced into their situation, she by the economic circumstances and/or pimp. He may have been drafted and not had the choice of how to use his own body. Both of their bodies clearly suffer due to their chosen or forced occupation of soldier or prostitute. The Hysterical Veteran has a gaping hole cutting across much of his face. One of his eyes is also no longer usable. His one good eye stares out in horror and bewilderment. Dix uses the Weimar Prostitute's skeletal, diseased body to illustrate the toll taken on her as victim of the war. She has syphilitic scars that resemble bullet holes.

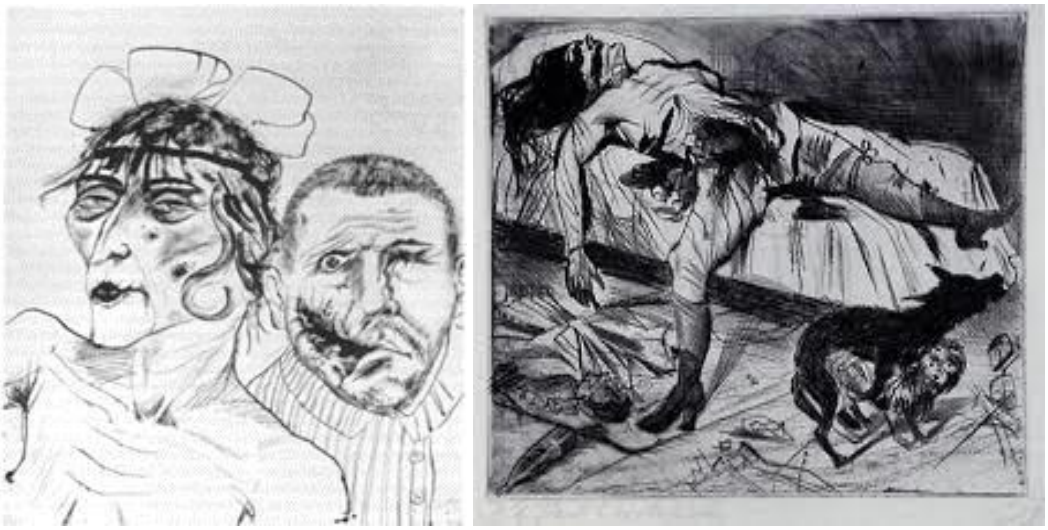

Figure 2.1 and 2.2. Otto Dix, *Two Victims of Capitalism* 1923 and Otto Dix, *Lustmord* 1922.

Some of the sexual acts of the Weimar Prostitute as portrayed by Dix have a violent element to them. Other works highlight the sexual violence as the main theme in the artworks. One such example, *Lustmord* by Dix is a powerful example of this theme. The artwork is a violent rendering of the murder of a Weimar Prostitute by her last client. Dix has some other *Lustmord* themed works in color but the start

black and white charcoal of this work drops any pretense of beauty or romanticization. Instead Dix confronts the viewer with a grotesque and excessively violent image of a woman's genitalia literally ripped open.

It is clear that the woman in Dix's *Lustmord* is a Weimar Prostitute. The Weimar Prostitute was the most vulnerable to this type of crime because she placed herself in a dangerous situation alone with her male client. Social critics argued the Weimar Prostitute placing herself in this precarious circumstance makes her complicit in her own murder. The murder of a Weimar Prostitute, however violent, was not viewed the same way as it would be if she was not a prostitute. Maria Tatar explains since prostitutes are associated with instability, corruption and immorality that their murder can be viewed as a symbolic effort "to cleanse and purify." [119] Social critics imbued the Weimar Prostitute's body as a disease infecting the larger populace, thus their violent death could sanitize the infected group. In her memoirs Vicki Baum recalled her mother saying a streetwalker was "a sick piece of filth that'll croak on straw. Just as you will if you go on showing yourself in public with your hair down and pink ribbons." [120] Baum's mother is representative of a much larger German population that considered a Weimar Prostitute's death; her/his justifiable punishment for living a morally degenerate life. Baum's mother also warned her daughter she would deserve the same horrible death if she continued wearing the wrong

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[119] Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 54.

[120] Vicki Baum, *It Was All Quite Different, Memoirs of Vicki Baum* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1964), 65.

Dix's anger at the establishment in Germany is palpable in his works on the Weimar Prostitute and the Hysterical Veteran. He makes it clear these figures of degeneration are in fact victims of a larger society. George Grosz (1893-1959) shared Dix's ideas about confronting the German populace with his art. Grosz was born into a working class family in a small rural town just outside of Berlin. He studied art at the Dresden Academy of Fine arts. Once he finished his schooling in Dresden he moved to Berlin in 1912 to continue his art education. He served in World War I until he was hospitalized and discharged twice from active service. Grosz returned to Berlin in time to see the immediate aftermath of World War I on German society. He joined the German Communist Party (KPD) and the November Group. He helped introduce Germany to the Dada movement and was extremely prolific as an artist during the Weimar years. His life in Berlin gave him many instances to see the rapid spread of prostitution in the metropolis. He painted many scenes of prostitutes as victims of oppression or manipulators.

While Dix typically showed prostitutes in clothing, Grosz almost always depicted prostitutes with exposed breasts and genitals. [121] An example is the painting, *Before Sunrise from 'Ecce Homo'* (1923). Grosz was indicted for obscenity for *Ecce Homo* because the painting was seen as so immoral and sexually graphic. The painting is interesting for a variety of reasons. There are four women in the work, and only one man. Three of the women are undisputedly prostitutes, with their breasts, buttocks and/or genitals fully exposed. Weimar prostitutes did not

[121] George Grosz portrayed most of his prostitute figures with their breasts and genitals exposed. Examples include, *Beauty* (1919), *Daum Marries* (1920), *Nudes* (1919), *John the Sex Murderer* (1918), *Friedrichstrasse* (1919), *Street Scene with Artist* (1917) and *Before Sunrise from 'Ecce Homo'* (1923).

walk around exposing their body parts. Grosz uses this to show how the male gaze of their customers saw them. Regardless if prostitutes wore pearls, jackets or hats, customers saw them as totally sexualized creatures whom were good for one thing- sex.

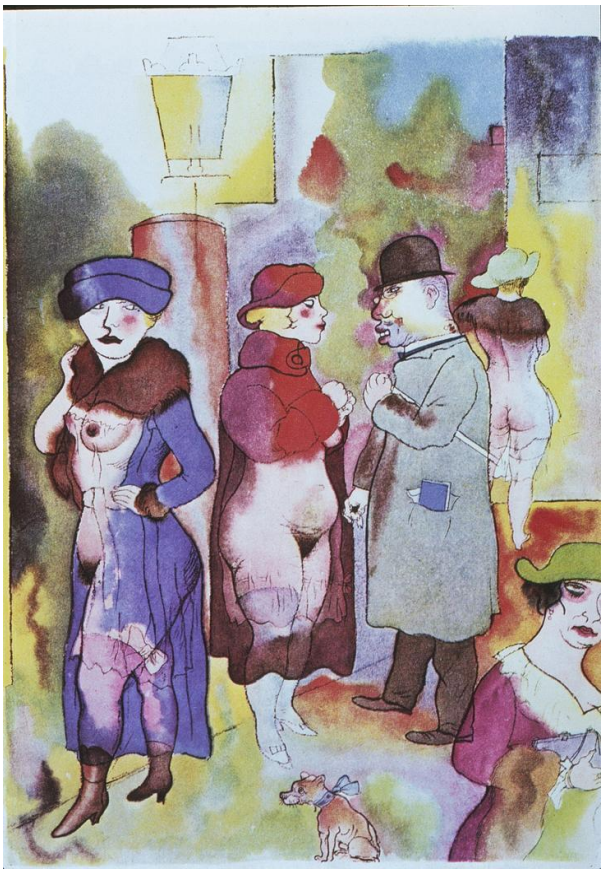

Figure 2.3. George Grosz, *Before Sunrise from 'Ecce Homo'* 1923.

Grosz does not depict the prostitutes in his painting as starved, desperate victims of a patriarchal society. Rather, he shows them as confident, plump seductresses. The prostitute in the center is the most appealing of the four figures. She appears to be bargaining with the bourgeois male customer about price or acts. She does not simply bow her head and follow him. Grosz depicts her as an agent, capable of making decisions and advocating for herself. The four women seem to

have some sort of relationship with each other, although similarly to many of Dix's painting, it is a competitive relationship. The prostitute dressed in purple takes note of the male customer, listening in but not trying to overtake the other prostitute. The prostitute in the back turns away from the deal. The woman in the right corner is not as clear as the others. One cannot tell if her body is exposed in the same manner due to her placement. She wears similar make up, hat and hair, but nothing around her neck like the other three. She therefore might be a female passerby.

Grosz's painting appears to take place at night, evidenced by the lit streetlight. Similarly to Dix's painting, Grosz includes a dog. The dog has a blue bow as a collar and therefore does not look like a stray roaming the street. Both Dix and Grosz include dogs, symbols of loyalty, in their depictions of prostitutes. It could be ironic, poking fun at the prostitutes who are loyal only to cash. The more plausible explanation is that prostitutes signify loyalty through their servitude. Weimar prostitutes provide sexual access for a defeated male population. Therefore the Weimar Prostitute is a surrogate for female sacrifice. The sacrifice they make is the most socially prized female possession-her sexuality.

A counterpoint to the art of Dix and Grosz was the artist Jeanne Mammen. As discussed in the chapter on the New Woman, Mammen was herself a New Woman. She worked for various publications concerned with fashion and consumerism. However, not every piece of art Mammen created was for her mainstream audience. She, like Grosz, lived and observed daily life in Berlin. The city had a large number of prostitutes. Mammen does not have only one version of the Weimar Prostitute. As she did with the New Woman, Mammen painted a variety of Weimar Prostitutes.

One such picture, *Boot-Whores*, was a more provocative depiction of Weimar society than Mammen's usual works. The portrait centers on the two prostitutes while they work an active street for clients. The two women resemble typical New Women with their *Bubikopf* hairstyle and knee-baring clothing. However, these women are identifiable as prostitutes because of their particular fashion of tall boots. Boot girls were unique prostitutes whose services/specialty were identifiable by the color of boots they wore. [122]

Figure 2.4. Jeanne Mammon, *Boot Whores* 1920s.

[122] Mel Gordon, *Voluptuous Panic: the Erotic World of Weimar Berlin* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2000, 2006), 27.

Mammen's artistic depiction of boot girls reveals her empathy toward this trade in Weimar Germany. Mammen does not show the prostitutes as helpless victims of the economic conditions in Weimar Germany as other artists did. She also does not depict them as degenerate, over-sexed creatures of an emasculated Germany as Dix and Grosz do. Rather, Mammen portrays the boot girls as individual women, demonstrating their agency in their choice as these particular prostitutes. Significantly, these women are not alone, rather they work in concert together. This seemingly insignificant factor is important. It demonstrates a community among prostitutes who share information about clients, pimps and the dangers of the profession. Mammen also stresses the prostitutes' inclusion in the community at large. These women are not alone in a back alley. Rather, they stand in unison with a man selling food, a woman selling newspapers and a blind man looking for charity. Mammen's inclusion of a variety of workers shows that the Weimar Prostitute plays an integral part in Weimar society as laborers and consumers.

Mammen's prostitutes do not resemble the prostitutes of Dix or Grosz. They are not ragged with their eyes popping out of their heads and wearing odd pieces of finery. Instead, Mammen's prostitutes resemble the New Woman in their stylish clothing and hairstyles. They are thin, but fashionably thin, not wasted away from desperation. It is a romanticized vision of prostitution in Weimar Germany. Mammen's work, *Boot Whores,* makes prostitution look somewhat appealing. Traditionalists condemned this romanticized vision as extremely threatening to the social fabric of Weimar Germany. They feared young working class girls would

choose prostitution over factory or domestic work because it appeared more alluring.

Gerta Overbeck offers the final example of artists depicting the Weimar Prostitute. Overbeck (1898-1977) was born into a merchant family in Germany. She had a degree as a drawing instructor and moved to Hannover to expand her education. Overbeck worked closely with Grethe Jürgens and several other artists to form what is today known as the Hannover wing of *Neue Sachlichkeit.* In 1922 Overbeck was forced to leave formal schooling and find work as art teacher to support herself during the turbulent Weimar years. She also had odd jobs in factories and offices. Art critics complain that Overbeck's work lacks the biting criticism of Dix and Grosz.

Unlike Dix, Grosz and Mammen, Overbeck does not glamorize or condemn the Weimar Prostitute. Instead, Overbeck draws the Weimar Prostitute as another laborer in her work, *Prostitute,* in 1923. The woman in the drawing is not immediately recognizable as a prostitute. In her work, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism,* Meskimmon does a close reading of several female artists, including Gerta Overbeck. Meskimmon points out the importance of Overbeck's placement of the prostitute in a pharmacy. Overbeck's choice of locale situates the prostitute in a shop during the daytime. "The fact that this image of an ordinary woman is titled prostitute is precisely the point: sex workers were not fantasy figures or metaphors for debauchery, but working women." [123] This is the context in which Overbeck wants to show the Weimar

[123] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough,* 25.

Prostitute. She was just another working class woman trying to make money to support herself.

Figure 2.5. Gerta Overbeck, *Prostitute* 1923.

Overbeck's *Prostitute* is unique. It is the only artistic rendering from the period that does not place the Weimar Prostitute in the male gaze. Instead she is removed from the male gaze and allowed a brief moment to be an ordinary workingwoman. Overbeck's drawing captures a seemingly private moment where the Weimar Prostitute can relax outward identity of seductress and return to normalcy. She is just another woman buying the essentials for her life in this drawing. Overbeck stresses the Weimar Prostitute as a laborer, not a commodity. This grants the Weimar Prostitute more agency than any of the other three artists

under review because it makes her an actor, not something that is simply acted upon.

The idea of the Weimar Prostitute as just another laborer is illustrated in Elga Kern's *Wie Sie dazu Kamen: 35 Lebensfragmente bordellierte Mädchen nach Untersuchungen in badischen Bordellen.* Kern's interviews with 35 prostitutes in Weimar Germany show they were more than salacious commodities. Kern empathizes with the ordinary women who fell on hard economic times and must make choices of survival. Kern challenges the view of prostitutes as biologically determined or morally degenerate by showing the similarities between the Weimar Prostitute and workingwomen not involved in the sex trade business. Kern humanizes the Weimar Prostitute by acknowledging they share religious and cultural beliefs with other Germans and thus are not fantastical creatures. She stresses the economic uncertainty caused by the defeat in World War I that forced many Weimar Prostitutes into the profession. By allowing the women to speak about their villages, religion, family, and their children, Kern defuses assumptions about the Weimar Prostitute as a solitary, childless, degenerate figure. [124]

The only way in which Overbeck's drawing is identifiable as a prostitute is her purchase of a contraceptive douche. The contraceptive douche was a tool of the trade for a Weimar Prostitute. Pregnancy was an inconvenient interruption in their ability to earn a living. In addition, contraceptive douches could be modified and

[124] Elga Kern, *Wie Sie dazu Kamen: 35 Lebensfragmente bordellierte Mädchen nach Untersuchungen in badischen Bordellen* (Munich: Verlag von Ernst Reinhardt, 1928), 67-70.

used in abortions. [125] This was fairly common since abortion was still criminalized under Weimar law. Controlling one's body reproductively was an essential part of an active, inclusive sexuality that was essential for the Weimar Prostitute. She simply could not afford the time and expense of pregnancy, childbirth and child rearing.

The four artists' work show the various ways in which one could interpret the Weimar Prostitute. She was supposed to be the ultimate figure of moral degeneration and was in many artists' work, especially Dix and Grosz. Although Dix portrays the Weimar Prostitute as a symbol of moral degeneration, he also shows her as victim of a brutal and greedy society. He places more blame on those in power who created the circumstances the Weimar Prostitute must navigate, than the Weimar Prostitute herself. But theirs was not the exclusive vision of the Weimar Prostitute. Mammen stresses her desirability while Overbeck emphasizes her ordinary labor. Both Mammen and Overbeck show her as a part of the larger community, normalizing her.

Literature

Similarly to artists, writers expressed their anxiety, fear, excitement and hope for German society through the figure of the Weimar Prostitute. Authors explored existing traditional hierarchies of gender and class through the Weimar Prostitute. There is so much hype over the figure of the Weimar Prostitute that one expects to find them over represented in Weimar literature. However, there are not novels that feature the Weimar Prostitute in the same way as the New Woman or

[125] Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough,* 25.

the Hysterical Veteran. Rather, prostitutes typically slink into the background of novels, posited as the other. In their role as the other the majority of prostitutes in Weimar literature are warnings for New Women to avoid, but there are others who have integrity or as act as stand in mothers. [126]

German historians and literary critics often conflate the Weimar Prostitute with the New Woman. [127] In her article, "Working Girls: White-Collar Workers and Prostitutes in Late Weimar Fiction" Jill Smith argues that the authors Vicki Baum and Irmgard Keun conflate the two distinct figures in the previously discussed novels, *The Grand Hotel* and *The Artificial Silk Girl.* Smith bases her argument on the New Woman's inclusion into the public sphere and world of paid labor. [128] However, the New Woman and Weimar Prostitute are not the same within the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate. The New Woman walks a tightrope between respectability and the fallen woman, but she has not yet fallen in Weimar society's eyes. The New Woman still has the ability to regenerate the nation. No such option is available to the Weimar Prostitute. Furthermore, in *The Artificial Silk Girl,* Keun juxtaposes the protagonist New Woman, Doris, with a prostitute. Although Doris exchanges sexual

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[126] For an example of the Weimar Prostitute as warning see Irmgard Keun, *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (1932), Berlin: Classen Verlag, 2005. For an example of the Weimar Prostitute as substitute mother see for example, Vicki Baum, *Secret Sentence,* trans. Eric Sutton (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1932), 180-81.

[127] See, for example, Anke Gleber, "Female Flanerie and The Symphony of the City" in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture* ed., Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 76; Katharina von Ankum, "Gendered Urban Spaces in Irmgard Keun's *Das kunstseidene Mädchen"* in *Women in the Metropolis,* 162-184.

[128] Jill Suzanne Smith, "Working Girls: White-Collar Workers and Prostitutes in Late Weimar Fiction" in *The German Quarterly 81.4 (Fall 2008)*, 452.

favors for material comfort she does not identify as a Weimar Prostitute. Weimar Prostitutes constructed a "distinct and strikingly self-confident occupational identity" through their organization and legal battles to end regulations. [129]

An example of the Weimar Prostitute as warning is Christopher Isherwood's short story, *The Berlin Stories.* Isherwood (1904-1986) was a British novelist, playwright and diarist. He grew up privileged in a wealthy household. His father died during World War I, greatly impacting the young Isherwood. The author was kicked out of Cambridge University in 1925 for writing joke answers on his exams. Then in 1929 Isherwood moved to Berlin, to experience the sexual freedom of the city. The author was homosexual and drawn to Berlin as a safe area to explore his curiosities. He taught English and lived in Berlin until the Nazi seizure of power. [130] While he lived in Berlin he rented a room from an impoverished landlady who had to take in renters to pay for her housing. While there he met Jean Ross, a political activist, cabaret singer and fashion model. Ross and the people he met in his Berlin years would provide the inspiration for his work *The Berlin Stories.* The work is an autobiographical account of the author's experience living in Berlin during the Weimar Republic.

Isherwood focuses his story on the New Woman Sally Bowles and their ensuing relationship. Both Isherwood and Sally rent from a lady forced to open up her home to renters because of the economic inflation immediately following the war. Another one of the renters, Fräulein Kost is a Weimar Prostitute. Although

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[129] Roos, *Weimar Through the Lens of Gender,* 115.

[130] "Christopher Isherwood," Google, accessed on January, 16, 2019, https://www.isherwoodfoundation.org

Isherwood is not German, he did live in Berlin for four continuous years and based his portrait of Fräulein Kost on an actual prostitute. Kost is not a main character but does offer insight into prostitution in Weimar Germany.

Fräulein Kost's story is unique and realistic. It is unique because the reader gets Kost's origin story. Kost first worked as a servant girl for a family in Berlin. She entered into a sexual relationship with her employer, became pregnant with his child and had an abortion. Despite ending the pregnancy, Kost was fired and turned to prostitution as the best viable means of providing for herself. When the landlady tells Isherwood about Kost's sad tale, she makes sure to point out that she has no "moral objections to her trade." [131] The landlady even allows Kost to bring her customers to the room she rents to conduct business. Kost's story is also realistic because it echoes the tale of many Weimar Prostitutes. The implication is that once she engaged in a sexual relationship with her employer and had an abortion, her reputation was ruined and prostitution was the most profitable option. Kost's tale of domestic servant turned sexual assault victim echoes in the lives of the 35 prostitutes Kern's interviewed.

Kost's path to prostitution is in essence a tale of warning. It is what will inevitably happen to a woman who engages in an illicit relationship. As much as social barriers were changing during Weimar Germany, they were still in place as a powerful tool for enforcing bourgeois morality. Although Isherwood shows Kost some degree of empathy, he ultimately sees her as an immoral woman. Isherwood

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[131] Christopher Isherwood, *The Berlin Stories: The Last of Mr. Norris & Goodbye to Berlin* (New York: New Directions Book, 1945), 8.

demonizes Kost in his story when she accuses the other renters of stealing her money to avoid paying rent. She comes off as a calculating opportunist. In contrast, in his seminal novel, *Berlin Alexanderplatz,* Alfred Döblin has a much more sympathetic and nuanced portrait of the Weimar Prostitute.

Döblin (1878-1957) was a novelist, screenwriter and doctor. He was born into an assimilated Jewish family and his parents had an unstable marriage. His father abandoned the family when Döblin was ten. His mother moved he and his siblings to a poor section of Berlin, they struggled financially without the help of her husband. His parents reunited briefly until his mother discovered his father was living a double life with two families. His parents split up for good this time and his mother struggled to support herself and her children. Döblin volunteered for World War I to avoid conscription, this was a fairly common occurrence throughout Germany. He served the war years as a doctor in the German Army, returning to Berlin after the war. When Döblin returned to Berlin he moved to a working class district and practiced medicine. This gave him a very unique perspective to write from.

The author set his novel purposely in the Alexanderplatz-a section of Berlin known for its poverty and criminality. Döblin was a doctor who practiced in this area before writing the novel and presumably based at least some of his novel on his daily observations. Working closely with the devastated Weimar population as a doctor in a poor section of Berlin arguably gave the author a more sympathetic view towards the Weimar Prostitute than the foreigner Isherwood. In his novel, Döblin examines the life of a flawed, poor criminal, Franz Biberkopf during Weimar Berlin.

Biberkopf is a pimp who has romantic relationships with his prostitutes. It was not uncommon for husbands or boyfriends to pimp their significant other. [132] The reader first meets Franz when he is released from his prison term for brutally beating and killing his girlfriend/prostitute Ida. Throughout the novel Franz has a series of girlfriends/prostitutes, including his old flame Eva and his last girl, Mieze.

Döblin's portraiture of Eva is the most complex among the various Weimar Prostitutes in the novel. Eva is not passive, desperate or submissive in her relationships with men. Eva is a driving, active force in the novel. Eva controls her own fate and wields influence over Franz, Mieze, her boyfriend/pimp Herbert and her rich client. While Eva is a dynamic character, she is very sympathetic and nurturing with regard to Franz. At one point she even stands in front of Franz when she thinks someone will shoot him. [133] In addition, Eva and her boyfriend/pimp Herbert support Franz financially by giving him money to live. [134] Eva also encourages Mieze to be with Franz because Eva believes Mieze will provide for Franz financially and emotionally. Eva does this despite the fact that she loves Franz herself. Although Eva encourages Mieze to be Franz's girl, Eva continues to have a sexual relationship with Franz, even becoming pregnant with his child. [135]

Eva defies the traditional role of a female prostitute in her self-assertion. It is she who controls her environment, not her boyfriend/pimp or her rich client. By

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[132] Willi Pröger, "Sites of Berlin Prostitution" (1930) in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook,* ed., Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, 736.

[133] Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: the Story of Franz Biberkopf,* trans. by Eugene Jolas (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 1961, 1929), 317.

[134] Ibid., 324 & 348

[135] Ibid., 357-358 & 378.

willingly standing in front of Franz when she believes he is in danger, Eva plays the role of protector and provider for her former lover. She engages in a sexual relationship with Franz because she wants to, not because she has to or needs to for money. Thus Eva continually challenges the assumption of a woman forced into prostitution to lead a desperate existence. Eva decides to get pregnant, mostly to satiate her rich client. But again she wields considerable power, choosing Franz to impregnate her. Since Eva is having sexual relations with her rich client, Herbert, Franz and possibly others, her conviction that the child is Franz's implies reproductive control on her part. Eva knows Franz is the father because presumably she took precautions with the others.

The other main prostitute character in Döblin's masterpiece is Mieze, Franz's final girlfriend. Similar to Kost, Mieze has an origin story of how she became a prostitute. Unlike Kost, Mieze's origin story is not one of a poor country girl taken advantage of by her urban employer. Instead, Döblin depicts Mieze as a fun-loving girl who was bored in her town of Bernau. The reader does not know the specifics of Mieze first turning to prostitution, just when she encountered Eva. Eva recalls meeting Mieze after a police raid. Apparently Mieze's mother kicked her daughter out after Mieze was caught bringing dishonor to the family. [136] Mieze seems to develop extreme attachments to various characters in the novel. She devotes herself to Franz but also declares her love for Eva and her rich client's nephew. [137]

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[136] Ibid., 445.

[137] Ibid., 379 & 461.

Mieze is a more stereotypical Weimar Prostitute than Eva because Mieze is under the control of Franz. After Mieze tells Franz about another suitor (the nephew) he beats her viciously. Franz would have beaten Mieze to death if not for the intervention of his antagonist, Reinhold. Reinhold then sends Franz away, with Mieze trying to follow him. Mieze is not scared away or surprised by Franz's actions. In fact, they make up that same night. [138] She expects this behavior from Franz and finds comfort in his irrational jealousy and anger.

The scholar Nicole Shea criticizes the "silent and submissive role to women" she believes Döblin assigns to the prostitutes in his novel. [139] While this criticism is applicable to Mieze, it is not applicable to Eva. Both Eva and Mieze are Weimar Prostitutes who use their sexuality to support themselves and their boyfriends/pimps. However, Eva has not only a voice, but a strong voice. She is not entirely submissive to any man in the novel, rather she plays them off each other to get what she wants. Eva's life is not a desperate tale of warning. Mieze's tale is much more familiar as a warning what will become of a woman once she engages in casual sex and becomes a prostitute. Döblin depicts Mieze as an abused, weak woman who ultimately dies at the hands of a brutal man she tries to refuse. He implies this was a natural consequence or danger of the profession.

The relationship between the two prostitutes is one of friendship, support and mutual dependence. Mieze and Eva are friends who care about each other's well being. Eva has no problem introducing Mieze to Franz, even though she is still in

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[138] Ibid., 462-466.

[139] Nicole Shea, "The Politics of Prostitution in Berlin Alexanderplatz" in *Studies in Modern German Literature* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, 2007), 26.

love with Franz. Eva wants both Mieze and Franz to be happy. Mieze becomes overjoyed at the idea of Eva having Franz's child. She displays no jealously when Eva tells her she would like to have Franz's child. Instead, Mieze showers Eva with kisses, prompting Eva to ask her if she is queer. The two women collaborate; they do not compete.

Much like the New Woman, the Weimar Prostitute was non a monolithic figure. The Weimar Prostitute was featured in the background of literature during the Weimar period as a victim of the tragic times or as a shrewd manipulator of morality. She waffled between agency and victimhood in the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate. It would be an interesting comparison to see how female authors treated the Weimar Prostitute in their literature. Much like in literature, the Weimar Prostitute was a figure of degeneracy in film from the era.

Film

The Weimar Prostitute was used as an effective symbol of warning in all three mediums of art, literature and film. In cinema, typically the directors contrast these fallen, public women with images of innocent, bourgeois women. The prostitutes form the other within this Madonna/Whore dichotomy. The Weimar Prostitute functions as a type of warning, the ultimate punishment for a woman who fails to maintain sexual unavailability and chastity. As previously discussed, the New Woman walked a tightrope between respectability and wantonness. The precarious life of the Weimar Prostitute was the punishment for falling (or being pushed) off that tightrope. One sees the Weimar Prostitute as a potential threat/punishment throughout Weimar cinema. As seen in the New Woman chapter, both Greta and

Lulu are constantly battling the threat of having to prostitute themselves. They are both threatened with a life of prostitution because of the dire economic circumstances of a post World War I society. It is simply one of the few available jobs for a woman to make money in Weimar Germany. Both Greta and Lulu teeter on the brink of prostitution but only Lulu must go through with this unenviable choice. In discussions of prostitutes in Weimar film, critics often conflate Lulu with that of a Weimar Prostitute. Yes, she does end up a prostitute, but it is a last resort for her and not her chief identity. It is an example of a New Woman falling off the tightrope and paying the ultimate price for her fall.

Another example of a film in which a New Woman walks the tightrope of respectability is, *Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* (1929). The film was directed once again by G.W. Pabst (1885-1967). Pabst, a World War I P.O.W. had already enjoyed success with *Joyless Streets* and *Pandora's Box.* He was attracted to stories centering on strong female protagonists facing difficult circumstances. The American actress, Louise Brooks once again plays the lead character of a New Woman. Unlike her portrayal of the worldly and cunning Lulu, in *Tagebuch einer Verlorenen*, Brooks plays an innocent and unsuspecting Thymian Henning. This is the story of a young bourgeois woman who becomes a prostitute because she has no other feasible option. The film was made in and set in Weimar, making it an integral part of the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate. The film was based on the 1905 novel of the same name, written by Margarete Böhme. Böhme at first pretended to only be the editor, claiming the novel was a genuine diary of a young German girl. The novel was a huge

success, selling more than one million copies by the end of the 1920's. [140] The scandal over whether the book was the real diary of a German girl only made the book and later the film more popular. The image below is the original poster for the German film. The most striking part of the poster is the blatant nudity of the main character, Thymian. The diary is the only thing that prevents her nude body from complete exposure.

Figure 2.6. Original German Poster for *Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* 1929

Tagebuch einer Verlorenen traces the fall of a young woman, who desperate circumstances force her out of her sheltered existence and expose her to the

[140] Donald Ray Richards, *The German Bestseller in the 20th Century: a complete bibliography and analysis, 1915-1940* (New York: Herbert Lang, 1968), 23.

Weimar underworld. The film also features several weak willed men. The men are not only weak, but are ruled by their passion for women. Women are the vibrant characters in the film, driving the plot line. Much like *Die freudlose Gasse, Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* is primarily a film about sexual morality and the stress of poverty on one's moral choices. When the film begins, the protagonist Thymian is preparing for her confirmation. The American actress, Louise Brooks stars in the film and plays a much different character than the worldly Lulu from "Pandora's Box." Thymian is the picture of innocence and purity. She dresses in a white lace dress that hides her womanly curves. She wears a wreath of flowers in her hair and Mary Jane sandals on her feet, reinforcing her childlike innocence. Thymian lives in a lavish home with her widowed father, above his pharmaceutical business.

Thymian's confirmation day is not without drama, as her beloved housekeeper Elisabeth leaves the home. Elisabeth is pregnant by Thymian's lecherous father who does not stop her from leaving. Thymian later learns the truth about her father's indiscretion from his assistant, Meinert. Meinert then takes advantage of the naïve Thymian and has sex with her. The scene of their sexual encounter is disturbing. Thymian is so distraught from the news of her father's immorality that upon hearing the truth, she goes into a sleep like trance. When Meinert carries Thymian upstairs to her room, her head rolls lifelessly back and she appears to be in a catatonic state. She does not resist Meinert's advances but she offers no encouragement. Meinert rapes Thymian and she becomes pregnant. Film critics call the rape scene a seduction but at no time does Thymian ever regain consciousness. When the father of the child is revealed, Thymian refuses to marry

Meinert because she does not love him. She becomes angry when her father's latest housekeeper and new lover Meta tries to touch her innocent child.

Thymian's father is completely under the control of his new wife and former housekeeper Meta. Meta pressures him to send Thymian away to a strict reformatory school and to give the child away to a midwife. Sadistic, cruel people run the reformatory school, causing Thymian to escape with the help of her fellow schoolmate Erica and family friend, Count Osedorff. Thymian immediately goes to retrieve her child but she is already dead. The baby's death implies she could not survive without her mother. This action reinforces Thymian's integrity and morality. Although Thymian had sex outside of marriage, she regains her morality through her devotion to her child and selflessness. After finding out her child is dead Thymian joins Erica and Count Osedorff at Erica's place of employment. Erica is a Weimar Prostitute and conspires with the Madame of the house to turn Thymian into one. The women dress Thymian provocatively and the Madame literally leads Thymian by the hand, introducing her to the salivating men. The two women get Thymian drunk and a customer carries Thymian's lifeless, comatose body into the bedroom. Thymian is again raped, evidenced by the fact she cannot remember the night. Her rapist had no consent but assumed she was sexually available because she was at a house of prostitution. The next morning, the Madame gives a confused Thymian some of the money her client left and tells her he left his regards. Thymian refuses the money, ashamed and saddened by the truth. The Madame tells her "be reasonable little one, you don't even have a shirt on your back." Thymian has the Madame place an ad for her to provide legitimate work through dance instruction

but her clients expect her to offer sex and she cannot find a legitimate way to support herself.

Figure 2.7. Scene from *Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* (*Diary of a Lost Girl*) 1929.

The next time we see Thymian she has clearly accepted her life as a Weimar Prostitute. She flirts, smiles and laughs while drinking champagne and organizing a lottery of women to be sold. In the midst of enjoying all the male attention on her, she notices her father, his wife Meta and his now partner Meinert. The above scene is the moment Thymian and her father makes eye contact. He wants to go to her but once again Meta pressures him to dessert his daughter. The above still from the film shows men groping and kissing Thymian while her father looks on. Louise Brooks's eyes show that Thymian is bewildered and ashamed for her father to see her as a Weimar Prostitute. Three years pass after Thymian seeing her father until she reads of his death. Her father leaves Thymian all his money and she plans to lead a new respectable life, married to the destitute but socially acceptable Count Osedorff. However, Thymian has the ultimate attack of conscious and gives the money to Meta and her two children. Thymian does not want her younger half-sister to suffer the

same fate as she. Count Osedorff commits suicide after hearing he will not get any of Thymian's money. Thymian is ultimately rewarded for her sacrifice when Count Osedorff's uncle takes her in as his niece and she can stop prostituting herself.

It is Thymian's continual selflessness that regenerates her morally. Once she escaped her only thought was a reunion with her child. Furthermore, Thymian sacrifices her own happiness and comfort for her siblings-demonstrating maternal love. This act of sacrifice rehabilitates her so that she is worthy of Oserdorff's uncle's kindness. While *Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* is chiefly a tale of warning, it is also a tale of rehabilitation. Thymian, much like Germany itself, is not beyond saving despite how far she/it fell.

While *Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* is a warning tale about what can happen to an innocent woman in the dire circumstances of Weimar Germany, *Der Blaue Engel* is more of a warning about a femme fatale. Josef von Sternberg (1894-1969) directed the first sound film for the major film production company UFA. Sternberg was born into an impoverished Jewish family in Vienna. When he was seven, Sternberg accompanied his mother and siblings to America where his father had gone years earlier to find work. When World War I broke out, Sternberg joined the United States Army and photographed Army recruitment films. Sternberg went on to marry and divorce the actress Riza Royce twice. His wife filed a lawsuit against the star of *Der Blaue Engel*, Marlene Dietrich who was having an affair with the married director. This illustrates the morality of the times that a woman could sue a woman for having an affair with her husband. It was against the law and bourgeois morality could be used to dictate acceptable behavior. Dietrich plays the main

character, Lola Lola. Lola Lola is a successful cabaret singer and performer who captures the attention of the bumbling weak professor Rath, played by Emil Jennings. [141] The film was shot in both English and German, enjoying international success.

The opening scene of *Der Blaue Engel* is that of a bustling city, seen in the chimneystacks billowing out from rooftops. Women wash windows, load animals onto carts and get ready for the day. The first glimpse we see of Dietrich's Lola Lola is a poster of her in which she's scantily clad in a corset and bowler hat. A regular woman, a washerwoman stands next to the poster, mimicking Lola Lola's masculine stance in the poster in admiration. This illustrates the true danger of the Weimar Prostitute, that she could infect the general population with her immorality. Critics of degeneration argued these public posters caused a real danger to moral climate of a beleaguered Germany. In the beginning of the film Professor Rath is a logical, respectable member of the German bourgeoisie. He sits at a table, surrounded by books and drinking tea. The books demonstrate his intelligence and profession while the tea illustrates his respectability.

[141] Emil Jenning's name appears before the title of the film as he was a well known star at the time. Marlene Dietrich was virtually unknown before her star turn as Lola Lola and thus her name only appears in the cast list.

Figure 2.8. Scene from *Der Blaue Engel (The Blue Angel)* 1920 featuring Marlene Dietrich as Lola Lola.

The audience next sees Professor Rath in his schoolroom with his all male students. He becomes angry with his students after he catches them looking at pictures of Lola Lola during his lecture. Once in private, Rath looks at Lola Lola's card with lust and longing. The card has feathers on it to form Lola Lola's skirt, which can be blown away to expose more of her body. Rath blows the feathers away, looks around to make sure no one is around, and then does it again. The audience notices his curiosity and sexual excitement. When Rath goes to the Blue Angel club to ostensibly catch his students we see our first live image of Lola Lola. She sings on the stage, dressed in revealing clothing, painted in makeup and wearing her hair in a *Bubikopf*. She also drinks alcohol on stage from another performer's glass. Thus Lola Lola is clearly morally degenerate as evidenced in her clothing, her hairstyle, her profession and her public consumption of alcohol. Rath first meets Lola Lola

backstage in one of her costumes. She's unfazed by his presence and deliberately undresses in front of him. When he tells her, "As a man of honor I must leave, I'm compromising you" she tells him he can stay. Rath still treats Lola Lola like a respectable woman who deserves modesty and discretion even though she's a cabaret performer. She seems amused by his reverence.

Rath leaves but returns the next night to the surprise of no one. Lola Lola clearly expects him to return, saying "I knew you'd come back, they always come back." Lola Lola demonstrates her agency and confidence in her relationship with the professor. Once Rath meets Lola Lola he falls completely under her spell. He ceases to be a logical, responsible professor, instead becoming enraptured and consumed by Lola Lola. Rath even chases away a wealthy suitor who attempts to shower Lola Lola with expensive, exotic gifts and champagne. Clearly Lola Lola has many men who are interested in her as an available sexual object. She chooses to spend the night with the professor, thus sealing his fate as her plaything. Lola Lola does not immediately make Rath subservient, instead she lulls him into a new existence through her sexuality and displaying traditional female behavior. She cooks breakfast for him and makes him coffee, seemingly amused by his traditionalism. Rath's boss fires him after he shows up late for work because Rath's students told the principal about Rath's relationship with Lola Lola. The principal fires Rath precisely because of his immoral relationship with a public woman, which could in turn infect the morality of the students.

One of Lola Lola's songs contains the lyrics "men flock around me like moths to a flame. I can't help it if they get singed, I'm not to blame." [142]This lyric implies Lola Lola is aware of her power. She realizes the power in her sexuality and chooses to use it to her own advantage, first marrying and then discarding Rath in favor of a more beneficial relationship. Rath is so distraught that Lola Lola continues to be a shared woman he cannot go on. He becomes enraged after Lola Lola takes the strongman upstairs for a sexual encounter. At this point Rath has sunk to playing a sad clown in Lola Lola's cabaret show and cannot stand the humiliation any longer. He attacks Lola Lola, is rebuked by the strongman and slinks off to die in his former classroom. The screen shot of Rath clutching his desk, dying juxtaposes with the final shot of Lola Lola nicely. We see Lola Lola sitting in her chair with her legs wide open. Her stance is masculine as is her jacket and bowler hat. This image of Lola Lola reinforces the notion that the Weimar Prostitute usurped respectable bourgeois society and turned it into Weimar depravity and degeneration.

Lola Lola is the ultimate femme fatale, a sort of dangerous taboo who represents the degenerate morality of a defeated Germany. She is a powerful, independent woman who wields her sexuality like a precise weapon, intending maximum damage. It is important to note that Lola Lola is not some obscure femme fatale who doesn't effect normal bourgeois society. For instance, at the beginning of the film we see an ordinary working class woman comparing herself to Lola Lola and feeling like she cannot possibly compete. Lola Lola emasculates Rath in her continued sexual relations with others and her role as the breadwinner in their

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[142] Das Blaue Engel, *Falling In Love Again*

relationship. Lola Lola doesn't care about bourgeois notions of respectability and monogamy. She initially laughs out loud repeatedly at Rath when he proposes. She marries him in front of all her cabaret friends, his acquaintances presumably refuse to come since he is marrying a public woman. After Rath's association with Lola Lola becomes public fodder and he loses his job, he must first try to sell pictures of his near naked wife and finally dress as a clown in her variety act. Rath initially told Lola Lola he would not let her sell pictures of herself while he has a penny left. The fact that he has to sink to the level of enticing strange men to view his wife in a sexual manner is humiliating for the former professor. Rath's fall from a respected, bourgeois professor to that of cuckold sad cabaret clown illustrates the slippery slope of respectability with regard to morality. Rath loses his respectability precisely because of his association and acceptance of a sexually available public woman in Lola Lola.

Concluding Comments

The Weimar Prostitute is a powerful symbol of moral degeneration in the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate in post-war Germany. In many ways she captured the essence of a defeated, demoralized Germany-forced to carve out a new path once old myths were shattered. The Weimar Prostitute differed from the Imperial Prostitute because she lived in a grey world that replaced the black and white morality of the former empire. Although some progress and challenges were made to traditional gender roles, the Weimar Prostitute remained entrenched in her role as the other. As the other, the Weimar Prostitute reinforced the norms of bourgeois morality. One sees this reinforcement within the cultural realm of Weimar Germany.

The Weimar Prostitute could function as a symbol of moral degeneration, symbolic victims of the Republic's socio-economic woes or rational workers in the post-war world. How the Weimar Prostitute was portrayed depended on the artists' purpose. The overwhelming portrait of the Weimar Prostitute is one of a symbol of moral degeneration. One sees the Weimar Prostitute featured this way in the art of Dix and Grosz, the literature of Isherwood, and in Pabst's film *Tagebuch einer Verlorenen.* That is not to say that the artists, writer and filmmaker have no sympathy for the Weimar Prostitute. All four men sympathize with the plight of the Weimar Prostitute and see her hardship as a direct consequence of Germany's economic plight. Thus they show the Weimar Prostitute as a symbol of moral degeneration and as victims of the Weimar Republic's woes. Mammen and Overbeck demonstrate the humanity of the Weimar Prostitute by normalizing her as part of the working class community. Overbeck's art is the only work to focus on the Weimar Prostitute as a rational worker. Finally, Döblin combines all three symbolic functions of the Weimar Prostitute. Mieze and Eva are morally degenerate, victims of socio-economic woes and rational workers.

CHAPTER 3: THE HYSTERICAL VETERAN

> Somehow we thought of war as an all-or-nothing gamble. You came home a victor or you died on the field of honor. Now there were wounded.
>
> -Vicki Baum, *It Was All Quite Different.*

Vicki Baum summed up the thoughts of many of her Weimar contemporaries when she expressed her view on the wounded in post World War I Germany. For many, war was a black and white issue. As Baum stated, you either won glory on the battlefield a hero, or you died tragically but heroically. Now in Weimar Germany "shattered war victims filled the bus-stops, train stations, and other public spaces, where they generated fear, resentment, sympathy and contempt from Germans reeling from the national trauma of total war." [143] The Hysterical Veteran confronted a weary German populace, who had already suffered more than four years of warfare, the dismantling of their political system, and economic devastation. Germany suffered tremendous loss in World War I, with over two million men dead. Even greater than the death toll was the wounded; as four million, three hundred thousand wounded veterans returned to civilian life in Weimar Germany. [144]

The Hysterical Veteran was the key male figure in the debate on moral degeneration in Weimar Germany. He was the polar opposite of the ideal

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[143] Jason Crouthamel, *The Great War and German Memory: Society, Politics and Psychological Trauma, 1914-1945* (Lancaster: University of Exeter Press, 2009), 2.

[144] Robert Whalen, *Bitter Wounds: German Victims of the Great War, 1914-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 40.

Nietzschean Soldier who found war invigorating. Unlike the ideal soldier, the Hysterical Veteran did not emerge strengthened from his time in the mud and blood of the trenches. Rather, he was physically and/or psychologically traumatized by the constant random death and trench warfare of the Great War. Many soldiers were young, formerly healthy members of society who went to war expecting glory in the ultimate test of manhood. Many returned to Germany as a Hysterical Veteran, shattered and broken by the trauma of war.

Weimar Germany was born in defeat and revolution. These tumultuous times demanded clearly defined gender roles, any blurring of that demarcation called forth the specter of chaos and degeneration. [145] Hysterical Veterans represented moral degeneracy in Weimar Germany because they did not encapsulate traditional masculinity. German men, especially soldiers, were supposed to be strong enough physically and mentally to withstand any challenge. The trauma of the Great War and defeat in that war transformed them from enthusiastic nationalistic warriors to defeated, devastated Hysterical Veterans.

The word hysteria comes from the Greek word for womb or uterus. [146] The obvious association of hysteria with the feminine was troubling for doctors, veterans, politicians and the general public. Hysteria implied irrationality and emotional instability-traits historically associated with women. The goal of medical personnel was to transform these effeminate, hysterical soldiers back into

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[145] George Mosse, *The Image of Man: the Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 66-67.

[146] Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 15.

nationalistic, productive masculine beings. Ideal masculinity became even more closely linked with soldiery and warfare with the advent of World War I. Hysterical Veterans' claim "to be 'normal men' despite breaking down under stress" challenged German nationalistic ideals of masculinity and progress. [147]

What exactly was the ideal masculine role in Germany? The historian, George Mosse has written extensively on the subject of masculinity in Germany. He defined masculinity as the form in which men asserted their manhood. All aspects of idealized masculinity were designed to reinforce a man's role as patriarch and breadwinner. According to Mosse, the ideal German man was productive, virtuous, resilient and controlled. [148] The Hysterical Veteran seemingly failed at every aspect of ideal masculinity. He often could not work because of physical/psychological impediments and sought out pension assistance. Because Weimar Germany was in economic ruin immediately following the war and right before the Nazi seizure of power, any financial assistance was looked at with suspicion. The Hysterical Veteran was not resilient or controlled because the war shattered his nerves or body. Finally, his virtue was also questioned. Many veterans came back with venereal diseases and were looked at as diseased, infecting agents. Hysterical Veterans rejected bourgeois, ideal German masculinity with their bodies and minds.

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[147] Crouthamel, *The Great War and German Memory,* 5-6.

[148] Mosse, *The Image of Man,* 7 & 109-112.

The bourgeoisie distinguished themselves from both the upper and lower classes through their frugality, sexual restraint and strong work ethic. [149] Thus the Hysterical Veterans not only broke gender lines, but class distinctions as well when they did not work or control their passions. Bourgeois values worked in concert with German nationalism to promote an ordered society. "Nationalism and respectability assigned everyone his place in life, men and women, normal and abnormal, native and foreigner, any confusion between these categories threatened chaos and loss of control." [150] The Hysterical Veteran was one such figure who defied the ideal characterization of a normal, native man according to nationalistic, bourgeois sentiment. As such, he was viewed as a danger to himself and the larger German populace. His very existence was a reminder of defeat and many Germans did not want a constant reminder. Furthermore, his inability to work and contribute in a meaningful way to Germany's economic recovery meant that the Hysterical Veteran could not demonstrate a strong work ethic.

Mosse argues nationalism created and reinforced modern masculinity and respectability. Both modern masculinity and ideas of respectability act as building blocks for the strengthening of nationalism. Nationalism united otherwise divided people in a cause deemed higher than any individual or group. Nationalism reinforced conventional masculinity through the insistence that ideal men must

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[149] George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985), 4-5.

[150] Ibid., 16.

subvert their own needs and desires to the higher calling of the nation. [151] Hysterical Veterans were not just a threat to conventional gender roles, but a danger to the national identity of Germany as well. The fact that German soldiers could not physically and mentally withstand the horrors of war exacerbated the belief that Hysterical Veterans were degenerate.

Work is to masculinity what sexuality is to femininity. It is the defining aspect of identity for traditional masculinity. Because production is so vital to masculine identity, lack of production among males is considered moral degeneration. This is comparable to lack of reproduction for women. No production for males means they are not performing their assigned task as breadwinners, protectors and patriarchs. According to traditionalists, the progress of civilization is dependent on men's production and women's reproduction. Therefore, since the Hysterical Veteran did not contribute to the production of the German nation, he was a symbol of a degenerate, defeated, immoral nation and society.

Many scholars have enriched the historiography on the Hysterical Veteran in Weimar Germany. Robert Whalen was a forerunner on the subject, with his study *Bitter Wounds: German Victims of the Great War, 1914-1939* (1984). Whalen looked specifically at the psyche of the Hysterical Veteran during and after World War I. He blended his charts, graphs and numbers with artwork from Otto Dix, George Grosz and Käthe Kollwitz to present a more well rounded social history of the period. The historian George Mosse provided a key factor by looking purposely at German masculinity within the context of nationalism, sexuality and war. He did this in

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[151] Mosse, *The Image of Man,* 109-112.

several works including, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (1985), *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (1990) and *The Image of Man: the Creation of Modern Masculinity.* (1996).

Whalen and Mosse provided a powerful foundation for research on masculinity, soldiery, nationalism and war's effect on the human psyche. In the last two decades several scholars made important contributions on the Hysterical Veteran in Germany. For instance, Paul Lerner's work *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930* (2003) is essential to understanding the politics surrounding the Hysterical Veteran. His periodization allows one to see the differences and continuities with Imperial Germany. Lerner highlights how psychiatry tried to turn the Hysterical Veterans back into productive masculine beings. Andreas Killen's work *Berlin Electropolis: Shock, Nerves and German Modernity* (2006) expertly examines the Hysterical Veteran in the specific urban city of Berlin. Killen's title alludes to *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and he focuses on the impact of modernity with the human psyche. Jason Crouthamel followed up these studies with his work *The Great War and German Memory: Society, Politics and Psychological Trauma, 1914-1945* (2009). Crouthamel looks at the debate surrounding the Hysterical Veteran and his impact on politics, memory and the welfare state. Crouthamel effectively examines the writings of Hysterical Veterans and government policies to see how these two divergent groups interact. All of the above mentioned studies have influenced my current work. I am indebted to the scholars for interweaving the German national narrative with the traumatized

Hysterical Veterans. This current work will make use of their scholarship to see how it informed the cultural realm of art, literature and film.

The Hysterical Veteran was the male counterpoint to the New Women. Similarly to the New Woman and the Weimar Prostitute, the Hysterical Veteran was a creation of an urbanized, defeated, immoral Germany. He stood in direct opposition to the traditional notion of masculinity. Thus, the Hysterical Veteran became a powerful figure in the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate in Weimar Germany. Much of the debate on moral degeneration took place in the popular cultural realm. Artists, authors, journalists and social critics played an important role in framing the debate for the larger public. In this debate the Hysterical Veteran was the symbol of a broken emasculated Germany, unable to work, sexually impotent, violent and irrational.

Art

The Weimar artists featuring the Hysterical Veteran did so as a cathartic response to the trauma and loss of World War I. Artists such as Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, George Grosz, Walter Gropius, and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner all fought in the Great War for Germany. Beckmann, Grosz, and Kirchner all had nervous breakdowns over the horrors they witnessed on the front. [152] While the artist Otto Dix did not suffer a mental breakdown, his art illustrates how traumatic the war was for him as well. One sees the dramatic shift in their art, especially with the artists' obsession with depicting wounded war veterans. Grosz and Dix portrayed the plight of veterans physically and psychologically wounded from the war and a society that rejected

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[152] M. Kay Flavell, *George Grosz: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 25.

them because they were a constant reminder of the failure of the war effort. Remarque, Beckmann, Dix and Grosz wanted to shock the public into realizing the trauma of combat in trench warfare that they witnessed first hand. They each felt the war shattered the minds, bodies and souls of the soldiers fighting in it.

George Grosz (1893-1959) volunteered for the Germany Army in 1914. He was injured early on and discharged in 1915. Following his discharge, Grosz changed his name from Georg Groß in an effort to de-Germanize his name. Although he was discharged years earlier, Grosz was conscripted into the badly failing German Army in May 1917, and deemed permanently unfit a few months later. Grosz was one of the most vehement social critics of World War I. Grosz wrote about his military service and subsequent mental breakdown he suffered in his autobiography. He recalls after being sent to the hospital for treatment, "all of a sudden they said I was well-but I wasn't, my nerves were shot." [153] The artist was so incensed over the misdiagnosis that he attacked a medical sergeant. Presumably, it was in order to prove his hysteria and inability to return to the front. This attack did not result in Grosz's continued hospitalization. Perhaps the doctors felt that if he could still attack a medical sergeant, he could still be of use at the warfront. It was only through the intervention of a rich and powerful friend that Grosz was once again discharged, with the proviso of being recalled if needed. [154] After the war the artist published his drawings and displayed his paintings in Weimar Germany. As a

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[153] George Grosz, *George Grosz: An Autobiography*, trans. Nora Hodges (New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, 1946, 1955), 108.

[154] Ibid., 111.

Hysterical Veteran himself, Grosz was a credible authority on the impact of the war on soldiers. Grosz's anger at the medical establishment, government and military comes though in his accusatory paintings of German society.

In the sketch commonly referred to as *The Faith Healers*, Grosz explicitly criticized the collaboration of military leaders and doctors. Grosz blamed the doctors for being a puppet of the military generals who needed more machine gun fodder to continue the war. The figure being examined is clearly not fit for continued service. Grosz used a skeleton with decomposing flesh rotting off his broken bones to represent the Hysterical Veteran. He exaggerated the ill health of the soldier to demonstrate how egregious the doctors' misdiagnoses were during World War One. Despite the skeleton's appearance, the doctor pronounces him fit for service (KV). The military generals laugh and appear unfazed by the misdiagnosis. The doctor makes a show of checking the soldier's health, even listening to his heart. The number of people present suggests criticism of the bureaucracy surrounding the soldiers at hospitals. The four windows in the background all show the smoke of industrial factories, implicating big business that profited from the war. Therefore, Grosz's sketch criticized the military, big business and doctors for their collusion with one another to continue the war at any cost. According to Grosz, the most significant cost of the failed war was the bodies and minds of the hysterical soldiers.

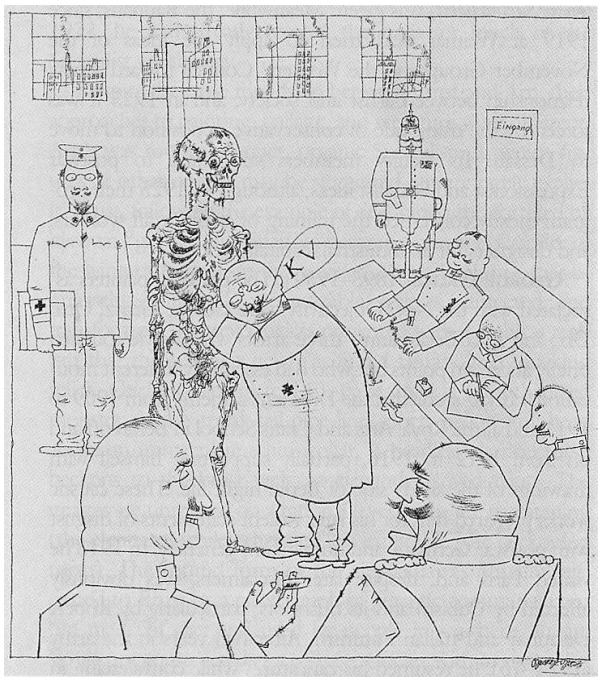

Figure 3.1. George Grosz, *Kriegsverwendungsfähig* (*Fit for Active Service or the Faith Healers*) 1918.

The phenomenon of male hysteria following World War I challenges the notion that war bolstered masculine ideals of discipline, strength, rationality and emotional detachment. Doctors reasoned, "The symptoms that debilitated the bodies of tens of thousands of physically healthy soldiers represented a form of resistance both to military authority and prevailing masculine norms." [155] It was as if the Hysterical Veteran's bodies expressed what their minds could not express. Hysteria was normally associated with women, as they were supposed to be irrational and emotional. The prevalence of hysteria within not just the male population, but within the military community was seen as extremely problematic and caused additional apprehension. By using the term "hysteria" doctors associated the hysterical veterans with other figures of degeneration, such as

[155] Paul Frederick Lerner, *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 8.

untraditional women, Jews, and homosexuals. [156] This was insulting and emasculating to men who had risked their lives for the fatherland. German men were supposed to be steadfast in the face of hardship, and these veterans seemed to crumble before the challenge.

German doctors overwhelmingly agreed that there were a large group of soldiers who had no physical injury and yet had physical symptoms from a psychological wound. [157] It was a breakthrough in itself that doctors recognized psychological wounds could impact the body. However, the historian Andreas Killen pointed out that this shift actually had dire consequences for the soldiers/veterans as it individualized the malady, therefore making each patient responsible for their own cure. [158] The shift also exempted doctors from any real responsibility to the patients. Many wartime psychiatrists espoused the view that these individuals were predisposed to nervous disorders before they fought in the war. [159] This explanation absolved the doctor, the government and military from any responsibility toward the care of hysterical veterans. Psychiatrists labeled Hysterical Veterans as predisposed degenerates whose nerves would have collapsed regardless of wartime atrocities they witnessed. The predisposed Hysterical Veteran was therefore not entitled to pension benefits.

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[156] Dora Apel, "Heroes and Whores: The Politics of Gender in Weimar Antiwar Imagery" in *The Art Bulletin,* vol. 79, no. 3 (Sep., 1997), 371.

[157] Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges* (Leipzig: Schneider & Co., 1930), 214.

[158] Andreas Killen, *Berlin Electropolis: Shock, Nerves and German Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 10.

[159] Ibid., 132.

The goal of military medical personnel was to rehabilitate hysterical soldiers so they could be sent out to the front again. For those men who were psychologically or physically unable to rejoin the front, they would at least transform them back into masculine workers. [160] Ideal German masculinity required work and shunned any sort of idle behavior. How German veterans were rehabilitated into the work force was intimately tied to traditional notions of masculinity. For instance, early on in the war nurses instructed soldiers in women's handicrafts such as crochet. This was done in order to foster dexterity and keep the soldier's mind and hands alert. However, after repeated complaints by male doctors this practice was stopped. [161] Male doctors felt it was an insult to feminize the wounded soldiers by encouraging them to learn traditionally female skills. Instead they wanted to reinforce ideal masculinity. It did not matter that traditional female skills such as needlework helped the Hysterical Veterans with dexterity and concentration, it was still seen as inappropriate.

Regardless if they were predisposed or not, Hysterical Veterans were repeatedly sent back to the warfront even after being diagnosed as hysterical. Doctors continued to insist on warfare as regenerative. It was considered a cure for soldiers suffering from hysterical symptoms. [162] Doctors ignored the connection between war trauma and Hysterical Veterans by returning the men to the site of their hysteria. Doctors reasoned that these men might find comfort in the positive

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[160] Lerner, *Hysterical Men,* 42 & 126.

[161] Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Scholer-Springorum, eds, *Home/front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New York and Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2002), 188.

[162] Crouthamel, *The Great War and German Memory,* 31.

example of other soldiers and camaraderie on the front lines. The Kaiser's government and military pressured doctors to rehabilitate Hysterical Veterans as quickly as possible so they could rejoin the war effort. Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld argued doctors were required to declare a certain preordained percentage of patients fit for continued service. He pointed out the problem was further exacerbated by shortages in the Central Powers armies, particularly in the latter years of the war. [163] Thus, the needs of the military overrode the needs of individual patients who were suffering directly from wartime participation.

As in Grosz' sketch *The Faith Healers,* doctors sent Hysterical Veterans back into war before they were ready. In 1929, the German writer and literary critic, Philipp Witkop published a collection of war letters from young soldiers who died in service during World War I. Despite Witkop's edit, the reader still finds instances of the Hysterical Veteran buried deep within the text. For instance, the soldier Zschuppe was in and out of field hospitals. In his letters he referred to "shell splinters, black blood and bandages with pus." [164] Zschuppe's letters showed a soldier clearly on the breaking point, suffering from delusional visions. He obviously suffered from a nervous condition but was sent out repeatedly until he eventually died.

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[163] Hirschfeld., *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges,* 217.

[164] Karen Hagemann. "'Rationalization of Family Work': Municipal Family Welfare and Urban Working Class Mothers in Interwar Germany" in *Social Politics* 4.1 (1997), 368.

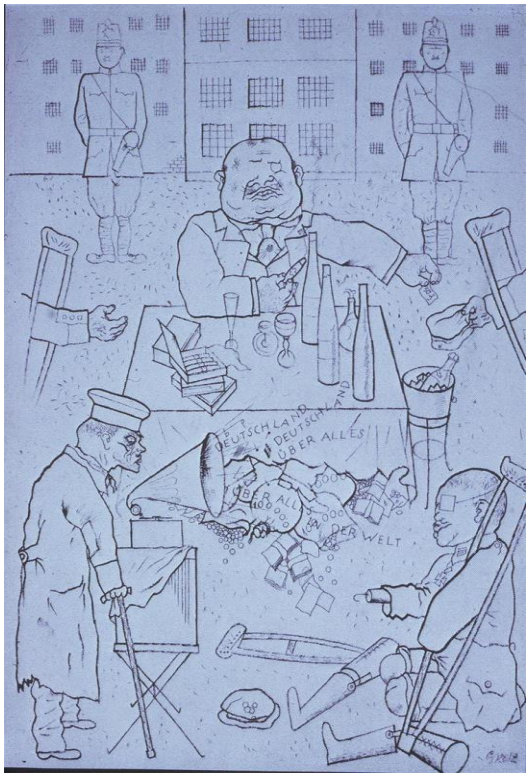

Figure 3.2. George Grosz, *These War Invalids are Getting to be Positive Pest* 1920.

In the sketch, "These War Invalids are Getting to be a Positive Pest" (1920) Grosz took aim at German national identity. The picture depicts a fat war capitalist who made a profit from the destruction of so many German men. He celebrates his success with champagne and cigars while dismissively handing out alms to the begging Hysterical Veterans. The phallic imagery overflows in this picture, as wine bottles, crutches, cigars, and guns all stand upright. The two soldiers in the background stand resolute and whole. Their guns strapped around their waists appear as erect penises. All of the phallic imagery only highlights the impotence of the Hysterical Veterans. The profiteer in the center is missing an eye, and the other one is ambiguous. Perhaps Grosz wanted to point out that these profiteers refused to see the destruction they brought about on Germany, turning a blind eye if one

will. The two Hysterical Veterans in the front are clearly physically wounded, especially the veteran in the right hand corner of the sketch. Grosz exaggerated the physical deformity of the veterans, drawing one of them without either arms or legs. He is also missing at least one eye. The other veteran appears more physically untouched by the war. His wound appears more psychological as his eye eerily stares out. The two other Hysterical Veterans appear only as outstretched arms, supported by crutches. This demonstrates the shear number of Hysterical Veterans in need of assistance during the Weimar Republic.

Grosz included the song, "Deutschland Über Alles" and the title, *These War Invalids are Getting to be a Positive Pest"* as a sarcastic reference to Germany's nationalistic self-aggrandizement that helped lead the country to war and defeat. During the course of the nineteenth century in Germany the medical profession gained enormous prestige, including psychiatry. [165] As their social position rose, doctors increasingly became a powerful voice on the social health of the nation. As members of the bourgeoisie, doctors in Germany were powerful arbiters of class, national and gender distinctions. Doctors in Germany expanded the field of social medicine and identified *natural* parameters for men and women, German and non-German along with bourgeoisie and non-bourgeoisie. [166] Hysterical veterans defied

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[165] Whalen, *Bitter Wounds,* 60.

[166] Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2. For a comparative example of social medicine and doctors as moral crusaders see Sean Quinlan, *The Great Nation in Decline: Sex, Modernity and Health Crises in Revolutionary France c. 1750-1850.* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 4-5. Although Quinlan wrote about France during an earlier time period, the same aspects of social medicine apply in Weimar Germany.

German doctors' definition of what it meant to be a German male soldier representing the nation. Psychiatrists used their newfound prestige to promote "notions of healthy German masculinity-a vision centered around patriotism, self-sacrifice and most of all economic productivity." [167] In this way they normalized traditional masculinity and undermined alternative visions of masculinity such as the hysterical soldier. Thus the Hysterical Veteran was defined as a degenerate figure of postwar Germany because he transgressed nationalistic ideals of masculinity.

Otto Dix (1891-1969) like his artistic companion Grosz, volunteered to fight in the Great War. Dix served as a NCO in a machine gun unit. His military service included surviving the British advance in the Battle of the Somme. Dix fought against British forces who included Siegfried Sassoon, J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis in this battle. Dix almost died from a wound to the neck in August 1918 but was saved by a medic. He was still in a hospital bed when the war officially ended. Dix's experiences in battle, at the hospital and in a defeated Germany significantly effected his work during the Weimar years.

In the sketch *War Cripples,* Dix highlighted the physical and psychological wounds of the Hysterical Veterans. He exaggerated the veterans' features and deformities in a type of caricature of Hysterical Veterans. All four soldiers have been saved by science and medicine, evidenced by their prosthetic limbs and wheelchair. Dix makes the clothing of the Hysterical Veterans transparent in order to emphasize the prosthetic limbs. One of the Hysterical Veterans also looks like he has a

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[167] Lerner, *Hysterical Men,* 8.

prosthetic jaw. Dix over emphasizes this and the other maladies of the Hysterical Veterans to make them look like some sort of science project. Dix accuses the doctors and military of saving the men's lives for a meaningless, dependent existence in this work.

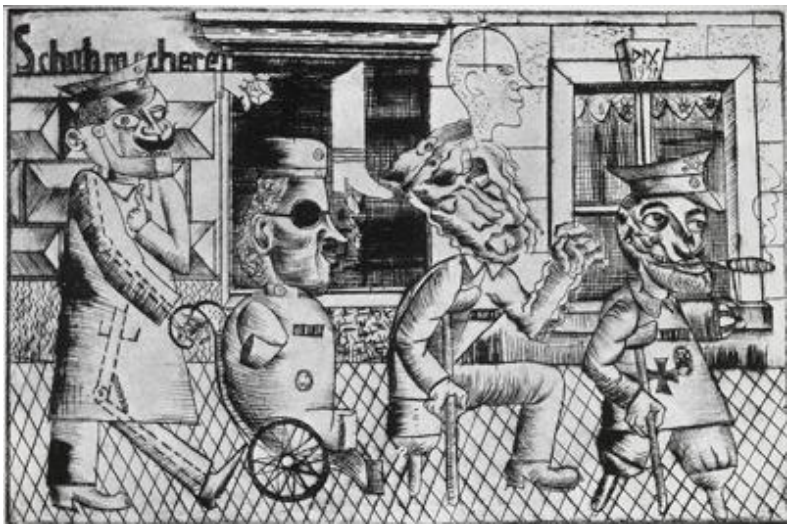

Figure 3.3. Otto Dix, *Kriegskrüppel* (War Cripples) 1920.

The four Hysterical Veterans still wear their uniform but they are anything but ideal German soldiers. The second figure from the front suffers from tremors, represented by the blurred, wavy lines surrounding his raised arm and his face. There is a head that seems to be springing from the head of the veteran with tremors. Perhaps Dix included this extra head to illustrate the idea of a divided self with the Hysterical Veterans. Hysterical Veterans had a prewar identity and a postwar one, in which they were haunted by their experience in the war. Dix purposely placed the Hysterical Veterans on a public street in front of shop windows. His juxtaposition of modern consumption-evidence of economic recovery- with the woefully traumatic Hysterical Veterans emphasized their economic dependence on the state. The uniformed veterans appear as artifacts in a world in

which they no longer belong. Dix used this sketch to stress the consequences of the war. In his depiction, the soldiers are not glorious victors; rather they are Hysterical Veterans, symbols of a defeated, degenerate Germany.

Dix based his observations on his first hand experience in the war. Dix's conclusions were not unlike the writer Ernst Friedrich's criticisms of the war. Unlike, Dix, Friedrich did not serve in World War I. The military conscripted Friedrich but he refused to serve in the Germany Army and was subsequently placed in a mental institution. [168] It is interesting to note that Friedrich was not imprisoned or exiled for his refusal. Rather, the government found his refusal the act of an insane person. German men were supposed to value war. War was an ingrained part of German national identity, largely based on Prussian militarism. A refusal was a sign of degeneracy that needed a cure.

Friedrich published *War Against War!* (1924) in four different languages in an effort to reach the widest public possible. Friedrich was not content to simply publish his scathing attack on German militarism. He also opened an anti-war museum the following year in Berlin and kept it open until the Nazis forced him to close it in 1933. The message of both the book and the museum was that war was universally wrong, despite specific nationalistic protestations of just cause. Similarly to Remarque, Dix, Beckmann and Grosz, Friedrich blamed the respective government leaders and generals of the countries at war during World War I. He realized like the others that German soldiers had more in common with their enemy than with those that sent them all to war. He dedicated his book "to war profiteers

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[168] Ernst Friedrich, *War against War!* (Seattle: Real Comet Press, 1924, 1987), 10.

and parasites. . . to kings, generals, presidents and priests" in an ironic jab at the war makers. [169]

Friedrich used a social construction argument in his book, pointing out that parents prepared and encouraged militarism in their boys by buying them toy soldiers and reading them stories of warriors' glory. [170] He emphasized the fact that militarism was ingrained in German male children from their earliest memories. It was in a way second nature and therefore very hard to eradicate once those children reached adulthood. Friedrich's words accused but not as powerfully as the images he included in his text. In 1924 Germany, many civilians had not yet seen severely disfigured veterans after the war unless they lived and worked in certain areas of Berlin. [171] The Weimar government worked in concert with military authorities to keep badly disfigured Hysterical Veterans from public view, not wanting to further erode bourgeois respectability. When Friedrich's book came out it was the first time many civilians saw the images of the severely injured Hysterical Veterans. Friedrich's brilliance lay in his juxtaposition of images of severely wounded veterans with healthy individuals. For instance, on one page Friedrich placed the picture of a war veteran with one arm trying to work a factory machine. The image on the other page is of the crown prince playing tennis. [172] His picture of the crown prince was not random. Friedrich contrasted the image of the wounded veteran

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[169] Ibid., 22.

[170] Friedrich, *War Against War,* 11 & 26.

[171] Rewald, *Glitter and Doom,* 236-237.

[172] Friedrich, *War Against War,* 203.

struggling to earn an honest living with the prince engaged in leisure to demonstrate the biased class hierarchy in Germany.

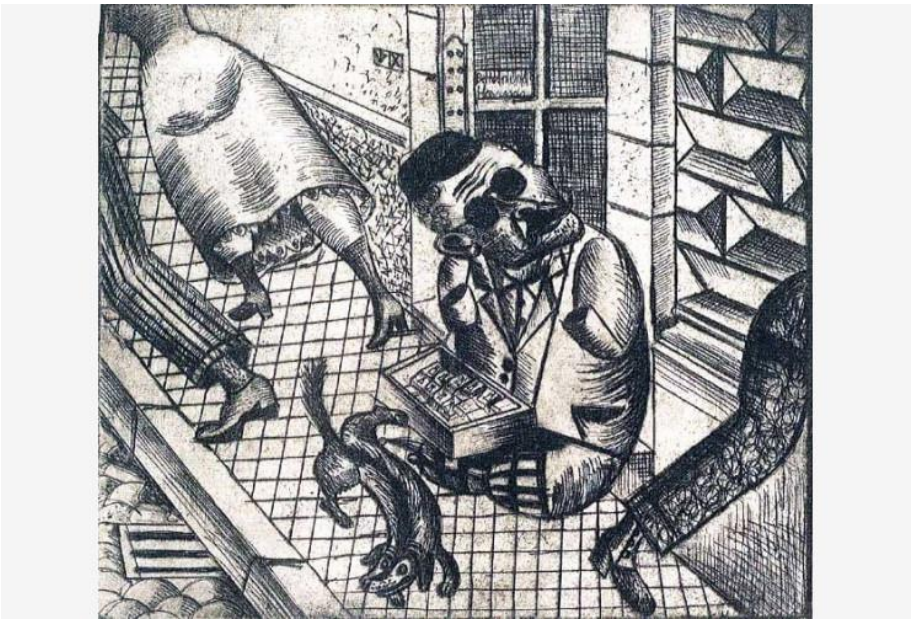

Figure 18: Otto Dix, *The Matchbook Seller* 1920

Dix effectively accused the German populace of turning their back on the Hysterical Veteran in his work titled *The Matchbook Seller.* Again, Dix chose to draw in black and white, giving the work gravitas that color would betray. Dix demonstrates the loyalty of the veteran by placing the dog in front of him. The Hysterical Veteran sits on a sidewalk trying to sell matches to earn a living. The sidewalk he sits on, the cobblestone street and the gutter are all clean and in good condition. Dix places the Hysterical Veteran on a seemingly busy street as many people walk by.

Dix's *Matchbook Seller* is severely physically damaged by his service in World War I. He has no hands or feet. It appears he lost both of his legs, one is fitted below the knee into a type of brace so he can presumably get around. The dark glasses also

imply he lost his sight during the war. He might not be able to see, but he still understands how people react to the sight of him. Dix illustrates this awareness by making the matchbook seller turn his head towards one of the people fleeing. The Hysterical Veteran furrows his brow and stares accusingly in the direction of those trying to avoid him. He props up the matchbook box on his missing leg. This Hysterical Veteran is not begging without offering anything. Rather he sells the matchbooks as a way to not be a complete burden on society. He is no malingerer, he must offer something in trade.

While Dix's *Matchbook Seller* features a Hysterical Veteran physically deformed from World War I, he is not the most striking thing about this work of art. The most noticeable and disturbing part of the drawing is the three people who are literally running away from the Hysterical Veteran. We see three different legs running away from the Hysterical Veteran. With only their legs visible, these three act as a stand in for the rest of German society that turned away from the physically and psychologically wounded veterans. The people shown running away from the Hysterical Veteran all look to be well dressed members of the bourgeoisie. They wear clean, nice clothing, one wearing a full pin striped suit, another a long dress. Dix does not accuse just men or women. He accuses them both by making them run away from the Hysterical Veteran. The figures running away from the Hysterical Veteran are damning him to an existence of obscurity and fright as people turn away from him in horror. Dix implies that the normal German populace did not want to be confronted by the reality of the injured veterans. They wanted to get on with their

life, and the wounded veterans on the streets did not allow people to forget or ignore the consequences of the war.

Dix's *Matchbook Sellers* is one of action even though it is a moment frozen in time. People running away from the Hysterical Veteran in this drawing surely see the matchbook seller as degenerate. Dix's matchbook seller is degenerate chiefly because he is a reminder of Germany's devastating loss in World War I. He is a very real symbol of the lives lost in the war, not just those who died. Furthermore, the matchbook seller is degenerate because he lacks the traditional masculine prowess of an idealized German man. He can no longer contribute to Germany with his body as it is unfit to protect the nation. Dix uses the fleeing woman to suggest that the Hysterical Veteran is also not a desirable marriage partner, thus cannot perform the masculine function of fathering children. The fact that the matchbook seller sits on the street means that he cannot find other work and is dependent on peoples' charity. Thus he cannot protect the nation, marry to produce children or contribute meaningfully in Germany's economic recovery. The matchbook seller is no longer the brutal, virile force that he might have been when called to war. He is therefore a symbol of the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate.

Over four million German men were wounded during the course of the Great War. During the war 600,000 Germen soldiers were treated for a wide range of symptoms, including uncontrollable shaking, nightmares, hallucinations, and depression. [173] Even more were treated once men realized they could not adjust to civilian life. The enormity and severity of the wounded was a shock to German

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[173] Crouthamel, *The Great War and German Memory,* 3-4.

civilians, who were dealing with economic and political uncertainty and instability. Weimar society struggled with how to reintegrate the Hysterical Veteran into the new republic as progressive members of society. Artists contemplated what the First World War had really meant by showing the Hysterical Veterans as another victim of the military, government and big business. Taking a cue from artists, authors also began to explore the meaning of the war and the Hysterical Veterans it had created.

Literature

> One of the soldiers, Albert expresses it: The war has ruined us for everything. The narrator Paul agrees, He is right. We are not youth any longer. We don't want to take the world by storm. We are fleeing. We fly from ourselves. From our life. We were eighteen and had begun to love life and the world: and we had to shoot it to pieces. The first bomb, the first explosion, burst in our hearts. We are cut off from activity, from striving, from progress. [174]

Erich Maria Remarque wrote the classic novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front* as a protest to German militarism that sent a generation of young men to slaughter. It is a novel about World War I, but was written and published during the Weimar Republic. Therefore, it forms an important part of the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate in Weimar Germany. Remarque used his own firsthand experience as a soldier to expose the effects of the Great War on men. According to Remarque, World War I destroyed a generation of young German men, making them unfit for life after the war. The message of the novel is that these soldiers are broken,

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[174] Erich Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front,* trans. A.W. Wheen (New York: Ballantine Books, 1928, 1956), preface.

perhaps beyond repair. The author clearly saw a disconnect between returning soldiers and the notion of progress. If the veterans of World War I were cut off "from striving, from progress" by definition they were degenerate. Degeneracy theorists used the notion of progress to argue that if one did not continue the forward progression than they were in a state of decline. This applied to nations, states and peoples. In the Weimar Republic, critics thought of degeneracy as cancerous, potentially infecting the healthy population just by association and contact. The Hysterical Veteran was therefore a major threat to the moral regeneration of Germany during the interwar years.

Although the men in *All Quiet on the Western Front* speculate about life after the war, almost all of them, including the narrator Paul Bäumer, die by the end of the novel. What would their lives be like if they lived to see Weimar Germany? Remarque answers the question of how Paul and his comrades would adjust to life after the war in his follow up novel, *Der Weg Zurück* (*The Road Back* (1931). The men of *All Quiet* are mostly dead, but the men of *The Road Back* express extremely similar thoughts and stand as representatives of what life was like for German soldiers returning home after the war. Both novels were serialized before publication and were tremendously popular. While various characters have their own specific problems, the men are all united by their discomfort in civilian life. The veterans' bond with each other stood in sharp contrast to the distance they felt with everyone else in their lives. Remarque explained this gap by insisting civilians could not fathom the experience of the veterans. This discrepancy created a gulf of distance between the veterans and the civilians. The veterans returned to a

transformed Germany, rife with the chaos of revolution and starvation. The men of both of Remarque's novel s are examples of moral degeneration. The soldiers featured in *The Road Back* are Hysterical Veterans.

Erich Maria Remarque (1898-1970) was born in Germany to a working class family. He was only 18 when he was drafted into the German Army and fought in World War I. Remarque fought on the frontlines but was injured early on. After being wounded, Remarque was sent to an army hospital in Germany, spending the remainder of the war there. His first hand experience in the war added credibility to the author's portrait of Hysterical Veterans. Remarque's criticism of German militarism echoes that of the artists Max Beckmann, Otto Dix and George Grosz.

An examination of Weimar literature supports the idea that veterans had difficulty finding work when they returned home. In Remarque's *The Road Back,* the veterans could not find adequate work. Several of them went to the countryside to scrounge for food and possible labor. Instead of finding some bountiful paradise in the countryside, they found resentful farmers. The farmers were exhausted from working their land and protecting it from desperate, hungry citizens. The farmers yelled at the veterans, telling them they should be ashamed to be out scrounging when they should be working. [175] The farmers took particular offense at the veterans more so than the ordinary people. This was largely based on their identity as soldiers, symbols of the warrior nation. The farmers believed the veterans should be examples of resilience and morality, displaying normative masculinity. The fact

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[175] Erich Remarque, *The Road Back,* trans. A.W. Wheen (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1931), 169-171.

that Hysterical Veterans begged along with the civilian population was an affront to nationalistic, bourgeois norms of masculinity.

It was not just the war experience that created the Hysterical Veteran. Rather, it was a culmination of trauma resulting from war along with the radical alteration of civilian society, which confronted the veteran upon the close of the war. The infamous Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld wrote that for many soldiers the most disappointing part of the war was the armistice. "Millions of men, worked up to an unnatural pitch of excitement and daring suddenly thrust back into routine normalcy which destroyed their equilibrium." [176] After four years of war it was extremely difficult for veterans to settle back into the humdrum existence of civilian life. It was also challenging for civilians to readjust to having the veterans back from the front. Civilians had survived four years without these men and focused on the hardships they had to endure while on the home front. One sees this idea of hysteria from civilian life play out in Remarque's *The Road Back* when the men discuss how difficult it is to adjust to the slowness of life after the constant death and injury. [177] They are not the same men who left and the civilians are not the same people the veterans left.

Dr. Hirschfeld specifically addresses the sexual aspects of Hysterical Veterans in his book, *The Sexual History of the World War.* Hirschfeld was an expert in sexuality and enjoyed popular success with his published works on the subject.

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[176] Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, *The Sexual History of the World War* (New York: Cadillac Publishing Co., 1930, 1941), 321.

[177] Remarque, *The Road Back,* 165 & 211.

Hirschfeld wrote about the immediate postwar years as a sort of sexual free for all. He cited Weimar Germany as a time of moral decay. [178] Hirschfeld was not a conservative doctor. He was a homosexual physician who was very interested in exploring the confines of bourgeois sexual respectability. The doctor pointed out the hypocrisy of veterans who regularly visited wartime brothels and yet were obsessed with their wives or girlfriends fidelity.

Hysterical Veterans were fixated over the idea of sexual betrayal. The notion of infidelity became even more traumatic for veterans because they had risked their lives to defend their loved ones at home. The idea that they were living in the horrid conditions of trench warfare while a man who did not answer the call to the fatherland was having sex with their women was often too much to bear. Hirschfeld referred to these fears in his study on the sexual history of the Great War. He took it as a matter of fact that many military wives were unfaithful. [179] According to Hirschfeld, it was a very real concern for veterans that quite often proved to be true. The doctor detailed one story in particular to illustrate the reaction of Hysterical Veterans to unfaithful wives. A veteran returned home after being away at war to find an empty house. His neighbors explained his children had been sent away and his wife returned home very late at night, insinuating she was immoral. The veteran pretended not to believe the neighbors, greeted his wife lovingly and asked her to prepare the stove for dinner. The Hysterical Veteran then burned his naked wife on

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[178] Hirschfeld., 37-38 & 323.

[179] Ibid., 32-38.

the hot stove after she had confessed to the infidelity. [180] The anecdote served as both a warning to women and a warning to Hysterical Veterans of what they were capable of. Hirschfeld described the event as a fairly typical reaction. The veteran was sent before the military courts but the doctor does not say what his punishment was. The reaction of the Hysterical Veteran was very violent and yet seemed calculated for the greatest effect. It is only conjecture to speculate if the veteran would have had the same reaction to his wife's infidelity without the mitigating experience of war. The Hysterical Veteran seemingly acquired his calculated patience for maximum damage during his years on the front.

The idea of unfaithful wives and girlfriends appeared regularly in the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate. Women's infidelity was a sign of moral decay. Women's infidelity while their husbands were away at war was a national crisis of degeneration. The war had dramatically altered men and women's lives in many ways. One of the wars most overlooked changes was the rupture it caused in intimacy between men and women. The long absences away from one another caused veterans and their wives to distrust each other's fidelity. It was not just women's deceitful actions but also the veteran's reactions to the infidelity that caused such concern. The reactions of Hysterical Veterans to a shocking infidelity was featured prominently in novels of the Weimar Republic, including, *The Road Back.*

Remarque used two major characters in *The Road Back* to illustrate the Hysterical Veterans' ultimate fear-betrayal by a woman they loved. Veterans

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[180] Ibid., 40-41.

displayed sexual anxiety about the fidelity of their wives/girlfriends due to long separation. They also must have wondered if women remained faithful while they might not have. Remarque depicted the ultimate betrayal through the character of Adolf Bethke. Adolf excitedly raced home to surprise his wife Marie with his return but found her unhappy. Marie confessed she had an affair while he was away at war from their small rural town. She confessed in part because she knew the townspeople would tell him about her scandalous behavior. [181] The town was small and everyone appeared to know everyone else's business. Remarque did not use the story of Marie's adultery to blame her or cast her as the immoral femme fatale. The reader only pities her for the sorrow she brought on herself and Adolf. Adolf tried to send her away but was lonely and agreed to try again. The couple eventually sold their farm and moved to the city because of the constant humiliating torture of the townspeople. [182] The townspeople labeled Marie a whore and called her out publically for her degenerate behavior. The townspeople also ridiculed Adolf as a cuckold who was more offensive for forgiving his wife than if he had killed her and her lover. If we recall the earlier story from Hirschfeld about the veteran burning his wife, it seems this was a more appropriate action. Adolf's neighbors lost respect for him because he forgave his wife.

The other major instance of betrayal by a woman towards a Hysterical Veteran in *The Road Back* ends much more violently. Albert appeared to be very level headed. He cared for his mother and his wounded veteran brother. But one

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[181] Remarque, *The Road Back,* p. 136.

[182] Ibid., 132 & 278-283.

night he found his girlfriend Lucie in a private section of a nightclub, half naked and drunk. Lucie barely had time to tell Albert a war profiteer got her drunk and took advantage of her before Albert killed the man. [183] This was not the action of an overly violent man, but a broken one. Lucie was lying, which came out later in Albert's trial. The sexual relationship between her and the war profiteer was consensual. When the judge asked for an explanation Albert offered none but that does not stop his comrades. Ernst explained, "And he wanted to marry because after the war he was lost, because he went always in fear of himself and of his memories, and looked for something whereby to steady himself. And this girl was that to him." [184] Thus, a marriage with traditional gender roles was a comfort to the Hysterical Veteran. It symbolized a past they risked their lives for and wanted to return to. It was their path to normalcy and progress and away from the degeneration of the trenches. Therefore, the loss of a conventional future and marriage was often extremely destructive for Hysterical Veterans to come to terms with.

While women they loved betrayed many men, their own bodies betrayed others. Some Hysterical Veterans experienced tics, tremors and shakes. These were physical evidence of the psychological trauma they endured. Often, the psychological trauma was connected to sexuality. Dr. Hirschfeld wrote of widespread sexual anxiety following the discharge of soldiers. Sexual anxiety often caused the Hysterical Veterans to fly into outbursts of rage. One sees this rage over sexual anxiety in Alfred Döblin's masterpiece, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: the Story of*

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[183] Ibid., 288-290.

[184] Ibid., 321.

Franz Biberkopf. Döblin was a German psychiatrist who volunteered for the First World War as a doctor. After the war Döblin practiced psychiatry in a poor district of Berlin. He therefore had firsthand experience with Hysterical Veterans. The protagonist in *Berlin Alexanderplatz,* Franz Biberkopf is the epitome of the Hysterical Veteran. He is clearly disturbed from his experiences in the trenches during World War I. Once the war ended, Franz beat his girlfriend Ida to death and was sent to prison. When he was released from prison Franz immediately began obsessing about women. He wanted to devour them. [185] Döblin included a three-page diatribe about sexual anxiety and impotency before his protagonist raped Ida's sister Minna. Presumably Franz had sexual anxiety about possible impotency that he transferred into rage for his rape of Minna. Döblin wrote how Franz felt free and happy after the rape, as if it somehow made him feel whole again. [186]

A particularly troubling aspect of sexual anxiety was the increase in impotence among veterans following the First World War. Hirschfeld even wrote that anxiety over impotence caused some veterans to have "ideas of inferiority and attempts at suicide." [187] Such extreme actions such as suicide demonstrate the intensity of sexuality and the incredible anxiety it can produce. Contemporaries viewed hysterical, impotent veterans as degenerate because they did not subscribe to traditional German masculinity. Conventional masculinity was intimately linked

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[185] Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: the Story of Franz Biberkopf.* Translated by Eugene Jolas. (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 1929, 1962), p. 30.

[186] Ibid., 34-36 & 40.

[187] Hirschfeld, 211.

to virility in Weimar Germany. [188] Impotence was the opposite of virile. Impotence also implied depopulation.

During the Weimar Republic concerns over depopulation grew. Germany's population was a major concern because of the loss of so many young German men. These men were in the prime child producing years of their lives when they were killed. Added to the number of dead was the number of Hysterical Veterans. Some Hysterical Veterans suffered from physical wounds that prevented procreative sexual intercourse. Many of the Hysterical Veterans who suffered from impotence were also unable to procreate. In a country already suffering from the death of so many men, this additional obstacle for repopulation was viewed as degenerate.

Various doctors tried to explain the rise in impotence among veterans and offered suggestions for combating this problem. The labor ministry said that veterans had fragile egos and women's success in the workforce produced uncontrollable anxiety. [189] While the accusation was not explicit, the labor ministry clearly saw women's participation in the workforce as a leading cause of sexual anxiety, including impotence. The message was that if women only returned home to their traditional role of mothers and wives, then impotence among Hysterical Veterans would disappear.

The New Woman played a key role in the Hysterical Veteran's quest for employment. Since women worked in more visible jobs they were easy targets for

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[188] George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 61.

[189] Crouthamel, *The Great War and German Memory,* 106.

veteran groups to scapegoat. The Labor Ministry issued a statement to employers stating, "as long as there are jobs for which they are qualified that are occupied by women disabled veterans should in no way be rejected." [190] One does not need to read between the lines to decipher the message; employers should fire women and hire veterans. The Labor Ministry especially identified women as an impediment to veterans' employment with that statement. They made it seem that women held their jobs in lieu of veterans. The Labor Ministry also implied women were double earners, meaning they were dependent on a man's wages and did not need work for their survival. The Labor Ministry was playing on public nationalistic sympathies and notions of conventional gender roles. They found a very receptive audience who were increasingly frustrated over women's employment.

Pension debate figured prominently in both *The Road Back* and *Berlin Alexanderplatz.* In *The Road Back* the Hysterical Veterans discussed the possibility of one of them, Valentin, receiving a pension. Before the war he was an acrobat and could no longer perform his art due to the physical damage of the war. Valentin and the others doubted the government wound reward him compensation and stressed over his financial future. [191] Later on in the novel a larger group of veterans discussed the pension system at a reunion for veterans. The veterans tried to make light of the situation but they were clearly unhappy with the Byzantine bureaucracy

[190] Ibid., 106.

[191] Remarque, *The Road Back,* 177.

that surrounded the process. The veterans blamed the civilian government for not providing adequate compensation for their sacrifice. [192]

Döblin was even more explicit in his criticism of the pension system in his novel. Franz was drawn increasingly into the underworld and could not pull himself away from it. Towards the end of the novel Franz was sent to an insane asylum where the doctors debated various methods of rehabilitation, including electrotherapy. The doctors concluded Franz was trying to defraud the government because it was easier than making an honest living. Furthermore, the doctors did not believe Franz's hysteria was war related; rather they diagnosed it as a form of malingering. [193] The doctor believed Franz wanted to avoid his responsibility of contributing to society and chose to defraud the government in some type of revenge plot. [194]

One can see just how essential work is for the construction of masculinity by an examination of the debate on war pensions. These men had risked their lives in the name of the Fatherland so one would expect the public officials to encourage them to collect their due. This was not the case in Germany. Military and government officials felt it was their duty to guard against men who collected pensions because they were lazy. Idleness was associated with femininity and moral

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[192] Ibid., 197-98.

[193] Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz,* 432.

[194] For a more in-depth discussion of the novel see Killen, *Berlin Electropolis.*

degeneracy. Therefore any sort of charity was frowned upon as an obstacle preventing men from recapturing their productive former identity. [195]

A psychiatrist explained, "As psychiatrists, we all agreed to aim at counteracting the generous granting of pensions, because we feared a fast increase in patients and their claims." [196] First of all, the pensions were not generous because the government could not afford for them to be. Second, it is interesting that the doctor used the word "feared" as if pension collecting by Hysterical Veterans was something threatening and dangerous. Finally, the psychiatrist's statement implies that fraud was rampant among veterans. He assumed veterans would fraud the government because it was easier than finding paid labor. He assumed the majority of veterans were lazy.

There was a definite class bias in the diagnosis of veterans with regard to pensions. Often doctors diagnosed officers as victims of organic nervous disorders and enlisted men as hysterical. The difference in diagnosis meant it was much more difficult to receive a pension once diagnosed as hysterical. [197] This discrepancy led to a lot of resentment among the enlisted men who felt they had risked their lives more so than their officer counterparts. Once diagnosed, the class bias continued. Weimar Republic policy dictated that doctors were no longer supposed to use military rank to determine the amount of compensation for veterans. However, doctors were supposed to consider the veteran's social class, educational

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[195] Lerner, *Hysterical Men,* 126, 147 & 224-25.

[196] Killen, *Berlin Electropolis,* 131.

[197] Crouthamel, *The Great War and German Memory,* 95-96.

background and prewar occupation before making an assessment of their financial needs. [198] The pension system was specifically designed to keep each veteran in the social standing from which they came. There was to be no social mobility through pension assistance. [199] Despite the republic's pretense, obviously class was still the determining factor in a veteran's pension. A veteran's educational background, prewar occupation and military rank were entirely dependent on the class they were from.

Hysterical Veterans were not the only ones who had to deal with the bureaucracy of the pension system. War widows had even more difficulty collecting compensation for their husband's service. Out of the two million four hundred thousand German soldiers who died during the Great War, one third of those were married. [200] This overburdened pension system already stretched beyond its funding had no hope of addressing the needs of war widows as well.

The loss of work for men meant a loss of identity and a loss of prospects for the future. Under the terms of traditional gender roles, women who were unable to find work could at least hope for future security through marriage. [201] There was no corollary for men to find future security, except through long-term charity or a pension. A pension also did not give Hysterical Veterans the sense of pride and fulfillment they so desperately sought.

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[198] Whalen, 34-36.

[199] Ibid., 101-05.

[200] Margaret Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Weitz, ed., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 128.

[201] Hagemann, 319.

Like Dix, Grosz, Remarque and Döblin, World War I also had a profound personal impact on the author Bertolt Brecht. Brecht (1898-1956) was only sixteen at the outbreak of World War I and later avoided being drafted by registering for a medical course in 1917. Brecht was eventually drafted in the autumn of 1918 and served as a medical orderly in a military VD clinic before the war ended a month later. Initially enthusiastic about the war, Brecht changed his opinion early on. He did not officially join the Communist Party, but was clearly politically in line with many of their views. Brecht designed his plays and poems to shock the audience.

Brecht's play *Trommeln in der Nacht* (*Drums in the Night*) features all three of our figures of degeneration. The New Woman, Anna struggles between her love for a Hysterical Veteran, Andreas Kragler and the promise of a better life with her fiancé Murk, a war profiteer. A Weimar Prostitute, Marie functions as a national conscious, repeatedly defending Kragler and criticizing Murk. [202] The Hysterical Veteran, Kragler was a prisoner of war for three years. While he was gone his girlfriend struck up a sexual relationship with Murk. Anna agreed to marry Murk but keeps a picture of Kragler next to her bed, as he is the one she loves. This again echoes the stories of sexual anxiety and sexual betrayal told by Remarque and Hirschfeld. The Hysterical Veteran was consumed with thoughts of betrayal while he was away fighting in the war. Anna explains that she loves Kragler and missed him but three years was a long time for her to wait. Anna's sexual betrayal emasculates the Hysterical Veteran Kragler; he appears as a cuckold if he accepts her. Anna and her parents are matter of fact about her sexual relationship with Murk.

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[202] Bertolt Brecht, *Trommeln in der Nacht (Drums in the Night),* 1922., 125-127.

Anna's parents want her to marry Murk because he has money. Anna's father criticizes the soldiers coming back from the front as ruining civilian life. He believes, "worst of all-I may say it here-are the soldiers back from the front: spoiled adventurers run wild, who've forgotten how to work and hold nothing sacred." [203] Anna's father expresses the view many civilians held-that the war was an adventure for these Hysterical Veterans. Since Murk profited during the war he is a much more stable choice for Anna. If she marries Murk then her father would not have to worry about giving her financial assistance himself. Anna's father expresses the rather popular idea in Weimar Germany that the returning soldiers added nothing to the betterment of Germany; rather he sees them as a further drain on the economy. Murk also bemoans that Kragler is treated with sympathy as a hero, while he stayed to work and is viewed with contempt. [204]

Later they all go out to eat and drink. Murk gets drunk and calls Anna a whore. Kragler defends her and begins to beat Murk before he is stopped. Kragler's reaction, similar to Albert in *the Road Back* is one of rage and brutality. Later, Kragler realizes Anna's betrayal when it is revealed she is pregnant. The Hysterical Veteran laments his survival, saying that he wishes he died in battle instead so that he would not know of her betrayal. [205] This illustrates how painful sexual betrayal was to the Hysterical Veteran. For Kragler, Anna represented the world before the war. Much like Albert, for Kragler, Anna represented stability, beauty and a life

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[203] Ibid., 105.

[204] Ibid., 124.

[205] Ibid., 153.

worth living. Anna, unlike Albert's girlfriend, makes amends to Kragler and begs him to forgive her. Anna shows the most agency in the play as she makes the ultimate decision to be with the Hysterical Veteran. He accepts that she is pregnant with another man's child. Kragler forgives Anna and they end up together, marching in unison.

Remarque, Döblin and Brecht all challenged the prevailing notions of ideal German masculinity in their works set and written during the Weimar Republic. They used their novels or plays to explain the effect of World War I on the psyche of these young men who were so different when they entered the war than when they left it. Paul expresses it best, these young men were full of life and hope when they entered World War I and the experience of war ruined them for civilian life. Remarque's novel about this human tragedy was so successful it was made into a film.

Film

The two films *Westfront 1918* (1930) and *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) portray the struggles of the Hysterical Veteran as he tries to survive the trenches of World War I. Both films were released in Weimar Germany in 1930, to considerable acclaim. In addition, both films were based on books written by German World War I veterans. The two films are an interesting comparison as *Westfront 1918* is a German movie, while *All Quiet on the Western Front* was an American Hollywood blockbuster. Both movies focus on a group of soldiers and the relationship they develop with each other while fighting on the western front. The

two films illustrate the disconnect the soldiers feel from those on the home front, including wives and mothers.

G.W. Pabst's (1885-1967) film, *Westfront 1918,* was based on the novel, *Vier von der Infanterie,* by Ernst Johannsen. Johannsen was conscripted into the German Army in 1916, serving until the war's end. The director, G.W. Pabst was interned at a P.O.W camp in France. Furthermore, three of the four main actors, plus dozens of extras were also World War I veterans. The fact that the author, director and many of the actors were actual World War I veterans lends the film an air of authenticity lacking in other productions. The film was a success until the Nazi sensor board deemed it unpatriotic, like its American counterpart, *All Quiet on the Western Front.* Pabst made the film in a gritty style, with a dark mood fitting in a war movie.

Westfront 1918 opens with the men all enjoying themselves in a French town on the western front. The men laugh, drink, sing, talk and flirt ceaselessly with the one female, a French peasant girl Yvette. The film follows four men in particular in the infantry, the Bavarian; the Student; Karl; and the Lieutenant. The four men look out for one another, clearly enjoying the close bond they share. The film presents a cacophony of images and sounds that represent the constant barrage of warfare the soldiers must deal with. We see barbwire and metal posts dotted throughout an otherwise bleak landscape of dirt. Smoke fills the air from explosions as a man adds another white cross to the growing pile that will mark men's graves. We hear bombs constantly exploding, the sound of unrelenting gunfire and helmets clinking as men try to escape death.

The constant warfare is interrupted when Karl receives his leave to go home. He's been at war for eighteen months and nine days at this point. He arrives home, dressed smartly in his clean uniform, piled with packages for his loved ones. The scene at home is bleak, as women and children stand in line to receive what little food is available. Karl's mother sees him but cannot leave her place in line for fear she will not receive food. Karl quietly enters his apartment, wanting to surprise his wife. He finds her in their bed with the butcher, both she and the butcher and ashamed and surprised at the soldier's return. Karl's reaction is not normal. He tells her "to forget it and make coffee" but also returns to the bedroom with his rifle. Karl invites the butcher to have coffee with them and orders him to kiss his wife. Karl, the Hysterical Veteran, is unhinged by his wife's betrayal. His wife explains that she traded sex with the butcher for food he provided her with. We get a glimpse into the home front of the war, where civilians' hunger triumphed over morality. When Karl leaves his wife to rejoin his comrades at the front he is joyful. She tells him he "behaved just as you were made of stone", illustrating how disconnected he is. Karl's wife is not shown in the same light as Lucie in the novel *The Road Back*. Karl's wife is not gleeful at getting something over on her husband. She explains the reality of her situation, trying anyway possible to survive the war years. Karl's mother does not shame her daughter in law nor does Karl chastise his wife for her betrayal; although when she tries to show him affection he is repulsed.

Figure 3.5. *Westfront 1918* (1930).

When Karl returns he is again confronted with the war. He seems much more comfortable among the barbwire, rifles and corpses than he did in his own home. The Student dies and the other three are taken to a field hospital. The hospital is woefully understaffed as doctors try to attend to men with missing limbs, one who has been blinded, others dying on stretchers. The stretchers pass by a statue of Jesus that is now rubble amongst the ruins. Pabst includes the Jesus image as a reminder of sacrifice and forgiveness. The Bavarian and Karl are physically and psychologically injured; and the Lieutenant goes insane. He starts shrieking in the middle of the battlefield and continues when they bring him to the hospital. The above image shows the Lieutenant becoming hysterical on the field of battle, surrounded by dead and dying men. His mind can no longer handle the death, pain and fear that are apart of trench warfare. He is a Hysterical Veteran. In another seen

the audience sees a dying Karl talking to his wife who appears to him. She says to please forgive her and that "we are all in trouble." Karl answers "It's everyone's fault." Karl's sentiment expresses the idea that it is not just he fault of the soldier, the government, the enthusiastic populace or the opposing countries; rather blame for World War I must be collective.

The idea of universal blame also appears in the American film, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930). Lewis Milestone (1895-1980) directed the Hollywood blockbuster. Milestone was a Jewish Russian émigré who came to the United States right before the start of World War I. He worked on odd jobs, including United States Army training films. He was already successful when he directed *All Quiet on the Western Front*, for which we won an Oscar as best director. The film was based on Erich Remarque's very successful novel *Im Westen nichts Neues.* It follows the story of a group of young men who volunteer for the German army and are stationed on the western front. Both the novel it is based on and the film begins with the words, "This story is neither an accusation nor a confession, and least of all an adventure, for death is not an adventure to those who stand face to face with it. It will try simply to tell of a generation of men who, even though they have escaped its shells, were destroyed by the war." These words set the tone for the entire film and stand in direct contrast to Ernst Jünger and others who found war's destruction invigorating. The film's message is that war is not an adventure and it is wrong to teach, preach and govern otherwise. The preamble also makes it clear that World War I made Hysterical Veterans. The film makes the argument that World War I shattered men; making them useless for civilian life.

The first scene in *All Quiet on the Western Front* depicts a bustling city with men marching off to war. Paul Bäumer and his classmates sit listening to their teacher tell them how proud he would be if they enlisted; that women flock to men in uniform; that one must put personal ambition aside for the fatherland. The teacher's nationalistic messages bring the students to tears as they imagine the heroic life of a soldier. The students break out in pandemonium to enlist for Germany. The students train and perform drills as they prepare for the war. The film clearly shows that this training does not prepare for the reality of the war. The men haze one of their superiors, Himmelstoss, for acting like a jerk. Their hazing makes them closer to one another and illustrates the brutality necessary for a soldier. They still behave in traditional masculine fashion.

The first time the former students experience the reality of the war they are all terrified, literally clinging to the seasoned veteran Katczinsky (Kat). Bombs explode and soldiers go blind, get limbs blown off and go hysterical upon hearing the unrelenting sound of gunfire. Men twitch, cry out, shake, clutch their wounds and have nightmares; all while living amongst the dirt, human waste, and rats. Their lack of adequate rations is clear as Kat must scrounge up whatever food he can find and steal out in enemy territory. The audience sees scenes similar to *Westfront 1918*, such as barbed wire, metal posts, trenches of dirt, steel helmets, smoke from exploding bombs and men dying. The monotonous battle scenes with long stretches of no dialogue reinforce the senselessness and absurdity of trench warfare.

The men discuss the war and who is to blame for starting it. Unlike the earlier scene in the classroom, there is no reverence for country or Kaiser among

the enlisted men. Rather, they realize they have more in common with the enemy soldiers than they do with the wealthy men who sent them to war. The scene of them criticizing the Kaiser had to be censored when the film showed in Germany so that it would not be seen as unpatriotic. The young men express how the war has ruined them for civilian life. They point out that the older soldiers have wives, kids and careers to return to at the end of the war. The young men feel their schooling was useless, that it did not prepare them for the war and that they have nothing to return to.

Similarly to *Westfront 1918, All Quiet on the Western Front* also has scenes of a field hospital. The first time Paul goes to the field hospital it is to comfort his friend Kemmerich who has been injured. Paul prays over his friend's body, crying out that his friend is only nineteen. The hospital is fairly clean and orderly although it is very busy and crowded. Paul later returns to a hospital when he and his classmate friend Albert Kropp are injured. Kropp is the epitome of the Hysterical Veteran. The doctor amputates Kropp's leg while Kropp is unconscious. When he sees his missing leg, Kropp becomes hysterical, vowing to kill himself the first chance he gets so that he will not live as a cripple.

Paul is the last of the former classmates to remain healthy enough to fight for Germany. He reluctantly takes his leave, returning to his childhood home. The home front Paul returns to is in much better condition than the one Karl returned home to in *Westfront 1918.* Paul's family still seems well off, they do not appear starving, although they happily accept the packages of sausages and bread that he brings. Paul looks around at his old books and butterfly collection with a sense of

bewilderment. It seems like someone else's life, not his. Paul's discomfort continues when his father parades him around his friends. Paul's father and his friends are clearly out of touch with the reality of the war. They believe the soldiers are better off than the civilians and that the army needs to just press on to Paris. The men demonstrate how clueless they are as they argue the best strategy. Paul's disconnect from home is finalized on his visit to his old classroom where he overhears his former teacher encouraging a new group of students to enlist. His former teacher tries to get Paul to tell the students of nobility and heroism in war but Paul refuses to lie to them. Instead Paul tells them how lost the soldiers are, and that it is not beautiful to die for your country. The reality is too much for the students who boo Paul out of the classroom. Paul decides to leave the next day, cutting his visit short because he cannot stand to perpetuate the myth of a heroic, victorious war.

Figure 3.6. *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930).

When Paul returns he barely recognizes anyone in his company anymore, as more men are dead and new boys replace them. Paul and Kat have a brief reunion

where Paul explains he and the other young soldiers like him are no longer fit for civilian life. The men must take cover as the enemy attacks. Paul carries Kat back to the barracks only to find that Kat died along the way. Paul is overwhelmed with sadness at Kat's passing. Paul goes back into battle but dies reaching for a butterfly. The filmmaker chose this ending sequence to show the fragility of life, symbolized by the butterfly. The butterfly also represents Paul's life before the war, which is beyond reach even if he physically survives.

Both *Westfront 1918* and *All Quiet on the Western Front* were released in Germany in 1930, at the end of the Weimar Republic. Both films were based on novels published the following year, and were written by German World War I veterans. *Westfront 1918* is the grittier of the two, perhaps because it lacks the Hollywood touch of *All Quiet on the Western Front. Westfront 1918* shows a bleaker home front certainly than *All Quiet on the Western Front.* It is interesting that while Karl returns home to a wife who betrayed him; Paul returns to an entire society that has betrayed him. Thus Karl's betrayal is personal while Paul's is universal. The two films were both very successful, with *All Quiet on the Western Front* being ranked number six and *Westfront 1918* being ranked number nine of the most successful films from 1930. [206] *Westfront 1918* was popular, but as with the novel, the popularity of *All Quiet on the Western Front* eclipsed the success of the German film. *All Quiet on the Western Front* premiered in Berlin to a stunned audience on December 4th, under heavy police presence. However, the next evening the police

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[206] Bernadette Kesler, *Film Front Weimar: Representations of the First World War in German Films of the Weimar Period (1919-1933),* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 128.

presence was diminished and the Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels led 150 brownshirts to disrupt the showing. They released mice into the theater along with sneezing powder and stink bombs. [207] Both films were eventually banned for their anti-German message when the Nazis assumed power. Neither film is anti-German. The two films simply express the notion that war destroys men, both psychically and psychologically.

Concluding Comments

Weimar Germany was a time of social instability as well as political and economic instability. The volatility in turn caused greater anxiety over any real or perceived changes to traditional gender roles. Because everything was in flux, gender roles needed clear and decisive separation. The Hysterical Veteran did not fit the ideal conventional masculine role because he suffered from what was considered a feminine disease. He also came back in defeat, rather than triumphant. The rampant inflation and dire economic situation only further emasculated the Hysterical Veteran. Finally, the Hysterical Veteran was seen as unfit for civilian life, including marriage. Since he was unable to adjust to married life, he was also unable to reproduce the next generation of mothers and soldiers.

Participation in the Great War haunted many German soldiers. Furthermore, the defeat in war complicated the status of those veterans as glorious warriors, fighting in the name of the Fatherland. German women received political enfranchisement for the first time along with visible gains in the employment sector. The trauma of the war, the defeat itself and the gains made by women all

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[207] www.smithsonianmag.com

emasculated the German veteran. Doctors diagnosed the unprecedented problem in veterans as hysteria. Doctors used degeneracy theory to argue veterans suffering from hysteria were predisposed to the disorder before their experience in war. [208] This made the doctors, government and military not responsible for the veteran's hysteria.

Those veterans considered hysterical were labeled degenerate because they represented the decline of German nationalism and masculinity. The Hysterical Veterans were the binary opposite of the Nietzschean Soldiers who viewed the war as invigorating. The Hysterical Veterans were unable to readjust to civilian life. They returned from the war broken, a shell of their former selves. The sheer number and prominence of Hysterical Veterans made them a symbol of moral degeneracy in Weimar Germany. Hysterical Veterans did not conform to nationalistic German ideas of masculinity. Civilians viewed them as a burden on the state because the veterans were too lazy to work for their money. Instead they wanted to live off other's labor and remain idle. Hysterical Veterans also had difficulty readjusting to married life and carrying on normal sexual relations with their loved ones. In this way they were not reproductive either. Hysterical Veterans were the most prominent symbols of male degeneracy in Weimar Germany.

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[208] Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-c. 1918* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 232.

CHAPTER 4: THE NIETZSCHEAN SOLDIER

> It is nothing but fanaticism and beautiful soulism to expect very much (or even, much only) from humanity when it has forgotten how to wage war….Many other such substitutes for war will be discovered, but perhaps precisely thereby it will become more and more obvious that such a highly cultivated and therefore necessarily enfeebled humanity as that of modern Europe not only needs wars, but the greatest and most terrible wars, consequently occasional relapses into barbarism, lest, by the means of culture, it should lose its culture and its very existence.
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> -Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Ein Buch für freie Geister* (Human All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits), 1878.

Friedrich Nietzsche, the influential German philosopher of the late 1800s, considered the very existence of Germany in danger if the young nation did not continue to wage war. According to Nietzsche, warfare was essential to not only the existence of Germany, but also that of modern Europe as a whole. He saw modern Europe, including Germany, as weakened-in need of a significant event in order to catapult Europeans into a more natural state of existence-for Nietzsche that event was warfare. The philosopher argued that there was no substitute for war, and that war must be terrible and continuous. Nietzsche did not write of war as some abstract idea. He volunteered in the Franco-Prussian War, serving briefly as a medical orderly before ill health forced him to return to his teaching post at the

University of Basel. [209] From this and other writings of Nietzsche we see a vision of masculinity as primal, brutal, courageous and dangerous. [210] Nietzsche was always popular throughout Germany but his "readership climbed strikingly after his death in 1900." [211] Thus by the advent of World War I, Nietzsche's influence was even greater than it had been in his life. Nietzsche's ideas on war were therefore not the ramblings of a philosopher no one read. Rather, his works and ideas on the need for constant warfare had real impact in post-World War I Germany.

War meant the retrenchment of traditional gender roles as men fought on the war front while women preserved life on the home front. In addition, military service required men be willing to sacrifice themselves to the greater cause of Germany, in the name of nationalism. Although Germany lost the war, not every defeated soldier emerged from the war broken and hysterical. Some German men emerged from the loss in the First World War with renewed strength, vigor and determination to make Germany a triumphant world power once more. The men emerging strengthened by the First World War were the *Übermensch* Nietzsche referred to in his work.

For German men post World War I, regeneration meant a turn towards hyper-masculinity. The historian, and German émigré, George Mosse has written extensively on masculinity, nationalism, sexuality and soldiery. Mosse argues that war creates an environment in which men depend on each other and exert the

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[209] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche,* ed., and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), 9.

[210] Ibid., 178-179. See also 97 & 478

[211] Chamberlain and Gilman, *Degeneration,* 17.

masculine qualities of discipline, self-reliance and courage. [212] This separation of the genders during war also creates a male only space, where some believed men could illustrate their true nature. This Rousseauian argument implies that women corrupt men's true nature. Women force men to be polite and civilized. But war was a time for men to express their true, unhindered masculinity. Mosse points out that World War I strengthened the idealized stereotype of manliness, even in defeat. Young men who were too young to serve in the Great War learned "that the war had fashioned an austere, strong willed German who had retained faith in himself and in his country's future even after defeat." [213] It was as if defeat made the Nietzschean Soldier even more heroic as he persevered in maintaining selflessness, camaraderie, bravery and brutality.

While discipline and bravery were important during wartime, brutality was essential. War requires men to possess the brutality so intrinsic in Western European notions of masculinity. Ernst Jünger, the World War I veteran and author, believed the experience of trench warfare allowed men to revert to their primordial instincts. Brutality was an essential part of primordial instincts, as men fought to survive by killing their enemy. The myth of men as naturally warlike and brutal, while women are peaceful and nurturing on the other hand, allowed an idealized

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[212] George Mosse, *The Image of Man: the Creation of Modern Masculinity.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 107-109.

[213] George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985), 114.

version of both stereotypes to continue into and after World War I. [214]An idealized masculinity could not survive without support during the Weimar Republic. Social construction of gender continued as boys played with toy soldiers and girls played with dolls. The educational system further strengthened the institutionalization of the stereotyped masculinity of the Nietzschean Soldier. [215] That stereotype of a militarized masculinity was also the ideal masculinity in Germany.

The very notion of an idealized German masculinity owes a huge debt to the German émigré and scholar George Mosse. Scholars of German history wrote traditionally male centered works when discussing the Great War. German men were featured overwhelmingly in studies on politics, economics and culture in Germany. This was especially true when the focus was war, as it was long considered a male domain. Mosse was the first in the English language to delve so deep into the German masculine psyche. Mosse examined German masculinity as an idealized stereotype and looked at how that stereotype impacted the rest of society. His works, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (1990) and *The Image of Man: the Creation of Modern Masculinity* (1996) filled a void in the scholarship of gender studies. While Mosse's work is illuminating, he does not address how this image of man and how the idealized soldier was displayed in Weimar Culture. The aim of this paper is to take Mosse's idealized stereotype of

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[214] Margaret Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Weitz, ed., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 1.

[215] Mosse, *The Image of Man,* 134-139.

German masculinity and see how artists, writers and filmmakers used it to reinforce order and stability in Weimar society.

Much like the German Mother, the Nietzschean Soldier was a symbol of regeneration for the beleaguered nation because of his selflessness and sacrifice. Germany needed people willing to privilege the nation and its efforts to regain power, prestige and integrity. Many Weimar contemporaries believed the road back from an emasculated, defeated Germany to a renewed, powerful Germany would require newly strengthened men to lead the way. The quest to find masculine heroes was hindered by the recent, catastrophic defeat of the German army. Many former soldiers were broken-labeled Hysterical Veterans, for their inability to deal with the horrors of 20th century warfare. But the Hysterical Veteran was not the only type of man to emerge from the war. There was also the Nietzschean Soldier. The Nietzschean Soldier was ideal for this renewal because he emerged from the war stronger, more resilient and determined in his quest to make Germany the greatest nation. He was a symbol of regeneration precisely because of his willingness to sacrifice his own life for the greater good of the nation. Once again, brutality was a crucial feature of this regenerated nationalism. The Nietzschean Soldier was a brutal, destructive force that had the ability to regenerate Germany through violent upheaval. The Nietzschean Soldier had the ability to regenerate through violent upheaval, but that was not the only way he could regenerate the nation. The Nietzschean Soldier functioned as symbol of regeneration through his commitment to provide and protect his family, and therefore the nation, through his hard work, sacrifice and steadfastness.

Art

There is an overabundance of art featuring the degenerate figures of Weimar Germany. There are also a number of artworks featuring the German Mother. Art depicting the Nietzschean Soldier is much more difficult to find. Artists who depicted the German World War I soldier heroically have largely been discredited in a post-Holocaust Germany. There is a tendency to conflate heroic/glorious depictions of the German World War I soldier with the rise of the Nazis, the remilitarization of Germany and ultimately with the horrifying events of the Holocaust. In addition, artists who later colluded with the Nazi regime have subsequently been discredited. While some of their official work survives, very little of their work in the Weimar years was preserved. This creates an erasure of memory and an unbalanced view of the Weimar period as dominated by what the Nazis would later call degenerate art. One must remember that this erasure was post 1945. There was a celebration of the Nietzschean Soldier in Weimar art, despite the lack of evidence.

Otto Dix (1891-1969) is one of the Weimar artists most associated with depictions of the Hysterical Veteran. Dix immediately and enthusiastically volunteered for the First World War. He served as an NCO and machine gunner throughout his years in the German Army. Dix was wounded several times during battle and was ultimately awarded the Iron Cross, second class for his bravery and service. His final wound almost killed him and he spent the end of the war in a hospital recovering. Unlike some of his fellow Weimar artists such as, Max Beckmann, Fritz Kircher and George Grosz, Dix did not suffer from a mental

breakdown as a result of the war. The majority of his soldier art is a scathing attack on German politicians and the German military, whom he believes sent a generation of German men to their unnecessary death. Dix painted rotting corpses and severely disfigured veterans as a way to illustrate both the horrific conditions that resulted from the war and as a protest towards increasing German militarization. However, there is an interesting contradiction in some of Dix's art featuring the German soldier. He himself did not find his experience of a soldier to be completely without merit. He painted or drew two examples of the Nietzschean Soldier.

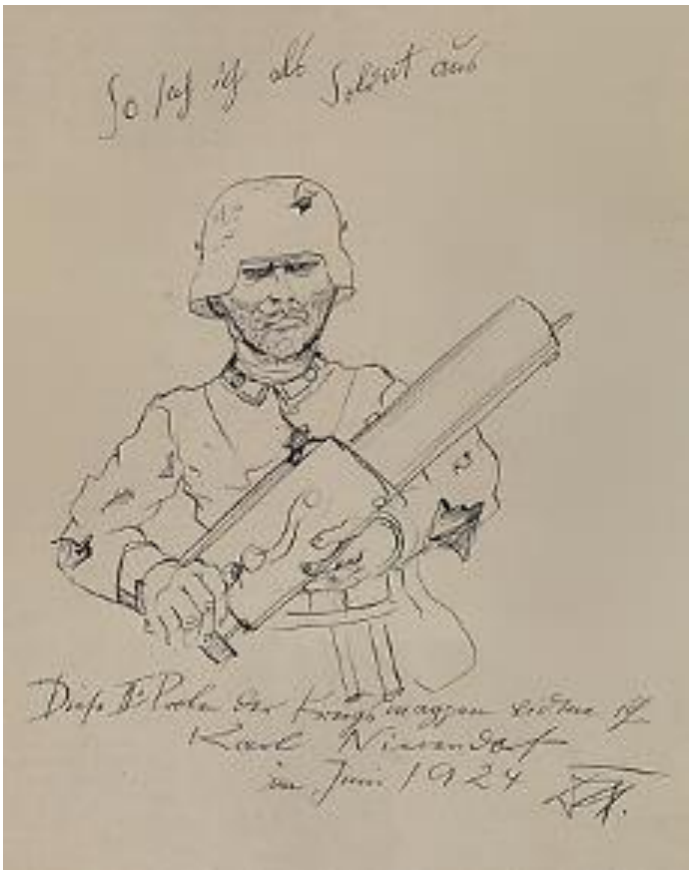

Figure 4.1. Otto Dix, *Self Portrait as Soldier* 1924.

The first example of the Nietzschean Soldier in Dix's work is his *Self Portrait as a Soldier*. Dix's self-portrait is done in black and white, like much of his work on

corpses and skeletons in World War I. The lack of color is striking compared to some of Dix's very colorful depictions of the Weimar Prostitute and the New Woman. The realistic style is also a contrast to Dix's grotesque caricature style that he is best known for. Dix chose to depict the Nietzschean Soldier alone, rather than in the company of his comrades. It is a testament to the isolation and self-reliance necessary for one to succeed as a soldier. Dix's Nietzschean Soldier is not a fresh-faced recruit. He appears older due to the facial hair and menacing look in his eyes. Dix, born in 1891, was in his mid-twenties during the war. It is interesting that he chose to portray himself as an older, seasoned veteran.

Dix's Nietzschean Soldier's uniform is in relatively good shape, with only a few rips in it. The rips make this soldier seem real, as if he has seen action on the front line. However, it is his eyes that truly give the impression of war experience. The Nietzschean Soldier has bags under his eyes from lack of sleep. He has a look of steel in them that one assumes he got from the horrors of war that he witnessed and committed. Dix's Nietzschean Soldier also smokes a cigarette. It was very common for soldiers to smoke while serving in World War I. Finally, Dix's soldier carries a large gun. The weapon appears too large for the soldier's body. It also looks extremely phallic. The weapon, cigarette, eyes of steel and the menacing grimace on the soldier's face all add to the identity of the Nietzschean Soldier. This Nietzschean Soldier looks like someone to fear. He looks prepared, resolved and experienced.

Dix was highly critical of the effect World War I had on the average soldier. He typically chose to portray his criticism of the war with disfigured veterans, smug German generals or rotting corpses. This self-portrait is a more complicated

condemnation of the war experience. One wonders what this Nietzschean Soldier looked like before he was ordered to kill others. Dix's self-portrait soldier has a bullet hole in his helmet. This implies that the soldier is already dead. Or perhaps he survived but is dead inside, signified by the bullet hole. With this drawing, one can conclude that war robs young men of their innocence. That it forces them to become hardened, insensitive to death and bestial in order to survive. Of course, not everyone considered this a negative consequence of war. It could be a positive if the resolve and brutality were used to rebuild Germany.

Another of Dix's drawings is the above rendering titled, *The War Shock Troops Advance Under Gas*. Dix very consciously chose the word "advance" in his title. This illustrates the violence and resilience of the Nietzschean Soldier. Even under the threat of a gas attack, the soldiers advance. They do not simply endure rather they push on even when threatened with poisoned gas. This type of courage exemplified the Nietzschean Soldier that emerged after World War I. He was stronger, but stronger specifically because of the war experience. The First World War provided the necessary arena for the Nietzschean Soldier to demonstrate his strength, resolve and brutality.

Figure 4.2. Otto Dix, *Sturmtruppe geht unter Gas vor: von Der Krieg* (*The War Shock Troops Advance Under Gas: from The War*) 1924.

Again, Dix chose black and white for this horrific scene. The absence of color is striking and conveys a more serious tone to the work than bright color would have. It is as if color would have made the work cartoonish instead of ghoulish. The gas masks resemble the face of a ghost, with huge gaping eye sockets. These War Shock Troops are truly Nietzschean Soldiers, emerging stronger from amidst the horror and chaos of trench warfare. In addition, the shock troops are not using guns during this battle. One carries a mace or hammer in his hand. The others have their hands spread out aggressively, as if they will use them for combat. The use of hand-to-hand combat is much more intimate than the distanced use of a firearm. Death is much closer and harder to ignore. The enemy is also closer and it is harder to ignore their humanity. Hand-to-hand combat requires brutality in order for the Nietzschean Soldier to survive.

Dix's shock troops are in the trenches of World War I. The artist shows barbed wire, metal posts and fragments of shelter that have been blown apart in this sketch. The fragments and jutting posts give the air of an apocalyptic nightmare. The gas masks convey the feeling that these men live in a post-apocalyptic environment. The surrounding environment and the gas masks emphasize the artificiality of this war. The gas masks convey a sense of artificiality that contrasts with the supposed natural state of war these men are in. Gas masks represent modernity, science and technology. They are a symbol that World War I is a truly modern war with new ways to kill the enemy even more efficiently than before. Dix's sketch of brutal trench warfare resembles many descriptions found in the writings of Jünger and in the films *Ich Hatt' Einen Kamaraden* and *Tannenberg.*

Another New Objectivity artist who spent time in the war and sketched about it was Otto Griebel, (1895-1972). Griebel recalled how his father forbade him to volunteer for the German Army in 1914, with all the other enthusiastic, young men. [216] The artist wrote that he was initially angry at not being able to enlist, but was thankful he had not when he lost two of his closest childhood friends in the first few months of the war. [217] Griebel started to seriously sketch around this time, abandoning his earlier career objective as a decorator. A year later, in 1915, the army drafted Griebel. The artist fought in the Battle of Somme in 1916, alongside

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[216] Otto Griebel, *Ich war ein Mann der Straße: Lebenserinnerungen eines Dresdner Malers (I was a Man on the Street: Memoirs of a Dresden painter),* trans. Matthias Griebel and Hans-Peter Lühr. ed., Irmfried Hiebel, Manfred Jendryschik and Alfred Halle (Leipzig, Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1986), 51.

[217] Ibid., 53.

Otto Dix. Griebel continued to fight on the Western Front in trench warfare throughout the rest of the war. He sustained serious injuries while fighting on the Western Front, leading to his deep antipathy toward militarism. He was sent to a field hospital for an operation and finally to a military hospital to recover. [218] At the Great War's end, Griebel was increasingly radicalized and sought revolution through the Communist Party(KPD). He actively participated in the November Revolution and cofounded two communist artists' organizations in Dresden. The artist strongly believed in the power of art as a tool for political change. [219]

Figure 4.3. Otto Griebel, *Enemy/Homicide in Uniform* 1923.

[218] Ibid., 60 & 65.

[219] Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann, ed., *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919-1933* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Munich and New York: Delmonico Books, 2015), 311.

In Griebel's *Enemy in Uniform"* we see two men in hand-to-hand combat. The painting is titled "Enemy in Uniform" and yet the two men clearly wear the same uniform. Their boots are identical, as is their pants, shirt, and belt. Griebel chose the title as an ironic nod to men having more in common with the combatant enemy soldier than they did with the officers, men in government and business men who sent them into war. The idea of a common brotherhood with enemy soldiers shows up in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, when Paul spends the night agonizing over killing a French soldier; in Jünger's writings of respect without animus for his enemies, and in *Westfront 1918* when the men discuss their disconnect from the officers.

The scene around the two men is filled with violence of war. The viewer sees an uneven landscape that looks like trenches have been built into it. A bomb or grenade explodes in the background of the two enemy soldiers, and we see a corpse lying near the explosion. Again the absence of color is especially powerful. It makes the painting stand apart from the very colorful art of the Weimar Republic. Like Dix's two artworks, Griebel understands the power of black and white to convey the importance of the situation. Unlike Dix, Griebel chose to depict his Nietzschean Soldier in actual combat with another man. This shows the enemy is not some abstract idea, but a flesh and blood man who the Nietzschean Soldier must kill in order to survive.

Griebel's *Enemy in Uniform* depicts the Nietzschean Soldier in his actions and appearance. The facial expression of the man doing the killing is the most obvious symbol of the brutality needed to survive in trench warfare. Remarque and Jünger

both recall scenes of meeting the enemy in hand-to-hand combat. Both authors detail the barbarism necessary for surviving such a close encounter. The initial romanticism associated with a bayonet faded once men realized the reality of such a close encounter. *Enemy in Uniform* is full of action, violence and danger. There is actual motion in the drawing, as the Nietzschean Soldier kills his enemy. The viewer sees the brutality necessary for warfare, as the Nietzschean Soldier plunges his bayonet into his enemy's chest. The danger in *Enemy in Uniform* is palpable as the Nietzschean Soldier's cartoonish grimace tells us he must kill or be killed.

Griebel's second painting, *Abgekämpfte Truppe* has a very different style than *Enemy in Uniform.* Griebel uses a realistic style in *Abgekämpfte Truppe* that looks akin to a photograph. Both of Griebel's artworks were made in very significant years of the Weimar Republic. 1923 and 1931 were watershed years in the economic crises of Weimar Germany. In 1923 hyperinflation peaked at 4.2 billion marks to one dollar, making the mark basically worthless. This was also the year of the failed Beer Hall Putsch, as well as three Communist uprisings. [220] 1931 was equally as turbulent, as evidenced by the collapse of the National Bank; stock market closing after the American stock market crash two years prior; and unemployment reaching 4.5 million. [221] Griebel sympathized specifically with the Communists and their efforts to reshape the nation into a more egalitarian model. While he drew the Nietzschean Soldier, he did so with a critical eye. Griebel consciously chose two of

[220] Ibid., ii.

[221] Ibid., 363.

the direst years in the history of the Weimar Republic in which to present his artwork.

The five men in *Abgekämpfte Truppe* look as though they have been fighting on the Western Front for many years together. Griebel purposely titled this work "weary troops" to emphasize the soldiers' exhaustion and sacrifice. These are not fresh recruits, new to battle. They are battle tested Nietzschean Soldiers who have proven their worth on the battlefield. The men stand among the desolation of warfare as in another Griebel work, *Drei Frontsoldaten,* but instead of standing in the rubble of a destroyed city, they stand in no man's land. The five men walk though mud, with metal posts, barbed wire and craters of water from where bombs exploded on them.

Figure 4.4. *Abgekämpfte Truppe* (*Weary Troop*), 1931.

The men of *Abgekämpfte Truppe* stand together; they are not the isolated Nietzschean Soldier that Dix depicts in his renderings of his own World War I experience. Griebel's Nietzschean Soldiers rely on each other in the ultimate test of manhood. These men have fought, killed and survived together, perhaps because of each other. They embody the spirit of the Nietzschean Soldier because of that reliance on one another. In his book, *In Stahlgewittern,* author and World War I veteran, Ernst Jünger recalls how the recruits and volunteers bonded in training and especially through the experience of actual battle. [222] Griebel highlights that camaraderie in the way the five men walk together, remaining a cohesive unit.

These five Nietzschean Soldiers are loaded down with supplies. The one on the far left has his head bandaged, suffering from a wound and yet still marching with his fellow soldiers. Three of the five men wear steel helmets and one smokes a pipe. Jünger recalled, "He was the first German Soldier I saw in a steel helmet, and he straightaway struck me as the denizen of a new and far harsher world." [223] The steel helmet is a symbol of the Nietzschean Soldier because it is a type of armor used to protect oneself from harm. It is also made from steel, symbolizing strength and resilience in the face of destruction. Thus, the steel helmet is featured in all five renderings of the Nietzschean Soldier. It is the unifying element, representing the masculine ideal of protection, steadfastness and confidence. For Jünger and others, the steel helmeted Nietzschean Soldier was the symbol of what Germany needed to return to the nation's former glory.

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[222] Ernst Jünger, *Storm of Steel,* trans. Michael Hofmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1920, 2015), 5.

[223] Ibid., 92.

Literature

Numerous Weimar authors depicted the tragedy of World War I by illustrating how personally devastating the war experience was for many German soldiers. As seen in the first part of this study, authors such as Remarque, Döblin, and Brecht, highlighted the experience of the Hysterical Veteran, whose psyche the Great War shattered. However, not every author agreed with Remarque, Döblin, and Brecht that the war was an overwhelmingly negative event for the soldiers who survived it. Other authors/veterans found themselves invigorated by the constant threat of danger and death. For these men, the war was a reaffirmation of traditional masculine traits of survival, bravery and brutality. It was a chance to prove themselves as *men,* in a modern, sedentary world.

More than any other author, Ernst Jünger (1895-1998) exemplifies the Nietzschean Soldier. Born in Heidelberg, Jünger ran away from school to enlist in the French foreign legion in 1913. His father brought him back to Germany and Jünger volunteered for the German Army with the outbreak of World War I. Jünger was injured at least seven times and at the end of the Great War he was awarded the Pour le Mérite medal. It is Germany's highest military honor. After the war the author studied botany and zoology. He also published his musings on World War I in several autobiographical accounts. He based his later writings on his war diaries, giving them authentic credibility lacking in secondary accounts. The author did not set up the context of his writings with specifics-as if his tale of war was universal enough on its own. Jünger's publishers initially printed only 2,000 copies of Jünger's first literary effort, *In Stahlgewittern* (Storm of Steel) in 1920. The author's family

originally published the work, naming the family gardener as the publisher of the work. Jünger's family considered his work important but assumed only veterans would be interested in his account of the war. The memoir went through seven more editions and is still widely popular. [224] The publishers and author did not anticipate the obsessive preoccupation with World War I that would define much of the Weimar Republic and make the memoir a must read. *In Stahlgewittern* is dedicated "For the Fallen." The revisions are interesting in themselves. For instance, the 1924 revision is extremely nationalistic. [225] He celebrates Germany unabashedly in this version and criticizes the enemy more aggressively. He later changed toned down his nationalism in the 1934 revision which circulated abroad.

In his writings, Jünger famously wrote about this new Nietzschean man who was forged in the steel, mud and blood of the trenches. Jünger saw the Great War as regenerative because it created this new hyper-masculine being. The author explained, "Grown up in an age of security, we shared a yearning for danger, for the experience of the extraordinary. We were enraptured by war. We thought of it as manly, as action, a merry dueling party on flowered, blood-bedewed meadows. [226] This quote speaks to one of the main driving forces in the war. Critics maintain that at the beginning of the 20th century, men were bored with their sedentary lives. They no longer had to hunt, forage and provide in the same way they had before. Therefore, war provided an opportunity for adventure for men dissatisfied with

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[224] Ibid., viii.

[225] Ibid., xiii-xiv.

[226] Ibid., 5.

their mundane existence. There also had not been a major war in over 100 years. People forgot how truly destructive war was on nations, the land and most of all, the human psyche. The language Jünger uses to describe warfare illustrates his mindset. His description of war as "a merry dueling party on flowered, blood-bedewed meadows" speaks volumes. A duel is not just a battle. It is a battle with rules, a code and presumably honor. It is not street thugs fighting it out. A duel is an aristocratic, even royal, pastime. Thus, Jünger sees purpose, honor and even joy in the experience of war. He is not numb to the pain, sadness and death that come with it; rather he expects bloodshed as an integral part of war.

The notion of the war as noble was echoed in Weimar Germany by those who viewed World War I as Jünger did. Nationalists argued war was a test of manhood because it meant sacrificing one's life for a greater good. In 1929, the German writer and literary critic, Philipp Witkop published a collection of war letters from young soldiers who died in service during World War I. He meant for the letters to stand as a living memorial to the fallen soldiers and his publisher sold around 200,000 copies of the collection in the interwar years. [227] In the preface to the original edition Witkop wrote of the dead soldiers, although "they hate war in itself and shrink from the bloodshed, the dirt, the terror and the privations; yet to not one of them is there any question of where their duty lies: the Fatherland has need of its sons, and as a matter of course they must answer the call." [228] Witkop managed to criticize the war itself while still revering the nationalistic message that supported the call to arms.

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[227] A.F. Wedd, *German Students' War Letters.* Translated and arranged from the Original Edition of Dr. Philip Witkop (Philadelphia: Pine Street Books, 1929, 2002), xiv.

[228] Ibid., xxvi.

He painstakingly chose examples of letters that demonstrated the poetic, romantic ideal of soldiers who fought in the war.

Similarly to the fallen soldier/students in Witkop's work, Jünger's writings about war are also romantic. There is hope, male bonding, honor and excitement in his words. They convey an antiquated, romantic vision of warfare that reality does not support. Jünger's writings differ dramatically from Remarque's. It is hard to believe they fought in and wrote about the same war. However, Jünger and Remarque both see war as destructive. The key difference is how they view destruction. Remarque sees the destruction of World War I as catastrophic, something that most men are incapable of moving past. For Remarque, war is so destructive that it tears apart one's soul. It leaves a shattered shell of a man. For Jünger, warfare is similarly destructive. But the difference is that Jünger sees a positive opportunity for man to emerge strengthened by destruction. Instead of creating a shattered man, Jünger sees war as creating a new Nietzschean man of steel.

Jünger sees the Nietzschean Soldier as Germany's possible redeemer because he is a new man, strengthened from the horror and brutality of war. It is the experience of war and defeat that has made these men capable of rising up in the name of the Fatherland, rising up to regenerate Germany. Jünger wrote, "The war is not the end but the prelude to violence. It is the forge in which the new world will be hammered into new borders and new communities. New forms want to be filled with blood, and power will be wielded with a hard fist. The war is a great school,

and the new man will bare our stamp." [229] For Jünger the war was just the beginning of the violence, he saw the need for it to continue. He sees the Great War as a forge and a forge is somewhere where metal is malleable. Thus Jünger views World War I as a great forge that can change men for the better, make them stronger.

Some critics have tried to label Jünger as pro-Nazi, because of his militaristic writings about the First World War. Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party praised Jünger's writings on World War I because they supported a rearmed, aggressive Germany. However, Jünger was never a member of the Nazi party nor particularly enthusiastic about their ability to regenerate Germany. Hitler and Jünger did exchange signed copies of their two books but Jünger twice refused a seat in the Reichstag for the Nazi Party. [230] Hitler admired Jünger's writings because he could use them to help justify the rearmament of Germany. Hitler co-opted Jünger's positive portrayal of the war in his attempt to foster another war.

It is difficult to discuss Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) as simply a Weimar author, writing on the Nietzschean Soldier. He was the architect of mass killings, a violent anti-Semite and the chief aggressor of World War II. But all of that is hindsight. For the purpose of this study, I will examine him as a Weimar author who believed the Nietzschean Soldier was an essential factor in the regeneration of the German people and the German nation. Hitler was born in Austria-Hungary in 1889. He was interested in art and made a meager living selling postcards and advertisements. Hitler tried and failed twice to gain entry to the Academy of Fine Arts. He grew up

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[229] Ernst Jünger, *Fire,* 19.

[230] Ernst Jünger, *Storm of Steel*, viii.

identifying with German Bavaria, which was across the border; thus advocating a *Groß Deutschland* approach. [231] Hitler volunteered for the Bavarian Army, served in World War I and was rewarded the Iron Cross for his efforts. After a failed coup landed him in prison, Hitler wrote his manifesto, *Mein Kampf* (1925). Similarly to Jünger, Hitler dedicated his manifesto to who he considers fallen soldiers. His dedication reads in part, "So-called national authorities denied these dead heroes a common grave. Therefore I dedicate to them, for common memory, the first volume in this work. As its blood witnesses, may they shine forever, a glowing example to the followers of our movement." [232] Hitler listed the men who died in the failed putsch before his nationalistic dedication. The dedication provides insight into his ideas of masculinity, nationalism and national memory. He dismisses the Weimar government as illegitimate and claims the fallen men are heroes to Germany. According to Hitler, the dead men are an example of greatness because they risked their lives for their cause. He believed that cause to be the regeneration of Germany through violent insurrection.

Hitler's writings for the regeneration of Germany emphasize a racial element not seen in the works of Jünger and others. The racial factor was central for Hitler. He believed Germany suffered from moral degeneration that resulted mainly from racial degeneration. His chief targets were Jews. He believed they and others who he deemed outsiders polluted the true German culture and morality. Hitler wrote Jews

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[231] The Groß Deutschland concept is one that advocated uniting all ethnic Germans under one state.

[232] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf,* trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925, 1943), Dedication

were fake, stupid, had no culture and were diseased. [233] He also argued Jews were the chief purveyors of prostitution and the white slave trade. Hitler saw Jews as immoral because of their supposed association with prostitution. He also decried what he saw as their usurpation of mainstream politics and world finance. Hitler thought Jews were so dangerous because they had the ability to take "over a foreign culture, imitating or rather ruining it." [234] Hitler used the Jews as a scapegoat for anything and everything wrong with German culture.

Hitler's anti-Semitic diatribes were part of his xenophobic nationalism that called for an Aryan homeland away from all foreign elements. Hitler's nationalism had a Fascistic element to it in that he believed war to be an appropriate manner to demonstrate a nation's power and dominance. In *Mein Kampf,* Hitler describes how disappointed he was that he was not born 100 years earlier, so he could have fought in the Wars of Liberation. [235] He sees war as expression of strength, a time for men to prove their honor, bravery and patriotism. According to Hitler, World War I was a lost opportunity for Germany. He will provide another.

Hitler echoes Jünger's sentiments that despite losing World War I, German soldiers emerged from the experience stronger, more disciplined, and ready to lead the German people back to their former glory. He talks of recruiting World War I veterans for the Nazi party because these men are "accustomed to discipline, and from their period of service raised in the principle: nothing at all is impossible,

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[233] Ibid., 150, 253, 300-301.

[234] Ibid., 303 & 59-60.

[235] Ibid., 157-58.

everything can be done if you only want it." [236] This statement at first seems like a contradiction because Germany after all, lost the war. But for Hitler and many other fanatical nationalists, the German army did not lose the war. Rather, the lack of resolve on the part of the civilians (i.e. Jews and women) is what cost Germany the war. Hitler recruited these former soldiers because he needed men accustomed to violence, adversity and following orders.

According to Hitler, the war experience could transform "uncertain and soft natures into men." [237] This echoes the thoughts of German doctors who thought the war was a cure for peacetime degeneration. Thus every man who enlisted or was drafted into the Great War had the opportunity to emerge stronger from the mud and blood of the trenches. Even if they originally had a more pacifist nature, the mere experience of war could transform them. Hitler expresses messianic belief that war was transformative. He, much like Nietzsche and Jünger, thought that war had the ability to regenerate Germany.

Hitler, like many of his Weimar contemporaries, believed Germany suffered from a moral crisis after World War I. He believed the crises started before the war but that the unfair dictates of the Treaty of Versailles exacerbated the already decaying condition. In *Mein Kampf,* Hitler argued, "The fact that millions bear in their hearts the desire for a basic change in the conditions obtaining today proves the deep discontent under which they suffer. It expresses itself in thousand fold manifestations, with one in despair and hopelessness, with another in ill will, anger

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[236] Ibid., 356.

[237] Ibid.

and indignation; with this man in indifference, and with that man in furious excesses." [238] Hitler believed this moral degeneration was widespread in Germany during the Weimar Republic. He also believed that the majority of Germans wanted to find a way out of the present degeneration and rebuild Germany.

Any comparison of Hitler and Jünger is unfair to Jünger, who never expressed anti-Semitic views such as those held by Hitler and the Nazis. However, both authors found World War I as a noble test of manhood, an honorable cause to give their life to if necessary. By comparing their views on World War I we can better understand the danger of such rhetoric. It could be relatively harmless, as in the case of Jünger, or it could lead to death and destruction, as in the case of Hitler. Nationalism paired with warfare could in fact be very dangerous. Showcasing nationalism and warfare in the cultural realm had the ability to not only reach present contemporaries but generations to come. Hitler's views on war as regenerative demonstrate the inherent danger in celebrating mass violence and destruction.

Film

In immediate post World War Germany, war films and military topics in general were off limits for major motion pictures. [239] The wound of defeat was still too raw for many in Weimar Germany to enjoy seeing the Great War depicted. They had lived so long with the war and wanted a reprieve from pain and suffering when they went to the cinema. Popular films in the early 1920's include fantastical stories

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[238] Ibid., 330.

[239] "Weimar Film," Google, accessed January 30, 2019, http://encyclopedia.1914-1918.online.net/article/filmcinema_germany

or ones with a message of morality interwoven in the storyline. [240] Similarly to literature, it was not until the mid-late 1920's that German filmmakers began to explore World War I and what it meant for Weimar society. [241]

One of the first films to explore Germany's role in World War I was the 1926 Conrad Wiene directed film, *Ich Hatt' Einen Kameraden* (I had a Comrade). The title was from a popular poem by the same name, written by Ludwig Uhland in 1809. Uhland wrote the poem at the time of Napoleonic occupation as a lament about a fallen soldier. [242] The poem is about two soldiers walking together; when one dies he literally becomes part of the surviving comrade and lives on through him. The poem is an ode to the German warrior, the Nietzschean Soldier. Wiene (1878-1934) was born to a Jewish family in Vienna. His father Carl was a successful actor and his brother directed *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari.* Wiene's fate is unknown after he left Berlin for Vienna in 1934. *Ich Hatt' Einen Kameraden* was shot entirely in the studio, except for the closing image. This differs considerably with other war movies that use actual war footage to give them authenticity. [243]

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[240] *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* (1920); *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler* (1922); *Nosferatu* (1922); *The Last Laugh* (1924) are some of the successful films of the early 1920's in Weimar Germany.

[241] *Namenlose Helden* (1925); *Ich Hatt einen Kameraden* (1926); *Unsere Emden* (1926); *Der Weltkrieg I* (1927); *Der Weltkrieg II* (1928); *Die Somme* (1930); *Douamont* (1931); *Morgenrot* (1932/33) are just some of the Weimar movies featuring World War I.

[242] Volker Langbehn, ed., *German Colonialism, Visual Culture and Modern Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 229.

[243] Bernadette Kester, *Film Front Weimar: Representations of the First World War in German Films of the Weimar Period, 1919-1933* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 207.

Figure 4.5. ***Ich Hatt' Einen Kamaraden*** **(I Once Had a Comrade) 1926.**

Wiene's film, *Ich Hatt' Einen Kameraden,* tells the story of two young soldiers, Jürgen von Goritz (played by Olaf Fjord) and Hellmuth von Rhaden (played by Carl de Vogt). The first part of the film introduces the audience to the two comrades, Jürgen and Hellmuth. Jürgen is the ideal Nietzschean Soldier, caring for his widowed, blind mother, engaged to a respectable girl Maria (played by Grete Reinwald), and devoted to the German army. Hellmuth is not an ideal Nietzschean Soldier because of his weakness for gambling and alcohol. Hellmuth is not able to control his passions and loses his job with the army because of his addictions. Unlike Jürgen, Hellmuth also has no family members to speak of, let alone anyone dependent on him. He is therefore not responsible for a household in the way that Jürgen is. And finally, Hellmuth falls in love with Jürgen's fiancé Maria after wrongly assuming a flower given to him was from her-it was really from her sister Hilde.

The two soldiers journey to an unnamed African colony so that Jürgen can advance his career in the army and Hellmuth can redeem himself through re-enlisting. Again Jürgen symbolizes the Nietzschean Soldier in his quest for

advancement so he can better care for his future wife Maria, their family, and his widowed mother. He also shows considerable restraint, maintaining a respectable distance from the native girl Fatuma who falls in love with him. Sexual restraint and control are key factors for the Nietzschean Soldier. He must only release that control with appropriate women. Fatuma was not a respectable German woman, nor a prostitute. Jürgen resembles Jünger in his bravery, as he volunteers to lead a dangerous expedition. Hellmuth accompanies his friend on the dangerous mission, demonstrating the gallantry and selflessness needed for him to become a Nietzschean Soldier. While trying to rescue the German flag, Jürgen is shot and falls. Hellmuth assumes his friend is dead and in true Nietzschean Soldier fashion, completes the task his fallen comrade could not.

Hellmuth leaves Africa and returns to Jürgen's home, where Maria and Hilde have been caring for Jürgen's mother. The film historian Bernadette Kester, points out that the three German women symbolize the home front for both of the Nietzschean Soldiers. Jürgen's mother, Maria and Hilde are mostly seen in the living room of the widow's home. They do needlework, drink tea and read. [244] The three women are the very picture of domesticity as they are completely dependent on the two men to protect and provide for them. Hellmuth's growth as a Nietzschean Soldier is complete as he convinces Maria to tell Jürgen's mother the truth that her son is dead. Hellmuth is now controlled, disciplined and honest. When Maria finally agrees to tell her future mother-in-law the truth, Jürgen miraculously reappears. He did not die in Africa; rather he was badly injured and lost his memory. He regained

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[244] Ibid., 210.

his memory in a field hospital after a kind nurse read the bible to him. Jürgen and Maria are reunited and continue to care for Jürgen's widowed mother. Hellmuth now returns Hilde's feelings of love and the two set sail to return to Africa. The final line of the film reads, "Through peaceful work we want to win it back-for it was German…and should become German again." The message of the movie is clearly nationalistic and designed to motivate the public to support an effort to regain the lost African colonies. [245]

While Jürgen is a Nietzschean Soldier at the outset of the film, *Ich Hatt' Einen Kamaraden,* Hellmuth becomes one. Both men show extreme devotion to Jürgen's widowed, blind mother. She is totally dependent on others, a tragic figure whose greatest joy in life is her son. When Hellmuth believes Jürgen is dead, he is willing to provide for his fallen comrade's mother. Jürgen illustrates the ideals of the Nietzschean Soldier throughout the entire film. He meticulously plans his advancement through the army to best care for his current and future family. Furthermore, Jürgen shows complete restraint by not engaging in a sexual relationship with the native girl, Fatuma. He is a faithful, devoted, and controlled Nietzschean Soldier. Jürgen also illustrates his bravery by volunteering for a dangerous mission. Hellmuth's journey is more complicated. He certainly represents self-reliance, as he really has no one besides Jürgen. Hellmuth also shows self-control, selflessness and devotion by keeping his feelings about Maria from her fiancé. Hellmuth did not have to return to Germany to Jürgen's family but he does. *Ich Hatt' Einen Kamaraden* is a celebration of the Nietzschean Soldier. The most

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[245] Langbehn, ed., *German Colonialism,* 230.

significant relationship of the film is that of the two comrades. It is their love, devotion and respect for each other that allows both of them to succeed.

Ich Hatt' Einen Kamaraden was one of the first films in Weimar Germany to tackle the Great War. Perhaps because of the remote colonial setting it was more palpable to domestic audiences. Both *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Westfront 1918* came out around the ten-year anniversary of the armistice. The two films were critical of Germany's entry and prolonged participation in World War I. However, not every filmmaker shared such a disparaging view of the war and wanted to highlight the glory of battle during the Great War. One such work to examine Germany's role in World War I is the Heinz Paul film, *Tannenberg* (1932). Paul (1893-1983) was a prolific and successful director during the Weimar Republic. *Tannenberg* was produced by UFA studios and employed 8,000 people. It was also expensive to make on location in East Prussia. This film was very popular at the time of its release in 1932. It was re-released in many other countries, including the United States. The films reputation suffered from its 1936 re-release under the Nazi regime. *Tannenberg* was not a Nazi film. It did, however, depict a triumphant German victory on the battle front-something the Nazis endorsed in their efforts to return Germany to a dominant military power. Thus it was only available through a special Internet website devoted to German war films. [246]

[246] It came without any subtitles, no English version exists. Only a four minute clip of the end is available on YouTube.

Figure 4.6. Poster for *Tannenberg* (1932).

The question arises why is this film so offensive that it is not preserved at the same convenient rate as *Westfront 1918*, which is decidedly anti-war. Both films used actual footage from World War I reels and both depicted things from the German perspective. The key difference being that *Westfront 1918* did not depict a victory for the Germans, while *Tannenberg* does. The film, *Tannenberg* is based on the famous 1914 battle of Tannenberg during World War I, in which the German side emerged victorious over the much larger Russian forces. General Paul von Hindenburg actually named the battle fought in East Prussia, Tannenberg, to commemorate the victory over the Slavs. In 1410, Polish-Lithuanian warriors defeated Teutonic Knights at Tannenberg. By renaming the battle Tannenberg,

Hindenburg made the former site of defeat a site of victory for the Germans. [247] The battle of Tannenberg has taken on almost mythic status in Germany's national narrative because it was such a stunning victory. Thus, the battle of Tannenberg remains one of the main points of German pride from World War I.

In the film, Paul focuses on the battle of Tannenberg by using actual historical footage intermixed with recreated war scenes. The vast majority of the historical footage was from the German side. The audience sees the soldiers marching, bombs exploding, bombed out buildings and desolated landscape. As in *Westfront 1918,* the film *Tannenberg* also used many World War I veterans to play their former role as soldiers on the big screen. In addition, the film was shot on location in East Prussia, creating a landscape of authenticity. [248] Paul uses this footage to demonstrate the reality of war. The filmmakers wanted the film to premiere on the anniversary of the victorious battle, but the premiere was delayed until footage of the actor playing Hindenburg was cut down. President Hindenburg reportedly did not like the fact that the actors chosen to play him looked so much like him, and made the censors delay the films release. [249] The opening begins with a map of the war fronts and arrows all pointing at part of Germany. The message is clear-Germany is under attack from different sides and is fighting a defensive war. Furthermore, the arrows make it clear that Germany is outnumbered. We next see a calendar with the date, bombing, a strategy meeting, and finally a pastoral scene.

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[247] Alan Palmer, *The Baltic: A New History of the Region and Its People* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2007), 311.

[248] Kester, *Film Front Weimar,* 88 &112.

[249] Ibid., 113-114.

There is a personal storyline interwoven in the war film *Tannenberg*. The personal storyline is Captain von Arndt going away to fight, leaving his wife and daughter behind. The Captain is the embodiment of the Nietzschean Solider. He passionately kisses his wife goodbye, clearly worried about their safety in his absence. We see the Captain's servants lined up to wave goodbye to him and the other soldiers; he is the picture of a responsible employer. The women in the film, including the Captain's wife Grete, all have long hair that they pull back. They also all wear dresses, not one is shown in pants or any of the styles of the New Woman. The women in the film feed and care for children or wounded soldiers in a make shift hospital. They are devoted to the care of others. The men are also all soldiers, save for a few older men who stay behind to work, or young boys.

There are many scenes of the generals deciding on what strategy to employ. This is a direct contrast to what the audience saw in *Westfront 1918* or *All Quiet on the Western Front.* In those two anti-war films, the audience only sees the common enlisted men complain about the ignorance of the military officials. In *Tannenberg* we repeatedly see military officials examining maps and coming up with battle plans. Another contrast is the idea of movement in the anti-war films versus *Tannenberg.* In *Westfront 1918* and *All Quiet on the Western Front* there is a sense of never getting anywhere, the soldiers spending so much time in the trenches that it becomes mundane. In contrast, *Tannenberg* is full of constant motion from the arrows, soldiers marching, trains going past and refugees leaving one area for the next.

Tannenberg is not simply a heroic war movie. It does not celebrate with unabashed arrogance. Cannons blast, machine gun fire is heard, injured men lay bandaged and corpses are piled up. The film depicts men in the hospital crying out for their mothers and desolation of the towns near the fighting. The final scene is of a graveyard of crosses with solemn music playing in the background. The most profound difference in the two anti-war movies and *Tannenberg* is the effect of the war on the soldiers. Yes, men dying call for their mothers, but they do not lose control, shake, talk negatively about the war, feel disconnected at home or long for death. No one in *Tannenberg* becomes hysterical and goes to a hospital. The only wounded the audience sees is those with physical wounds. The Nietzschean Soldiers in *Tannenberg* are resolute, patriotic and confident.

Ich Hatt' Einen Kamaraden and *Tannenberg* both feature the Nietzschean Soldier as an idealized male figure. The Nietzschean Soldiers in these two films volunteer for the war, they are not conscripted into it. They answer the call to war in defense of their country and seem honored to do so. They display the Nietzschean Soldier qualities of sacrifice, courage, and brutality. They kill men and risk their lives throughout the films. They also want to protect the women in their lives and seemingly fight in the war in defense of their families.

The men are Nietzschean Soldiers and the women in the films support that identity. For instance, in *Ich Hatt' Einen Kamaraden*, the three German women are dependent on Jürgen, and to some extent Hellmuth. They look to them for guidance, protection, provisions, and love. Unlike her German counterpart Maria, Fatuma exudes confidence and takes decisive action. The female characters in *Tannenberg*

are also traditional German women who depend on their men for protection. Captain von Arndt's wife, Grete and her two sisters wait at the house while the men leave to fight in the war. They also spend their time demonstrating characteristics of the German Mother. They are not only dependent, but they are useful. Grete has a child who she raises with the help of her sisters and servants. When the war comes to their home, the women all transform the home into a hospital to care for the wounded. They cook, care for children, and do household chores. Women in these two films never try to usurp any male task, job or role. They support the Nietzschean Soldier completely.

Concluding Comments

"Like Spengler, Hitler, and so many others, Jünger believed that rejuvenation could come only through war, and those who sought to avoid this fundamental law of nature were only 'ridiculous', the 'pests of civilization' whose beliefs led to civilization's decay." [250]It was as if peacetime degeneration of inaction was worse than suffering during war. Warfare was a necessary part of moral regeneration specifically because it required a clear separation of sexes. This distinction allowed men to embrace their primordial, inner nature of a Nietzschean Soldier. This thinking considered the rejection of ideal masculinity to be responsible for much of the moral degeneration of Weimar Germany.

The Nietzschean Soldier represented a past world, where each gender had a clearly defined role. The Nietzschean Soldier's role of protector and provider were

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[250] Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 339. Weitz is using Jünger's words from *Corpse 125: A Chronicle of Trench Warfare of 1918* (London: Chatto & Windows, 1930), ix & 2.

the most significant factors of his identity. His ability to defend the nation, his family and his way of life were paramount to his feelings of superiority. The Nietzschean Soldier lived in constant danger but that danger was justified because it was for a greater good. The Nietzschean Soldier did not live in a constant state of warfare. His chief role during peacetime was as a provider, again for his nation, family and fellow countrymen.

In the art, literature and film of Weimar Germany, one sees that figures of moral degeneration were not the only subject. Artists, authors and filmmakers consciously showed another side of Germany, one based on strict demarcation between gender and class. War, if not openly celebrated, was at least seen as necessary in these works.

CHAPTER 5: THE GERMAN MOTHER

> If marriage is disturbed, family life is thereby endangered, and if marriage difficulties become particularly numerous, the preservation and propagation of the nation will also be impaired.
>
> -Ida Rost, *Die Ehescheidungen der Jahre 1920-1924 von in Sachsen geschlossenen Ehen, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Dauer der Ehen und des Heiratsalters der geschiedenen Ehegatten.* (Leipzig: Ullstein Verlag, 1927)

In a 1927 study on marriage and divorce in Weimar Germany, Ida Rost summed up how the moral panic in Germany directly related to the German Mother. Rost and other contemporaries saw a direct correlation between regenerating the nation and regenerating the family. It was one and the same for them. German contemporaries saw the acceptance of the traditional role of the German Mother as the best way to ensure the prosperity and continuation of family life. Therefore, it was chiefly the German Mother who was responsible for cultivating a successful marriage, leading to children and the continuation of the nation. It was she who must repair what has been broken by the moral degeneracy of Weimar Germany. The German Mother regenerated the family and thus the nation through her self-sacrifice, hard work and devotion.

Weimar contemporaries contrasted their depiction of the selfish New Woman with the ideal German Mother who subjugated any personal aspirations to that of others. Within the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate, if the New Woman represented the rupture of the Great War; the German Mother symbolized the

idealized vision of Germany before the war destroyed it. The German Mother was not a creation of the post-war world. She was a much older construct, steeped in unsullied German culture. The German Mother was not just an ideal; she was also a myth created to symbolize stability, altruism and morality. The German Mother was first and foremost a figure of self-sacrifice. She put her family's needs above her own individual happiness. This also meant she put the German nation and German people's needs above her own; as Weimar contemporaries believed the regeneration of the traditional family directly correlated with the regeneration of Germany. The German Mother's selfless, sacrificial nature is what made her a symbol of a regenerated Germany. Only through sacrifice, service and selflessness could Germany be saved from the moral degeneration of post-war apocalypse.

The bifurcation of New Woman versus the German Mother was not just a woman's personal choice because of the heightened international tensions after World War I. The German populace felt their future threatened by foreigners, especially with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. German contemporaries saw traditional gender roles as a possible antidote for both the external threat of force, and the internal threat of depopulation. Therefore, it was German women's national duty to give birth or else the soldiers' efforts would be in vain. The German State considered maternity to be a woman's tribute to the nation in lieu of military service. The French historian, Mary Louise Roberts argues that, "soldierly and motherhood represented differently gendered versions of the same blood tribute to

the state." [251] For the Nietzschean Soldier that blood tribute was risking their life in military service to Germany. For the German Mother that blood tribute was the risk of pregnancy and birth. But it went beyond that for both the soldier and mother. Both privilege other's lives above their own and willingly give up a degree of autonomy to service others. In addition, soldierly and motherhood required total devotion, courage and sacrifice

The leaders of the Weimar Republic upgraded woman's traditional role of mother and wife from a responsibility to a duty by making motherhood a blood tribute comparable to military service. [252] Much like the Nietzschean Soldier, the German Mother answered the higher calling of service to Germany's future dominance. Women's rights activist Marianne Weber praised soldiers who surrendered their self to the greater whole. She reasoned the wartime "trenches have stamped the souls of our male compatriots." [253] Weber did not view war as wholly positive. She bemoaned the rootless existence of soldiery but saw the home as the place to heal the psychological wounds of the Great War. Weber represents many Weimar contemporaries who believed a traditional family life would provide a safe haven against post-war degeneracy. Weber felt men's military service

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[251] Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes,* 90. Roberts is writing about France, but the same statement is true in the context of Weimar Germany.

[252] Lynn Abrams, *Gender Relations in German History: Power, Agency and Experience from the 16th to the 20th Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 22.

[253] Marianne Weber, "Die besonderen kulturellen Aufgaben der Frau" in *Frauenfragen und Frauengedanken. Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1919) in *The Weimar Sourcebook,* ed., Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 197.

exempted them from the process of moral regeneration. Therefore, it was women who must heal the ravages to society and the family caused by the defeat in war, with their acceptance of their traditional role as wife and mother. Motherhood would stamp the souls of female compatriots in much the same way as soldiery did for men.

Natalists used the law to champion the selfless German Mother as essential in the regeneration of Germany. Despite offering women political equality, the Weimar constitution included a significant body of imperial law used to reinforce woman's conventional gender role. [254] Although the new constitution guaranteed equal political rights for women, women's civil rights remained regulated by the Civil Code of 1900. In Weimar Germany, the use of imperial law continued a ban on abortion, restriction to birth control, as well as restriction of women's rights in marriage and in obtaining a divorce. [255] Article 119 of the Weimar Republic Constitution established marriage as the "basis of family life and the preservation and propagation of the nation under the special protection of the constitution." [256] Marriage was important enough to have special protection under the new constitution because it was considered absolutely essential to the rebuilding of a moral society in postwar Germany. Despite the restrictions on divorce, the divorce rate peaked in 1921, and remained more than double the pre-war rates, even after

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[254] Grossmann, *Reforming Sex.*, 155.

[255] Bridenthal, Grossmann and Kaplan, ed., *When Biology Became Destiny,* 5.

[256] Artikel 119. Die Verfassung des Deutschen Reichs vom 11. August 1919. http://www.documentarchiv.de/wr/wrv.html#ERSTER_ABSCHNITT02 (Accessed, April 17, 2019).

economic stabilization. [257] This rampant rate of divorce added to an atmosphere already ripe with moral panic.

The maintenance of imperial law with regard to women's reproductive rights was seen as regenerative in that the old laws would strengthen the family and restore moral order. The social critic Thomas Wehrling explained his opposition for women to have access to birth control, arguing "whatever the short-sighted social calculus might say in favor of contraceptives, this is clear: the daily use of devices to prevent pregnancy leads inexorably to whoredom on the part of woman. She learns to enjoy but she forgets how to have a destiny." [258] Wehrling and others believed birth control led women to whoredom, while for men it was a non-issue. Men's morality was not dependent on sexual monogamy or chastity. According to his line of thinking, Germany faced an apocalyptic future if German women embraced any change to their accepted role of mother and wife. According to Wehrling and other conservative critics, motherhood was a German woman's destiny and her acceptance of this was the answer to Germany's perceived moral crisis.

Not all Weimar laws encouraged motherhood through punitive measures. The Weimar government reinforced woman's traditional role of wife and mother through affirmative measures as well. For example, Mother's Day was introduced shortly after World War I ended, although it did not become an official holiday until after the Nazi seizure of power. The introduction of the holiday immediately after

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[257] Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 231.

[258] Thomas Wehrling, "Die Verhurung Berlins" in *Das Tage-Buch* 1 (November 6, 1920), in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook,* ed., Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, 722.

the end of World War I illustrates the German population's growing anxiety over any change to established gender roles. Flower shop owners, natalists, Christian groups, health professionals and others saw Mother's Day as an opportunity to reaffirm traditional values of self-sacrifice, exemplified by the German Mother. The authors of *When Biology Became Destiny,* argue the advocates of Mother's Day had a hidden agenda. "In the guise of glorifying motherhood, they worried loudly about the loss of morality; a code word for what they perceived as women's increased economic and sexual agency. They defined woman in terms of their capacity to raise the 'right kind' of large families which were to be the building blocks of a racially 'healthy' nation." [259] Thus, Mother's Day was not only a celebration of woman's traditional role, but also a chance to criticize those women who did not embrace motherhood. In addition, employees of the State, manual workers and civil servants all received a statutory child benefit by 1927. Also from 1925 on there was a tax benefit for having a child that went up with each additional child born into the family. [260] These official governmental measures pressured families to have more children and rewarded them for combating Germany's depopulation crisis.

Conservative leaders saw the German Mother as the greatest hope for regeneration of the German nation and the German people. One prominent church leader explained, "Every woman must know and understand that with the bond of marriage, she takes on the responsibility of being, first and foremost, the soul of the

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[259] Bridenthal, Grossmann and Kaplan, *When Biology Became Destiny,* 132.

[260] Cornelie Usborne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany: Women's Reproductive Rights and Duties* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 43.

home. And with that she must recognize sacrificial love as her life's ideal." [261] This statement is indicative of how many contemporaries felt towards German women's role in regenerating the nation. While it might seem privileged for women to be the "soul of the home" what is important is the labeling of sacrificial love as an ideal. "Sacrifice" means to give up something that is valued. The German Mother had to give up part of herself to devote herself to her family, while no such requirement was made of a German father. Many traditionalists argued a German Mother's sacrificial love and devotion were signs of her morality. As the soul of the home, the German Mother's morality effected everyone else in the home.

Many historians have written about the German Mother as a part of the social fabric of family. The German Mother appears regularly in German histories of the family and as the enforced ideal in histories on the reproductive debate. Robert Whalen wrote about the German Mother as a victim of the state in his work, *Bitter Wounds: German Victims of the Great War, 1914-1939* (1984). These women, many with young children, were widows of dead soldiers. Whalen demonstrates that although they deserved assistance from the government, in many cases they did not receive it. His German Mothers are extremely sympathetic figures who are unable to navigate the bureaucracy of the system.

Ute Frevert's work, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (1989) is a macro-history of German women and as such has sections that deal with motherhood. She explains how German women used their

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[261] Final resolution of conference: 68 Generalversammlung der Deutschen Katholiken, page 85 as quoted in Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 326.

position as mothers to argue for political involvement based on their morality as mothers. Atina Grossman's work, *Reforming Sex: the German Movement for Birth Control* (1995) is about the need to limit the size of one's family. It is the story of the German Mother and has implications about morality and gender identity. In the same year as Grossmann, the art historian, Marsha Meskimmon looked at the German Mother as a trope in Weimar in her work, *Visions of the Neue Frau: Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany* (1995). Meskimmon look at how female artists depicted the German Mother as a trope of morality. Following this scholarship, Karen Hagemann looked at a particular subset of the German Mother in her article, *Rationalization of Family Work: Municipal Family Welfare and Urban Working Class Mothers in Interwar Germany* (1997). She examines the specific struggles urban working class German Mothers dealt with in the economic turmoil of Weimar Germany.

The German Mother was an essential figure of moral regeneration in Weimar Germany. She was at the center of many political, economic and social debates surrounding the future of Germany. The German Mother was a powerful symbol that crossed lines of religion, region, politics and class. Although the German Mother was a constructed ideal, Weimar authors, artists and filmmakers often presented her as the accepted truth of what a mother should be. Authors, artists and filmmakers constructed and presented the German Mother as a symbol of moral regeneration, even if that regeneration came through her death. In their works of art, the German Mother represented a myriad of values such as self-sacrifice, hard work, love and resolve. Artists, authors and filmmakers portrayed the German Mother as either a

victim of oppression or an altruistic being. Along with the Nietzschean Soldier, the German Mother could turn Germany's defeat into a victory by reversing the degeneration of the post-war world. The German Mother would lead the way to a stronger, morally pure Germany. She was the guardian of morality and Germany's best chance at salvation.

Art

The infamous Weimar artists overwhelmingly focus on chaotic images of the city, the New Woman, the Weimar Prostitute and the Hysterical Veteran. In addition, there are portraits of fellow artists, war profiteers, pimps, dancers and capitalists. The preponderance of Weimar art depicts new, dynamic persons who represent the political, economic, social and cultural changes associated with Weimar Germany. Comparatively, there is a lack of representation of the countryside, regeneration, the Nietzschean Soldier and fatherhood. When Weimar artists did focus on the German Mother she remained a trope of self-sacrifice and virtue. The art historian Marsha Meskimmon points out, "What remained unquestioned in this visualization of maternity was the 'natural' bond between mother and child and, as its corollary, a woman's 'nature' being determined by female natality." [262] Weimar artists typically showed sentimental, devoted German mothers as an obvious Madonna/child reference; or starving working class mothers as figures of capitalist exploitation. Either way, Weimar artists made motherhood a noble, selfless pursuit. Weimar artists who frequently depicted women as mothers risked infantilizing women as

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[262] Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 77.

fellow dependent creatures by always showing them in conjunction with children. It often subsumed any other aspect of a woman's identity. There are no such comparable images of benevolent or starving fathers with their dependent children. Artists depicted men as solitary figures or mired in the chaos of the urban crowds. Men were workers, businessmen, soldiers and profiteers *in addition* to being fathers.

Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945) is the Weimar artist most readily associated with depictions of the German Mother. Kollwitz, born in 1867, is a generation older than the other artists under review in this study. Kollwitz lived exclusively in Berlin during the Weimar years and devoted her energies to depicting the plight of German women during the aftermath of the Great War. The suffering of mothers and children is by far the dominant theme in the artist's work during the Weimar years. The vast majority of Kollwitz's art is done in black and grays. There is a marked absence of color in her work, especially when compared to artists such as George Grosz, George Schrimpf and Jeanne Mammen. The lack of color brings a certain seriousness to the work of Kollwitz. Her works on motherhood during the Weimar Republic are not joyous.

Kollwitz did not include women on the fringes of her art as mere adjuncts. Rather, she depicted women as the main, driving agents in her art. Still, Kollwitz privileged motherhood as woman's main identifiable role in her art. Kollwitz sculpted and drew portraits of mother figures and even a mother cradling her dead son, before losing her own son Peter in World War I. The loss of Peter made Kollwitz focus on the plight of the German Mother even more so than before her tragic loss.

Her son's tragic death sent her into the depths of despair from which she feared she might never recover. [263] Kollwitz used her art to express her grief and give her life greater meaning. She became a pacifist after Peter's death. In the latter years of the war, she criticized the German government and German nationalists who continued to send young men to what Kollwitz believed to be their senseless death. It was not just her personal tragedy, but also her political beliefs that made Kollwitz tempestuous against renewed warfare.

Kollwitz had an early education in Socialism from her immediate family, and later turned to Communism. Her political ideology made Kollwitz more sympathetic to the special hardships German mothers dealt with in the aftermath of the war and the subsequent economic devastation. Kollwitz did not do this for purely aesthetic reasons. Kollwitz believed she had a rare opportunity and platform from which to expose the unique heartache, joy, suffering and love that came along with motherhood in Weimar Germany. She expressed a collective identity for German mothers in the aftermath of the Great War. However, that identity privileges natality over individuality for German women. That collective German Mother's identity was based on hard work, suffering, self-sacrifice, morality and a reliance on the community at large. Kollwitz's work demanded the German populace take notice of the civilian suffering that resulted from World War I.

Kollwitz created a series of woodcuts titled *Krieg!* (War!) to highlight the suffering of the German population due to the tragedy of World War I. She included

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[263] Martha Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz: Woman and Artist* (New York: the Feminist Press, 1976), 134 & 150-151.

one woodcut of volunteers in the army but focused the other six on the civilian suffering. In one such woodcut, *Das Opfer* (The Sacrifice), a naked woman offers up her newborn child. Kollwitz set the woman against a black backdrop as she lifts her child up to the light surrounded by blackness. It is a messianic image, the mother offering her child for the good of the fatherland. While *Das Opfer* is usually translated as sacrifice, the word can also mean victim. This double meaning of the word removes any sort of romanticization of the woman's offer. It is one and the same. The child is both sacrifice and victim to the fatherland. In her diary, Kollwitz describes the German Mother in the woodcut as, "she gives up her child reluctantly; her feet drag." [264] This commentary from the artist reveals her conflicted feelings of motherhood versus national pride. Kollwitz understood that mothers across Germany had to give up their sons for the war effort. But the artist quickly became disenchanted from the early wartime enthusiasm when her son died within the first few months. She felt betrayed and especially angry over Peter's death at such a young age. [265]

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[264] Käthe Kollwitz, *Tagebuchblätter und Briefe,* ed., Hans Kollwitz (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann Verlag, 1948), 86.

[265] Kearns, *Käthe Kollwitz*, 150.

Figure 5.1 and 5.2 Käthe Kollwitz, *Das Opfer* (*The Sacrifice*) 1922, published 1923 and Käthe Kollwitz, *Survivors* 1923.

Kollwitz did not always show the German Mother as a solitary figure. In her work, *Survivors,* the artist instead showed the German Mother in conjuction with other survivors of World War I. The German Mother in this charcoal sketch stands with her arms around multiple children. Even more children crowd into the frame, clutching at and crying out to the German Mother for help. In the background are various figures, one woman appears to bend over crying as an older man next to her bows his head in despair. Kollwitz also included a Hysterical Veteran as a survivor of World War I along with old men, German Mothers and children. The Hysterical Veteran still wears his uniform and bandages cover his eyes, he has been wounded in the war and must beg alongside the German Mother and children. The central figure of the German Mother stares out along with the children. Her face looks haunted as she tries to feed her family. The title *Survivors,* is not just about physcially surviving the war. The existence of the German Mother and the children is so precarious they must live in survival mode, only thinking about where their

next meal will come. Kollwitz creates an overwhelming feeling of sympathy for these survivors but in doing so depicts them as victims.

Kollwitz most often highlighted the suffering associated with the German Mother. Another Weimar artist, Grethe Jürgens had a very different style and focus than Kollwitz. Jürgens (1899-1981) was raised in a devout Catholic family, with her father teaching at a denominational school. She attended art school in Hanover. During the Weimar years, she had to quit art school because her family did not have enough money to support her. She worked in advertising and illustrating to support herself while she continued working on her craft. In this way she was New Woman herself. Like Kollwitz, Jürgens believed the artist should be engaged in the world they lived in. Both women saw art as a medium to reach the masses, although they focused on different subjects. Unlike Kollwitz, Jürgens did not always show German women as mothers. Instead, she depicted German women and men in a variety of roles.

In her painting *Mutter und Kind* (Mother with Child), Jürgens depicts a woman with her young child in their home. The woman is clean, neatly dressed and appears very traditional. The German Mother in the painting does not have her hair cut short in the *Bubikopf* hairstyle, nor does she wear stylish, modern fashion. She wears a buttoned up dress with long sleeves and pulls her long hair into a bun. She does not appear to work outside the home. Jürgens's German Mother has a somber expression on her face and clasps her hands together. She does not seem overworked or exhausted. She is not too thin from lack of food. In fact she looks quite roboust. Also the child is clean, well fed and clothed nicely. Even the table has

decorative flowers, showing the mother's care for the home. The artist chose the kitchen for the setting of her painting, clearly domisticating the German Mother. This painting stands out from the other Weimar works in which the German Mother suffers along with her children/child.

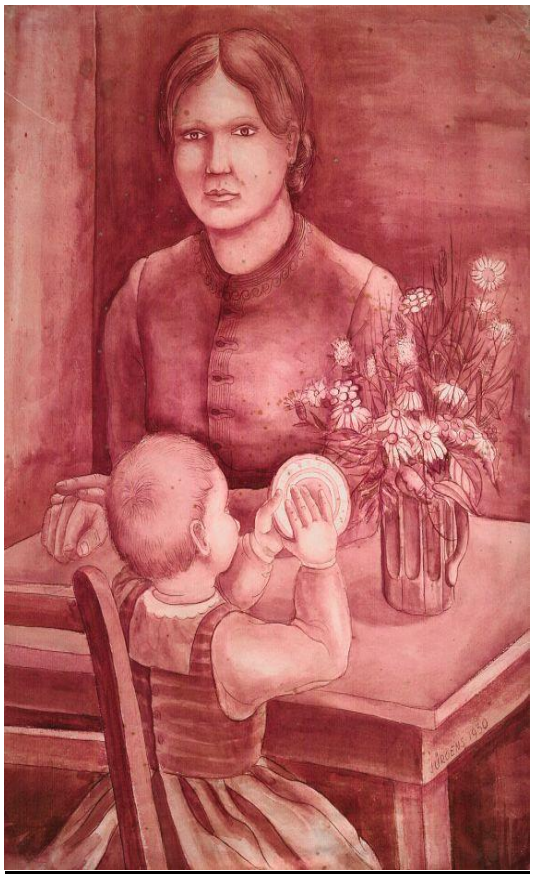

Figure 5.3. Grethe Jürgens, *Mutter und Kind* (*Mother with Child*) 1930.

Jürgens's German Mother appears confident and secure. Since she does not have to worry about her next meal or paying rent, she thinks about her child's future. That is her primary concern. This is evidenced by the care she takes in the home, in herself, and in her child. It is interesting that the artist chose this picture to paint in the year 1930. Following the Stock Market Crash in America and the subsequent recalling of all foreign loans, was the ecomomic depression of the early

1930's in Germany. Jürgen's mother and child do not appear to be in a time of such ecomomic and social unrest. Perhaps the artist wanted to show the resilence and stability of the traditional German family as an antidote to the chaos around her. The author and social critic, Elsa Herrmann explained a major difference between the beloved German Mother and the vilianized New Woman. Herrmann pointed out that the New Woman thought of the present and lived very much in the moment. This contrasted with the German Mother who "lived exclusively for and geared her actions toward the future." [266] Herrmann believed the New Woman's concentration on the present to be a positive while the German Mother's focus on the future was negative. However, in the early and late 1920's the present was so bleak and contemporaries felt they lived in an immoral world. Thus, the German Mother's willingness to think of and plan for the future is what Germany desperately needed in order to regenerate itself. Regeneration implies to fix what is wrong, what became corrupted. For Weimar men and women, the future was hope for salvation.

Although Otto Dix's (1891-1969) painting has the same title of *Mutter und Kind* (Mother with Child) as Jürgens's painting, his work resembles the tone of Kollwitz's art much more so than Jürgens. The mother in Dix's painting is clearly exhausted. She is noticeably thin, with her neck and arm veins jutting out from her yellowish skin. She also has long hair that she pulls back in a traditional bun. Her clothing is nondescript and swallows up her small frame. It appears that this German Mother used to have finer things in life, based on her white, silk blouse, but can no longer afford new clothes to fit her body that is wasting away. She does have

[266] Elsa Herrmann, *So ist die neue Frau.* (Berlin: Avalun Verlag, 1929), 32.

some rouge on her cheeks, but the color appears garish next to her pale skin. The child appears well fed, dressed in simple clothing with boots. The German Mother in this painting obviously makes sacrifices to care for her child, who appears much healthier than the mother.

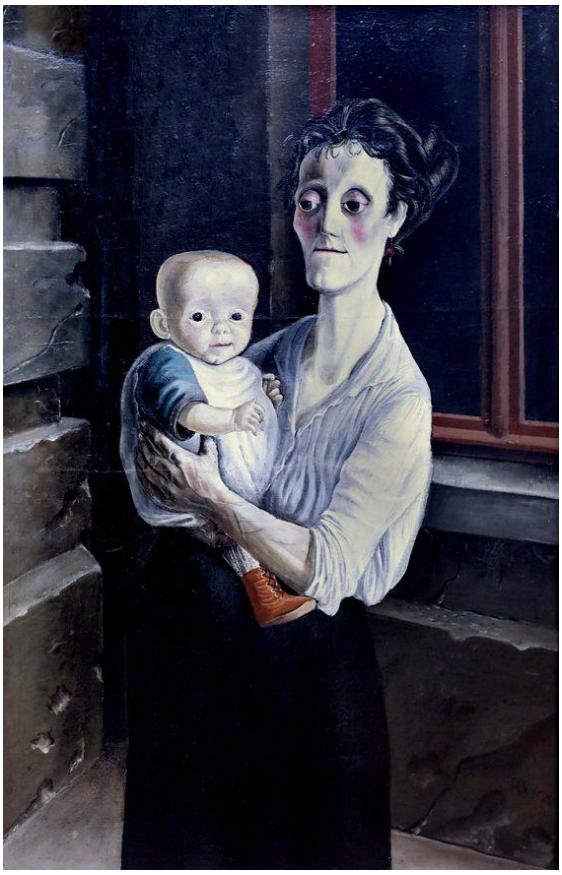

Figure 5.4. Otto Dix, *Mutter und Kind* (*Mother and Child*) 1921.

Dix does not paint his German Mother in motion. She is not out shopping, working or visiting. She simply stands with her child. The gaze of the mother is interesting. She does not look out at the viewer accusingly. Instead, she shifts her gaze to the side. It is as if she lacks the confidence or the will to accuse anyone. Her look is one of resignation, she must endure the suffering silently. On the other hand, the child she holds looks out directly at the viewer of the painting. The child's gaze is

innocent and yet direct. The child calls out for someone to help his/her mother. Dix implies that while hope is lost for the mother, the child is still salvageable. The two figures are locked in a pose reminiscent of the Madonna/child stance. The German Mother cradles her child protectively.

Dix chose an urban setting for his mother and child. There is dull, cracked concrete and a large window in the background. She is either in a housing or working district in the city. Also, the mother does not have an apron on and her clothes do not appear appropriate for a rural setting. She most likely works outside the home or takes in piecework so that she could care for her young child. Natalists envisioned the working-class German Mother as particularly significant for Germany's future salvation. They contrasted the self-sacrificing working German Mother with the bourgeois New Woman who was only concerned with her individual happiness. The social critic Hans Ostwald praised the working-class German Mother in his work, *A Moral History of the Inflation* (1931). Ostwald believed regeneration had begun for Germany in the early 1930's. He stated the immorality had not spread to the majority of the population. In fact, "The upright little man, the postman and the railroad engineer, the seamstress and the washerwoman, had always, just like other kinds of workers, fulfilled their duties." [267] Notice, Ostwald did not refer to the female bank tellers or shop assistants, both highly visible jobs for women in the post-war world. Instead, Ostwald referenced seamstresses and washerwoman in the regeneration of Germany. Both working-

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[267] Hans Ostwald, *Sittengeschichte der Inflation: Ein Kulturdokument aus den Jahren des Marktsturzes* (Berlin: Neufeld und Henius Verlag, 1931), 9.

class jobs were traditionally feminine domains involving the textile industry. Both jobs were also often done within the home. Ostwald directly links women working invisibly in the home as regenerative.

Dix and Kollwitz highlighted the urban German Mother's experience because the artists recognized the struggle of working and raising a family in such dire economic times as the Weimar Republic. Jürgens, on the other hand, was committed to realism of everyday life that did not always focus on the depravity and chaos of the times. Elsa Haensgen-Dingkuhn was a Weimar artist whose style differed from Kollwitz, Jürgens and Dix, although she also painted the German Mother. Haensgen-Dingkuhn (1898-1991) was born into a wealthy German family. At the close of World War I she studied painting and graphic design. She married a fellow artist and settled in Hamburg, raising two children. Haensgen-Dingkuhn frequently depicted children and families in a multitude of settings. The magazine publisher, Ludwig Benninghoff, praised Haensgen-Dingkuhn's work in 1930 when he wrote, "So it happens that this woman paints not in spite of, but because she is a mother, because she is a housewife." [268] Benninghoff's statement assumes that Haensgen-Dingkuhn paints because she is a mother and a housewife, as if she has extra time. No comparable statement can be found on Dix, who was a father. Publishers did not assume he painted because he had children.

Haensgen-Dingkuhn painted *Family in the Garden,* in 1924 during the hyperinflation period in the Weimar Republic. From the republic's start, it was beset

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[268] Ludwig Benninghoff, "Elsa Haensgen-Dingkuhn", *Der Kreis: Zeitschrift für Kunstlerische Kultur,* vol. 7, no. 6, June 1930, 336-40. Translation from Meskimmon, 32.

with political, economic and social strife. And yet, Haensgen-Dingkuhn's painting is idyllic, hopeful and joyful. It is a striking contrast to the other three works previously discussed in this chapter. The artist's use of color and shapes is bright and happy. The home is the center of the family life in this painting. It is made of brick, which represents stability and strength. The home has a hatched roof, picket fence, open door, welcoming path and garden, all making it inviting. The home, and thereby its occupants looks well cared for and peaceful. The garden looks as if the owners planted food for nourishment, but also flowers for pure beauty and enjoyment.

Figure 5.5. Elsa Haensgen-Dingkuhn, *Family in the Garden* 1924.

In *Family in the Garden,* Haensgen-Dingkuhn shows two loving parents in the background and a male child in the forefront. All three look happy and connected with one another. Haensgen-Dingkuhn was one of the few Weimar artists to show a family together, with the father present. Typically, the German Mother is shown with only her children, other mothers or amongst struggling working class people. The father figure is rarely in any artistic representations of the family. The ghettoizing of the German Mother with children in artistic works further infantilizes her as another dependent in need of provision and protection.

Haensgen-Dingkuhn places the German Mother with her husband in a loving embrace. They are together and look after the child. The artist highlights the couple as a unit, separate from their offspring. She values the relationship of a husband and wife, regardless of children. The wife appears to hold her stomach, perhaps signaling another child is on the way. The boy child at the forefront looks well dressed and loved. He looks out at the viewer while his parents look only at each other. The house, garden and family all seem very content, far removed from the turmoil of the Weimar Republic.

The four artists, Käthe Kollwitz, Grete Jürgens, Otto Dix and Elsa Haensgen-Dingkuhn all chose the German Mother as a motif when painting life in Weimar Germany. Kollwitz and Dix highlight the struggle and sacrifice of motherhood during such a calamitous time. Their German Mother is urban and working class. She must sacrifice her body and health in order to provide for the children. Kollwitz and Dix use the German Mother to critique the class-based society of Weimar Germany. Kollwitz uses her work to condemn the military officers, big business and

government that send young men to their deaths. Her German Mother must literally sacrifice the life of her child for the fatherland. Jürgens and Haensgen-Dingkuhn are subtler in their approach to the German Mother. These two artists do not focus only on the drudgery and sacrifice of motherhood. Nor do Jürgens and Haensgen-Dingkuhn overly romanticize motherhood. Rather, these two artists demonstrate the devotion and realism of the German Mother.

Literature

The German Mother appears regularly in Weimar literature as a symbol of moral regeneration. One of the most influential Weimar depictions of the German Mother was from the author Else Ury. Ury (1877-1943) was born to a wealthy Jewish family in Berlin and tragically died in Auschwitz in 1943. She did not reference Judaism in her novels, but that did not matter in Nazi Germany. Ury drew her inspiration for her *Nesthäkchen* household from her own privileged life in Berlin. Ury's mother Franziska was an appropriately educated woman of her time and taught her daughter her love of literature and music. Ury never married and began to help support her family when her father's tobacco company faltered. [269] Ury's first published work was a collection of moral tales. She used fictional characters to tell lessons on morality. She continued this trend with her *Nesthäkchen* books. Ury wrote the very popular *Nesthäkchen* series of books about a young female protagonist, Annemarie Braun. In the beloved series, readers follow Annemarie from the age of five until she is a grandmother. Ury wrote the

[269] Jennifer Redmann, "Nostalgia and Optimism in Else Ury's 'Nesthäkchen' Books for Young Girls in the Weimar Republic" in *The German Quarterly,* vol. 79, no. 4 (Fall, 2006), 468-469.

Nesthäkchen series from 1918 to 1925, all during the Weimar Republic, although the series does not take place in the Weimar Republic until the fifth volume. The books were extremely popular, selling over one million copies by 1926. [270]

Annemarie's mother is the epitome of the bourgeois German Mother. She devotes herself entirely to her children, as she is free from the mundane chores of domesticity. She does not work outside of the home. The Braun family is extremely well off, employing a maid, chauffer, cook and nanny. Annemarie is a precocious child who finds domestic chores, such as knitting, boring in the beginning of the series. [271] Reading the earlier volumes in the series, the present day reader might expect Annemarie to reject domesticity entirely and embrace her role as a New Woman in Weimar Germany. However, that is not the case. Annemarie begins medical school with the purpose of returning home to become her doctor father's assistant. She fights her parents for the right to go to school so the reader expects her to follow through with her plans. Annemarie struggles in medical school and eventually drops out to marry a man who is already a doctor, therefore becoming a doctor's wife. The volume in which she leaves home and marries at the end is titled, "flight from the nest." At the beginning of the novel, Annemarie's flight appears to be from her father's home out into the larger world of education and a career. However, her flight is actually from one patriarch's household (her father) to

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[270] Ibid., 465.

[271] Else Ury, *Nesthäkchen erstes Schuljahr. Eine Geschichte für kleine Mädchen.* Vol. 2. Berlin: Meidinger, n.d. (1918), 167.

another's (her husband). It is worth noting that although the author Ury never married herself or gave up her successful career, she had her fictional heroine do so.

Annemarie starts out as a spirited child. She eventually embraces marriage and motherhood as her ultimate calling. Ury glorifies motherhood throughout the book series. She uses Annemarie as an example that while it is acceptable for a child to rebel against traditional femininity, an adult woman must accept her role. Many of Annemarie's close circle of friends do have careers; however every single one of them gives up their career for marriage and motherhood. Ury's message is again clear-a bourgeois woman must give up her career once she marries. Her primary task is to bear and raise children. Throughout the book series, Ury celebrates the role of German mothers as a stabilizing and nurturing force within German family life.

Annemarie embraces being a mother and grandmother. She regrets neglecting her domestic duties later on when she needs them. Her husband is not as successful as her father and the economic conditions require thrift and creativity within the household. Ury illustrates the German Mother's morality throughout the *Nesthäkchen* series. Moral regeneration was not exclusively sexual in nature. It was a broader concept of hard work, preparedness and serving one's community. Ury demonstrates Annemarie's moral regeneration through her acceptance of these moral values and her embracement of her role as a German Mother. The fact that she was hesitant at first to embrace domesticity only makes her acceptance of it more powerful.

Ury wrote such a successful series geared towards young girls and women. She helped to promote traditional gender roles within her *Nesthäkchen* series. Her books reinforced motherhood as a woman's ultimate source of fulfillment and love. Ury was successful, independently wealthy and hopeful in her Weimar Republic years. She was one of the most prolific writers of Weimar Germany. Another prolific writer was the novelist, Vicki Baum. Baum (1888-1960) was born into a bourgeois Jewish family in Vienna. Her father was prone to anger and Baum recalled having to read in secret so that he did not find out. Her mother Mathilde suffered from mental illness, putting a considerable strain on a young Baum. Baum first studied music before turning her attention to writing full time. She married at age eighteen in an effort to escape the chaos of her home. The marriage did not last. Baum married again in 1916 and had two children. She was extremely successful in her writing career and worked as an editor for the publishing company Ullstein from 1920-1931.

Another literary example of the German Mother is in Vicki Baum's novel, *Zwischenfall in Lohwinkel.* The protagonist, Elizabeth is a mother to her only daughter, Rehle and wife to an absent-minded doctor in the countryside of Lohwinkel. When the novel begins, Elizabeth is already dissatisfied with her dormant marriage and life. Elizabeth discusses the boredom of Lohwinkel, especially when she compares it to the city where "everything is now in a state of flux, values are changing-here we live as though we were walled in." [272] Elizabeth feels claustrophobic from her life as a mother and wife. She is not so disconnected

[272] Vicki Baum, *Zwinschenfall in Lohwinckel* (1930), Munich: Droemer Knaur, 1973), 48.

that she does not realize the vast changes going on in the cities of Weimar Germany. It is this knowledge of social, political and cultural change that further frustrates Elizabeth and emphasizes her stagnation.

Elizabeth realizes how discontented she is when three strangers from Berlin get into an automobile accident in Lohwinkel, causing them to remain in the village while they heal. The strangers are a movie star Leore, her wealthy lover Karbon and their chauffer. Karbon stays with Elizabeth's family and the two develop a hesitant friendship that turns romantic. Karbon forgets about Leore and pursues the naïve Elizabeth. Karbon becomes enraptured with Elizabeth precisely because she is so different than the women he is involved with, especially Leore. Baum makes the contrast overly apparent. Leore only cares about herself and spends much of the novel worried over how the accident will affect her looks. Leore is in a sexual relationship with Karbon but has other suitors such as a famous boxer. Elizabeth has only had sexual relations with one man-her husband. Elizabeth also works all day long on household chores, without any outside help. Baum makes repeated references to how dirty Elizabeth's hands and clothes become from shoveling soot. Elizabeth's innocence excites Karbon because she seems so old-fashioned, like something out of a nineteenth-century novel. Karbon eventually wears Elizabeth down with promises of an exciting life and she agrees to run away with him. Elizabeth even goes to the local Lohwinkel cinema with Karbon, openly walking with him and holding his hand although she is a married woman. It causes quite the scandal in Lohwinkel.

In *Zwischenfall im Lohwinkel,* Baum explores the confines of a traditional marriage on men and especially women during Weimar Germany. In the novel, Baum paints a picture of mutual lies, mundane boredom, and little love in Elizabeth's marriage. The author also points out several times that Elizabeth's marriage is typical and therefore signifies the problems inherent in any marriage. Baum does not portray motherhood with any more reverence than she does marriage. Elizabeth's only child Rehle, is a wild child, "raised like a deer in the forest." [273] Rehle enjoys traveling with her dad and watching him work. This makes Elizabeth feel that Rehle would not suffer too greatly without her mother around. Rehle is not dependent on her mother, which makes Elizabeth feel even more useless. Rehle also has no interest in helping Elizabeth in her domestic chores or learning them for herself.

Throughout the novel the reader assumes Elizabeth will leave this unhappy life and create a new one for herself in the city. One fears that Karbon will lose his fascination with Elizabeth and leave her destitute, with her reputation ruined. But still one hopes for Elizabeth's sake that she will take this one and only chance she might get. Alas, Elizabeth remains in her marriage, reaffirming the role of German women as wives and mothers. Elizabeth's plan unravels when her husband breaks down crying in her arms and professes his love. They discuss the problems of their marriage before Elizabeth decides to stay with her husband. She tells him how unhappy she is because she feels like his slave and wants more from life. He tells her that marriage is not all about having fun and excitement. The novel ends with the

[273] Ibid., 19.

two reuniting and the author offering the following about marriage, "One among hundreds of thousands of average marriages in which the man is morose and the woman overworked, in which there is much talk of daily cares and very little love." [274] Baum's statement is hardly a renouncing endorsement of the institution.

The reader is left wondering what Baum meant to portray with this novel. The message seems to be that marriage is difficult, boring and without romance but one must endure it. When Baum published the novel in 1930 she was already divorced from her first husband and remarried so she clearly had no aversion to getting out of an unhappy marriage. One must also consider Baum's fairly conservative publishing company Ullstein and her largely young, female audience. The year the novel was published, 1930, is also important as Germany was once again suffering economic turmoil caused by the worldwide depression. Baum could write a book in which a wife and mother is unhappy with her domestication, but could not write one in which the wife and mother actually leaves her family. The message is one of anguish and resignation. Weimar contemporaries believed both suffering and acceptance of one's lot in life were necessary in the regeneration of Germany.

Both Baum and Ury reaffirm the notion that German women must accept their pivotal role as the German Mother, in order for Germany to regenerate itself. Elizabeth and Annemarie are ideal Weimar women because although they have hopes for a different life, ultimately they embrace their traditional feminine role. Ury's protagonist Annemarie has the option of school and a career. She rejects them

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[274] Ibid., 290.

in favor of her role as a wife and a mother. Through her storytelling, Ury insists that this choice brings Annemarie much more happiness and fulfillment than any career would have. Ury makes the role of wife and mother much more appealing than Baum does in her novel. Baum details the arduous domestic tasks associated with living in the countryside in her novel set in Lohwinkel. Despite this mundane existence, Elizabeth chooses to stay with her family. She chooses stability, the life she knows and her family over excitement, the unknown and a new lover. Although Baum writes a conventional ending to the novel, it is Elizabeth-the German Mother-who chooses her path in life. Elizabeth's choice demonstrates her agency, as does Annemarie's choice to not pursue a medical career. The protagonists' choices encourage women to sacrifice their own individual happiness for the regeneration of the family, the nation and the German people.

Film

Piel Jutzi's film, *Mutter Krausen's Fahrt Ins Glück* (1929) is the story of a struggling working-class widow in Weimar Germany. The company Prometheus produced the silent, black and white film. *Mutter Krausen's Fahrt Ins Glück* was a commercial success and an attempt by Jutzi to address a specifically female, proletarian audience. [275] Jutzi (1896-1946) was born into a working class family in Germany. He volunteered for World War I but was rejected because of a physical disability. Jutzi moved to Berlin in 1925, joined the Communist Party in 1928 and worked on several films. The production company, Prometheus, who he made

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[275] Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 150.

Mutter Krausen's Fahrt Ins Glück with was a German subsidiary of a Soviet film company. Jutzi expresses his communist beliefs in the film. After the film's release, Jutzi left the Communist Party in 1929. He joined the Nazi Party in 1933 and went on to direct many films under their rule. Jutzi's move from the Communist to the Nazi Party demonstrates the fragility of the political situation in Weimar. The two extremes were seen as the only viable path to regeneration, with no middle path available.

The film is explicitly set in Berlin during the economic turmoil of the Weimar Republic. The viewer sees men with missing limbs, New Women in dance halls and unemployment rampant. When Mutter Krause's son Paul is introduced, the text describes how he is just one of six and a half million Germans that are out of work. The overall tone of the film is bleak, using Mother Krause's family as an example of working-class desperation. Mother Krause lost her husband and the main breadwinner of the family. She must support her adult, unemployed son Paul and her younger, unemployed daughter Erna. Like many other German families during the Weimar Republic, Mother Krause survives by taking in three tenants-a prostitute, her young daughter and the prostitute's pimp. The three tenants live in very close quarters with Mother Krause's family.

While the tone and especially the ending are bleak, there is some cause for hope among the struggling German population. That hope comes in the form of Communism; glorified by Jutzi as the only possibility for regeneration of the nation and the German people. The opening credits of the film list the artist Kollwitz as an advisor and the opening drawing looks like she created it. It is of a bent over mother

who has a child tugging at her. Jutzi introduces Communism through Erna's boyfriend Max. Max is a laborer and is full of integrity. Jutzi contrasts Max with Erna's drunk, thieving brother Paul and the despicable and heartless pimp.

Throughout the film, Jutzi includes many domestic images of Mother Krause. She constantly cleans, cooks, and cares for her family and tenants. During the economic turmoil of the late Weimar Republic, a mother or wife's skills were especially important. Women waited in lines for food, prepared food, household items and cleaned their houses. During more prosperous times, a family might outsource some of this domestic labor. Jutzi includes several scenes of Mother Krause doling out the limited familial resources carefully, to preserve what was needed for future survival. In 1928, just one year prior to the films release, a book entitled *My Working Day, My Weekend* compiled interviews from working women describing their typical days and chores. Many of the women echo Mother Krause's portrait in the film, never getting a break from their domestic chores even when supporting the family. One woman recalled the never-ending household chores of tending the fire, preparing the food, washing the laundry, mending the clothes and helping the children with schoolwork. Most workingwomen were lucky to get a reprieve long enough to sit down and eat dinner before finishing all the domestic work. [276] Jutzi illustrates the mundane, constant domestic labor through the character of Mother Krause. She seems to never get a reprieve.

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[276] Alf Lüdtke, *Mein Arbeitstag, Mein Wochenende: Arbeiterinnen berichten von ihrem Alltag* (Hamburg: Ergebrisse Verlag, 1928, 1991), 153.

Figure 5.6. *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück* (*Mother Krause's Journey to Happiness*) 1929.

However, Mother Krause is not just a domestic figure. She is the main breadwinner and head of the household. She sells newspapers to support her family, along with providing room and board for the three tenants. Mother Krause never appears to judge the adult tenants of the pimp and prostitute. They eat at her table with her family, and the prostitute and her daughter sleep in the same room with Erna and Mother Krause. Mother Krause set aside any reservations she had about cohabitating with these morally suspect people because she had to.

Mother Krause is a very hardworking woman with impeccable integrity. Her son Paul steals and then spends the money his mother still owes for the newspapers she sells at the local bar. Mother Krause's employer intends to send the police after her if she cannot repay the money. And yet still Mother Krause never turns her back on her son. She sells the last valuable thing she has left-a gold pin with her husband's picture set into it. Mother Krause cherishes the pin but she sacrifices it

for the good of her family. Alas the pin cannot save Mother Krause from further heartache.

Under the encouragement of the pimp, Paul robs the store where Mother Krause pawned her memento and is arrested for his crime. Mother Krause falls into despair after Paul's arrest. She has lost her husband, her son will reside in jail and she found out the pimp had raped Erna years ago while under her roof. It is simply too much for Mother Krause to bear. Mother Krause kills herself and the prostitute's daughter with gas inhalation. Before turning on the gas, Mother Krause looks at the child and asks, "What does a poor creature like you have to gain in this world? Come with Mother Krause to find happiness." Later, Erna and Max find the police at the apartment. The camera pans to six different women outside the apartment who all share in Mother Krause's despair. This implies that Mother Krause's fate awaits all these working-class mothers. Their situation is hopeless.

Jutzi uses Mother Krause as a symbol of what is wrong in Germany. She is an honest, hardworking, respectable mother who should not have to despair as she does. She kills herself because she sees no end to her misery. She kills the prostitute's daughter because she sees no hope for her future. The only hope comes in the form of Communism. Max educates Erna in the class struggle and the last shot of the film is Erna's feet marching with the Communists.

Mutter Krausen's Fahrt Ins Glück is the story of a German Mother and her struggles to support her family during the depression. In the film, Jutzi explores the role of the German Mother in Weimar Germany. The predominant image of the German Mother is one of overwhelming sacrifice. The German Mother must

privilege her children over herself. In the film, Jutzi paints a portrait of motherhood as a slavish existence, not unlike the description of motherhood in Baum's novel, *Zwischenfall in Lohwinkel.* It is in essence the German Mother's duty to give the next generation the tools and hope to regenerate the nation.

Another Weimar film that shows motherhood as a life of sacrifice is *So ist das Leben* (1929). The silent Czech/German film was shot in Prague and premiered in Berlin on March 24, 1930. The director, Carl Junghaus (1897-1984) was the son of a tailor born in Germany. Junghaus volunteered for World War I in 1916, however, a back injury rendered him unfit for service in 1917. Junghaus first worked as an actor and then as a journalist writing mostly film reviews. He was a member of the KPD from 1924-1927 and again from 1929-1930. No information exists on why he stopped his KPD membership for two years in the 1920's. Junghaus worked on a few projects for the production company Prometheus (a subsidiary of the Soviet film production) before he made his first full length film, *So ist das Leben.* Junghaus also wrote the script for his first feature film in 1925 but it took him four years to convince Prometheus to fund his project.

Figure 5.7. *So ist das Leben* (That's Life) 1929.

The film opens with a group of women waiting for work, as seen in the above image. While they wait, the women knit and talk. The women (presumably all mothers) wear their long hair pulled back and dress modestly. This is the introduction to the central mother figure in the film. The protagonist German Mother is the last woman to get called for work and is joyous when given the opportunity for employment. The director contrasts the scene of women waiting for work, with men working outside, shoveling coal. This introduces the father/husband figure of the protagonist family. The viewer then meets the last member of the protagonist family-the New Woman daughter who works at a nail salon, wears her hair in the *Bubikopf* style, and dresses in the latest fashions. In her first scene, a client makes an unwanted sexual advance on the daughter and she throws him out.

The family unit is somewhat estranged because the father/husband is a drunk. The protagonist German Mother earns wages outside the home and slaves away on domestic chores in the home. The daughter also contributes by working, but spends the money she earns on herself. The family does not appear as destitute as Mother Krause's family. Yet, the German Mother protagonist carefully doles out the limited supplies, making sure they last. The family mainly survives on a soup that both the daughter and husband/father complain about. The family does enjoy some luxuries in their fairly austere existence. For instance, for the German Mother's birthday, her friends and neighbors bring over cake and port to celebrate. During a day of laundry washing by the river, the German Mother and her husband also buy some food from a local vendor.

Throughout the film, the viewer learns that the husband/father is unfaithful, spending his money and time with his New Woman, younger mistress. He is also a drunk. His fondness for alcohol results in him losing his job because he is so late for work. He then steals money from his unwitting wife to get drunk at the cabaret with his mistress. Much like Mother Krause's son Paul-the father/husband steals from the German Mother-who selflessly works hard for her family's survival. He steals the money in part to buy a good bottle of port for his wife's birthday, but then ends up staying out all night drunk with his mistress and drinking the bottle he bought for his wife the next morning.

The German Mother protagonist constantly contributes to her family's income. In her article, *The Traffic in Women,* Gayle Rubin explains how women contribute to the family's surplus value through their domestic labor. Without the German Mother's tireless sacrifices, a German family would have to pay someone to do the laundry, cooking, food preparation, ironing, cleaning and child rearing. [277] A German Mother's throwing them on the floor. When she yells at him to stop he threatens her. From the fear in her eyes, it seems as if this is not the first time her husband has turned violent. She finally chases him out of the house with a large kitchen knife. This scene of domestic violence was not uncommon for working-class families in Weimar Germany. The scene shows incredible agency on the part of the German Mother who will not back down to her husband because he is endangering her family's continued survival.

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[277] Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory,* ed., Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1997), 29-30.

The protagonist German Mother throws out her husband's clothes on the street and he seeks solace at his mistress's house. The German Mother then deals with yet another crisis when her unmarried daughter comes home to tell her mother she is pregnant. The German Mother next comforts a young neighbor girl who is fighting with her brother. The German Mother extends her nurturing to this neighbor girl, teaching her how to scrub laundry. This scene is interesting. It is as if the German Mother illustrates the young girl's future fate by demonstrating the domestic tasks she will be burdened with. The young neighbor girl is uninterested in laundry and foolishly plays by an open window instead of focusing on her chores. The German Mother instinctively saves her by grabbing her back from falling out the open window, but spills the scalding water on herself in the process. The German Mother dies from these injuries.

The director of *So ist das Leben* (1929) uses several montages to get his message across. For example, he shows multiple scenes of laundry to emphasize the domestic drudgery of the German Mother. He also includes a few montages of religious, stone statues. Some of the statues are of Jesus on the cross and other ones are of the Virgin Mary, surrounded by infants. Both Jesus and the Virgin Mary are figures of ultimate sacrifice. Sacrifice is the number one attribute accorded to the German Mother. There are also several montages of nature, including water rushing in the river, flowers growing in the meadow and birds flying in the sky. The montages of laundry, religious figures and nature all allude to the regenerative hopes for Germany's future prosperity. The are all linked to the sacrifice of the German Mother.

So ist das Leben and *Mother Krausens Fahrt Ins Glück* are both films primarily about the German Mother's sacrificial role within the family. The directors contrast the German Mother figures with their New Woman daughters. Both daughters are not necessarily selfish, but they both value their own happiness and are not willing to sacrifice it just to please others. These two mothers struggle with supporting their son or husband. Mother Krause's son is unemployed, drunk and steals from her. The mother in *So ist das Leben* has a husband who cheats on her, loses his job, drinks, gambles and steals from her. These are not positive portrayals of German working-class men. Rather, the son and husband are parasites who feed off the mother figures in the films.

Jutzi does not even give Mother Krause a first name in the film. Her entire identity is that of motherhood. She is a widow and a mother, not a person. Mother Krause must rent her home out to a pimp and prostitute because she is desperate for survival. Similarly, the German Mother in *So ist das Leben* does not have a first name either. However, unlike Mother Krause, she has friends and does not have to rent out part of her home. Both mothers are tragic symbols of a traditional female role.

Both films end with the death of the German Mother figure. The mothers die from tools of domesticity-Mother Krause from the oven and the mother in *So ist das Leben* from the laundry. The overwhelming portrait of motherhood in the films is one of sacrifice and selflessness. The cost proves too great in both cases. Mother Krause's daughter Erna seems to rise from her mother's ashes, joining the Communists in their cause. Her mother's death invigorates her with purpose so that

she will not suffer the same fate. In *So ist das Leben,* the daughter also seems revitalized by her mother's death. She attends her mother's funeral with her boyfriend, signaling her secure future of creating a family with him. The fact that she is pregnant when her mother dies implies new life will be born from her mother's sacrifices. In both cases, it was as if the mother figures needed to die for their daughters to have a better life.

Concluding Comments

Weimar literature, art and film are littered with German Mother figures. They typically form the backdrop to the more vibrant characters of the Weimar Prostitute, Hysterical Soldier and especially to the New Woman. However, authors, artists and filmmakers stress the role of the German Mother as one of regeneration. Even through her constant suffering and sacrifice, the German Mother can regenerate the nation. She leads by example in her devotion, nurturing and above all, sacrifice. She illustrates hope after suffering.

The two films, *So ist das Leben* and *Mother Krausens Fahrt Ins Glück* pair nicely with the art of Kollwitz and Dix. Taken together, these films and artworks present a picture dire portrait of motherhood during the Weimar Republic. The situation is fairly hopeless, as the German Mother struggles to provide and care for her family. Their version of the German Mother faces an insurmountable situation that offers little hope or joy. Fathers are completely absent or drunk for these German Mothers, again making their situation tenuous at best. Ury's novels and the art of Haensgen-Dingkuhn present the most hopeful picture of motherhood in Weimar Germany. They have fathers who are present, although the German Mother

took on the bulk of raising her family. Ury, Haensgen-Dingkuhn and Jürgens all demonstrate a German Mother who is from the middle class. She has a much easier life than the working class German Mother. Baum stands alone in her treatment of the German Mother. Elizabeth's motherhood is not her chief identity because her child is so precocious. Her motherhood is secondary to her role of wife, as her main focus is her chores. Elizabeth is bored but resigned.

CONCLUSION

> It is proper that we meet the longing of our time-this yearning search, these experiments, some blinded with passion, others coolly bold-with respect. Even if they are all condemned to failure, they nonetheless remain serious concerns with supreme goals; should none at all of them survive our time, they fulfill an essential function while they live. All of these fictions, these religious elaborations, these new doctrines of faith help people live, help them not only to endure this difficult, questionable life but to value it highly and hold it sacred. And if they were nothing but a lovely stimulus or a sweet anesthesia, then even that perhaps would not be so little. But they are more, infinitely more.
>
> -Hermann Hesse, *The Longing of Our Time for a Worldvie*w 1926

The title of Hesse's work, *The Longing of Our Time for a Worldvie*w, expressed what he and many other Weimar contemporaries felt. In post-World War I Germany there was a need for something to ground the populace amongst all of the dramatic shifts taking place around them. They yearned for this worldview, this moral compass that could guide them through the years fraught with political, economic, social, and cultural upheaval. This worldview would encapsulate the hopes and fears of Weimar society. Hesse described this worldview as either stimulus or anesthesia. This is a metaphor for how he saw Weimar Germany. For Hesse, Weimar Germany was either a motivation towards something else, or a sweet respite of painlessness, artificially induced. He and other contemporaries searched for meaning amongst the ruins and rubble of postwar Germany. As people searched for meaning they inevitably explored morality and how it could guide their search.

World War I was the catalyst for the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate in Germany. Weimar Germany was "glitter and doom" and "tragedy and promise." The dualistic nature of Weimar is what in part makes it such a unique area of study. It was hope and fear at the same time. This duality made it dynamic as anything was possible. Germany's loss in World War I was an interruption in their national narrative of triumph and progress. The aftershock of defeat left a wake of moral degeneration that Weimar contemporaries struggled to understand, process, encourage, and stymie. The economic collapse of Weimar Germany caused unprecedented trepidation and angst in a population weary from the actual war and then the defeat in the Great War. The surprise of defeat, rapid unemployment and foreign governmental system all combined to cause this apprehension and dread.

Weimar contemporaries felt unease living in a new world, a civilization without sexes. While moral degeneration and decay were rampant, there was still hope for salvation through reinforcing traditional morality. Gender roles were a very visible and easily understood way in which to express fears, concerns, hopes, and ideals about morality. It was because gender roles were so well established and seemingly natural that they were a way in which to express such fear and doubt. The changes to gender roles were the most tangible change brought about by the war. Since gender roles were supposed to be so concrete, people felt comfortable expressing their concern about them. The debate on these gender roles reveals how central gender was to Germany's cultural self-identification, national narrative, and national identity. If we recall Joan Scott's definition of gender as "a primary way of

signifying relationships of power" the *Verwilderung der Sitten* is fundamentally about those in power wielding their cultural hegemony. [278]

The increased anxiety over blurred gender roles led to feelings of a national, moral decline in Weimar Germany. World War I was the catalyst for this revaluation and ultimate reestablishment of traditional gender roles. The debate over a crisis of gender identity (civilization without sexes) is best seen through three figures of degeneration. The New Woman, the Hysterical Veteran and the Weimar Prostitute symbolize the degenerate, defeated, emasculated Germany because they all three transgress established gender norms. These figures of degeneration do so in their public display of their degeneration, their non-reproductive malignant sexuality, and their refusal to adhere to culturally dominant values of bourgeois Germany. The existence of the three figures of moral degeneration was seen as a testament to Germany's failure in World War I.

Weimar Germany is recalled by tragedy and promise, glitter and doom because all was not lost for the beleaguered nation. Even when times were at their worst in Weimar Germany there remained an undercurrent of hope and belief that things could be turned around. Hope was offered through the acceptance of conventional gender roles. As if somehow returning to traditional gender roles could turn back the clock and repair the damage of the First World War. Hope meant the nation could be regenerated. To regenerate the nation German women had to embrace their role as selfless German Mothers. German women could regenerate

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[278] Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis" reprinted in Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History.* Revised Edition. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 42-43.

the morally degenerate nation through their literal sacrifice of her own life to bearing and raising children. German men could regenerate the nation through their tribute to the state, most literally as soldiers but also as productive workers and breadwinners during peacetime. Thus the Nietzchean soldier, who emerged defeated yet strengthened in the fire of war, resolved to regain the lost German glory and was therefore the male symbol of regeneration.

The *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate played out in the economic, political, social and cultural realm. The majority of Germans understood their cultural values and morality within the cultural reflectors of the time-literature, the popular press, fashion, art and film. These mediums offer a unique glimpse into how contemporaries understood the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate. One can best see the raging debate on changing gender roles through the cultural lens of art, literature and film. The creators of that art, literature and film were not passive, rather they helped to construct and challenge notions of gender with regard to morality. After the loss in World War I, Germans lost faith in their nation and people. A significant part of that loss was expressed through the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate and highlighted in terms of gender. By looking at three figures of degeneration and two figures of regeneration in the cultural sphere, we can get a better understanding of the debate in popular terms. This dissertation hopes to add to the understanding of Weimar Germany and "is not concerned with establishing some national character pattern allegedly elevated above history, but it is concerned with the psychological

pattern of a people at a particular time." [279] The *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate in Weimar Germany was a glimpse into the psychological pattern of people living under the specific circumstances of their postwar world. Their feelings, hopes and fears were expressed through the cultural lenses of art, literature and film.

The outcome of the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate is well known. With the Nazi takeover in 1933, Germany returned to a reestablishment of traditional gender roles and the customary morality that reinforced the double standard with regard to sexuality. Reestablishment meant not only the return of conventional gender roles, but also the strengthening of those gender roles as natural moral parameters. The Nazis realized the power of popular culture as a tool to bolster their views on morality and used propaganda successfully throughout their rule. The Nazi seizure of power demonstrates the importance of the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate in German history. It shows how seemingly private issues of morality and gender identity can be manipulated in the political realm though the cultural realm.

Regrettably this work does not address the racial aspect of moral degeneration in Weimar Germany. More research needs to combine ideas of morality with regard to gender and race. There was a decidedly gendered element to discussions of race in Weimar German culture as Jewish males were depicted as fiends, profiteers or effeminate. Many of the Weimar artists, writers, directors, producers and actors under review in this work were Jewish. Most ignored this and did not address it in their work because it would not have found a receptive

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[279] Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947)

audience or they did not find it necessary. One must mine the works of both non-Jewish and Jewish authors, artists and filmmakers to understand why they address issues of gender and class but not race. When they do address race in literature, art and film, what are they saying about morality in Weimar culture?

In addition, in the last few years there is a growing scholarship on Queer or gay studies that needs to be explored more fully. The homosexual as a figure of moral degeneration is a subject worthy of investigation. Some work by Katie Sutton, for example, has been done on female homosexuality. More recently, male homosexuality in Weimar Germany has come under investigation. More work needs to be done to examine both female and male homosexuality and how they were constructed as moral degenerates in Weimar culture.

Writing on the centennial anniversary of the founding of the Weimar Republic allows one hindsight that contemporaries did not have. The Weimar Republic was not doomed from the start, its failure was not guaranteed. Other than the Nazi period, no other period in German history inspires such fascination as the Weimar Republic. Much of the fascination of Weimar is surely connected to the Nazi period. As if understanding the Weimar Republic could make modern contemporaries understand how it all went so wrong and Hitler was brought to power. The writer and cultural critic, Kracauer tried to explain Germany's turn to Nazism when he reflected, the "Germans obviously held that they had no choice other than the cataclysm of anarchy or a tyrannical regime." [280] Weimar contemporaries were so fraught with anxiety and dread that they saw only these

[280] Ibid., 88.

two choices as a possible solution. The Nazi seizure of power demonstrates just how central the *Verwilderung der Sitten* debate was to Weimar society. The Nazis were able to capitalize on the fear and panic of so many concerned with the morality, identity, and future of Germany.

The Weimar Republic only lasted fourteen years but it lives on in the art, literature, and film. The incredible proliferation in the arts was a form of escapism from the tragedy of the First World War. It was how contemporaries expressed their disillusionment. It was a way to leave the drudgery of postwar recovery and forget the disillusionment so many felt. The artists, writers and filmmakers of Weimar Germany all consciously created works that captured the *Zeitgeist* of the time. Through their cultural artifacts, they consciously illustrated the collective mentality of Germans living at the time.

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