

UNCANNY COLLAPSE:
SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND UNSETTLED RHETORIC
IN GERMAN-LANGUAGE *LUSTMORD* REPRESENTATIONS, 1900-1933

by

Jay Michael Layne

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Germanic Languages and Literatures)
in The University of Michigan
2008

Doctoral Committee:

Assistant Professor Kerstin Barndt, Chair
Associate Professor Helmut Puff
Associate Professor Scott D. Spector
Associate Professor Silke-Maria Weineck

© Jay Michael Layne
All rights reserved
2008

To Annie

Acknowledgements

It has been my great fortune to have enjoyed the support and encouragement of a number of scholars, institutions, and friends, without whom this dissertation could never have been written. My thanks go first to my dissertation chair, Kerstin Barndt, and to my committee: Scott Spector, Helmut Puff, and Silke Weineck. The greatest gift anyone could give an aspiring scholar is a close and critical reading of their work, and I count myself lucky to have found such sharp and insightful critics for my project. Their intellectual acumen and generosity of spirit were invaluable in shepherding my project through the stages of clarification and revision.

My thanks go further to the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures where I found an intellectual home, to the then chair Fred Amrine who did so much on my behalf when I first came to Michigan, and to Marga Schuwerk-Hampel who helped tremendously with the logistics of being a graduate student.

The dissertation would have been impossible without the generous financial support of a variety of institutions. The Council for European Studies and the Mellon Foundation provided funds for a preliminary research trip. The German Academic Exchange Service enabled me to spend a year researching newspaper articles and fantastic fiction in Berlin. The Rackham Graduate School has financed conference trips, a summer session at the School for Criticism and Theory at Cornell, and a final semester of study. The Sweetland Writing Center at the University of Michigan offered me a place in their spring Dissertation Writing Institute along with a much appreciated stipend.

Finally, I am very grateful to the German Department for the funding that allowed me to finish writing the dissertation in its final stages.

I'd like to thank my fellow graduate students for their friendship and encouragement. I can't imagine my time here at Michigan without having known the companionship and encouragement of Sun-Young Kim, Kayte Steinbock, Jeff Luppés, Michael Andre, Clara Hong, Didem Ekici, and Olivier Delers. My thanks also to the members of my graduate student reading group: No Grad Left Behind. For those of you still out there, I say: Hang on! We're coming back to get you!

I'd like to thank my family, who, though sometimes bewildered by what I'm doing, has always been supportive. And finally, I'd like to thank Annie for her patience and support in these final days, and Sophie for being so darn cute.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 The Fantastic Uncanny: Genre and Affect in Newspaper Articles and Popular Fiction.....	23
Chapter 2 Archeology, Excavation, and What Remains: The Female Corpse.....	68
Chapter 3 Monstrous Humans and the Return of the Repressed.....	116
Chapter 4 The Blasé Sadist: Ironic Distance and Uncanny Collapse.....	194
Chapter 5 Psychosis, Contagion, and Control: Images of the Endangered/Dangerous Public in the Kürten Case.....	242
Bibliography.....	270

Introduction

In Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (Book 1, 1930), the character of the sexual murderer Moosbrugger is introduced in terms that emphasize his appeal to a public at once scandalized by and attracted to the description of *Lustmord*:

Und es ereignete sich des weiteren auch das Merkwürdige, daß die krankhaften Ausschreitungen Moosbruggers, als sie noch kaum bekannt geworden waren, schon von tausenden Menschen, welche die Sensationsgier der Zeitungen tadeln, als "endlich einmal etwas Interessantes" empfunden wurden; von eiligen Beamten wie von vierzehnjährigen Söhnen und durch Haussorgen umwölkten Gattinnen. Man seufzte zwar über eine solche Ausgeburt, aber man wurde von ihr innerlicher beschäftigt als vom eigenen Lebensberuf. Ja, es mochte sich ereignen, daß in diesen Tagen beim Zubettgehen ein korrekter Herr Sektionschef oder ein Bankprokurist zu seiner schläfrigen Gattin sagte: "Was würdest du jetzt anfangen, wenn ich ein Moosbrugger wäre..."¹

Musil deploys the implied erotic identification of the petit bourgeois *Bankprokurist* with the "Ausgeburt" Moosbrugger to ironic effect. Moosbrugger is a blue-collar worker who has brutally killed a lower-class woman ("eine Prostituierte niedersten Ranges") and has subsequently become a media sensation.² The scandal of *Lustmord* itself becomes part of an erotic role-play in which the *Bankprokurist* can cross class lines and project himself into the role of the notorious *Lustmörder* (and his wife as the prostitute victim). There is a contradiction between the professed moral judgments of people like the *Bankprokurist* and their private fantasies that suggests secret homologies between "correct" society and the demimonde. In this sense, "das Merkwürdige" of the public response to Moosbrugger's *Lustmord* is hardly strange at all.

¹ Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften: Erstes Buch Kapitel 1-80*, ed. Adolf Frisé, Gesammelte Werke 1 (1930; Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978), 69.

And yet, there are hints in this passage that the public's identification with the *Lustmörder* is less pleasurable and more fraught with anxiety than would at first seem to be the case. That one might be "innerlicher beschäftigt als vom eigenen Lebensberuf" by a case of sexual murder implies more than a casual fantasy of identification. In the context of the novel as a whole, the public's interest in and ambiguous identification with Moosbrugger echoes that of Musil's protagonist Ulrich, for whom Moosbrugger becomes a focal point for ruminations on society and identity.³ Ulrich's first encounter with Moosbrugger is an imaginary chance meeting on the street, inspired by the newspaper stories that he has read about the killer. Musil's description of this fantasy breaks off abruptly:

[...]; so erfuhr er— —: doch so muß derartiges sich wohl früher abgespielt haben, da man es oft in dieser Weise berichtet findet, und Ulrich glaubte beinahe selbst daran, aber die zeitgenössische Wahrheit war, daß er alles bloß in der Zeitung gelesen hatte. [...] Die Wahrscheinlichkeit, etwas Ungewöhnliches durch die Zeitung zu erfahren, ist weit größer als die, es zu erleben; mit anderen Worten, im Abstrakten ereignet sich heute das Wesentlichere, und das Belanglosere im Wirklichen.⁴

In Musil's text, public interest in Moosbrugger consists of a communal *Beschäftigung*⁵—an active preoccupation and pursuit of the case that is carried out through the medium of the newspapers. Another possible referent to Musil's "das Merkwürdige"—beyond the irony that the same people who condemn the "Sensationsgier

² Ibid., 68.

³ Andrew Webber argues that Moosbrugger is (one of) Ulrich's *Doppelgänger*. See Andrew Webber, *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996), 18-19. Moosbrugger himself experiences his crime not as *Lustmord*, but as a panicked attempt to cut himself loose from the woman whose identity seems to flow into his own: "Da erkannte er, daß er niemals von ihr loskommen werde, weil er es selbst war, der sie hinter sich herzog. Ein weinerlicher Ekel füllte seinen Hals aus. Er ging, und das, halb hinter ihm, war wiederum er. [...] Er hatte sich einmal einen großen Holzsplitter selbst aus dem Bein geschnitten, weil er zu ungeduldig war, um auf den Arzt zu warten; ganz ähnlich fühlte er jetzt wieder sein Messer, lang und hart lag es in seiner Tasche." Musil, *Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, 74.

⁴ Musil, *Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, 69.

der Zeitungen” could greet the sensation of Moosbrugger’s *Lustmord* with such pleasure—is the inflationary nature of the crime’s influence on thousands of people.

Materials: The “Discursive Fullness” of *Lustmord* Representation

Musil’s fictional depiction of the presence of a *Lustmord* case in the popular imagination makes reference to the increasing prevalence of actual *Lustmord* cases in the newspapers of the 1920’s and early 1930’s. The increased visibility of sexual murder in the newspapers found a counterpart in an increased cultural preoccupation with *Lustmord*. As Beth Irwin Lewis and Maria Tatar have shown, representations of *Lustmord* occurred in avant-garde visual arts and in modernist literature with shocking regularity.⁶ These high-cultural representations were accompanied—and preceded—by a mass of popular “low” representations: film, newspapers, and so-called “Trivalliteratur.” Tatar speaks of a “discursive fullness” of *Lustmord* representation which provides the context in which the high literary and avant-garde cases she considers emerge.⁷

⁵ “Zu dieser Zeit beschäftigte der Fall Moosbrugger die Öffentlichkeit” (Musil, *Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, 67).

⁶ Tatar writes that “[t]he sheer number of canvases from the 1920s with the title *Lustmord* (Sexual Murder) ought to have been a source of wonder for Weimar’s cultural historians long before now,” Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995), 4. Beth Irwin Lewis likewise calls attention to a proliferation of *Lustmord* representation during Weimar. See Beth Irwin Lewis, “*Lustmord*: Inside the Windows of the Metropolis,” *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis*, eds. Charles W. Haxthausen, and Heidrun Suhr (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990), 111-40. Since Tatar and Lewis, the proposition that Weimar was a time of *Lustmord* has been fairly well established. Richard Evans, for instance cites Tatar and Lewis in support of his contention that “*Lustmord* had been known in Imperial times, but it undoubtedly occurred more frequently, and on a larger scale, under Weimar” (Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution: Capital Punishment in Germany, 1600-1986* [Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996], 534).

⁷ Maria Tatar uses the term “discursive fullness” in reference to the expansiveness of representation contrasted with the relative paucity of *Lustmord*’s incidence. Tatar argues that “[w]hile the victims of serial murderers account for only a tiny percentage of homicides, they become the subject of endless daily conversations, receive prominent media attention, and repeatedly figure as the objects of cultural representation.” See Tatar, *Lustmord*, 40. Alexandra Wenig also cite a discursive “Fülle” of *Lustmord* representation. See Alexandra Wenig, “Serienmord in Deutschland 1900-1945: Eine historische Betrachtung des Phänomens serieller Tötung,” *Serienmord: Kriminologische und kulturwissenschaftliche Skizzierungen eines ungeheuerlichen Phänomens*, eds. Frank J. Robertz, and Alexandra Thomas (Munich:

It is the purpose of this dissertation to investigate the texts that comprised this “discursive fullness” of popular *Lustmord* representation and to trace the differences and similarities of what has otherwise been treated as an undifferentiated mass. The dissertation attends to fictional and non-fictional popular representations of *Lustmord*, as well as to representations of the popular response to *Lustmord*’s ubiquity in the period from 1900 to 1933. I am concerned here primarily with textual representations and with investigating the way the discursive elements of narrative and rhetoric function in this intertextual field.

The primary source material for the dissertation has been drawn first from the newspaper articles written about notorious true-crime *Lustmord* cases and then from a variety of popular fiction sources—most notably the fantastic fiction written around the turn of the century. I trace a line from the anxious atmospherics evoked by *Lustmord* reportage in the newspapers to the self-consciously lurid erotics of these fantastic *Lustmord* tales. Other popular sources include film and detective fiction. In addition, I consider the non-fiction police reports and psychiatric and psychoanalytic reports about the notorious Weimar *Lustmörder* Fritz Haarmann and Peter Kürten.⁸

Belleville, 2004), 97. Arne Höcker provides a contemporary attestation. He quotes the author of the 1930 article “Lustmord-Motiv” in the *Ergänzungsband zum Bilder-Lexikon: Kulturgeschichte-Literatur und Kunst-Sexualwissenschaft*, published by the Wiener Institut für Sexualwissenschaft: “Der Lustmord beschäftigt in ungemein starker Weise die Phantasie unserer Dichter und Graphiker. Die Mehrzahl unserer modernen Maler und Zeichner hat wiederholt dieses Thema künstlerisch behandelt [...],” qtd. in Arne Höcker, “Die Lust am Text: Lustmord und Lustmord-Motiv,” *Lustmord: Medialisierungen eines kulturellen Phantasmas um 1900*, eds. Susanne Komfort-Hein, and Susanne Scholz (Königstein: Helmer, 2007), 37.

⁸ Court documents are not popular representations. They are highly specialized, and are not only unpublished, but produced in a juridical process that sought at times to explicitly exclude the public. This attempt to control and direct a popular phenomenon (the public reaction to notorious *Lustmord* cases) is, however, precisely what makes them interesting when read in conjunction with popular representations. This is especially the case since the specialized reports of the experts often repeat the language of popular fiction. Cf. Stefan Andriopoulos, “Ungeheuer, Vampire, Werwölfe: Fiktionale Strategien der Horrorliteratur in kriminologischen Darstellungen von Serienmördern,” *Serienmord: Kriminologische und*

My work makes at least four interventions in current *Lustmord* research: I use the Kürten case as my focus;⁹ I attend to *Lustmord*'s presence and reception in the popular public sphere;¹⁰ I read newspapers, film, expert non-fiction, and literature as parts of a single intertextual field; and I trace the rhetorics of Weimar *Lustmord* discourse back to fin-de-siècle texts.

Unsettled Texts—Uncanny Collapse

The presence of *Lustmord* as a topic of discussion and representation in the popular public sphere is not, in itself, remarkable. The fascination that lurid *Lustmord* representations exert make it a good topic for the production, sale, and circulation of popular stories. And yet, though the lurid appeal of *Lustmord* is certainly extant, Weimar-era representations are particularly fraught in a manner that contradicts any effort to make *Lustmord* the object of purely pleasurable consumption. The array of topoi and narrative elements which recur in Weimar-era *Lustmord* representations are notable for the way they complicate the borderlines between the realms of the rationally human and the monstrous or insane. In marked contrast to late 20th century American representations of serial killers as psychopaths beyond the pale of human society,¹¹ Weimar's *Lustmörder* refuse to maintain their distance.

In these texts, *Lustmord* is figured as both a disaster and as an object of lurid fascination. This ambivalence is paralleled by a seemingly intractable paradox: the killer is represented at once as an outsider beyond the pale of society and, as a figure of illicit

kulturwissenschaftliche Skizzierungen eines ungeheuerlichen Phänomens, eds. Frank J. Robertz, and Alexandra Thomas (Munich: Belleville, 2004), 314-29.

⁹ Much recent scholarship about *Lustmord* has focused on the Haarmann case.

¹⁰ Most recent work has been on high literary and avant-garde representations or on the medical and criminological discourse.

¹¹ This is not to argue that American serial killers are not complex: cf. Mark Seltzer, *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

identification and public concern, as absolutely central to it. The dissertation uses the Freudian concepts the uncanny and the return of the repressed to come to terms with this paradox. The uncanny marks an unsettling moment in which what had been overcome and made other than the self returns to reveal itself as still a constituent part of the psyche.¹² In a similar manner, the *Lustmörder* is continuously recalled into society in these representations by the very gestures that attempt to cast him out.

The *Lustmörder* is never just a simple figure of horrified refusal or sympathetic identification. In these texts, the crime of *Lustmord* and the figure of the *Lustmörder* are persistently unsettled, such that no definition holds. Indeed, most often, the moment of definition marks an ironic reversal. For instance, the fantastic author Hanns Heinz Ewers renders his protagonist a sympathetic character only in the process of describing his monstrous exceptionality;¹³ and Kürten's psychiatric interrogators insist that he is a sadistic psychopath only at the cost of implicitly normalizing his sadism.¹⁴ The contradictory image of the *Lustmörder* that unsettles these texts thus involves both their represented content and the form of their representation.

The dissertation calls this return of unsettling content and unsettled form an uncanny collapse. Each chapter deals with an aspect of this uncanny collapse by linking a reading of a true-crime depiction of the late-Weimar *Lustmörder* Peter Kürten with a fictional representation. Fictional representations are more apt to evince a fascination

¹² See Sigmund Freud, "Das Unheimliche," *Studienausgabe*, eds. Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, and James Strachey, Vol. 4 [Psychologische Schriften] (1919; Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1970) 241-74.

¹³ Cf. Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Vampir: Ein verwilderter Roman in Fetzen und Farben* (1920; Berlin: Sieben Stäbe Verlags- und Druckerei-Gesellschaft, 1928).

¹⁴ Cf. Sioli, "Ärztliche Begutachtung durch Professor Sioli," *Leben und Wirken des Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf*, eds. Elisabeth Lenk, and Roswitha Kaever (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1974), 256-71; and Sioli, "Ärztliche Begutachtung durch Professor Sioli," *Leben und Wirken des Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf*, eds. Elisabeth Lenk, and Roswitha Kaever (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1974), 256-71.

with the killer than are non-fiction representations—but both share similar concerns and similar patterns of narrative or representation. What finally emerges from a consideration of all these popular representations is the idea that the public sphere of orderly life was endangered by *Lustmord* and its uncanny returns.

Lustmord as a Rhetorical Problem

Lustmord is an uncertain, troublesome term. The word makes its first appearance in the 1880s (mainly in sexological texts) and, strictly speaking, denotes a murder committed solely for sexual pleasure.¹⁵ The term is immediately problematized, however, in that the strict definition of *Lustmord* as the conflation of sexual desire with violence seems to have posed a stumbling block for contemporaries. Whether or not a crime was actually *Lustmord* became a contentious issue. Commentators on particular cases often accept the possibility of *Lustmord* as such, but argue that in this particular case (whatever it may be) the conjunction of sex and violence was not essential, but secondary to the act. Thus, they claim, violence did not substitute for the sex act (as in true *Lustmord*) but was prompted by the desire to leave no witnesses, or followed accidentally in the course of a rape.

The cases and fictional representations I deal with were not always called *Lustmord*. Other terms that were used to describe sexual or gendered violence include: *Sexualmord*, *Frauenmord*, *Kindermord*, *Massenmord*, and *Serienmord*. This list is not meant to suggest an equivalence between any two terms (for instance between *Sexualmord* and *Lustmord*) but rather to indicate the fluidity of reference. By

¹⁵ See Siebenpfeiffer, “Kreatur und kalter Killer,” 109

implication, these other terms presuppose different points of emphasis and (sometimes) different causal mechanisms underlying the crimes.¹⁶

It is precisely the way in which *Lustmord* posed problems for representation that interests me here. The uncertain definition of *Lustmord*, along with frequent gestures of denial or disavowal that serve to claim that particular cases are not actually *Lustmord* at all—these pose a methodological problem. Rather than solve this problem, I am interested in how this problem manifests itself in the Weimar reportage and in fiction. In other words, I am interested in what happens when writers attempt to explain or rationalize *Lustmord*. In this context, I understand *Lustmord* to be a sensationalized breakdown in human order in the representation of the conjunction of sex and violence. What is key for me is the conjunction of passion (irrational drives) and violence—and the problems that this conjunction poses to textual representation. This conjunction gets to the bewildered experience of helplessness that marks the irrationality of the crime.

True Crime and its Popular Reception

Lustmord cases became especially visible during the Weimar Republic. During Germany's Weimar Republic there were four cases of sensational *Lustmord* that attracted considerable press interest and so were extraordinarily present in the popular public sphere. These were the cases of Carl Grossmann, Fritz Haarmann, Karl Denke, and Peter Kürten—what contemporary crime writer Hans Hyan called “das blutige Vierblatt” of Weimar *Lustmord*.¹⁷

¹⁶ In the case of Karl Denke, for instance, contemporaries vacillated between calling him a *Lustmörder* and a *Raubmörder* who was motivated not by sexual but by pecuniary desire. Denke hung himself almost immediately after being taken into investigative custody, so it is difficult to say what his motives were. But his modus operandi in at least his last attempted murder suggests some utilitarian motive—he hit the fellow over the head while his back was turned.

¹⁷ Hans Hyan, “Der Düsseldorfer Polizeiskandal,” *Die Weltbühne* 27.17 (1931), 615.

These cases were instances in which what was otherwise figured as an obscure and individual perversion (*Lustmord*) became suddenly extraordinarily public. This is so both due to the press interest in these cases and due to the manner in which the crimes came to light and the killers were finally apprehended.

Grossmann raped and killed several women in his room in a crowded tenement in the middle of Berlin. After his capture, a major question was how he could have remained undetected for so long. Haarmann picked up young men and boys at the train station in Hannover, took them home, and killed them while having sex with them. Haarmann had worked as a police informant. At the time of Haarmann's capture, he was still on good terms with the police and enjoyed a quasi-official status at the train station (normally closed to non-travelers). A major question after Haarmann's capture was not only how he had managed to evade detection, but also to what extent his affiliation with the police had aided him in the commission of his crimes. Denke enjoyed a reputation as a pious and charitable old man in his small Silesian town of Münsterberg (now in Poland). Denke would take in itinerant journeymen and beggars under the pretext of giving them small jobs, kill them, and eat them.

Grossmann and Haarmann had been captured only after a period of public alarm in which their victims' body parts had been repeatedly found floating in the water (the Engelbecken in Berlin, the river Leine in Hanover). Denke's capture, on the other hand, was preceded by no such discoveries. Denke was captured only when he failed to kill his latest victim, who managed to escape and alarm the police. To the police's utter surprise, they found on the premises his victims' old clothes, barrels of pickled human flesh, and a detailed record Denke had kept of the twenty-six men (and four women) he had killed

since 1903. In Denke's case as well, the question was how such a dissolute killer could have been living undetected in the community for so long.

Denke was captured on the 21st of December 1924, just after the Haarmann trial had ended. Since the Haarmann case had attracted such widespread attention in the press, it is unsurprising that Denke was received as a "second Haarmann".

There had been persistent rumors about cannibalism in the Grossmann and Haarmann cases. Both Grossmann and Haarmann had killed at home and then dismembered their victims in order to dispose of the bodies. Grossmann was a street peddler who had also owned a small sausage stand in the Silesian train station where he could conceivably have sold some of the flesh he was disposing of to the public. Haarmann had been in the habit of selling or giving away his victims' clothing—a key piece of incriminating evidence against him was the identification of their sons' clothing by the parents of the victims. Haarmann had also sold meat to neighbors. At one point, suspicious acquaintances had brought some of this meat to the police to see if it was, in fact, human flesh. The expert had dismissed it as pork without investigating further. Nothing conclusive could be proven in these two cases, but in the Denke case the evidence of cannibalism was incontrovertible: Denke's own records in conjunction with the flesh found on his stovetop.

The killers' effective invisibility in their communities, and their post-hoc revelation as established members of those communities (Haarmann the police agent; Denke the charitable old man) were aspects of the cases that implicated the public at large in their crimes. The rumors of cannibalism and trade in human flesh (as well as in the clothes of the victims) further implicated the public in these crimes. Another public

aspect of these *Lustmord* cases was the popular dissemination of information about them through the newspapers. These notorious Weimar *Lustmord* cases were public in their reportage and reception and in their milieu. It was as if the crime of *Lustmord* had suddenly erupted from the placid surface of rational Weimar social life.

The language used in reporting the Denke case (that he represented “noch ein Haarmann”) indicates the degree to which both the popular and scientific press flattened out the idiosyncrasies of these various cases of *Lustmord* and began reporting on them as instances of a singular criminal type (the *Lustmörder*). An example of such a flattening out occurs in the police detective and popular crime writer Ernst Engelbrecht’s autobiography. In a rogue’s gallery of criminal types, Grossmann is pictured identified only as “ein Lustmörder”—as an exemplar of a type.¹⁸

The Peter Kürten Case

In 1929, after the infamous cases of Grossmann, Haarmann, and Denke (among others) had prepared the way, came the case of Peter Kürten in Düsseldorf. Unlike the others, Kürten killed women and girls (and one man) in public. Indeed, it would be fair to say that Kürten’s preferred sexual partner was the horrified public. He later reported that he derived sexual satisfaction both from the sight of blood and from the prospect of the public’s horrified reaction when his victims’ bodies were found or when people read about his crimes in the newspaper. In dual pursuit of a terroristic effect and the sight of blood, Kürten’s methods varied so widely that at one point authorities thought that they were dealing with three murderers instead of just one.

¹⁸ Ernst Engelbrecht, *Fünfzehn Jahre Kriminalkommissar: Ernstes und Heiteres aus meiner kriminalistischen Berufsarbeit: Mit 20 Originalphotos und 2 Zeichnungen von Elek Barna* (Berlin-Schöneberg: Peter J. Oestergaard, 1927).

The Kürten case is key for my dissertation. His case is a point of convergence of all the previous discourse about *Lustmord* in Weimar. It is also a case in which the order of the public was most directly challenged (both by Kürten's avowed project and by its effects).

Especially in the Kürten case, the language that the newspapers used to report on these stories served to further implicate the public. This language was marked by a paranoiac rhetoric. The unknown killers were represented as having an almost supernatural ability to evade detection. At the same time, due to this undetectability, the danger of *Lustmord* became diffuse and extensive. This manifested in two ways. First, almost anybody could be the killer—which made almost everybody a suspect. Second, the danger posed by the unknown killer, though actually acute, became effectively ubiquitous. Undetected, the killer threatened everybody. This diffusion of danger is marked in the standard language of expansion used in newspaper stories to mark the widespread interest the Kürten case aroused: “Ganz Deutschland” was interested in the story. Letters and clues came in from all over Germany—as did attestations of the unknown murderer's imagined travels.

The Popular Press and the Public Sphere

The Weimar *Lustmörder* were made notorious through their presence in the newspapers. Peter Fritzsche has written about the way in which the newspaper culture of the fin-de-siècle created a textual urban environment.¹⁹ Berliners experienced their city partly through their daily experiences, but also through the ubiquitous newspapers. There

¹⁹ Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996).

is a similarity between the consumerist simultaneity of the newspaper story and the mode of browsing particular to the flâneur.

The newspaper culture that Fritzsche describes at the turn of the century had reached a high point in Weimar.²⁰ Three major publishing houses (Scherl, Ullstein, and Mosse) competed for readers in Berlin, each with their flagship daily paper. Scherl's *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* had a circulation of about 230 thousand in 1925. Its sympathies were petite bourgeois with imperial nostalgia. The *Berliner Tageblatt* was Mosse's flagship paper, which had a circulation of about 250 thousand in 1923. Its editorial policy was more liberal. Ullstein's *Berliner Morgenpost* was the a popular, boulevard paper. Its circulation reached 607 thousand in 1928. All three of these papers had a national readership. The *Berliner Tageblatt* and the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* had both morning and evening editions. Another nationally important newspaper was the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, with a circulation of around 80 to 100 thousand.²¹

²⁰ Most of my information comes from Mende and Fritzsche (Marcus Mende, *Sensationalismus als Produktgestaltungsmittel: Eine empirische Analyse über die verlegerische und journalistische Orientierung am Sensationsbedürfnis und der deutsche Presse zwischen 1914 und 1933*, Wirtschafts- und Rechtsgeschichte 31 [Köln: Botermann & Botermann, 1996]; Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* [1996]).

See also Stöber, Pross, and de Mendelssohn for general press history (Rudolf Stöber, *Deutsche Pressegeschichte: Einführung, Systematik, Glossar* [Konstanz: 2000]; Harry Pross, *Zeitungsreport: Deutsche Presse im 20. Jahrhundert* [Weimar: 2000]; Peter de Mendelssohn, *Zeitungsstadt Berlin: Menschen und Mächte in der Geschichte der deutschen Presse* [1959; Frankfurt a.M.: Ullstein, 1982]).

See Marckwardt for the popular illustrated papers (Wilhelm Marckwardt, *Die Illustrierten der Weimarer Zeit. Publizistische Funktion, ökonomische Entwicklung und inhaltliche Tendenzen (unter Einschluss einer Bibliographie dieses Presstypus 1918-1932)* [1982]).

See Rolf Lindner for the intersection of the press and urbanity (Rolf Lindner, *Die Entdeckung der Stadtkultur: Soziologie aus der Erfahrung der Reportage* [Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1990]).

For the culture of the feuilleton, see Haacke, Prümm, and Jäger/Schütz (1994 and 1999) (Wilmont Haacke, *Handbuch des Feuilletons* [Emsdetten: 1951]; Karl Prümm, "Die Stadt der Reporter und Kinogänger bei Roth, Brentano, und Kracauer: Das Berlin der zwanziger Jahre im Feuilleton der 'Frankfurter Zeitung'," *Die Unwirklichkeit der Städte*, ed. Scherpe [Reinbek: 1988]; Christian Jäger, and Erhard Schütz, eds., *Glänzender Asphalt. Berlin im Feuilleton der Weimarer Republik* [B: Bostelmann u. Sieben, 1994]; Christian Jäger, and Erhard Schütz, *Städtebilder zwischen Literatur und Journalismus. Wien, Berlin und das Feuilleton der Weimarer Republik* [Deutscher Universitäts-Verlag, 1999]).

²¹ In addition to these flagship papers, the three major houses had "boulevard" papers which were lighter and more like tabloids—they tended to the sensational. Ullstein's *BZ am Mittag* was a commuter paper

Most of the newspapers consulted for the dissertation are from Berlin. The following papers were consulted: the six large Berlin papers (national and boulevard): *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*; *Berliner Morgenpost*; *Berliner Tageblatt*; *BZ am Mittag*; *8-Uhr Abendblatt*; *Berlin Illustrierte Nachtausgabe*; The prestige papers: *Vossische Zeitung*; *Weltbühne*; The political papers: *Vorwärts*; *Kölnische Zeitung*; *Kreuzzeitung*.

The feuilleton, a genre of observational or critical editorial reportage, was an important site of Lustmord representation. Many major public intellectuals were feuilletonists. Kurt Tucholsky and Siegfried Kracauer were among the most prominent and prolific. Famous reporters and editorialists of the Weimar era include: Egon Irwin Kirsch, Joseph Roth, Gabrielle Tergit. Prominent criminologists or crime writers include: Hans Hyan, Leo Heller, Ernst Engelbrecht. Others included: Erich Kästner, Kurt Pinthus, Walter Kiaulehn, Alfred Karrasch, Hanns-Erich Kaminski, Franz Blei. Writing for the feuilleton was a respectable way to participate in public debate. In addition to

with a circulation of 200 thousand in 1928. Mosse's *8-Uhr Abendblatt* was likewise an evening commuter paper. And Scherl's boulevard paper was Scherl's *Berlin Illustrierte Nachtausgabe* with a circulation of 202 thousand in 1929.

Some of the boulevard papers made a point of providing their readers with plenty of pictures (as indicated in the names of the papers). Besides the *Berliner Illustrierte Nachtausgabe*, these prominently included Scherl's *Die Woche* (whose circulation dropped from 400 thousand in 1900 to 200 thousand in 1929) and Ullstein's *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, which had an astonishing circulation of almost 2 million copies in 1931 (1,950,000). Another important boulevard paper was *Mittag*, published twice a day in Düsseldorf with a circulation of 50 thousand.

At the other end of the spectrum were papers that were highly serious and intellectual. The *Vossische Zeitung* only ever had a circulation of 60 to 80 thousand in 1928, but was influential due to its history and continuing prestige. One of the oldest newspapers, it was first published in 1704. It was owned by Mosse since 1914. The weekly liberal *Weltbühne* likewise had a small circulation but was considered prestigious. Its circulation was 12.6 thousand in 1925 and 16 thousand by 1931. The *Weltbühne* was not a newspaper, but rather a regular collection of feuilletons. The *Vossische Zeitung* and the *Weltbühne* covered the Kürten case not due to its criminal but rather due to its public policy implications. The *Neue Rundschau* was another important political magazine with a liberal bias.

Explicitly politically orientated papers were also important. The *Rote Fahne* was the communist paper. The social democrats published *Vorwärts*. The illustrated workers paper *AIZ* was also important. The *AIZ* is especially visible in secondary literature on Weimar since it provides many iconic images. Rightwing newspapers include the *Kreuzzeitung* and the Nazi organ, the *Völkische Beobachter*.

Major regional papers include: the *Münchener Illustrierte Presse* with a circulation of 500 to 700 thousand and the right wing *Kölnische Zeitung* (circulation 60-80 thousand).

these feuilletons and editorials, which were signed, the newspapers were composed by a vast majority of unsigned articles. This means that a story on *Lustmord* will tend to be more schematic and informational if unsigned (notes on court dates, new developments reported without analysis, announcements of police initiatives). The signed articles tend to include analysis and critique. In the main, I use signed articles in this dissertation. In addition to the feuilletons, newspapers sometimes included articles written by politicians and police officers (such as Ernst Gennat). In these articles, the representatives of official authority spoke directly to the public.

Secondary Literature: Solving the Problem of *Lustmord*

The secondary literature on *Lustmord* attempts to solve the problem of *Lustmord*. In other words, it has recapitulated the attempt to provide a causal reason for the presence of *Lustmord* and its representations. Maria Tatar and Beth Irwin Lewis posit a generalized misogyny activated by the social conditions of Weimar and explicable through a psychoanalytic framework. Mark Seltzer, in a self-consciously broader view (though Tatar too references American and late-20th century representations as part of the *Lustmord* complex she investigates) diagnoses a repetitive mimetic compulsion underlying serial killing that emerges from the dehumanizing conditions of modern industrial/urban life and which aim to mark the serial killer's individuality.²²

Tatar and Lewis proceed from a set of assumptions about the representation of gender and sexual violence during the Weimar Republic that depends on the dehumanizing effects of World War One, on the one hand, and on the activation of a

²² Mark Seltzer, *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

latent male aggressivity towards the procreative power of women on the other.²³

According to this analysis, *Lustmord* representations are about the activation of a latent and universal male misogynist aggression. This interpretation leaves the persistent androgyny of some *Lustmord* representations something of a mystery. It is true that Tatar's analysis concludes that the violence of *Lustmord* representations is the reflection of a sort of war between the sexes in which women threaten to assume male subject positions and males attempt to thwart or assume the reproductive power of the female by advancing the creative power of the artist. But to a certain extent, this analysis reasserts the gender roles that are said to be under attack. My idea is a bit more radical (in the sense of a return to the roots, *radix*). What is at stake in the ambiguous genders of *Lustmord* representations is not the ability to assume particular, desirable social roles. Nor is it the ability to assert the gendered nature of particular roles. What is at stake is, rather, the possibility of asserting separate roles and bounded, individual subjectivities as such.

Here I need to acknowledge my debt to Mark Seltzer, whose *Serial Killers* examines at great length the particular *seriality* at play in the commission of sexual violence as an attempt by the killer to overcome the monotonous fungibility and technical iterability of modernity (i.e. sterile machine culture, alienated citizen-workers, and the reduction of humanity to machinery) by creating a difference in the mutilated body of his victims that founds the possibility of his own hermetically sealed self.²⁴ In Seltzer's analysis, the dehumanizing circumstances of modernity create the conditions for a

²³ Cf. Tatar, *Lustmord*, 8 and 132-152 *passim* for the ignored victim of *Lustmord*; and 5-7, 33-36 for womb-envy..

pathological attempt at the reassertion of the humanist individual by means of the violent death of another. The serial killer mutilates his victims in an effort to repudiate his own exposure to objectification by producing the abject disintegration of the other's body.²⁵ This attempt becomes a serial process itself when the serial killer discovers that his attempt at final self-definition continuously fails. I agree with Seltzer that the impetus for sex crime involves the continuously failing attempt to assert a hermetically sealed individuality. The gendered aspect of sex crime does not, then (contra Tatar and Lewis), involve an attempt to occupy (or gender) certain subject positions. It involves, rather, the repeated and futile attempt to assert a unitary subject at all. The tentative subject is gendered male in his active attempts to shore up his ego boundaries against (and differentiate it from) a hostile environment. The object of sexual violence—in Seltzer's argument, the would-be other that might enable the male to differentiate himself from his environment—is gendered female. The gendered aspect of sex crime then becomes the tentative male subject producing an abject female other.

The ripped open body of the female (or feminized) victim that functions to ratify the hermetically sealed bodily (and ego) boundaries of the male recalls Theweleit's analysis of misogyny among right-wing males of the modernist period in Germany.²⁶ The imagery that Theweleit calls attention to contrasts concrete and amorphous phenomena in gendered terms. Male virtues are hard, compact, impassively cool, and impenetrable. The mud, the morass, the marsh, the flood—these are associated with the

²⁴ Mark Seltzer, *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 144.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag Roter Stern, 1977).

female. This is especially true of the debased and dispersed female bodies which contrast with the disciplined unity of the male.²⁷ These gendered images would seem to accord well with Seltzer's account of the serial killer. However, in Seltzer's account the impetus for the serial killer's crime is a surfeit of rationalization. The serial killer rips apart his female or feminized victim to create a distinction between his own intact body, true. But the social conditions from which this desire for distinction emerges include a sense of absolute determination and an inseparability from his environment. Seltzer's serial killer acts to free himself from an overdetermined, overrationalized social milieu.

The most recent German scholarship on *Lustmord* tends to treat it as an instance of a more or less hegemonic discourse: words such as *Mythos*, *Medialisierung*, *Semiotik*, and *Diskurs* predominate. These interventions are close to my own project in their attention to discourse; but they tend to flatten out the variety of that discourse in an attempt to describe the hegemonic effects of language. Kerstin Brückweh, for instance, attends to the emotional reception of *Lustmord* cases, but draws her material from Weimar to the late 20th century in her selection of texts, treating the *Lustmord* discourse as an ahistoric entity rather than a historically conditioned activity. Hania Siebenpfeiffer focuses on Weimar, investigating explicitly the discursive formation of *Lustmord* as a particularly masculine crime, and the "invention" of *Lustmord* shortly before the turn of the century. This is an excellent study. However, Siebenpfeiffer, like Brückweh, tends to flatten out the differences among individual texts in an effort to make them fit into a particular *Lustmord* discourse. Both Brückweh and Siebenpfeiffer use Haarmann as a

²⁷ Cf. Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien: Band 1: Frauen, Fluten, Körper, Geschichte* (1977; Munich: Piper, 2000), 236-50 and 405-8.

key case,²⁸ much as I use Kürten. And both generalize determinate facts about Weimar *Lustmord* from this exemplary case rather than (as I hope I do) maintaining the particularity of individual *Lustmord* cases.²⁹

Methodology and Chapter Plan

Unlike the most recent German scholarship on *Lustmord*, I am not interested in a hegemonic *Lustmord* discourse, but in one fraught with a variety of internal—formal—points of contradiction that motivate an unsettling collapse of the observing subject into

²⁸ Most studies of *Lustmord* (certainly after 2000) use Haarmann as a key case; I will be one of few (besides Hoffmeister) to focus mainly on Kürten. Other recent German scholarship includes: Martin Lindner on semiotic process and the act of *Lustmord* as a rupture that the concept *Lustmord* attempts to forestall/heal by providing rational explanations. See Martin Lindner, “Der Mythos 'Lustmord': Serienmörder in der deutschen Literatur, dem Film und der bildenden Kunst zwischen 1892 und 1932,” *Verbrechen--Justiz--Medien: Konstellationen in Deutschland von 1900 bis zur Gegenwart*, eds. Joachim Lindner, and Claus-Michael Ort (Tübingen: 1999), 273-305; Karl Juhnke and Angelica Schwab on serial murder in film. See Karl Juhnke, *Das Erzählmotiv des Serienmörders im Spielfilm: Eine filmwissenschaftliche Untersuchung: Mit einem Geleitwort von Prof. Dr. Kiefer* (Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitäts-Verlag, 2001); and Angelica Schwab, *Serienkiller in Wirklichkeit und Film: Störenfreid oder Stabilisator? Eine sozioästhetische Untersuchung*, Nordamerikastudien 1 (Hamburg: 2001); Thomas Kailer on the sociology of knowledge, professional vs. popular knowledge of Haarmann and the mutual transfer of knowledge between realms. See Thomas Kailer, “Werwölfe, Triebtäter, minderwertige Psychopathen: Bedingungen von Wissenspopularisierung: Der Fall Haarmann,” *Wissenspopularisierung: Konzepte der Wissensverbreitung im Wandel*, ed. Carsten Kretschmann, Wissenskultur und gesellschaftlicher Wandel 4 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2003), 323-59; Eva Bischoff on *Lustmord* and cannibalism in a postcolonial context. See Eva Bischoff, “‘Between Animal Instinct and Morality’: The Construction of White Masculinity in Medico-psychiatric Discourse in Weimar Germany,” *Historicising Whiteness: Transnational Perspectives on the Construction of an Identity*, ed. Katherine Ellinghaus, Melbourne University conference and seminar series 15 (Melbourne: RMIT Publishing, 2007), 427-35, and “Mee/at Your Neighbors: Dangerous Encounters in Weimar Germany,” *Perspectives on Endangerment*, eds. Graham Huggan, and Stephan Klasen (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2005), 97-108; Arne Höcker on the connections between criminological and literary representations of *Lustmord* around 1900. See Arne Höcker, “Eine Ordnung des Verbrechens: Epistemologie und Ästhetik des Lustmords in Kriminologie und Literatur um 1900,” diss., Johns Hopkins, 2008; and Maren Hoffmeister on *Lustmord* as a (Foucauldian) discursive/mediated effect centered around the (unmediated, impulsive) body of the killer. Hoffmeister does consider Kürten. See Maren Hoffmeister, “Der Körper des Täters in der Deutung des Lustmords,” *Kriminologisches Journal* 35.3 (2003): 212-23, and “Autopoiesis und Lustmord: Materialität des Rechts im Spannungsfeld zwischen dem Rechtssystem und populären Ideen,” *Paragrana: Internationale Zeitschrift für historische Anthropologie* 15.1 (2006): 100-13.

²⁹ One of Siebenpfeiffer’s reviewers, for instance, notes the incongruity/problems of attempting to deduce a typical heterosexual nature to *Lustmord* from the key case of the homosexual *Lustmörder* Haarmann. See Urte Helduser, “Von Giftmörderinnen und Werwölfen: Hania Siebenpfeiffer untersucht Gewaltdiskurse in der Weimarer Republik,” *literaturkritik.de*, March 3, 2006, http://www.literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez_id=9192&ausgabe=200603 (accessed August 3, 2008).

the object of representation. I am interested, in other words, in the rhetoric of the *Lustmord* discourse as it manifests an uncanny collapse of distinction.

The chapters of the dissertation all deal with a formal aspect of textual *Lustmord* representation. Each chapter examines this formal aspect in its manifestation in fictional and non-fictional representations. The true-crime case of Peter Kürten provides a touchstone around which to arrange these various readings. Each chapter shows how the form of representation is significantly unsettled in a way that relates to its unsettling content: the *Lustmord* representations examined here participate to greater or lesser degrees in an uncanny collapse of the knowing subject into the unknowable object. Different texts color this collapse in different ways. For authors of the fin-de-siècle fantastic revival this collapse is a moment of horror, but also of erotic excitement. For authors of official non-fiction reports on true-crime *Lustmord* cases, this tendency to uncanny collapse is an often unacknowledged disaster.

Chapter One investigates the ways in which the genre of the fantastic and the affect of the uncanny figure in *Lustmord* representations. The fantastic uncanny involves an impression of the familiar made strange (the uncanny) that is motivated by topoi common to the fantastic tale. Newspaper reportage about the late-Weimar Kürten case recapitulate the topoi of the fin-de-siècle fantastic *Lustmord* narrative. The purportedly non-fiction articles are haunted by a genre of popular fiction.

Chapter Two continues the investigation of the fantastic uncanny by looking at a pair of its related topoi: the buried female body and the excavating male. A reading of Karl Hans Strobl's exemplary fantastic tale "Die arge Nonn" illustrates the importance of revenant female corpses in the fin-de-siècle tale of the fantastic revival. The exhumation

of vampiric female bodies leads to catastrophe for male rationality in the fantastic *Lustmord* narrative. Freud reads a similar tale of the archeological female, Jensen's *Gradiva*, as an allegory for a successful psychoanalysis. Two contrasting newspaper articles about the discovery of Kürten's victims suggest that a romanticized view of the exhumed female corpse is only possible at a distance—the confrontation with the reality of death destroys the fantasy of hermetic male mastery.

Chapter Three considers the contradictions of a common metaphor for the sexual murderer: the monstrous human. Newspaper articles about the Kürten case commonly used this metaphor in a failed attempt to mark the extremity of the case and Kürten's distance from the human realm. That the notorious Weimar *Lustmörder* were called werewolves and vampires—monsters who are also partly human—suggests a continuing affinity and concern for the boundaries of the human in the use of this metaphor. Hanns Heinz Ewers' fantastic Frank Braun novels end with the protagonist transformed into a vampire—but this is not an unequivocal shift to the supernatural, since it is precisely Braun's continued rationality and humanity that are emphasized until the end. Rather, this is a mode of the fantastic in which reason itself becomes supernatural. Theodor Lessing's book about the *Lustmörder* Fritz Haarmann uses the metaphor of the werewolf to suggest that there is a common atavistic potential in all of us that makes us complicit with *Lustmord*. Both Ewers and Lessing make humanity complicit in the monstrous.

Chapter Four deals with representations that initially appear unperturbed by the phenomenon of *Lustmord*. The expert psychiatric testimony in Kürten's court case treats *Lustmord* matter-of-factly: Kürten was a typical *Lustmörder* who acted rationally to satisfy his sadistic desires. Hugo Bettauer's *Frauenmörder* is a detective story in which

the supposed *Lustmörder* is revealed to be a budding author who faked his crimes in order to garner publicity. Both Kürten and Bettauer's faux-killer are treated as blasé sadists—men whose crimes are committed in a cool rational manner for the purpose of satisfying sadistic desires. The blasé sadist is blasé in his attitude toward his crimes, but also in others' estimation of him. The psychiatric experts in the Kürten case and the detective in Bettauer's novel are unperturbed by the phenomenon of *Lustmord* as such—at moments they even express their admiration for the killer. There is thus a tacit homology between the killer and his experts that tends to collapse the structures of vision and performance that otherwise would keep the experts and the killer apart.

Chapter Five looks at the contradictory image of the public in the newspaper articles about the Kürten case and in Fritz Lang's film *M*. The public is initially figured as a potential victim of Kürten's violence and unrest. But the public also figures as a dangerous space and as a dangerous mass subject. The danger of the public inheres in its irrationality. As such it becomes an object of official concern and attempts at regulation. The real danger of *Lustmord* is the unsettling effect it has on public order. This unsettling effect extends to the mutually comprehensible language of rationality that makes the public sphere possible. The danger of loss of language is enacted metaphorically by the mobile signifier "M" in Fritz Lang's film—the motives and etiology of the murderer are never pinned down. Both film and newspapers end with the injunction to continued surveillance. This marks a final incoherence in the face of *Lustmord*.

Chapter 1

The Fantastic Uncanny: Genre and Affect in Newspaper Articles and Popular Fiction

In February of 1929, Peter Kürten carried out a series of attacks that marked the beginning of a murder spree that would come to be a media sensation. By November of that year, the murderer was still at large, and the newspapers were full of speculation about the identity of the “Düsseldorfer Mörder,” criticisms of the police, and descriptions of public unrest.

Around the turn of the century there had been a revival of fantastic fiction that featured lurid images of sexual violence.¹ The authors of this fantastic revival wrote stories that combined depictions of sexual violence with narratives of the disastrous encounter of scholarly males with licentious female bodies in a manner consistent enough to justify writing of a typical fantastic *Lustmord* narrative. The late Weimar newspaper articles about the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* recall many of the themes and motifs of this fin-de-siècle fantastic fiction. The newspaper articles do not replicate the structure of a fantastic tale in any thoroughgoing way, however. Rather, they are *haunted* by the fantastic. This haunting manifests most clearly in their atmospherics. What is described and evoked is not a clear description of events and people, but an atmosphere of uncertainty and dread. In this, these stories replicate a defining feature of fantastic fiction

¹ The main authors of this revival were Gustav Meyrink, Alfred Kubin, Karl Hans Strobl, Hanns Heinz Ewers.

as defined by Tzvetan Todorov: a persistent hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations for the events of the plot.²

Haunted Newspapers: Atmosphere and Rhetorical Excess in *Lustmord* Reportage

A newspaper article in the *Kölnischer Zeitung* on the 9th of February, 1929 began as follows:

Auf einem unbebauten Grundstück an der Ecke Kettwiger Straße und Höherweg im Schatten der Vinzenzkirche fanden heute vormittag vorübergehende Arbeiter die noch brennende Leiche eines achtjährigen Mädchens. Die Leiche wies fünf Messerstiche auf und war mit Brandwunden über und über bedeckt. Es handelt sich um die seit gestern abend vermißte Rosa Ohliger, die allem Anschein nach einem Lustmord zum Opfer gefallen ist.³

Compare that fairly sober report of the facts to the beginning of an article in the *Vossische Zeitung* of November 19th:

An der Mauer Haniel ist ein einfaches kleines Kreuz. Hier liegt begraben Gertrud Albermann, 5 Jahre alt, ermordet von einem unbekanntem Täter, den ganz Düsseldorf erregt sucht, der bisher neun Menschen getötet, zehn schwer verletzt hat und der in dieser schönen, eleganten Stadt zu einem Gespenst geworden ist, das aber grauenvoll tatsächlich ist.⁴

One immediate thing to note is that this passage gets the facts wrong: Gertrud Albermann was *not* buried at the site on the factory wall where her body was discovered. The cross was not a grave marker, but a memorial placed there by the police.⁵ Berndorff refers to the absent killer as a *Gespenst*, but he also conjures up the ghostly presence of the *Lustmord* victim's absent body.

Besides the odd invocation of the victim's absent body, the language of the November article is markedly different than that of the February article: it is more

² Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (1970; Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1975), 25.

³ "Lustmord an einem achtjährigen Mädchen," *Kölnische Zeitung* 9 Feb. 1929, Abend-Ausgabe.

⁴ H. R. Berndorff, "Der Ort placed des Grauens: An der Haniel-Mauer," *Vossische Zeitung* 19 Nov. 1929.

⁵ Ibid.

emotive, it sets a scene dramatically rather than just presenting the facts, and it uses the supernatural metaphor of *Gespensst*. An immediate difference in tone and style is evident. The November article abounds with extra language that is not strictly motivated by its content. Indeed, unlike the earlier article, which reports on an event, the latter article reports on nothing of substance except for the lack of progress in the case. The article does not report so much as evoke an atmosphere.

One reason for this difference in tone might be temporal. Rosa Ohliger was one of Kürten's first victims in the series of attacks and murders that would become a media event. Gertrud Albermann was the last of Kürten's public victims. She was not the last person Kürten attacked—he attempted to strangle a series of more than ten women from February to May of 1930—but she was the last person he killed, and the last corpse he left to be found in public. The February article thus reports on a single victim of an unknown *Lustmörder*; the November article reports on the latest spectacular victim of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*—the still unknown, but by now apparently undetectable and quasi-supernatural killer. But this tends to overstate the temporal dimension. The newspaper reports on the unknown *Düsseldorfer Mörder* were alternately sober and sensationalist. November 1929 marked a high-point of concern with the unknown murderer, but there were still some articles that reported new developments in simple, non-emotive language.⁶ A more compelling reason for the difference in tone might be that the February article was unattributed, while the November article has a named author, H.R. Berndorff. Named articles in the Weimar newspapers tended to be written in the genre of first-person reportage. This is a subjective style in which the reporter's personal

experiences and reflections feature in the article. The greatest number of signed articles about the Kürten case (before his capture) come in November of 1929, when the public concern with the unknown *Düsseldorfer Mörder* was at its height. However, even unsigned articles evince this excess of emotive language. And this emotive language occurs earlier than November of 1929.

The rhetoric of Berndorff's article exists in excess of its content—which is to say: there are elements that seem to exceed the needs of pure description. These elements contribute to the evocation of an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear. In such an atmosphere, supernatural metaphors suddenly seem no longer merely figural, but horribly real (“grauenvoll tatsächlich”). There is an intriguing connection here between the overwrought rhetorics of representation (and its slippages) and the suggestion of the supernatural. The imagery of the supernatural and its uncertain status relates to the genre of the fantastic, which Todorov has defined structurally as inhering in the narrative hesitation between natural (i.e. proceeding from natural and scientifically explicable causes) and supernatural explanations for unsettling events. Such imagery also recalls (especially in the context of a report on *Lustmord*) a particular historical fantastic genre: the popular fantastic tales written by Karl Hans Strobl and Hanns Heinz Ewers from around the turn of the century through Weimar, which commonly included depictions of sexual violence.⁷ Besides the fantastic, the atmosphere of uncertainty and fear evoked by Berndorff's article, and others like it, is marked by an uncanny affect. Berndorff's descriptions of Düsseldorf and its unsettled inhabitants depict a series of contradictorily

⁶ An article in the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* on the 18th of November, for example, reports on the police's forensic efforts and public enquiries without calling the murderer a ghost or describing scenes of public unrest. See “Eine neue Spur in Düsseldorf,” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 18 Nov. 1929, Abendausgabe.

⁷ I deal with Ewers and Strobl's deployment of what I call the fantastic *Lustmord* narrative below.

depopulated city spaces. The scene of the crime is set at the periphery of the city, in places that are at once inhabited and desolate. This desolation is revisited even on the center of the city and its uneasy, murmuring inhabitants. This (to for the moment severely curtail Freud's definition of the uncanny) is the familiar made strange.⁸ The atmosphere evoked by articles like Berndorff's is one of the fantastic uncanny.

Another, more subtle, difference between Berndorff's article and the February article is the missing body of the victim. In the earlier article, the body of the victim and its wounds are clearly mentioned. In the later article, there is a shift of emphasis from the victim and the proximate details of the crime to the disembodied presence of the absent killer and his unsettling effect on the public. Berndorff's factual error is symptomatic of a concern with what the case of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* does to public order: it makes emotional sense to locate Albermann's presence at her murder scene. Berndorff's article is exemplary of a number of newspaper articles in which it is not the murders themselves, but the resulting fantastic uncanny atmosphere that becomes the subject of representation.

It is the purpose of this chapter to trace the ways in which this fantastic uncanny atmosphere is evoked in newspaper articles, to explicate its roots in the fantastic *Lustmord* narrative of fantastic fiction, and to investigate how rationality is at stake in the failed rhetorics of *Lustmord* representation. All of these issues center around the missing body of the victim and the perpetrator.

The true-crime accounts of Weimar *Lustmörder* that appear in the popular press do not recapitulate the fantastic *Lustmord* narrative with any great fidelity. But they do repeatedly make what might be called fictionalizing gestures that recall the fantastic

⁸ Again, I deal with Freud and his concept of the uncanny in more detail below.

uncanny. There are discernable echoes of the fantastic *Lustmord* narrative in these newspaper stories: first, in the atmosphere of uncertainty and dread that many of these stories evoke; and second, in their recapitulation of the important themes of gender, vision, and textuality.

The newspaper stories about the anonymous *Lustmörder* (Peter Kürten) who began terrorizing Düsseldorf in 1929, for instance, are marked by a strangely dramatic and *un-objective* tone. This is notable in the description of the atmospherics of a city under siege: the hostile, questioning glances; the explicit assertion of an atmosphere of fear; the strain of continued ignorance. Several of these newspaper reports are first person accounts of the reporter's experience of the atmosphere of anxiety. Other articles contain explicit language of darkness and gloom; of clarity and its lack.⁹ These narratives tell of the reporter's attempt to attain to some truth, clarity, or finality about the case in a novelistic mode highly reminiscent of fantastic fiction.

The genre of *Reportage* includes first-person accounts.¹⁰ The reporter's own experience is a guarantor of the authenticity of the reported event. In the case of *Lustmord*, however, this experience seems to include the reporter's fantasies about the murderer and his possible victims.

⁹ See, for instance, "Kommt Licht in das Dunkel? Spuren des Düsseldorfer Mörders? Zusammenhang zwischen der Ermordung der Breslauer Kinder Fehse und den Jetzigen Untaten?" *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 12 Nov 1929; and the claim that "[d]ie Mordtat an der fünfjährigen Gertrud Albermann ist noch immer in Dunkel gehüllt" in "Ein Brief des Kindermörders," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 11 Nov 1929, Abendausgabe.

¹⁰ The genre of *Reportage* was ambiguously both a subjective (and politically informed) mode of reporting and seen as an ideally objective mode of reporting: "During the Weimar Republic, literary reportage came into its own as a socially critical genre to which writers and journalists from many points along the political spectrum turned in order to attack injustices and advance their respective causes. [...] [T]he dominant cultural trend of "New Objectivity" during the period of relative stabilization in the middle years of the Weimar period favored the explosion of reportage as a genre that promised unbiased perspectives and reliable facts." (Carol Poore, *The Bonds of Labor: German Journeys to the Working World, 1890-1990* [Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2001], 125). Egon Erwin Kisch said (in 1935): "To write reportage means to make visible different ways of work and life, and in our times these are often austere, gray models." (qtd. in

The reporter from the *Berliner Illustrierte Nachtausgabe* who reports on the atmosphere of “[I]ähmende Ungewißheit in der Stadt” proceeds from a description of his experiences of the “prüfende Blicke” of the city’s inhabitants when they see an outsider to a vignette of the fear felt by the waiting mother of a potential victim.¹¹ This is a fantasy that is almost certainly imagined rather than experienced. “Langsam nähere ich mich an verödeten Schrebergärten vorbei der Haniel-Mauer,” the reporter writes. Here there is silence (“Nur leise werden ein paar Worte geflüstert”), and a few sightseers who gaze at the spot Gertrud Albermann’s body was found in horror that the reporter shares: “Und mit Schauern, das einen frösteln macht, wendet man sich ab.” This last sentence expresses a solidarity with the onlookers that implicitly makes the reporter one of them. Though technically the reporter is still recording authentic experiences, the next paragraphs take on an increasingly imaginary tone. First there is a vignette with a mother and child that is as much imagined as observed:

Eine Mutter gibt noch schnell vor der Haustür ihrer Siebenjährigen die letzten Ermahnungen: “Nun bleib’ nicht lange, um fünf Uhr bist du wieder zu Hause; und denke daran, was ich dir gesagt habe!” Lange schaut sie dem Kinde nach und verschwindet wieder hinter dem Türschlitz. Mit banger Sorge wartet sie sicher auf die Rückkehr der Tochter, und je näher der Uhrzeiger auf fünf rückt, um so beängstigender und unruhiger wird ihr Herz schlagen.¹²

And finally, at the site of Maria Hahn’s burial in the field, the reporter imagines the “Ruhe und Kaltblütigkeit” with which the killer dug her grave.¹³

An article in the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, in which Alfred Karrasch reports on his arrival in Düsseldorf, follows a similar pattern.¹⁴ First, Karrasch is made the object of a

ibid., 126). See also Michael Geisler, *Die literarische Reportage in Deutschland: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen eines operativen Genres* (Königstein: Scriptor, 1982), 110-19.

¹¹ “An den Stätten des Grauens: Mordpsychose in Düsseldorf: Lähmende Ungewißheit in der Stadt,” *Berliner illustrierte Nachtausgabe* 21 Nov 1929.

¹² Ibid.

paranoid gaze. After asking a police officer the way to the police station, Karrasch finds himself the object of scrutiny: “Im Weiterschreiten wendet man sich noch einmal um, die Augen des Polizisten folgen mit Argwohn. Straßen weiter. Unsicher fragt man einen Passanten. Als man nach ein paar Schritten sich wieder umwendet, sieht man, wie auch die Augen argwöhnlich folgen.” Later, Karrasch gives in to the atmosphere of fear and uncertainty he is reporting on. Earlier, he had noted the flimsy pretexts on which suspicion is based.¹⁵ Now, coming across a series of defaced posters of the latest *Lustmord* victim, Karrasch fantasizes that this is a message from the murderer:

Ich will euch zeigen, wie ich von Plakat zu Plakat gehen kann. Es ist ja niemand da, der hier nachts aufpaßt. Die Polizeistreifen sind weither an ihren Uniformen erkennbar. Sonst aber ist niemand da. Ihr ahnt zwar, daß ich in diesem Viertel wohne, bewacht aber ist es nicht.¹⁶

According to Michael Geisler, the first-person accounts typical of reportage serve the function of making clear the particular circumstances under which the information in the report was gathered.¹⁷ The norms of reportage are traceable to the historical example of the flâneur and the authority of the eyewitness.¹⁸ As such, reportage’s first-person accounts are (or should be) self-consciously subjective, but decidedly non-fictional: “Wichtig ist jedoch allein, daß die vermittelnde und organisierende Instanz auf sich aufmerksam macht—ohne indes das Berichtete zu sehr in die Nähe einer fiktionalen

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Alfred Karrasch, “Die Stadt der unaufgeklärten Bluttaten: Zerschnittene Bilder des letzten Düsseldorfer Opfers.—Demonstrationen des Täters?” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 14 Nov 1929, Morgenausgabe.

¹⁵ In the police station, Karrasch meets a father who, with his son, had seen a man on the street walk quickly back and forth for a few steps—“und ich hatte gleich das Gefühl, das ist der Mörder.” Karrasch notes that such is “das Faktum, auf welche ‘Verdachtsmomente’ hier schon ein Argwohn sich aufbaut.”

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ “Das Sichtbarmachung der vermittelnden Instanz findet seine formale Entsprechung in der typischen Erzählhaltung der Reportage: meist handelt es sich um ein deutlich hervortretendes Erzähler-Ich” (Geisler, *Die literarische Reportage in Deutschland*, 116).

¹⁸ Ibid., 110-12, 117.

Erzählsituation zu treiben [...], da dadurch die Glaubwürdigkeit des Textes mehr als nötig in Frage gestellt würde.”¹⁹ Karrasch’s fantasy goes beyond the requirements of any such reportage.

Though actually absent, the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* attains an imagined presence in Düsseldorf and beyond. The unknown *Lustmörder* is figured in many newspaper stories as a sort of master criminal. He is quasi-invisible (because undetectable) and since he could, in principle, be anywhere, his influence extends over the entire city—over all of Germany and the world, as some hyperbolic claims in the newspapers would have it.²⁰

The killer’s actual absence provokes an imagined presence in newspaper stories and in the popular imagination. In this sense, the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* haunts the city. “Der Mörder ist zum Gespenst geworden,” Berndorff writes of the unknown killer’s effect on Düsseldorf’s inhabitants.²¹ This preoccupation with the imagined *Lustmörder* tends to shift the emphasis from his victims to a fascination with his actions and motives. An article in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, slides from reportage to fiction in an imaginary reconstruction of the unknown killer’s murder of Maria Hahn: “Der Mörder ist mit einer unheimlichen Sachlichkeit bei der Mordtat vorgegangen. Er hat wahrscheinlich sein Opfer auf dieses von einer Anhöhe umgebene Brachfeld gelockt und dort vergewaltigt

¹⁹ Ibid., 117.

²⁰ The author of an article in the *8-Uhr Abendblatt* writes of “[d]ie Grauen erregende Serie der Bluttaten, die ganz Deutschland mit Schrecken erfüllt,” for instance. See Dr. M, “Der erste Fingerzeig!,” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 11 Nov 1929. After Kürten’s capture, an article in the *Kölnische Zeitung* recalls the expansive influence the wave of murders had exerted: “In der ganzen Welt hat man den Mörder gesucht, diesseits und jenseits des Ozeans, in Frankreich, in Spanien, Portugal, in Österreich, Ungarn, in England, Holland, Polen, der Tschechoslowakei und erst recht in allen Gegenden Deutschlands. Überall wo ein Sittlichkeitsverbrechen sich ereignete, war es ‘der Düsseldorfer Mörder,’ oder noch schlimmer, der ‘Schlächter oder Würger von Düsseldorf.’” See “Der ‘Fluch’ von Düsseldorf gewichen: Kürten ein typischer Sexualmörder,” *Kölnische Zeitung* 26 May 1930, Abend-Ausgabe.

²¹ Berndorff, “Der Ort des Grauens,” *Vossische Zeitung*.

und dann ermordet.”²² The effect of these imagined reconstructions of the murders is to recall the absent killer’s actions and effect to mind while largely ignoring the victim.

The killer proves his power by compelling the paranoid gazes of Düsseldorf’s citizens while his continued success in evading the police is depicted as a mockery of the police and the city’s inhabitants. It is significant that this imagined presence of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* is so often triggered by visits to empty graves. The doubled absence of the victim’s body and the criminal motivates a paranoid fantasy in which what remains is his ghostly presence, the silent sightseer and the suspicious gaze.

This is not to say that the body of the victim disappears entirely from the Weimar *Lustmord* reportage. It becomes sometimes suddenly, shockingly clear that it is precisely the body of the victim that is the secret center of the male reporter’s paranoid wanderings. The body of the victim concretizes the violent erotics of the act of *Lustmord* and serves as a trace and symptom of the potential for eroticized violence: the female corpse constitutes a challenge to rational understanding. In two exemplary newspaper articles, the reporter confronts the body of the *Lustmörder*’s victim. In Alfred Karrasch’s article of 14 November 1929, he expresses his horror at the sight of Gerturd Albermann’s corpse.²³ In Walter Kiaulehn’s article of 17 November 1929, he calls the newly exhumed corpse of Maria Hahn “eine schlafende Braut.”²⁴ The reaction to the corpse is either the horrified rejection of the romanticized image of the killer as master criminal or the continuation of the fantasy through a corresponding romanticization of the corpse.

²² “Die Leiche des Dienstmädchens Hahn in Pappendell gefunden: DAS MORD-MYSTERIUM: Grosse Erregung in der Düsseldorfer Bevölkerung,” *Berliner Tageblatt* 16 Nov 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe.

²³ Karrasch, “Die Stadt der unaufgeklärten Bluttaten,” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*.

²⁴ Walter Kiaulehn, “Der Würger von Düsseldorf,” *Berliner Tageblatt* 17 Nov 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe.

The contradictory image of the *Lustmörder*'s victims will be addressed in the next chapter. First, however, the genre of the fantastic and the emergence of a typical fantastic *Lustmord* narrative will be examined. It is this fantastic *Lustmord* narrative that prefigures the representation of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* and his victims in the newspaper articles.

Suggestions of Fantastic Motifs in Newspaper Articles

The articles of November 1929 that combine reports of suspicious gazes with fantasies of the absent killer suggest the fantastic in that they move from fact to fantasy almost imperceptibly. These articles evoke an uncanny mood. But they also seriously challenge the assumption of the rational intelligibility of the world through their slippages and emotive rhetoric. Berndorff's article, which begins by using a metaphor to compare the killer to a ghost, continues by taking the reader on a tour of Düsseldorf's blighted murder sites, moving from the periphery to the center of the suddenly uncanny city. The ghost metaphor is intensified rather than dispelled. The fin-de-siècle revival of fantastic fiction incorporated Gothic elements like ruins, graveyards, monasteries, and castles, and secret passages. These are figured as scenes of uncanny dis-inhabitation.²⁵ When Berndorff flies us over Düsseldorf, as it were, he is taking us on a tour of Düsseldorf's uncanny spaces that recall the Gothic spaces of the fantastic revival. Kürten's crime spree has rendered the city hostile and extreme—it recalls elements of fantastic and Gothic fiction.

Another set of fantastic motifs has to do with ambiguously legible clues (secret messages, ancient manuscripts, mysterious paintings, and mundane objects—a key, an

²⁵ On the architectural uncanny, see Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

amulet—taken as signs). The preoccupation with everyday objects as clues is a common feature in the newspaper reporting about the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*. In these articles, as in the fantastic tale, these objects suggest the limits and failure of traditional authority and knowledge. The police, the newspapers, and the public (as amateur detectives) all deal with clues. But the manner of the public and the newspapers is often melodramatic. By this is meant the way that the surface of everyday life is pressured to reveal a deeper, emotional truth—what Peter Brooks calls the moral occult.²⁶ The popular public involvement with the continuing mystery of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* manifested in part as an increase in the number of amateur detectives who submitted to the police a correspondingly great number of found objects—more than a thousand—as clues whose provenience the police were then obliged to investigate.²⁷ Among these were “nicht weniger als 50 blutbefleckte Gegenstände,” which turned out to be mundane objects unconnected to the case and only apparently stained with blood.²⁸

The context in which this imaginative construal of the hidden life of things occurred was one in which the demarcation between the merely obscure and the occult was not clear. There had been a resurgence of popular enthusiasm for the supernatural that began with the fin-de-siècle revival of fantastic fiction and continued through the

²⁶ Brooks identifies this as “the domain of operative spiritual values which is both indicated within and masked by the surface of reality” (Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*, 2nd ed. [New Haven: Yale UP, 1995], 5). The term “pressure” used in conjunction with the moral occult is Brooks’: “There is a pressure [...] on the textual surface, to make reality yield the terms of the drama of this moral occult” (ibid., 6). Brooks compares the function of the melodramatic moral occult with the similar manifestation of interior states in external things and spaces in the Gothic. See ibid., 19-20.

²⁷ Dr. M, “Jeder sucht einen Mörder: Düsseldorf, die Stadt der Detektive: Arme Polizei, die allen Vermutungen nachgehen muß!” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 21 Nov. 1929.

²⁸ Ibid.

Weimar period.²⁹ This enthusiasm was attested to in many newspaper articles and professional journals of the time. An article reporting on the trial of the famous medium Hanussen, who was accused of fraud, indicates the degree to which both the popular public and public officials were willing to entertain the possibility that supernatural powers could exist: “Das Gericht ist nicht in der Lage, auszusprechen, daß Hanussen die Fähigkeit des Hellsehens nicht besitzt. Nach diesen Worten des Vorsitzenden bricht die Zuhörerschaft in einen etwa zehn Minuten dauernden Beifall aus.”³⁰ The popular enthusiasm for mediums like Hanussen extended to some police officers who experimented with using supernatural help to solve cases, much to the displeasure of other police officials.³¹

In the case of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*, there was massive popular involvement with the case that expressed itself both as a supernatural interest (the “unvermeidlichen Hellseher”, in the words of one newspaper)³², and as an enthusiasm for amateur detective

²⁹ Clemens Ruthner notes that there was a notable fluctuation (by which he means an increase) of uncanny images around 1918, and goes on to suggest that the genre of the fantastic is key to understanding the culture of Germany in the 1920s, “indem sie [die phantastische Literature] deren [der Kultur im frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhundert] klärungsbedürftige Abgründe aufzeigt” (Clemens Ruthner, “Andererseits: Die deutschsprachige Phantastik des frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts in ihrem kulturhistorischen Kontext,” *Der Demiurg ist ein Zwitter: Alfred Kubin und die deutschsprachige Phantastik*, eds. Winfried Freund, Johann Lachinger, and Clemens Ruthner [Munich: Fink, 1999], 165, 167).

³⁰ The presiding judge continues: “Wir dürfen nicht richten, wo die Wissenschaft noch nicht entschieden hat, um so weniger, als das Gericht sich durch Augenschein davon überzeugen konnte, daß Hanussen über rätselhafte Geisteskräfte verfügt.” (“Hanussen freigesprochen: Gericht will nicht richten, wo die Wissenschaft noch nicht entschieden,” *Vorwärts* 28 May 1930, Morgenausgabe).

³¹ In 1929, an article in the *Kriminalistische Monatshefte* quotes a Dr. Kröner as claiming that “zwar das Hellsehen niemals die kriminalpolizeiliche Tätigkeit ersetzen könne, daß es aber als ein sehr wichtiges Hilfsmittel anzusehen sei”—a claim that the article’s author rejects as “Phantasiegebilde mit einem Schuß Zeitungsreportage” (Degner, “Ein neuer Beitrag zum Thema ‘Hellsehen und Kriminalistik’,” *Kriminalistische Monatshefte* 3.9 [1929], 196, 199). In 1930, an article in the *Deutsche Juristen-Zeitung* discusses competent police officers’ experiments with and reliance on supernaturalism: “Es ist kein Geheimnis, daß vorzügliche Polizeibeamte seit Jahren Hellseher und Medien in Anspruch genommen haben [...]” (Steiner, “Okkultismus und Strafrecht,” *Deutsche Juristen-Zeitung* 35.23 [1930], 1500).

³² “Kommt Licht in das Dunkel?” *8-Uhr Abendblatt*.

work.³³ In these circumstances, clues and symptoms could become invested with supernatural ambience. As the official investigation failed to produce new leads, the popular public actively took up the search for clues.³⁴ In one instance, a reporter from Vienna, investigating on his own in Düsseldorf, finds an old scarf with a red stain on it and a length of garden hose filled with sand among the detritus of the industrial district in which Albermann was killed.³⁵ These objects are re-imagined to be murder weapon and the murderer's blood stained clothes.³⁶ Just as everyday objects are invested with hidden meaning in melodrama, so too are everyday objects saturated with potential meaning in Düsseldorf in 1929. The difference is that here, objects are granted status as clues without the support of a narrative framework: all of Düsseldorf becomes supersaturated with clues and mystic portents.

These elements produce images of instability and uncertainty. There is, in the fantastic, a conjunction of ambiguity and ambivalence that inheres in uncanny doubling and the potential for or threat of a hidden, horrible knowledge.

Genre and Affect: The Fantastic Uncanny

The fantastic and the uncanny are related, but distinct concepts. It is important to differentiate the two terms in order to develop a theory of the fantastic uncanny—the

³³ Cf., for instance, Dr. M, "Jeder sucht einen Mörder. Düsseldorf, die Stadt der Detektive: Arme Polizei, die allen Vermutungen nachgehen muß!," *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 21 Nov 1929.

³⁴ The search for clues also had a financial component. "Das Grausigste aber ist die Grabewut," Walter Kiaulehn writes, which particularly afflicts the children "in den Industrievororten": "In kleinen Trupps schwärmen die Blässlinge über die Felder. Jeder hat einen spitzen Stock in der Hand. Der wird hier in den Acker gebohrt und da. Vielleicht trifft man doch einmal auf eine Leiche. Wenn fünfzehntausend Mark Belohnung winken, botanisiert das unschuldige Elend den Würmerfrass, wie andere Kinder Jagd auf Schmetterlinge machen" (Walther Kiaulehn, "Der Mörder und das Grauen," *Berliner Tageblatt* 20 Nov 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe).

³⁵ Fritz Karpfen, "Mordwerkzeug des Düsseldorfer Unholds gefunden?: Die Entdeckung in der Laube," *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 19 Nov 1929.

³⁶ They were, in fact, just a length of garden hose and an old scarf. See "Die falsche Spur: Erklärung des Kriminalrats Gennat," *Berliner Tageblatt* 20 Nov 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe.

feeling of unsettled horror triggered by fantastic conditions in both fin-de-siècle fantastic fiction and in the true-crime *Lustmord* reportage of the late Weimar period.

The two premiere theorists of the fantastic and the uncanny are Tzvetan Todorov and Sigmund Freud, respectively. Freud takes pains to exclude any intellectual confusion from his definition of the uncanny.³⁷ And it is precisely this condition of intellectual hesitation that Todorov makes his definition of the fantastic as genre.³⁸ However, the fact that Freud finds it necessary to explicitly bar this hesitation, and the fact that Todorov, in turn, uses Freud's essay on the uncanny to set off his own project, indicate the affinities of the two terms.³⁹ Further complicating the matter is Todorov's terminology (in his English translation): he calls the fantastic a genre defined by the hesitation between the marvelous (*le merveilleux*) and the uncanny (*l'étrange*). Furthermore, he argues that the fantastic as such only exists for the duration of such a hesitation. Any decisive clarification of the unsettling events of the plot move the tale into one of two neighboring sub-genres: the fantastic-marvelous or the fantastic-uncanny.⁴⁰ This situates the uncanny as a natural, rationally explicable phenomenon—the merely strange.

Maria Tatar has ameliorated this situation somewhat by translating Todorov's *l'étrange* as “strange.”⁴¹ In her analysis, the relation between the fantastic and the uncanny is that of two intersecting axes.⁴² I agree with Tatar that the meanings of the

³⁷ Sigmund Freud, “Das Unheimliche,” *Studienausgabe*, eds. Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, and James Strachey, Vol. 4 [Psychologische Schriften] (1919; Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1970), 253-54.

³⁸ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, 25.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 46-47. Todorov offers this disclaimer: “[T]here is not an entire coincidence between Freud's use of the term and our own” (47).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 44 and 24-57 *passim*.

⁴¹ Maria Tatar, “The Houses of Fiction: Toward a Definition of the Uncanny,” *Comparative Literature* 33.2 (1981), 168.

⁴² “The fantastic draws its very lifeblood from an event that, defying reason, shatters the stability of the world to create a condition of radical homelessness. A world once safe and secure becomes hostile and

terms intersect. However, the fantastic is not merely a point between the canny and the uncanny. As Todorov defines it, the fantastic is a matter of hesitation between the everyday and the hitherto unreal. The terms I will use are the *natural* and the *supernatural*. These terms have the benefit of being less subjective than either the *strange* or the *uncanny*—terms which refer to affect rather than explanatory regimes. The fantastic tales which concern me are both fantastic and uncanny.

The concepts of the fantastic and the uncanny are, finally, roughly as follows: the fantastic is a genre marked by the hesitation between supernatural and natural explanations for the events of the plot; the uncanny is an affect of uncertain horror motivated by situations in which the familiar is experienced as strange. The fantastic uncanny, then, is an affect of uncomfortable self-estrangement motivated by a generic situation in which rationality is called into question.

Todorov: The Fantastic as Genre

According to Todorov, the fantastic is a genre marked by the juxtaposition of the mundane and the supernatural realms of experience—and by a persistent uncertainty about which of two possible explanatory regimes best explain the action of the plot.⁴³

Todorov's structuralist definition of the fantastic genre limits its utility. The pervasive uncertainty produced by the hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations is certainly central to the fantastic. But Todorov's strict structuralist definition excludes many works that belong to the same tradition. For example, Todorov excludes from the fantastic proper those tales which seem to resolve the hesitation

treacherous. This new world is situated at the crossroad of *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, at the point where the two words converge in meaning to suggest the sinister and oppressive" (ibid., 182).

⁴³ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, 25. For Todorov, only the hesitation between the supernatural and the mundane qualifies as fantastic.

between the natural and supernatural, calling them the fantastic-uncanny (for those tales that end in the restoration of the natural order) or the fantastic-marvelous (for those tales which veer off into the supernatural).⁴⁴ One problem with this is that it is ahistorical. The claim that many tales are fantastic-uncanny or fantastic-marvelous not only excludes tales written by the same authors and in the same tradition, it also lumps together (in principle, if not in Todorov's practice) tales that are written at different times and in different traditions, for instance science fiction.⁴⁵

A second problem with Todorov's strict structuralist definition is that it makes the fantastic into an unstable genre that seems in constant danger of collapsing into the fantastic-marvelous or the fantastic-uncanny. In Todorov's analysis, the realm of the pure fantastic narrows to a knife's edge: "a line correspond[ing] perfectly to the nature of the fantastic, a frontier between two adjacent realms."⁴⁶ But even fantastic tales that appear to conclude with unequivocally natural or supernatural explanations maintain the force of their uncertainty. By dint of having forced the reader to confront the possibility of the supernatural in a natural setting, the fantastic tale prolongs the reader's uncertainty even through the clarifying ending. Some of Todorov's examples of the fantastic-uncanny rely on coincidence for their natural explanation to such an extreme degree as to throw *this* reader, at least, back into fantastic uncertainty.⁴⁷

It is not at all clear why we should acquiesce to such a reading. Any reading that curtails fantastic hesitation and insists on *either* the natural or supernatural (as a binary

⁴⁴ Ibid., 44.

⁴⁵ In practice, Todorov argues that science fiction, along with Kafka's fiction, is only apparently fantastic: these works are a "new fantastic" in which the the intrusion of the supernatural into the natural is no longer exceptional, but the norm (ibid., 173-4).

⁴⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 45.

choice) tends to rationalize—to make orderly and clearly understood—what had otherwise been fantastic and obscure in the story. Such an interpretation misses the point and does damage to the power of the story. It represses the still-present irrational supernatural elements by explaining them away with the natural rationalistic—but only ever incompletely and unsatisfactorily. A purely naturalist explanation (a satisfyingly rational appeal to natural causes) would leave no remainder. It would, in other words, explain those events which had hitherto appeared to be supernatural in a persuasive manner, leaving no room for the hesitation that had previously obtained.

Freud: The Uncanny as Affect

The fantastic terrain upon which these stories so often play out are *unheimlich* in the word's most literal sense: they are haunted spaces that are at once homely and horrible. In Freud's study of the uncanny, he approaches the meaning of the *unheimlich* by means of its etymology (*heimlich*: homely, secret, hidden; *unheimlich*, unfamiliar, foreboding).⁴⁸ The horrified affect of the uncanny is produced at the juncture of the word and its supposed antonym—an inflection point at which the familiar is recognized as strange.⁴⁹ This linguistic peculiarity is a symptom of what is, as Freud takes pains to point out, a real psychic process of the familiar made strange.⁵⁰ “[D]ies Unheimliche ist wirklich nichts Neues oder Fremdes, sondern etwas dem Seelenleben von alters her Vertrautes, das ihm nur durch den Prozeß der Verdrängung entfremdet worden ist.”⁵¹ *Das Unheimliche* is, in Freud's analysis, an instance in which that which has been repressed (due usually to an individual desire's incompatibility with social life) returns in

⁴⁸ Freud, “Das Unheimliche,” 244-250.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 271.

a moment in which it appears simultaneously familiar (because the desire is part of the original organism) and alien (because it has necessarily been repudiated).⁵² That which has been repressed is often an infantile, pre-linguistic desire or attitude of relation to the world which has necessarily been overcome in the process of maturation.⁵³ The way to subject-hood involves repression: the emergence from an infantile state of amorphous indeterminate relation with the world requires an inaugural distance and distinction that founds the possibility of the individual as such.⁵⁴ The moment of horrified affect that constitutes the uncanny is the result of a double bind: the individual cannot discharge this desire; nor can it be successfully repressed. This results in what Freud calls a *Wiederholungszwang*.⁵⁵ The uncanny is the inexorable return of the repressed that cannot be mastered in conventional terms (in the language of bourgeois rationality). It can neither be spoken nor experienced. Moreover, as a mode of self-alienation, it is the obscure apprehension that the other is implicated with the self (and vice versa). Thus, the uncanny represents a moment of danger for secure ego-boundaries—and even more of a danger for the easy verities of a bourgeois rationality founded on the assumption of absolute essential differences.

⁵¹ Ibid., 264.

⁵² Making a distinction between the uncanny of experience and of representation (“zwischen dem Unheimlichen, das man erlebt, und dem Unheimlichen, das man sich bloß vorstellt oder von dem man liest”), Freud stresses that the uncanny of experience involves the return of real repressed primitive conceptions (“infantile Komplexe”): “Es handelt sich um wirkliche Verdrängung eines Inhalts und um die Wiederkehr des Verdrängten, nicht um die Aufhebung des *Glaubens an die Realität* dieses Inhalts.” Ibid., 269, 271.

⁵³ “Das Unheimliche des Erlebens kommt zustande, wenn *verdrängte* infantile Komplexe durch einen Eindruck wieder belebt werden oder wenn *überwundene* primitive Überzeugungen wieder bestätigt scheinen” (ibid., 271).

⁵⁴ Sigmund Freud, “Die Verdrängung,” *Werkausgabe in zwei Bänden*, eds. Anna Freud, and Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, 2 vols., Vol. 1 [Elemente der Psychoanalyse] (1915; Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2006), 435-44.

⁵⁵ Freud, “Das Unheimliche,” 261.

It is the failure of these clear differences that are concretized in the tombs, haunted houses, and secret passages of the fantastic or Gothic tale. The uncanny is, in Freud's theory, an affect of horror caused by the failure of repression that is triggered by a certain impression or situation which is then retroactively called uncanny. The uncanny involves real psychic detritus of repression and ego-formation. Freud calls these remains the "noch äußerungsfähige Reste und Spuren" of repression.⁵⁶

The Repressed Remainder: Fantastic and Uncanny as Analytic Terms

Both Freud and Todorov implicitly ascribe transhistoric validity to their terms. Freud claims to base his psychoanalysis on the obscured, but real, workings of the mind. Todorov's analysis is cast in formalist-aesthetic terms. In both cases, their truth-claims express a certain resistance to uncertainty. This is important to this project because of what gets left out or left unsaid in Freud's theory of the uncanny: the violent sexual content of many of his examples, most notably E.T.A. Hoffmann's "Der Sandmann."⁵⁷

Tatar's analysis makes a demystifying move that echoes similar impetuses in Freud and Todorov. In a reading of Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, Tatar claims that the "[s]uppression of knowledge conjure[s] up the spirit of Alfonso."⁵⁸ When hidden knowledge is revealed, the ghost loses power. Tatar writes: "Once the token of repression is lifted from an uncanny event, what was formerly *unheimlich* becomes

⁵⁶ "Es scheint, daß wir alle in unserer individuellen Entwicklung eine diesem Animismus der Primitiven entsprechende Phase durchgemacht haben, daß sie bei keinem von uns abgelaufen ist, ohne noch äußerungsfähige Reste und Spuren zu hinterlassen, und daß alles, was uns heute als 'unheimlich' erscheint, die Bedingung erfüllt, daß es an diese Rest animistischer Seelentätigkeit rührt und sie zur Äußerung anregt" (ibid., 263).

⁵⁷ E.T.A. Hoffmann, "Der Sandmann," *Nachtstücke*, ed. Eduard Grisebach, E.T.A. Hoffmann's sämtliche Werke in fünfzehn Bänden 3 (1817; Leipzig: Max Hesse's Verlag, 1900), 7-39.

⁵⁸ Alfonso is the murdered king whose place has been usurped (Tatar, "Houses of Fiction," 182).

heimlich: the once hostile world becomes habitable again.”⁵⁹ But this posits an eternally available return to psychic equilibrium that can be effected as easily as acknowledging repression. But what if the truth that knowledge purports to comprehend is neither singular nor assimilable to a livable world? What if the repressed is inexhaustible?⁶⁰ When it comes to fin-de-siècle *Lustmord* representations, it is precisely the catastrophic release of unmasterable and unknowable forces that is thematized.

The Fin-de-Siècle Revival of Fantastic Fiction

In the later half of the 19th century, during the period of literary Realism and Naturalism, the supernatural elements that had featured in late Romantic works had fallen out of favor.⁶¹ Around the turn of the twentieth century, a number of authors began writing in the tradition of the German *Schauerliteratur* again: in 1901, one of these, Karl Hans Strobl, expressed the programmatic wish to be “der Erneuerer der *phantastischen* Erzählung.”⁶² Gustav Meyrink, Hanns Heinz Ewers, Karl Hans Strobl and Alfred Kubin were the most prominent of these fantastic authors, but there were many others.⁶³ In this dissertation, the genre of the fantastic refers to these authors and this historical corpus rather than to the atemporal structuralist genre identified by Todorov.

⁵⁹ Tatar, “Houses of Fiction,” 182.

⁶⁰ Primal repression, after all, is an “ineradicable and permanent” prerequisite to subjectivity per se. See Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal*, 2nd ed. [New York: Routledge, 1998], 11; and Freud, “Die Verdrängung,” 436-37.

⁶¹ Ruthner, “Andererseits,” 165-66.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 169.

⁶³ Ruthner provides a list of other fantastic authors: Franz Spunda, Otto Soyka, Paul Busson, Egmont Colerus, Theodor Däubler, Paul Frank, Paul Leppin, Thaddäus Rittner, “und viele andere”—He cites Leo Perutz and Alexander Lernet-Holenia as authors of a “kriminalistische, subtil psychologische Phantastik” and Stanislaw Przybyszewski and Oskar Panizza as the immediate literary predecessors of the fin-de-siècle fantastic (*ibid.*, 170, 171). Clute and Grant (in a non-academic, completist reference book) add expansively to the list of fantastic authors writing from around the fin de siècle through the Weimar Republic: Georg von der Gabelenz, Bodo Wildberg, Paul Scheerbarth, Alexander Moritz Frey, Willy Seidel, Paul Ernst, Karl von Schlözer, Karl du Prel, Isolde Kurz, Kurt Münzer, Gustav Renker, Oscar A.H. Schmitz, Wilhelm von Scholz, Hermann Esswein, Roland Betsch, Werner Bergengruen, and Eufemia Adlersfeld-Ballestrem. See John Clute and John Grant, “Germany,” *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 398-99.

The authors of the fin-de-siècle fantastic were and remain (with the possible exception of Meyrink) non-canonical.⁶⁴ It is significant that Clemens Ruthner refers to the three most prominent fantastic authors as the fantastic's "Marktleader": Meyrink, Ewers, and Strobl are perhaps more notable as authors of popular bestsellers than for the literary quality of their work.⁶⁵ Gustav Meyrink, a Prague author who achieved his first success with *Der Golem* (1915), is the best remembered of the three.⁶⁶ Ewers and Strobl, despite their prodigious output and the multiple editions their works went through during the Weimar Republic, are practically forgotten today. This is perhaps due to their politics: both were right wing and were later Nazi sympathizers (though the National Socialists did not reciprocate their affections).⁶⁷ Ewers was a world traveler and self-

⁶⁴ And even Meyrink is a marginal figure. Writing in 2006, Amanda Boyd, who wrote her dissertation on Meyrink, calls him "the seemingly forgotten author Gustav Meyrink" (Amanda Boyd, "Gustav Meyrink and the Evolution of the Literary Vampire: From Feared Bloodsucker to Esoteric Phenomenon," *Neophilologus* 90 [2006], 602). Cf. also Amanda Boyd, "Demonizing Esotericism: The Treatment of Spirituality and Popular Culture in the Works of Gustav Meyrink," diss., University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 2005.

⁶⁵ Ruthner, "Andererseits" 170. Heinrich Meyer, arguing that the *Trivialliteratur* of the Weimar period deserves to be studied, singles out these prominent authors of the fantastic as exemplars of that *Trivialliteratur* (and damns them with faint praise) when he writes: "Strobl, Meyrink, and Ewers were by no means negligible writers; they knew how to write and even how to finish their books, when Kafka, who tried to write, generally knew only how to start" (Heinrich Meyer, "Bestseller Research Problems," *The German Bestseller in the 20th Century: A Complete Bibliography and Analysis 1925-1940*, ed. Heinrich Meyer, German Studies in America 2 [Bern: Herbert Lang, 1968], xv).

⁶⁶ Ruthner notes that *Golem* was the most successful book of the First World War. See Ruthner, "Andererseits," 170. Meyrink's novel was published in 1915 and had reached a print run of 150,000 by 1917—an astonishing initial print run. By 1931, some 191,000 copies had been printed (which puts it among the top 140 best-selling books of the period 1915-1940). See Donald Ray Richards, *The German Bestseller in the 20th Century: A Complete Bibliography and Analysis 1925-1940* (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1968), 60, 188.

⁶⁷ One of Ewers' bestsellers was his hagiography of Horst Wessel—*Horst Wessel: Ein deutsches Schicksal* (1932)—which reached a print run of 200,000 copies by 1934. See *ibid.*, 124. In 1931 Ewers became a member of the NSDAP. In May 1933, his books were burned along with those of other "degenerate" authors. And in 1934, after he barely escaped being killed in the Röhm-Putsch, Ewers' books were confiscated and banned. See Wilfried Kugel, "Zeittafel zur Biographie von Hanns Heinz Ewers," *Der Zauberlehrling oder Die Teufelsjäger; Alraune*, ed. Wilfried Kugel, Gesammelte Werke 1 (Erfstadt: Area, 2005) 797-9. Strobl transformed from a "deutsch-völkischen Corpsstudenten [...] zum nationalsozialistischen Apologeten" and greeted the *Anschluss* with enthusiasm (Günther Wackwitz, qtd. in Clemens Ruthner, *Unheimliche Wiederkehr: Interpretationen zu den gespenstischen Romanfiguren bei Ewers, Meyrink, Soyka, Spunda und Strobl*, Studien zur phantastischen Literatur 10 [Meitingen: Corian-Verlag, 1993], 89). See also Raimund Lang, "Der Dramaturg von Prag - Karl Hans Strobl als studentischer

styled literary great (a *Dichter* rather than an *Autor*) whose lurid stories and novels contained frequent scenes of sexual violence. Strobl was a German-speaking resident of Prague, whose first novels and stories had as much to do with the then fraught conditions between German-speaking students and Czech nationalists as with the fantastic.⁶⁸ Strobl was an active and enthusiastic fraternity member (the right-wing *Korporationen* whose members proved their courage by participating in ceremonial duels) who was subsequently received (and eventually forgotten) as a “Nazidichter”.⁶⁹ Taken together, these three authors constitute the core authors of fantastic fin-de-siècle literature.

Despite their authors’ occasional protestations to the contrary, fantastic stories were consistently received as low-brow *Schundliteratur*.⁷⁰ These stories may have been popular, but they were not well received by the literary establishment. Ewers fancied himself as the heir of Goethe and Schiller, but the literary establishment did not agree. The fantastic, in its lowbrow, popular appeal, was understood as a potentially dangerous literature. The popular appeal of salacious films and *Schauerliteratur* was thought to pose a risk to the morals of Germany’s youth.⁷¹ The *Schund- und Schmutzgesetz* of 1926

Dichter,” *Zwischen Weltoffenheit und nationaler Verengung*, eds. Frische and Becker, *Historica academica* 39 (Würzburg: Studentlichgeschichtliche Vereinigung des Coburger Convents, 2000), 137. As early as 1941, however, he was dismissed (along with Ewers, Meyrink, and Kubin) as a confused decadent by a Nazi academic. See Ruthner, *Unheimliche Wiederkehr*, 19.

⁶⁸ Lang, “Der Dramaturg von Prag,” 137-66.; Scott Spector, *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2000), 55.

⁶⁹ Lang, “Der Dramaturg von Prag,” 137-139, 158.

⁷⁰ Ruthner “Andererseits” 166.

⁷¹ See Winfried Speitkamp, “Jugendschutz und kommerzielle Interessen: Schunddebatte und Zensur in der Weimarer Republik,” *Konsumpolitik: Die Regulierung Des Privaten Verbrauchs Im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Hartmut Berghoff (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 50-53. The dangers of lowbrow, trashy literature (*Schund und Schmutz*) were thought to include the “corruption of values, encouraging violence, undermining the authority of religious and state authorities, offending against good taste and proper social order, distorting reality, and encouraging hedonism and speculation. Those who actively engaged in combating trash (*Schundkämpfer*), most of them educated men, saw these writings as a manifestation of a rival culture which was threatening to undermine the social order at whose head the educated male bourgeoisie had set itself” (Gideon Reuveni, *Reading Germany: Literature and Consumer Culture in Germany Before 1933*, trans. Ruth Morris [New York: Berghahn Books, 2006], 250-1). Reuveni notes that

was meant to counter this threat. Though there was officially no censorship during the Weimar Republic,⁷² this law made it illegal to display and sell certain proscribed works to minors.⁷³

The Historical Roots of the Fantastic in the Romantic and the Gothic

The corpus of fantastic tales that prefigured the reception of true-crime *Lustmord* accounts emerged from a certain literary tradition. In other words, they were part of a genre that has a historical place and not (contra Todorov) merely participants in an atemporal, and in principle eternally valid, structuralist genre. The popular fantastic tales of the period from the fin-de-siècle through the founding of the Weimar Republic were prefigured by Romanticism and the Gothic tale. Romantic themes and Gothic motifs resound in these fantastic tales; authors such as E.T.A. Hoffmann and Edgar Allen Poe exert a continuing influence that Ewers and Strobl explicitly acknowledged.⁷⁴

Both Romanticism and the Gothic complicate what I will call the naturalist assumption: the belief that a comprehensible regularity underlies the workings of the world.⁷⁵ Jürgen Habermas defines the project of Enlightenment (programmatically

besides the young, workers and women were thought to be particularly endangered by “bad” literature. See *ibid.*, 251.

⁷² Film was explicitly exempted from the prohibition on censorship in the Weimar constitution, and measures taken “zur Bekämpfung der Schund- und Schmutzliteratur sowie zum Schutz der Jugend bei öffentlichen Schaustellungen und Darbietungen” were explicitly allowed (qtd. in Speitkamp, “Jugendschutz und kommerzielle Interessen,” 56). See also Reuveni, *Reading Germany*, 256. For a history of the Wilhelmine censorship and the debate about the *Lex Heinze* (a censorship law originally meant to control prostitution but extended to regulate obscenity), see R. J. Lenman, “Art, Society, and the Law in Wilhelmine Germany: The Lex Heinze,” *Oxford German Studies* 8 (1973), 86-113.

⁷³ See Speitkamp, “Jugendschutz und kommerzielle Interessen,” 57-8.

⁷⁴ Both Ewers and Strobl edited collections of fantastic stories in which their own stories appeared along side those of Poe and Hoffmann (Clute/Grant, “Germany,” 398-99). For the fin-de-siècle fantastics’ publications and reference to earlier fantastic authors see also Ruthner, *Andererseits*, 170. Ewers wrote a short book (or essay—it is only some 67 pages long) about Poe. See Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Edgar Allen Poe* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1905). For Strobl’s understanding of himself as the inheritor and reviver of a fantastic tradition, see Ruthner, “Andererseits,” 139; and Lang, “Der Dramaturg von Prag,” 138.

⁷⁵ Roy Bhaskar defines naturalism as “the thesis that there is (or can be) an essential unity of method between the natural and the social sciences,” Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical*

identified as the unfinished project of modernity) as an attempt “to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art, according to their inner logic.”⁷⁶

It is this presumption of the possibility of objectivity and inner logic that founds the possibility of a process of Enlightenment per se.⁷⁷

Romanticism has been commonly understood as having arisen as a reaction to the mechanical conception of the world advanced by the Enlightenment.⁷⁸ The Romanticist engagement with Enlightenment precepts was more nuanced than a simple reaction, however. Frederick Beiser argues that the early Romantics shared the Enlightenment ideals of ameliorative *Bildung* (including *Volksbildung*) and radical critique, but that they also sought to overcome an alienation from community and nature by turning to aestheticism.⁷⁹ The conflict and continuities between the Enlightenment and Romanticism set the stage for the hesitation between explanatory regimes that Todorov makes foundational for the genre of the fantastic. Romanticism’s concern for the possibilities that exist beyond the scope of the mechanical rationality of the Enlightenment makes it amenable to the supernatural.⁸⁰

Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences, 3rd ed. (1979; London: Routledge, 1998), 2. Philosophical naturalism, in other words, involves the proposition that it is, in principle, possible to objectively investigate and describe what Bhaskar calls the deep generative structures underlying both physical and socio-cultural processes.

⁷⁶ Habermas programmatically identifies this as the unfinished project of modernity. See Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity versus Postmodernity,” trans. Seyla Ben-Habib, *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, ed. Clive Cazeaux (1981; London: Routledge, 2000) 273.

⁷⁷ Bhaskar founds the possibility of ideological critique on the validity of the naturalist assumption. See Bhaskar, *Possibility of Naturalism*, 53.

⁷⁸ “It is a commonplace of intellectual history to regard the birth of German romanticism at the end of the eighteenth century as the death of the *Aufklärung*,” Frederick C. Beiser, “Early Romanticism and the *Aufklärung*,” *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, ed. James Schmidt (Berkeley: U of California P, 1996), 317.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 324-5.

⁸⁰ Tobin Siebers argues that both Romanticism and the fantastic are reactions against the Enlightenment inhering in an appreciative turn back to superstition. See Tobin Siebers, *The Romantic Fantastic* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984), 25-28.

The fantastic is descended from the Romantic most obviously via the Gothic. The literary Gothic began in the late eighteenth century with Horace Walpole's self-consciously antiquarian *The Castle of Otranto* (1764).⁸¹ Walpole's novel contains many of the elements that would come to mark the Gothic: crumbling old castles, secret passages, sexual repression, and family secrets.⁸² The Gothic novel is marked above all by the expressiveness of its settings. The castles, ruins, graveyards, and secret passages of the Gothic realize the mental conflicts of its protagonists: they render a psychic topography concrete. A key example of this from the American Gothic is Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher."⁸³ The topography of the Gothic has obvious affinities to psychoanalysis.⁸⁴ Eve Sedgwick has argued that the key Gothic theme is not confinement but release: the Gothic protagonist finds him- or herself trapped underground or otherwise blocked, but the true moment of horror comes in the moment a barrier is breached.⁸⁵ The denouement of the Gothic tale involves the manifestation of what has otherwise remained repressed or hidden.⁸⁶ This points to a difference between

⁸¹ E.F. Bleiler, "Horace Walpole and *The Castle of Otranto*," *The Castle of Otranto, by Horace Walpole; Vathek, by William Beckford, The Vampire, by John Polidori: Three Gothic Novels*, ed. E.F. Bleiler (New York: Dover, 1966), xiii.

⁸² Eve Sedgwick notes how remarkably formulaic the Gothic novel is ("The first [remarkable thing] is of course just that a form with the historical stature of the Gothic novel should be so adequately reducible to a formula") with the following catalogue of themes and topoi: "the priesthood and monastic institutions; sleeplike and deathlike states; subterranean spaces and live burial; doubles; the discovery of obscured family ties; affinities between narrative and pictorial art; possibilities of incest; unnatural echoes or silences, unintelligible writings, and the unspeakable; garrulous retainers; the poisonous effects of guilt and shame; nocturnal landscapes and dreams; apparitions from the past; Faust- and Wandering Jew-like figures; civil insurrections and fires; the charnel house and the madhouse" (Eve K. Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* [London: Methuen, 1986], 10, 9-10).

⁸³ On Poe as a representative of an American Gothic tradition, see Andrew Smith, *Gothic Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008), 61-68; and Fred Botting, *Gothic* (Abingdon [UK]: Routledge, 1996), 115-123. For the American Gothic in general, see Teresa A. Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (New York: Columbia UP, 1997); and Alan Lloyd-Smith, *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction* (New York: Continuum, 2004).

⁸⁴ See Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 19-20.

⁸⁵ Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, 22.

⁸⁶ Sedgwick takes care to argue that this needn't be interpreted in psychoanalytic terms. See *ibid.*, 12.

the Gothic and the Fantastic. The latter maintains an uncertainty as to what, precisely, accounts for the action of the story. The former may maintain a fantastic tension, but just as often is explicable as unambiguously natural or supernatural.⁸⁷ The key to the Gothic is not a fantastic tension, but the physical manifestation of secrets and (often) mental states.

What the fin-de-siècle fantastic revival takes from the Gothic are its expressive topoi and the psychological topography they manifest. The fantastic fiction of Ewers, Meyrink, and Strobl abounds with Gothic motifs.

The Grotesque and the Failure of Rationality

The fiction of the fin-de-siècle fantastic revival features grotesque images as well as Gothic topoi. The grotesque, following Wolfgang Kayser's definition, is marked by the incongruous, sudden reversals, and unnatural images: it is the "estranged world."⁸⁸ The imagery of the grotesque is very similar to that of the fantastic: the monstrous, artificial humans, machines come to life.⁸⁹ The affect attending the grotesque resembles that of the uncanny. Confronted with the grotesque, the reader feels that the world has ceased to be reliable and the conditions for everyday life are challenged: the grotesque inspires a fear of life rather than death.⁹⁰

With the fin-de-siècle fantastic revival, German-language horror tales took a cynical turn. Wolfgang Kayser argues that unlike earlier works that presented the

⁸⁷ There is no suggestion that the giant helmet that crushes Manfred's son in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* has a natural explanation, for instance. See Horace Walpole, "The Castle of Otranto," *The Castle of Otranto, by Horace Walpole; Vathek, by William Beckford, The Vampire, by John Polidori: Three Gothic Novels*, ed. E.F. Bleiler (1764; New York: Dover, 1966), 28-30.

⁸⁸ Wolfgang Kayser, *Das Grotteske* (Oldenburg: Gerhard Stalling Verlag, 1957), 198.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 197-99.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 199.

grotesque in a manner that ultimately incorporated it into a rational order,⁹¹ these fantastic tales depicted the final failure of the conventional rational order. “Die Schauerliteratur im zweiten Jahrzehnt des 20. Jahrhunderts will das Nächtliche nicht mehr einordnen. Soweit sie nicht einfach die Funktion erfüllt, Gruseln zu erregen [...], strebt sie nach Erschütterung der geltenden Kategorien im bürgerlichen Weltbild.”⁹² It is questionable whether the fantastic authors had such clear programmatic intent: the fantastic horror story was a popular form rather than an avant-garde movement. But Kayser is right to note the tendency to depict the failure of integration rather than the happy reassertion of rational norms. I am interested here most strictly in the fantastic rather than Kayser’s grotesque (the co-presence of the two explanatory regimes of natural and supernatural rather than incongruous exaggeration and monstrous hybridity). But there is considerable overlap, and the point is still valid: the fantastic tale of the early Twentieth Century seldom has a happy ending. This is especially the case with the fantastic tales that are most interesting here: those that depict sexual violence.

The Fantastic *Lustmord* Narrative

Meyrink’s Golem

One of the most popular novels of the fantastic revival was Gustav Meyrink’s *Der Golem* (1915).⁹³ Meyrink’s novel is an exemplary fantastic tale. It features stories within stories, underground passages, dreams, artificial humans, and the persistent hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations that Todorov makes the criteria of the

⁹¹ “eine Ordnung nur um so machvoller, die solche Unheimlichkeit zu halten vermag” (ibid., 152).

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Gustav Meyrink, *Der Golem* (1915; Augsburg: Weltbild, 1995). On *Golem*’s popularity, see Ruthner, “Andererseits,” 170; and Richards, *The German Bestseller*, 60, 188. The most popular novel of the fin-de-siècle fantastic revival was Ewers’ *Alraune*, which had sold more than 238,000 copies by 1922. See Richards, *The German Bestseller in the 20th Century*, 59, 124.

fantastic tale.⁹⁴ *Golem* does not depict sexual violence. It concerns a search for identity and mystic meaning that takes place in the labyrinthine setting of Prague's ghetto. The novel's main female character, the archivist's daughter Mirjam, acts as a spiritual guide and helpmate whose presence is (as the final scene of the novel shows) a precondition of the character Athanasius Pernath's mystic apotheosis.⁹⁵ However, *Lustmord* becomes suddenly relevant to Pernath's enlightenment in a surprising, and symptomatic, episode in prison.

Meyrink's plot is so convoluted as to defy a simple retelling: there are several framing stories, the protagonist's name and identity changes in the course of what may or may not be a dream, and the question of which framing story should be considered the real one remains open until the end of the novel. Briefly, the novel concerns the spiritual journey of an unnamed, dreaming protagonist who in a moment of identity dissolution has an out of body experience and finds himself inhabiting the body of the jeweler Athanasius Pernath in the old Prague of the last century. He is given a book to illuminate that takes control of him and leads to a vision of a hermaphrodite on a throne. Pernath himself undergoes a series of out-of-body experiences in which he seems to have become the Golem. The archivist Hillel and his daughter Mirjam help him understand some of

⁹⁴ It also references E.T.A. Hoffmann's "Der Sandmann." An important plot element revolves around an unscrupulous ophthalmologist, Dr. Wassory, who fraudulently tells his patients that they need a special operation to keep from going blind (35-38). The operation is painful, and leaves the patients with a chronic glare in their eyes. Another character, who wants to expose Dr. Wassory, claims that Dr. Wassory "[hat] sogar seinen Kollegen, die viel zu arglos und anständig waren, um ihn zu durchschauen, Sand in die Augen zu streuen gewußt" (37). Another character keeps a wax mannequin in his shop to remind him of his old lover (195). These are all plot elements that are reminiscent of Hoffmann's "Der Sandmann": the optician Coppola and the Sandmann's threat to Nathanael's eyes; the explicit reference to sand in eyes; and the artificial woman Olimpia. See E.T.A. Hoffmann, "Der Sandmann," *Nachtstücke*, ed. Eduard Grisebach, Vol. 3, E.T.A. Hoffmann's sämtliche Werke in fünfzehn Bänden (1817; Leipzig: Max Hesse's Verlag, 1900) 7-39.

⁹⁵ Thus, Mirjam's role is reminiscent of that of the female intermediary whose femininity facilitates the rational male's rediscovery of his originary unity with the world in the Romantic tradition, as exemplified

what happens to him. Pernath's mystic imprisonment in the body of the Golem and in the labyrinthine old buildings and underground passages of the ghetto are followed by a period of more direct imprisonment when he is falsely arrested for killing and robbing a man. When he is released from prison, he discovers that the ghetto which he had inhabited is being razed and all his friends are gone. Pernath takes a room in one of the few old houses remaining in the ghetto—in the house which has a secret room in which the Golem disappeared long ago. Shortly thereafter, there is a fire which Pernath escapes by climbing out onto a roof and down a rope. He falls—and awakens as himself, the nameless protagonist.

An important part of Pernath's path to enlightenment is the dream or vision in which he finds himself faced with a choice whether to accept or deny the handful of red beads offered to him by a headless apparition. Pernath dashes them out of the apparition's hand. "Zwei Pfade laufen nebeneinander hin: der Weg des Lebens und der Weg des Todes," Hillel tells him. He has chosen the path of life. Later, in prison, he meets a *Lustmörder*, Amadeus Laponder, who has faced the same choice. It is because he accepted the beads that Laponder had to become a *Lustmörder*: he has chosen the path of death. This latter is figured as a fatalistic necessity. Laponder does not want to murder women, he has no choice.⁹⁶ The secret as to why this *Lustmord* is necessary for

by Schlegel's *Lucinde* (1799), among others. Cf. Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde: Ein Roman*, ed. Karl Konrad Polheim (1799; Stuttgart: Reclam, 1963).

⁹⁶ As Laponder tells Pernath: "Was Sie mir vorhin von dem Phantom ohne Kopf – ein Symbol natürlich: dieses Phantom; den Schlüssel können Sie leicht finden, wenn Sie darüber nachdenken – erzählten, ist mir einst genauso passiert. Nur habe ich die Körner angenommen. Ich gehe also den 'Weg des Todes' – Für mich ist das Heiligste, das ich denken kann: meine Schritte vom Geistigen in mir lenken zu lassen. Blind, vertrauensvoll, wohin der Weg auch führen mag: ob zum Galgen oder zum Thron, ob zur Armut oder zum Reichtum. Niemals habe ich gezögert, wenn die Wahl in meine Hand gelegt war" (278).

his enlightenment, Laponder says, is given by the vision of the hermaphrodite. As Mirjam has explained, the hermaphrodite is the final goal of mystic enlightenment.⁹⁷ The implication is that though Pernath's "path of life" leads through a mystic unity with Mirjam, an equally valid (and quicker) path to enlightenment is the "path of death" marked by *Lustmord*.

Meyrink's use of *Lustmord* is suggestive of the connection between sexual violence and the epistemological concerns of the fantastic. The novels and stories by Ewers and Strobl are more directly illustrative of what becomes a typical fantastic *Lustmord* narrative.

Ewers and Strobl

Sexual violence is thematized in the work of Kubin, Meyrink, and others, but it is Ewers and Strobl whose work most often depicts fantastic sexual violence. The Romantic narrative of male attainment of lyrical union with the world via female mediation is here turned on its head. The female characters in these tales are most often rivals to male power, treacherous betrayers, or outright monsters rather than faithful female mediators. There is a common narrative of fantastic sexual violence in Ewers and Strobl: a male protagonist is confronted with a mystery which he attempts to solve in a rational manner only to be thwarted by a demonic female force—the plot culminates in a moment of disavowed sexual violence centered on the body of the woman. This is an ambiguous moment. Though the male protagonist (or his double) commits this act of sexual violence he appears inculpable because the act was unwilling.

⁹⁷ Mirjam describes the hermaphrodite as "Die magische Vereinigung von männlich und weiblich im Menschengeschlecht zu einem Halbgott. Als Endziel! – Nein, nicht als Endziel, als Beginn eines neuen Weges, der ewig ist – *kein* Ende hat" (197).

In Strobl's story "Das Aderlaßmännchen" (1909),⁹⁸ a mysterious stranger catches a doctor in the act of exhuming a young woman's body in order to conduct a forbidden autopsy. The stranger offers his silence in return for taking the doctor's place at the monthly bloodletting of a group of nuns the next day. They make a contract, and the mysterious stranger assumes the doctor's form and appears in his place at the convent. The bloodletting, whose ostensible purpose is the drawing off of the nuns' hot blood in order to reconcile them to their pious station, becomes an orgy of violence when the doctor/stranger begins to attack the nuns. Two things happen during this attack: the nuns are haunted by the ghosts of their renounced passions, and the painted walls of the convent peel back to reveal the lascivious frescos that originally adorned the palace before it was converted into a convent. As the stranger leaves the convent, the crowd that had gathered outside (among whose number is the doctor) rushes inside to find the nuns' blood has been sucked from their bodies and that the painting of Jesus appears to be screaming in horror.

In Ewer's "Die Spinne" (1908),⁹⁹ a medical student's diary tells of his offer to stay in a room where there have been a series of mysterious (male) suicides. His diary entries first detail his preoccupation with the mystery, but he soon becomes intrigued by the woman in the window across the street with whom he plays increasingly complicated and engaging games of mimicry. He gradually realizes that it is he who is mimicking (and in thrall to) her and not vice versa. The last diary entry records his knowledge of his enthrallment: the woman has tied a noose and he has followed suit. He is safe for the

⁹⁸ Karl Hans Strobl, "Das Aderlaßmännchen," *Lemuria: Seltsame Geschichten*, Galerie der Phantasten 4 (1909; München: Georg Müller, 1917) 231-54.

⁹⁹ Hanns Heinz Ewers, "Die Spinne," *Seltsame Geschichten* (1908; Munich: Verlag Kurt Desch, 1964) 7-34.

brief time that he writes in his diary, but knows he will be compelled to hang himself when he looks up again. The entry breaks off after he has repeatedly written his own name. A police report takes up where the diary left off and reports on the discovery of his body—with a spider clenched between his teeth, and the fact that the apartment opposite his window had been unoccupied for some months.

In Strobl's "Grabmal auf dem Père Lachaise" (1913),¹⁰⁰ a poor scholar is offered a fortune to spend a year in an infamously dissolute woman's tomb. He isn't allowed to leave the tomb or to talk to anyone except for a servant of the estate. He intends to use his time writing a scholarly treatise on the interpenetration of matter and energy. Two things distract him: he becomes intrigued by the amorphous quality of the marble in the tomb, which appears to soften in the moonlight, and he becomes increasingly disquieted by a series of dreams and hints that the dead woman might be a vampire who visits him at night in ghostly form. He sends his written speculation about the amorphous marble to the academy of science where it is taken as a sign of madness. The scholar rebuffs the attempts of his fiancée to visit him and is plagued by the sightseers who come to catch sight of him from the door to the tomb and to try to entice him to talk. Finally, he is convinced that the woman will take form and attempt to take him over. He feigns sleep and as the shape of a woman coalesces out of the moonlight and climbs into his bed, he turns the tables on her and kills her. In the light of the rising sun it appears she has played one last trick on him by assuming the shape of his fiancée.

In Ewer's trilogy of novels (which I deal with in more depth in chapter 3 below), the protagonist Frank Braun is an aristocratic traveler, a sometime scholar of the occult,

¹⁰⁰ Karl Hans Strobl, "Das Grabmal auf dem Père Lachaise," *Lemuria: Seltsame Geschichten*, Galerie der Phantasten 4 (1913; München: Georg Müller, 1917) 191-230.

and connoisseur of the strange and erotic. Braun's attempts at masterful distance and power are continually thwarted by female power. In *Der Zauberlehrling* (1909),¹⁰¹ he travels to a small mountain village in the grip of religious fervor in order to enjoy and encourage the spectacle while working on his scholarly treatise on language and race in Europe. After raping his landlord's daughter, Teresa, he hypnotizes her and suggests the formation of a flagellation cult.¹⁰² He later tries to revoke the posthypnotic suggestion, but Teresa persists in leading the townspeople to greater and greater displays of violent passion. Braun becomes trapped in the village, held captive by the townspeople who now do Teresa's bidding. He only escapes after a scene of sexual violence and religious fervor in which Teresa has the townspeople crucify her and then—their hands on his, physically forcing and compelling him—makes him kill her by stabbing her and their unborn child with a pitchfork. In *Alraune* (1911),¹⁰³ Frank Braun decides that there is a strange sort of truth to the legend of the mandrake root—which supposedly grows where the sperm of a hanged criminal falls to the ground and which brings both wealth and misfortune to its owner. He convinces his uncle to experiment with artificial insemination by inseminating the most dissolute whore in Berlin with the sperm of an infamous murderer. The child is a living Alraune—a femme fatale who bends the will of her playmates to her own and who, as a young woman, brings destruction on all men who enter her sphere of influence. She destroys her own “father,” Braun's uncle, among others. Frank and Alraune begin a sort of love affair, marked by bouts of vampiric

¹⁰¹ Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Der Zauberlehrling oder die Teufelsjäger* (1909; Munich: Georg Müller, 1920).

¹⁰² Ewers based his novel on a historical case that occurred in a swiss mountain villiage in the years 1817 to 1823. See Wilfried Kugel, *Der Unverantwortliche: Das Leben des Hanns Heinz Ewers* (Düsseldorf: Grupelli Verlag, 1992), 418-19.

For a discussion of historical cases of erotic religious flagellation, see Niklaus Largier, *In Praise of the Whip: A Cultural History of Arousal*, trans. Graham Harman (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 235-70.

violence and characterized by a mutual struggle for mastery of the other. This is an explicit war of the sexes. Braun finds he is only able to break free from her when he tells her the truth about her origin and burns the original mandrake root that had inspired his speculations. In *Vampir* (1921),¹⁰⁴ the last novel, Frank Braun finds himself trapped in the United States by the outbreak of World War One. He makes his way to New York where he meets an old girl friend, Lotte Lewi, who is now a rich widow. Lotte tells him two things: that she has always loved him and that he, the self-styled *Übermensch*, has always been a puppet. Bankrolled by Lotte's money, Braun begins traveling around the U.S., making wonderfully charismatic speeches and agitating for the German cause. During this time he ruminates on what it means to be a patriotic German—part of the masses yet apart from them. The thought that he is indeed a puppet begins to take hold. This feeling is exacerbated when he is stricken by a strange ailment: he is alternately anemic and flushed with health. Braun begins to suspect that Lotte is a vampire when he notices that the turning points in his illness almost always occur after he has been with her—and that she has a strange preoccupation with knives. He leaves her, half-coerced and half-willingly for another woman, but then discovers that it is he who is the vampire. The novel ends as Lotte sacrifices the last of her lifeblood so that Braun can live and continue his fight for the German cause.

In Strobl's "Die arge Nonn'" (1911),¹⁰⁵ an architect (*Baumeister*) who is in charge of dismantling an old cloister has a recurring dream—or a nighttime experience—in which a woman is chased through the streets by a crowd of angry men. Further

¹⁰³ Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Alraune: Die Geschichte eines lebenden Wesens* (1911; Munich: Herbig, 1973).

¹⁰⁴ Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Vampir: Ein verwilderter Roman in Fetzen und Farben* (1920; Berlin: Sieben Stäbe Verlags-und Druckerei-Gesellschaft, 1928).

excavations reveal first a hidden manuscript and then a hidden passage. His antiquarian friend deciphers the document: it is the story of the dissolute nun Agathe who infuriated the townspeople in the Middle Ages with her impiety and habit of luring young men to the convent, where it is implied she indulged in violent orgies. With the help of the manuscript's clues the two discover the hidden passage in which three mummified bodies are found—one of whom the *Baumeister* recognizes as the woman running from the mob—the dissolute nun Agathe. In the night of this discovery the ghost mob tracks down and rips the ghost Agathe into pieces. But now there is a change in narrative point of view and style of text. Instead of a first-person narrative in the *Baumeister*'s voice, it becomes a legal brief describing his descent into madness. Convinced that Agathe has vowed revenge, he decides that his wife is turning into the *arge Nonn*' and thus kills her.

Knowledge and the Erotics of Power: Gender, Vision, Textuality

These stories and novels feature a recurring fantastic narrative in which a man identified as a student, scholar, or expert is confronted with an occult mystery that poses a problem or challenge to his scholarly attempt to understand it. The encounter with the occult becomes an encounter with an intriguing woman—usually subterranean, usually a femme fatale. The result of this encounter is an eruption of sexual violence that is committed in a delirium or while the man is otherwise compelled. This is the fantastic *Lustmord* narrative whose motifs and topoi prefigured the reception given to notorious true-crime *Lustmord* cases during the Weimar Republic. This last example given above, Strobl's "arge Nonn'," is paradigmatic of this fantastic narrative. But before proceeding

¹⁰⁵ Karl Hans Strobl, "Die arge Nonn'," *Lemuria: Seltsame Geschichten*, Galerie der Phantasten 4 (1911; München: Georg Müller, 1917) 271-313.

to a closer reading of that exemplary story, I'd like to further expand on the contours of the fantastic narrative of sexual violence using the tales already cited.

The treatment of sexual violence in these fantastic tales is marked first of all by the scholarly attributes of the male protagonist. The ostensible hero of these tales is a student, a doctor, a scientist—in every instance a man of reason and knowledge. In many cases, the male protagonist begins these stories with an overweening sense of pride and confidence in his own mental abilities to penetrate whatever supernatural mystery he is confronted with. Accompanying the character of the scholar are the attributes of his profession. Frank Braun and the poor scholar of Strobl's "Grabmal" are writing treatises. The medical student in "Die Spinne" pursues an investigation whose field notes are recorded in his diary. The doctor and grave robber of "Aderlaßmännchen" is seeking access to a dead woman's body in pursuit of his anatomical studies. The *Baumeister* in "Die arge Nonn'" is a literal master-builder; the friend who helps him investigate the cloister's ruins is a historian and archivist.

The man of knowledge pursues an active investigation marked by interpretation and its analogs: excavation or exhumation; reading and deciphering ancient texts; and activities of investigative discovery in general. The student in "Die Spinne" begins his stay in the boarding house occupied by his medical books and eager to solve a mystery. His object of study soon becomes the woman in the window. Frank Braun's adventures are generally episodic—he moves from one occult adventure to another. There is however a larger arc his adventures follow, moving from attempts at masterful action and writing (in *Zauberlehrling*) through an attempt to understand and master the femme fatale (in *Alraune*) to a reactive uncertainty in which the object of his investigation becomes

both a woman and himself (*Vampir*). Throughout his adventures Braun has frequent recourse to obscure books of occult knowledge and is intermittently occupied in writing scholarly treatises on the occult. The scholar in “Grabmal” concerns himself both with writing his original scholarly work and with investigating the strange quality of light in the tomb and the odd permeability of its marble. This then becomes an investigation into the character of the ostensibly dead woman whose tomb he is inhabiting—and into the possibility that she might be visiting him in his sleep to suck his blood. In all these examples there is a shift in the activity of discovery from a safely neutral and disinterested object of scientific investigation to a horrifyingly intimate possibility: the scholarly position that would presume to insist on the distance between the knowing subject and the object of his knowledge collapses here in an uncanny way. The doctor’s double in “Aderlaßmännchen” completes the *Lustmord* in the convent that is only hinted at on the doctor’s examination table. The student in “Die Spinne” assumes he is observing a woman in another apartment—through two windows and across the street. The end of the story suggests either that the woman has gotten into his room and transformed into a spider or that she was a spider in his room all along. Frank Braun becomes not the master of the occult, but the occult himself.

Haunted Spaces: The Feminine Occult and the Work of Excavation

The process of investigation often has its physical analog in acts of uncovering: excavation, exhumation, dissection. In “Die arge Nonn” the process of investigation proceeds by means of parallel textual and physical investigations. The archivist deciphers an ancient map and investigates the history of the convent in the town’s chronicles. The *Baumeister* leads the demolition work of literal excavation that leads to

the discovery of and descent into a secret passage that is also a grave. In “Aderlaßmännchen,” the process of discovery is paralleled by a literal movement of uncovering. The doctor in “Aderlaßmännchen” begins the story in an act of exhumation which is part scholarly and part criminal. Likewise, there are hints that his scholarly intent is part objectively scientific and part sexual. The corpse which he intends to transform into the object of his scientific knowledge is that of a young woman. The narrator describes the dead woman as beautiful, nude, and (having just recently died) life-like. Indeed, in a key scene, the woman’s corpse reanimates in an attempt to warn the doctor of the mysterious stranger’s intentions. Discovery and uncovering turn from coolly scientific to horrific when the stranger, as the doctor’s double, goes to the convent. This is another excavation: the stranger enters the otherwise closed space of the convent and then proceeds to figuratively strip away the façade of the bloodletting (ostensibly to cool the nuns’ hot blood) to reveal its violent erotic undercurrent. The stranger’s attack also literally strips away the pious paintings on the walls of the convent to reveal the orgiastic frescos that originally decorated the building when it had been a pagan palace.

The physical action of investigation is closely tied to architectural elements. The setting for the failure of investigation is frequently a Gothic space. The failure of rational male investigation is marked in clearly architectural terms in “Die arge Nonn’”: besides the *Baumeister*’s evident architectural occupation, the action ranges from rationalized bourgeois interiors (literally *heimlich*, homely) through the city streets to the Gothic ruins of the cloister. The failure of his subterranean investigations revisit him in that homely interior when he brings first the *arge Nonn*’ Agathe’s portrait and then his creeping conviction that his wife is becoming Agathe into his home. The windows in “Die

Spinne” are another example of the radical collapse of distance between the male observer and the occult object of his investigation. The convent and graveyard in “Aderlaßmännchen” is another. In “Aderlaßmännchen,” episodes in the Frank Braun novels, “Grabmal,” and many other fantastic tales there is a Gothic topography on whose surface the male protagonist’s attempts at rational interpretation play out.¹⁰⁶ Here, the attempt at detection and clarification (*Aufklärung*) often involves a literal descent into secret passages, churches, ruins, and tombs. The problem with this, at least in the pessimistic stories of fantastic *Lustmord* that concern me, is that the excavation does not expose the ruins to clarifying light so much as it loses the male protagonist in the subterranean darkness.

The representation of physical uncovering is a concretization of the metaphors or analogs of interpretation: reading and deciphering become exhumation and dissection, an enlightenment that is a literal uncovering and exposure to the light. The movement into a Gothic space filled with shadows, ruins, secret passages and labyrinthine cityscapes marks the point at which interpretation fails. The rational investigations of the man of knowledge cannot pierce the mysteries of Gothic space. The literalization of the representation of interpretation allows for the concurrent depiction of its dangers. In other words, when these tales represent various metaphors of interpretation as physical actions they do so in a way that vividly calls into question the possibility of the success of the interpretive project. In all of these tales, the protagonist begins as a relatively self-assured, sometimes arrogant, man of knowledge—firmly and often favorably established

¹⁰⁶ Cf., for instance, Meyrink’s crumbling and labyrinthine Prague in his *Golem* and the Oriental dream city in Kubin’s *Die andere Seite*. See Alfred Kubin, *Die andere Seite: Ein phantastischer Roman: Mit einer Selbstbiographie des Künstlers, zweiundfünfzig Abbildungen und einem Plan*, ed. Hanns Heinz Ewers, Galerie der Phantasten 5 (1909; Munich: Georg Müller, [1917]).

in the social hierarchy, and ends with the man's faith in a rational order severely shaken. Often these stories end with the man himself destroyed physically or socially: the student in "Die Spinne" is found dead with the body of the *Spinne* crushed between his teeth; the protagonists of both "Grabmal" and "die arge Nonn" have committed a sort of *Lustmord* by killing their lovers when they mistake them for another woman; the protagonist of "Aderlaßmännchen" has committed *Lustmord* either apparently or actually (depending on how one interprets his double, the stranger); and Frank Braun has (however supposedly unwillingly) both committed *Lustmord* and become a monster (though in the context of Ewers' novels this is arguably a happy ending for the protagonist).

Finally, then, there is a typically ambivalent relation to sexual violence in these fantastic narratives. The protagonist of these tales commits *Lustmord* in an attenuated way that distances him from his actions and maintains a sort of innocence. The murder of women is presented as ostensibly horrible (especially when compounded with the unwilling nature of the killing) but at the same time also somehow satisfying.¹⁰⁷ This is the key content of the fantastic *Lustmord* narrative: not only the depiction of sexual violence, but an attending ambiguity and ambivalence. In these tales, male agency in *Lustmord* is disavowed while the psychic gain (so to speak) is tentatively retained: the man of knowledge is compelled, represented by a double, or otherwise coerced—and thus inculpable—which means that the sexual violence manifests like an elemental force, an external event whose violence can be enjoyed without guilt. As to why sexual violence would be enjoyable, the *Lustmord* in these tales is redemptive: it is an affect-laden act of

¹⁰⁷ The double affect of horror and satisfaction is the mark of an uncanny appeal to *Lustmord*. This is an aesthetic appeal that is only available at a distance. The reactions of Hans Anders and his archivist friend in Strobl's "Die arge Nonn" rehearse the differences between aesthetic reaction and the shock of the

pleasurable violence that attempts to recuperate the lost masculine power and mastery that does not become available through the initial activities of interpretation and investigation. When the man of knowledge reaches the limits of his investigative powers, when the occult mystery proves too great and the man of knowledge is lost in the labyrinth, it is then that an unwilling act of sexual violence occurs.

The men who kill women in these stories do so mistakenly (thinking the victim is someone else), at a distance (accomplished by a double), or in an act of rightful retribution. Frank Braun is violent on his own (he rapes Teresa), but his more egregious acts are unwilling: Teresa's death is compelled by the crowd; Alraune's death is necessary, and only tangentially his fault; and when he becomes a vampire he is no longer responsible for his actions. The scholar in "Grabmal" acts thinking he's killing the vampire; the *Baumeister* in "Die arge Nonn'" mistakes his wife for Agathe. The nuns in "Aderlaßmännchen" are killed by a double, not the real doctor. And the student in "Spinne" dies with the body of the spider crushed between his teeth. Alraune and the *Spinne* are examples of women who are threats not only to the protagonist, but to all men: the femme fatale is such a danger that it is necessary to kill her. But even in these last cases male agency is troubled and compelled: the death of the woman, however ostensibly righteous, is accompanied not by male mastery but by continuing failure of male knowledge and his attempts at affirmative action. One might view *Lustmord* in these stories as attempts to re-inscribe the power of the male on the body of the female. But look at how this violence is represented: as a mistake, as compulsion, and—even in the moment of righteous retribution—as a loss of self-control. These are gestures of

real. Anders is undone by an encounter that the archivist experiences as merely interesting and entertaining.

inculpability, but they are also marks of continuing *Fehlleistungen*—the unintended consequences of attempts at self mastery. If *Lustmord* is an instrument of differentiation and mastery,¹⁰⁸ it is one that consistently misses its mark. In the fantastic *Lustmord* narrative, sexual violence is compelled by and reinforces an epistemological panic.

Conclusion

Taken together, these popular works suggest a certain narrative logic to the pre-Weimar fantastic *Lustmord* narrative that prefigures the reception of infamous Weimar *Lustmord* cases in true-crime accounts. We are now in a position to more fully explicate the course of this fantastic narrative of sexual violence. A man of knowledge is confronted by an occult mystery which challenges his interpretive prowess. His attempts at rational clarification are accompanied by a physical interaction with a Gothic space or other architectural elements that are the focus of masculine vision and the scene of its failure. These actions include physically uncovering mysteries (excavation and exhumation again) and a descent into Gothic spaces—tombs, ruins, cloisters, churches and other religious spaces. Vision is frustrated when it turns against the intentions of the viewer—revealing subterranean, prohibited desire and failing to maintain the distance between subject and object of knowledge that allows for the continued maintenance of stable ego boundaries.

The failure of vision involves both a failure of male agency and of male identity. The mystery and the Gothic space are associated with the feminine: it is here that the protagonist meets the incarnation of the irrational in the body of the femme fatale. The threat of the femme fatale is met with an act of disavowed sexual violence: the

¹⁰⁸ Mark Seltzer argues that serial killers are driven by a desire to mark their difference from and mastery over a technological modernity that tends to efface the differences among individuals. See Mark Seltzer,

protagonist commits *Lustmord*, but ostensibly against his will. This disavowed agency in the commission of sexual violence is represented variously by dreams, hypnotism, sleepwalking, *Doppelgänger*, and the mistaken identity of the victim. Finally, the attitude of the work, the protagonist, and the assumed reader is one of ambivalence to *Lustmord*. Most obviously, these are horror stories in which the protagonist murderers, confused or compelled, succumb to an irrational desire for sexual violence. On the other hand, the victim is often the incarnation of irrational sexual violence such that the *Lustmord* is at once the attempt to forestall and the de facto continuation of the irrational desire inherent to the male protagonist.

Strobl's "Die arge Nonn" is exemplary of this narrative and its ambivalence. I have already given a synopsis of the story and used it in some examples. The next chapter will proceed to a closer reading of the story in order to further examine the thematic elements and tensions at work. Of special interest are three thematic elements that recur in both fantastic *Lustmord* narratives and the later true-crime accounts of infamous Weimar *Lustmörder*: gender, vision, and textuality. To anticipate: the gender roles in *Lustmord* narratives sometimes seem unambiguous, but are undermined by a persistent androgyny (the assumed originary location of sexual violence ranges from the murderer to his victim; the *Lustmörder* accordingly varies in gender identification from ultramale to degenerately feminine); the failure of vision (a main theme of fantastic fiction according to Todorov)¹⁰⁹ marks the failure of male rationality and the ordering potential of investigative activity; and the continuing representation of textuality and the problems of interpretation (books, writing, illegibility, obscure symbols, mute clues and

Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture (New York: Routledge, 1998), 29-88.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Todorov, *Fantastic*, 120-23.

traces) seems to point to an uneasy condition of failed intersubjective intelligibility in the public sphere. What is threatened here is a particularly *masculine* public sphere—an arena of ideally disinterested information exchange that founds the claim to an abstract rationality on which the transcendent unity of the male ego is founded. This is not to argue that such a public sphere actually existed. And it is certainly not meant to argue that women were congenitally unsuited to participate in a rational public sphere. Rather, it is meant to indicate that this rationality is gendered male in these representations.

What particularly calls the assumption of male rationality into question is its gendered counterpart: the irrationality of the feminine body and its associated sexual drive. The next chapter will examine the ways in which the fantastic *Lustmord* narrative and its associated themes of fraught gender, vision, and textuality are structured around the exhumation of the female body.

Chapter 2

Archeology, Excavation, and What Remains: The Female Corpse

“Just in case you thought there was no distinction between representation and reality, there is death,” writes Regina Barreca in her essay on women, death, and the power of words.¹ Barreca’s point is that death’s ineluctable reality provides a reference point that transcends otherwise totalizing masculine discourses—women’s writing referencing death can evoke a fugitive reality that, escaping totalization, becomes emancipatory. In the course of making this argument, Barreca cites literary references to the uncontainable flows associated with female bodies and the link between death and desire inherent in the image of insatiable female sexuality.² Her conclusion that the evocation of such sites of the inexpressible and inassimilable (in terms of the dominant received patriarchal discourse) real can be emancipatory has an obverse aspect: the reference to femininity and death is fatal to the masculine discourse on which male subjectivity is founded. In this chapter, the body of the female—as mutilated corpse or revenant—functions intermittently as the screen onto which necrophiliac fantasies are projected or as an encounter with the inassimilable real that proves catastrophic for masculine rationality. The female corpse and the erotics of *Lustmord* it evokes—this is

¹ Regina Barreca, “Writing as Voodoo: Sorcery, Hysteria, and Art,” *Death and Representation*, eds. Sarah Webster Goodwin, and Elisabeth Bronfen, Parallax Re-visions of Culture and Society (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993), 174.

² *Ibid.*, 176, 183.

the remainder of the real, inassimilable to rational society, that returns to haunt the rational male.

The fantastic *Lustmord* narrative is often structured around the exhumation of female corpses. This chapter examines the exhumation of three such corpses: Agathe, the *Gradiva*, and Maria Hahn. I'll first read Strobl's "Die arge Nonn"—which is exemplary of the fantastic *Lustmord* narrative.³ I will then briefly look at Freud's reading of Jensen's *Gradiva*,⁴ and two newspaper articles about the discovery of two of Peter Kürten's victims.⁵

In Karl Hans Strobl's story, "Die arge Nonn," the action involves the dismantling of an abbey (*Jesuitenkaserne*) that becomes also the exhumation of the body of Agathe, the "arge Nonn" of the title. The female body is subterranean in both literal and figurative senses: it is located underground, and it is the occasion for the resurgence of otherwise buried desires and affects.⁶

Freud's reading of Jensen's *Gradiva* features a parallel moment of excavation and exhumation that leads to a much happier outcome. Jensen's fantastic novel tells the story of an archeologist who becomes obsessed with the figure of a woman in an ancient Roman bas-relief, who imagines that he sees this woman first on the streets of the city and then among the ruins of Pompeii, and who finally discovers that what he took to be

³ Karl Hans Strobl, "Die arge Nonn," *Lemuria: Seltsame Geschichten*, Galerie der Phantasten 4 (1911; München: Georg Müller, 1917), 271-313.

⁴ Sigmund Freud, "Die Wahn und die Träume in W. Jensens 'Gradiva'," *Werkausgabe in zwei Bänden*, eds. Anna Freud, and Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, Vol. 2 [Anwendungen der Psychoanalyse] (1907; Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2006), 68-127.

⁵ Walter Kiaulehn, "Der Würger von Düsseldorf," *Berliner Tageblatt* 17 Nov. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe; and Alfred Karrasch, "Die Stadt der unaufgeklärten Bluttaten: Zerschnittene Bilder des letzten Düsseldorfer Opfers.—Demonstrationen des Täters?" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 14 Nov. 1929, Morgenausgabe.

⁶ This recalls the example Freud cites of the uncanny sense that a dried-up well might suddenly bring forth water again. See Freud, "Das Unheimliche," 247.

the apparition *Gradiva* is actually his hitherto forgotten childhood friend Zoë Bertgang.⁷ Freud reads Jensen's fantastic tale as an allegorical analysis of the archeologist Norbert Hanold. Zoë Bertgang, the living incarnation of the Gradiva, successfully brings Norbert's repressed knowledge to the surface and thereby clears the way for the satisfaction of his libidinal desires.

This happy ending contrasts with a pair of newspaper stories about the discovery of two of Peter Kürten's victims. Maria Hahn's corpse is all too real. Yet in an article about the exhumation of her body, Walter Kiaulehn can somehow imagine her to be a sleeping bride. This projection of the iconography of the fantastic onto a true-crime case stands in stark contrast to another newspaper article about another female victim of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* whose author reacts in horror when confronted with the forensic police photos of the mutilated body of the five year-old Gertrud Albermann.

Strobl's "Die arge Nonn'"—An Exemplary Fantastic *Lustmord* Narrative

Strobl's "Die arge Nonn'" is a story about a man, the *Baumeister* Hans Anders, whose series of nighttime experiences or dreams about a licentious nun from the seventeenth century leads him to believe first that she still exercises a vampiric power as a femme fatale, and then that she is slowly possessing his wife.⁸ Anders finally kills his wife to free himself from her influence. Like other fantastic stories of men killing women, the violence here takes place in an attenuated way: ostensibly Anders kills his wife only due to a case of mistaken identity motivated by what we're invited to understand as madness. The murder is identifiable as a *Lustmord* only incidentally—by

⁷ Wilhelm Jensen, *Gradiva: Ein pompejanisches Phantasiestück* (Dresden: Carl Reissner, 1903).

⁸ Karl Hans Strobl, "Die arge Nonn'," *Lemuria: Seltsame Geschichten, Galerie der Phantasten* 4 (1911; München: Georg Müller, 1917), 271-313. Subsequent citations to "Die arge Nonn'" give the page number in parentheses.

the story of the licentious Agathe, *die arge Nonn*, who inspired contradictory emotions of love and violent hate in the young men who finally demanded her death and by the mutilation of her corpse (“[ein] Fall sexuellen Wahnsinns” 301). It is never quite clear how much credence we should give to Hans Anders’ reports about his experiences with Agathe. The story is given in two parts: it begins in the first-person as Anders own report on the events leading up to his wife’s death; it ends as a criminal case study in a third-person account of Anders’ behavior and crime.

The evident generic content of such a fantastic *Lustmord* story (that which makes it typical and identifiable as belonging to the genre) would seem to require only these elements (the sexual murder and the hesitation on the part of the character or reader between supernatural and natural explanations). Strobl’s story has a surfeit of other elements as well that seem inexplicable on the surface: these are the themes and images of religious mystery, the architectural manifestation of internal states, threatened gender roles, the failure of vision, and problems of interpretation clustered generally around the problematics of textuality. “Die arge Nonn” is exemplary in this aspect, but the other stories cited manifest these elements as well.

In my further investigation of the story (and its implications for the fantastic *Lustmord* tale in general and as a propaedeutic for further discussion of the influence on or affinities with later true-crime *Lustmord* accounts) I will look first at the story’s representations of textuality (and problems of comprehensibility); then the representation of vexed vision; and finally the ambivalent representation of gender. This last is most apparently explicable in terms of compensatory male violence directed towards a female

victim.⁹ But there is a persistent suggestion of androgyny that seems to at least partially undo this simple dynamic.

Textuality: Images of Writing, Reading and Interpretation

The story as a whole is presented in two uneven parts. The longer first part is a first-person account told from the point of view of the *Baumeister*—architect, foreman or, literally, master builder—and engineer Hans Anders, who is in the midst of directing the dismantling of an old building that has been most recently a barracks, a Jesuit fortress, a cloister, and (in its earliest incarnation) a marketplace. Anders describes how the progress of the excavation and dismantling of this *Jesuitenkaserne* is paralleled by the increasingly unsettling and real-seeming manifestations of Agathe, the wicked nun and the mob of men chasing her through the streets of the city to the *Jesuitenkaserne*. These manifestations start with a scream in the night and end with what Anders assures his readers is an absolutely true and faithful eyewitness account of Agathe's execution and violent dismemberment by the crowd. The second, shorter part is a case study describing the discovery of his wife's body (whom Anders has murdered) and the subsequent inconclusive investigation by police and medical officials into the reasons for her murder. This second part retells much of Anders' story in a more condensed form, and continues beyond it. Besides a description of the discovery of the wife's corpse, the case study describes: Anders' wife's growing unease and then panic at her husband's changed behavior; Anders' parallel growing conviction that the wicked nun is slowly possessing his wife in order to get her revenge (for the excavation of her tomb that has, Anders believes, allowed the ghostly mob to catch her); the archivist's attempts to persuade his

⁹ This is the argument that Beth Irwin Lewis and Maria Tatar make. See Beth Irwin Lewis, "Lustmord: Inside the Windows of the Metropolis," *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis*, eds. Charles W. Haxthausen, and

friend his apparently supernatural experiences have a natural cause; and Anders' death in a jail cell, officially due to a fright-induced heart attack, but accompanied by a suspiciously crushed and broken arm.

The suture point between Anders' first-person account and the case study occurs at the moment of sexual violence. Anders ends his notebook with the discovery of Agathe's violently desecrated corpse: it has been beaten and kicked, all its bones have been broken, and its head has been cut off. Due to these abuses, "[m]an vermutete einen Fall sexuellen Wahnsinns" (301). The case study begins in language that almost exactly parallels later newspaper accounts of *Lustmord*: "Ein fürchterliches Verbrechen versetzte am Morgen des 17. Juli 19.. die ganze Stadt in Aufregung" (301).¹⁰ These parallel murders and the sudden switch in the manner in which they are recounted mark a moment of textual confusion at a formal level. The story that had previously been naively presented as a first-person fantastic tale abruptly reveals itself to be part of a case study. This becomes explicit with a footnote on page 311, explaining that Anders' text is taken from the notebook found by his wife: "Wir haben die Aufzeichnungen des Hans Anders an den Beginn dieses Berichtes gestellt."

The two parts of the story—Anders' first-person account and the case study that attempts to make sense of it—are marked as separate by a clear typographical gap. This

Heidrun Suhr (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990), 115; and Tatar, *Lustmord*, 10, 126, 182.

¹⁰ A few examples from the Kürten case show the ubiquity of this sort of phrase: "Seit etwa einem Monat wird die Bevölkerung Düsseldorfs durch geheimnisvolle Bluttaten in Angst und Schrecken versetzt" ("Bluttaten in Düsseldorf: Berliner Kriminalisten zur Aufklärung entsandt," *Vorwärts* 1 Oct. 1929, Morgenausgabe); "Immer wieder wird die Bevölkerung durch neue Morde und Messerüberfälle mit tödlichem Ausgang in Erregung versetzt" ("Täter abermals entkommen: Drei neue Ueberfälle auf Frauen in Düsseldorf! Vergebliche Nachforschungen der Polizei," *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 26 Oct. 1929); "Düsseldorf ist in neue Angst versetzt worden. Die ganze Stadt ist unter dem Eindruck der Geschehnisse wie gelähmt" ("Neues Opfer in Düsseldorf: Ein Knabe verschwunden," *Berliner Tageblatt* 16 Nov. 1929, Abend-Ausgabe); "Gestern abend um 10 Uhr wurde die angsterfüllte Stadt Düsseldorf von neuem in Aufregung versetzt" ("Neuer Mord in Düsseldorf?" *Berliner Morgenpost* 21 Nov. 1929).

is a caesura in both formal literary and psychological terms. The break at the moment of sexual violence marks both a textual break and a moment of irretrievable loss of content. The moment of sexual violence is precisely the moment at which rationality breaks down, at which Anders' supernatural experiences or mad fantasies culminate and then abruptly break off with an image of a mutilated female body and a thwarted attempt at official explanation. This break marks both an end point and a continuation of Agathe's malevolent erotic power. The climax of Anders' nightly visions in Agathe's apparent death and mutilation at the hands of the mob does not actually end the threat she represents—nor does Anders' murder of his wife or his iconoclastic destruction of Agathe's portrait. At the end of Strobl's story, Anders is found dead of a heart attack brought on by a sudden fright—but with a shattered and repeatedly broken right arm. Anders' death in custody, and his shattered arm, suggests that Agathe returns, a vampire or revenant, to complete her task of bringing men to their ruin. This break is also the moment towards which the case study works back, in its investigative attempt, to try to explain the etiology of Anders' crime.

There is a marked parallel between Anders' excavations and the case study's investigations. The case study begins with the discovery of Anders' inexplicable crime and proceeds to present a series of testimony and narratives that work like an excavation: the official case study gives way to the archivist's testimony, which in turn gives way to an extended section of the victim's reported speech, which in turn describes the origin and discovery of Anders' notebook. Anders' notebook is an end point of the investigation. It is the final level, the originary, yet still unsatisfying direct testimony of the murderer that, in the words of the case study, remains "eine so seltsame und

unverständliche Erklärung” (303). The case study that follows the moment of sexual violence, like Anders’ experiences or fantasies preceding it, is marked by moments of illegibility and muteness: the failure of language at the moment of sexual violence. It is in this way that the break is also like a psychological caesura. It marks an inflexion point between the two modes of explanation (supernatural and natural) that together in their competing tension constitute a fantastic tale. But as such it is also the moment of irretrievable incomprehension that refuses comprehensible explanations. The break is a formal mark of the inaccessibility of the content of sexual violence.

At the figurative textual level—at the level on which we as readers are asked to read Strobl’s fictional story as if it were a series of first-person notes, or a case study, or as indirect speech—the two parts have a complex relation that has the effect of radically calling into question both the forms and the content of the story. Anders’ first-person account is occasionally augmented by long passages in which the archivist recounts what he has learned of the wicked nun in the chronicles of the city. These embedded histories are, then reports of reports. The case study that follows Anders’ first-person account contains a sort of recursive array of embedded texts: the case study proper gives way to an extended report by the archivist of what his experience of the events has been. The archivist’s report has embedded in it in its turn the indirect report of Anders’ wife. Anders’ wife (via the archivist, via the case study) reports on her husband’s increasing estrangement from her and her own increasing unease. Part of this unease is centered around a notebook she sees her husband writing in furtively from time to time. Unable to bring herself to read it herself, she takes it to the archivist and his friend, the medical doctor Engelhorn. It is this notebook which contains Anders’ first-person account, the

same account that comprises the first part of Strobl's story and, we are now told, of the case study.

At the beginning of Anders' first-person account, the archivist is quoted as saying: "Ich bin überzeugt [...], daß wir noch viel Sonderbares finden werden, wenn wir erst zu den Fundamenten kommen" (273). Anders' officially sanctioned project is a demolition that—because he needs to protect the possibly valuable property he might uncover—first becomes a deconstruction or an excavation and then (after the nuns' bodies are found) an exhumation. The archivist's attitude toward and experience of this process contrasts sharply with that of Anders. The archivist's attitude is one of pleasurable curiosity: his reports of Agathe's licentiousness mark his success as a scholar in discovering this material in the archives; his interest in the "Sonderbares" is licensed by the distance that he maintains from it. Anders begins the story with a similar attitude: he goes to the ruins at night because, he says, "Ich wollte den Reiz des Unheimlichen auf mich wirken lassen und mich mit den Geistern des Ortes befreunden" (273).

But over the course of the story, Anders experiences the excavation as a gradual, inexorable and horrifying collapse of the distance he presumes to put between himself and the sexualized irrationality of the buried woman—of his own fundament, as it were. For the archivist, the excavation of the *Fundamente* takes place on solid ground, as a sort of search for lurid buried treasure in the archives. For Anders, the excavation of the *Fundamente* involves a literal collapse (293). The weight and activity of the deconstruction has partially caved in the secret passage; Anders completes this breach when, at his orders, a shaft is dug which runs from the everyday space of the street to the hidden chamber in which Agathe is buried.

There is a parallel between the activity of excavation of the *Jesuitenkaserne* (to its foundations) in the story and the layers of embedded text with which it is told. At the most objective (and least supernatural) superficial level, we have the case study as the frame for the whole of Strobl's tale. This contains, in layers of deeper nesting, the archivist's tale, the wife's tale, and finally Anders' tale as recorded in the notebook. This last would seem to be the fundament, the base layer of excavation at which the mystery of Anders' crime might be expected to be revealed. But rather than revelation, or clarification, Anders' writings lead only to more mystery. The archivist gives the notebook to the district court justice (*Landesgerichtsrat*) with the words: "Sie werden höchst merkwürdige Aufzeichnungen darin finden, und ich überlasse es Ihrem Schafsinn, sich in dieser Geschichte, die mir dadurch noch verwickelter wird, zurechtzufinden" (311). Anders' own direct testimony met with a similar failure of rational understanding: after his arrest, Anders "gab [...] eine so seltsame und unverständliche Erklärung ab, daß weder der Kommissar noch der Untersuchungsrichter, dem der Fall noch am selben Abend abgetreten wurde, daraus etwas zu verstehen imstande waren" (303).

Formally, Anders' first-person tale breaks the frame of embedding, by occurring not at the moment of the wife's discovery of his notebook (told at the point it is embedded in her story), but at the beginning of the tale. Strobl effectively puts the fundament first, displaying its impenetrable mystery and then presenting the recursively occurring failures to account for Anders' actions. Significantly, the notebook makes its appearance in a moment of the refusal of reading—and even when read, the tale remains opaque and its belated reader is unable to prevent the sexual murder of the wife. The *Fundamente* [foundations] of the *Jesuitenkaserne* are exposed, and do indeed reveal

strange and unexpected things. But the forces they unleash are unfathomable (without solid foundation) and uncontained by the story both in its narrative form and in its represented content. The form of the story demonstrates the limits of reading and the impotence of text to encompass the odd and disavowed forces involved in sexual murder. I want to say that the dynamic of storytelling in which each narrative gives way to a deeper, more authentic (because closer to the action) narrative is *sprung* (like an overwound clock) by the subterranean forces motivating sexual murder.

Strobl's story enacts textual illegibility in its very form: the nesting narratives of the case study, the testimony of Hans Anders' archivist friend, the reported words of his murdered wife, and finally of his own written words in the notebook which begin the story and constitute whatever foundational truth that might be found in this tale—these do not serve to clarify Anders' nighttime experiences and subsequent crime but to extend and maintain the fantastic tension between natural and supernatural explanations. Besides this formal enactment of textual illegibility, Strobl's story also *represents* moments of vexed textuality and failed reading. The most immediately striking of these representations is Anders' notebook. The notebook functions both as Anders' first-person narrative, comprising the first part of Strobl's story, and as a symbol of illegibility. Anders' wife and eventual victim finds the notebook in which she has seen him writing, but can't bring herself to read it: "Als ich aber beginnen wollte, zu lesen, kam eine schreckliche Angst über mich und überwand meine Neugierde. Ich wagte nicht, es auch nur aufzuschlagen, weil ich ... nun weil ich fürchtete, etwas Entsetzliches zu erfahren" (311). Instead of reading the notebook herself, Anders' wife gives it to the archivist, who reads and realizes its import only too late: "Dieser Mangel an

Geistesgegenwart, an energischer Entschlossenheit ihrer Freunde, hat der armen Frau das Leben gekostet. So ist es mit uns Menschen, wir sehen die Gefahr ganz deutlich, aber wir unterlassen es, ihr rechtzeitig zu begegnen,” he tells the commission (311). And even having read the notebook, the archivist, like the reader of Strobl’s whole story, is left no wiser. He gives the notebook to the *Landesgerichtsrat* with the words: “und ich überlasse es Ihrem Scharfsinn, sich in dieser Geschichte, die mir dadurch noch verwickelter wird, zurechtzufinden.” (311). As a physical object, Anders’ notebook is an emblem of multiple illegibilities: it prompts his wife’s fear of horrible knowledge; it fails in its investigative task (Anders’ intent); and, as the object of investigation (as read by the archivist), it leaves Anders’ case more confused than before. As a narrative, it enacts the failure of rational investigation. It is the deepest level to which the case study can penetrate, the bedrock to which it can dig before turning away. It formally escapes the explanatory framework of the case study and continues to confront us with the still open question of Hans Anders’ madness or possession.

The theme of textuality, in its enactments and representations, is vexed. It manifests a problematic of interpretation and communicability precisely in those moments in which the characters in the story are attempting to effect some sort of clarification to the various mysteries that plague them. In this sense, when I talk of the theme of ‘textuality’ in the *Lustmord* narrative, I mean to point to typical moments in the story in which the actions of reading and writing fail to effect a rational explanation but become problematic in their own right. Reading and interpretation fail to come to a satisfyingly singular conclusion. Writing fails in its communicative intent. Language

opens up interpretive possibilities rather than indicating a singularly true meaning—it fails to be a practical mirror of nature.¹¹

Strobl's story abounds in moments of linguistic frustration. The fear felt by Anders' wife when she tries to read the notebook and the archivist's unsatisfactory reading of it are examples. There are several other moments of the refusal of language. Anders initially tells his wife about his nighttime experiences, but then decides to hide them from her. He is reluctant to tell others of his experiences and motives:

Ich habe mich immer davor gehütet, von Angelegenheiten, die erst im Beginn der Entwicklung stehen, viel zu sprechen; denn ich fürchtete die Wirkungen des gesprochenes Wortes. Das Wort ist mächtiger, als unser Alltagsverstand denkt, und es beeinflusst die Zukunft auf eine geheimnisvolle und unfehlbare Art. (282)

And at the end of his notebook, he writes: “Aber die Nachforschungen der Behörden ergaben kein Resultat, denn ich hütete mich wohl, zu erzählen, was ich nachts gesehen hatte” (301). The scene of Agathe's execution and mutilation is marked by a strange silence. Anders observes the shouts and cries of the crowd but cannot hear anything: “Keines der Worte, die ich doch sprechen sah, wurde laut, keiner der Rufe drang bis zu mir” (298).

Strobl's story abounds with images of illegibility and silence. Besides Anders' notebook, the blueprint that he and the archivist find is also quasi-illegible. In the course of the excavation, workers disturb a statue of St. James (*der heilige Jakobus*). The statue's head falls off and rolls away (an action that parallels the action of Agathe's later execution).¹² Inside the hollowed-out head, they find a confusing scribble (a “Gewirr” of

¹¹ The term is Richard Rorty's and refers to his claim that knowledge has traditionally been regarded as a reflection of true conditions, “as accuracy of representation.” See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980), 12, 7.

¹² This action also recalls the circumstances of St. James' death. He was beheaded after returning to Jerusalem from a mission in Galicia. Besides his role as a messenger (a missionary), there is a further

red and blue lines) that appears to be an as-yet illegible blueprint of the *Jesuitenkaserner*. This blueprint is written on “ein Stück des starken Urkundenpapiers, auf dem die wichtigsten Verträge der Vergangenheit aufgezeichnet zu werden pflegten” (279). The apparently rational-yet-illegible blueprint hints at a comprehensible order whose contours are present but not yet clear. The paper on which the blueprint is written hints further at the legality of that obscure order: the mysteries of the convent (its history and its physical manifestation as a building to be excavated) are inscribed on the same sort of parchment on which important contracts were written. This otherwise inconsequential bit of detail about the type of paper the blueprint is written on takes on even greater suggestive power when considered along with another apparently inconsequential bit of legalistic writing Anders encounters on the demolition site. In the first night that Anders follows the running woman and the mob of men chasing her, he is surprised to find himself at the gate of the fence that surrounds the demolition site, “Am Eingang, über dem die Tafel mit der Aufschrift angebracht war: ‘Nichtbeschäftigten ist das Betreten des Platzes verboten’” (277). If this sign is not just an insignificant detail, it is hard not to read it as an address to the *Baumeister* Hans Anders. Again, the implication is that there is a higher order of legality to which Anders does not have access and, furthermore, from which he is explicitly barred. The *Baumeister* is, ironically, an unauthorized person on his own work site. To anticipate a further argument, his rational self confronts his unconscious desires in a moment of inversion: the legality of language (as the ordering, discerning human faculty that inaugurates the durative subject as such) gives way to the sovereign demands of prelinguistic bodily desire. The composed and distinct ego-

textual aspect to his death. James and his death are associated with a mystery about a missing map. See William Melczer, Introduction, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela* (New York: Italica Press,

boundaries of Anders the *Baumeister* (a paragon of masculine rationality and agency) are dispersed and transcended by the *Jesuitenkaserne*'s "Trümmerfeld"—that is, rubble field, or expanse of remains. This is a site that metonymically concretizes an impossible project of self-knowledge, mastery, and destruction. I say "metonymically" because Anders, the male burgher and *Baumeister*, is congruent with his rational, socially sanctioned work. I say "impossible" because the attempt at mastery is not compatible with the attempt at self-knowledge. The former requires the activity of a rationalizing, investigating subject. The latter requires exposure as an object of knowledge. This incongruity is suggested by Anders' work in leading the demolition rather than the construction of a building. It is further suggested by the double nature of this demolition: it is at once the destruction of the *Jesuitenkaserne* and its excavation and investigation. If the ruins are taken as a physical representation of Anders' own psyche, the act of excavation is a sort of self-analysis. This analysis fails at the point where the id (the prelinguistic) confronts the ego (the lawful, discerning power of definition and distinction that works via language) as the stronger power. Thus we have the irony of the power of the prelinguistic manifesting as the sign forbidding unauthorized persons—a command that effects its purpose in the dissolution of the legal power of command. This irony can explain the moments of vexed legibility that occur with Anders' notebook, the sign, and the blueprint. These are moments in which the impotence of writing is manifest in an unhappy deciphering of meaning. The blueprint and the notebook are finally read, but not to any satisfactory effect. Likewise, the sign at the gate accomplishes its purpose (in my analysis its purpose is countering the attempt at further rationalizing excavation) by failing in its immediate command. The unauthorized, rationalizing Anders enters the

1993), 8-9.

ruined landscape of his psyche, but thereby accomplishes not the *Aufklärung* of his prelinguistic bodily desire but rather the dissolution of his rationalizing powers. The sign functions in this sense less as command than warning. The sign, blueprint, and notebook are emblems of the impotence of text. This is the key to my interpretation of Strobl's story and of the fantastic *Lustmord* narrative in general. What's at stake here is the continued validity of the socially comprehensible rationality that founds the possibility of stable male ego boundaries and male agency. This comprehensible rationality is an inherited assumption that the world is naturally organized in a certain way. Todorov is right: the fantastic involves a hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations. What is undermined in the moment of this hesitation is the easy assumption of naturalism that founds rationality. Once this is called into question (and in a generic fantastic tale as Todorov defines it, the assumptions of naturalism are continuously called into question) male mastery is radically endangered.

There are moments of silence and the refusal to speak in Strobl's story. There are emblems of illegibility: the notebook, warning sign, and the blueprint. These suggest the impotence of language. But there are also moments in which metaphors seem to move from the figurative to the literal in a way that suggests more rather than less linguistic power. This recalls Anders' stated fear of the effect of spoken words.¹³ Strobl's story is structured around one master metaphor that becomes literalized in a series of doubled references and actions. At the beginning of the story, Anders describes the *Jesuitenkaserne* and his "Demolierungsarbeiten" as "[die] Sezierung dieses ehrwürdigen Körpers" (272, 273). As Todorov suggests, we can find moments in fantastic tales in

¹³ "Ich habe mich immer davor gehütet, von Angelegenheiten, die erst im Beginn der Entwicklung stehen, viel zu sprechen; denn ich fürchtete die Wirkungen des gesprochenes Wortes" (282).

which the metaphor loses its figural innocence and becomes frighteningly literal.¹⁴ Here, a metaphor that equates the *Jesuitenkasernen* to a body and the excavations to a dissection (a rational investigation) suggests an interpretation in which the ruins are the topographical concretization of the psyche and its bodily desires.¹⁵

The action of excavation is present as a physical activity, as a metaphor of textual interpretation, and potentially as a mode of psychoanalytic analysis. The blueprint that Anders and the archivist find in the course of their excavations requires an analogous excavation in its turn in order to make it legible. The blueprint's true contours are hidden by a type of secret writing. Unlike other secret writings that are invisible until treated, the archivist explains, this secret writing is obscured by yet more writing. The "Gewirr" of lines on the blueprint are a sort of palimpsest in which the original plan of the building and its secrets are obscured by subsequent writings. The manipulation that renders the blueprint finally legible involves heating the paper to erase superfluous lines. The process of removing superfluous lines to get to the original plan (and the revelation of the building's secret passage) parallels the excavation of the *Jesuitenkasernen* itself.

There are multiple instances of what might be called an archeological intent and method at work here. The superficial purpose of the demolition work is never clear in the story, but presumably it is to clear the land for new building. This ostensible purpose soon becomes lost in the shared archeological intent of the archivist and the *Baumeister*: the "Demolierungsarbeiten" turn from a task of demolition to one of exploration. Similar to the blueprint as palimpsest, whose excess lines and writings have to be removed to

¹⁴ Todorov, *Fantastic*, 76-82. Todorov's examples involve moments in which the supernatural emerges in a literalized turn of phrase: the metaphor "huddled into a ball" effects a transformation of a person into a ball (78); the idle terms of a curse are actually realized (79).

make it legible, the site of the *Jesuitenkaserner* has been continuously rebuilt upon until it has become something like an architectural palimpsest itself: “das Gebäude [scheint] von allen Ereignissen berührt worden zu sein, jede Äußerung des Lebens in sich hineingesogen zu haben, so daß ihre Spur zurückblieb,” says the archivist (273). This is an “Ablagerung” that might allow a “Geologie der Geschichte” (273). Excavation is the method. The intent is to reach the base level of meaning. “‘Ich bin überzeugt,’ sagte er [der Archivar], ‘daß wir noch viel Sonderbares finden werden, wenn wir erst zu den Fundamenten kommen’” (273). For the blueprint, this involves a figurative foundation: the revelation of the secret passage. For the building itself, this is the literal revelation of the building’s archeological secrets along with its foundations. Note that the blueprint itself is doubly hidden: first as a palimpsest and then architecturally, hidden in the hollowed out head of a saint.

It is in the course of the exploration of the secret passage that excavation turns into exhumation with the discovery of the bodies of the nuns.¹⁶ This discovery, and the shaft that Anders has built from the chamber where the bodies were found to the street above, allows the ghostly mob of men that chase Agathe through the streets to finally catch her, execute her, and then tear her to pieces. In this last episode, the figurative suggestion of dissection that Anders makes as the first-person narrator at the beginning of the story when comparing the building to an “ehrwürdige[r] Körper” is literalized in a

¹⁵ This metaphor has strong affinities with psychoanalytic interpretations of the Gothic tale. See Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 19-20.

¹⁶ When Anders and the archivist discover the nuns’ bodies, it is the second time that Agathe’s corpse has been exhumed. The first, as the archivist tells Anders, is recorded in the chronicles as having occurred shortly after her supposed death. The young men of the town demand the production of her body after rumors surface (“[Es] tauchten Gerüchte auf”) that she is still alive (294). The Abbess orders the exhumation of Agathe’s body and it is subsequently displayed at a window, where it is exposed to the sticks, stones, and shots of the crowd of young men below (295).

grotesque and perverse way. In the moment of Agathe's execution the wrath of the mob is not yet satisfied: "wie in einer plötzlichen Eingebung stürzten sie sich alle auf den Leichnam los, stießen, schlugen und zerrten ihn herum, als wäre ihre Wut noch immer nicht ganz befriedigt" (300). The incongruity of a legalistic (rationalized) execution followed by what is to all effects a collective *Lustmord* committed on a corpse is grotesque. So too is the collectivized intent of the mob: Agathe is surrounded by a "Gruppe von Männern, in der der gemeinsame Haß der ganzen wütenden Menge verkörpert schien" (299). The scene is perverse in its manifestation of a turn from an ostensibly rational intent (the legal attempt to protect the community from a harmful element) to an irrational bacchanal. The rational intent of dissection is perverted (in a technical sense) by a still obscure, still unmastered desire for the violent disintegration of the woman's body. And it is here that the otherwise extraneous elements of textual uncertainty converge with the more obviously manifest content of sexual violence.

Vision: Images of Eyes, Gazes, Seeing, and Revealing

Vision operates in two related, but different registers in Strobl's story. First, vision is present as an image—in descriptions of the characters' eyes, their gazes, and of Anders' consciousness of being subjected to the gaze of others. Second, vision is present as an activity that structures the relative subject positions of the characters: the action of the story is driven by a series of revelations and concealments in which what is at stake is the claim to mastery of the visual field. The sovereign subject observes; the object is observed. What connects and complicates vision *qua* image and vision *qua* action is a third type of vision—that of vision as delirium and/or transient, unstable appearance. What is vitally at stake in Strobl's story, as in all fantastic tales, is the quality of the

evidence presented in the narration that would allow the reader and the characters to finally decide whether the events of the story had been natural or supernatural.

This mastery of vision inheres both in the relative roles of the characters as observer or observed and in the implicit claim that the visual field structures knowledge at all. In other words, when Anders, the male representative of Enlightenment rationality, sets out to perform a naturalist investigation that would clear up the mystery of the scream, he acts in accordance with the naturalist assumption. His encounter with Agathe is, beyond the play of their respective gazes, fraught with the danger of the naturalist visual field's subversion. Whether Anders' experiences were visions borne of madness or visions of the supernatural, the catastrophic result is the same: the grounds on which he would found his mastery collapse.

The activity of the investigating, rational male in excavation, exhumation, deciphering or dissection is structured as an attempt at visual mastery in Strobl's story. The utility of vision in this story is clearly structured as a male faculty of rational investigation. The masculine power of discernment validates his agency and clearly delineates his distinct subjectivity: it is the male subject who gazes at the object of investigation. At the same time that the power of vision offers a privileged agency to the discerning individual, it threatens dissolution if the individual himself is made the object of that gaze. The male's gaze creates a certain distance between himself and the object of his gaze.¹⁷ This distance will become very important and contested in the late Weimar

¹⁷ The term *the gaze* is not used in a Lacanian sense here. My line of argumentation has definite affinities to, but differs from, the film theory of the Lacanian gaze as developed by Laura Mulvey and Christian Metz. See Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Feminism and Film Theory*, ed. Constance Penley (1975; New York: Routledge, 1988), 57-68; and Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (1977; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982). See also Jacques Lacan, "Of the Gaze as Objet

period.¹⁸ Strobl's fin-de-siècle fantastic tale functions as a sort of foreshadowing of concerns that would become prevalent in 1920s New Objectivity. In Lethen's terms, vision creates the sort of distance that is necessary to move freely and without danger in a modernizing world. The façade of rationalized atomism (the fiction of the autonomous individual) is maintained in order to avoid exposing the defenseless *Kreatur* to the gaze of others who are interested in maximizing their profit at all costs. The danger of exposing one's creaturely nature is that one might give one's opponents some leverage in a social milieu that is figured as a sort of battlefield. To push beyond Lethen, another danger of exposing the creaturely to the gaze of the other is that of losing control of one's boundaries and of suffering dissolution of one's subject position. Following this analysis, the gaze becomes something like a weapon—a sweeping death-ray that maintains the observer's subjectivity by exposing others to its burning gaze.¹⁹

Now let's look at what is and is not visible in this story. The bodies that are literally or figuratively taken apart (the *Jesuitenkasernen*, Agathe's corpse) fail to yield up their secrets. The *Fundamente* that the archivist looked forward to exposing do not, once

Petit a," trans. Alan Sheridan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1998), 67-122; and Elizabeth Wright's discussion of the use of Lacan in feminist and psychoanalytic theory of film, on which I have heavily relied (Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal*, 2nd ed. [New York: Routledge, 1998], 110, 182-6). The distance and control effected through the gaze in Strobl's story has an erotic component. And the idea of the scopophilic gaze captures something of the decidedly non-neutral aggressivity accompanying the exposure and debasement of the *Lustmord* victim as the object of the gaze. However, the looks that pass between Anders and Agathe are neither filmic nor utopian (Metz; Wright 110, 182). Nor are they premised on a panoptic pleasure (Mulvey; Wright 183). Most importantly, they are not born of a desire inherent in the inadequacy of the Symbolic vis-à-vis the Imaginary provoked by, and located on the side of, the object (Lacan; Wright 107-10 and 182). The paranoid and dangerous gazes in Strobl's story do not spring from the hegemony of language (the Symbolic) but rather circulate in the context of its radical failure. There is not too much signifying here (as represented in the plot), but too little.

¹⁸ Cf. Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. Don Reneau, *Weimar and Now: German Cultural Criticism* 17 (Berkeley: U of California P, 2002), 57-58.

¹⁹ This is very similar to what Mark Seltzer has to say about the technologies of distancing and differentiation attempted by serial killers in their murders. The literal bodily dissolution of the other serves

bared, offer the knowledge that they first seemed to promise. Both the archivist and Anders function as detectives seeking to clear up a mystery: Anders in his capacity of de facto archeologist; the archivist in his textual investigations. But their expert gazes fail to uncover the answers they seek. Or rather, they suffer an uncertain success. The archivist has a good deal of success in his textual investigations. But the final mystery of Anders' crime remains obscure. Likewise, Anders is able to achieve a certain success. His nightly investigations finally lead him to the secret of the *arge Nonn*' and her secret passage, and ends with her apparent destruction at the hands of the angry male mob. This apparent death by literal disintegration would seem to conform to the requirements Mark Seltzer sets out for the serial killer's attempt at distinction.²⁰ Anders would appear to have succeeded both in his ostensible intellectual intent and in his possible repressed desire to assert himself by the violent dissolution of a woman's body. But like Seltzer's serial killers, Anders' success is only apparent.

Anders' project is explicitly rational and naturalistic. After being woken on three successive nights by the mysterious scream, Anders decides to investigate more thoroughly on the fourth. He first attempts to counteract the supernatural by reading Kant: "Da ich keinerlei unsinnige Gedanken in mir aufkommen lassen wollte, nahm ich Kants 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft' vor und versuchte mich in die strengen und logischen Vorstellungsreihen zu versenken" (275). It is only after this fails (the approach of midnight causes an "Unruhe, die mich unfähig machte, weiter zu lesen" (275)) that Anders goes down to the street to pursue an investigation. This investigation is explicitly cast as an attempt at rational visual mastery—to uncover the natural causes behind the

to reemphasize the killer's own bodily and psychological integrity. See Mark Seltzer, *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 29-62.

seemingly supernatural phenomenon: “ich war entschloßen, die Qual meiner Nächte durch ein rasches Aufdecken der natürlichen Ursachen zu beenden” (275). This attempt fails. Anders finds that rather than bringing a clarifying light to the mysterious night, the night is invading the day: “Wieder gewannen die Erscheinungen meiner Nächte auch am hellen Tage in solcher Weise über mich Gewalt. Ich sah mich in eine sehr absonderliche Geschichte verstrickt und ich fühlte mit Grauen, daß ich mich nicht befreien konnte” (296). The process by which Anders is totally defeated involves the failure of his attempt to be an investigating subject possessed of virtuoso vision and his increasing exposure to the gaze of others.

Rather than assert the primacy of his gaze as a seeing subject, Anders finds himself the object of others’ gazes. At several points in the story, Anders reacts angrily to finding himself the object of the same sort of gaze he attempts to assert as a knowing, masterful subject. After his first nighttime adventure following Agathe and the mob to the demolition site, Anders lies to his wife by telling her that he slept well and (in his capacity as first-person narrator) reports “[ich] versteckte meinen Kopf rasch in der Waschschüssel, damit meine Frau nicht die Zeichen dieser Nacht auf meinem Gesicht entdecken sollte” (278). Later, when the archivist tries to send a doctor to talk to him as a mental patient, Anders reacts angrily and doesn’t let the doctor see him (308). Anders is careful from nearly the beginning of his fantastic experiences to keep them from everyone but the archivist. Even with the archivist he is silent: “Schon war ich im Begriff, ihm davon [about his nightly experiences] zu erzählen, als mich eine eigentümliche Scheu zurückhielt” (282). And when he is interrogated about the discovery of the nun’s mutilated body, Anders keeps himself from becoming the object of

²⁰ Ibid., 140-49.

the rationalizing male gaze: “ich hütete mich wohl, zu erzählen, was ich nachts gesehen hatte” (301). But the most dangerous gaze Anders encounters is that of Agathe herself. This is the one gaze he cannot escape, and the one (it seems) that destroys him in the end.

Anders first encounters Agathe’s gaze on the second night that he follows the woman and her pursuers to the demolition site: “Einen Augenblick kehrte sie mir ihr Gesicht zu, ein blasses, schönes Gesicht, in dem dunkle Augen ein seltsames Licht aussandten” (283). There are three elements of Agathe’s gaze that recur: the description of her dark eyes, the odd light that is emitted from these eyes, and an alienated compulsion. Immediately after describing Agathe’s eyes, the narrator Anders writes: “Wieder war ich gezwungen, laufend der Jagd zu folgen [...]” (283). The *arge Nonn*’s gaze acts as a sort of death ray that obliterates the *Baumeister*’s will and defeats his efforts to establish a masculine regime of rational visibility.

The moments of compulsion Anders feels follow directly after descriptions of Agathe’s eyes. After following Agathe and the mob to the demolition site, Anders discovers for the first time a portrait that is affixed to the wall above the chest that hides the secret passage. In this portrait, he meets Agathe’s gaze a second time: “Diese dunklen, flammensprühenden Augen brannten sich in die meinen” (285). The picture’s gaze is again accompanied by an impression of compulsion: “Und dann spürte ich ganz deutlich, wie ein fremder Wille über den meinen Herr werden wollte. Ich sah auf und blickte in die dunklen, flammensprühenden Augen des Bildes über dem Schrank.—” (286). This compulsion is accompanied by a feeling of self-alienation. In gazing at Agathe’s portrait, Anders finds himself losing control over himself. As he stares at the portrait he has just discovered, Anders becomes convinced that it is the portrait of the

woman he has seen running through the streets followed by a pack of men. This realization is accompanied by a sudden great fear and a feeling of alienation from his own thoughts:

Ich zitterte in einer unerklärlichen Furcht. Und plötzlich kam mir ein banger Gedanke. Man hat oft das Empfinden, als sei einer dieser Gedanken, die uns so plötzlich überkommen, nicht in uns geboren, als sei er gar nicht unser Eigentum, als komme er irgendwie von außen her, als werde er uns mitgeteilt genau so, wie der Gedanke eines Fremden. Dieses Empfinden war so stark, daß ich den Eindruck hatte, der Gedanke sei neben mir ausgesprochen worden, als habe mich jemand gewarnt ... mit einer flüsternden Frauenstimme gewarnt. (285)

Here, the fear prompted by becoming the object of the gaze is accompanied by a feeling of self alienation that is cast first in mental and then in physical terms. Anders loses ownership of his own thoughts—and this is literalized in his sense that an external agency is dictating to him. In terms of male rationality, Anders loses control of his understanding. He experiences a moment of madness that is cast as both a loss of self and a loss (or alienation) of language.

It is perhaps significant that Agathe's threatening eyes are strangely disembodied: they stare back at him first from the portrait, then from her severed head, and finally from his wife's face.²¹ Like Agathe's eyes, her image is mobile and disturbingly indeterminate. Anders follows two strategies to avoid being the object of this gaze: he first tries to assert the dominance of his vision by hiding from the female gaze and subjecting her to his own; and he finally resorts to an iconoclasm that doubles in figurative violence *Lustmord's* physical destruction of the female body.

²¹ There is a disturbing mobility of the sign here. Agathe's unfixed gaze is reminiscent of Derrida's semiotic *différance*: a mobile signifier that refuses final definition and which proves fatal for epistemologies founded on maintaining the strict difference of subject/object, male/female. See Jacques Derrida, "Différance," *Critical Theory Since 1965*, eds. Hazard Adams, and Leroy Searle (Tallahassee: Florida State UP, 1986) 120-36. The mobility of the sign and of gazes becomes evident again in Fritz Lang's film *M*. See chapter 5 below.

Being exposed to the gaze leads to an intense fear that is combined with madness. Upon first realizing that the portrait's eyes are those of the woman he has seen running from the mob, Anders writes that "Obzwar ich nicht furchtsam bin, erschrak ich so sehr, daß mich die Besinnung verließ" (286). Anders' immediate reaction is to attempt to flee this gaze: he slowly backs out of the sacristy in which he has found the portrait, "langsam, die Augen fest in denen des Bildes" until he is outside where he can slam and lock the door. Here, however, he finds "Die Bilder und Statuen schienen ihre Stellungen verändert zu haben und mit höhnischen Grimassen auf mich herabzusehen" (286). The attempt to hide from the female's gaze is consistently thwarted.

After following the running woman and the chasing pack of men for the last time, Anders hides himself to watch the proceedings: a legalistic trial and Agathe's execution at the hands of the mob. This is a moment of spectatorship. Anders writes in a way that emphasizes his vision and Agathe's literal exposure: "Ich sah alle Einzelheiten der schauerlichen Exekution. Ich sah, wie der Mann ein blankes, breites Schwert hervorzog [...], wie er das Kleid der Nonne öffnete, so daß der weiße Hals und die schönen Schultern sichtbar wurden, [...]" (300). Even in this moment of Agathe's exposure to his gaze, however, Anders finds himself the object of her gaze as well. As the executioner forces her head down to the block, Anders writes: "Ich hätte schreien mögen und war doch dankbar, daß die dunkeln drohenden Augen endlich von mir abgewendet waren, die sich in den letzten Minuten starr nach meinem Versteck gerichtet hatten, als hätten sie mich dort erblickt" (300).

Even after her execution, Anders discovers that he has not rid himself of Agathe's unwelcome gaze. First, her portrait is delivered to his home under mysterious

circumstances and placed on his bedroom wall, where it is fixed as firmly (Anders claims) as it had been in the sacristy of the *Jesuitenkaserne*. He attempts to cover the portrait with a curtain, but this too fails: it is always uncovered by midnight. Now, Anders complains to the archivist, “Sie sieht mich immer an, immerfort an, mit diesen entsetzlichen Augen” (307). Finally, Anders becomes convinced that Agathe is taking over his wife’s body and slowly possessing her. It is her eyes that changed first, he tells the archivist: “ein fremder, lauernder Blick tauchte in ihnen auf, mit dem sie mich beobachtete, mein Gehen und Kommen, jede meine Bewegungen” (309).

It is shortly after this that Anders resorts to violence. This is the turn from a strategy of contesting the gaze to a strategy of physical destruction of both his wife—taken for the *arge Nonn*’—and of the portrait. Anders murders his wife in a manner that recapitulates the details of Agathe’s execution (or the desecration of her corpse) and leaves one of the pictures in the bedroom “vollständig zertrümmert” (302). Thus, the elements of Agathe’s death are distributed in Anders’ reenactment between his wife’s body (a beheading) and Agathe’s portrait (the mob’s mutilation of her corpse). In this distribution of literal and figurative violence lies the suggestion of their equivalence. Anders’ attempt at mastery through vision (avoiding the other’s gaze and asserting his own) is congruent with an attempt to overcome the textual indeterminacy.

Anders attempts to assert mastery over the objective world via virtuoso vision. In this attempt, the threatening gaze of the “*arge Nonn*” represents an alternate, alien regime in which Anders himself is enthralled. In terms of Todorov’s fantastic tension, Agathe’s assertive female sexuality and dream-like nighttime adventures occupy the place of the irrational supernatural. Anders, on the other hand, is the representative of

rationalizing naturalism. Naturalist motives prompt Anders to continue an investigation into the cause and nature of his nighttime experiences. He initially expects the mysterious scream to be quickly explained by “ein rasches Aufdecken der natürlichen Ursachen” (275). And though he decides to go on vacation immediately after he and the archivist discover the corpses of the nuns in the secret passage (since he “fühlte mit Grauen, daß ich mich nicht befreien konnte” from the “absonderliche[n] Geschichte” in which he found himself caught), Anders decides that first he must finish his investigations: “Aber vorher, wollte ich noch diese Nacht meine Beobachtungen zu Ende bringen; denn ich war überzeugt, daß eine Art Entscheidung fallen müßte” (296). Strobl’s tale is the story of the repeated failure of naturalism to master the supernatural: Anders ends either in madness or as the victim of a supernatural power made frighteningly real.

The manner in which Anders’ masculine naturalism fails is instructive. He finds himself the witness to an impossible vision in the moment of Agathe’s execution. Her sentencing and death at the hands of the mob constitute an inadmissible event that resembles a repressed wish fulfillment (in Freudian terms). The conflict, it seems, is that the desire for mastery of the femme fatale is inadmissible in traditionally rational terms: to admit the desire to overcome a female sexual power that is experienced as emasculating would be to acknowledge the very psychic impotence that Anders is trying to overcome. Thus the fantastic scene, split between the supernatural and the natural: “Was ich nun erblickte, ist fast unmöglich zu beschreiben. Es war alles wie im Traum und doch vollkommen deutlich” (298).

This indescribable scene thus combines the failure of vision with the failure of language. The entire scene of Agathe's execution is strikingly silent. Anders advances a remarkable theory as to why this should be so:

Es gibt ein gewisses Maß des Entsetzens, bei dem alle Besorgnis um das eigene Ich verschwunden ist und man nur durch die Augen lebt, während alle anderen Sinne gleichsam ausgeschaltet scheinen. Dieses Maß hatte ich erreicht, und ich kann mich dafür verbürgen, daß sich alles das, was ich sah, auch wirklich zutrug. (299)

This surprising claim combines an alleged loss of self (or concern for self) with the reaffirmation of that self's virtuoso vision. In effect, Anders is claiming that his intense horror has emptied him of content and left him as nothing but a pair of eyes. Two things should be noted here: first, that the supernatural silence of the scene is given an explicitly *naturalist* explanation; and second, that this wordless scene (lacking language) takes place in and through an affect that has robbed him of his concern for, or sense of, self. Note that it is precisely this loss of his senses on which Anders bases his claim to have seen most clearly and truly. Anders claims in this moment to have retained his sanity (vision) by losing his other senses. This loss of his other senses imbues his sense of vision with great significance such that it becomes the bearer of his entire sense of self. But at the same time, Anders becomes something like an unreasoning vessel of vision—an instrument through which the events of the execution/dream can be related in an allegedly unmediated way.

The moment in which language intrudes into the silence of the scene is also the moment in which the lines of vision are reversed. As the mob falls on Agathe's body, her severed head rolls right up to his hiding place:

Die dunklen, flammensprühenden Augen sahen mich an, und ich hörte Worte, die die ersten während der ganzen schrecklichen Szene, Worte aus dem Mund dem

Kopfes ...: 'Du sollst der argen Nonn gedenken.'—Da verschwand alles vor mir, das Getümmel der Menge, der Kopf, der Henker samt dem Block, und nur die rote Sichel des erstarrten Blutstrahles schwebte einen Augenblick im grünen Mondlicht. (300-1)

The fantastic scene of Agathe's execution is one of essential disintegration—the dismemberment of the female body marks the limits of male consciousness.²²

Gender: Male Actors, Female Ciphers, Androgyny

The failure of vision and the problematics of textuality discussed so far are intimately related to the failure of gender distinctions and to the compensatory erotics of violence. The representations and enactments of textuality in Strobl's story, the dynamics of vision and its utility as a technology of subject-formation—these elements involve, but do not completely engage with the troubling content of *Lustmord* representation. The themes of vision and textuality represent or formally reenact an ever-present danger that boundaries may blur, distinctions fail, and distance collapse. The very genre of the fantastic (following Todorov) consists of a tension between the two incompatible explanatory regimes of the natural and the supernatural. Beyond the manifest content of a *Lustmord* representation (a man kills a woman in a moment of irrational and erotic affect), what these stories are *about* is a failure of distance and distinction that proves fatal to male ego and agency.

It is tempting to now claim that sexual violence, the manifest content of *Lustmord* representations as such, is merely superficial. The themes of vexed vision and textuality that seemed at first out of place now offer themselves as the truer, deeper meaning of these tales. I am brought up short, however, by the thought that such an interpretation would ignore the really stubborn question of why sexual pleasure and violence should be

linked at all. This would effectively evacuate the bodily content of these tales in favor of a structural, aestheticized analysis. Tatar has rightly called attention to this tendency in the secondary literature to ignore the victims (the evident content) of *Lustmord* representations.²³ The third theme to which we now turn—that of androgyny and contested gender roles—offers a way to investigate the ways in which *Lustmord* representations are about both epistemological panic and the erotics of violence.

The gender roles in Strobl's story are superficially clear: the protagonist is an innocent male (guilty of hubris, if anything) who is enthralled or overcome by a mysterious female force. The obscure supernatural possibilities that lurk in the dark are associated with the female Agathe, as is sexual desire as such. Knowledge, science, and light are gendered male, as represented by the archivist and Anders. The reader is also implicitly gendered male since the protagonist serves as a figure of identification (as Todorov tells us, the fantastic tale is habitually told in the first person).²⁴ Ostensibly, sexual violence occurs in "Die arge Nonn" not due to any active agency or desire on Anders' part, but because he has become confounded by an irrational, subterranean evil female power.

The gendered roles of the rational male *Baumeister* and the irrational, sexualized female *arge Nonn* are confounded as Anders falls more and more under the influence of his nighttime experiences with Agathe. According to Anders, his motives for killing his wife were rational: she was turning into the *arge Nonn* and he had to protect himself. An incident his wife reports to the archivist, however, complicates that picture. She sees

²² This loss of male consciousness is doubly marked: first as Anders' literal faint, and second as the loss of the young men's individuation as they become constituent parts of an irrational mob.

²³ Tatar, *Lustmord*, 13-18.

²⁴ Todorov, *Fantastic*, 37, 83-84.

him reading in his notebook and a moment later finds that he has snuck up behind her. He grabs her throat and says “Ein schöner Hals und schon einmal durchgeschnitten” (310). An erotic component of the violence involved in Anders’ ostensible crime of “self defense” becomes evident here.

Though the gender of Strobl’s protagonist is never in doubt, the gender associated with sexual violence is ambiguous. In the fantastic *Lustmord* narrative, the male protagonist is swept away by sexual violence, overwhelmed by it in a way that even at its most explicitly sadistic (in Ewers, for instance) exculpates the rational male character and condemns only a chaos (an ineffable *Rausch*) associated with the feminine. To put it another way: the *Lustmörder* is feminized only in the ultimate moment of violence—a moment that is doubly feminized in that its object is the female body. In more schematic terms, violence (*Gewalt*) tends to be associated with the active masculine attributes of vigor and power; sexuality tends to be associated with the feminine mysteries of sexuality and the body (as opposed to the mind). Sexual violence, involves a moment of simultaneous assertion and dissolution of a stereotyped masculine essence. Under these stereotyped conditions (the conditions of modernity in which the active maintenance of strict distinctions and boundaries becomes important), the male, maneuvering in a combat zone and acting according to codes of conduct mandating a cool distance,²⁵ can only access his bodily (creaturely) sexuality in a moment of paranoid danger and self-alienation.

²⁵ The language of combat zones, codes of conduct, and cool distance is taken from Helmut Lethen. In his discussion of Helmut Pleßner’s *Grenzen der Gemeinschaft*, Lethen uses the metaphor of a brightly lit fencing hall to suggest the tenor of modern life in which boundaries threaten to fail and in which men must be on guard to protect their ego-boundaries from corrosive ridicule. See Lethen, *Cool Conduct*, 58-9.

In Strobl's story, Anders suffers moments of self-alienation during his encounters with Agathe that are explicitly marked as a loss of self: he describes himself as "außer mir vor Angst" in one such moment (276). And in another, loss of control is juxtaposed with both alienation and violence. Anders wakes his wife after two nights of hearing the scream so that she can hear it too. But when she tells him she does not hear it, there is a foreshadowing moment of alienated violence: "Ich war so außer mir, daß ich sie anschrie: 'Schweig doch ... und jetzt ... jetzt laufen sie unten auf der Straße.' 'Du tust mir weh'—rief meine Frau, denn ich drückte ihren Arm, als müsse ich sie durch Anwendung von Gewalt überzeugen" (274). This is highly suggestive of a connection between self-alienation and the male protagonist's strategy of the use of violence to insist on a certain interpretation of what is going on.

There is a further, more obscure, connection between "masculine" violence and the "feminized" condition of speechlessness here. The physical violence in Strobl's story has a counterpart in a tendency to use male speech to silence and control female bodies. The conjunction of Anders' demand for silence with a physical assault on his wife's body is one example of this. Another is the later episode in which Anders again combines a physical assault with a verbal assault when he grabs his wife by the throat while alluding to her decapitation (310). The effect of Anders' discursive violence is to insist that the female body be the site of speechlessness.

The few female characters in the story are distanced and mute. Besides the revenant Agathe and Anders' wife, the only other female to figure in the story is the maid, who reacts to her discovery of Anders' crime with inarticulate horror. She runs screaming from the room, and it is left to a male student, "der Besonnenste unter den

aufgeregten und entsetzten Hausgenossen,” to send for the doctor and police (301).

Anders’ wife and eventual victim is present in the story only in an attenuated way: in Anders’ notebook, and in the report given by the archivist. Where she does appear, she is marked by incomprehension and practical illiteracy—she cannot bring herself to read Anders’ notebook. Anders’ wife and the maid are relatively flat, minor characters who do not figure as forceful presences in the story. They are the object of action rather than actors in their own right. The two living female characters in the story are ciphers. The exception is the revenant Agathe.

Agathe too is a cipher, in the sense of being a mystery, but she reverses the passive feminine mode to become disastrously active. Agathe’s body is the site of a dangerous, untrammelled sexuality. Her sexuality inheres in a vampiric, violent erotic frenzy that is notable for the lack of mediation and self-control that accompanies it: the townspeople are upset with her, and threaten violence, “aber sie war nicht imstande, ihren Trieben Einhalt zu tun und setzte ihr Leben fort. Nach wie vor tanzte sie in den Schenken, saß unter dem Gesindel und fiel wie ein Vampyr junge Männer auf der Straße an” (289). The pathological aspect of her sexuality finds expression as a *Lustseuche* (288)—a venereal disease that at the same time functions as an epidemic irrational sexual violence. The venereal disease is paralleled by a figurative fever that grips the townspeople. Thus, the female body is marked as both licentious and diseased: “Die Seuche, deren Priesterin Agathe war, griff um sich, und endlich brach eine furchtbare Empörung der Bürgerschaft aus” (293). Her body is the site of both an irrational, violent sexual drive and of disease.

Those who fall under Agathe's power are irrational. The archivist notes their contradictory impulses: "es ist seltsam, daß sie eine Menge von Beschützern fand, von jungen Männern, die sie liebten, trotzdem sie wußten, daß sie von ihr vergiftet wurden" (293). These contradictory impulses find expression a desecration of her corpse that is described as the expression of an odd mixture of love and hate. When the abbess displays Agathe's dead body, the outraged crowd throws sticks and stones at it: "[u]nd die Chronik fügt hinzu, daß unter den Empörten die jungen Männer die Empörteten waren, die sie geliebt hatten, als sie noch lebte" (295). The young men who chase Agathe through the streets at night are finally described as a pack of wild animals (as a *Meute*). This incident, which the archivist retrieves from his chronicles, rehearses the later desecration of Agathe's corpse (almost certainly committed by Anders) that is understood as a case of sexual insanity (301).

Significantly, the unrest fails to abate when Agathe is buried: "Trotzdem ein Begräbnis stattgefunden hatte und ein Sarg in die Erde versenkt worden war, trotzdem man sich davon überzeugen konnte, daß ein Stein mit dem Namen der 'argen Nonn' auf diesem Grabe errichtet worden war, tauchten Gerüchte auf, Schwester Agathe lebe noch" (294). The rumors of the past come back to haunt Anders' reality. Agathe refuses to remain buried.

What is decisive is what is dug up. The archivist unearths texts; the *Baumeister* unearths bodies. These mark a return of the repressed sexual violence that is ambiguously hinted at in the archivist's chronicles (a safely antiquarian pursuit for the archivist, a vitally real phenomenon to Anders). The return of the repressed is a return of historical material here. According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory, repression is

absolutely vital to the sublimation of instinct that allows for the formation of first the ego and then civilization.²⁶ However, by definition, the repressed remains present in the psyche and may resurface under certain conditions. As Freud states in the essay on the uncanny, the process of repression leaves behind “noch äußerungsfähige Reste und Spuren.”²⁷ The return of the seventeenth-century Agathe and her mob of pursuers is symptomatic of the uncanny failure of a necessary repression.

The unhappy hero of Strobl’s “Die arge Nonn” unearths a female power that he cannot contain. If one follows the Gothic logic by which houses and other structures stand in for egos, the process of demolition cum excavation becomes an exploration of Anders’ own psyche—one which ends in disaster when what he unearths is an unbridled, violently sexual female.

The gendered aspects of such an interpretation are unclear, as are the identities and agencies involved. Agathe may be a fantasy which ultimately springs from Anders’ own unconscious (and madness). Or she might be a supernatural revenant come to bring him to ruin. Agathe figures ambiguously both as a potential threat from outside—to Anders’ sanity and bodily integrity; and as a potential threat from the inside—his own disavowed violent, irrational sexuality that finds horrible expression once it is unearthed. In either case, what is dug up is both revenant and remnant—inassimilable to Anders’ rational integrated ego. The female corpse, the *Lustmord* victim is what remains: it is the irrational that exists in excess of the rationalized male ego which returns to haunt him.

²⁶ See Freud, “Die Verdrängung,” 436; and Sigmund Freud, “Das Unbehagen in der Kultur,” *Werkausgabe in zwei Bänden*, eds. Anna Freud, and Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, 2 vols., Vol. 2 [Anwendungen der Psychoanalyse] (1930; Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2006), 367-424.

²⁷ Freud, “Das Unheimliche,” 263.

Reading Freud reading Jensen's *Gradiva*: Excavation as Analysis and Catastrophe

It is instructive to compare Freud's discussion of Jensen's *Gradiva* with the fantastic *Lustmord* narrative. In both Freud's reading of Jensen's novel and in Strobl's "Die arge Nonn" a male protagonist undergoes a sort of psychoanalysis in which ruins are the site of the emergence of the female and the return of a hitherto repressed sexuality. The difference is that what is figured as catastrophe in Strobl's story becomes libidinal release and the restoration of naturalized rationality in Jensen's novel.

In a long essay of 1907, Freud reads Wilhelm Jensen's fantastic novel *Gradiva* as an allegory of a successful psychoanalysis.²⁸ Jensen's protagonist, Norbert Hanold is an archeologist who becomes intrigued with a bas-relief depicting a young woman in the act of stepping forward in a particularly distinct and fetching way. This is the *Gradiva*, who Hanold imagines, and dreams, died in the eruption of Vesuvius. Distracted by the thought of the *Gradiva*, and unable to find anyone on the street who steps like her, Hanold travels to Pompeii. There, in a series of hesitant and seemingly magical encounters, he is astonished to find her apparently come to life among the ruins of the city. Eventually he discovers that the woman he has taken for the ghost *Gradiva* is actually his neighbor and childhood friend Zoë Bertgang.

Bertgang, Freud notes approvingly, has acted as an exemplary analyst by entering into her friend's delusion until the point that he is prepared to recognize the truth.²⁹ Now that Hanold has recognized Bertgang as the living object of his sexual interest, his

²⁸ Sigmund Freud, "Die Wahn und die Träume in W. Jensens 'Gradiva'," *Werkausgabe in zwei Bänden*, eds. Anna Freud, and Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, Vol. 2 [Anwendungen der Psychoanalyse] (1907; Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2006), 68-127. See also Wilhelm Jensen, *Gradiva: Ein pompejanisches Phantasiestück* (Dresden: Carl Reissner, 1903).

²⁹ Freud, "Wahn und die Träume," 122.

delusions and neurosis disappear.³⁰ It is the body of the living woman that cures him of his delusion.³¹ Whereas he had hitherto been annoyed by the honeymooners he has encountered on his trip to Italy he is now enchanted. He and Zoë become engaged and plan to spend their own honeymoon in Pompeii.

The novel ends with an unequivocal happy ending for the scholar and his reconciled libido. The novel also has a happy ending for Freud, who uses it both as a demonstration of psychoanalysis and as partial proof of his theories. The author, Wilhelm Jensen had had no knowledge of psychoanalysis and had certainly had no intention of writing a psychoanalytic allegory.³² What justifies a psychoanalytic reading of a text, Freud says, is the common root of artistic production and mental phenomenon in psychic processes: the author need not be a psychoanalyst to produce a true-to-life portrait that is then explicable via psychoanalytic means.³³

If Freud can read Jensen's novel as an allegory of a successful analysis, the *Lustmord* narrative allegorizes its failure. Jensen's novel ends in the attainment of a felicitous social position and arranges for the happy release of sexual energy via the intermediation of the *Gradiva*/Zoë Bertgang. The fantastic *Lustmord* narrative ends precisely in the destruction of a stable societal position and the violent, still disavowed eruption of repressed and thwarted sexual energy via the malevolent influence of a femme fatale.

³⁰ Ibid., 121.

³¹ Sabine Hake, "Saxa loquuntur: Freud's Archaeology of the Text," *boundary 2* 20.1 (1993), 165. I have relied heavily on the reading Hake develops in this article.

³² Hake, "Saxa loquuntur," 161.

³³ Freud, "Wahn und die Träume," 70.

The Archeological Model

Both stories—“Die arge Nonn” and *Gradiva*—describe encounters with female revenants that take place among ruins that are the focus of archeological interest. The ruins figure ambiguously as metonyms for the body. But it is uncertain whose body it represents. Hake claims that the archeological ground is gendered feminine. This is certainly compelling. But as with Anders and Agathe, the excavations and archeological expeditions that take place among the ruins are arguably an exploration of the male psyche.

Archeology was one of Freud’s preferred metaphor for psychoanalysis: he used it first in 1896 in his “Etiology of Hysteria;” and made occasional use of it many times thereafter—most notably in his essay on Jensen’s *Gradiva*.³⁴ In her article about Freud’s use of the archeological model, Sabine Hake notes that it presumes a spatial model of the psyche and that it relies on the notion of stratification—a concept shared with other nineteenth-century “master discourses.”³⁵ The archeological model was thus premised on the twin assumptions that the psyche was the site of hidden mechanisms that could produce visible effects and that the detritus of psychic processes were preserved as possible clues to the working of those obscure mechanisms. This first assumption puts Freud firmly into the camp of the rational naturalists: the world is orderly and rationally explicable even when the underlying order is obscure.³⁶ The second assumption puts Freud into the structural position of the archeologist—or the detective hunting for clues.³⁷

³⁴ Hake, “Saxa loquuntur,” 147-9.

³⁵ Hake includes among these “German idealism and its hierarchy between appearance and reality; Marxism and its base superstructure model; and historicism and its inquiries into the past ‘as it really was’” (ibid., 150).

³⁶ Roy Bhaskar, doyen of the critical realist school, calls such obscure mechanisms real generative structures. These might not be noticed (empirical) or even currently actuated (actual) but are nonetheless

Freud studied medicine in a milieu that valued diagnosis above treatment—a prevalent Austrian attitude that William Johnston calls therapeutic nihilism.³⁸ Though Freud offered his patients a “talking cure” that ran counter to such therapeutic nihilism,³⁹ the fact remains that he was often at least as interested in raw materials for scientific discoveries that his patients provided him. His friend and disciple Ernst Jones notes in his biography of Freud that the latter was attracted to the idea of solving the world’s big problems.⁴⁰ As a metaphorical archeologist, then, Freud faced the object of his study with the intent to master it. When Freud’s patients were women, he displayed a certain aggressiveness in overcoming their resistance and insisting on preferred interpretations. Freud’s treatment of the hysterical Dora is a case in point.⁴¹ Hake notes that the archeological metaphor was cast as a conquest—and that the archeological site was implicitly gendered female: “the power of the analyst as archaeologist is reflected in the image of archeology as an active, intrusive, and explicitly male activity, while the woman, who, as *terra incognita*, makes his quest for knowledge both necessary and possible, is regularly identified with images of the unknown: the buried city, the hidden treasure.”⁴²

productive of real tendencies that have real effects, and which can thus become the object of scientific inquiry. See Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences*, 3rd ed. (1979; London: Routledge, 1998), 49.

³⁷ Carlo Ginzburg describes the nineteenth-century emergence of modes of “high” and “low” knowledge and the homologies between detection and criminalist/psychoanalytic scientific discovery. See Carlo Ginzburg, “Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method,” *History Workshop* 9 (1980): 5-36.

³⁸ See William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1972), 223-9.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 250.

⁴⁰ Ernest Jones, *Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Abr. ed. (New York: Basic, 1974), 21-23.

⁴¹ Sigmund Freud, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1905; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997); cf. also: Charles Bernheimer, and Claire Kahane, eds., *In Dora's Case: Freud-Hysteria-Feminism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia UP, 1990).

⁴² Hake, “Saxa loquuntur,” 151.

Freud as a Primary Text: Excavation and its Remainder

Freud's technique is one of excavation. He uses surface phenomenon to drill down into the psyche to grasp what is otherwise always hidden and ungraspable. Freud's object, then, is assumed rather than given: he can approach it only obliquely through the traces it leaves. Although Freud himself is not a mystic, his object (the psyche) takes on mystical attributes. This is reminiscent of the fantastic, which gives hints of a deeper truth read from traces. Indeed, the fact that Freud uses fantastic stories to explicate his psychoanalytic theory in two key instances—reading the uncanny out of E.T.A. Hoffmann's "Der Sandmann" and the process of repression, analysis and the restoration of libidinal equilibrium out of Jensen's *Gradiva*—suggests an affinity between the fin-de-siècle fantastic revival and the emergence and development of Freud's psychoanalytic theory.⁴³

Freud's excavations into Jensen's text provide him with a satisfying wealth of confirmation for his own theories. But when considering the metaphor of excavation, we would do well to consider what gets left over—the debris of the digging as it were. Hans Anders' catastrophic encounter with Agathe is arguably an uncanny meeting of the rational male with his own disavowed, violent sexuality.⁴⁴ Agathe is an embodied remainder of the inassimilable real. Zoë Bertgang, on the other hand, is a cipher (both a focus of mystery and a screen onto which male fantasies are projected)—as is the city of

⁴³ Clemens Ruthner notes the parallels between the fantastic and psychoanalysis: "Beide Diskurse loten die Tiefen des menschlichen Bewußtseins aus; es wäre auch durchaus schlüssig zu behaupten, daß die Defizite einer (individualistischen) zeitgenössischen Seelenkunde sowohl die Massenpsychologie von Simon Le Bon (1895) und Sigmund Freud (1921) als auch die phantastischen Weltuntergangsromane in der Nachfolge von Kubins Andere Seite provozierte [...]" (Ruthner, "Andererseits," 172).

⁴⁴ Here it's irresistible not to note that Robert Musil's *Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, Ulrich, was originally to be named "Anders." Ulrich's sister is named Agathe. (Ulrich and Agathe function as incestuous *Doppelgänger* according to Andrew Webber). See Andrew Webber, *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996), 18.

Pompeii. Hanold never does much digging. Pompeii is already excavated and open to the sun: the successful analysis requires only recognition of that which is already exposed. The Gothic landscapes of the fantastic tale, however, are still half-buried and require active excavation. In that sense, Freud's reading of Jensen's *Gradiva* renders Pompeii into a sort of psychoanalytic utopia in which repression can safely be lifted and libidinal satisfaction achieved without endangering the masculine principles of rationality. Bertgang's "analysis" is in the service of this masculine principle. But it is fantastic when considered from her point of view (i.e. not easily explained in rational terms). Bertgang's utility and talent aren't in question. What is puzzling are her motives. The women of the city were not too pleased to have Hanold staring at their feet. In Pompeii, however, Zoë/*Gradiva* is happy not only to display herself to him, but also to indulge his fantasies (both by displaying her feet for him and by entering into his delusion).

If Hanold doesn't do much digging, neither does Freud. He encounters in Jensen's novel a text that is ridiculously well suited to the task of demonstrating the psychoanalytic analysis.⁴⁵ The novel, like the character of the *Gradiva*, is remarkably compliant to male desire. Both the *Gradiva* and Pompeii function as figures of desire.

Hake notes that Freud's willful reading is remarkable for the way it largely ignores the female character of Zoë Bertgang to focus on the dreams, delirium, and mental processes of Norbert Hanold.⁴⁶ If Bertgang is the analyst and Hanold the analysand, this implies a confusing reversal in which the female becomes an active agent

⁴⁵ Hake calls it uncannily well-suited. See Hake, "Saxa loquuntur," 160.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

rather than the passive ground and the male becomes subject to a rationalizing gaze.⁴⁷ An associated omission, one which Hake takes Freud to task for as a squandered opportunity, is his refusal to deal with Jensen's novel as a *text* which requires (and features scenes of) interpretation.⁴⁸

What remains here to vex Freud's reading is the failure to engage with real women. Pompeii functions as a utopian fantastic space—one in which the excavating is done and there is no remainder to vex the masculine principle of comprehensive rationality. Zoë Bertgang proves herself good-natured, tractable, and totally devoted to Hanold. She is a screen against which Hanold—and Freud—can project his desires. Here in Pompeii, Hanold has found the city and woman of his dreams.

“Eine schlafende Braut”: Fantastic Fragments and the Return of the Repressed

What is ultimately repressed in Freud's reading of Jensen's *Gradiva* is the violence of his interpretation. This violence involves, as Hake suggests, a repression of the textual female body. Jensen's fantasy is a happy one that ends with the protagonists still in the special space of exception which is Pompeii. Strobl's exemplary story of Hans Anders' encounter with the *arge Nonn*' indicates an alternative ending—one in which the male does not travel to and inhabit the space of exception (Pompeii), but in which the femme fatale invades the rationalized spaces of the city.

To conclude the chapter, I will briefly look at two contrasting newspaper articles which depict the reporters' encounters with the bodies of two different *Lustmord* victims. The newspaper articles are among those which evoke a fantastic uncanny mood. The

⁴⁷ Ibid., 163.

⁴⁸ Freud, Hake reports, calls Jensen's novel not a fantasy, but a “psychiatric study.” Ibid., 164.

first, an article by Walter Kiaulehn, has many affinities with Strobl's "Die arge Nonn".⁴⁹ The second, an article by Alfred Karrasch, includes, besides a first-person description of the unsettled atmosphere of the city, a striking description of a series of iconoclastic defacements of the image of a *Lustmord* victim.⁵⁰ The one involves a fantasized and romanticized identification with the anonymous *Lustmörder*. The other involves a sudden encounter with the reality of *Lustmord* that destroys any possibility of identification.

The Female Corpse

Kiaulehn's article appeared on the 17th of November, in the midst of the growing excitement and worry about the crimes of the then anonymous Peter Kürten. The article describes the atmosphere of nervous excitement surrounding the exhumation of Maria Hahn's body, the location of whose grave was indicated in an anonymous letter written to the police. Kiaulehn's style is novelistic. (Sentences such as "Auf der Brache schaufeln sie sich unverdrossen an den Leichnam heran. Ein Krähenschwarm fliegt an der Waldecke hoch und kreist über der Gruft." have little function beyond evoking an atmosphere of eerie suspense.) What is seen and reported on, mainly, is a remarkable scene of public excitement:

Als die Mordkommission eine halbe Stunde später an der Stelle erscheint, ist der bewaldete Berg ein Pilgerziel der Düsseldorfer geworden. Von allen Seiten kommen die Menschen gerannt. Elegante Privatautomobile mühen sich über die quatschnassen Feldwege nach Pappendell, ein Wettrennen nach dem Grabe des toten Dienstmädchens setzt ein.

The "elegante Damen, Kinder und Arbeitslose" of Düsseldorf watch and wait as it grows darker. The workers set up floodlights and continue their work ("Das Grab des Dienstmädchens leuchtet hell vom Berge ins Tal hinunter"). Finally, Hahn's body is

⁴⁹ Walter Kiaulehn, "Der Würger von Düsseldorf," *Berliner Tageblatt* 17 Nov. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe.

discovered and lifted out of the ground, a “Symbol der seltsamen Mord-Idyllik geworden, mit welcher der neue ‘Jack the ripper’ sich und seine Taten umgibt.”

From other newspaper reports about the exhumation of Hahn’s body, we know that the men searching for her corpse smelled her long before they saw her.⁵¹ The body was so decomposed that Hahn couldn’t be identified by sight, and a forensic examination to tell if she had been raped was impossible.⁵² When what remained of her body was lifted from the ground, the crowd reacted in horror.⁵³

This is how Kiaulehn describes the victim’s corpse:

Friedlich liegt der Mädchenkörper auf der tonigen Erde, ganz ausgestreckt. Eine Hand ist dem Mädchen ans Herz gebogen, die andere ruht auf der Hüfte. Kein Krampf, scheinbar kein Schrecken. Eine schlafende Braut.

In this image of Maria Hahn’s exhumed body, the signs of her brutal murder are erased and her death is eroticized. This florid prose is in excess of the requirements of objective reportage: it does both more and less than it should. Maria Hahn had been dead and buried in a field outside of Düsseldorf for three months by this time. She had been stabbed at least twenty times in the head, throat and chest.⁵⁴ To describe the corpse of a *Lustmord* victim as “eine schlafende Braut” in this context is not only to dramatize the event in a stylistic excess of questionable taste, but to indicate an unacknowledged

⁵⁰ Alfred Karrasch, “Die Stadt der unaufgeklärten Bluttaten: Zerschnittene Bilder des letzten Düsseldorfer Opfers.—Demonstrationen des Täters?” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 14 Nov. 1929, Morgenausgabe.

⁵¹ “Die Leiche des Dienstmädchens Hahn in Pappendell gefunden.” *Berliner Tageblatt*.

⁵² “Düsseldorf in Schrecken: Der vermißte Schüler von der Polizei aufgegriffen,” *Vorwärts* 17 Nov. 1929, Morgenausgabe.

⁵³ “Durch die Menge, die nur mit Mühe durch die Polizei zurückgehalten wurde, ging eine tiefe Bewegung, als die Tote aus der Grube herausgehoben und auf eine Bahre gelegt wurde. *Die Leiche war noch bekleidet, aber schon vollkommen in Verwesung übergegangen*” (“Die Leiche des Dienstmädchens Hahn in Pappendell gefunden.” *Berliner Tageblatt*).

⁵⁴ For the forensic description of Hahn’s corpse, see Berg, *Der Sadist*, 97-8.

kinship between the anonymous murderer and the reporter whose florid article completes the killer's "work."

Uncanny Identifications

In the first part of his article, Kiaulehn notes the unknown killer's "merkwürdiges Interesse" in making his killings public and claims that the exhumation and the public excitement attending it is "sein Werk": "Die Ausgrabung der Leiche war sein Werk. Genau drei Monate nach dem Mord an Maria Hahn schickt er an die Polizeiverwaltung einen Plan, der, hängt man ihn in einer Ausstellung primitiver Kunst, seine Bewunderer finden würde."

Kiaulehn makes an explicit analogy between killing women and making art. He calls the unknown killer a "Poet des Grauens," and then prints the text of Kürten's letter to the police in the article as if it were a poem:

"Am Fusse bei Pappendelle
An der angekreuzten Stelle
Wo kein Unkraut wächst
Und die mit einem Stein bezeichnet ist
Liegt eine Leiche anderthalb Meter tief." (Quotation marks in original)

The murderer, he writes, "besitzt bei aller primitiven Knappheit seiner Ausdrucksformen gewisse natürliche künstlerische Veranlagung." What makes it possible to express such interest and appreciation for a *Lustmörder*?

An answer is suggested by Alfred Karrasch's article of 14 November, 1929. Karrasch reports, among other things, about a series of mutilated posters of Gertrud Albermann. "An den Litfaßsäulen kleben *die roten Plakate* mit dem Bild der armen kleinen Gertrud," he writes (emphasis in original). Now somebody "hat [...] diesem Bild Verletzungen beigebracht, nach ihm mit dem Messer gestochen, noch auf dem Bild dem

kleinen Mädchen den Hals durchgeschnitten.” These lines are remarkable not only for the rhetorical correspondence of image and child, but for the radically different way this presumed message from the murderer is received.

In Kiaulehn’s reception of Kürten’s letter as a poem, he aestheticizes the murderer’s words. Both the message and the crime are appreciated at a distance—apart from the physical reality to which they refer. This aesthetic remove allows Kiaulehn to appreciate Kürten’s crimes, the public sensation and—most astonishingly—the rotting corpse of his victim as analogous to artistic works. Karrasch is deprived of the ability to impose aesthetic distance by a direct confrontation with the unmitigated horror of the death and mutilation *Lustmord* entails.

Unlike Kiaulehn, Karrasch reacts in horror to the sight of one of Kürten’s victims. The reporter has seen forensic pictures of Gertrud Albermann’s body, which he calls “diese[n] armen Körper[] einer Märtyrerin der demagogischen Phrasen einer irrsinnig gewordenen Zeit.” The picture cannot be published, but Karrasch describes it in a series of sentence fragments and exclamations:

Ich sah soeben das Bild der ermordeten Gertrud Albermann. Ein kleiner armer Kinderkörper, ein traurig zerquältes Kindergesicht.

Und nun: Stiche in der Schläfe. Der Körper bestialisch geschändet. 30 Stiche in der kleinen Brust.

Das klagt an — — —

Dieses Bild, veröffentlicht, würde nur einen Schrei als Antwort ergeben: theorisieren wir nicht mehr mit den Begriffen von Strafe und Besserung, Rache oder Güte.

Aber eins steht fest: Der das tat, gehört nicht ins Leben.

Karrasch and Kiaulehn are two separate people, but the disparity in their responses still seems schizophrenic. The body of the *Lustmord* victim seems to offer itself to one of two radically different interpretations: the romanticized fantasy of the

female corpse that comes back to life to serve male sexual fantasies or the horrifying reality of *Lustmord* that seems to render the observer inarticulate.

Chapter 3

Monstrous Humans and the Return of the Repressed

An article in the *Berliner Tageblatt* of 27 August 1929 about the then unknown assailant who had committed a recent series of alarming attacks on women and girls in Düsseldorf was titled “Der Vampir von Düsseldorf.”¹ This attestation of the anonymous *Lustmörder*’s vampiric nature was obviously not meant to be taken literally. The article itself makes no mention of vampires, and when it notes that this latest horrific crime (a “grauenhafte[r] Kindermord”) was committed “aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach von demselben Manne” it locates the unknown killer firmly within the human realm. Yet this metaphor was apt enough to be used again both before and after Peter Kürten (the then unknown assailant) was captured.² It was used again still later in the title of Elisabeth Lenk and Roswitha Kaefer’s collection of materials related to the Kürten case.³

The continuing valence of this vampire metaphor suggests that it accomplishes some sort of vital cultural work—a work that is, I think, continually left undone and in need of shoring up. Rather than imagine a literal vampire on the loose in Düsseldorf, the *Berliner Tageblatt*’s readers would have been expected to understand that the author was thus emphasizing the distance separating the unknown killer and the community of

¹ “Der Vampir von Düsseldorf: Zwei Mädchen ermordet,” *Berliner Tageblatt*.

² See “Der Vampir von Düsseldorf: Eine neue Bluttat,” *Vorwärts*; “Der Vampyr von Düsseldorf: Neuer Ueberfall,” *Vorwärts*; and “Der Vampir von Düsseldorf: Kürten berichtet ohne eine Spur von Reue,” *Vorwärts* 14 April 1931, Morgenausgabe: [5].

humans on which this figurative monster preyed. The importance of police work in keeping the city physically safe from the killer finds a sort of counterpart in the textual work of the trope that insists on an absolute distinction between the killer and his victims. This theory gains credence when we consider the panoply of distancing metaphors that accompany mention of those most notorious of Weimar *Lustmörder* (what crime writer Hans Hyan called “das blutige Vierblatt” of Karl Großmann, Fritz Haarmann, Karl Denke, and Peter Kürten): they are called—besides *Lustmörder*, *Sexualmörder*, *Massenmörder*, and *Amokläufer*—*Tier* and *Untier*, *Bestie*, *Unhold*, *Unmensch*, *Monstrum*, *Oger*, *Vampir*, and *Werwolf*.⁴ In an article written around the time of the *Berliner Tageblatt* article, the anonymous killer is called a “Bestie in Menschengestalt.”⁵ After his capture, at his trial, Kürten is referred to as an “Ungeheuer in Menschengestalt.”⁶ The vampire metaphor, then, is an instance of a larger trope—what I

³ Elisabeth Lenk, and Roswitha Kaever, eds., *Leben und Wirken des Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1974).

⁴ Except for “Vampir” and “Werwolf”, which I deal with extensively below, I list here for illustrative purposes a single instance of each of these attestations: “Haarmann von dem Breslauer Lustmörder überboten: Eine neue, beispiellos viehische Tat,” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 8 June 1926; “Der ‘Fluch’ von Düsseldorf gewichen: Kürten ein typischer Sexualmörder,” *Kölnische Zeitung* 26 May 1930, Abend-Ausgabe; “Ein Massenmörder in Hannover verhaftet,” *B.Z. am Mittag* 2 July 1924; “Es ist nicht ausgeschlossen, daß es sich bei diesem Amokläufer um einen Menschen handelt [...]” (“Die Polizei fahndet nach einem verdächtigen jungen Mann: Die Mördersuche in Düsseldorf: Aufrufe in den Tanzlokalen,” *Berliner illustrierte Nachtausgabe* 18 Nov. 1929); Manfred Georg, “Haarmann—Mensch und Tier,” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 20 Dec. 1924; Peter Eik, “Das Untier von Hannover: Berlin und Hannover.—Großmann und Haarmann,” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 12 July 1924; “Neue Brief der Düsseldorfer Bestie,” *Kreuzzeitung* 22 Nov. 1929; “Neue Funde in Denkes Wohnung: Bisher 13 Opfer des Unholds festgestellt,” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 31 Dec. 1924; “Sachverständigen: Kürten zurechnungsfähig! Er hat alle Verbrechen mit Ueberlegung ausgeführt! Todesurteil gewiß? Analyse eines Unmenschen,” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 21 April 1931; “Es bedeutet fürwahr keine Anerkennung für unsere Zivilisation, daß aus ihrem Schoß ein derartiges Monstrum hervorgehen konnte” (“Kürten neunmal zum Tode verurteilt: Der Verteidiger plaidiert auf Totschlag—Urteil auf Grund der Sachverständigengutachten: Eine Moralpredigt Kürtens,” *Kölnische Zeitung* 23 April 1931, Morgen-Ausgabe); “[D]er Homosexuelle Haarmann [hat] in dieser vergnüglichen Stadt wie ein Oger gehaust und nachweislich siebenundzwanzig jungen Leuten die Kehle durchgebissen” (Hans Hyan, “Der Düsseldorfer Polizeiskandal,” *Die Weltbühne* 27.17 [1931], 615).

⁵ “Die Polizei fahndet,” *Berliner illustrierte Nachtausgabe*. The *Bestie* metaphor also provides the title of a non-academic true-crime book about serial killers. See Kompisch/Otto, *Bestien des Boulevards*.

⁶ “Der ‘Fluch’ von Düsseldorf gewichen,” *Kölnische Zeitung*.

will call the monster metaphor—that seems to mark the distance and distinction of the *Lustmörder* from the human realm.

The distinction instituted by the monster metaphor is only ever apparent, however. The metaphorical claim that the *Lustmörder* is a monster is the most immediately obvious relic of the fantastic in the non-fiction *Lustmord* articles and case studies of the Weimar era. The monster metaphor is a carrier of the fantastic hesitation between the natural and the supernatural. This chapter investigates the ways this metaphor is subtly literalized: what begins as a gesture of abnegation ends with the monstrous element of *Lustmord* being incorporated into the human realm.

The Uses of the Monster Metaphor

The monster metaphor appears, at first glance, as nothing but a fairly understandable figure of abnegation. Newspaper authors call Kürten and others monsters to emphasize the absolute separation of the killer from the realm of human society. Note that the secondary sources are much more standardized in their references to the notorious killers of Weimar than were the authors of the primary sources. In the secondary sources, the references to the notorious Weimar *Lustmörder* are fairly consistent: Kürten is a vampire, Haarmann is a werewolf, Grossmann is a butcher, Denke is a cannibal. The primary sources mix references to the human with references to the monstrous.

The consistency of the secondary sources does, however, point to a ritualistic aspect of reference that manifests in the primary sources as well. My use of the term “ritualistic” here requires a brief theoretical excursus. My use of the term *ritual* is influenced by Judith Butler’s use of the term in her re-appropriation of Althusser’s

concept of interpellation and in her attempt to mediate between the Foucauldian concept of a discursively conditioned “soul” and a psychoanalytic concept of psyche.⁷ For Butler, the ritualistic aspect of language and naming (in principle present in all attempts at language) marks the ultimate failure of naming to comprehend reality: there is always an excess of the Lacanian Real that Butler calls a remainder. The ritual of language is invoked at the instance of every utterance as the (failed) attempt to comprehend the real. I share Butler and Kristeva’s ontological claim: that there exists an order of life that exceeds the Symbolic and that thus returns to vex attempts at determinate language. My whole project is an attempt to describe the ways in which representations of *Lustmord* from the fin-de-siècle through the Weimar Republic, as an exemplary limit-case, manifest rhetorical problems.

The ritualistic naming of the then unknown Kürten as “der Düsseldorfer Mörder” marks both the attempt to gain a sort of power over a disruptive and worrisome element (the *Lustmörder* at large and apparently undetectable) and the failure of this attempt at control. The “Düsseldorfer Mörder” takes on an imaginary life in the newspaper articles that largely unrelated to the actual person and practice of Peter Kürten. Though the name “Vampir” is more evocative and retrospectively attractive (because lurid?) than the more usual “Düsseldorfer Mörder”, the latter name also participates in a discursive effort to cordon off the imagined *Lustmörder* from human society and from the definition of the human. The ritualistic aspect of the “Düsseldorfer Mörder” name includes also a certain magical intent: by marking the killer as other than society, and other than human, the

⁷ See Judith Butler, “‘Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All’: Althusser’s Subjection,” *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjugation* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997), 106-31; and “Subjection, Resistance, Resignification: Between Freud and Foucault,” *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjugation* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997), 83-105.

authors attempt to also deprive the killer of his social power (that is, his presence as a fearful imaginary figure).

At stake in the attestation of the killer's monstrous nature is the uncertain status of the ostensibly inviolable and definitive human realm (i.e. that realm from which definitions and distinctions emerge).

This chapter is concerned, then, with the power of names, and the process of attempted abnegation and return that occurs when the monster metaphor is employed. The return of the repressed monster into the midst of the human is marked most emphatically by the monstrous nicknames that the two most notorious Weimar *Lustmörder* had: Haarmann the werewolf and Kürten the vampire. These monsters have significant human attributes: the werewolf is a hybrid or transformational monster; the vampire is an uncanny revenant. The werewolf and the vampire mark two paths that ultimately converge on the same place (the monstrous human). The werewolf is an atavistic shape-shifter whose apparent humanity conceals a bestial nature. The vampire is an animated corpse whose apparent life is extended artificially by sucking the blood of others. Both are monsters due to their deviation from a human ideal. The werewolf is an atavistic degenerate who marks the border between human and animal; the vampire is an animated corpse whose arrested decay marks the border between the human and the dead. These two modes of deviation from the human norm are degeneration and decadence. Both retain the human in the monster and are monstrous for precisely that reason.

Thesis and Chapter Plan

The metaphoric use of 'monster' takes on literal meaning which—in conjunction with the attestation of typicality—has grave implications for the status of the human in

the Weimar period: the *Lustmörder* can be taken as typical of human experience—he is the personification of an alienated state of permanent crisis. Another, more succinct way of putting this: the *use* of the monster metaphor ironically subverts its *intention*.

The monster metaphor is a metaphor that ostensibly works to clearly mark the *Lustmörder* as utterly other. This is a species of abnegation or (to use Kristeva's word and theoretical apparatus) abjection.⁸ As Kristeva points out, abjection is a cultural operation that marks the limits of the human only by denying or throwing away what is, after all, a constituent part of the self. Abjection succeeds only in so far as it is ignored. The hyperbolic monster metaphor is, in practice, subject to a creeping literalization (or—if that word is too confusing/laden with theoretical import—a creeping concretization). The metaphor that is meant to figuratively mark the *Lustmörder* as inhuman (monstrous) inadvertently reveals the subterranean contiguity between the monstrous and the human. It is in this sense that the figurative metaphor is literalized: the monstrous *Lustmörder* is indeed monstrous, but he is also inextricably human. The ritualistic nature of the metaphor—and its failure to maintain a distance between the human and the monster—suggests an uncanny affect of horrified self-recognition latent in the figure of the human monster (werewolf, vampire), and implies a return of the primal repressed that is catastrophic for the Symbolic order that founds the human realm.

The most important and interesting feature of this monster metaphor in the Weimar context is its persistent failure to accomplish the distinction between the *Lustmörder* and the human. Unlike in the late 20th century context (in which calling a serial killer a monster or a beast is a cliché devoid of any affect except, perhaps, salacious

⁸ See Julia Kristeva, "Approaching Abjection," trans. Leon S. Roudiez, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, European Perspectives (1980; New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 1-31.

curiosity), the monster metaphor from the fin de siècle through the Weimar era is marked by a symptomatic failure to demarcate the territory of the human from that of the monstrous.

In this chapter, I mean to trace the deployment and characteristic failures of the monster metaphor for *Lustmord* through its exemplary use in fantastic fiction and in the true-crime cases of the “vampire” Peter Kürten and the “werewolf” Fritz Haarmann. I begin by looking at the intermittent use of the monster metaphor and a corresponding echo of the fantastic in newspaper articles about true-crime *Lustmörder* (predominately Peter Kürten). I then examine the equivocally literalized and disavowed use of the monster metaphor in the popular fantastic author Hanns Heinz Ewers’ Frank Braun trilogy. I continue with a reading of Theodor Lessing’s novelistic case study *Haarmann: Die Geschichte eines Werwolfs*. I end as I began, with a newspaper article about Kürten: this one asserting a literal vampirism on behalf of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* and his fellow criminal/spook *das Nachtgespenst*.

Taken as a whole (and implicit in its various parts) the sequence of monster metaphors deployed in Weimar *Lustmord* representations manifests a literalization of the metaphor that means the failure of the distinction it would otherwise impose. This persistent failure resembles that of another frequently recurring trope: the impossible assertion that the *Lustmörder* is at once an absolute exception and somehow typical.

Real Life Monsters: Metaphor and the Fantastic in *Lustmord* Newspaper Articles

Like the fantastic tale, newspaper stories about *Lustmord* are often fraught with an ongoing ambiguity. In Todorov’s definition, the fantastic is a genre marked by an interpretive hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations that is never cleared

up in the end.⁹ In the first two chapters, I discussed how Weimar newspaper articles about *Lustmord* contain echoes of the fantastic narrative that contribute to what I called a fantastic atmosphere in those texts. Now, I want to suggest that there is a more thoroughgoing homology between the fantastic tale and at least some *Lustmord* newspaper articles. I will deal predominately with newspaper articles written about the *Lustmörder* Peter Kürten, or the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*, as he was known before his capture. The newspaper articles about the Kürten case of 1929-1930 make implicit (and sometimes explicit) reference to the other notorious *Lustmord* cases of the Weimar years: the cases of Carl Grossmann (1921), Karl Denke (1924), and especially Fritz Haarmann (1924).

In the articles written about infamous Weimar *Lustmord* cases, a hesitation emerges gradually, as what is ostensibly a sober report reveals a mode of hesitation that centers on the implied question of whether or not the *Lustmörder* can be caught and comprehended by officially sanctioned means. In the newspaper reports, this hesitation often accompanies a critique of public authority. For instance, an article in the *8-Uhr Abendblatt* entitled “Polizei versagt” reports on “ein neues bestialisches Verbrechen” committed by an unknown assailant (the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*) who has managed to maintain his anonymity (“sich im Dunkeln zu halten”) in spite of the police’s best efforts.¹⁰ The connections between attestations of the murderer’s monstrosity or bestiality and a critique of official rationality seem tenuous here, at best. Yet, as I hope to show, there is a connection to be made between these hints of fantastic hesitation in the newspapers and the more explicit hesitations in fantastic fiction.

⁹ Todorov, *Fantastic*, 25.

In the case of the *Lustmord* reportage, there is an ambiguity about the causal forces and identities involved in sex crime. The figure of the killer is both ambiguous and ambivalent. There is even a tacit identification with the killer in some cases.¹¹ The *Lustmörder* is figured as both outcast and as intimate. It is in this sense that the metaphor of the monstrous human is inherently instable. I want to examine this metaphor for its subtle, tacit literalizations (the points where the claim that Kürten and others are monstrous takes on more than figurative weight—the articulation of monstrosity becomes something like a self-fulfilling prophesy when the purportedly objective expert interprets Haarmann, for instance, in accordance with a monster model). But I also want to suggest that the metaphor of monstrous human is germane to a whole tendency of *Lustmord* interpretation to become fraught with ambiguities and ambivalences that can be understood as human rationality being haunted (or infected, in another common metaphor) by the disavowed monstrous irrationality of sexual violence. These ambiguities mark the recurrence of the sort of hesitation between explanatory regimes that Todorov makes the definition of the fantastic. There is a return of the fantastic in the Weimar *Lustmord* articles that is reminiscent of the return of the repressed that Freud describes in his article about the uncanny: what triggers the affect of the uncanny is a sudden resurgence of a disavowed magical thinking. What is triggered by the use of the monster metaphor in these non-fiction newspaper articles is an intimation of the fantastic. Since the fantastic thematizes the conflict between natural and supernatural explanations, either explicitly or implicitly, the echoes of the fantastic mark a return of an irrationality

¹⁰ “Polizei versagt: Neuer Mord in Düsseldorf! Heute der 7. Fall entdeckt: Diesmal ein kleines Mädchen,” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 9 Nov. 1929.

¹¹ Cf. Walther Kiaulehn’s description of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* as a “Poet des Grauens” (Kiaulehn, “Der Würger von Düsseldorf,” *Berliner Tageblatt*).

that frustrates attempts to explain *Lustmord* rationally and with calm scientific detachment. The attempt to rationalize *Lustmord* founders on the return of its repressed irrational bodily content.

In the case of the monster metaphor, the attempted disavowal of the monstrous *Lustmörder* is plagued by his inexorable return as, at times, exemplarily human. This is explicitly evident in Lessing's work, where the *Werwolf* metaphor is extended as an organizing explanatory principle by means of which the Haarmann case is understood as an instance of degeneracy to which we are all susceptible. Though more tenuously, this is also evident in the contradictory prose of those newspaper articles that attempt to maintain the monster metaphor beyond a bald assertion of inhumanity. In a sensationalist mode, these articles assert two contradictory things about the *Lustmörder* in the space of a single article, or sometimes a single paragraph: that he is both monster and human. A striking example of this is the article "Konnte mehr erreicht werden?" from the *8-Uhr Abendblatt*, which is dealt with in detail below. But there are other examples of articles that begin by asserting the killer's monstrosity only to admit to his humanity later. For example, an article in the *Berliner illustrierte Nachtausgabe* discussing the relative lack of progress in the case begins by calling the unknown killer a *Bestie in Menschengestalt* and then proceeds to speculate that the killer might be virtually undetectable: "Es ist nicht ausgeschlossen, daß es sich bei diesem Amokläufer um einen Menschen handelt, der noch immer Tag für Tag in einem Büro arbeitet, um plötzlich, in einer tierischen Besessenheit, einen Mord zu begehen."¹² I anticipate an immediate objection: the language here seems unremarkable, calculated *only* to achieve a rhetorical effect. But

¹² "Die Polizei fahndet," *Berliner illustrierte Nachtausgabe*.

this is precisely the point. The term “Bestie in Menschengestalt” was a fairly common way to refer to *Lustmörder*, and as such may seem unremarkable and unimportant.¹³ But what would otherwise be a banality is immediately problematized by the context and content of the actual articles in which this particular metaphor appears: what is at stake is precisely the way in which the *Lustmörder* fails to be a beast, the way he encroaches on the realm of the human. This is marked in the terms of the metaphor itself: the “Bestie in Menschengestalt” is never safely other. His “Menschengestalt” problematizes the attempt to treat him as other than fully human.

This return of the human to the monstrous (or recurrence of the monstrous in the human realm) is also, finally, discernable in the oddly dramatic, affectively fraught atmosphere of dread and suspense that marks the majority of the newspaper articles written about the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*/Peter Kürten. This last is much more tenuous, merely suggestive. But it seems that the reportage of the Kürten case draws upon fantastic tales in subtle, unacknowledged ways to depict a fantastic atmosphere of uncertainty and dread in which it is as yet unclear whether the official authorities of police and science (human reason) or supernatural explanations (the irrationality of monsters) can best decipher and contain the danger posed by the invisible *Lustmörder*.

A newspaper article published in the *8-Uhr Abendblatt* in late November of 1929 notes the continued lack of progress in the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* case and describes the dangers and difficulties attendant to the search for the etiology and perpetrators of such

¹³ For example: “Bestien in Menschengestalt: Wieder ein Mordversuch an einem Kinde,” *Berliner Tageblatt* 8 June 1926, Morgen-Ausgabe; and “Wegen achtzig Mark hingeschlachtet! Zwei Bestien in Menschengestalt: Die Germersdorfer Bluttat vor Gericht,” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 21 June 1926. Carl von Ossietzky writes about a general sentiment that Kürten should be denied a reprieve as a clamor coming from all sides “diese Bestie in Menschengestalt nicht der Gnade teilhaftig werden zu lassen” (Carl v. Ossietzky,

“geheimnisvoll[e] Verbrechen” in terms that veer from abjection to inclusion and from the coolly rational to intimations of the supernatural in the space of a few sentences:

Der Mörder läßt in seinem Gebaren, in seiner übrigen Tätigkeit nicht erkennen, welchen Dämons Peitsche ihn vorwärts treibt. Er ist wirklich ein ‘Mensch wie du und ich,’ er hat für seine Verbrechen keinen Helfer, keinen Mitwisser. Als Mensch mag er ein Bürger, Freund, Kollege sein, als Un-Mensch ist er ein Einsamer, ein Außenstehender, auch wenn er noch nicht ausgestoßen ist.¹⁴

This passage offers an entrée into the problematic of the relation of the Kürten reportage to the fantastic. Note first that this piece is not about Peter Kürten (who was not arrested until May of 1930) but the imagined *Düsseldorfer Mörder*. The author’s article, then, is an imaginative reconstruction of an absent subject—a sort of deduction that asserts the truth of an absent or invisible part of reality on the basis of what is assumed to be true about such killers. In this, the article has recourse to the themes and motifs of fantastic fiction. The first, most obvious, motif is that of demonic possession. Here the “Dämons Peitsche” is meant to be read figuratively: there is no indication that the author wishes to suggest that the unknown killer is literally possessed. But there is a tacit suggestion that the analogy of demonic possession is apt since the rest of the passage makes it clear that the killer is both compelled and has a doubled personality. The literal claim is that the killer is at once both “Mensch” and “Un-Mensch”. If, as readers, we understand the demon’s whip to be figurative, the literal reality to which it refers would have to be a split in the killer’s being—an interior self-possession, rather than a possession by external, malevolent powers. This recalls the problematic distinction

“Der Verrat an Kürten,” *Die Weltbühne* 27.18 [1931], 644). Another article calls Kürten an “Ungeheuer in Menschengestalt” (“Der ‘Fluch’ von Düsseldorf gewichen,” *Kölnische Zeitung*).

¹⁴ Dr. M., “Konnte mehr erreicht werden? Wie weit ist man in Düsseldorf? Erste Bilanz,” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 26 Nov. 1929.

between the monstrous and the human that collapses in the fantastic metaphor of the monstrous human.

The intimation of a split in the killer's personality suggests both an affinity to psychoanalytic discourse (a split personality) and to the fantastic motif of the *Doppelgänger*. Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was written only shortly before the Jack the Ripper murders and provided an immediate literary model on which the case was received.¹⁵ Stevenson's book was one of the nineteenth century British monster novels that dealt with the limits between the human and the monstrous—often thematizing the problematics of knowledge and science at the same time.¹⁶ These novels were translated and read in German. In 1914, Freud's secretary, Otto Rank wrote a psychoanalytic study of the *Doppelgänger* in which he analyzed the figure of the double in various literary works and film (Rye's *Der Student von Prag*).¹⁷

The killer inhabits two realms and lives two lives. As *Mensch*, the killer is a part of the human order; as *Unmensch*, he is part of the inhuman, supernatural, and (insofar as the supernatural contradicts the assumptions of rational naturalism) irrational order. The figure of the *Doppelgänger* is self-reflexively uncanny in a way that pits the rationalizing ego against the ascendant repressed desires of the id. That is, the *Doppelgänger* marks a split in the psyche between ordered rationality and chaotic irrationality.

¹⁵ Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981). This is part of Hania Siebenpfeiffer's argument, which deals in general with a split reception of the Lustmörder as both cold-blooded killer and *Kreatur*. See Hania Siebenpfeiffer, "Kreatur und kalter Killer – Der Lustmörder als Paradigma männlicher Gewalt in der Moderne," *Gewalt und Geschlecht: Bilder, Literatur und Diskurse im 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Hanno Ehrlicher, and Hania Siebenpfeiffer, Große Reihe: Literatur – Kultur – Geschlecht 23 (Cologne: Böhlau, 2002), 111).

¹⁶ The others are Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).

¹⁷ Otto Rank, *Der Doppelgänger: Eine psychoanalytische Studie* (Leipzig: International Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1914).

As a “self-possessed” killer in the sense that it is not an external, but an internal, malevolent power that compels him, the unknown *Lustmörder* is alienated from himself. But the killer is also self-possessed in the usual sense: in his everyday life, as “Bürger, Freund, Kollege,” the *Lustmörder* appears completely normal. There is a contradictory suggestion here that the killer is both coolly rational and irrationally driven.

Both the killer himself and his crimes (as the rest of the article claims) leave no traces. He is effectively invisible in his daily life and undetectable in the commission of his crimes. And it is this troubling invisibility of the killer that is most remarkable. It is not the “Sensation, die die grauenhaften Untaten und ihre furchtbaren Spuren hervorgerufen haben,” but an “ernsthafte Sorge” about the futility of the search for the killer that keeps people's interest: “Man beginnt immer eindringlicher zu fragen, *wie es möglich ist, dass die unerhörte Mordserie noch nicht gesühnt werden konnte.*”¹⁸

This invisibility and the concurrent failure of detection also hint at fantastic themes. The killer might plausibly be said to merely be skilled at evading detection and naturally adapt at letting no trace of his murderous passions appear on his face. But there remains a hint of the possibility that the reason detection and vision fail in this case is because they are confronted with a force that cannot be tamed by rationality. The rest of the article goes on to offer a critique of the “system” of rational detection and its limits. The journalist lists the technical apparatus and extent of police mobilization (“Telephon und Auto, Photographie und Chemikalien”) and suggests that the failure of this mobilization of modern technology and police methods is manifestly inadequate: “Wie in der Medizin kommt es in der Kriminalistik letzten Endes auf den Erfolg an. Der Arzt, der stolz verkündet, die Operation sei glänzend verlaufen, der Patient allerdings dabei

verstorben, ist kein guter Arzt [...]. Denn der System ist nicht Selbstzweck, der Erfolg ist das Ziel.”¹⁹ The rational detection attempted by the official authority of the police is confronted by a killer and a syndrome, it is tacitly suggested, that overpower the ability of rationality to tame the irrational.

Finally, the sense of the uncanny is suggested in this passage in two ways. First, there is the uncanny thought that one’s neighbor might be an undetectable monster.²⁰ Second, there is the suggestion that one might be a monster oneself. In a key slippage, the article combines the assertion “Er ist wirklich ein ‘Mensch wie du und ich’” with the further assertion “er hat für seine Verbrechen keinen Helfer, keinen Mitwisser.” The intended meaning is clear: the killer is undetectable and has no affiliations with others who might be able to aid in his capture. Read literally, however, the passage is suggestive. If the *Lustmörder* is a human being just like you and I, this raises the question of just what sorts of people we are.

Naming the Monstrous Human—Fantastic Rituals

There is a rote, banal quality to the use of the monster metaphor. To call a *Lustmörder* a monster or beast is simple gesture—an almost automatic and irresistible cliché. The cliché is an overused metaphor—one which has lost its original rhetorical import and has become a standard formula. As such, the effect of the cliché is closed or

¹⁸ Dr. M, “Könnte mehr erreicht werden?” *8-Uhr Abendblatt*. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ The problem of the killer’s effective invisibility was often remarked on. This is a typical passage: “Wenn bei der Mordserie keine Anzeigen einlaufen, so liegt es offenbar daran, daß der Mörder kein Berufsverbrecher ist, daß er also nach außen hin ein bürgerlich-anständiges Leben führt und seinen furchtbaren Neigungen im Geheimen fröhnt” (“Mörderspuren in Düsseldorf gefunden! Bestimmte Vermutungen der Berliner Kriminalkommissare! Eine Frau Helferin? Man erkennt Zusammenhänge,” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 13 Nov. 1929).

monadic—what Bakhtin calls monologic.²¹ Many instances of the monster metaphor in the reportage about the notorious Weimar *Lustmörder* do seem to be such reflexive clichés. (Below, I will make a claim that the Weimar-era usage of the monster metaphor can be differentiated from the late-20th century monadic cliché due to its failure as ritual). As cliché, the monster metaphor is complete and untroubled. But in the context of its use in Weimar true-crime reportage, the monster metaphor is often in danger of collapse. The distance of the killer from the human that might otherwise be simply asserted (or easily assumed in a 20th century American context) is only ever tenuously imposed in Weimar.

In newspaper articles, attestations of the monstrous nature of *Lustmörder* frequently occur alongside discussion of their typicality. An article about Fritz Haarmann in the *8-Uhr Abendblatt*, for instance, calls Haarmann both an “Untier” and notes the “verzweifelte Ähnlichkeit” between his and Grossmann’s *Lustmorde*.²² An article in the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* surveys the series of Weimar *Lustmörder*, gives a psychological etiology of the *Sexualmörder*, urges the public’s protection from “diesen Unholden” (especially women and children), and notes the problems their detection and capture poses for the police who as “Normalmenschen” find it impossible to imagine the motive of the *Lustmörder*: “Er [the detective] kann sich auch in die Gedankengänge eines Mörders aus Haß oder Eifersucht zum Vorteil für seine Ermittlungsarbeit hineinversetzen, niemals aber in die Vorstellungswelt eines Sexualverbrechers, weil er

²¹ See M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, trans. Caryl Emerson, and Michael Holquist, University of Texas Press Slavic Series 1 (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981), 274.

²² Eik, “Das Untier von Hannover,” *8-Uhr Abendblatt*.

selbst ein Normalmensch ist und ja auch sein muß.”²³ Here the figurative claim of monstrosity is accompanied by a claim that there is a literal division between the *Normalmensch* and the *Lustmörder*. This clear division fails, however, when the latent hyperbolic and quasi-supernatural aspects of the monster metaphor come to the fore. The author of an article about the unsolved Kürten case in the *8-Uhr Abendblatt* writes about the continuing failure of the police to catch the unknown killer: “und noch immer streift der Unhold, streifen vielleicht mehrere Unmenschen durch die Gassen, die Parks, die Wiesen und Wälder, um der tierischen Lust und Mordgier neue Opfer zu suchen.”²⁴ This language could be taken directly from a fantastic tale—and the import of the fantastic is the same: the supernatural haunts and confounds the efforts of the authorities such that the monster metaphor takes on an increasingly literal import. Here the typicality of the *Lustmörder* inheres not in a scientifically legible pathology but in his ghostly invisibility and multiplication.

The conjunction of the monster metaphor with attestations of typicality is both ironic and self-defeating (assuming the metaphor is meant to mark a distinction between the killer and his victims). First, because it reduces the monstrosity of *Lustmord* to a sensationalist device that is contradictory and ridiculous on its face: the monster is a typical exception. Second, because when taken seriously as a claim of exceptionality and absolute distance, the monster metaphor’s attendant typicality undermines its claim in the mode of its utterance. The assertion that the killer is an unprecedented monster just like his predecessors dissolves into meaninglessness.

²³ lictor, “Von Großmann zum Düsseldorfer Mörder: Der Schrecken der Sexualmorde: Das schwierigste Gebiet der Kriminalistik,” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 18 Nov. 1929, *Der Montag: Die illustrierte Montagszeitung*.

A final example suggests the ways in which the monster metaphor's fantastic residue can subvert the attempt to reduce it to the merely figurative. After Kürten's capture, an article in the *Kölnische Zeitung* refers to the killer in a clearly figurative usage—in quotes, as a distancing gesture and in disproving reference to other newspapers' use of the monster metaphor—as an “Ungeheuer in Menschengestalt.”²⁵ Most of the article is taken up with a discussion of Kürten's typicality and the signs that, legible in retrospect, should have been obvious all along. This attempt to reduce Kürten to a legible type falters, however, on a residue of fantastic and apparently irresistible language: Kürten is a “Fluch” that has lifted from the city and his crimes are a “fürchterliche[r] Kriminalkomplex [...], der sich um den Namen Düsseldorf wie eine giftige Schlage wand.” The overt rejection of the monster metaphor (attributed to the excesses of a *Sensationspresse*) fails here with the use of language that references a sense of the fantastic. The use, in an article claiming scientific precision, of the simile of the snake and the metaphor of the curse tends to at least suggest the continuing presence of an unmasterable supernatural alternative in this *Lustmord* case. The city *was* beleaguered; Kürten *was* a sort of inexplicable curse.²⁶

The claim that the *Lustmörder* is a monster often occurs alongside language that stresses his baffling invisibility and undetectability in quasi-supernatural terms. The continuing ability of the killer to evade what was described as an intense police mobilization of personnel and resources suggests either criminal genius or supernatural

²⁴ Dr. M, “Das bisherige Ergebnis: Geistesschwacher Staußberg einer der Täter? Er gesteht, aber...?” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 11 Nov. 1929.

²⁵ “Der ‘Fluch’ von Düsseldorf gewichen,” *Kölnische Zeitung*.

²⁶ “Wie es bei jeder andern Großstadt auch der Fall sein kann, hatte Düsseldorf lediglich das Unglück, daß sich in seinen Mauern jahrelang ein Verbrecher aufhielt, dessen wahre Natur im letzten Jahr in eine Serie von Morden und Überfällen zur Entladung kam” (ibid.).

power. Walter Kiaulehn, for example, describes the anonymous *Düsseldorfer Mörder* as “der unsichtbare Regisseur eines unheimlich-blutigen Puppenspiels über uns und die kriminalistische Wissenschaft.”²⁷ Such claims serve less to mark the distance between the human realm of his victims and the monstrous killer as absolute other, and rather suggests the emergence of the supernatural into the human realm of rational order.

Put simply, unlike at other times and places, the sexual murderer in Weimar is not safely other: he at all times threatens to reemerge in the midst of the human. The monster metaphor in this context insists on a distance that is never firmly established. The repeated invocations and re-invocations of the monster metaphor in Weimar have the character not of cliché, but of ritual.

Repetition and Failure of Rhetorical Ritual

The repeated invocation of monster metaphors in the Weimar era reportage on *Lustmord* cases carries with it a whiff of panic. Unlike late 20th century invocations of the monstrous nature of serial killers—which have settled on a comforting narrative of childhood trauma, comprehensible etiologies, and legible signs (or “profiling”)²⁸—the Weimar *Lustmörder* is monstrous precisely in his indecipherability and undetectable, amorphous presence. What is at stake in Weimar attestations of the monstrous *Lustmörder* is the continuing viability of a comprehensible human realm. In the context of urbanization, modernization and neurasthenia; of the increasing visibility of the New Woman and fin de siècle images of feminine evil; of the modernist staging of a cultural

²⁷ Kiaulehn, “Der Würger von Düsseldorf,” *Berliner Tageblatt*.

²⁸ See Seltzer, *Serial Killers*, 125-58. Seltzer masterfully points out the failings of this late 20th century compensatory narrative of the serial killer’s etiology and suggests that we should not be so sanguine as we are about our own supposed separation from the killer. My point here is not that such imbrications are distinct to Weimar, but that what Seltzer tries to recall for us here in an American context was deeply and persistently felt during Weimar.

struggle of the epigones with their forebears; of the challenge to aristocratic and bourgeois verities even before the national humiliation of the First World War—in a context, in short, of deeply felt change and instability, the borders of the human are not safely distinct. The blandishments of a *CSI: Weimar* are impossible in such a context.²⁹

The invocation of the monster metaphor tends toward the ritualistic in the Weimar context. The ritualistic is characterized by the periodic reaffirmation of social norms and definitions that are deemed to be exogenous to the group (that is, naturally valid). A ritual involves an act of communal magical thinking that reaffirms some social distinction in the moment that it also betrays the weakness of that claim. While discussing religious purification rites, Julia Kristeva writes that: “It is as if dividing lines were built up between society and a certain nature, as well as within the social aggregate, on the basis of the simple logic of *excluding filth*, which, promoted to the ritual level of *defilement*, founded the ‘self and clean’ of each social group if not of each subject.”³⁰ The actual religious purification ritual, Kristeva claims, is thus an attempt at collective expulsion that then founds the possibility of rationality as such.³¹ Whether or not this is how rituals actually work in practice, Kristeva (together with Butler’s use of the term *ritual*) provides

²⁹ This is a reference to the “CSI effect”—speculation that the American television show *CSI* [“Crime Scene Investigation”] and others like it have conditioned jurors and others to expect an unrealistic degree of forensic expertise on the part of the police. The effect such that, in the late 20th century and early 21st century American context, people have come to have an outsized faith in the ability of science not only to detect but to provide absolute certainty. Recent legal scholarship has called into question the idea that the television show has itself led to a change in the standards of proof, while leaving relatively untouched the idea that modern juries expect more certainty from science. Cf. Kimberlianne Podlas, “‘The CSI Effect’: Exposing the Media Myth,” *Fordham Intellectual Property, Media and Entertainment Law Journal* 16.2 (2006): 429-65; Tom R. Tyler, “Viewing *CSI* and the Threshold of Guilt: Managing Truth and Justice in Reality and Fiction,” *The Yale Law Journal* 115.5 (2006): 1050-85.; and Simon A. Cole and Rachel Dioso-Villa, “*CSI* and its Effects: Media, Juries, and the Burden of Proof,” *New England Law Review* 41.3 (2007): 435-69.

³⁰ Italics in original. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, European Perspectives (1980; New York: Columbia UP, 1982): 65.

us here with a way to think of the ways in which words can be understood to be an attempt at ordering (i.e. rationalizing) the pre-linguistic. The monster metaphor *qua* ritual marks a repeating social attempt to insist on a certain distinction and distance that (as evinced by the need for its repetition) was subject to the constant threat of failure.

The monster metaphor has clear affinities to the analysis of the fantastic in chapter one. The figurative and hyperbolic use of metaphors of inhumanity to refer to *Lustmörder* in non-fiction articles and case studies recalls the generic conventions of popular fantastic literature and film. As noted in the first chapter, the fictional fantastic was contemporary with true-crime *Lustmord* reportage: the newspaper reader was, if not also a reader of fantastic literature, almost certainly at least familiar with popular fantastic fiction.

The stakes and tensions of the fantastic are concretized in the rhetorical problems of the monster metaphor. Before moving to my readings of Ewers and Lessing, I want to take a moment to further unpack the intertwining of the fantastic and the uncanny implicit in the metaphor, and to introduce a third term: the abject.

The Monster and Abjection

The reportage and case studies about Weimar *Lustmörder* are most clearly fantastic when claiming that the killers are monsters or beasts. The monster metaphor is not, however, fantastic because it refers to a supernatural being—an unambiguous reference to the supernatural would be merely marvelous (to use Todorov's term).

Remember that the condition of the fantastic is precisely the persistent hesitation between

³¹ “Defilement is what is jettisoned from the ‘symbolic system.’ It is what escapes that social rationality, that logical order on which a social aggregate is based, which then becomes differentiated from a temporary agglomeration of individuals and, in short, constitutes a classification system or a structure” (ibid.).

the explanatory regimes of the natural and the supernatural. Rather, the monster metaphor is fantastic in its tendency toward literalization.

The claim that the *Lustmörder* is a vampire or werewolf is obviously meant to be figurative. But in the course of its actual usage, the metaphor is subtly literalized. The vacillation between rational natural and supernatural explanations that Todorov places at the center of his definition of the fantastic here comes to the fore. In the Kürten case, the figurative use of terms such as “Unhold”, “Unmensch”, “Vampir”, and “Werwolf” occur alongside the more literal “Würger”, “Mörder”, and “Mädchenstecher”. On the one hand, these terms are used ritualistically and largely interchangeably as shorthand references to a then unknown killer. On the other hand, the unknown killer is granted a quasi-supernatural status both by the invocation of such supernatural metaphors and by the associated claims made by the newspaper authors (the killer is undetectable or, figuratively, invisible; the killer defies the police’s scientific investigations; the killer appears as a normal citizen one moment only to break out into a murderous rage the next). The language of “as if” elides subtly into “is”: it is “as if” the killer were a Jekyll/Hyde creature—but he also *is* such a creature. The metaphor of the *Lustmörder* as monster suggests an “as if” in its figurative usage, but often becomes literalized as an actual claim.

The Uncanny as Affect

The monster metaphor is uncanny in its affect. The hybrid nature of the monsters most often used to metaphorically refer to notorious Weimar *Lustmörder* point to a contradiction at the heart of the attempt to insist on the distance between the monstrous criminal and his human victims: vampires and werewolves are particularly human

monsters whose imaginary presence suggests more the uncanny imbrication of the monstrous other in the self than their absolute distinction. I will later have cause to investigate the differences in vampire and werewolf monstrosity. But for now, I will just note that both are monstrous due to a deviation from a human norm. The supernatural human monster is uncanny due to the apprehension of hybridity it invites: the werewolf and the vampire mark the failure of boundaries between the human and the beast, the living and the dead. This is not just an epistemological failure. Rather it calls into question the assumption of a stable pre- or extralinguistic ontological realm. Such failure of originary distinctions suggest the possibility that the monstrous human might be or become a human monster—in other words, that the base of human life might not be rationality at all, but monstrous irrationality.

For Freud, the horror of the uncanny is a return of the repressed.³² The familiar is experienced as unsettlingly strange in the moment that chance and circumstance invite the return of hitherto overcome infantile patterns of magical thinking. Freud casts this moment in terms similar to, yet distinct from, the moment of hesitation inherent to the fantastic: perhaps there are ghosts after all; perhaps my wishes have the power to change reality after all.³³ In a significant image, Freud cites the feeling of the uncanny that is produced by walking over an old well combined with the thought that perhaps the water might well up again.³⁴

The fantastic is a genre typified by a persistent question as to whether the events of the plot are motivated by natural or supernatural means. The uncanny is an affect—an unpleasant feeling that is activated by the sudden failure of distinctions. The most

³² Freud, "Das Unheimliche," 264.

³³ *Ibid.*, 271.

elemental and unsettling moment of the uncanny is the failure of the distinction between self and other. The fantastic uncanny, then, is that moment of uncanny affect that is triggered by a fantastic uncertainty: a moment in which disavowed supernatural fantasies seem to challenge the renunciations and rational order on which an adult self-image is founded.

The fantastic uncanny is an important term for my understanding of Weimar *Lustmord* representations. Another important term is the abject. The moment of abjection, following Kristeva, is one in which the Lacanian real returns to vex the symbolic order in which subjectivity is constituted.³⁵ The symbolic order that founds the possibility of the self is, I want to argue, that realm of human reason and order that is profoundly threatened through an encounter with *Lustmord* in the Weimar context. If the uncanny is an unpleasant affect activated by the failure of distinctions between the familiar and the unfamiliar (especially between the self and the other), the abject *is* that moment of failure. A good definition of monster is that which is abject.

The abject is, following Kristeva, the impossible real: it is “the jettisoned object, is radically excluded [... and is] the place where meaning collapses.”³⁶ Abjection is, most concretely, the gesture of denial and expulsion that occurs in a moment of disgust. This gesture is importantly bodily: it proceeds outside of the symbolic realm of language and, in fact, constitutes the foundational moment of the self (which requires a world of objects against which it can recognize itself as self).

The monster, the object of the equation figuratively made by the monster metaphor, is the essentially inhuman. That is, it is the abject whose exclusion makes

³⁴ Ibid., 247.

³⁵ Kristeva, “Approaching Abjection,” 10-15.

possible both the self and the comprehensible human world. There is, according to Kristeva, a primal repression of the real that is necessary for any experience as a self set apart from other objects. If not for the fact that objects are only conceivable after such a primal repression, “[t]he abject would thus be the ‘object’ of primal repression.”³⁷ Abjection is thus a foundational, socially necessary rejection of some “other” that then serves to define the comprehensible human realm. But it is also a gesture that marks the convulsive return of that primal repressed, a moment of experience that contravenes the order by which we have previously made sense of the world. Kristeva’s concept of abjection provides us with a working definition of the monstrous as a limit-case: it is both beyond pale of the human realm and intimately connected to it. The monster is the abject and abjection is the experience of the monstrous—the unmaking of the human world.

The rhetorical failure that plagues the monster metaphor is a moment of abjection. (This is hypothetically true for all monster metaphors, but is actively true in the Weimar context: the cliché doesn’t fail because its banality lets its interior contradictions pass unnoticed. The Weimar monster metaphor is already loaded with the anxiety of anticipatory failure.) What I want to argue via Kristeva’s analysis of the abject, is that the attempt to represent the *Lustmörder* as a monster never serves to mark him as absolutely other than the human realm. The invocation of the monster metaphor ironically activates precisely that moment of abjection that calls human categories radically into question. The attempt to represent the non-object of the abject motivates abjection.

³⁶ Ibid., 2.

³⁷ Ibid., 12. The italics are Kristeva’s.

Two moments of abjection and the abject that Kristeva calls particular attention to are the corpse (i.e. death) and the animal.³⁸ These are border territories whose contiguity with the human must be denied to found the human as such. Kristeva notes the cultural work necessary to maintain such borders. The abject and abjection are motivated by cultural norms of disgust: “To each superego its abject.”³⁹ (2). In the context of the monstrous human, this normative reflex is radically undermined. In hybrid human monsters like the vampire and the werewolf (which share obvious affinities with the corpse and the animal) the abject no longer functions as a clear boundary, but implies panicked intermingling of realms. This might be called a primal return of the repressed contiguity of the self with what is unmasterable and irrational.

In the monstrous activation of the abject the affect of the uncanny is activated. (The uncanny is the monster metaphor’s epistemology; its ontology is the abject.) In terms of the monster metaphor—which in its creeping literalization leaves open a doubt as to its ultimate status as mere figurative or supernatural—this is the fantastic uncanny.

Frank Braun and the Fate of Magisterial Masculinity

I will now turn to a reading of Hanns Heinz Ewers’ Frank Braun trilogy to draw out the ways in which the themes of mastery and abjection vis-à-vis the monster metaphor figure in popular bestsellers of the Imperial and Weimar era.

Hanns Heinz Ewers was an author of popular fantastic stories who, though now nearly forgotten, was widely read during the Weimar era.⁴⁰ Ewers had literary

³⁸ Ibid., 3; 12-13.

³⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁰ There has recently been a minor upsurge in interest in Ewers. The first monograph about Ewers since the Weimar Republic was Michael Sennewald, *Hanns Heinz Ewers: Phantastik und Jugendstil*, eds. Willi Flemming, and Kurt Wagner, Deutsche Studien 22 (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1973). In 1988 Reinhold Keiner wrote a study of Ewers and his relation to fantastic film. See Reinhold Keiner,

pretensions, but was largely ignored or mocked by the literary establishment. He began his career writing for and performing in cabarets,⁴¹ and writing fairy tales. He then started writing fantastic stories notable for their erotic violence. Ewers understood himself as working in the tradition of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Edgar Allen Poe.⁴² Ewers edited an early encyclopedia of modern German authors,⁴³ and he participated in writing the collective novel *Der Roman der XII* (along with Gustav Meyrink, among others).⁴⁴ This may seem to indicate a certain acceptance into literary circles, but more established authors like Thomas Mann and Gerhart Hauptmann had kept their distance from what was, in effect, a “literarische[r] Scherz.”⁴⁵ In a 1911 overview of contemporary authors, Albert Soergel takes Ewers as an exemplar of a new current in German literature (the revival of fantastic fiction): Soergel notes Ewers’ lurid content, suggests that this is driven by his desire for new “Stoffgebiete”, and remarks that it remains to be seen

Hanns Heinz Ewers und der phantastische Film, Studien zur Filmgeschichte 4 (Hildesheim: Olms, 1988). In the early 1990s, Clemens Ruthner and Wilfried Kugel wrote, respectively, a monograph about German fantastic fiction and a psychoanalytic biography. See Clemens Ruthner, *Unheimliche Wiederkehr: Interpretationen zu den gespenstischen Romanfiguren bei Ewers, Meyrink, Soyka, Spunda und Strobl*, Studien zur phantastischen Literatur 10 (Meitingen: Corian-Verlag, 1993); and Wilfried Kugel, *Der Unverantwortliche: Das Leben des Hanns Heinz Ewers* (Düsseldorf: Grupelli Verlag, 1992). Stefanie Stockhorst wrote a book chapter about Ewers’ travel fiction in 2001. See Stefanie Stockhorst, “Populäre Kulturvermittlung nach 1900: Selbst- und Fremdbilder in den Reiseberichten von Hanns Heinz Ewers,” *Fallstudien zu Wegen ins deutschsprachige System*, eds. Florian Krobb, and Sabine Strümper-Krobb (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 167-81. In 2002, Marion Knobloch turned her dissertation on Ewers into a book. See Marion Knobloch, *Hanns Heinz Ewers: Bestseller-Autor in Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik* (Marburg: Tectum, 2002). In 2003, Ulrike Brandenburg published a study of Ewers’ work in the context of right-wing utopian thought (originally her dissertation). See Ulrike Brandenburg, *Hanns Heinz Ewers (1871-1943): Von der Jahrhundertwende zum Dritten Reich*, Studien zur Deutschen und Europäischen Literatur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts 48 (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2003). And most recently, Jared Poley has written a book (originally his dissertation) on the popular German response to the loss of their colonies as reflected in Ewers’ fiction. See Jared Poley, *Decolonization in Germany: Weimar Narratives of Colonial Loss and Foreign Occupation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

⁴¹ See Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992), 50-51. Ewers wrote a memoir about his time in the cabaret. See Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Das Cabaret* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1904).

⁴² Cf. Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Edgar Allen Poe* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1906).

⁴³ Hanns Heinz Ewers, ed. *Führer durch die moderne Literatur* (Berlin: Globus, 1906).

⁴⁴ Hanns Heinz Ewers, “Abgeklopft,” *Der Roman der XII* (Berlin: K.W. Mecklenburg, 1909), 243-86.

whether “aus dieser Bewegung mehr entwickeln wird” or not.⁴⁶ Ten years later, Kurt Tucholsky (who barely acknowledges having read him) answers in the negative. In a review of an Ewers parody (*Hanns Heinz Vampir*), Tucholsky calls Ewers “eine nette kleine Journalistenbegabung aus der Zeit des Spätnaturalismus” who does a good business catering to the public’s appetite for the lurid. Tucholsky notes Ewers’ literary pretensions with some sarcasm: “Man sagt mir, es sei ihm Ernst mit seinem Geschreibe. Also nicht einmal ein Bluff!”⁴⁷ Ewers also aroused considerable indignation when he decided to finish Schiller’s fragment *Der Geisterseher*.⁴⁸ He is now known (to the extent he is generally known at all) as a Nazi author who wrote a biography of Horst Wessel.⁴⁹ Ewers’ embrace of National Socialism was not reciprocated. The salacious conjunction of sex and violence in his fiction put him beyond the pale: his works were burned alongside that of left-wing authors.

Ewers’ first three novels comprise a loose trilogy about the occult adventurer Frank Braun, a protagonist who functions as Ewers’ alter-ego.⁵⁰ In the novels, Braun attempts to investigate and control supernatural forces on a pseudo-scientific basis. In the

⁴⁵ Richard Albrecht, “Von Roman der XII zum Kollektivroman: Wir lassen uns nicht verschaukeln: Aspekte literarischer Gemeinschaftsproduktionen in der deutschen Literatur des 20 Jahrhunderts,” *Neohelicon: Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* 14.1 (1987), 273.

⁴⁶ Albert Soergel, “Hanns Heinz Ewers,” *Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit: Eine Schilderung der deutschen Literatur der letzten Jahrzehnte von Albert Soergel* (Leipzig: R. Voigtländers Verlag, 1911), 817.

⁴⁷ Peter Panter [Kurt Tucholsky], “Hanns Heinz Vampir,” *Die Weltbühne* 46 (1921), 511.

⁴⁸ Friedrich Schiller, and Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Der Geisterseher: Aus den Papieren des Grafen O****: 1. Teil hrsg. von Friedrich von Schiller; 2. Teil hrsg. von Hanns Heinz Ewers (Munich: G. Müller, 1922).

⁴⁹ Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Horst Wessel: Ein deutsches Schicksal* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1932). In an aside, Lotte Eisner calls Ewers an “author of strange tales of blood and lust” and notes: “Nobody was surprised when this then overrated individual turned his hand to the *Blut und Boden*—blood and soil—conception of the Nazis” (Lotte Eisner, *The Haunted Screen*, trans. Roger Greaves [Berkeley: U of California P, 1969], 39).

⁵⁰ Sennewald, Kugel, and Knobloch call the Frank Braun novels semi-autobiographical. Especially in *Vampir*, Brauns’ travels and adventures (advocating for the German cause) are modeled on Ewers’ own experiences. See Sennewald, *Hanns Heinz Ewers*, 100-7; Kugel, *Der Unverantwortliche*, 427 and Knobloch, *Hanns Heinz Ewers*, 61.

first novel, *Der Zauberlehrling oder Die Teufelsjäger* (1909),⁵¹ Braun travels to a remote mountain village and attempts to control the villagers by encouraging them to form a flagellation cult. In the second, *Alraune: Die Geschichte eines lebenden Wesens* (1911),⁵² Braun and his uncle experiment with genetic engineering and try to control the woman they engender. In the last, *Vampir: Ein verwilderter Roman in Fetzen und Farben* (1920),⁵³ Braun slowly comes to realize that he has become a vampire and is himself in thrall to occult forces.

Frank Braun is an aristocratic scholar and sybarite who aspires to become a Nietzschean *Übermensch*. This wish, though generally attested to in the secondary literature,⁵⁴ is seldom explicitly expressed. A conception of Ewers' vulgar Nietzscheanism can be deduced from a passage in *Zauberlehrling* that does explicitly mention Nietzsche, whose madness is said to result from his not being able to live up to his aphorism "Werdet hart!": "—Eine Fliege kroch ihm [Frank Braun] übers Gesicht. Er fasste zu und griff sie zwischen zwei Fingern. 'Werdet hart' lachte er bitter," and, after some hesitation, lets it go: "Der Mensch des Willens hätte es zerquetscht--gedankenlos."⁵⁵ The theme of humanity (and superhumanity) is immediately thematized in *Zauberlehrling* in Braun's attempt to assert his extraordinary individuality vis-à-vis the masses. This theme is continued through *Alraune* and *Vampir* where it is complicated by references to the monstrous. There is an intertextual reference to Mary Shelley's monster in *Frankenstein* (1818) and to the doll Olympia in E.T.A. Hoffmann's "Sandmann"

⁵¹ Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Der Zauberlehrling oder die Teufelsjäger* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1909).

⁵² Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Alraune: Die Geschichte eines lebenden Wesens* (1911; Munich: Herbig, 1973).

⁵³ Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Vampir: Ein verwilderter Roman in Fetzen und Farben* (1920; Berlin: Sieben Stäbe Verlags-und Druckerei-Gesellschaft, 1928).

⁵⁴ Cf., for instance, Ruthner, "Andererseits," 175. Here, Ruthner calls Frank Braun a "nietzscheanische[r] Held." Writing in 1911, Soergel notes Ewers' "Nietzscheton" (Soergel, "Hanns Heinz Ewers," 820).

(1817) in the figure of the artificial woman Alraune. And the very title of *Vampir* indicates its concern with monstrosity and the limits of humanity. Puppets and puppetry are a related theme throughout the novels: from Braun's failed attempts at hypnosis and social engineering in *Zauberlehrling* through the living doll Alraune to Braun's experience of his own subjugation to the occult as a "Hampelmann" in *Vampir* (446). The occult is both feminized and eroticized in these novels. The action centers around control of powerful women and includes descriptions of the erotic delights that come from controlling or yielding to their power.

The most compelling reason to attend to these novels is that they form a bridge from the Imperial Wilhelmine era to Weimar. This is true both in a basic chronological sense (Ewers' books were written in the 1910s and continuously reprinted, read, and circulated during the Weimar Republic) and in terms of their content. It is this last which most interests me here. Ewers' trilogy is immediately important for a study of Weimar-era *Lustmord* representations both because of its lurid depiction of sexual violence and because of its consistent popularity. The novels went through several printings during the Weimar era, and the second novel *Alraune* was filmed at least twice.⁵⁶ These three novels, then, are a major conduit through which the themes of fantastic sexual violence were made available to a large audience.

⁵⁵ Ewers, *Zauberlehrling*, 493-4.

⁵⁶ A silent version was followed by a sound version two years later. See *Alraune*, dir. Henrick Galeen, Ama-Film, 1928; and *Alraune*, dir. Richard Oswald, Richard Oswald-Produktion, 1930. Brigitte Helm played the lead in both. Ewers provided the plot for a third *Alraune* film based not on his book but on the Germanic *Alraune* legend (*Alraune, die Henkerstochter, genannt die rote Hanne*, dir. Eugen Illés, Neutral-Film, 1918). Another possible film adaptations of Ewers' novel is listed at www.filmportal.de: *Alraune*, dir. Edmund Fritz and Eugen Illés (?), Luna-Film, 1919. A final *Alraune* film exists apparently only as an advertisement and may never have been made (*Alraune und der Golem*, dir. Nils Chrisander, Deutsche Bioscop, 1919).

The individual novels are long (about 500 to 600 pages each) but curiously lacking in plot. What fills the pages (especially in *Vampir*, a novel “aus Fetzen und Farben”) are episodic collections of lurid scenes only tenuously motivated by the ostensible action and concerns of the plot. Interspersed among scenes of sexual violence are long digressions taken from Frank Braun’s theoretical writings on European history, Judaism, linguistics, and the hidden science of occult phenomena. Despite his pretensions, Ewers’ literary quality is low. Ewers’ books seem to exist largely as an excuse to present the reader with this succession of (often violently) erotic episodes. Though his books were once very popular, I am inclined to agree with Tucholsky that this popularity was due to his pandering to his readership’s appetite for the lurid and the illicit. Yet these novels do evince a certain thematic unity that is reinforced and given special coloration precisely because of the flatness of his plots and the return to violent sexual scenes.

What holds Ewers’ novels together is a consistent thematic concern for male mastery and the dangerous allure of an exoticized female other. Taken together, the Frank Braun novels describe a story arc of the protagonist’s continuous fall from a position of confident male mastery of self and the exotic female other to a loss of both self-control and his self—all figured via descriptions of sadistic sexual violence and degradation.

The protagonist Frank Braun is an amoral sybarite, adventurer and connoisseur of the occult. The first Frank Braun novel, *Zauberlehrling*, tells the story of his travel to a remote mountain village in Italy that has been recently plagued by an outbreak of apostate religious fervor. Braun rapes and hypnotizes Teresa, the innkeeper’s daughter,

who becomes his puppet and pet. He uses her as his tool to encourage the villagers to form a flagellation cult. When, unnerved by the congregation's increasingly orgiastic meetings, Braun attempts to reverse his posthypnotic suggestion, he finds he cannot. Teresa is now regarded as a saint, and it is now Braun who belongs to Teresa. Her congregation physically stops him from leaving the village. Finally, the cultic ceremonies of religious fervor and eroticized violence reach a crescendo: Teresa, who has already evinced the stigmata, demands to be crucified. She is nailed naked to a cross, and Frank Braun is physically overpowered and forced to thrust a pitchfork through her belly—which, he can now see, is swollen because Teresa is pregnant with his child. In the confusion after the crucifixion, Braun is able to escape to Venice. There he meets an old girlfriend, Lotte Lewi, who takes him to the movies and, in the novel's final scene demands that he impregnate her.

The second Frank Braun novel, *Alraune*, begins with Braun and his uncle ten Brinken as guests of the successful lawyer Herr Gontram's Gothic household—both the house and its inhabitants are characterized by decadence and decay. When an old family relic, a mandrake root (*Alraune*), falls from its place on the wall, another guest explains the Germanic legend of the mandrake: in the moment that the criminal's neck breaks as he is hanged, naked, at the crossroad, his sperm falls to the ground and fertilizes it. The mandrake root (male or female) thus engendered can be dug up at midnight and brings great wealth to its possessor (usually from mineral sources) but also great misfortune. Frank Braun offers an allegorical reading of this legend: the earth of the crossroads is a symbol for a woman's womb; the mandrake is not an actual root, but the child who inherits and intensifies her parents' criminal and immoral traits. Braun eventually

convinces his uncle, an enthusiast of genetic engineering, to carry out an experiment along the lines of this rationalized legend. Together they travel to Berlin to find the most dissolute whore in the city (who happens to be named Alma Raune), and then impregnate her with the sperm of an executed *Lustmörder*. The child, Alraune, who is born of this union exercises a strange fascination on her classmates and others: she remains technically inculpable while she induces others to commit a series of “kleine Grausamkeiten” (158). Over the course of the novel, she leads a series of men to their doom, including, finally, the *Geheimrat* ten Brinken. Frank Braun now reenters the scene, many years later, as the executor of his uncle’s will and as Alraune’s legal guardian. The resulting encounter between the femme fatale and the implicit lady-killer is characterized by a series of battles of will interspersed with violent sexual encounters.⁵⁷ Alraune gives herself completely to Braun, offering to be whipped, to die for him.⁵⁸ Braun, however, feels himself to be still oddly constrained and compelled.⁵⁹ He decides to burn the mandrake root that originally fell from the Gontram’s wall, but is interrupted by Alraune who first complains of the pain and then cuts him and drinks his blood. This final action seems to put Alraune into a trance: she wanders out of the room and is discovered later sleepwalking on the roof of the house. When her estranged friend Frieda Gontram calls her name, Alraune awakens and falls to her death.

⁵⁷ “—Manche rote Lippen küßte mein Mund—und sie wurden sehr bleich. Nun—nun wäre wohl die Reihe an dir,” Braun tells her (318).

⁵⁸ After a hunting accident in which Alraune apparently accidentally shoots him, Frank Braun recognizes his danger and prepares to leave. Alraune goes to him and tells him that since he has taught her to love, he must stay to be loved: “Sie fuhr leicht über seine Wunde, küßte sie mit zärtlicher Zunge. Hob den Kopf, sah ihn an mit irren Augen. ‘Ich tat dir weh’, flüsterte sie, ‘ich traf dich—dicht am Herzen. Willst du mich schlagen? Soll ich die Peitsche holen? Tu was du willst!—Reiße mir Wunden mit deinen Zähnen—nimm auch das Messer. Trinke mein Blut—tu, was du magst—alles, alles! Deine Sklavin bin ich”” (346).

⁵⁹ “Wieder schloß er die Augen, seufzte tief. ‘Die Herrin bist du!’ dachte er. ‘Die Siegerin!’” (346).

The third Frank Braun novel, *Vampir*, is set largely in the United States during World War One and deals Braun's attempts to come to terms with two concurrent problems: Braun's odd sickness (an alternating vigour and anemia), and his ambivalent attempts to reconcile an aristocratic cosmopolitanism with his German nationalism. The novel begins with Braun inadvertently marooned on a plague ship at the beginning of the First World War. After bribing his way off the ship, Braun makes his way to New York City, where he makes runs into an old girlfriend (Lotte van Neß, née Lewi, last seen in *Zauberlehrling*) and the rest of the émigré community and begins working for the German cause. Braun is put to work as an orator—he has a talent for making rousing speeches, but the words seem to come from somewhere outside of himself. In between speeches, Braun is plagued by episodes of anemia which the doctors are powerless to explain. He begins to suspect that Lotte is a vampire: his moments of weakness come when she displays a healthy vigor—and vice versa. His suspicions are heightened when a respected old professor (who was forced to leave Germany after he committed a series of inexplicable *Lustmorde*) tells them his theory that a cannibalistic cult of child sacrifice is, in its various manifestations, the prime mover of human history. Lotte, Braun thinks, is the “Sternengöttin, die das Sonnenkind raubt und zerstückelt” (563). Braun finally leaves Lotte for the American Ivy Jefferson—a rich banker's daughter who has the added advantage of being able to guarantee that her father's bank won't issue war bonds to finance the English war effort. He and Ivy are engaged to be married when an obscure and confused event involving knives causes a rift. Ivy refuses to see him again and marries another. Braun cannot remember or imagine what might have happened, but this is the third time that a woman previously well-disposed to him has become morbidly

afraid of him after such a confusing, dreamlike event.⁶⁰ Perhaps, Braun thinks, they were all vampires. It is only after he returns to Lotte and wakes from his delirium covered in blood that Braun realizes that it has been he who was the vampire all along. He is arrested for *Lustmord* (although Lotte is not yet dead) and it is while he is in prison that Germany loses the war. Released, Braun rushes back to Lotte's side, where she confirms that she has been sacrificing herself for him. Like Braun himself, she says, the world was overcome with bloodlust and had to indulge it in order to become young again. As for the defeated Germany, "Es wird aufstehn vom Nichtsein, das Niedergebroschene!" flüsterte sie" with glowing eyes (607). Braun leaves her sickroom and the novel ends with the words: "Noch atmete sie— — —" (608).

Taken together, these three novels describe the story of the progressive failures of Frank Braun's attempt to assert a masculine mastery of the world via his cool, aristocratic reserve and superior knowledge. What begins in *Zauberlehrling* as a self-confident and masterful attitude toward the world and his fellow human beings has "degenerated" in *Vampir* to a much more mediated and androgynous male identity. The aristocratic individual who attempts to stand aloof in the first novel has become the incarnation of the masses and their drives in the last. In the process of this fall, Frank Braun must give up the Nietzschean (or Nietzsche-istic) conceit of being an *Übermensch* and attains a sort of

⁶⁰ The others are Emaldine Farstin and Dolores Echevarria (who calls herself the Goyita). Farstin is an opera singer Braun first meets at one of his speaking engagements (97). With her (at first willing) help, Braun overcomes his stage-fright by biting her lip until it bleeds—an event Braun neither remembers nor understands when she shows him her bloody handkerchief (104). She is attracted to him, but after they spend the night together she wants nothing to do with him. "Das kann ich mir denken!" says Lotte when he tells her about this, but Braun doesn't know what she's talking about (116). The Goyita is a Spanish dancer Braun first meets on the plague ship and then again in Mexico, where she is the object of fascination and lust for Pancho Villa and his men (166). In the midst of a long, complicated and confusing mescaline-fueled dream, Braun attacks and slashes the Goyita without knowing it (384-409). Later, she sees him on the street and runs screaming from him (536-7).

attenuated humanity as an exceptional creature (a vampire) who incarnates the unmasterable irrationality of sexual violence.

The Monstrous in Ewers

What is at stake in these attempts to assert a sovereign subjectivity vis-à-vis a series of others (the masses, women and femininity, the occult) is the status of humanness and the monstrous. Frank Braun's humanity, and his attempt at superhumanity (a quasi-Nietzschean *Übermensch*) is complicated by his involvement—his implication—in the very areas against which he wishes to assert his mastery. In structuralist terms, his attempt to define himself as separate from and superior to a series of opposite terms (again: masses, women, the occult) fail as he finds himself implicated in these very realms. Frank Braun's involvement with the monstrous follows a path of increasingly fraught episodes of self-positioning vis-à-vis an other. The definition of the monstrous as abject that served well when discussing the newspaper articles written about the Kürten case needs to be refined here. The others that Braun faces are not monstrous, not abject, per se. The feminine, the masses, the occult—these are figured as irrational and (in the case of the occult, at least) inhuman, but they are, in the logic of the novels, comprehensibly irrational. They are objects of knowledge and investigation and (not incidentally) delight; they are not abject. What is abject is the protagonist Frank Braun himself. It is in his character, revealed as literally monstrous in the last novel, that the incongruities between his status as both knowing subject and object of his investigation emerge and Braun experiences himself as something unknowable, ineluctable, and ultimately inhuman. In a perverted manner (I use the term advisedly in its technical sense as subverting a norm) Braun has achieved his goal of Nietzschean superhumanity not by

rising above, but by plunging into and below the irrationality of the masses. At the end of *Vampir*, Frank Braun has become the monstrous superhuman.

Braun's monstrosity satisfies the technical requirements of abjection without, however, sharing its affect. Rather than convulsive disgust and displeasure, Braun experiences fascination, appreciation, and delight when confronted with blood, for instance. The definition of the monstrous as abjection has to be amended in this case to allow for the pleasure Braun feels when confronted with the permeable boundaries of his own body, the fluidity of gender identity, and the contiguities between the human and the dead and the human and the animal. As Kristeva develops the concept, abjection involves a problematic (because always already incomplete) rejection of the maternal body.⁶¹ The foundational moment of abjection is one in which the infantile proto-subject enters into the Symbolic order by accepting cultural norms as well as the preexisting language that orders the world. The disgust that accompanies abjection is one of horror when faced with the dissolution or inadequacy of that order. For Frank Braun, however, the confrontation with the challenges the feminized occult poses to rational order is tinged not with disgust, but with the appreciation of a connoisseur. There is still horror present, but it is a horror that is appreciated (aestheticized and eroticized). For Braun, the monstrous is sublime rather than abject.

The consolation of monstrosity is that it offers a respite from the aristocratic decadence plaguing both Frank Braun and his uncle ten Brinken. The extremity of the violent sexual encounters that accompany Braun's experiments and investigations into the occult are marked by moments of mastery and servitude that probe and call into

⁶¹ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 56-89.

question the sovereignty of the subject. Thus even failed attempts at mastery are at least diverting. Braun originally intends to travel to the remote Italian village Val di Scodra in order to have a peaceful place to do some writing. But when the priest he has just met tells him about the heretical, but harmlessly aimless, cult that has recently been flourishing there, he decides to amuse himself with the townspeople by giving the cult leader, Mr. Peter, the thoughts he lacks. When the priest asks what sort of thoughts, Braun replies: “Ich weiss nicht.—Irgendeinen.—Den, den er braucht!—Eine Kraft liegt da, in den tiefen Tälern dieser Berge—irgendeine geheimnisvolle, schwärmerische, ekstatische Kraft. Und sie verpufft, Jahr um Jahr—in jämmerlichem Strohfeuer.—Man sollte keine Kraft brach liegen lassen” (27). In response to the priest’s claim that evil should be allowed to perish, Braun counters with an aesthetic of monstrous (or sublime) greatness: “Nur was klein ist, ist hässlich!” (27). The impetus for Braun’s trip to Val di Scodra thus becomes both a practical desire for a quiet place to write and an aesthetically distanced desire to play with other people’s lives as the *Zauberlehrling* of the title. Here Braun is full of vigor and youth. In *Alraune*, which is initially set some years before the events in *Zauberlehrling*, Braun is likewise filled with youthful confidence and vigor. His uncle, however, is old and decadent—he needs increasingly extreme experiences to relieve his boredom: he has had all he can from life “in den normalen Grenzen des Bürgertums,” he complains. “Der Bach langweilt sich in seinem alten Bett, tritt hier und da frech über die engen Ufer.—Es ist das Blut” (34). The young Frank Braun makes a programmatic declaration of independence in reference to his uncle. He notes admiringly that his uncle “[hat] die Kanten abgeschlagen, die Stacheldrähte durchschnitten und gelacht über alle Gesetze—nun wohl, so werde ich es auch können” (33).

By the time of *Vampir*, at the beginning of the First World War,⁶² Frank Braun too has become world weary: “Er wußte wohl, daß er krank war; Europa machte ihn krank, die Heimat, die er liebte” (11). So he decides that he need to travel so as to gather new strength (“Aber er wußte auch, was ihn heilen mochte. Oder eigentlich: nicht heilen. Wohl aber: ihm neue Kraft geben für neue Jahre in der Heimat” [11]). The story arc described over the course of the three novels is one in which Frank Braun moves from a youthful, aristocratic arrogance to an increasingly world-weary (yet still aristocratic) decadence. *Vampir* ends in a moment of ironic self-renewal. Braun loses his distance from the female and from the masses. He becomes one with the occult. Yet this is figured as a sort of triumph—a *Happyend* for the vampire.

The pleasure Braun takes in the occult, the mysterious and the irrational—all that escapes codification in the Symbolic order—is not unequivocal, however. Frank Braun takes part in the monstrous by becoming a vampire, but this is not a wholehearted rejection of humanity, but rather an emendation of it. The greatest consolation of Braun’s monstrosity is plausible deniability. The various acts of sexual violence that Braun enjoys—that are marked by their erotic charge—are often committed in a state of delirium or duress. At the same time, Ewers (through Braun’s writings) is eager to reclaim the occult for rationality. The status of the fantastic is called into question by Braun’s theoretical writings and explanations, which tend to rationalize the occult. This

⁶² *Zauberlehrling* is set in 1908; the latter half of *Alraune* in 1911; and *Vampir* in 1914. *Vampir* begins “[i]n dem Jahre, in dem die ganze Welt wahnsinnig wurde” and on the day of “der wilde Schrei von Sarajewos Mordtat” (*Vampir* 11, 12). On a train from San Francisco to the east, Braun thinks he sees his uncle ten Brinken on the train. But “[d]er Sanitätsrat war es nicht, gewiß nicht. Auch wer der ja tot, ganz und gar tot. Hatte sich aufgehängt; vor drei Jahren nun, gottseidank” (51). Braun’s uncle hangs himself after *Alraune* has ruined him and shortly before Frank Braun returns to be her guardian (*Alraune* 258). When he meets Lotte van Neß, née Lewi, Braun asks her when they had last seen each other: “‘In Venedig,’ sagte sie, ‘sechs Jahre sind es her. Auf dem Markusplatz traf ich dich wieder, und du sprachst: ‘Lotte Lewi, die Phönizische’” (*Vampir* 71). This scene takes place at the end of *Zauberlehrling* (497).

is a sort of colonization of irrationality. The character of Frank Braun manages to have it both ways, then: he is figured as a sovereign subject whose rational investigations into the occult have transformed him into a quasi-mystical creature who kills women in a delirium that absolves him of any responsibility.

In what follows, I will take up the ways in which Frank Braun's sovereign monstrosity is constructed. I deal first with his problematic attempts to set himself apart from a series of others (the masses, the feminine, the occult) and the ways in which his own actions become compelled in the moments of his failure to do so. I'll then consider the consolations of his monstrosity. The contrast with Strobl's character of the *Baumeister* in "Die arge Nonn" is striking. Braun reacts to the occult not with the *Baumeister's* horror, but with the fascination of the archivist. Finally, I'll consider the fate of the fantastic in Ewers' trilogy. What initially appears as a rationalization of the occult is reversed in the occultization of the rational.

Sovereignty: Frank Braun's Attempt at Aristocratic Mastery

Frank Braun's attempt to assert an aristocratic sovereignty is increasingly frustrated by his implication in those realms over which he had sought definitive mastery (i.e. a mastery that could serve to define a sovereign self): the occult, the masses, and women/the feminine. The transformation of Frank Braun's situation from aristocratic surety to abased insecurity over the course of the trilogy can be illustrated by two jail scenes: the first from the aristocratic Wilhemian time before the World War, when Braun is a *Corpsstudent*; the second from war-time America, when Braun is jailed as an spy and a depraved individual (and when, according to Ewers' depiction, merely being German is practically a jail-able offense). In the first instance, Braun is imprisoned

because of dueling, but comfortably so, with a room of his own and among his peers. As an aristocrat and a man of honor, Braun is able to take leave from the fortress for a weekend in Berlin, where he helps his uncle find a mother for Alraune (*Alraune* 59-60). At the end of *Vampir*, Braun is imprisoned in the New York City jail (or “Tombs”) in altogether different circumstances: a small, cold jail cell that’s infested with bugs (589-90). After being transferred to a jail in the south, Braun bribes a guard to smuggle him out to the provincial town for the night, “Nur wieder einmal gewiß [zu] sein, daß er noch ein Mensch sei” (599). But he also feels healthy and strong, “und wollte diese Stärke fühlen. Ein Instinkt riß ihn, rein animalisch genoß er” (600). In the second scene, Braun is in degraded circumstances, but seems both nervous about his status as human and able to derive solace from an animalistic vital force. What is challenging about this is that Braun maintains a tenuously exceptional character throughout this transformation. He does not succumb to the mundane; he becomes remarkable as a monster.

The first Frank Braun novel, *Zauberlehrling*, announces in its title both Ewers’ literary ambitions (as a reference to Goethe’s poem) and its motivating theme: the danger and allure of attempting to use the occult for personal gain. This theme continues in *Alraune*, whose eponymous character is, like the cultish townspeople in *Zauberlehrling*, Braun’s own creation turned against him. The status of the occult in the novels is ambiguous. Braun positions himself as master of the occult by demystifying it: his writings and his conversations about the occult serve to emphasize his rational control over the occult by explaining the supernatural in naturalist terms. An example is Braun’s interpretation of the Alraune myth as an allegory of heredity (*Alraune* 50-52). Another example (which I deal with in more depth below) is his digression on werewolves and

Manntiger as quasi-psychological transformations that make manifest otherwise hidden atavistic tendencies (*Vampir* 577-80). After Alraune has caused his uncle ten Brinken's downfall, Braun thinks himself safe because he is forewarned due to his extensive experiences with the occult (*Alraune* 296). But this attempt to be the rational master of the occult consistently fails. In *Vampir*, Braun himself has become an occult creature.

Throughout the series, Braun evinces a vulgar Nietzschean humanism: he defines himself aristocratically, over and above the masses. The people (villagers, lower classes, workers and the *Volk*) are partly romanticized, but they are also treated as animalistic. In *Zauberlehrling*, Teresa quotes Braun as saying “die Menschen sind dumme Tiere” (93). Braun views especially the people of the mountain village as animals: “Das Tal von Scodra schien ihm ein grosser Käfig zu sein, voll von wilden Tieren” (150-1). Only after Teresa has become their “saint” (and she only does this due to his own posthypnotic suggestion) do the people of the village become a threat to him: “Das Volk von Val di Scodra war ein grosses Tier ohne Hirn, scheu und feige kroch es daher und floh vor seinem Blick. Nun aber hatte es einen Willen. Teresas Willen” (353). In *Alraune*, the servants are among the few who are not compelled by her charisma: like the animals they have an instinctive distrust of her (142, 185). This is true of *Zauberlehrling* and *Alraune*. In *Vampir*, the case is more complicated—Braun's increasing identification with the *Volk* means a concurrent identification (or at least mediation) on his own animal nature. He is ambivalent about the war: it is a crisis for individuality, but the mass experience is attractive.⁶³ The world, Lotte tells him in the final pages of the novel, had

⁶³ “Das sah er wohl, wie in solcher Zeit jeder einzelne zurücktrat, wie er verschwand und sich auflöste, aufging in der Masse, zusammenschmolz mit Millionen andern. Und wie plötzlich, über Nacht, ein Wesen erwuchs, jung, gewaltig, titanenhaft: das Volk” (48). “Und er dachte: es wäre wohl gut, drüben zu sein. Zu

been infected by a “Blutwahn” that had led to the World War: “Sehr ansteckend ist es, reißt mit, was mit ihm in Berührung kommt. Blut wollen die Menschen, Blut. Wie du!” (606). When Braun protests that he had known nothing of it till their final night together “wo ich aufwachte,” Lotte tells him that he is just like the masses in this regard: “Unbewußt ist ihnen ihr wilder Wahn, ihr Durst nach Blut—wie es dir war” (606).

The American banker’s daughter, Ivy, one of Braun’s women and something like his student, confounds him when she tells him: “Für die Massen ist das Vaterland und all die andern Phrasen—nicht für uns. [...] Für uns?—Das Leben!” (425). Among other things, what happens in this book is a renegotiation of this sentiment on the part of the aristocratic cosmopolitan character—Frank Braun is learning patriotism. In *Vampir*, there is an increasing identification with the masses and a concurrent increase in gender confusion. This allows for a reflexive (both unmediated and directed to the self) discovery of feminine depths of irrationality and bloodlust in the male individual while retaining an insistence on masculine mastery and individuality. Thus the male aristocratic individual discovers, enjoys (in a quasi-objective/distanced, ironic, degenerate manner) the innate feminine irrationality of his self without, however, doing without a claim to absolute ego-boundaries. That this claim is bogus is beside the point. In the world of the novel, Braun has managed to square the circle: he remains insistently male as he plumbs the depths of the feminine mystery. Frank Braun’s discovery of his ‘feminine side’ involves, then, not a softening, but an ostensible hardening of bodily boundaries that is achieved through misogynistic violence.

sehen, zu fühlen, zu erleben im gewaltigen Meere der deutschen Massen, was er hier im Wasserglase sah. Die ungeheure gewaltige Suggestion von hundert Millionen—dieser rasende Glaube—” (30).

Sexual violence is a tool of male power in these novels. Besides positioning himself above the masses and the occult, Frank Braun also tries to prove his mastery by controlling women directly. Braun's method of control (in order of escalating violence) is persuasion, hypnotism, rape, and killing.

Soon after he arrives in the village of Val di Scodra, Braun rapes his landlord's daughter Teresa. This rape is motivated by nothing so much as Braun's wish to prove his mastery. In a moment of perhaps unintended bathos, Braun asserts his humanity by brushing his teeth before committing his rape.⁶⁴ Braun's rape of Teresa is reminiscent of his uncle ten Brinken's rape of a young girl in *Alraune* in a moment of self-doubt when he finds Alraune's will too strong for him. Rape acts as a restorative of masculine power: "Das war es, die Sicherheit fehlte ihm," ten Brinken thinks, "Und er suchte herum, nach irgendeinem anderen Opfer, nur um sich zu überzeugen, daß er noch Herr sei seiner alten Künste."⁶⁵ After he rapes a young girl, ten Brinken is once more more powerful than Alraune.

Braun's rape of Teresa is closely associated with the power of his speech. She is speechless during the rape, while he speaks "[s]eltsam lockend": "Er fühlte wohl, dass sie ihn hören musste. Und alle zärtlichen Worte, die er je schönen Frauen gesagt, wurden nun lebendig, flossen von seinen Lippen; alle, und viel mehr noch, schönere und seltsamere" (64). Braun hypnotizes Teresa shortly thereafter. Once he has her in his

⁶⁴ In the moments before he commits the rape Braun thinks "Es ist das Schicksal!" and goes out into the corridor—but finds himself "zurückgedrängt durch die Kultur der Kinderstube. 'Ich bin kein Tier.' flüsterte er," and goes back to his room to brush his teeth (62).

⁶⁵ The passage continues: "Er fand eines, das dreizehnjährige Töchterlein des Klempners, das irgendeinen geflickten Kessel zum Hause brachte. 'Komm mit, Mariechen', sagte er. 'Ich will dir was schenken.' Und er zog sie hinein in die Bibliothek. Still, wie ein krankes Wild, schlich die Kleine hinaus, nach einer halben Stunde. Drückte sich eng an den Mauern vorbei, mit weit offenen, starren Augen— Aber triumphierend, mit breitem Lächeln, schritt der Geheimrat über den Hof, dem Herrenhause zu. Nun war er wohl

power, he plays with her like a doll: “Alle Glieder zeigten grosse Nachgiebigkeit, machten automatisch die Bewegungen, die er wünschte, verharrten steif in der Stellung, die er ihnen gab” (109).⁶⁶ Braun’s power of speech becomes very important in *Vampir*, where he uses his great talents of oratory to rouse his audiences to action for the German cause. This amounts to something like a mass hypnosis, but it is one in which Braun himself finds himself hypnotized: he hardly knows what he’s saying on stage, and can’t remember much of his speech afterwards (82-83). In a moment of doubt, Braun says: “Ich weiß es jetzt gut: etwas in mir spricht—nicht ich. Und wenn das nicht mag—” (97). Braun recovers his poise by kissing and biting an opera singer’s lips—an incident he doesn’t remember after his speech. Again, sexual violence acts to restore male vitality.

The most extreme act of sexual violence, *Lustmord*, only occurs in a mode of disavowal. Like the spirit of patriotic vampirism that possesses Braun in the moments in which he speaks before the masses, the moments of sexual murder in the trilogy occur through Braun but in a manner that is out of his control. Each novel features a strong female figure (a femme fatale in the case of *Alraune*) whom Braun attempt to dominate. In *Zauberlehrling*, this is the landlord’s daughter Teresa, who becomes strong only after Braun hypnotizes her. In *Alraune*, this is the title character, who dies after Braun has told her the secret of her birth and she is awakened while sleepwalking on the roof. It is her estranged friend Frieda Gontram who wakes her, but (Braun says) it was his wish (359).

sicherer—aber nun wich Alraune ihm aus. Kam vor, sowie er ruhig schien, zog sie sich zurück, wenn sein Auge wirr flackerte” (*Alraune* 239).

⁶⁶ He plays with her nerve endings: “Er nahm ihren Ellenbogen und suchte den Nerv, drückte ihn stark”—which causes a reflexive closing of the hand. The infliction of pain is an important component of this exercise: “Er stach heftig mit einer Nadel in die Arme, ihr Gesicht zeigte keinen Ausdruck des Schmerzes” (109). ““Lethargie.”” murmelte er. ‘Nur zu, mein Kind—es ist nicht gut, einen eingenen Willenzu haben!’” (109).

And in *Vampir* it is Lotte van Neß, whom he cuts up in a delirium. Each novel ends with the death, or impending death, of the female.

The way in which Braun kills Teresa and his unborn child is illustrative of the way the female's death is both savored and disavowed. Teresa, in the grips of a religious fervor has convinced herself and the townspeople that she is a saint who must be crucified. It is through Frank Braun's hands that she wishes to die. The townspeople surround him and force him to kill her:

Mit allen Kräften suchte er sich zu befreien, die Hand zu lösen, den Schaft nach unten zu reissen. Aber sie hielten ihn, acht starke Männer, mit wilder, fanatischer Kraft. Und der Wille der, die am Kreuze hing, machte ihre Muskeln zu Eisen.

Ihre Puppe war er.

Dann, mit einem gewaltigen Ruck, stiess Girolamo Scuro von unten gegen seinen Ellenbogen, riss ihm den Arm hoch hinauf. Und die Zinke drang in der Heiligen Leib und bohrte sich hinein bis zum Ende—

Tief hinein—durch Mutter und Kind—

Dort, wo das Stigma leuchtete—

Die Heilige schrie.

Einen einzigen, wilden, entsetzlichen Schrei.

* * *

Sie liessen ihn los, dumpf fiel er zu Boden. (474)

In these novels, the female is that which is subjected to male knowledge and power. That Braun himself becomes increasingly feminized in *Vampir* is a mark of his increasing monstrosity. The ultimate sexual violence of *Lustmord* is disavowed: Braun kills only against his will. But as *Vampir* progresses, the sexual violence that Braun commits becomes the expression of a mystical being that transcends his everyday, rational self. In effect, Braun's monstrosity licenses him to slash and kill without giving up his claim to humanity. The extreme sexual violence of *Lustmord* is figured as an expression of an elemental *feminine* passion. It is Teresa who commands that she be crucified and that her congregation force Braun to stab her. It is Frieda Gontram who

awakens Alraune and causes her to fall to her death. And it is Lotte who has acted not as the monster, but as its midwife (or, as Ewers suggests through his various references to Lotte's motherly nature, its mother): she aids and encourages Braun's unconscious bloodlust throughout the novel. It is this is the mystic passion that Braun seeks to investigate and control as the *Zauberlehrling*. Braun becomes a *Lustmörder* to the extent that he loses control of the feminine and begins to incarnate it as a vampire.

Another mark of Braun's increasing feminization is his loss of control over writing. From the first pages of *Zauberlehrling*, writing is set up as a master metaphor of masculine power and control. After Frank Braun correctly guesses what his companion, a priest he has just met, is thinking, Braun tells him that his thoughts were written on his face: "Gott sei Dank können nicht alle Menschen lesen" says the priest (7). Braun replies: "Richtig, Don Vincenzo, es gibt grässlich viel Analphabeten.--Aber da sind wir wieder: das Lesen ist das Erste. Das ist das Sehen, das Erkennen. Und dann kommt das andere--das Schreiben: das ist das Schaffen" (7). It is Braun's avowed purpose to go to Val di Scodra in order to be able to write—a purpose that take on double meaning in light of his metaphor of writing as creation. Speaking of another priest he admires, Braun calls him a creator whose preaching is like writing:⁶⁷ "Aus tausend Leibern reisst er tausend Seelen und schweisst sie zu einer in seiner Rede Flammen. Da stehen sie, Kinder, Weiber und Männer—jedes für sich—ein lächerliches Jammerbild! Und der Paduaner greift sie und formt sie und macht ein Grosses daraus, eine einzige starke Masse: ein gewaltiges, wahnsinniges Tier" (10). Reading and writing are gendered in the Frank

⁶⁷ "Er liest, aber er erkennt nur wenig das, was er liest. Und so schreibt er—verstaubte, abgegriffene Bücher" (9).

Braun novels: interpretation is a rationalizing masculine activity; control of language is the mark of the sovereign male subject.

Braun's attempt to assert such control via speech is stymied in the moment in which he is to give Teresa a posthypnotic suggestion that will lead to the institution of the orgiastic flagellation cult. Braun has second thoughts, but finds himself giving the order against his will: "Und heftig, gegen seinen Willen, drängte es sich auf seine Lippen: 'Nun wirk es fort——'" (277). Braun attempts to convince himself of his self-mastery: "'Ich bin ein Sieger.' sagte er. 'Ich bin ein König. Ich bin ein Gott.' Irgend etwas lachte—aber er wollte es nicht hören" (277). The power of his speech is manifest, but beyond his control.

Frank Braun's masculine attempt to control language is paralleled by moments of feminine incomprehension or refusal to engage in reading or writing. This is most striking in Alraune and Frieda Gontram's refusal to read and write. Frieda hates to write (20), and Alraune can't be taught to do so: "Den Griffel nahm es wohl in die Hand, aber es war nicht zu bewegen, Haarstriche, Grundstriche oder Buchstaben zu machen—es zeichnete vielmehr irgendein merkwürdiges Tier mit zehn Beinen, oder ein Gesicht mit drei Augen und zwei Nasen" (156).

The gendered aspects of the texts are fairly clear: Frank Braun increasingly assumes and absorbs aspects of the feminine, and actual women either serve as sexual objects or offer maternal succor. The two roles of mother/whore finally merge into one in *Vampir*. The moment in which this occurs is instructively *textual*: Frank Braun, attempting to master his unruly feelings and his mysterious disease (his vampirism) attempts to write Lotte a letter and finds that instead of her name, he can only write:

“Mutter” (586). This is a moment of textual incompetence that is highly suggestive when set against other odd moments of writing, reading, or textual refusal in the trilogy (Alraune refuses to write, for instance). The textual arena of rational male order dissolves in a moment of mystic revelation of Lotte’s true role. If vision and text are arrayed as two poles of a continuum on which knowledge can be sought, then Braun’s mystic visions and dreams (as opposed to physical vision) prove more fruitful than his attempts at writing treatises about the nature of reality.

The final novel comprises a sort of fantastic detective story (the mystery revolving around the significance of knives and blood) in which the detective at last discovers himself (rather than his lover Lotte) to be the monster he has sought.

Collapse: Frank Braun’s Descent into the Occult

In *Alraune*, Frank Braun believes that his experience with the occult will inoculate him from Alraune’s pernicious influence: “[Er] war tief gewatet durch die schwülen Fiebersümpfe des Unbegreiflichen” (*Alraune* 296). But his involvement with the occult ends not with what he had hoped—a mastery over the occult that would make him a superhuman being—but rather with his absorption into the occult. Braun becomes not the master of, but increasingly the subject of the occult.

Braun sleepwalks and commits horrible crimes in a state of delirium in *Vampir*. These are numerous enough, and at times of such baroque complexity, that it would be tedious to list them all. An example of how he attacks Lotte and sucks her blood in his sleep comes while he dreams of the Goyita’s wounded neck—a wound that he just imagined and “Der nicht einmal da war!”: when he awakes he sees blood on the sheets and feels so fresh and healthy he can’t believe he was ever sick (233). Lotte is a willing

victim, and descriptions of his attacks on her are fairly brief. His other attacks, on unwilling victims, are accompanied by descriptions of dreams that hint at the content of his actions. The most elaborate of these is a long passage during which Braun attacks the Goyita while in a mescaline dream.⁶⁸

Braun also often speaks in a delirium. He is a demagogue, but comes to feel that he is the crowd's creature as much as he is its master.⁶⁹ Significantly, these moments are connected to the delirium of his violent sexual attacks on women. Finally, he becomes (or is revealed to himself) as a *Vampir wider Willen*.⁷⁰ From the first novel through *Vampir*, the theme and imagery of puppets and control is strong. Braun hypnotizes and at times feels compelled as if he has been hypnotized.

At the beginning of *Zauberlehrling*, confident in his powers, Braun compares himself to a theater master whose ambitions are much larger than the town: "Vielleicht lohnt es sich der Mühe nicht, euch Puppen tanzen zu machen--wer kann das wissen?"

⁶⁸ He dreams first of a scene in which a naked woman is gored by a bull; then of a fat man in the ocean who wants to suck him dry; then, after a digression about the tragedy of clichés and "Dieser gräßliche, schauerhafte gesunde Menschenverstand" and the nature that is responsible for them, of being split into two people (one on the couch in his room, the other in the water of his dream); then of swimming against the current in a morass and cutting off tentacles that grow into threatening naked women; then of one of the tentacle women sucking his blood as he paradoxically feels it filling him; then of his cousin Daisy and hedgehogs who suck the guts out of toads; and then of his aunt's coffee pot sucking out his insides and turning into his aunt; and then of nuns who turn into New York society women with red roses that rain down on him like blood—that he licks from the corner of his lips; and then he dreams that he is waking from his dream to face trial for his various crimes and that he is being sentenced to death by electro-suction; and finally that the mob is chopping down his cell door—whereupon he emerges from his dream to find Lotte and his valet have chopped down his door to get to him and the grievously injured Goyita (384-409).

⁶⁹ After his attack on the Goyita, Braun feels an uncommonly good rapport with the audience:

"Sonst rang er mit dem Tiere da unten, dem vielköpfigen. Bändigte es, zwang es unter seinem Bann.

Heute war es ein anderes. Er kämpfte nicht. Er wartete keine Wirkungen ab, verzichtete, ohne es doch zu wollen, auf alle Rednerkniffe. Ließ jede Kunst beiseite, überlegte nichts.

Heute war es, als ob das, was er sprach, nicht aus ihm komme. Als ob er nur der Mund sei, nur die eine Stimme der tausend Menschen. O ja, das war es: er war die Stimme ihrer Seele" (413).

⁷⁰ After coming to his senses to find himself standing in his bedroom with blood in his mouth and all over his clothes, Braun rushes into Lotte's room and finds her very pale with blood everywhere and, on the nightstand, "wild durcheinander, blutige Messerchen—"; he rips back the covers and sees the many many

Vielleicht seid ihr nur dummes, hysterisches Dutzendzeug, Klinikfutter für neugierige Aerzte!--Denn, siehst du, mein Kind, auf der Bühne, wo ich Herr bin, soll es hoch hergehen! Haupt- und Staatsaktionen!" (110). At the end of the novel, despite his powers as a hypnotist, he has become Teresa's puppet (474). In *Alraune*, ten Brinken treats Alraune as a puppet: "Sie erschien dem Geheimrat recht eigentlich ein Phantom, ein schemenhaftes Ding, das nicht in sich selbst leben konnte [...] ein unwirkliches Ding [...], dem er Körper und Form gegeben, als eine blutleere Puppe, der er eine Maske geborgt hatte" (186). Like Braun in *Zauberlehrling*, ten Brinken believes himself to be the true master of the situation. Braun has chances to escape the Val di Scodra, but he stays anyway: "So blieb er—in der festen Gewissheit, immer gehen zu können, wann er nur wollte" (431). Likewise, ten Brinken thinks he has things under control: "Er ließ sie [Alraune] Herrin sein und fügte sich nicht weniger ihren Wünschen und Launen, wie es die andern taten. Mit dem Unterschiede nur, daß er glaubte, das Spiel stets in der Hand zu haben, daß er voll überzeugt war, daß es letzten Endes nur sein eigener Wille war, der sich äußerte durch das Medium Alraune" (186). By the time he meets Lotte again in America, Braun has lost his youthful confidence in his own mastery.⁷¹ At a fundraiser for the German cause, Braun sees Lotte selling *Hampelmänner*. This makes him remember a clown he and his *Korpsbrüder* saw playing a *Hampelmann* in Bonn: the man was a horrible actor, but Braun and his friends kept applauding, which made the

wounds covering her body: "Welch Tier—welch wildes, gieriges Tier hatte—? Welch grausame, ekle Bestie— Ah: er! Er!" (588).

⁷¹ Lotte tells him: "Manchmal denke ich, daß du gar kein Mensch bist, nur ein Saiteninstrument, das so aussieht wie etwas Lebendiges, seltsam genug." Thus he's an instrument that may be played by all: "Du, Frank Braun, du bist nur immer die Puppe—in all deinen Tragikomödien!" (71).

Hampelmann keep dancing until he collapsed of exhaustion (442-4).⁷² Now Frank Braun sees himself as a puppet whose string is being pulled not by his audiences, but by Lotte (446). Braun experiences this subjugation as feminizing: “Es war, als ob er gar kein Eigenleben mehr habe. Eine Puppe war er in ihren kleinen Händen, ihr *Hampelmann*, den sie springen ließ. [...] Sehr feminin war sein Empfinden zu dieser Frau—sie war der Mann, und nicht er” (561).

Braun’s transformation into a vampire is accompanied by an increasing androgyny. Braun’s androgyny is connected with his merging with the masses, who are also feminized. Not only does Lotte pull his string as if he were her *Hampelmann*, he feels that Lotte and he have somehow switched gender roles. She’s physically weak, he strong, yet: “Und doch fühlte er: unter der braunen Haut bist du bleicher als sie. Viel, viel bleicher. Und: sie ist stärker als du—sie. Und dann, zuweilen: du bist die Frau. Sie—sie ist dein Mann. Sie” (86). Part of this androgyny is due to his fear and sickness. In his mysterious sickness and accompanying mood swings, Braun is described as a hysterical woman: on his good days he’s very winning, “Aber er war unausstehlich, unerträglich fast am andern Tage—abstoßend wie ein hysterisches Frauenzimmer” (492). Braun denies this with a rhetorical question that seems to affirm what he seeks to deny: “Bin ich ein neurasthenischer Jüngling, ein bleichsüchtiges Backfischchen? Ein hysterisches Weib in den Wechseljahren oder ein mondsüchtiges Frauenzimmer, das ihre

⁷² The comedian kept making gestures that he wanted to stop, but “Nein, nein, sie ließen ihn nicht aus. Diese Grausamkeit, die von Frank Braun ausging, kroch in alle Hirne, schlug in Flammen heraus, verlangte rasend das jämmerliche Opfer.” In his memory of the *Hampelmann*, Braun is the one figuratively pulling the string and the crowd acquiesces to his desire and becomes the instrument of his coercion (the crowd both helps pull the *Hampelmann*’s string and is at the same time itself in the position of a puppet) (444). The band starts playing and the *Hampelmann* starts dancing again: “Nun war es nichts Menschliches mehr, das da oben sprang. Eine lahme Puppe wars, ein *Hampelmann*, dem die Strippe zerriß.” his dentures fall out: “‘Er lost sich auf!’ lachte Frank Braun” (444). The condition of being subjugated to the will of another here leads to a dissolving of human essence.

Regeltage hat? Zum Henker, nein! Ich habe Angst—sage ich Ihnen—ganz gemeine Angst—vor—vor—irgend etwas!” (257). Finally, he is ignorant of the true nature and cause of his sickness whereas Lotte knows from the beginning of the novel what is going on. She tells him: “Du bist kein Zeugender, kein Befruchtender, du nicht! Du bist Boden, bist Weib und Mutterschoß. Alles nimmst du, alles befruchtet dich, liebend und gewaltsam, mit deinem Willen und gegen ihn. Wie die Erde bist du” (120).

The figure of Braun’s mother, and motherhood in general, plays a central (sometimes shocking) role in all three novels. In *Zauberlehrling*, Teresa is pregnant with Braun’s child when he is forced to kill her. And when he meets Lotte in Venice she tells him she wants to have his child. In *Alraune*, Braun functions as a sort of parent to Alraune, and his own mother becomes important when he has to choose between remaining with her or going to be Alraune’s guardian.

In *Vampir*, Frank Braun mixes up Lotte’s name with his mother’s twice. The second time comes when he awakens covered in blood he cradles Lotte in his arms and calls her name: “Doch daraus wurde—und er wußte nich wie—ein anderes Wort: Maria” (591). Maria is (besides being the mother of Christ and the name of a girl in Vienna who loved him and who shot herself when he sent her a letter ending their relationship) the name of his mother. The first time comes right before he attacks Lotte—when he still thinks that she is the vampire. He wants to write her a letter, but finds he can get no further than “Liebe Lotte” “du” and “Liebste”: “Kein Brief wurde es, kein Satz kam zustande. Nur Worte, Worte. Nur ein armseliges Stammeln, ein qualvolles Schluchzen und Stöhnen” (585). Here is another instance in which language fails him. “Dann—dann fühlte er, wie die Hand ihm den Dienst versagte. Er starrte hin—sah die beiden Finger,

die die Feder hielten. Still, stief—ohne Bewegung.” His brain orders writing, his hand does not obey. Braun wages a great battle to try to get his hand to write a word: tries to write “Lotte” and “Da bewegte sich die Feder. Ganz dünn nur—kaum erkennbar. Schrieb: Mutter” (586).

This business with the femme fatale Lotte being confused with the mother seems to lend credence to Maria Tatar’s theories about *Lustmord* and male jealousy of reproductive power.⁷³ However, Braun’s relation to motherhood is not jealous so much as selfish: the maternal is the space of female protection and succor. Sitting with Lotte in her apartment, Braun feels a great sense of contentment: “Er faßte ihre Hand über den Tisch, es schien ihm, als ob er zu Hause sei—still—bei der Mutter. Und zugleich, als ob er nie eine andere Frau in den Armen gehalten habe” (232). When Braun confuses his lover Lotti Lewi for his mother in *Vampir*, it is not due to jealousy so much as a mark of a radical failure of boundaries. (This doesn’t make it any less disturbing though).

Consolations: Decadence, Dissolution, and the Pleasures of Monstrosity

There are consolations to the vampiric decadence to which Braun attains in the last novel. He has not, perhaps mastered the other, but has absorbed it into himself. He usurps the feminine as well as the male, accepts the animalistic (and argues that it makes him more human), and is honored to have yet another woman die on his behalf.

The consolations of monstrosity include an erotics of dissolution. Frank Braun is dissolute in the archaic sense of the word: he is both licentious and loose. His debauchery is closely connected to a loosening or dissolving of standards and meanings.

⁷³ Tatar finds the psychological origin of the *Lustmord* reproduction in a “nervous womb envy” of male artists: “Still, as I have noted and as will become evident in the chapters that follow, there is almost always more than a trace of either helpless infantile rage or nervous womb envy present in the genesis, execution, or subject matter of the works to be discussed” (Tatar, *Lustmord*, 10). Cf. also Tatar, *Lustmord*, 7, 28-36.

Part of the erotics of dissolution plays out in Braun's increasing androgyny. Yet at the same time, Braun insists on his masculine prerogatives. The solution to this apparent paradox is that Braun approaches the feminine as a male to become something other than human: his absorption of the feminine does not make him less male, but rather other than human. The implication is that he has become (in an attenuated way) superhuman.

What maintains Braun's status as a sort of holy monster (i.e. not degraded as subhuman but transcendently inhuman) is his continuing claim to rationality. Braun's moments of linguistic and textual failure come not due to his abiding nature (as do Alraune and Frieda Gontram's refusal to write), but due to intense, mystic moments of interaction with an abiding mysterious force (the occult) that resists rational explication. Frank Braun's transformation from human to monster marks his share in the occult: his experiences in the "Fiebersümpfe des Unbegreiflichen" have transformed him. But he maintains a claim to humanizing rationality. *Vampir* ends with Braun restored to health via Lotte's sacrificial death. He has solved the mystery of his own transformation and has (through Lotte's mediation) come to see it as analogous to the violent upheavals of the First World War. Throughout the trilogy, and again in this final scene, the mysteries of the occult are interpreted in a rationalizing, naturalizing way. Braun's experiences do not ever reduce the supernatural to the banal everyday, but rather interpret them in a manner that suggests their eventual susceptibility to rationalization.

By such means is the occult not explained, but held somewhat at bay. Like the archivist in Strobl's "Die arge Nonn'," Braun enjoys the mystery. Unlike the archivist, he accepts the occult premise and is transformed by it.

The method of rational explanation practice by Braun is one that leaves the occult intact. In the next section I will look at what this implies for the status of Ewers' writing as fantastic.

The Fate of the Fantastic in Ewers

But although Ewers is a fantastic author, and though there are frequent supernatural episodes in the trilogy, I need to pause here to consider the status of the fantastic in the Frank Braun books. The doubt that the Frank Braun novels inspire is less binary than Todorov would wish. Rather than a persistent question as to whether the events of the novels are motivated by supernatural or natural means, the novels seem to imply that the supernatural is subsumable under the natural. Ewers' narration pauses at several points so that Frank Braun or another character can offer a longer exposition explaining why some supernatural phenomenon might exist (in slightly altered form) in a natural world. Thus Braun's vampirism is cast as a natural supernaturalism. The exposition on "Manntiger" in the last part of *Vampir* is instructive here (577-80). We are given to understand that the myth of the transformation of humans into predatory animals is based on an underlying truth of human nature (i.e. humans' primordial bestial instincts), and that primitive peoples the world over are responding to this through their myth. At the same time, however, this common myth is inspired by real events of periodic atavism: Frank Braun himself has seen a *Manntiger* with his own eyes (578). The conclusion is that such transformation actually take place, whether "auf höchst phantastische oder auch auf sehr natürliche Weise" (580).

The metaphor is literalized in both the case of the *Manntiger* and Frank Braun's transformation into a vampire. Scholarship (*Wissenschaft*) is used to explain myth, but

the myth retains its power. The result is a mystified science, and a return of the fantastic where it once seemed absent.

“Unser aller Schuld”: Lessing’s Case Study and the Dangers of Degeneracy

The digression on the “Manntiger” in Ewers’ *Vampir* suggests a sort of atavistic potential for degeneration in human beings. This degeneration is linked (by the examples used) first to primitive peoples and then by analogy to the jungle-like conditions of the modern metropolis. Frank Braun’s own form of monstrosity, however, is motivated less by an atavistic regression than by decadence, a surfeit of civilization. Unlike the human/animal hybrid of the *Manntiger* (or the *Werwolf*), the vampire is an animated corpse, a creature who is inhuman precisely because he is no longer living. The metaphor of the modernist city as jungle serves to partially bridge this divide between the degeneration of atavistic regression and the degeneration of decadence. Both are deviations from a human norm. But if the werewolf is a regression to a bestial state, the vampire is in a way overly human: a creature of decadence. The vampire suffers from too much civilization (*Zivilisation*); the werewolf emerges due to too little.

I now turn to a discussion of Theodor Lessing’s *Haarmann: Die Geschichte eines Werwolfs*. Ewers’ Frank Braun novels tell a story of individual decadence. Lessing’s book tells a story of societal degeneracy and the activation of atavistic latencies.

Theodor Lessing’s Interest in Haarmann

In 1924, Theodor Lessing, a journalist and professor of psychology at the University of Hannover, became increasingly interested in the case of Fritz Haarmann. As early as July 1924, Lessing was not well informed about the case, but by the time Erich Frey arrived to represent Haarmann as his defense attorney in August, Lessing had

gotten to know the case “wie kein anderer”.⁷⁴ As the case progressed, Lessing became a vocal proponent of a psychoanalytic examination of Haarmann. Lessing suggested Alfred Döblin or Sigmund Freud among others.⁷⁵ The court appointed psychiatrist, Schultze, was no psychoanalyst. His interrogations of Haarmann were marred by leading questions and value judgments and seem to have served more to legitimize Haarmann’s execution than to attempt to discover the truth. Hania Siebenpfeiffer notes the fine line Schultze walked in his interrogations: if evidence of Haarmann’s epilepsy had been admitted, Haarmann would have automatically been judged incompetent under §51 of the *Strafgesetzbuch*).⁷⁶ Lessing was admitted to Haarmann’s trial as a correspondent of the *Prager Tagblatt*.⁷⁷ Lessing, along with the other reporters, was admonished to be *sachlich* in his reports: the court explicitly expressed the wish to avoid sensationalizing the case—and the effects such sensationalization might have on the populace of Hannover. Lessing wrote many articles criticizing the police and the public authorities’ handling of the case, specifically the lack of psychoanalytic experts at the trial. He was

⁷⁴ Martina Keilson-Lauritz, “Theodor Lessing und der Fall Haarmann,” *‘Sinngebung des Sinnlosen’: Zum Leben und Werk des Kulturkritikers Theodor Lessing (1872-1933)*, ed. Elke-Vera Kotowski, Haskala Wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen 31 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2006), 98, 109n5.

⁷⁵ These others were Ludwig Klages, Alfred Adler or Hans v. Hattingberg. Lessing had originally been slated to appear as an expert psychoanalytic witness himself, but withdrew after Frey had been dismissed. See Theodor Lessing, *Haarmann: Die Geschichte eines Werwolfs*, ed. Rudolf Leonhard, Außenseiter der Gesellschaft: Verbrechen der Gegenwart 6 (Berlin: Die Schmiede, 1925), 118.

⁷⁶ Siebenpfeiffer, “Kreatur und kalter Killer,” 32. See also Franz von Liszt, Ernst Delaquis, and Eduard Kohlrausch, *Strafgesetzbuch für das Deutsche Reich mit Nebengesetzen: Textausgabe mit Anmerkungen und Sachregister*, Deutsche Reichsgesetzgebung 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1928). Siebenpfeiffer discusses the criminological discourse of crime and *Zurechnungsfähigkeit* at greater length (and includes a quotation of the relevant §51) in her book “*Böse Lust*”. See Hania Siebenpfeiffer, „*Böse Lust*“: *Gewaltverbrechen in Diskursen der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2005), 32-37.

⁷⁷ Keilson-Lauritz, “Theodor Lessing und der Fall Haarmann,” 97.

ultimately ejected from the trial on the eleventh day due to his continued insistence on filing stories critical of the police and public authorities.⁷⁸

The terms in which the court understood his recalcitrance are instructive: we can brook no imaginative flights of fancy, Lessing was told. He had been admitted as a reporter and not as a novelist [Schriftsteller]. Lessing reports the words of the chief judge to him: “Sie sind hier als Reporter zugelassen, nicht als Schriftsteller. Wir können im Gerichtssaal keinen Herren dulden, der Psychologie treibt” (228). The court also explicitly rejected psychoanalysis as newfangled and unproven.⁷⁹ After Haarmann had rejected Frey as his defense attorney (because, Lessing says, he had been convinced by agents of the court that Frey was a communist agent—and Haarmann had a chronic fear of communists),⁸⁰ Haarmann was assigned a public defender. This public defender was, Lessing claimed, the equivalent of a third prosecutor (*der dritte Staatsanwalt*)—an untalented lawyer who had hitherto only tried trifling provincial matters and who used this opportunity “vor den lokalen Behörden sich nützlich zu erweisen, ja in kirchturmpolitischen Tiraden das ‘wilhelminische und bismarckische Zeitalter’ auszuspielen gegen ‘die Republik, die solche Unholde wie den Haarmann gebar’” (117, 119). This was the man who, Lessing reports, responded to Lessing’s suggestions for

⁷⁸ Kerstin Brückweh, “Unerwünschte Expertise: Theodor Lessing und der Fall Haarmann 1924/25,” *Lustmord: Medialisierungen eines kulturellen Phantasmas um 1900*, eds. Susanne Komfort-Hein, and Susanne Scholz (Königstein: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 2007), 149.

⁷⁹ The psychiatric experts who were called to testify on the question of mental competency [*Zurechnungsfähigkeit*] during the Weimar Republic tended to be suspicious of or hostile to the innovations of psychoanalysis. See *ibid.*, 154-7. The institution of psychiatry in general held to the tenets of Emil Kraepelin’s biological and genetic theories of mental disease. See *ibid.*, 154; and Richard F. Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal: A History of German Criminology, 1880-1945*, Studies in Legal History (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2000), 42-43, 69.

⁸⁰ Lessing, *Haarmann*, 117.

psychoanalytic experts with a short note: “Ich wüßte nicht, was man Psychologisches fragen sollte” (118).

Lessing’s conflict with the court, then, was one in which the stakes were the terms through which Haarmann and his crimes would be officially understood: psychoanalytically as an atavistic and (implicitly) humanized case or in the then-current psychiatric-medical terms of physical pathology as a sane and therefore culpable case of murderous sexual appetite. Lessing and his chosen interpretive terms were physically shut out of the courtroom. Likewise, Lessing notes, his critique of public authority was shut out at the same time.⁸¹

In 1925 Lessing published his case study of Haarmann: *Haarmann: Die Geschichte eines Werwolfs*. The book was part of a series (*Außenseiter der Gesellschaft: Verbrechen der Gegenwart*) published by Die Schmiede in Berlin. In this book, Lessing is able to advance all the arguments he was prevented from making in the course of the trial. The genre of Lessing’s case study is instable: as Todd Herzog argues, all the books in the series were.⁸² It purports to be an attempt to tell the truth about the Haarmann case—to set right the court’s attempt to conceal the truth. Lessing promises to present “den gesamten Rechtsfall klar und sachlich,” but also to present his facts such that “dem einfachen Leser alle Vorgänge bildhaft lebendig werden” (7, 8). The book is thus situated somewhere between a completely *sachlich* legal case study (an alternative to the *Gutachten* by Schultze that he finds so inadequate) and the novelistic. This is especially so as Lessing claims a privileged position as an observer: “In Stadt und Schauplatz

⁸¹ Ibid., 223-29.

⁸² Todd Herzog, “Crime Stories: Criminal, Society, and the Modernist Case History,” *Representations* 80 (2002): 36.

gewurzelt, war ich der Einzige, der Ort, Zeit, Personen und Zusammenhänge völlig übersehen konnte” (7-8).

There are two important points to be made here. The first is that Lessing positions himself as an expert in part because he himself is implicated in the pathological space of the city. The second is that his use of the monster metaphor—werewolf—is one that, in practice, further develops this theme of the inexorable implication of the human (and the expert) in the pathology of *Lustmord*. Lessing’s critique of public authority is developed alongside his description of Haarmann’s case and his own psychoanalytic explanation of the cause of Haarmann’s crimes. Lessing’s final section, the final words of his book before an epilogue, and the words he suggests should be carved into a monument over the grave of Haarmann’s victims are: “Unser aller Schuld” (256).

The Relation of the Fantastic to the Case Study

This section moves from a discussion of the monster metaphor in fantastic fiction to its use in a case study. I thus intend to use literary critical methods to understand the ways in which another level of discourse about *Lustmord* during the Weimar republic works. This involves certain methodological concerns: I anticipate readers who will object to my treatment of literature and case study together. What justifies this? First, there is a continuity of the human stakes and narrative intent in Ewers’ novels and Lessing’s case study: in both, *Lustmord* suggests an alarming hybridity that is figuratively represented by the monster metaphor. In Ewers, this is negotiated as a tentative apotheosis of the human in Nietzschean terms: the vampire Frank Braun is a decadent superhuman. In Lessing, this is understood as an atavistic regression from a human ideal: the werewolf Haarmann is reduced to, and a victim of, his primitive drives.

These differences in the form of the *Lustmörder*'s monstrous hybridity are interesting and important, but not reason enough to forestall their consideration in a single chapter.

Ewers' fiction and Lessing's nonfiction complement each other in intriguing ways. As shown above, the fantastic of Ewer's Frank Braun novels is marked by a scientific move that first seems to evacuate the possibility of the fantastic (by reducing the supernatural to the natural) only to revive it in the literalization of the vampire metaphor. In Ewer's novels, the natural and the supernatural converge into the fantastic under the guise of the supernatural's naturalization. In Lessing, too, there is a literalization of the metaphor. This inheres first in Lessing's use of metaphors (Haarmann is not a wolf, but is, in a way an actual werewolf) and then in the novelistic quality of his prose. Just as Ewers returns to the fantastic under the guise of scientism, so does Lessing approach the fantastic by giving his scientific case study fictional qualities.

The genre in which Lessing writes is that of the speculative case study, in which a description of the criminal serves to frame an appraisal of the law itself.⁸³ The case study is a genre that developed from direct observation of criminals and the insane. Cesare Lombroso's nineteenth century criminal-anthropological work *Der Verbrecher (Homo Delinquens)* posited not only the existence of a degenerate criminal type, but the possibility of identifying the born criminal as such through the signs of deviance written on his body.⁸⁴ The case study typically consists of a variety of elements: a physical description of the individual under observation, a description of his heredity and milieu,

⁸³ Cf. Herzog's discussion of the genre as an evolution from the presentation of the criminal as an exception in the Pitaval to an assessment of the efficacy of the law in the Weimar period. See *ibid.*, 36-40.

⁸⁴ Cesare Lombroso, *Der Verbrecher (Homo Delinquens) in anthropologischer, ärztlicher und juristischer Beziehung*, trans. M.O. Fraenkel, 2 vols. (1890; Hamburg: Verlagsanstalt u. Druckerei, 1890). On Lombroso's influence on the "science" of profiling serial killers, see Alexandra Warwick, "The Scene of the Crime: Inventing the Serial Killer," *Social Legal Studies* 15.4 (2006), 562.

and a recapitulation of his crimes/deviance, followed by a diagnosis. The case study thus accommodates differences in early Weimar criminology as to the etiology of crime in heredity or environment.⁸⁵ But it maintains the primacy of investigative vision. In the Weimar period the case study underwent a sort of crisis: the hitherto visible criminal became obstinately invisible.⁸⁶ Todd Herzog argues that the modernist case study is one in which not the criminal, but the uncertain apparatus of detection is increasingly thematized.⁸⁷ Such modernist case studies (in which camp he explicitly includes Lessing's book on Haarmann) are "intentionally disorganized, self-contradictory archives that contain multiple perspectives and varied approaches [...]."⁸⁸

In Lessing's case study, the author's stance on the visibility of the criminal and the etiology of his crimes is clear. Lessing's case study is divided into two parts: the first on Haarmann's crimes and their etiology; the second on the trial and the authorities' complicitness in Haarmann's crimes. Significantly, this first part includes an investigation of Haarmann's milieu as well as his person: it is called "Zeit und Ort des Dramas."

Lessing works from a psychoanalytic and anthropological perspective. He discusses Haarmann's heredity, but his emphasis is on the social-environmental factors that, he argues, have led to Haarmann's atavistic regression. Thus it is that Lessing's book begins with a physiological description of the city of Hanover and the scene of the crime before proceeding with the more traditional "Signalement" of Haarmann's

⁸⁵ See Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal*, 168-74.

⁸⁶ This is Herzog's argument. See Harold R. (Todd) Herzog, III., "Criminalistic Fantasy: Imagining Crime in Weimar Germany (Alfred Doeblin, Peter Kuerten, Fritz Lang)," diss., U of Chicago, 2001, **PP**.

⁸⁷ See Todd Herzog, "Crime Stories: Criminal, Society, and the Modernist Case History," *Representations* 80 (2002), 38.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

physiology. After noting Haarmann's androgyny and cold demeanor, Lessing proceeds with a description of Haarmann's childhood and hereditary influences. He gives most attention to Haarmann's biography, however: his childhood and military experiences, his periodic internment in insane asylums, his criminality, his alliances with the police, and finally his sex crimes and the important friendship with Hans Grans.

After some psychological "Bemerkungen" Lessing moves on to describe the topography of the scene of the crimes. Important here is the way in which Haarmann's surroundings are made to be as important as his person. Mark Seltzer has argued that there is an unbearable lack of differentiation between the serial killer and the scene of his crime that motivates the repetitive murders.⁸⁹ Here, Lessing shows a lack of differentiation from the killer and his milieu that is less motivational than accusatory: his argument moves toward his final section, in the second part, called "unser aller Schuld". This first part ends with a description of the discovery of Haarmann's victims' remains and Haarmann's subsequent confession. The second part is less a case study than cultural and juridical critique.

Lessing's book was part of a series of novelistic case studies called *Außenseiter der Gesellschaft* that self-consciously used fictional elements in their treatment of true-crime cases.⁹⁰ His text does indeed have novelistic elements. Here, I'd like to separate Lessing's use of metaphor from his use of dramatic/novelistic language. Lessing uses the

⁸⁹ Seltzer, *Serial Killers*, 29-62.

⁹⁰ Herzog writes that the series "consciously presents itself as a borderline project that transgresses genres (between history and fiction, scientific analysis and popular sensationalism) in order to question precisely the possibility of generic classification." See Herzog, "Crime Stories," 36.

recurring metaphor of the drama to refer to Haarmann's crimes.⁹¹ He also describes events, places, and people in dramatic ways. Lessing's book, then, is a true-crime case study that is shot through with value-laden prose and imaginary scenes.⁹²

The Werewolf Metaphor: The Monstrous in Lessing

Lessing's report on the "werewolf" Haarmann uses psychoanalytic ideas to describe the abiding presence of the bestial in all humans and the possibility of a literal degeneration. It is this state of doubled life as both tenuous humanity and inherent bestiality that founds the unstable figure of the monstrous human.

Lessing's use of the monster metaphor is based on the activation of a supposed latent (in all humans) bestial nature. Lessing's figure is unstable. He refers to Haarmann as both wolf and werewolf. He refers to Haarmann's accomplice Hans Grans as a "fox". In Haarmann's case, the wolf emerges due to an atavistic regression that involves a reduction of human life to the basic drives (hunger and sexual desire). The clever, cold accomplice Grans, however, is inhuman in another way: he is a fox due to his excess of instrumental reason (*Zweckrationalität*). Haarmann the wolf and Grans the fox are figuratively inhuman: Lessing's use of the metaphor is not meant to be taken literally. Neither is Lessing's use of the werewolf metaphor meant to be understood as an actual physical transformation that Haarmann undergoes. However, the identification of Haarmann as a werewolf is quite literal when applied to the hybrid transformation that afflicts Haarmann. The activation of Haarmann's latent atavistic drives involves an

⁹¹ His first section is titled "Ort und Zeit des Dramas"; he expresses the hope near the end of his book that "Zur Zeit wo das Buch im Druck erscheint, wird vielleicht das sinnlose Ende des sinnlosen Dramas vollzogen sein" (252).

⁹² The most striking example of such an imaginary scene occurs towards the end of Lessing's book, when he offers his readers an imaginary letter that Haarmann *could* have written after his sentencing. See Lessing, *Haarmann*, 262-4.

invisible, but actual transformation into a bestial nature. Lessing argues that the responsibility for Haarmann's crimes thus rests not with the individual (idealistically imagined as an atomistic agent) but in the triggers of his atavistic regression. In Lessing's argument, Haarmann is both *like* a werewolf and—in terms of his mental hybridity—*is* a werewolf.

The use of the monster metaphor in Lessing's book is equivocal. When he uses phrases such as “So war denn der Wolf (24 Jahre alt) auf die menschliche Gesellschaft losgelassen,”⁹³ his language seems clearly figurative. He states clearly that his use of the monster metaphor has the character of a “vorläufige Formel” for his book: “so erinnere man sich an die uralten germanischen Mythen von dem in Wolfsgestalt Menschgewordenem ‘Urbösen’; and die Sagen vom Werwolf (dem roman. loup-garon, den angelsächs. werewolfes), dem ‘kugelfesten’, nur gegen heilige Hände wehrlosen Unhold, der verflucht ist, Kindern die Kehle durchbeißen und sie zerfleischen zu müssen. [...] Mit einem solchen Fall von Lykanthropie haben wir im folgenden uns zu befassen” (63). By the means of this metaphor, Lessing hopes to forestall the analogy to other sex crimes in favor of using mythology as a hermeneutic device.⁹⁴ Lessing's argument, as it develops in his book, is that Haarmann was not motivated by outwardly orientated objects (and thus not by sexual objects) but by unreasoning elemental and atavistic (because primitive) drives. Haarmann cannot have been motivated by sexual desire because sexual desire presupposes an object—and Haarmann's pathology implicated precisely his lack of ability to think objectively. Lessing thus claims that Haarmann

⁹³ This is in reference to an earlier incident in which Haarmann was released from the psychiatric hospital. See Lessing, *Haarmann*, 39.

wasn't motivated by the erotics of power (as was Sade) but by an elemental, hard to classify *Triebballung* that inheres in bodily rhythms.⁹⁵ In this, Lessing seems close to the prelinguistic, elemental *chora* that Kristeva talks about. Except here it is a psychotic failure of abjection that results in a self-reflexive cannibalism.⁹⁶ in Lessing's analysis, Haarmann's case has nothing to do with a sadistic erotics of power. Sadism, Lessing implies, would require an awareness of subject positions that Haarmann lacked: his sexual murders involved an atavistic regression to primal biological activities such that the differentiation of himself from his victim failed.

In light of this claim, it is clear that while Lessing may be using the myth of the werewolf figuratively, he means for its implications to be taken quite literally. In other words, while Lessing does not expect anyone to sprout hair and fangs in the light of the full moon, he does make a serious claim that certain environmental stimuli can activate a psychic atavism. According to Lessing, these stimuli are the degraded conditions of life in the modern city.

Lessing's Etiology of Lustmord: "Der Wolfsmensch mit Radio und Elektrizität"

Lessing's explanatory apparatus relies on the differences between a "nahsinnlich" person (creaturely, given to experiences of direct contact) and "fernsinnlich" (distanced by virtue of sight and hearing—thus more rational and abstract) (242). Haarmann had an

⁹⁴ "Dazu aber ist auch dies erforderlich, daß wir keine 'Analogien' und 'Parallelen' zu dem merkwürdigsten Kriminalfall unserer Tage aufsuchen. Vor allem meide man das unerträgliche 'sexualpathologische' Geschwätz, über 'Sadismus', 'Masochismus' und dergl." (62).

⁹⁵ "[D]ie dunkle Heimlichkeit des Zerreißen und Verschlingens [ist] überhaupt zur überwertigen Triebballung geworden." See Lessing, *Haarmann*, 62.

⁹⁶ In Haarmann's case, "schlechthin [ist] nur das Töten im Geschlechtsrausch und schließlich die dunkle Heimlichkeit des Zerreißen und Verschlingens überhaupt zur überwertigen Triebballung geworden [...]. Anderes stärkeres Leben vernichten oder sich von anderem stärkeren Leben vernichten lassen; sich selber

“entpersönlichtes Liebesleben” that demanded anonymous victims (241). He was “nahsinnlich” (a creature of taste, smell, touch), and manifested a “gräßliche Traumlosigkeit seines nackten Trieblebens.”⁹⁷ Haarmann had a great reluctance, fear even, of knowing his victims as people.⁹⁸ His relation to Grans was “die einzig persönliche, ideale Seite seines Lebens”: “Nur in dieser einen Beziehung wuchs er über das Animalische hinaus” (243). Lessing goes to some pains here to note the difference between Haarmann’s crimes and those of the animal abuse of sadistic children: Haarmann isn’t sadistic because his violence isn’t directed toward the suffering of others but rather to the immediate gratification of his desires (240). The homology of hunger and sex is instructive: just as one doesn’t eat to observe the effect this has on one’s food, so too did Haarmann not kill to observe the effects of his brutality on his victims—sadism requires humanity.

What activated Haarmann’s atavistic potential were the conditions of his life—which, in turn, were the conditions of the modern urban poor. Lessing believed that the conditions of modern life could be detrimental to human existence.⁹⁹ In his discussion of Haarmann and Grans, Lessing makes them into exemplary modern types: the beast and the cold blooded intellect (246). The development of these two polar types, in turn, he attributes to a tragedy of modernity: “Der Mensch als ein Stück Naturseele und der Mensch als zweckesetzender Geist sind auseinander getreten!” (245). The modern human can no longer comprehend the social urban space as a human (i.e. humane

hinzugeben and den Tod oder tötend das Andere sich einzuverleiben; Fressen und Gefressenwerden, das sind die beiden polaren Achsen des gesamten kosmischen Lebensspieles,” *ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 243. By this, Lessing meant that Haarmann had no personal desires other than hunger and sex.

⁹⁸ “Die größte Qual, die man Haarmann antun konnte, war die, daß man ihm die Bilder der Opfer vorlegte, ihm von seinen Knaben erzählte und sie ihm persönlich nahe brachte,” *ibid.*, 241.

and livable) environment. This is “die Tragödie einer Seele, die nicht mehr Schritt halten kann mit den Werken und Werten, die sie aus sich selber herausgestellt hat” (245). In a memorable phrase, Lessing calls Haarmann “Der Wolfsmensch mit Radio und Elektrizität (245).” What this line of argument does for Lessing is to develop an etiology that implicates absolutely everybody in the phenomenon of *Lustmord*.

Lessing flatly rejects reductive causal arguments that would find an absolute cause for Haarmann’s murders. He criticizes “den logisch-ökonomischen Zwang, das geballte und unausmeßliche Schicksal künstlich zu verengen, um es faßbar zu machen für begreifende Orientierung” (238). On the one hand, Lessing thus disposes of the nagging question of why it should have been precisely Haarmann who committed these murders (he does note the coincidence of “ein zweiter Fall von Anthropophagie”—that of Karl Denke—occurring around the same time [63-4]). On the other hand, he thereby preserves an elemental mystery at the heart of *Lustmord*, “wo gerade die Dunkelheit und der Reiz, den das Heimliche und Bodenlose ausübt, selber zum Urgrund von Taten geworden ist,” which leaves everybody exposed to its pathology (238).

Lessing quotes a report from the *Deutsche Zeitung* that notes the “Unangenehmes Aufsehen” that his (Lessing’s) criticisms provoked (269). Lessing is one of the few commentators on *Lustmord* who does not try to erase its erotic component. His argument is all the more uncomfortable then where it not only seems to absolve Haarmann (who was virtually a beast according to Lessing’s argument) but serves to implicate us all in the erotics of sexual violence: “In den wenigen Sekunden berausenden Schauers sinken bei allen Geschöpfen all die lügenhaften Gewohnheiten der Kultur und alle

⁹⁹ He was an anti-noise campaigner, for instance: “To Lessing, the din of the metropolis was an effect and

Entstellungen wie Edeltümer der menschlichen Ethik und Logik als völlig weselos dahin und in der Ekstase wie im Tode werden alle gleich und wird alles Eins” (267).

Lessing and the police authorities both had causal explanations of Haarmann’s crimes that located the impulse for his violent sexuality in environmental factors. For the latter, the slums in which Haarmann dwelt and in which he committed his crimes were a reservoir of degeneracy and crime. For the former, the conditions of Haarmann’s life constituted a trigger for his latent atavistic criminality. Both Lessing and the police, then, agreed that Haarmann was a “degenerate” whose latent criminality had been activated by the social and physical conditions of his life.¹⁰⁰

The police advanced a theory of criminal contiguity: Haarmann was a creature of the slums whose criminal sexuality was finally attributable to the slum and slum dwellers. The attribution of degenerate criminal influence of Haarmann’s milieu was made explicitly (though not clearly thought out) by the chief of police, who claimed that Haarmann and his milieu (and his victims) were of a type.¹⁰¹ This was very unpopular among the citizens of Hanover living in this area, who rightly complained that the victims were being classed with the killer.¹⁰² The chief of police retracted his comments. But his sentiments were in accord with contemporary ideas about class and crime. The general idea was that crime among the lower classes was due to an innate primitivism and that the

a cause of the degeneration of the quality of life in Western civilization” (Lawrence Baron, “Noise and Degeneration: Theodor Lessing’s Crusade for Quiet,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 17.1 (1982), 166).

¹⁰⁰ This is similar to Mark Seltzer argument about the serial killer. Seltzer relies on the topographic contiguity between the serial killer and the scene of the crime to explain both the popular discourse of serial killing and to suggest an etiology (viz. that the modernist killer suffers from over-identification with place and seeks via serial killing to distinguish himself from his environment). See Seltzer, *Serial Killers*, 29-62.

¹⁰¹ Theodor Lessing, *Haarmann: Die Geschichte eines Werwolfs*, ed. Rudolf Leonhard, Außenseiter der Gesellschaft: Verbrechen der Gegenwart 6 (Berlin: Die Schmiede, 1925).

¹⁰² Ibid.

irrationality of violent crime could be epidemic.¹⁰³ The police response in this case followed a strategy of containment (or quarantine)—this was less a physical than discursive containment. The police response transformed the *Lustmörder* into a type—and sought to suggest an ongoing affinity of that type to a certain sector of the city and to the class that inhabited it.

This attempt was complicated by the fact that Haarmann had been intermittently on the police payroll as an informant. At the time of his arrest, Haarmann was carrying a card identifying him as a private detective (he had formed a sort of agency with a police official friend).¹⁰⁴ The train station where Haarmann met most of the itinerant workers and young runaways on whom he preyed was closed to non-travelers. Haarmann, however, was granted free access to the station. This was not official police policy, but a de facto state of affairs: the station master and guards knew Haarmann and also knew that he frequently cooperated with the police. Haarmann used his quasi-official position as leverage against his victims, threatening to turn them into the authorities if they didn't yield to him. Indeed, Haarmann was arrested after taking one such young boy to the police to be arrested. The police authorities were well aware of both Haarmann's history of psychological treatment and of his fondness for young boys.¹⁰⁵ The police officer to whom Haarmann took his would-be victim took the opportunity to arrest Haarmann instead and to place him in investigative custody.

This history of Haarmann's involvement with the police and what, in light of what the police knew of his character and mental problems, was said to be police negligence,

¹⁰³ Cf. Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England since 1830* (London: Routledge, 2000); and Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, *Women in Culture and Society* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992).

¹⁰⁴ Lessing, *Haarmann*, 54.

prompted a public relations struggle that played out in the popular press. The police were at pains to note their relative ignorance vis-à-vis Haarmann's history and appetites. The citizens and journalists of Hannover—as well as the victims' parents—were not easily convinced.¹⁰⁶ An episode cited by Lessing indicates the troublesome nature of Haarmann's involvement with the police: the officer who was recognized wearing one of the victim's hat—a gift from Haarmann.¹⁰⁷

Haarmann's status as a sometime police informant served as a key part of Lessing's critique of public authority. For Lessing, it was no single part of the city, but the rationalized and amoral conditions of modernity—as indicated by the working relationship between Haarmann and the police—that activated Haarmann's latent wolfish nature. Lessing's hermeneutic metaphor becomes something more than merely figurative here. Like Ewers' vampire, Lessing's werewolf was not a literal supernatural creature: Frank Braun did not have fangs; Haarmann did not physically transform into a wolf. Yet Ewers' and Lessing' use of the monster metaphor serves to problematize the distinction between the marvelous and the strange in a thoroughgoingly fantastic manner. Frank Braun's vampirism is explained in rationalizing terms that tend to inject the supernatural into the natural. Lessing's extended metaphor of the werewolf is likewise more than a mere figure: it comes to reference an invisible, but literal psychological transformation. Like Ewers, Lessing steps back from the literal supernatural referent of his metaphor only

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 59-60.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. "Der Massenmörder von Hannover: Eine öffentliche Protestversammlung," *Berliner Tageblatt* 11 July 1924, Abend-Ausgabe.

¹⁰⁷ Lessing, *Haarmann*, 170. When the hat was later discussed at trial, the press was reminded that their task was to report on Haarmann's trial and not to speculate about the possible failings of the police. See "Haarmann und die Polizei," *B.Z. am Mittag* 13 Dec. 1924.

to find that the supernatural has been injected into the natural order. It is in this sense that Lessing's metaphor is literalized.

Lessing's monster metaphor enables a political critique that not only implicates public authority in the commission of *Lustmord*, but calls into question the rational order and divisions on which the police and court officials found their claim to public authority as such. Lessing rejects the police's theory that *Lustmord* emerges from discrete neighborhoods of squalor and crime; he abolishes those borders and extends the pathology of *Lustmord* over all of society ("Unser aller Schuld"). The result of this is to recall the monstrous into the heart of society, however. The purely figurative reference to the monstrous (the rhetorical gesture as a mere embellishment) is no longer possible.

To conclude the chapter, we will look at a final case in which a political critique using the monster metaphor is vexed by the ghostly return of a real literal referent. Here, irony fails to maintain its distance and reverts to the uncertain hesitation of the fantastic.

Modern Vampires: The *Nachtgespenst* and the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*

In an article in the *8-Uhr Abendblatt* of 14 December 1929, Hanns-Erich Kaminski poses a question that is almost surely ironic: Are the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* and his fellow "spook" the *Nachtgespenst* modern vampires?¹⁰⁸ Kaminski was a writer for many different Berlin papers, including the *Weltbühne*. He was a committed socialist, a historian, and (one would imagine) not given to enthusiasm for the supernatural.¹⁰⁹

The *Nachtgespenst* was the name given to a burglar with a particularly notable modus operandi. Roughly concurrent with the Kürten case in Düsseldorf was the case of the *Nachtgespenst* in Berlin. This unknown man would break into rich homes in west

¹⁰⁸ Kaminski, "Gespenster in Berlin," *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 14 Dec 1929.

Berlin, cut the power and phone lines, steal a few things (though sometimes nothing at all) and then sneak into a sleeping woman's room (sometimes a maid, sometimes the woman of the house), take off her bed covers, and shine a light into her eyes until she awoke. When the women screamed, the "Nachtgespenst" would throw the covers over her head and escape. Later in his career, he started slapping and otherwise abusing these women. When he was finally captured (and revealed to be one Josef Janoschka) he was charged with burglary and rape. He was sentenced to 3 and a half years for the burglaries (which he confessed) but acquitted of the *Sittlichkeitsdelikte* (which he had denied) due to lack of evidence.¹¹⁰ Newspaper stories about the *Nachtgespenst* were often quite critical of the police and their continued lack of success in solving the case.¹¹¹

In his article Kaminski writes "Wir haben jetzt Gespenster in Berlin, was in einer Viermillionenstadt niemand überraschen kann." His tone is breezy, yet he plays his argument fairly straight: the *Nachtgespenst* and the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* might be supernatural beings who are thus able to elude the police. Kaminski cites a number of "wissenschaftliche" works from the eighteenth century and decides: "Was im 18. Jahrhundert möglich war, ist im 20. nicht unmöglich, besonders wenn man bedenkt, daß schon damals Vampire in Deutschland zahlreich waren. Der Feuilletonist der Pariser Zeitung 'L'Oeuvre', de la Fouchardère, meint sogar, der Düsseldorfer Mörder könnte ein Vampir sein." Kaminski ends, however, with a fairly clear (ironic) critique of the police: the *Nachtgespenst* is most likely not a vampire but the devil. The evidence for this is the

¹⁰⁹ Though I haven't been able to find a biography, so I'm not sure.

¹¹⁰ See "Das Nachtgespenst erneut vor Gericht," *12 Uhr Blatt* 2 July 1931; and "Lokaltermin mit dem Nachtgespenst: Das Erlebnis einer Belastungszeugin: Hat sie richtig gesehen?," *Berliner Morgenpost* 5 July 1931.

devil's well-known habit of frequenting Berlin (Kaminski cites E.T.A. Hoffmann's "Der Teufel in Berlin" in support of this allegation). In Hoffmann's story, the devil is revealed through a coincidence, when a convicted witch calls upon Satan to come to her aid. It is not safe to wait for another coincidence to solve these cases, Kaminski says: "Besser wäre es schon, den Teufel in aller Form zu exorzieren [...]." This is irony with political import.

But if Kaminski's article is ironic, it is effective because of the discursive context in which it was published. The Weimar public was fairly credulous about the supernatural. The Kürten case brought with it offers of help from *Hellseher* and other mystics. The Regulski case in Berlin (an eviction in which the defendants claimed that the noise they are being accused of making is caused by the ghost of their dead uncle) featured dueling *Sachverständigen* ("Voraussichtlich wird der Amtsrichter in Charlottenburg heute dazu kommen, eine Beweiserhebung anzuordnen! Die erste zivilprozessuale Beweiserhebung über das Bestehen oder Nichtbestehen von Spukphänomenen").¹¹² And even some police officials were inclined to accept supernatural help if they could get it (though at least as many seemed ready to protest that *Hellseher* were bogus charlatans).¹¹³

In the Kürten case, the public seemed particularly inclined to offer supernatural help, with a large number of letters sent to the police containing supposed details of the killer that had been obtained by occult means: an article in the *Deutsche Juristen-Zeitung*

¹¹¹ Cf., for instance, "Polizei ihm gegenüber machtlos? Nachtgespenst zieht durch Berlin: und man kann es nicht fassen! Wie lange noch soll dieser Verbrecher-Spuk die Bevölkerung ängstigen können?!" *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 5 Dec. 1929; and Regina Ruben, "Das Nachtgespenst," *Die Weltbühne* 25.52 (1929): 963-64.

¹¹² "Kündigungsgrund: Gespenster: Aerztekonferenz im Charlottenburger Amtsgericht," *B.Z. am Mittag* 21 Nov. 1929.

notes that the public seemed particularly inclined to imagine the unknown killer in uniform.¹¹⁴ The occult was, then, a popular response that was tacitly opposed to the official rationality of the police. The offers of occult help and allegations of supernatural agency were a challenge to the rationality of the police and to their claim of authority over a rationalized public order and space. This challenge was exacerbated by the police's own methods, which sometimes had a close affinity with the techniques of the various *Hellseher* who wrote in offering help. Graphology, for instance, was used both as a strict forensic tool to authenticate the provenience of handwriting and as a method of interpreting the character of the absent writer. The police used graphology as a forensic tool to determine which of the many *Mörderbriefe* purporting to be from the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* might be genuine.¹¹⁵ But a graphologist writing in the *Vossische Zeitung* manages to deduce facts about the killer's character from his letters. Among other things, he notes "Die Brutalität der ganzen Strichführung," of the killer and "die erschreckende Keulenform seiner Unterstreichungen."¹¹⁶ In the science of physiognomy too, scientific rationality seems to merge with the logic of the occult. Lombroso's method of using external physical clues to determine the presence of a criminal personality has affinities to the more questionable methods of divination. In an article about palm reading, Arthur Kronfeld and Erich Scheuermann decry the predominance of charlatans among the palm-readers, but insist that the hand is as plastic and expressive as

¹¹³ Degner, "Ein neuer Beitrag zum Thema 'Hellsehen und Kriminalistik'," *Kriminalistische Monatshefte* 3.9 (1929): 196-200.

¹¹⁴ See Steiner, "Okkultismus und Strafrecht," *Deutsche Juristen-Zeitung* 35.23 (1930): 1496-500.

¹¹⁵ "Wichtige Spur in Düsseldorf: Der Mörder der Hausangestellten Hahn festgestellt: Zwei bedeutungsvolle Zeugen: Der blonde Mann mit der Hornbrille," *Berliner Tageblatt* 26 Nov. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe.

¹¹⁶ Max Pulver, "Unheimliches Schrift des Mörders: Brutal, kaltblütig—und doch geisteskrank!" *Vossische Zeitung* 19 Nov. 1929.

a face—and so of use to the criminologist. A person's experiences determinately influence "sowohl das Bild seiner Handlinien [...] als auch gewisse seelische Grundeigenarten seines Charakters."¹¹⁷ The rationality of the police and the supernaturalism of the occultist had significant similarities at times.

Kaminski's article accomplishes a political critique through an ironic reference to supernatural claims. The role of scholarship is inverted in the article: scholarship is adduced to support the claim of supernatural agency rather than to clear it up. Note also that—irony or no—Kaminski's article maintains a good fantastic structure: he offers us two readings, the naive and the ironic. Kaminski's faux-credulous article allows him to draw a parallel between two "spooks" who were certainly supernatural in their media presence and their effect on the public, if not in fact.

Finally, Kaminski's article shows the activation of the monster metaphor in a faux-literalization (irony) by which a subterranean literalization is actually accomplished. This is an earnest comparison between popular occult enthusiasms and the validity (or at least efficacy) of scientific and public authority that Kaminski tacitly draws. In other words, the tongue in cheek claim that the *Nachtgespenst* and the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* are vampires founds the possibility of a credulous critique of public authority.

This is the same tacit critique (or possible critique) that runs through all the uses of the monster metaphor: from the Kürten newspaper articles, through Ewers' occult enthusiasm, to Lessing's case study of *Haarmann*. The use of the monster metaphor is not simply a rhetorical device in these cases. It enables a critique of public authority and

¹¹⁷ Arthur Kronfeld, and Erich Scheuermann, "Das lateinische M in der menschlichen Hand," *Die Woche* 31.41 (1929): 12, 14-5.

received rationality that makes it possible to question the premises on which scientific rationality is founded.

It is in that sense, that the monster metaphor truly is monstrous.

Chapter 4

The Blasé Sadist: Ironic Distance and Uncanny Collapse

Not all Weimar representations depict *Lustmord* as an unsettling problem. The court-ordered psychiatric reports (*Gutachten*) in the Peter Kürten case (1930) are untroubled by the etiology of his crimes: they report that Kürten is a typical sadist who failed to control his violent sexual urges.¹ And in Hugo Bettauer's novel, *Der Frauenmörder* (1922),² the detective who arrests the presumed *Lustmörder*, feels—along with almost everyone else—that the lives of five women are insignificant in comparison with the virtuoso novel and stage play that the criminal wrote. There is a fairly good reason for this: in both the official report on the actual *Lustmörder* and in the fictional representation of the presumed *Frauenmörder* in a popular detective novel, sexual violence is beside the point. In their capacity as medical experts before the court, the psychiatrists who interrogated Kürten were concerned with the narrow question of his mental state (*Zurechnungsfähigkeit*) at the time he committed his murders. And the levity with which Bettauer treats the murder of five women is licensed by the fact, which emerges at the end of the novel, that the crimes have been faked and nobody has actually

¹ The psychiatric reports (*Gutachten*) in the Kürten case are reprinted in Lenk/Kaever, *Leben und Wirken*, 256-82. See Sioli, "Ärztliche Begutachtung durch Professor Sioli," *Leben und Wirken des Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf*, eds. Elisabeth Lenk, and Roswitha Kaever (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1974), 256-71; and Raether, "Ärztliche Begutachtung durch Dr. Raether," *Leben und Wirken des Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf*, eds. Elisabeth Lenk, and Roswitha Kaever (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1974), 271-82.

² Hugo Bettauer, *Der Frauenmörder* (1922; Vienna: R. Löwit, 1926).

been murdered at all. In the sober language of the court medical experts and in the farce of a popular novel, then, it was possible to treat *Lustmord* not as an exceptionally unsettling phenomenon, but as a fairly unremarkable part of everyday life.³

The obverse of the monstrous *Lustmörder* is the figure of the *Lustmörder* as what I will call the blasé sadist. If the literalized metaphor of the monstrous human marks the explosive resurgence of the disavowed in the very center of social life, in these texts sexual murder and its paradoxical complications appear to pose no problem at all. In both instances, *Lustmord* is treated as alarming and aberrant—a matter requiring serious attention and official concern—but not devastating to human life and reason. *Lustmord* and the *Lustmörder* operate firmly within the boundaries of the human here. In contrast to the extremity of the *Lustmörder*-as-monster, the human face of *Lustmord* is figured as upsetting, but fully rationalized: *Lustmord* is ultimately explicable in natural terms; it is aberrant, but understandable. In the Kürten *Gutachten*, the killer is not only figured as rationally explicable, but almost banal. Kürten is an instance of an identifiable criminal type, the cold-blooded killer. I shall call this type the blasé sadist. In both his affect and the experts' treatment of him, Kürten is blasé. Bettauer's *Frauenmörder* is likewise blasé (because he has committed no actual murder), as is the detective who tracks him down.

The figure of the blasé sadist presumes a correspondingly blasé attitude toward *Lustmord* on the part of the psychiatrists and detectives who track down the *Lustmörder* in their sober, *sachlich* manner. The posited type of the blasé sadist, in other words, implicates the *Normalmenschen* (who would otherwise purport to stand apart from the

³ This is not to suggest that in Bettauer's use of *Lustmord* as a plot device he represents it as banal. *Lustmord* is, on the contrary, the sensation around which the plot turns. However, it is precisely as a sensation, and an aestheticized one at that, that the bodily content of *Lustmord* retreats behind the excitement of the spectacle.

Lustmörder as an objective, rational observer of a pathological type) in the paradigm (or complex) of blasé sadism. There is a homology between the *Lustmörder* and his experts that make them too into blasé sadists.

This chapter looks first at the Kürten *Gutachten* and the transcripts of the psychiatric interrogations to examine how the experts construct Kürten as a typical sadist and Kürten resists by trying to posit himself as a certain type of *Düsseldorfer Mörder*. The *Gutachten* try to present a closed view of Kürten as the object of scientific investigation, but they contain traces of the contentious process of the interrogations. Furthermore, the *Gutachten* tacitly implicate the rational scientist in the phenomenon of *Lustmord* when they posit Kürten's actions as resulting from a natural male sexual aggression that Kürten is culpable in not controlling. Kürten is the ostensible blasé sadist. But his interrogators participate in a line of questioning that mark them first as blasé about sadism themselves and, finally, as potential sadists themselves.

The focus then turns to the fictional representation of a presumed blasé sadist in Bettauer's *Der Frauenmörder*. Bettauer's novel is different in both kind and historic context than the materials produced by Kürten's psychiatric interrogations: the fictional detective novel of 1922 is a different sort of text than the narrowly focused scientific transcripts and *Gutachten* of 1930. Yet the two sets of texts betray a remarkably similar pattern of homologies, identifications, observation and collapse. The Kürten *Gutachten* are fraught with the ironic collapse of distinction between the scientific observer and the criminal. A similar irony is on display in Bettauer's *Frauenmörder*.

The blasé sadist of the novel, the presumed *Frauenmörder* and actual poet finds his counterpart in the detective who tracks him down. The blasé attitude of the novel is

licensed by its fictional status, and by the fact that there is no actual murder. Yet there is a consistent undertone of violent misogyny that runs through the novel and justifies the murderer and detective's mutual admiration even before the truth is revealed. As in the Kürten case, the detective/scientist and the criminal participate in a competition of mutual role-play, display and discovery in a struggle to find or impose a preferred interpretation of *Lustmord*. A major difference is that this struggle is tacit and only obliquely visible in the Kürten case while it is figured as a triumphant spectacle in Bettauer.

Performance, Vision and Irony

The depiction of the *Lustmörder* as blasé sadist is a failed attempt at naturalization.⁴ These texts are remarkable not just because the *Lustmörder* appears as explicable, but because he becomes positively banal.

The allegation that the *Lustmörder* is a blasé sadist appears, at first glance, a banality. But on closer examination, it becomes clear that the allegation of blasé sadism sets up a fragile structure that is subject to collapse. This may be one reason the experts in the Kürten case and the detective in Bettauer's *Frauenmörder* skirt the issue, making other aspects of the case (*Zurechnungsfähigkeit*, rational detection) the center of their attention. Blasé sadism cannot just be averred—it must be carefully negotiated. What emerges in a closer examination of the novel and the psychiatric reports and transcripts is that the purported banality of *Lustmord* is structured by a series of performative gestures that insist on the rationality of the *Lustmörder* as a comprehensible object of study. What is performed by the detective and experts is a virtuoso visual acumen and a corresponding

⁴ By “naturalization” I mean an attempt to make Kürten and his crime of *Lustmord* into the object of scientific examination analogous to the objects of the natural sciences. On the proposition that the methodologies of scientific naturalism might be extended to the realm of human sciences, see Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 2.

detachment from the object of study that, in Bettauer's novel at least, manifests as an ironic stance. Vision and irony serve to mark the distance and distinction of the male expert or detective from the *Lustmörder* and (not incidentally) the overwrought reactions of the masses.

Bettauer's *Frauenmörder* and the Kürten *Gutachten* are remarkable for the lack of serious unrest that *Lustmord* causes. While it is true that there is ample unrest in the public, this serves mainly to set off the contrastingly calm reactions and virtuoso rationality of the experts and the detective. The public, feminized as an irrational mass, is overwrought. But the magisterial male remains sovereign and aloof. This cool treatment of *Lustmord* is only possible with a distance from the bodily content of *Lustmord* (a distance that the public does not have, as we shall see in the final chapter). The rational male's tool for remaining separate and aloof is twofold: vision and a social-structural detachment from the common people (scientific objectivity and an ironic stance). There is a structural similarity between the ironic stance and scientific objectivity: both set themselves as observers apart from the other. In the reactions of the experts and detective, irony serves as a distancing technique—ironic form institutes a certain distance from the bodily reality of *Lustmord*. This irony is structured as expert vision that keeps the object of investigation at a distance. The experts in the Kürten case, and the detective in Bettauer's novel are heroes of vision.

But the distance ratified by vision and the ironic stance collapses. Bettauer's novel introduces a homology between the detective and the presumed murderer that collapses the distinction between the two. Likewise, the experts in the Kürten case have rescued him for the human realm of rationality only at the price of suggesting that they

themselves (that all males) might be *Lustmörder*. The disavowed bodily content is the secret center around which the claims of ironic distance are made. A final irony, then, is that the very mechanism (of vision and irony) by which the rationalizing male seeks to maintain his distance effects the final collapse into homology with the *Lustmörder*.

Contexts: Crisis and Masculine Identity

The culture of the later Weimar period was typified by a turn from Expressionism to *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity). In practice, this meant a turn from the emotive universalism that cultural producers had sought to extract from expressions of interiority to a localized concern with surfaces and concrete objects.⁵ *Neue Sachlichkeit* was no more a coherent school of thought than Expressionism had been.⁶ It was, rather, a collective name given to an epochal change in mood: a New Objectivity or New Sobriety, a Matter-of-Factness that was characterized by a denial of interiority, an attitude of cynicism, and a preoccupation with the distancing maneuvers of masks and manners.

Peter Sloterdijk has given us a picture of Weimar as an exemplar of cynical culture—cynicism, in his definition, being a state of self-willed false consciousness.⁷ The cynic, according to Sloterdijk, is aware that social forms do not correspond to real conditions, but is uninterested in challenging or changing the status quo. That Weimar was populated by cynics means that people knew that their own and others' protestations

⁵ For more on the turn from interiority to exteriority in a modernist context, cf. the essays in Malcolm Bradbury, and James McFarlane, eds., *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature: 1890-1930* (1976; London: Penguin Books, 1991). On Expressionism in general cf. John Willet, *Expressionism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970). On Expressionism as a part of a literary avant-garde, cf. Rainer Rumold, *The Janus Face of the German Avant-Garde: From Expressionism to Postmodernism* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2002).

⁶ Cf. Jost Hermand, "Neue Sachlichkeit: Ideology, Lifestyle, or Artistic Movement?" *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*, eds. Thomas W. Kniesche, and Stephen Brockmann (1994), 57-68.

⁷ Peter Sloterdijk, *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983).

of motive was false—that they faced each other in a position of tacit masquerade. The face one presented to the world was understood, cynically, to be a simulation. True feeling and origins were concealed by a shifting array of masks and poses. This Weimar cynicism was marked by suspicious distance, then, and by an attitude of ironic masquerade that expected to be met with insincerity.

Helmut Lethen diagnoses Weimar in complementary terms as a shame culture (as opposed to a guilt culture) in which people's actions and calculations were aimed at presenting a certain image of themselves to others.⁸ Weimar culture confronted the individual as a tactical situation—a battlefield upon which individuals moved like fencers, jockeying for position and attempting to keep up their guard while maintaining distance. This is the culture in which codes of conduct become important tools for daily survival, and in which the secret center of human life (the vulnerable *Kreatur*) is protected by the ego armoring of the cool persona.⁹ The question arises: what is so dangerous to the cool persona? The answer is twofold: laughter and ego-dissolution. The first is a danger to one's social mask: laughter exposes the armor-less individual to the penetrating gaze of the other—it means the failure of one's performative gambits. The second results potentially from the first. Furthermore, the threat of ego-dissolution is implied by laughter and prefigured by the experiences of the First World War. In

⁸ Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. Don Reneau, Weimar and Now: German Cultural Criticism 17 (Berkeley: U of California P, 2002).

⁹ Lethen stresses that the type of the *Kreatur* is the persona of the “essential ego”: it is the mask of the unmasked, authentic human. See *ibid.*, 195-96. Writing of the Siegfried Kracauer's depiction of the creaturely mass murderer Fritz Angerstein, Lethen writes that psychoanalysis “undoes the fiction of the competent subject” as “the id finds its mask in the creature.” *Ibid.*, 206.

Weimar's hostile shame-culture, the individual fights to maintain bodily integrity and psychic ego identity: laughter acts as a corrosive.¹⁰

Since Detlev Peukert's *Die Weimarer Republik: Krisenjahre der klassischen Moderne*,¹¹ Weimar historiography has tended to view the era as characterized by crisis.¹² This state of permanent crisis begins to be taken for granted in Weimar historiography, and needs to be interrogated anew.¹³ But if the explanatory potential of the concept of crisis is in doubt for historiography, the presence of a historical experience of continual crisis during the Weimar period is not. In other words, whether or not social crises and their representation in the cultural sphere led to the political crises of the late Weimar period, the representation and attestation of states of crisis is notable. The ubiquity of the word *Krise* in the newspapers of the late Weimar period is an index of the cultural experience of more or less continuous crisis.

The most apposite crisis for *Lustmord* is the modernist crisis of male subjectivity. This crisis, according to Maria Tatar, who cites it as an important context in which *Lustmord* representations flourished, inhered in a sense of bodily vulnerability that resulted from the experience of trench warfare in the First World War combined with a resentment of the rise of the New Woman.¹⁴ Patrice Petro, whom Tatar cites, also refers to a crisis of masculine subjectivity, linking it to a corresponding crisis of perception that

¹⁰ Ibid., 60.

¹¹ Detlev J.K. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik: Krisenjahre der Klassischen Moderne* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1987)

¹² For a discussion of Peukert's influence and for an attempt to test his claims, cf. Ben Lieberman, "Testing Peukert's Paradigm: The 'Crisis of Classical Modernity' in the 'New Frankfurt,' 1925-1930," *German Studies Review* 17.2 (1994): 287-303. Lieberman suggests that the link Peukert made between cultural conflict and political crisis is overdrawn.

¹³ Cf. the essays (and especially the editors' introduction) in Moritz Föllmer, and Rüdiger Graf, eds., *Die "Krise" der Weimarer Republik: Zur Kritik eines Deutungsmuster* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2005).

¹⁴ Tatar, *Lustmord*, 12.

Heidegger, Benjamin, and Kracauer diagnose in the popular culture of Weimar (specifically in film) and noting that this implies a crisis of male vision.¹⁵ In the context of fin-de-siècle, Vienna, Andreas Huyssen notes the link between a crisis of language and identity (exemplified by Hofmannsthal's Chandos-Brief of 1902) to a crisis of vision.¹⁶ Huyssen goes on to adduce a sexual and gendered aspect of this crisis of vision when he calls attention to the labyrinthine urban space of female sexuality in Freud's anecdote about stumbling into, and repeatedly failing to exit, the red-light district in an Italian town.¹⁷ As Huyssen notes, Freud soon leaves the red-light district (in reality and in his text) for "more innocuous example[s]" of the return of (or to) the same that leads to the sense of the uncanny.¹⁸

Freud's anecdote is striking in the context of a discussion about male crises of vision, language, and identity. His sense of the uncanny is brought about in circumstances (which he ignores in his analysis) of uncomfortable and sexualized visual reciprocity: Freud argues that the sense of the uncanny arose because he finds himself again in the same street without intending it; he adds parenthetically that this was the street "in der ich nun Aufsehen zu erregen begann."¹⁹ Arguably, Freud's sense of the uncanny has as much to do with a situation of sexualized gender reversal: instead of directing his gaze at the prostitutes, he finds himself the object of their gazes. Freud's anecdote is even more striking in the context of his project in the essay on the uncanny:

¹⁵ Patrice Petro, "Perceptions of Difference: Woman as Spectator and Spectacle," *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997), 47.

¹⁶ Andreas Huyssen, "The Disturbance of Vision in Vienna Modernism," *Modernism/modernity* 5.3 (1998): 33-47.

¹⁷ Huyssen, "Disturbance of Vision," 35. See also Freud, "Das Unheimliche," 259-60.

¹⁸ Huyssen, "Disturbance of Vision," 36.

¹⁹ Freud, "Das Unheimliche," 260.

arguing against Jentsch's theory that the uncanny has to do with an "intellektuelle Unsicherheit," Freud moves his analysis of Hoffmann's "Der Sandmann" away from the figure of the automaton and love object Olympia to the castration complex implied by the threat posed by the Sandmann/Coppola/Coppelius to Nathaniel's eyes.²⁰ Freud thus rescues intellectual certainty, cast as visual surety, from the threat of fantastic ambiguity. He does this only at the cost of excluding the female, the sexual, from the economy of masculine scientific vision.²¹

The cultural context of Kürten's psychiatric interrogations was marked by the condition of male subjectivity under siege (in crisis)—a condition of vulnerability that was combated by the distancing and preserving tools of performative cynicism and cool conduct. Both the crisis of male subjectivity and the performative display of cool unconcern and rational mastery that sought to combat it were visual.

There is a connection to be made here between the concern for distanced rationality evinced by the detective and the scientific experts' concern with Kürten's *Zurechnungsfähigkeit*. At all times, the heroes of vision are concerned with implementing a rational order by means of virtuoso vision. Their method, like Freud's, is ostensibly to bring to light that which is hidden. But the performance of virtuoso vision serves the purpose of actually obscuring a secret affinity with the *Lustmörder*.

The reality of *Lustmord* (whatever that might be) becomes less important here than the plausibly rational explanations of it and its agencies that might be brought forward (visually manifested) for the purpose of containing and protecting the nervous failure of hermetic boundaries that the crime implies. This pits a performed cool

²⁰ Ibid., 250-4.

cynicism against a tacit, disavowed nervous complicity with the *Lustmörder*. This manifests in the battle of performative expertise and creaturely exposure in the Kürten interrogations; it is prefigured in the explicit play of mutual admiration, display and reception between the detective and the criminal in Bettauer's *Frauenmörder*.

The Irony of Blasé Sadism

Irony involves an essentially self-contradictory situation; cynicism is the belief that others act in a self-interest that conceals their true motives. Irony is often a cynical, distanced mode. It implies skepticism and a performative situation that is at a remove from questions of authenticity or interiority. In a cynical situation, attestations of being (emotion, motive, etc.) circle around an empty center of authenticity. This prompts an ironic mode: emotionally when a character disavows the truth that is claimed in a statement; textually when the level of signification (avowal, intention) undermines the level of denotation (the literal). Textually, irony undermines the literality of discourse and prompts an essentially figurative condition—the trope of irony, then, implies the pure textuality of discourse (evacuating the content of referentiality).

Insofar as the representations of *Lustmord* I examine in this chapter attempt to gloss over the rhetorical problem of sexual violence, their irony is apposite in that it accomplishes its distancing task. But there is an added irony here in that they only achieve the speaking of the truth of *Lustmord* by implicitly accepting the creaturely, “feminine” disorder of violence sexuality as a constituent part of masculinity. In other words: 1) the erasure of the problem of *Lustmord* irrationality is accomplished only by accepting violence as a naturalized constituent of masculine sexuality; 2) the ironic mode

²¹ For a discussion of the ironic return of the uncanny to Freud's essay on the uncanny, cf. Elisabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1998), 128-34.

that accomplishes (or accompanies) this naturalization tends to move discourse into a textual (i.e. multivalent) realm that undermines the desire for monologic, indexical rational correspondences: the tool of distance (irony) collapses the desired distance between individual and chaos (by re-asserting the textual).

I want to tease out the implications of the irony of Weimar cynicism for a bit: that the attitude of habitual masquerade was ironic, means that there was—at some level—a consciousness of the performativity of representation/speech. Rhetorically, irony is the mode of formal contradiction in the moment of assertion: that is ironic which affirms or intends something by avowing its opposite. Thus the irony of Weimar cynicism inheres in a general knowledge that events are proceeding on two levels, that all actors are simulating, and that though one may say one thing for form's sake, one believes and acts on another understanding. Beyond its rhetoric, then, the irony of Weimar cynicism evokes a mood: that of detached amusement.

What I want to suggest is that the magisterial detachment and distance suggested by such ironic amusement is itself a facade. What I look at in these texts in this chapter is the consistent failure of distance and distinction parried (to use Lethen's metaphor) with the guise of amused detachment. The double irony of this: the guise of detachment is only available at the expense of allowing in the originary paradox of *Lustmord*.

The Kürten Interrogations: Being the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*

After his arrest in May of 1930, Peter Kürten underwent psychiatric questioning from October through December of that year, during which time he was examined by Dr. Sioli and Dr. Raether. The situation called for unequivocal answers: the juridical task of Kürten's medical examiners was clear. They were to decide the binary question (yes or

no) of Kürten's *Zurechnungsfähigkeit* [his mental competency; lit. ability to order/reason]. The question was not whether or not he had committed his crimes, but under what circumstances. The question of his *Zurechnungsfähigkeit* implied a narrative unpacking of the story of his crime. The medical examiners had to delve into the etiology of his crime in order to answer these questions.

In this situation, Kürten was always already a *Lustmörder*. By the time of Kürten's capture, there was a diagnosis waiting for him like a readymade suit. Kürten was a cold-blooded killer, a sadist.²² Both Sioli and Raether came to a diagnosis of "true" or "pure sadism" ["echte[r] Sadismus"; "reinste[r] Sadismus"].²³ Kürten's sadism is the perversion that makes his murders "true" *Lustmorde*.²⁴ But as Hania Siebenpfeiffer notes: "Die entscheidende und typologiebestimmende Abweichung des Lustmörders von der sexuellen Disposition des 'normalen' Mannes wurde jedoch in seinem 'übersteigerten Sexualtrieb' gesehen [...]."²⁵ The sadistic murderer was marked not by a qualitative, but a quantitative difference from his fellow men. This could prove problematical. The contiguity between the abnormal sexual drive of the *Lustmörder* and the naturally sadistic (but controllably so) sexual drive of normal men meant that there was less of a difference

²² For a discussion of the development of the concept of the *Lustmörder* as cold-blooded killer (and the dichotomy with the image of the killer as an inhuman beast) see Siebenpfeiffer, "Kreatur und kalter Killer," 109-30.

²³ Dr. Sioli: "Kürtens Geschlechtstrieb ist ein pervertierter Trieb; es handelt sich um einen echten Sadismus, der die sexuelle Befriedigung bis zum Samenerguß in der Durchführung von Gewalttaten findet, im Quälen und Schmerzberichten, Quälen von Tieren und Einzelpersonen und der Gesamtheit, dem Publikum" (Sioli, "Ärztliche Begutachten," 263). Dr. Raether: "Es handelt sich bei Kürten um einen pervertierten Geschlechtstrieb, der als Ersatz für den Geschlechtsakt oder zur Erhöhung des Genusses beim Geschlechtakt nur durch Zufügung von Qualen und durch Ausführung von mannigfachsten Gewalttaten, wobei das Würgen seiner Opfer noch die mildeste Form darstellt, sexuelle Befriedigung bis zum Samenerguß findet" (Raether, "Ärztliche Begutachten," 278).

²⁴ "Der 'echte' Lustmord war allerdings auf die 'Befriedigung eines in krankhafter Grausamkeit abirrenden Geschlechtstriebes' eingeschränkt [...]" (Siebenpfeiffer, "Kreatur und kalter Killer," 112).

²⁵ An excessive sexual drive that was, moreover, associated with the loss of control over one's affect and drives (Siebenpfeiffer, "Kreatur und kalter Killer," 113).

between Kürten and his fellow men (and his interrogators) than might be wished. As Siebenpfeiffer writes, “Der Lustmörder war damit hineingeholt in die Mitte der bürgerlichen Ordnung, deren Grenzen er doch markierte [...]”²⁶ In an article in *Die Weltbühne*, Carl von Ossietzky denounces “die himmelschreiende Unzulänglichkeit der psychiatrischen Sachverständigen, denen Gott nur die Sache ausgeliefert hat und nicht den Verstand dazu,” and notes: “Diese gelehrten Herren brachten es fertig, Kürten für normal zu erklären, worauf sich alle Normalmenschen [...] etwas einbilden können.”²⁷

The medical experts were faced with a difficult balancing act, one which they never explicitly acknowledge: if they were to declare Kürten mentally competent at the time of his actions (practically a foregone conclusion), they had to claim that the killer would have been able to control his urges if he’d wanted to. This is precisely where the borderline had been drawn between the “normal” man and the *Lustmörder*, however. In theory, there was no reason they should not declare Kürten fully human, fully sane: he was culpable because he could have controlled his urges but did not. But in practice—as the transcripts of their interrogations indicate—this was precluded by a desire to mark a difference between the killer and the scientist. The effort to make Kürten into a certain type of murderer involved the performance of expertise structured around the visual logic of masterful observer and the passive object of scientific observation. Kürten resisted this project, and attempted to posit his own interpretation of his (or the “Düsseldorfer Mörder’s”) motives and etiology.

²⁶ She continues: “Er erschien nicht nur in der Doppelgestalt *Jedermann*, dessen harmlose äußere Erscheinung die innere *Bestie* verbarg, er stand als integrierter Außenseiter zugleich innerhalb wie außerhalb der ‘männlichen Sexualordnung’, deren Attributierungen er in seiner Übersteigerungen nach wie vor entsprach” (Siebenpfeiffer, “Kreatur und kalter Killer,” 113).

²⁷ Carl von Ossietzky, “Der Verrat an Kürten,” *Die Weltbühne* 27.18 (1931), 642.

Just how difficult of a balancing act this was is indicated by a passage from Karl Berg's case study, *Der Sadist*. Berg, as his title suggests, confirms the diagnosis of cool sadism. But he also notes how hard it is to then relegate Kürten to some area beyond the human realm. The passage comes just after Berg has not only unequivocally declared that Kürten was mentally competent, but also professionally *sachlich* in the commission of his crimes:

Wer sich nach den Zeitungsberichten über die entsetzlichen Verbrechen des Kürten ein Bild von ihm zurecht legt, der stellt sich ihn als einen gefühlkalten, rohen Menschen vor, als die Bestie in Menschengestalt. Der Zeitungsleser erfährt eben nur das Schreckhafte. Wer sich aber näher mit diesem seltsamen Mann beschäftigt und zu scheiden vermag zwischen dem Sadisten Kürten und dem Menschen Kürten, der wird zu seiner Verwunderung in diesem Menschen Kürten neben manchen Mängeln auch Werte entdecken just in ähnlicher Mischung wie bei andern Mitmenschen auch, einen zugänglichen, freundlichen Plauderer mit vielseitigen Kenntnissen und zutreffendem Urteil, der vergessen macht, daß wir dem Düsseldorfer Mörder gegenüber sitzen.²⁸

This remarkable passage indicates something of the tacit homologues between the medical experts and the *Lustmörder* who was the object of their investigation. It also indicates the disjoint between the readymade role of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* and the actual criminal: Kürten entered into a performative situation even before his capture. What was at stake in the interrogations was the discursive power to insist on a certain definitive explanation for Kürten's crimes.

²⁸ Karl Berg, *Der Sadist: Gerichtsärztliches und Kriminalpsychologisches zu den Taten des Düsseldorfer Mörders Peter Kürten: Mit zwei Artikelserien des Kriminal-Polizeirats Ernst Gennat und der Verteidigungsrede von Dr. Alex Wehner* (1931; Munich: Belleville, 2004), 176. Berg claims that Kürten resembles Robert Heindl's Berufsverbrecher, who kills "planmäßig mit professioneller Sachlichkeit" (ibid., 173). Cf. also Robert Heindl, *Der Berufsverbrecher: Ein Beitrag zur Strafrechtsreform* (1926; Berlin: Pan-Verlag R. Heise, 1928).

Kürten and the role of Düsseldorfer Mörder

In a letter written to his wife from prison, Peter Kürten complains: “[E]s ist wirklich nicht so leicht, der Düsseldorfer Mörder zu sein, sondern es ist sehr schwer. Wenn ich manches so gewußt hätte, dann wär ich nur Brandstifter geworden.”²⁹

There is a strange gap that opens up here between the “real killer” and the public persona imagined for him by the many newspaper articles and criminological studies written before his arrest. The *Düsseldorfer Mörder* was a semi-mythologized creature whose putative motives and identity were understood by reference to other recent *Lustmörder*, fantastic monsters (vampires, werewolves, ghosts), and to psychological and criminological models. Peter Kürten was the actual killer who, whatever the pathologies of his crimes actually were, was confronted by a variety of popular and scientific ideas about *Lustmord* in general and the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* in particular that tended to structure and constrain the ways in which Kürten and his actions could be understood. In other words, the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* constituted a sort of ready-made imagined identity that existed in excess of the actual murderer Peter Kürten.

Kürten’s complaint to his wife is indicative of a certain disavowal of the role of *Lustmörder*, but at other times Kürten enthusiastically embraces the role of a certain type of *Düsseldorfer Mörder*—the criminal mastermind, the avenger and reformer of societal ills, or simply one who is absolutely apart and aloof from society. The role of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*, then, was not simple and singular but radically indeterminate and irrationally plural. There are vexed issues of identity and motivation involved in

²⁹ Lenk/Kaefer, *Leben und Wirken*, 94.

Kürten's attempt to be not only the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*, but a certain type of *Düsseldorfer Mörder*.

Kürten makes his claims and disavowals of identity with the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* while in police custody, during his initial criminal interrogations and then in a series of more in-depth psychiatric interrogations. Kürten's police and medical examiners, for their part, were charged with discovering the truth about Kürten's absolute identity with the murderer in the first instance (the police) and the truth about his motives and mental state at the time of the murders in the second instance (the psychiatrists). It is tempting, but false, to understand Kürten as a prevaricating performer facing police and medical interrogators who are interested only in unmasking him and discovering the truth. The authorities were at least as interested in maintaining public order (and the mutual comprehensibility of rational discourse, as I will argue) as they were in uncovering the truth about the Kürten case. Kürten's psychiatric interrogators vigorously resisted the possibility that he might have been legally insane at the time of his crimes—largely to ensure that he could be executed to maintain the public's faith in the authority of the state.³⁰ These interrogations constitute a performative situation in which not only Kürten, but his interrogators as well, attempt to forestall the unruly variety of possible identities and interpretations in the case in favor of a singular favored narrative.

³⁰ A hint of this sentiment can be gleaned, for instance, from a letter that the Düsseldorf police chief wrote about the drawn out process of the appeals process to Kürten's death sentence: "Ich darf darauf hinweisen, daß die lange Hinausschiebung der Entscheidung über die Vollstreckung des Todesurteil in der Bevölkerung bereits deutlich erkennbare Unruhe hervorgerufen hat, die sich im Laufe der Zeit aller Voraussicht nach in einem die Autorität des Staates schädigenden Maße steigern wird" (reprinted in *ibid.*, 295). Richard Evans, in his study of capital punishment in Germany, argues that "Popular opinion, articulated through the media, made it effectively impossible to reach a verdict of diminished responsibility in the Kürten case" (Evans, *Rituals of Retribution*, 602).

The Authenticity of Performance: Always Already the Düsseldorfer Mörder

The outcome of the Kürten interrogations was predetermined in the sense that there was little chance that Kürten would be found innocent of his crimes by reason of insanity, and no chance that Kürten's sometimes contradictory explanations would persuade his interrogators. The various narratives proposed by Kürten and his interrogators to explain this case of *Lustmord* were only ever ostensibly objective (i.e. disinterested). These explanatory narratives were actually self-interested tactical appropriations and manipulations of elements of earlier *Lustmord* discourse. The masks that various parties attempt to strip away to reveal true inner being (true identity and motive) hide nothing but the continued lack of internal essence. In other words, the constant interplay of performativity (the performance of objectivity and unmasking) obscures the fact that there is no real secret center of origin to be revealed in such a situation. In other words: Kürten and his medical examiners were *readers* of the various strands of *Lustmord* discourse in Weimar; this reading took the form of performance/simulation that could not (did not want to) take into account the irrational excesses involved in *Lustmord*. So, for instance, the experts *performed* their expertise in a way that tacitly denied other forces at work in the case: they pretended to be neutral experts even though they had an interest in disposing of Kürten in a certain way so as to reassert the primacy of their discourse and its privileges.

What falls away or is obscured in both Kürten's and his interrogators' explanations is precisely the irrational conjunction of sexual desire and violence that would seem to beg for explanation in such cases. The experts' final answer to the etiology of Kürten's crimes was that he was a member of a naturally recurring type, a

sadist, who was culpable because he failed to control his violent sexual desires. To push this further: this was a failure of the rational male mind to constrain the irrational desires of the body. The experts' diagnosis of Kürten was that he was a blasé sadist—blasé both in the averred cold-bloodedness of his crimes and in reference to the astonishing ease with which this diagnosis was incorporated into a cultural milieu in which misogynist violence was in a certain way normalized. In other words, both the killer (cold-blooded) and his medical interrogators (*Lustmord* is unfortunate, but no great mystery) were blasé. The Kürten transcripts reveal a strategic reading of various *Lustmord* narratives that have more of a practical than absolute claim to truth: the 'blasé sadist' narrative does not explain Kürten, but it does dispose of some of his troubling excesses.

In the course of his psychiatric interrogations, both Kürten and the medical experts were involved in a double performance that took the form of assertions of truth (narratives of causal forces, identity, and motive) that were based on the reception and interpretation of previous texts about sexual violence. The Kürten interrogations were a performative situation, a reading, in which the sexual affect involved in these cases became lost or effaced.

The Performative Gap

If Kürten's letter to his wife implies a sort of performative gap between a social role and a "true" identity after his arrest, this gap opens yet further (or again) when we consider the ways in which Kürten participated in and played with the production of this public persona in the months leading up to his arrest. He wrote two anonymous letters to the police and the press that encouraged the initial flurry of speculation about the

Düsseldorfer Mörder.³¹ During his interrogations, he claimed to have derived sexual pleasure from standing in the midst of an alarmed crowd and reading about his/the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*'s latest crime.³² He claimed also to have had fantasies about being the one who captures the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* and the hero's welcome he would then receive: "ich habe mit dem Düsseldorfer Mörder ungezählte Kämpfe ausgeführt, wo ich immer schwer verletzt in den Städtischen Krankenanstalten lag, [...] wo mich halb Düsseldorf besuchte und mit Blumen überschüttete."³³ And in the moments before attacking many of his last victims he referred specifically to the danger posed by the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*, asking whether they weren't afraid.³⁴ It is tempting to attribute at least some of these moments of apparent self-alienation to insanity.

This stubborn non-coincidence of the real Peter Kürten with the imagined *Düsseldorfer Mörder* cannot be reduced to an effect of Kürten's probable mental illness, however. If Kürten's ability to speak of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* in the third person indicates some sort of schizophrenic self-alienation, this schizoid logic is mirrored in his medical examiners' efforts to understand and depict him as the instantiation of an abstract type.

To be clear: both Kürten and his police and medical examiners confronted a persistent gap between the putative real and the representation of *Lustmord*. This gap, or disjoint, between the "real" and the imagined is not psychological but discursive (i.e. inherent not in the fantasies of a diseased mind, but in the necessary distance between

³¹ Kürten actually wrote four letters, but only two became widely known to the public. See Lenk/Kaever, *Leben und Wirken*, 139-140.

³² Lenk/Kaever, *Leben und Wirken*, 191.

³³ *Ibid.*, 153, 170-171, 169.

representational abstraction and the particular real). This gap manifests ironically in the very process of interrogation that was meant to extract the truth of *Lustmord* (Kürten's motives and the etiology of his character) from the apparently irrational body of the criminal as the object of study. One of the important claims, then, is that the readymade identities and explanations of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* in particular, and *Lustmord* more generally, offered themselves as roles to be assumed and narratives to be performed in a way that shaped the understanding of Kürten's crimes to the detriment of the ostensible program of his interrogations (i.e. to discover the particular truth of his situation). A further important claim is that Kürten and the medical experts participated in the uptake of these "readymades" not in an unselfconscious way (not in the manner of subjects being constituted by Foucauldian discourses) but tactically, to assert a particular, preferred truth about sexual violence that passes over certain unpalatable possibilities in silence. Both Kürten and the medical experts execute willful interpretations of his crimes that tend to naturalize misogynist sexual violence in a way that sidesteps the irrational affect. Again, to be clear: the gap between the real and the represented of *Lustmord* involves a performance of truth-seeking that obscures the unpalatable reality of the irrational affect of sexual violence. The assertions made by the experts and by Kürten in the course of his medical examinations are performances; the interrogation itself was a performative situation.

The Psychiatric Interrogation as Performative Situation

Kürten and his expert medical examiners met in a forensic situation expressly dedicated to uncovering the truth about his state of mind during his attacks. According to

³⁴ One of Kürten's surviving victims reports that before he struck her on the back of the head, he called the area "unheimlich" and asked her whether or not she was afraid. See "Neue Berliner Spezialisten greifen

the criminal code, Kürten could not be held liable for his actions if he had committed them in a moment of irrational affect that had overwhelmed his power of volition.³⁵ This question revolved around the question of Kürten's identity in a deeper sense than the prosaic identification of a culprit. Having caught the "real killer", the police handed the culprit over to the medical authorities so that they could determine what had gone on in his mind at the moment of the crime. There were roughly two possibilities: either Kürten was effectively insane at the time of the crimes (and thus not legally accountable for them), or he was a cold-blooded sadist who had deliberately killed for his own sexual pleasure. Both these possibilities were problematic in their own way (it is not good to have either a madman or a psychopath in the community), and both were problematic for the continuing undetectability of the culprit (it's especially not good to not be able to tell who the psychopaths and madmen are). Kürten faced the medical authorities in the position of one with a secret: he was either pretending to be sane to hide his insanity or he was pretending to be insane to hide his deplorable sadistic appetites. One way or another, Kürten was putting on a performance to hide his true self. The question of Kürten's true being was intimately tied to the question of what part of him was performance and what genuine. Kürten himself stood vis-à-vis the medical authorities as an ordinary, authenticating vessel: it was his presence as the object of investigation by expert knowledge that would ratify the experts' claims. The medical authorities' task was to separate truth from fiction—in other words, to pierce the veil of performance to once more find the real killer.

ein! Suche bisher erfolglos!" *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 21 Nov. 1929.

³⁵ See Liszt, *Strafgesetzbuch*, and Siebenpfeiffer's discussion in Siebenpfeiffer, "Böse Lust", 32-37.

There was a naturalistic assumption at work in this forensic situation: that Peter Kürten had a singular true identity, and that this identity could help explain the otherwise incomprehensible motives that caused him to commit sex crimes. To this performative situation, Kürten and his examiners brought not just the short history of the newspapers' idea of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*, but a whole accumulation of *Lustmord* discourse through which they alternately understood and contested the identities and motives at work in this particular case. These previous narratives of *Lustmord* cause and identities had an impact on the reception and understanding of Kürten as a *Lustmörder*. What these transcripts reveal is the strategic maneuverings of parties attempting to propound a singular truth of the case. They had to act *as if* this were the only possible truth of the case to assert a monologic understanding of Kürten's crimes.

There was a cultural element of performativity to Kürten's medical interrogations and the diagnosis of blasé sadism. The medical experts' final (foregone) conclusion was that Kürten was a blasé sadist: a cool character who could have controlled his violent sexual desire, but did not. The coolness with which Kürten is supposed to have planned and carried out his crimes is reminiscent of the culture of the New Objectivity *cool persona* discussed by Helmut Lethen.³⁶ New Objectivity was marked by a turn away from the Expressionist concern with manifesting interior states to an aesthetic of exteriority, matter-of-factness, and smooth, impenetrable surfaces. The expert discourses of the day participated in this cultural preoccupation with surface to the extent that it meant a repression of the messy, potentially contradictory, and dangerously

³⁶ To don the armor and mask of the cool persona in order to safely navigate a dangerous world of shame-culture and conduct codes meant a corresponding assumption that others were similarly armored. This assumption that cool conduct is the norm also keeps the creaturely at bay. Lethen notes that for some, at

interpenetrable interiority of human bodies, motivations, and relations. Lethen hypothesizes a corresponding evacuation of interiority in everyday life. The culture of the Weimar Republic—especially the later Weimar Republic—was marked by a series of tactical situations in which individuals sought recourse in codes of conduct. This was a shame culture focused on legible outer signs in which maintaining face was more important than doing right (the focus of moral action in a guilt society). In such a culture, Lethen says, individuals face each other as on a fencing ground or battlefield. Each individual attempts to gain or maintain tactical advantage over the others by deft observation and manipulation of the codes of conduct. In this light, the performative situation of the medical interrogation appears as an attempt to maintain the ability of tactical self-representation.

Kürten and the medical experts found themselves on a discursive battlefield (to use Lethen's language)—in a speech situation characterized by tactical considerations of ego-preservation rather than the pursuit of truth they claimed—a battlefield on which the struggle was between differing interpretations of the identities, motives, and external causal forces at play in Kürten's crimes. In effect, Kürten and the medical experts were readers of the *Lustmord* discourse—a discourse that encompassed the various fantastic and criminological representations of sexual violence. This reading took the shape of a tactical appropriation, assertion, and performance of different possible roles and narratives of sexual murder.

least, the wish to don a cool persona is related to “a compulsive attempt to contain phenomena suggestive of chaos or fluidity.” Lethen, *Cool Conduct*, 47.

Performative Moments: Being the Düsseldorfer Mörder; Being the Expert

I'd like to briefly examine a few of the performative moments—the ways in which the performative situation of the medical interrogation manifests as tactical maneuvering on a discursive battlefield (the uptake or maintenance of ready-made roles and narratives for self-interested, even if tacit or unconscious reasons).

The first is Kürten's previous experience in court in which the public prosecutor called him an "alter Zuchthäusler" in front of his wife. Kürten reports this incident to his medical interrogators with great indignance: his wife had not previously known about his criminal record (!) and he reports feeling extremely exposed. In the same vein, Kürten recalls an earlier incident in which his jailor had paraded him through the streets, leaving him exposed to the stares and comments of the public. These experiences are not necessarily performative in themselves (though Kürten does use them to bolster his claims that he has cause to resent the penal system and that his murders were an attempt at penal reform), but they do accord well with Lethen's description of a shame culture in which what is important is less one's guilt than the shame to which one is exposed by the gaze of others.

A related possible moment of performativity is comprised of the various explanations Kürten proposes for his actual innocence. These explanations were never rationally coherent, and he seems not to have developed any coherent system that would tie them together. At some times, Kürten claimed that he was an avenging killer: he murdered in the service of his *Vergeltungs-* or *Sühneidee*. The former involved a purported attempt to demonstrate the failings and futility of the current penal system in Germany—it was in that sense that Kürten could claim to have been undertaking an

attempt at penal reform.³⁷ The latter involved a process of mystical transference in which his victims were at the same time sacrifices (significantly the same word, *Opfer*, in German).³⁸ By killing the innocent, Kürten claimed, he was effecting a transference of guilt such that the blood of his victims was on the authorities' hands. At other moments Kürten claimed that he was not himself at the time of the attacks—that he *himself* had had no control over his actions. These claims were variously couched in the legalistic language of temporary insanity or the mystical language of demonic possession.³⁹ In either case, an unmasterable *something* had taken control of him.⁴⁰ At times, usually in response to his interrogators insistence, Kürten identified this alien *something* as his own disavowed sexual desire.⁴¹ But usually he maintains the pose of the masterful doer of good or the abject subject forced to do evil against his will.

The medical experts, unsurprisingly, did not agree with Kürten's interpretations of his actions. In their final reports, the experts discussed and disposed of the possibility of inherited and acquired pathology to finally diagnose Kürten as a blasé sadist: a cool character whose rational actions are motivated by otherwise irrational desires.⁴² The

³⁷ See Lenk/Kaever, *Leben und Wirken*, 104, 114.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 126-27, 311.

³⁹ “[I]ch war doch vom Teufel besessen. Der Zwang war unwiderstehlich. Das braucht nicht in den §51 gezwängt zu werden, das können sie vielleicht gar nicht, aber der Wahn war doch da [...]”; “Die Macht des Bösen in mir war eben so stark, daß ich schon nicht mehr unterscheiden konnte, daß das, was ich tat, böse oder Unrecht war”; “Der Dämon hatte mich voll und ganz beherrscht.” *Ibid.*, 305, 96, 287.

⁴⁰ “[W]as das war, ich weiß es nämlich selber nicht. Es war dieser Wahn, dieses Etwas, das hat mich gezogen.” *Ibid.*, 306.

⁴¹ Kürten admits to his interrogators that he became sexually excited thinking about violent acts, but insists that he was more a victim than an agent of his sexual feelings: “Aber wenn ich so in der Zelle alleine war, dann habe ich mir immer was anderes vorgestellt, Gewalttätigkeiten, und das war für mich ein Genuß, ich kann es ja heute ruhig sagen, alles das ist mal ganz von alleine gekommen, und ich sage nochmals, ich habe nichts dazu getan [...]” *Ibid.*, 126.

⁴² Cf. Sioli, “Ärztliche Begutachtung durch Professor Sioli,” *Leben und Wirken des Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf*, eds. Elisabeth Lenk, and Roswitha Kaever (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1974), 256-71; and Raether, “Ärztliche Begutachtung durch Dr. Raether,” *Leben und Wirken des Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf*, eds. Elisabeth Lenk, and Roswitha Kaever (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1974), 271-82.

medical experts interpreted Kürten's actions willfully as evidence of culpable lack of restraint rather than insanity. Thus moments of planning negate moments of irrational affect: the fact that Kürten carried hammers with him is evidence of his rationality; the fact that he killed people with the hammer is evidence of his motivating bloodlust. The two are brought into consonance via the concept of blasé sadism.

Likewise, the signs of possible insanity in his interrogation are understood as evidence of Kürten's rational efforts to outmaneuver the police and the medical experts. It seems reasonable that Kürten was at least a psychopath if not insane, but the medical experts go to great lengths in their final reports to willfully understand all evidence of insanity as signs of Kürten's rational instrumental prevarication. The confusions of his *Sühneidee*, for instance, are understood as a tactic: an instrumental attempt at post hoc justification or perhaps a self-conscious psychic mechanism that Kürten used to overcome his normal human inhibitions to allow himself to kill for sadistic pleasure.⁴³ One of his interrogators argues that only Kürten's initial confessions were really crazy, and that his repudiation of these confessions was "die Frucht seiner wiedergekehrten seelischen Fassung, die von kühlen Verstandesmaßnahmen inspiriert und getragen war"—and that his subsequent renewed confession was a result not of Kürten's failure of reason, but due to a combination of the growing evidence against him and the "geschickten psychischen Behandlung" of the police detective who interrogated him.⁴⁴ In other words, Kürten was not crazy; he had merely been out maneuvered by the police's superior rationality.

⁴³ Ibid., 258, 262.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 281.

Both Kürten and his medical interrogators might be said to be performing intent here: both parties purport to want to uncover the truth while they were also (or exclusively) actually jockeying for position. The medical experts perform a semblance of objectivity that is concretized in the final reports that they submit to the court. The *Gutachten* as performance glosses over the inconsistencies of the case and presents a tidy verdict that rationalizes Kürten's apparently inconsistent and irrational actions and explanations as the singular effort of a sadist to gratify his violent sexual desires and then to escape his punishment.

A final moment of performativity is found in Kürten's welcoming reception of his medical interrogators. Kürten received his medical interrogators on the occasion of their first visit with the question "Das ist doch aus wissenschaftlichem Interesse, daß Sie zu mir kommen?" and thereafter proved himself to be a cooperative and enthusiastic participant in expert discourse. Kürten notes that without his cooperation, the experts would have nothing to present at court.⁴⁵ But besides being a willing object of scientific investigation, Kürten attempts to usurp or mimic that objectivizing power. Among other things, Kürten tries to cross-examine the witnesses that are brought to identify him, refers his interrogators to the legal files to support his assertions, and gradually changes his vocabulary to match that of the medical experts (he changes his word for ejaculation from *Eruption* to *Samenerguß* to accommodate his interrogators).⁴⁶

If the initial question at Kürten's medical interrogation was what sort of *Düsseldorfer Mörder* he would be, an additional question might be what sort of expert knowledge he and his interrogators could claim. It is unsurprising that the medical

⁴⁵ Ibid., 53.

experts had the last word in the case. But for the time of his interrogations at least, Kürten the object of scientific knowledge was unsettlingly insistent on talking back to his interrogators.

What Gets Lost

It seems likely that both Kürten and his interrogators want to attain and maintain the stance of objective observer—the sovereign and magisterial subject. But this goal is only ever achieved in this case at the cost of evacuating the troublesome intertwining of rationality and irrationality in sexual violence. Attesting to the ‘cool’ rationality of the killer obscures the irrational hot passions that motivate him. Being the blasé sadist means disavowing the irrationality of violent sexual affect. But such a disavowal can also only ever be temporary. The performance of the fantasy of absolute distance fails in the return of what Lethen calls the creaturely nature of the individual—the vulnerable, irrational part that exists in excess of the pose of rationalized individual in control.

The Kürten interrogations show that the apparently pat explanations of *Lustmord* in the character of the blasé sadist are actually shot through with contradictions. The scientifically detached language used in the experts’ *Gutachten* contrasts with the tentative feints and moments of resistance offered by Kürten in the course of his interrogations. Rather than being a point where *Lustmord* becomes unproblematic and banal, the tales of blasé sadism are a point of maximal uncanny failure of distance: the purported magisterial distance of vision/knowledge collapses into an uncanny coincidence of irrational object and rationalizing subject. The irrational object resounds at the center of the knowing subject. “Being” the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* or the medical

⁴⁶ Ibid., 57; 104; 106, 125.

expert means performing distancing rituals that only ever postpone the collapse of object into subject rather than ratifying their absolute distinction.

Bettauer's *Frauenmörder*: The Detective and the Case of the Missing Sexuality

Hugo Bettauer's *Der Frauenmörder* (1922) is a detective novel without a crime. The unsettling, irrational potential suggested by the title (*Der Frauenmörder* = *The Lady Killer*, lit. "The Murderer of Women") is progressively evacuated as the plot progresses until the novel ends in a valedictory handshake between the detective and the supposed criminal. The unsettling potential of *Lustmord* would appear to have been totally contained here: there is no danger of *Lustmord*'s irrationality erupting into the rationalized center of social life because there was never any actual crime. Rather than dealing with the paradoxical conjunction of violence and sexuality, the plot of the novel revolves around the techniques of simulation and detection employed by the faux criminal and his detective. The novel is structured as a play of mutual performance and reception between its two protagonists. This play, in turn, is significantly figured as a reciprocal visual exchange. Absent an actual crime, in other words, the novel is ultimately about the structures of vision enacted by the game of simulation and detection.

The form of performativity and visual exchange becomes content in Bettauer's novel. At the end of the novel, where we would normally expect the detective to solve the crime and catch the criminal, we discover that not only is there no crime, but that the detective has known this since the beginning. The final revelations and performances with which the novel ends amount to an elaborate unveiling of the two protagonists' performativity. There is no hidden essence behind their masks, only their simulation and a virtuoso display of detection. In 1925, the sociologist and newspaper reporter Siegfried

Kracauer argued that this display of *ratio* (abstract, capitalist rationality) was the ultimate content of all detective novels.⁴⁷ Here, then, the detective novel is reduced to its essence: a celebration of abstract rationality and a reaffirmation of the prospect that the mysteries of modern life will ultimately yield their secrets to the committed observer.

Yet Bettauer's novel does more than celebrate rationality—it celebrates *male* rationality. *Der Frauenmörder* ends in a valedictory apotheosis of vision that is insistently gendered masculine. The exchange of performance and visual reception that the two protagonists share manifests a triumph of male rationality both in the form of distanced exchange and in the distinct male identities that are ratified by this exchange. In other words, the protagonists become rational males by virtue of a process simulation and detection in which they perform their rational male-ness. Male rationality forecloses female content. This allows the male characters to enjoy a distinct, distanced subjectivity. The ironic mode of the detective is noted by Kracauer. The introduction of the gendered aspect to rationality reintroduces content: this is, effectively the return of the repressed content of *Lustmord* to the ideally abstract realm of masculine *ratio*.

Not only is the potentially unsettling content of *Lustmord* evacuated at the end of the novel, but so too are females and the feminine. The circuit of vision that connects the detective and the faux criminal is a closed dyad of mutual appreciation that asserts the rationality of male subjectivity by foreclosing both actual females and a whole array of things like bodily desire and messy interiority that are persistently coded feminine.

⁴⁷ Detective novels, Kracauer writes, are marked by “die Idee der durchrationalisierten zivilisierten Gesellschaft, die sie mit radikaler Einseitigkeit erfassen und in der ästhetischen Brechung stilisiert verkörpern.” Siegfried Kracauer, “Der Detektiv-Roman: Ein philosophischer Traktat,” *Schriften I: Soziologie als Wissenschaft, Der Detektiv-Roman, Die Angestellten* ([1922-25]; Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1971), 105-6. See also, David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of*

The final words of the novel become symptomatic of the breakdown of the pose of ironic male distance:

Auf die Gefahr hin, daß Sie mich verraten und damit meiner Karriere schaden, möchte ich Ihnen versichern, daß ich schon damals, als ich Ihnen vom Postamt aus auf dem Fuße folgte, meine Bedenken gehabt hatte. Sie habe ich nie für einen Mörder, Ihre Braut aber immer für ein höchst schlaues Persönchen gehalten. Und das Spiel gefiel mir so gut, daß ich es zu Ende gespielt sehen wollte!⁴⁸

The language of visual desire, danger, betrayal, passive-aggressive misogynist diminutive, and visual desire is highly suggestive here. The moment of the triumph of masculine vision is one in which the detective and the faux criminal face each other as virtuosos of spectacular performance and detection in homosocial (if not homosexual) mutual appreciation. The detective celebrates the play of display and reception they have been engaged in—but only after carefully putting the only significant female character in her place with a diminutive and after letting slip his own vulnerability to the charge of less than perfect vision (the idea that a less than perfect visual detection could be damaging to his career). The detective at once shores up the visual circuit with a passive-aggressive bit of misogyny and signals his own vulnerability to the charge of less than perfect vision (being less than a man). This is done in a speech that explicitly affirms the scopophilic pleasure of detection that (combined with his sidelining of Hartwig's fiancée) invites a rereading of the entire novel that illuminates the illicit pleasures of the ostensibly cool and evacuated homosocial/homosexual circuits of vision. This scopophilia rests on a misogynist disavowal that though figured as marginal is revealed here to be absolutely foundational: the disavowed irrational content of *Lustmord* comes rushing back in a flood of scopic delight in the spectacle of women killed for the pleasure

Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin, ed. Thomas McCarthy, *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 126-32.

of men. What is disavowed is what is desired. By erasing any actual *Lustmord* from the novel, Bettauer allows his characters to more fully enjoy the fantasy of sexual murder.

Bettauer's novel appears to evacuate the disturbing content of *Lustmord* promised by the title. This unsettling content is replaced by a closed structural circuit of vision and performativity that at first appears to be an apotheosis of abstract rationality. But the visual circuit of performative self-presentation and detection/reception that plays out between the two protagonists (the detective and the faux criminal) is significantly gendered male: the ideally closed homosocial dyad is supported by an array of dismissive misogynist gestures that are figured as unproblematically natural. In this naturalized gesture of dismissal, the disavowed irrational content of *Lustmord* comes rushing back with destructive vengeance. The misogynist gesture rests on a metonymic chain (attested to both in the fin-de-siècle pan-European culture of decadence and especially in the nervous reaction of Weimar males to the rise of the New Woman) linking the female—body—sexuality and bodily drives—prelinguistic irrationality—morass.⁴⁹ In other words, the hermetic male identities and rationality celebrated in the novel are underpinned by a naturalized misogyny that re-injects the feminine morass into the supposedly abstract realm of masculine reason. On a second reading, the apparently secure, magisterial distance of the male protagonists from the feminized morass becomes a hysterical insistence that ironically reverses their attempt at distinction.

Most succinctly: The irrational sexuality of *Lustmord* that is evacuated as the content of the novel is reintroduced as a structural dyad based on an exclusionary circuit

⁴⁸ Bettauer, *Frauenmörder*, 151. Further references to Bettauer's novel will be parenthetical.

of vision (the literal pleasurable elimination of women becomes figurative)—but this conspicuously pleasurable erasure of an irrationality coded feminine ironically recalls the missing content of *Lustmord*: as performativity and visual reception become the novel's only content, the empty spectacle of simulated *Lustmord* becomes a source of disavowed (yet symptomatically detectable) erotic pleasure.

Author, Bestseller, and the Context of the Detective Novel

Hugo Bettauer was a bestselling Viennese author.⁵⁰ From an early age, Bettauer traveled widely. He worked as a newspaper reporter in New York and Berlin, as a magazine editor in Hamburg, and wrote for a cabaret in Munich. In 1914 he returned to Vienna and worked as a reporter through the First World War. Bettauer began writing novels as serials in the newspaper. Starting in 1920, his novelistic output increased substantially and he began writing several novels a year—mainly detective novels set in New York, Berlin, and Vienna.⁵¹ Bettauer was an assimilated Jew who is best remembered today for having written the novel *Stadt ohne Juden* (1922) and for his murder in 1925 at the hands of an anti-Semitic assassin following his trial for indecency.⁵² In a report on sexuality in the literature, art, popular press and film of the

⁴⁹ Cf. Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien: Band 1: Frauen, Fluten, Körper, Geschichte* (1977; Munich: Piper, 2000), 236-50 and 405-8.

⁵⁰ He was the “Verlagszugpferd Nummer eins” for the Gloriette-Verlag, which published five of his successful novels. Besides *Der Frauenmörder*, these were: *Das blaue Mal: Der Roman eines Ausgestoßenen* (1922), *Die Stadt ohne Juden: Ein Roman von Übermorgen* (1922), *Der Herr auf der Galgenleiter* (1923), and *Die freudlose Gasse: Ein Wiener Roman aus unseren Tagen* (1924). See Murray G. Hall, *Österreichische Verlagsgeschichte, 1918-1938: Geschichte des österreichischen Verlagswesens*, Vol. 2 [Belletristische Verlage der Ersten Republik] (Vienna: Böhlau, 1985), 176.

⁵¹ Cf. Beth Noveck, “Hugo Bettauer and the Political Culture of the First Republic,” *Austria In The Nineteen Fifties*, eds. Günter Bischof, and Anton Pelinka, Contemporary Austrian Studies 3 (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1995), 138-70; and Murray G. Hall, *Der Fall Bettauer* (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 1978).

⁵² Scott Spector, “Modernism without Jews: A Counter-Historical Argument,” *Modernism/modernity* 13.4 (2006): 619.

1920s,⁵³ Paul Englisch calls Bettauer one of the most popular authors of the Weimar-era and notes that he also pandered to the popular appetite for sexually explicit material—besides his novels, Bettauer edited an erotic magazine.⁵⁴

The detective novel is a genre thematizing the triumph of visual detection and reason. The earliest detective stories were written by fantastic authors. E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* (1820) has sometimes been called the first detective story.⁵⁵ Edgar Allan Poe created a recurring detective, Auguste Dupin, in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841)—another work often called the first detective story. Dupin also appeared in "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" (1842) and "The Purloined Letter" (1844).

The detective novels of Weimar thematize the desire to see rationality triumph over mystery. Many of the most popular detective novels were about masters of disguise or criminal masterminds (notable examples are Norbert Jacques' *Mabuse* novels and Edgar Wallace's *Hexer*). According to Kracauer, the genre of the detective novel is about circulation and *ratio*. The detective novel is ostensibly about crime, but actually a confirmation of male virtuoso vision.

The character of the detective is aloof, cool, illegible. Note how Sherlock Holmes keeps things from Watson, the better to reveal his visual acumen. Almost all Sherlock Holmes stories begin with a demonstration of virtuoso vision. Like the fantastic story,

⁵³ Originally written for Hirschfeld's *Sittengeschichte der Nachkriegszeit* (1931): Paul Englisch, "Die sexuelle Frage in Literatur, Kunst, Presse und Film der Zwanziger Jahre," *Zwischen zwei Katastrophen (früher: Sittengeschichte der Nachkriegszeit)*, eds. Magnus Hirschfeld, Andreas Gaspar, and Friedrich E. Ziehlke, 2nd ed., *Sittengeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts 2* (Hanau a.M.: Karl Schustek, 1966), 217-53.

⁵⁴ Called *Er und Sie: Wochenschrift für Lebenskunst und Erotik*. See Spector, "Modernism without Jews," 630n16. Paul Englisch gives an overview of the circulation of erotic magazines during the Weimar era. See Englisch, "Die sexuelle Frage," 220.

the detective story brings to the fore that which is hidden or obscure—the idea that events may be moved by hidden processes. But the detective story depicts the detective’s successful interpretation of obscure clues as symptoms of true events. The detective is he who confronts and tames a mystery—puts the world back into order.

Bettauer’s Novel as a Compensatory Fantasy of Perfect Distance

In 1922, Bettauer wrote *Der Frauenmörder*—a detective novel set in Berlin. Two striking features of the novel include its depiction of stereotypical Berlin scenery and the importance of vision in the plot.⁵⁶ Bettauer’s novel is significantly not about a *Lustmörder*, but about a series of sensations and sights that resolve themselves as the reciprocal display and reception of the signs of virtuoso male vision that circulate between the detective and the faux criminal-poet.

The detective Joachim von Dengern (whose name already marks him as an aristocrat), nicknamed “Krause”, is given the task of clearing up the case of a serial killer who has been preying on women, the *Frauenmörder* (or lady killer) of the title. Krause became a master detective after being himself falsely accused of a crime: in prison he studied his case and became an expert observer of human physiognomy. After clearing his name, he was recruited to the police force and has become its most valuable detective. He is, nonetheless, somewhat of an outsider: his manner is cool and inscrutable; his is cynical and somewhat ironic.

The supposed killer whose case Krause is called upon to solve appears to be a *Heiratsschwindler*: a series of young, apparently respectable and well-to-do women have taken rooms in Berlin boarding houses, told their landlady that they are going to meet a

⁵⁵ Cf. Christopher A. Lee, “E.T.A. Hoffmann’s ‘Mademoiselle de Scudéry’ as a Forerunner of the Detective Story,” *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 15.2 (1994): 63-73.

prospective fiancé (whom they have met via newspaper ads), and have subsequently disappeared. It appears that the unknown man has killed them for their money. These five women are most notable for their utter banality—their names, the possessions they have left behind are so common as to render them totally anonymous. Following a series of clues, Krause discovers that one Thomas Hartwig, an aspiring author, is apparently the murderer. But this is yet more confusing: the author does not seem to be the type who would kill. The notoriety of the case helps the young author to the publishing success he had sought. His novel becomes a best seller, and his drama is produced. There is a doubled spectacle of the supposed killer's premiere of his play and his court case. Everyone wants to be present to see both. At the trial, Krause makes a dramatic entrance and, with corroborating statements and explanations from Hartwig, reveals that the entire series of murders has been a publicity stunt to gain Hartwig his deserved notice and fame as an author.

The novel ends in a doubled moment of admiration and confirmation of the two male protagonists' magisterial male identity. Krause is validated as a premier detective and observer. Hartwig is revealed as a virtuoso artist and creator of spectacle. In each other, Krause and Hartwig have found their ideal reader and author respectively. In this moment, the imaginary female victims of sexual violence vanish into nothingness and the one main female character (Hartwig's girl friend Lotte Fröhlich, with whose help he has instigated the whole charade) recedes into the background. This is, if not a homosexual apotheosis of vision and camaraderie, at least a homosocial validation of the magisterial male subject in which moment the female is excluded.

⁵⁶ In 1925, the novel was made into a film: *Das Abenteuer des Sibylle Brant*, dir. Carl Froehlich, 1925.

The way Bettauer begins his novel is symptomatic/significant for what it says about the underlying concern for vision. The novel begins with the words of the chief of the Berlin Police: Dr. Clusius: “Lieber Krause, Sie müssen Klarheit in die Sache bringen! Nur läppischer Zufall? Ne, das glaube ich nicht und Sie glauben es auch nicht, soweit ich aus Ihrem wieder einmal total versteinerten Gesicht lesen kann!” (1). Note here the way Krause is positioned as the virtuoso observer (who might bring clarity to an intolerably muddled matter (viz. the ongoing *Lustmord* case). Meanwhile, the chief of police is established as a lesser observer at the same time that Krause, with his stony face, is excluded as an object of vision. From the beginning, the detective is cast as the privileged observer.

The detective novel presents the compensatory fantasy of perfect vision and distance. Bettauer’s novel proceeds by means of a radical disavowal of erotic violence that brings it back in—not all detective stories make erotic violence the center of the plot this way. There is no actual erotic release here, but an intellectualized satisfaction in the debasement of women. The pleasure is cold, distanced. This is the self-congratulatory pleasure of blasé sadism (here in a pure form, because unencumbered by ambivalence).

The suggested sadism of the novel can be enjoyed because it doesn’t actually exist. This clears away the barriers to identification with the *Lustmörder*. We are not only permitted, but encouraged to identify with Hartwig. Under the surface, never close enough to be called really violent in any but a figurative way, is the persistent violence of contempt for the feminine and the suggestion that *Lustmord* wouldn’t be so bad. However, this gratifyingly cool distance is only ever imaginary: when faced with a true *Lustmord* the criminal becomes an impossible figure of identification.

Lustmord Becomes Unproblematic

Lustmord is unproblematic in two ways in Bettauer's *Frauenmörder*. First because the ostensible motive for killing women is not sexual gratification but monetary gain: Hartwig is supposedly a *Heiratsschwindler*. Yet the idea of killing women has more than a purely monetary connotation. Second, there is no actual murder committed: Hartwig stages the whole series of fake crimes in order to gain notoriety and thus attention for his novel and plays. This poses the question: why should Hartwig have sought notoriety as a *Frauenmörder* of all things? Is there something about the crime of killing women that makes this an attractive choice to simulate?

Misogyny pervades the novel. Women are described as ugly, worthless, driven to distraction by their desire to be married. On the first page, the missing women are described as *heiratstoll* (1). Examining the personal belongings of the murdered women, Krause sees before him

[d]ie irdischen Reste armer, dummer Mädchen, die in ihrer irren Angst vor dem einsamen Alter und der ungestillten Gier nach Liebe, Zweisamkeit und Mutterschaft dem erstbesten Schurken auf den Leim gehen und sich, bis zum letzten Augenblick voll süßen Sehnsens, von ihm irgendwo im Wald oder an einem öden Flußufer abschlachten lassen. (19)

The one example of decent womanhood represented is Hartwig's girlfriend, who helps him pretend to be a *Frauenmörder*. There is an implication, sometimes an outright statement, that killing women can be worthwhile. Having tracked Hartwig down, Krause is torn between admiration and duty. He practically apologizes to the poet for having to arrest him:

Das bedeutet, daß ich Sie verhaften muß, Herr Hartwig, obwohl mir Ihr Roman wirklich ganz außerordentlich gefallen hat und ich wirklich nicht genau weiß, ob nicht am Ende Ihr Drama wertvoller ist als die fünf Mädchen, die Sie an sich gelockt, ermordet und beraubt haben! (72)

Thus, while the *Frauenmörder* isn't technically a *Lustmörder*, he shares striking affinities with the sexual murderer. In this case, the psychic gain to be made is subterranean. Hartwig (and the implied male readers) are able to simultaneously disavow *Lustmord* and to enjoy its spectacle.

When Krause questions one of the murdered women's landladies, her reply implies that she imagines the *Frauenmord* to be a *Lustmord*:

‘Ne,’ erwiderte Frau Wendler, ‘das arme Fräulein hat ja nie von sich, sondern immer nur von ihrem Bräutigam, dem Lumpen, den Gott strafen soll, gesprochen, und nu schwimmt ihre Leiche sicher irgendwo im Wasser herum und der Kerl vergnügt sich mit anderen Meechens, die er dann ooch umbringen wird.’ (21)

The angry and impotent reaction of the female characters in the novel to the supposed murders is a consistent source of amusement. When Krause goes to the newspaper to track down the text of the classified ad that Hartwig put in the paper, he is amused by the single older woman in charge of the personal ads: “Innerlich lächelte Krause über das alte Mädchen [...]” (36). And when she remembers Hartwig, and remembers him with regret because she, it is implied, would dearly love to have such a man, Krause gazes at her with a sort of pitying contempt: “Fräulein Lieblein schwieg plötzlich verschämt und Krause ließ aus seinen grauen, kühlen Augen einen Blick voll Mitleid über das hagere, eckige, reizlose Mädchen gleiten” (38). The open contempt with which women are treated in this novel is remarkable. There is an implied gender-appropriateness to men killing women: it is criminal and regrettable, but understandable. The idea of the blasé sadist isn't here fully formed (largely because the crime is explained away) but the outlines of the form are clear. Masculine values trump feminine concerns in the novel. Art and reason are noble pursuits; marriage is pathetic—and women's desires to be

married even more so. Krause himself is married, it is mentioned almost in passing. But this marriage had only been made to enable him to solve the mystery of who had framed him for the theft of his employer's money (15). Krause, in other words, is himself something of a *Heiratsschwindler*. It is in this mode that Krause makes his statement that Hartwig's play is probably worth the lives of the five women he is supposed to have killed (72).

Heroic Detection; Virtuoso Spectacle

Women are shut out of the novel: the focus is on the two men, and moreover on their virtuoso vision. The novel ends in mutual admiration: the problem of feminine chaos and *Lustmord* recedes into nothingness. What replaces the problem of *Lustmord* is a concern with detection and spectacle. Hartwig's staging of his scandal is equated to that of his play. Krause displays virtuoso vision in his ability to see through Hartwig's ploy. But because Hartwig simulated *Frauenmord* for the express purpose of being detected and read, this is the completion of a circuit: a happy ending for male vision and mutual recognition.

The detective's detection is a form of decoding. The novel emphasizes Krause's ability to read clues obscure to others.⁵⁷ The technologies of vision operate as a form of writing and reading here. In Krause, Hartwig has found his best reader. It is significant that Krause himself is not subject to vision: his face is illegible; he has a stony face (1). The story of Krause's solving of his own case from prison is the story of an escape from the panopticon via a masterful reversal of the technology of vision/rationality. The story

⁵⁷ In prison, Krause learns to read people from their gait, for instance: "Damals hatte er sich Erkenntnis der Menschen nach ihrer Art zu gehen zurecht gelegt und oft genug herausgefunden, daß der Schritt, die Körperhaltung beim Gehen, das Federn im Knie oft mehr zu sagen hatten, als das Gesicht, das durch äußerliche Erlebnisse unabhängig vom wahren Wesen stark beeinflusst wird" (42).

of how Krause became a detective is a triumphant tale of detection. After being falsely accused of stealing from his employer, Krause is sent to prison, where he develops a prodigious memory.⁵⁸

As an artist, Hartwig creates a spectacle—this is his function as an artist. However, the object of vision is not himself, but his creation. Krause uncovers not the secret of Hartwig, but the secret of his simulation—in other words, Krause unravels the riddle that Hartwig presents, leaving Hartwig himself unobserved (the essence of Hartwig is beside the point in the novel). Hartwig’s art reaches its fullest audience in a literary and criminal spectacle. There is an equivalence implied between artistic effort and crime—Hartwig is *Dichter* (poet or literary author) and murderer. His status as supposed criminal is what creates the spectacle and interest in his novel and play (which are then found to be independently good— “even if he hadn’t been a murderer...” (the crime of *Lustmord* is again made to be beside the point). In his staging of spectacle, Hartwig proves himself to be a master of conduct codes. He presents an image of self that allows him to transform himself from (apparent) villain to (actual) hero. Again, this makes his work the object of vision and not himself: he is seen only in simulation. And even when he is unmasked, he is raised to the status of Krause’s equal—a master of vision rather than an object of it.

Both Krause and Hartwig are heroes of vision, then: the one as detective, the other as artist. Together they form a visual circuit of display and reception that shuts out

⁵⁸ “Immer dachte er an ein und dasselbe: Wie werde ich meine Unschuld erweisen, wie baue ich Tatsachen, Vermutungen, winzige Geschehnisse so auf und zusammen, daß sie dereinst meine Zeugen werden? Im Kopfe setzte er — Papier erhielt er für solch alberne Dinge nicht — die Schrift zusammen, mit der er die Wiederaufnahme des Verfahrens gegen sich beantragen wollte, und diese Schrift wurde immer umfangreicher, es wurden schließlich hundert Seiten Maschinenschrift, die er jederzeit auswendig hersagen konnte” (14).

others. The public at large is depicted as an excited mass of ignorant (or at least less discerning than Krause) spectators. The public as mass reacts in a feminine mode with hysteria. The one main female character, Lotte (Hartwig's girlfriend (or *Braut*) is likewise shut out. There is at least a hint of homosexual attraction here. In a cryptic passage about Krause's jail-time experiences, he remembers learning how to judge a person by his gait: "Wie edel und weich waren die Bewegungen jenes Mannes gewesen, der zwölf Jahre wegen Ermordung seiner Frau zu verbüßen hatte, und wie viel reine Menschengüte, christliche Denkungsart hatte Dengern später bei ihm im gemeinsamen Schlafsaal entdeckt" (42). This is an instance when bodies are not (quite) obscured by the novel's persistent privileging of vision over bodies. Even here, though, the emphasis is on Krause's visual acumen (and the pleasure to be derived from it). As a rule, however, bodies are indeed excluded (however fitfully and imperfectly). The closure of the visual circuit between Krause and Hartwig is an apotheosis of pure circulation. This is the triumph of rationalized distance—of the New Objectivity virtues of circulation, free movement, and successful simulation.

Structurally, sadism is made into 'mere' misogyny here—a blasé misogy. The implication of sadism (an erotic charge to misogyny) is strengthened by what is elided or left unsaid (or imperfectly said). There are symptomatic moments of silence in the novel: the wife-murderer Krause meets in prison is actually a sympathetic man (this proves Krause's abilities as a detective; the man's crimes are passed over in silence); the reactions of the crowd to Hartwig's spectacle suggest that *Lustmord* is valuable as an aesthetic sensation (the fate of the victims is secondary at best); the disparagement of marriage and women in general normalizes an attitude of misogyny (which does not

excuse *Lustmord*, but which may make it understandable and—as Krause’s reaction to Hartwig implies—even forgivable). The murder of women is blasé because that crime is never actually committed, true. But it is also blasé because women’s debased nature makes it acceptable. Note that the cool characters of Krause and Hartwig maintain their masculine composure in the end. But Hartwig’s simulation activates a hysterical reaction in the reading public.

Ironic Distance

Formally, the masculine circulation of vision cuts out the body in the novel, leading to a self-congratulatory male happy ending. Hartwig and Krause are left with the consolations of ironic distance. The apotheosis of the visual creates an absolute formal distance. The distinction offered by this distance ratifies their ego boundaries as two exemplary types: presenter and see-er; *Dichter* and detective. They can thus afford to affect an attitude of desultory irony: they have played at *Frauenmord* without becoming implicated in its messy bodily irrationality (NB Krause’s use of “Spiel” in his final words) (151). The representation of *Frauenmord* means they have been able to experience a desire for violent murder while remaining free from culpability.

This circulation is thus accomplished on the backs of the degraded feminine. In other words, the simulation of *Lustmord* becomes the vehicle of rational circulation. How does this work? It is only in denying the body (coded feminine) and the irrational passions of which it is the source that the pure visual can emerge. The formal action of the novel works to excise bodies. There is a cutting aspect to the vision in this novel. It seeks to leave messy bodies behind and to retain only the pure rational circuit of absolute egos and reciprocal vision. What is left out, I argue, is absolutely necessary to, central to,

the novel. The debasement of women and the feminine is the mechanism through which this state of pure vision is attained.

There is an irony here of the way that this mechanism of cutting out the feminine serves only to recall it. This is the irony of the imaginary confirmation of the formally disavowed. By pretending to be a *Frauenmörder*, Hartwig cannot help but call it to mind. Following Butler in *Excitable Speech*, this is analogous to a person using invectives in the guise of merely naming them.⁵⁹ The disavowal does not erase the misogynist presence called into being by the words. So while it is true that there is no murder in the “real” sense, the entire plot revolves around the acceptability of femicide and the worthlessness of the female.

Conclusion

The expert reports and transcripts of Kürten interrogations and Bettauer’s *Frauenmörder* are representations of sexual violence that seem unproblematic only at first glance. There is a decisive difference between the rhetorical function of sadism in the Kürten *Gutachten* and in Bettauer’s novel. But they both participate in a tentative flattening out of the complications involved in the phenomenon of *Lustmord* in order to insist on a certain magisterial subject position. The detective and the scientific expert both attempt to maintain a detached ego-position from a chaotic world. But (in this Weimar context) when their gaze falls on the blasé sadist they find they are looking at themselves.

The appearance of the blasé sadist is a symptom of overcompensation. It is an attempt at erasure that claims a little too stridently to be comprehensive. That the

⁵⁹ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (London: Routledge, 1997), 26-27.

latencies of the unsettling content of *Lustmord* is not dealt with in the text and that the implied sadism of all men remains unacknowledged in the image of the rational male means that the protestations of text and character begin to appear hysterical. In its technical sense, hysteria is the physical manifestation of unacknowledged psychic conflicts. Here, the blasé sadist text wears its disavowed uncertainties on its sleeve, as it were: a strident misogyny, a refusal to acknowledge the homologues between psychiatric investigator and his subject—these mark the collapse of the magisterial subject.

Lustmord becomes an issue in its very erasure. To put this another way, Weimar era representations of ostensibly “unproblematic” *Lustmord* are marked by the conspicuous absence of *Lustmord*’s problematic content. This is why the implicit positing of blasé sadism is a disavowal and not a true erasure: not only does the unsettling potential of *Lustmord* remain untouched by the mechanism of its disavowal, it also becomes positively activated. On a second reading, pressured a little, the apparently unproblematic *Lustmord* representations prove to be actually persistently unsettled. A simple disavowal is not enough, the distinction between chaos and rationality, between the *Lustmörder* and his investigator, must be constantly shored up by willful misogyny or careful refusal to admit to certain possibilities. This is (or resembles) the mechanism that Freud calls the return of the repressed. This return is uncanny in that it makes the familiar uncomfortably strange: it is the collapse of distinctions between the rational male and the *Lustmörder*.

The use of the figure of the blasé sadist to validate masculine vision and subjectivity fails ironically. The ironic pose of the magisterial male character is undermined by the textual gesture of disavowal that recalls precisely that which it

attempts to exclude (i.e. the irrational sexuality of *Lustmord*). The blasé irony of the sadist masks a continuing and ineradicable anxiety about male status and identity.

It is here that the body returns as the disavowed but ever-present confluence of drives and desire that is gendered feminine. The attempt to reduce masculine essence to the eye—defined by clean lines of vision, masterful detachment and absolute distance—has failed. The attempt as a specifically masculine subject position fails even more so as what returns is the ineradicable feminine core (the chaos of pre-linguistic, pre-rational drives that is labeled feminine). To use Theweleit's terms, what returns are the constitutive flows that Weimar men (especially right wing men) tried to deny.⁶⁰ This is the return of the morass as the return of the repressed.

In this light, the insistence with which the feminized irrational is denigrated and disavowed becomes understandable as a compulsion to repeat. The detective and the scientific expert both attempt to stave off an inevitable uncanny collapse of subject and object when confronted with *Lustmord*. The anxious gesture of insouciance with which they go about claiming and demonstrating that the problem of *Lustmord*'s content is unproblematic becomes symptomatic.

In my next chapter I will consider the gendered mass—the mass as public and the public as mass. Here, the ideally rationalized sphere of the public, subject to bureaucratic surveillance and control, becomes uncannily other. The public is both space (the urban public areas), mass character (the public as the people), and, ideally, a realm of rational

⁶⁰ Theweleit, *Männerphantasien: Band 1*, 250-54.

and rationalized exchange (a bourgeois public sphere). In this next chapter the public is both endangered and dangerous.

Chapter 5

Psychosis, Contagion and Control:

The Endangered/Dangerous Public in the Popular Reception of the Kürten Case

The valedictory scenes of public acclaim that end Bettauer's *Frauenmörder* contrast markedly with the descriptions of the public reaction and public spaces that occur in newspaper articles about the still uncaptured *Düsseldorfer Mörder*.

Between February and November 1929, Peter Kürten committed a series of sadistic sexual attacks and murders in and around Düsseldorf that excited enormous public interest. Reports on the crimes and continued anonymity of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* filled the pages of Weimar newspapers and tabloids. The case was discussed in literary political magazines like the *Weltbühne*, and in the pages of specialist criminal and medical journals. And Fritz Lang's film *M* was inspired by, if not wholly based on, the popular reaction to the Kürten case. This abundance of representation in the popular media meant that the case was highly visible in the Weimar public sphere.

However, the intense visibility of this unsolved case stood in stark contrast to the persistent invisibility of the anonymous killer. In the absence of an identifiable murderer, what *was* visible, and what is still legible in all of these texts today, is a palpable concern with the unsolved case's impact on the public.¹

¹ Maria Tatar makes a similar argument (Tatar, *Lustmord*, 46), but she argues that the focus on the public was a way for the newspapers to avoid dealing with Kürten and his crimes. I argue that the attention paid

This chapter investigates the terms in which the threat to the public was sometimes transformed into a threat from the public. I will trace this concern for the public by reading the non-fiction newspaper reports on the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* case and Ernst Gennat's series of articles for the *Kriminalistische Monatshefte* alongside the fictionalized depiction of a *Lustmord* case in Fritz Lang's film *M*.

Uncanny Spaces of the Uncanny Public

In his article about the scene of Gertrud Albermann's murder, H.R. Berndorff takes his readers on a tour of the blighted scenery of Düsseldorf and the mute observers who inhabit them—both haunted by a the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*, a “Gespenst [...] das aber grauenvoll tatsächlich ist.”²

Berndorff's prose emphasizes the peripheral status of the industrial area where Kürten committed many of his crimes. The area has a provisional character: workers' allotment gardens and makeshift huts are “kunstlos zusammen[ge]schlugen” and now abandoned. Berndorff draws a contrast between the inhabited and desolate times that remakes the *Industriegebiet* into an uncanny landscape:

An schönen warmen Sommernachmittagen spielen die Kinder der Industriearbeiter, knarren Grammophone in den Lauben. [...] In den Tagen des Herbstes, aber, an den Abenden, an denen der Nebel aus dem Walde kriecht, and denen der Rauch der Fabrikschlote von dem Regen auf die Erde gedrückt wird, ist dieser Platz trostlos.

The same site that is otherwise the scene of sociability is made into a desolate wasteland.³

The murder sites are not uninhabited even now, however. Berndorff describes the silent sightseers who come by car “von weither” to see the murder scenes: “In den

to the public was an important part of the Kürten case. The image of the popular public is ambivalent, not disparaging.

² Berndorff, “Der Ort des Grauens,” *Vossische Zeitung*.

Straßen, die das Gebiet umsäumen, stauen sich die Menschen und sie sehen alle hinaus in diese trostlose Dunkelheit, die nur ab und zu von einem Feuerstrahl aus den Werkstätten der Fabrik sekundenschnell erhellt wird. Diese Menschen raunen von dem gespenstischen Mörder, den niemand fassen kann.” Berndorff inhabits his uncanny scenes with murmuring crowds of otherwise silent, and motionless onlookers.

“Am nächsten Abend verläuft sich diese Menge, am Morgen und am Mittag waren diese Menschen schon an andren Mordstellen. Es gibt ja neun Orte in und um Düsseldorf, die derart verlassen daliegen, und an denen der Mörder sein Werk getan hat. Sie sind zu schaurigen Wallfahrtsstätten geworden.” The sites are both abandoned and uncannily populated by silent sightseers who (after all) have nothing to see. There is an uncanny juxtaposition of woods and city: “in den Wäldern und in einem Torfbruch, an einsamen Orten liegen die Mordstellen. Dieses ganze Gebiet ist mit kleinen Villenkolonien übersät, ganze Stadtteile Düsseldorfs liegen hier, abgesondert in den Hügeln und Wäldern. Diese ganze Gegend liegt des Abends vollkommen verlassen.” What is remarkable here is that Berndorff’s description first deals with industrial areas that he claims are abandoned even as they fill with curious onlookers. He then moves to other murder sites that are paradoxically both lonely (*einsam*) and inhabited. The sense of abandonment is extended over entire sections of Düsseldorf. The crowds of curious onlooker and the inhabitants of these areas are not enough to enliven the place. Indeed, they seem to take on the same uncanny attributes as the landscape. They do not carry on their normal lives, but rather wait and stare and murmur. The area, Berndorff says, is

³ On the architectural uncanny, see Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

“ganz verlassen”—except for the police hiding behind every tree. The *Lustmord* landscape of Düsseldorf is infused with a sense of silent and futile watchfulness.

After this tour of the periphery, Berndorff brings us back into the city center, which is likewise infused with this uncanny mood of apprehensive watchfulness:

In der Stadt aber, unter den hellen Bogenlampen der Königsallee und der Schadowstraße, stauen sich die Menschen zu Hunderten vor den Fenstern der Zeitungen, um zu erfahren, ob es eine neue Nachricht über das Gespenst gibt. Noch nie waren des Abends die Andachten in den Kirchen so besucht wie jetzt.

In all the restaurants and in every sort of company, Berndorff reports, one speaks only of the murderer.

The Public in Danger and the Dangerous Public

The inhabitants of Düsseldorf whose nervous reactions and mute spectatorship featured so prominently in the newspaper reports about the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*—these inhabitants constituted a sort of mass subject whose collective safety was endangered by the unknown killer. This mass public’s safety was the responsibility of another public—the official public power of the police and politicians. The activity of both of these groups were reported on by yet another public—the newspapers that constituted part of the popular public sphere.

In all of these publics, the phenomenon of the still undetected, and apparently undetectable, *Düsseldorfer Mörder*, acted as a powerful irritant. Ostensibly, it was the unknown killer who was pathological. Yet as November of 1929 wore on, it was the mass public whose reactions were pathologized. An odd shift of focus is discernable: the public comes to be figured as a dangerous element: the putative victim becomes the site of an uncanny danger.

The danger posed by the unknown murderer comes to be represented as issuing from the very public he endangers. The language in which this irritation was reported is notable for its imagery of psychosis, contagion and control (or its loss). The news of a new killing spreads like a wildfire.⁴ The streets seethe with anxious activity one moment; and are eerily empty the next.

That this public unrest encompassed the police as well as the masses is indicated in the following quote from a newspaper article: “Von Woche zu Woche ist die Panik gestiegen, erhöhte gemeinsam mit den Berliner Kriminalkommissaren die Düsseldorfer Polizei ihre fieberhaften Anstrengungen.”⁵ The panic and the feverish work of the police increase in tandem. What this implies is that the unrest inspired by the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* is contagious. It also implies a principle of transference from ghostlike killer to his putative victims of an irrationality.

“Von dem Täter fehlt noch jede greifbare Spur, trotzdem die Kriminalpolizei und alle anderen Polizeiorgane in fieberhafter Tätigkeit sind.”⁶ The unknown *Düsseldorfer Mörder* was the source of a contagious unrest that becomes remarkable when one attends to the language with which both the popular public reaction and the police and civil servants’ (i.e. the public authorities’) responses are reported. Ostensibly, that the police

⁴ “Die Kunde von dem grauenhaften Kindermord hatte sich wie ein Lauffeuer verbreitet” (“Der Vampir von Düsseldorf: Zwei Mädchen ermordet, ein drittes schwer verletzt,” *Berliner Tageblatt* 27 Aug. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe); “Die Nachricht, dass die Leiche gefunden sei, hatte sich wie ein Lauffeuer unter der Bevölkerung des Vororts Gerresheim verbreitet” (“Die Leiche des Dienstmädchens Hahn in Pappendell gefunden: DAS MORD-MYSTERIUM: Grosse Erregung in der Düsseldorfer Bevölkerung,” *Berliner Tageblatt* 16 Nov. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe). Significantly, this public excitement didn’t abate when the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* was captured: “Die Verhaftung hatte einen grossen Menschaufmarsch zur Folge, und wie ein Lauffeuer verbreitete sich das Gerücht durch die Stadt, dass der Düsseldorfer Mörder endlich von der Polizei verhaftet worden sei” (“Wie der Düsseldorfer Mörder verhaftet wurde: Er ist durch einen Zufall festgestellt worden,” *Berliner Tageblatt* 25 May 1930, Morgen-Ausgabe).

⁵ “Vor der Entdeckung des Düsseldorfer Mörders? Man kennt den Besitzer des blutigen Halstuchs: Die Verfolgung der neuesten Spur,” *B.Z. am Mittag* 19 Nov. 1929.

⁶ “Ein Brief des Kindermörders,” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 11 Nov. 1929, Abendausgabe.

response is described as “*fieberhaft*” is meant to signal the great extent of their mobilization. Actually it is a symptom of the contagious irrationality the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* caused. The *Düsseldorfer Mörder* was a threat to more than public safety: he was a threat to public order.

Four Types of “Public”: Spaces, Masses, Authorities, Sphere

Before I can go any further, however, I have to partially unpack the ambivalence and ambiguities about the image of the public that emerge in these texts. The ambivalence about the public in these representations is most striking: the immediate concern for the public’s physical safety as the possible victim of sexual assault easily becomes a concern for the public’s state of constant excitement and the consequent eruptions of irrational action that result. In many newspaper articles (and in part of Gennat’s series) the threat posed by the unknown killer falls almost entirely away, to be replaced by the danger posed by a public in a state of permanent irrational excitement.

This ambivalence, in its turn, manifests in a series of ambiguous images of the public in which it is difficult to say just what exactly the public is. There are at least four possible referents to the *public*: the collective character of the public as the population of the city; the public spaces of the city (the streets, the parks, the pubs, etc.); the official public authorities of the police and government; and the formal and informal organs of communication that constitute the Weimar public sphere (gossip, newspapers, film, etc.). In these texts, the official public authority of the police acts as a foil to the ambiguous image of the popular public in its collective and spatial aspects. These aspects are never entirely separate, but appear as images of ideal types.

In the first instance, the public tends to appear as a sort of collective character, who acts and reacts to the danger posed by sexual violence. This is the public as a possible victim of sexual violence who is the subject of both police authority and control. This is the image of the *crowd*. The crowd in these representations is most immediately associated with the character of the victim—but it also appears in a secondary capacity as a dangerously unstable figure liable to irrational outbursts of activity that stand in stark contrast to the measured initiatives of the police. As a feminized mass, the crowd's irrationality (identified as psychoses by Gennat and various newspaper reporters) appears hysterical.

In the second instance, the public as object is an impersonal zone or space of official concern and control. Here the public is figured as a threatened, and in its turn threatening, territory. This is the image of the street. Like the crowd, the public space of the street is both endangered and dangerous. The anonymity of the *Lustmörder* lays claim to a territorial expansion more extensive than any one man could affect if known. The fear of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* effectively suffuses the street with its presence. The spaces of the city and its periphery lay under a sort of spell such that even (especially) the uninhabited places of the periphery (the woods and fields) are under its threat. The atmosphere of horror spreads (to use language from the newspapers)⁷ like an epidemic

⁷ Besides the wildfire metaphor noted above, the spread of the atmosphere of uncertainty and dread was indicated in the newspapers by phrases using the word *ganz*. For example, an article about a missing boy begins: "Düsseldorf ist in neue Angst versetzt worden. Die ganze Stadt ist unter dem Eindruck der Geschehnisse wie gelähmt" ("Neues Opfer in Düsseldorf: Ein Knabe verschwunden," *Berliner Tageblatt* 16 Nov. 1929, Abend-Ausgabe). And an article in the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* refers to the unknown murderer as the man "der nun schon seit Monaten eine ganze Stadt in Unruhe und Sorge gestürzt hat" ("Noch ein Frauenmord? Gegenstände einer Vermißten gefunden.—Eine neue geheimnisvolle Zuschrift," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 15 Nov. 1929, Morgenausgabe). This *ganz* is inflationary: the influence of the unknown killer extends over the whole city, and in some reports over the whole of Germany and the whole world. An article in the *8-Uhr Abendblatt* reports on "*Die Grauen erregende Serie der Bluttaten, die ganz Deutschland mit Schrecken erfüllt*," for instance (Dr. M, "Der erste Fingerzeig!" *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 11 Nov.

that infects even the relatively unpopulated places of the periphery and depersonalizes the experience of the crowd.

The fact that these texts are all constituent parts of a Weimar public sphere further complicates their representation of the public. In the popular media of the newspaper story and Fritz Lang's *M*, the public often appears as the victim of its own excitement and anxiety in the face of an unsolved, sensationalized case. In other words, a *further* danger of sexual murder is represented as the disorder of the street caused by the unruly reactions of the crowd to the physical danger of sexual violence. But this disorderly reaction is carried by the very organs of publicity that call attention to the dangerous pathologies and contagious nature of this public unrest. What finally obtains then, is a condition of uncanny self-reflexivity in which the public persists in telling itself how nervous it is. This is a failure of distance in which the *Lustmörder* not only fails to be safely excluded from the self as the other but in which the *Lustmörder*'s pathologies of irrationality are revisited on the nervous, vulnerable public.

The representations of the Kürten case in the popular media present an ambivalent image of the public as both endangered victim and dangerously unsettled milieu. These popular representations thematize and participate in an opposition between the rationalized authority represented by public officials and the spontaneous (and sometimes illicit and irrational) response of the popular public.

1929). And after Kürten's capture, the *Kölnische Zeitung* says that the entire public shares what the leader of Düsseldorf's *Mordkommission* describes as the deepest satisfaction he has ever known: "so teilt dieses befriedigende Gefühl mit ihm nicht nur die Bevölkerung der Stadt Düsseldorf, sondern die ganze Öffentlichkeit. Das ist keine Übertreibung, nachdem der Verbrecher, besonders im letzten Jahr, wo er Mord an Mord reihte, die ganze Welt in Atem gehalten hat" ("Der Düsseldorfer Mörder gefaßt: Der Hergang und die Taten," *Kölnische Zeitung* 26 May 1930, Morgen-Ausgabe).

In what follows, I will move from a discussion of Peter Kürten's crimes and the way in which he consciously courted publicity to an examination of how newspaper stories and Lang's *M* represented the crowd. I will then discuss the representation of public psychoses in the newspaper articles and Gennat's series as a bridge to the expansive spatial aspects of the dangerous public. After examining the representation of empty public spaces that nonetheless seem supersaturated with potential violence, I conclude with a consideration of how these representations constitute a threat to and critique of public authority as exemplified by *M*'s representation of the failure of vision.

Kürten's Preferred Victim: Public Order

By the time Peter Kürten and his wife moved to Düsseldorf in 1925, he had spent almost half his life in prison on charges ranging from theft to sexual assault.⁸ In Düsseldorf, he was a habitual and enthusiastic arsonist before turning to more directly physical attacks. As Kürten later told his medical examiners, he derived sexual satisfaction both from his brutal assaults and from their terroristic effects on the public.⁹

In February 1929, Kürten began what would later be reconstructed by the police and the newspapers as a singular reign of terror by assaulting a woman, a child, and a man within the space of ten days. It was the child's murder that excited the greatest public unrest. On the 8th, Kürten raped and killed the eight-year-old Rosa Ohliger and set her body on fire. As he had intended, the discovery of her still smoldering body in the street attracted a crowd and considerable press attention.¹⁰

⁸ Lenk/Kaever and Berg provide chronologies of Kürten's life and crimes. See Lenk/Kaever, *Leben und Wirken*, 346; and Berg, *Der Sadist*, 109.

⁹ "Ich habe daran Gefallen gehabt, so wie andere sich ein nacktes Weib vorstellen" (Lenk/Kaever, *Leben und Wirken*, 107).

¹⁰ Kürten tells his medical examiner: "Ich muß bejahen, daß das ganz was Besonderes, Schreckliches werden sollte. Ich wollte die Bevölkerung erregen und empören" (Lenk/Kaever, *Leben und Wirken*, 220).

Unlike the earlier Weimar-era *Lustmörder* with whom Kürten was often compared,¹¹ Kürten did not kill at home but in the public spaces of the city and (quite often) in highly public ways. This may be partially explained by the fact that he had a wife at home who never suspected her husband of being the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* until the moment of his confession to her. But it may also be because of his desire to excite and enjoy public fear and unrest.¹²

In July and early August of 1929, Kürten attacked at least five women whom he had met on the streets and pubs of Düsseldorf. All but the last of these, Maria Hahn, survived Kürten's attacks.¹³ Kürten killed Hahn and buried her body in a field on the 11th of August. Her disappearance wasn't reported in the press—nor did her sudden absence cause much concern in the house where she had previously been employed as a maid.¹⁴

On the 21st of August 1929, Kürten attacked three people with a knife (all survived). And then on the 24th, he killed two children a short distance from their house as they were returning home after visiting the fair. These last two attacks reignited the press interest that had first been aroused by the Ohliger case. From this point until the 7th of November 1929, Kürten attacked nine people, killing three. His attacks ranged in method from stabbing and strangulation to hammer attacks.¹⁵

¹¹ Grossmann, Haaarmann, and Denke all killed indoors and took care to hide their victims' bodies.

¹² Kürten describes repeatedly deriving sexual pleasure from reading about his crimes in a newspaper in the middle of a crowd (Lenk/Kaever, *Leben und Wirken*, 191).

¹³ Berg, *Der Sadist*, 120-123.

¹⁴ "Erfolgreiche Schlüsselprobe: Neue Spuren in der Düsseldorfer Mordserie," *Berliner Morgenpost* 15 Nov. 1929. Many of Kürten's victims were maids. Kürten tells his interrogators: "Wenn ich meine Opfer vorzugsweise [...] unter den weiblichen Hausangestellten gesucht habe, so rührt dies daher, daß diese leichter zu erreichen sind, weil sie nicht den Schutz genießen, unter dem die Angehörigen besserer Kreise kraft ihrer sozialen Stellung stehen. [...] mein Streben ging doch danach, möglichst viele Opfer zu finden." (Lenk/Kaever, *Leben und Wirken*, 344).

¹⁵ Berg, *Der Sadist*, 110.

Kürten had written two letters describing the location of Maria Hahn's grave in October: one to a local paper and the other to the police. These, Kürten later said, were meant to cause "Aufregung und Empörung" among the public and police.¹⁶ The first was never found and the second was investigated by the country police (*Landjäger*) without success.¹⁷

On the 7th of November 1929, Kürten killed the five-year-old Gertrud Albermann on the outskirts of the city and then wrote a letter to a local communist newspaper describing not only the location of her body, but the location of Maria Hahn's grave as well. Albermann had already been reported missing and the police, well aware of the increasing public unrest and criticism of their lack of success in finding the anonymous murderer, organized a series of search parties.¹⁸ On the 9th, the newspaper received Kürten's letter and duly delivered it to the police, whose search party had, in the meantime, already discovered Albermann's body. It was this sequence of events, according to the leader of Berlin's *Mordkommission* Ernst Gennat, that really started the avalanche of press reports about the still anonymous killer and the police's inability to find him.¹⁹ From the seventh onward, newspaper reports proliferated about the anonymous *Düsseldorfer Mörder*, the police's lack of success in finding him, and the effect that this failure of public authority and continued threat had on the public.

¹⁶ Lenk/Kaever, *Leben und Wirken*, 140. Kürten describes the letters at Lenk/Kaever, *Leben und Wirken*, 139-141.

¹⁷ Kürten claims to have written this first letter at Lenk/Kaever, *Leben und Wirken*, 141. The police's response to the letter they received is reported in "Die Düsseldorfer Mordserie: Ein zweites Schreiben über eine Mordtat," *Berliner Tageblatt* 13 Nov. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe.

¹⁸ "Der neue Kindermord in Düsseldorf: Busdorf nach Düsseldorf beordert," *Kölnische Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1929, Erste Sonntags-Ausgabe.

¹⁹ Ernst Gennat, "Die Düsseldorfer Sexualverbrechen: (Fortsetzung und Schluß)," *Kriminalistische Monatshefte* 4.4 (1930): 79-85.

Press reports initially focused on the shocking features of individual episodes (especially Kürten's child murders and multiple attacks). But as it became clear that these attacks were probably related, the newspapers began to criticize the police's inability to capture the anonymous killer. In this atmosphere of sustained suspense, such headlines as "Nichts Neues in Düsseldorf" and "Keine Mörderspür in Düsseldorf!" became possible.²⁰ Here the lack of news becomes news. Finally, stories about the lack of progress in the case began to include descriptions of popular unrest.

On the 15th of November, Maria Hahn's body was excavated using the map Kürten had drawn in his letter.²¹ Though the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* was still at large, the killings seemed to have stopped.²² The newspaper stories grew less frequent and more liable to accuse the police of negligence as 1929 drew to a close. The following headline gives something of the flavor of the coverage at this point: "Alle Spuren aufgegeben?: Düsseldorfer Mördersuche erfolglos!: Polizei nicht einen Schritt weiter gekommen!"²³

Kürten began strangling women again in 1930. Between February 23rd and the time of his arrest, Kürten attacked at least ten women, but killed none of them.²⁴ One of the last of these victims, Maria Budlies, was able to lead the police to his apartment, but Kürten saw her from a distance and fled. Two days later, on the 23rd of May, Kürten confessed his crimes to his wife, who then told the police that her husband was the

²⁰ "Nichts Neues in Düsseldorf," *Vossische Zeitung* 21 Nov. 1929; "Mörderspuren in Düsseldorf gefunden! Bestimmte Vermutungen der Berliner Kriminalkommissare! Eine Frau Helferin? Man erkennt Zusammenhänge," *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 13 Nov. 1929. See also: "Alle Spuren aufgegeben? Düsseldorfer Mördersuche erfolglos! Polizei nicht einen Schritt weiter gekommen!," *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 9 Dec. 1929; and "Nicht die Spur einer Spur," *Kölnische Zeitung* 27 Nov. 1929, Abend-Ausgabe.

²¹ "Die Leiche des Dienstmädchens Hahn in Pappendell gefunden: DAS MORD-MYSTERIUM: Grosse Erregung in der Düsseldorfer Bevölkerung," *Berliner Tageblatt* 16 Nov. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe.

²² "Mit dem Fall Albermann brach die Reihe der Morde und Überfälle in Düsseldorf ab. Der Winter blieb ruhig" (Berg, *Der Sadist*, 101).

²³ In the *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 9 Dec 1929.

Düsseldorfer Mörder when she was questioned the next day. Kürten was arrested without incident as he arrived for a second meeting with his wife on the 24th of May.²⁵

After almost a year of legal proceedings and psychological evaluations, Kürten's trial was held from the 13th to the 22nd of April 1931. The trial attracted a great deal of media attention from Germany and abroad: it was held in specially constructed facilities to accommodate press interests and requirements.²⁶ Kürten's guilty verdict and death sentence became part of the public debate about the justice and possible abolition of the death penalty.²⁷ He was executed under extremely controlled conditions and in quasi-secrecy on the 2nd of July 1931.

Fritz Lang's *M* had opened in Berlin on the 11th of May 1931.

The Endangered Public and its Spontaneous Responses

Both Lang's film and the newspaper stories about the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* case (i.e. before Kürten's arrest turned it into the Kürten case) contain scenes of unmediated public response to the threat of anonymous sexual assault. The newspaper stories typically contain a description of a victim, the crime scene and the progress of the police investigation. But the victim is one in a series; the crime scene is empty except for curious sightseers or police investigators; and the description of heroic police mobilization is often explicitly countered by the fact of public authority's continued failure to find the killer. The descriptions of the crime scenes especially devolve into vignettes of failed detection: there is no motion forward, only images of silent sightseers.

²⁴ See Berg, *Der Sadist*, 110.

²⁵ Berg, *Der Sadist*, 103-108.

²⁶ Ernst Gennat, "Der Kürtenprozeß: (Düsseldorfer Sexualverbrechen)," *Kriminalistische Monatshefte* 5.5 (1931): 108-11.

²⁷ Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution: Capital Punishment in Germany, 1600-1986* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 591-610.

Representations of the case are at once concerned with the danger to physical safety posed by the attacks of the criminal Peter Kürten and with the danger to public order and equanimity posed by the unsolved case of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder*. The risk to public order posed by the imagined *Düsseldorfer Mörder* appears far more dangerous in these texts than the relatively minor physical threat posed by the real Peter Kürten.

In the absence of any discoverable killer or any real progress in the investigation, the newspaper stories quickly turn to descriptions of public unrest. This public unrest inheres in a persistent state of uncertainty that produces increasing police mobilization on the one hand, and increasingly disruptive spontaneous action on the part of the popular public (the crowd) on the other. The rationalistic efforts of police mobilization stand in stark contrast to the unmediated action of the crowd.

One of the earliest newspaper reports on the discovery of one of Kürten's victims illustrates both the spontaneous nature of public unrest and the disruptive challenge this unrest posed for public authorities. Kürten had left the stabbed, abused, and partially burned body of eight-year-old Rosa Ohliger in the street, where it was discovered by passers by. The *Kölnische Zeitung* reports that even though the public prosecutor had not yet arrived to complete an investigation, the Düsseldorf police chief decided to move the body "um Unruhen durch die sich ansammelnden großen Menschenmengen zu vermeiden."²⁸ Even in this early example, the emphasis of the account shifts from the unknown assailant and his exposed victim to the disruptive effects that the sensation of such public violence might have.

²⁸ "Lustmord an einem achtjährigen Mädchen," *Kölnische Zeitung* 9 Feb 1929, Abend-Ausgabe.

I'd like to point out two things here. First, that the formation of the crowd and other such popular responses appear in these texts as spontaneous, unmediated actions that might therefore be called natural. Manifestations of growing popular unrest included: the spontaneous gathering of crowds; false denunciations and chases on the street; false reports of attacks; the common assumption that missing children were victims of sex crime; and false confessions. There are several such scenes in Lang's *M*. And such popular reactions were both widely reported in the popular press and the subject of official police concern. Unlike the police's extra patrols and painstaking catalogues of evidence, the crowd's reactions are extemporaneous rather than instrumental.

Second, the newspaper stories (and Lang's film) that purport to report on this spontaneous crowd action are themselves part of the public response that they represent. These representations thus do an odd sort of double duty here: they at once report on and enact the excitement of the public response.

These descriptions of the public eruption of interest and anxiety about the Kürten case are tantalizing for the apparent access that they offer to otherwise unrecorded popular responses to sexual murder. It might seem that by using these newspaper stories we could gain access to the spontaneous unmediated reactions of the Weimar public—and that the apparently unmediated reaction of the crowd to sexual violence could be set against the more mediated official rationality of the police. But the status of the unmediated and spontaneous response of the crowd is precisely what is at stake in these representations.

It is this condition of mediation that prompts what I have called the odd double duty of the popular media. Any attempt to critically comment on the unruly popular response to sexual murder is complicated by the fact that the comment itself is a part of that popular response. This formal self-reflexivity of the popular press is echoed in its theme of endangered public order.

The following account is exemplary in its representation of the public as both threat and victim:

On the 21st of November 1929, a woman in Budapest began screaming in the middle of the street. She cried out to passers-by that the notorious *Düsseldorfer Mörder* had just approached her, disguised as a woman, and had tried to lure her into the woods surrounding the city. A crowd quickly gathered, and a police officer soon arrived. Together, both the police officer and the crowd gave chase and quickly caught the woman (or *Frauengestalt* as the article calls her). By this time, however, the crowd was so excited that it was only with great difficulty that the police officer was able to keep the woman from being lynched.²⁹ At the police station it was discovered that the *Frauengestalt* was indeed a man dressed as a woman. However, this person turned out to be a mentally ill Viennese businessman, and not the long sought *Düsseldorfer Mörder*.³⁰

The first and most striking aspect of this story is perhaps the complete absence of any actual crime or criminal. Instead of a crime story, it is a story about the public unrest

²⁹ “Der Polizist konnte nur mit großer Mühe verhindern, daß sie nicht auf der Stelle gelyncht wurde” (“Erfolglose Suche in Düsseldorf,” *Vossische Zeitung* 22 Nov. 1929). This was a press agency story that was run in several newspapers under other stories about the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* (in all the examples I have). For example, it ran after the main story in “Massenmord auch im Raxgebiet? Zwei Tote gefunden, sechs Personen vermißt,” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 22 Nov. 1929, Morgenausgabe. It also, rather ironically, ran as the second story under the headline “Schwindel über Düsseldorf: Der Düsseldorfer Polizeipräsident wendet sich gegen die Sensationspresse” (in *Vorwärts* 22 Nov. 1929, Morgenausgabe).

³⁰ “Erfolglose Suche in Düsseldorf.”

inspired by crime stories. Three further interrelated components of this public unrest emerge in this story. First, there is the spontaneous formation of a crowd in the street. Second, there is the challenge that this crowd poses to the official state authority represented by the police officer. And third, there is an example of the contagious spread of excitement and unrest among the public that is explicitly pathologized as psychosis by other writers of the time.

Public Psychoses

The woman's public screams and the quick gathering of the crowd in the Budapest story results from a sort of readiness to react to a public sense of hidden, but ever-present danger on the street. The newspaper stories that depict this sense of danger do so by offering examples of irrational or overexcited reactions in the street and other public places of the city. A newspaper article from early November complains of the "Ueberfallpsychose in Düsseldorf" that consists of anxious overreactions of people to things that at other times and in other places would not warrant such excitement.³¹ And a newspaper story from later in the month³² describes the feeling of fear in the city in a kind of travelogue—moving from the crowds gathered at crime scenes to the bustling streets and cafes of the city and describing the common atmosphere of "lähmende Ungewissheit" that hangs over them all. This results in an image of a city supersaturated with potential violence. The possibility of violence comes first from the unknown murderer: "Jeden Tag kann die Bestie wieder hervorbrechen [...]." But this is accompanied by the possibility of a spontaneous eruption from the over-excited crowd:

³¹ "Ueberfallpsychose in Düsseldorf," *Kölnische Zeitung* 9 Nov. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe.

³² Called "Mordpsychose in Düsseldorf" ("An den Stätten des Grauens: Mordpsychose in Düsseldorf: Lähmende Ungewißheit in der Stadt," *Berliner illustrierte Nachtausgabe* 21 Nov. 1929).

“Der Fremde, der in der ungewohnten Umgebung auffällt, wird von allen Seiten kritisch beobachtet. Prüfende Blicke hängen an jeder Bewegung und jedem Augenaufschlag.”

The challenge that this series of sexual murder posed for the public authorities is thus doubled. The primary focus of their efforts is discovering the anonymous murderer and ensuring public safety. But they must also be concerned with controlling popular public unrest. Ernst Gennat, the leader of the Berlin police’s homicide division, writes about dealing with the unsettled popular public in a series of articles he wrote for the *Kriminalistische Monatshefte*. He diagnoses three “psychoses” afflicting the population of Düsseldorf (and beyond): these are the missing persons, attack, and letter-writing psychoses that feature in newspaper stories and Lang’s *M*.³³

Gennat is kinder than the newspaper articles in some respects: he sympathizes with those who suffered from the “Vermissten-psychose” (in which missing people (mainly children) were thought to have been killed by the murderer), for instance, calling it understandable in the circumstances.³⁴ But in the main, the various psychoses depicted in the newspapers, the film, and Gennat’s articles are cast as dangerously irrational.

What is significant here is the combination of irrationality and contagion that is portrayed in this pathological model. The atmosphere of anxiety and fear was depicted as a contagious sickness—a sort of disease that could spread and infect others if not controlled. Popular excitement and unrest about the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* reached a fever pitch in November 1929. Some newspapers used precisely this word, *fiieberhaft*, to

³³ Ernst Gennat, “Die Düsseldorfer Sexualverbrechen,” *Kriminalistische Monatshefte* 4.1 (1930): 2-7; 4.2 (1930): 27-32; 4.3 (1930): 49-54; 4.4 (1930): 79-85. The section I cite is at 4.4 (1930): 79-85. The series is also reprinted in: Karl Berg, *Der Sadist: Gerichtsärztliches und Kriminalpsychologisches zu den Taten des Düsseldorfer Mörders Peter Kürten: Mit zwei Artikelserien des Kriminal-Polizeirats Ernst Gennat und der Verteidigungsrede von Dr. Alex Wehner* (1931; Munich: Belleville, 2004), 7-68.

describe the mood of the city and the search for the unknown killer.³⁵ Significantly, this fever spread not only among the crowd but through the official rationality of the police as well,³⁶ and across Düsseldorf's city limits to all of Germany and beyond: "Düsseldorf fiebert! Das Rheinland zittert in Spannung! Sagen wir ruhig: Ganz Deutschland stürzt in diesen Tagen von einer Sensation in die andere."³⁷ Another remarkable aspect of the story from Budapest, after all, is that it takes place in Budapest, hundreds of miles from Düsseldorf. The spread of popular concern about the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* from the west of Germany to Hungary (and elsewhere) exemplifies the pathological spread of an atmosphere of fear and anxiety that prevailed at the time.

Crime Scenes, Carnival, and Haunted Public Spaces

The spread of public psychoses throughout Düsseldorf and beyond clearly has a spatial aspect. The unsettled, anxious crowd is infected by an irrational fear and this results in false denunciations, the gathering of crowds and other such spontaneous actions that turn the public spaces of the city into dangerous spaces. The street is doubly dangerous because it is the site both of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder's* physical violence and the crowd's irrational responses.

Since this model situates the danger of irrationality in the actions of the crowd it would seem to trace the origins of the dangerous city back to what Henri Lefebvre calls

³⁴ Maria Tatar also objects that the "psychosis" afflicting the public was nothing but common sense fear in the face of an uncontrollable threat. See Tatar, *Lustmord*, 46.

³⁵ See e.g. "Neue Aufregung in Düsseldorf: Ein dritter Brief des Mörders/Ein neues Opfer?/Fieberhafte Suche der Polizei/Verbindungen nach Berlin?," *Vossische Zeitung* 17 Nov. 1929.

³⁶ "Die fieberhafte Suche nach dem Düsseldorfer Mörder ist bisher ganz ergebnislos geblieben" ("Ein weiteres Mordopfer: Die Leiche der Maria Hahn in Düsseldorf gefunden," *Vorwärts* 16 Nov. 1929, Morgenausgabe).

³⁷ "15 000 Mark Belohnung! Der Massenmörder von Düsseldorf," [*Kriminal-Magazin* Sonderausgabe (1930)], *Leben und Wirken des Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf*, eds. Elisabeth Lenk, and Roswitha Kaefer (Leipzig: Rogner & Bernhard, 1974), 13.

the “perceived space” produced through the immediate practice of everyday life.³⁸ But the uncanny aspect of the dangerous street inheres precisely in the fact that the quotidian space of everyday life (which is implicitly familiar by definition) becomes the site also of unpredictable physical danger. This then has its impact on what Lefebvre calls the “representational space” that is lived through the mediated realm of “its associated images and symbols.”³⁹ In the representational space of the dangerous city, the threat of the unknown, invisible *Lustmörder* is represented as the impersonal atmosphere that suffuses the streets of the city and the crime scenes. Significantly, these dangerous spaces are often depicted as empty of the crowd whose irrational energies might otherwise explain the feeling of danger.

An article from the 21st of November guides its readers through the “Stätten des Grauens”—the streets and cafes of the city that are haunted by a “lähmende Ungewißheit” and are suffused with the “schwüle Luft der Mordpsychose.”⁴⁰ The scene of Gertrud Albermann’s death is a desolate spot on the edge of the city where a few people stand around a wooden cross that the police have erected; the site of Maria Hahn’s death is a lonely spot, far outside the city, that is still visited by people who have come to see the scene of her murder—even though there’s not much to see. The few people who inhabit these scenes do so as nervous and suspicious pedestrians in the city, or as silent observers of places where nothing is happening anymore.

³⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (1974; Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 38. See 33, and 38-41 for Lefebvre’s most succinct description of his conceptual triad of *Spatial practice*, *Representations of space*, and *Representational space* (or, as he sometimes refers to them, the perceived, the conceived, and the lived; 39).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁰ “An den Stätten des Grauens: Mordpsychose in Düsseldorf: Lähmende Ungewißheit in der Stadt.” *Berliner illustrierte Nachtausgabe* 21 Nov 1929.

There is a certain nervous vacillation here between empty spaces and the crowds who rush in to fill the space with their excited energy and desire to know what happened—as in the scene in Lang’s *M*. The silent observers (who function as representatives of the popular public) in the newspaper article become almost part of the scenery. What both images of the crowd have in common, in their excitement and despair, is an attitude of thwarted vision.

“Noch tappt man im Dunkeln” a headline from the 11th of November claims in a manner that seems to foreshadow the blind balloon seller in Lang’s *M*.⁴¹ This article offers vignettes of police mobilization and the spontaneous popular response (“Fetzen von Unterhaltungen” that the reported has heard in the street). The scene of the crime here is one that the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* has visited before: the carnival. Rosa Ohliger was murdered during carnival time in February; Kürten’s attacks in Leierfeld and his subsequent murder of the children in Flehe took place near the local *Kirmes* in those places. Now, the article emphasizes, it’s time for carnival again. The reporter offers an image of the lanterns of *Martinstag*, with parades and gifts and singing and—“in einem kahlen, düstern Keller liegt der geschändete, zerfetzte Körper eines kleinen Mädchens.” The irrational crowd comes back to inhabit the dangerous streets here in the scene of the carnival. “Im Gewirr der Gassen, im Durcheinander der singenden Menge werde heute wie alle Jahre Dutzende von Kindern verloren gehen,” the reporter notes. Most of these children will be safely returned to their families, but the list of victims that follow make it clear that some will not.

⁴¹ “Noch tappt man im Dunkeln: Wieviele Düsseldorfer Mörder? Polizei steht vor Rätseln!” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 11 Nov 1929.

What seems clear here is that an image of anonymous danger is projected onto the crowd. Here the killer emerges from the milieu of his own endangered/dangerous victims. This is once more a failure of distance and distinction: the uncanny killer is borne of the crowd to prey again on the crowd. There is an implication that the crowd conceals the killer—that it may be hard to tell them apart. This is a crisis of vision in which public authority and the popular public of the street both participate. The popular public is a milieu in which visual detection fails.

Fritz Lang's *M*

A few weeks after Kürten's trial ended, Lang's film *M* was released in Berlin. It seems to depict a troubling, but ultimately decipherable case. The hysterias of false accusation and letter writing are followed by an ultimately successful attempt by the street (represented by beggars, criminal gangs, and small shopkeepers) to discover the murderer in their midst. When a blind balloon seller happens to hear Beckert's signature whistle, he alerts his companion who is then able to mark the murderer with the chalk mark "M", which in turn enables his continued surveillance. The chase is followed by Beckert's successful capture and the start of a mock trial in which the popular public sits as judge and jury. This incipient alternative authority is not allowed to become completed—the hand of the law reaches down at the last moment to transport Beckert to an actual courtroom and official justice.

But what might seem like a successful reestablishment of official authority is anything but. The movie ends with an admonishment to the people (the mothers) to watch out for their little ones. The individual body of Beckert has been delivered to a type of justice, but the danger he represents lingers.

Lang's film thematizes the public unrest depicted in the newspaper reports about the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* case. Each aspect of the endangered public is shown to be affected by the unknown killer's lingering presence: the mass public, the public spaces of the city, the public authority of the police, and the rational public sphere. In many cases this danger is transformational and contagious: the public itself becomes dangerous.

The mass public is shown to be the site of a nervous fear that expresses itself in spontaneous outbursts. The film includes scenes of crowds congregating in the street to hear the latest news of the child-murderer, a nervous mother waiting for her child, spontaneous false accusations both on the street and in private, and a montage scene showing the mass of letters written to the police.⁴² These scenes dramatize the murder, missing-persons, and letter-writing psychoses that Gennat mentions in his articles. Meanwhile, the child-murderer Beckert circulates through Berlin undetected. The city he inhabits is marked by psychosis—here made visible as hysteria—and paranoia. The whole film stages the failure of vision, from the blind balloon seller to the police mobilization (futile) to the beggars and criminals' surveillance. The whole film is about the feverish search for clues and the failure of police and criminal rationality to find them.

Scenes of public unrest alternate with scenes of the eerily empty city. The empty spaces of the city are filled with menace. Elsie's murder takes place off screen, and is only depicted obliquely by three quick cuts showing her empty place at the table, her ball

⁴² This last scene is missing from current restorations, but was in the original film. See Anton Kaes, *M*, BFI Film Classics (2000; London: BFI Publishing, 2001), 81-82.

rolling out of the bushes, and her balloon caught in the telephone wires.⁴³ The next scene is a shot of an empty street that quickly fills with newspaper sellers shouting “Extraausgabe” and the crowd that wants to hear the news. The visual motif of the empty, or nearly empty street is repeated in the film when Beckert is followed and then chased through the nearly deserted streets of the city.⁴⁴ What the streets are filled with, besides an atmosphere of potential violence, is a tenuous attempt at surveillance.

The public authority of the police is challenged both by Beckert’s continued success in evading detection and by the ironic doubling of their efforts at surveillance by the members of the *Ringverein* and the beggars of the *Bettlerbörse*. These are caricatures of bureaucratic organization. Many scenes in the film stage efforts at surveillance as spectacle. We see the police’s maps, fingerprints, interrogations and raids. These are evidence of police mobilization, but it is a mobilization that is always too late. Even Lohmann’s detective work with Beckert’s letter is too late. While he and his fellow police officers are in Beckert’s room, the *Ringverein* and the beggars have stumbled across the killer.

The police investigation has succeeded in that Lohmann and his fellow police officer have correctly followed a series of guesses and clues to Beckert’s windowsill, where they find physical proof that it is here that the murderer wrote his letter. The moment of discovery is one that combines archival work (the identification of the brand of cigarette Beckert smokes in the records of an earlier case) and a good guess (that the letter might have been written somewhere other than at a table). By this detective work is finally belated since the criminal gang and the beggars have already found Beckert. The

⁴³ Fritz Lang, and Thea von Harbou, *M: Protokoll*, Cinemathek 3 (Hamburg: Schroeder, 1963), 15.

criminals, in turn, have stumbled on Beckert by accident—due to the blind balloon seller’s chance reencounter with the murderer. The anxious attempt to keep Beckert in sight and to track him with the chalk mark “M” is a physical reenactment of the tenuous line of clues and guesses followed by the police. Both the criminals and the police finally catch the killer, but their efforts are only ever belated, as the coda of the film suggests.

Beckert is captured by accident. This means his capture provides no closure since his actual detection and arrest proceed not from the futile rationalization of police methods and the city, but from chance. In this, his capture seems to parallel the etiology of his sudden bloodlusts, which are likewise inexplicable and seemingly random. What we're left with at the end of the film, then, is a futilely rationalized, and paranoid city. We end with the injunction to watch.

The rational public sphere is subverted in the film. The accident that leads the beggars to realize Beckert’s identity is the start of a tenuous string of fleeting observations that threaten always to escape them. Finally, one beggar chalks an “M” on his hand and slaps Beckert on the back, marking him. Anton Kaes suggests that this seals Beckert’s fate: “To inscribe him in this way is to assign him a new identity that determines his subsequent actions. An anonymous ‘Man without qualities’ [...] becomes trapped in a bureaucratic system that disciplines by labelling. Beckert, transformed into M, is now a moving target, designated for the kill.”⁴⁵ But the label “M” misses its mark. As Kaes notes, the initial could stand for any of a variety of things. If Beckert has been transformed into M, he has been marked as a cipher—it is still not clear, it is never clear, what label could ever make sense of Beckert.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 16, 74-75.

Lang's *M* stages the failure of the sign as structured by the public search for the killer. Beckert is the fugitive signified that has escaped the signifiers that would make him legible as the sought *Lustmörder*.

The scene in which Beckert is visibly marked is a transfer from the beggar who is afraid he will lose him. It's unclear what he's thinking, but a fair guess would be that he's trying to mark Beckert with the *M* for *Murderer*. But the actual act is one of self-inscription and transfer that serves to underline both the transience of the signifier (it slides from Mensch to Mörder in this interpretation) and the suggestion of an underlying, unacknowledged homology (Mensch=Mörder in this interpretation). What is then enacted in the chase sequence is the attempt of the criminals and beggars to run the signifier to the ground—to make it stick.

The beggars trail Beckert to an office building, but he escapes inside just before closing time. When the work day is over, they anxiously scan the flow of people leaving the building to make sure he isn't among them. Beckert has hidden himself in the Gothic space of the attic, from which he must be disinterred by the members of the Ringverein. There follow two court scenes. The first in a basement that is, again, reminiscent of a Gothic space. The second, following quickly on the first, is the official court of law, whose authority is undercut by the association with the criminals' impromptu courtroom suggested by Lang's cut.

The association of hands and the letter M which is made in the transfer scene suggests a reinterpretation of the hand of the law (and other hands) that reach down for Beckert from off screen. If "Die Mörder sind unter uns," this scene also suggests—in a

⁴⁵ Kaes, *M*, 63.

manner that recuperates the suggestion of the fantastic suggested by the Gothic spaces of the attic and the cellar—that “Die Mörder sind wir.”

Keep Watching! The Saturation of Weimar with *Lustmord*'s Danger

An accident, rather than successful detection, led to Peter Kürten's arrest on the 24th of May 1930. On the 14th of May, Kürten watched as Maria Budlies, who had just arrived in Düsseldorf, was approached by a man who told her that he knew of a place she could spend the night. Kürten followed as the man led her through the streets and attempted to lead her into the woods. Budlies struggled against the man, and Kürten stepped forward to offer her his protection. The other man fled. Kürten took her first to his apartment and then, when she refused to sleep with him, out into the countryside where he raped her and then (convinced that she would never be able to find his apartment) let her go.⁴⁶ Budlies did not go to the police on her own, but did write a letter to a casual acquaintance in which she stated “daß sie einem Mörder in die Finger gefallen sei.”⁴⁷ This letter was misaddressed and the recipient went to the police, who found Budlies and had her lead them to the murderer's apartment.

Despite all efforts at police mobilization and detection, Berg writes, it was an accident that led to Kürten's capture: “Nicht der Mühe der Polizei, sondern einem baren Zufall und einer Unvorsichtigkeit des Verbrechers verdanken wir diese Überraschung.”⁴⁸

What the ending of Lang's film depicts is this failure of rationalized surveillance and the failure of public authority. That the beggars, the *Ringverein* and then the police managed to stumble across Beckert is no real consolation: it was the accident of his

⁴⁶ See Berg, *Der Sadist*, 103-105; and Lenk/Kaefer, *Leben und Wirken*, 209-210.

⁴⁷ Berg, *Der Sadist*, 105.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

whistle and not the rationality of the public authorities nor the savvy of the street that led to the murderer's capture. Fritz Lang claimed that his film wasn't particularly influenced by the Kürten case—that there had been many *Lustmörder* filling the pages of Weimar's newspapers and that Kürten had been only one of many.⁴⁹ One thing that might account for this curious disavowal (since the case of the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* could hardly have been unknown to him)⁵⁰ might be the consolidation and continuation of the *Lustmord* discourse that was involved in this case. After Haarmann and Denke, the Kürten case consolidated the idea of the *Lustmörder* as a recurring type. At the same time, this consolidation amplified Kürten's influence such that it continued after his death as a generalized paranoia. The public authorities executed Kürten; the *Düsseldorfer Mörder* lived on.

The day after Kürten's execution on the 2nd of July, 1931, the *12Uhr Blatt* ran a story entitled "Sittlichkeitsverbrecher suchen ihre Opfer" in which sexual violence is not only naturalized but made to change with the seasons: "Mit Beginn der wärmeren Jahreszeiten nimmt die Zahl der Sittlichkeitsverbrecher gewöhnlich zu."⁵¹ The article does not mention Kürten by name. Like Lang's *M*, the article ends with an admonishment to renewed surveillance.

⁴⁹ Lang/Harbou, *M: Protokoll*, 127, 123-4.

⁵⁰ Cf. Anton Kaes, "M," *British Film Institute: Film Classics*, Vol. 1 (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2003) 146-7.

⁵¹ "Die Polizei warnt: Sittlichkeitsverbrecher suchen ihre Opfer: Vorsicht bei Herrenbekanntschaften," *12 Uhr Blatt* 3 July 1931.

Bibliography

Primary Sources: Newspaper

- “15 000 Mark Belohnung! Der Massenmörder von Düsseldorf.” [*Kriminal-Magazin* Sonderausgabe (1930)]. *Leben und Wirken des Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf*. Eds. Elisabeth Lenk, and Roswitha Kaever. Leipzig: Rogner & Bernhard, 1974. 13-37.
- “‘Nicht die Spur einer Spur’.” *Kölnische Zeitung* 27 Nov. 1929, Abend-Ausgabe: [3].
- “Alle Spuren aufgegeben?: Düsseldorfer Mördersuche erfolglos!: Polizei nicht einen Schritt weiter gekommen!.” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 9 Dec. 1929: [16].
- “An den Stätten des Grauens: Mordpsychose in Düsseldorf: Lähmende Ungewißheit in der Stadt.” *Berliner illustrierte Nachtausgabe* 21 Nov. 1929: [3].
- Berndorff, H. R. “Der Ort des Grauens: An der Haniel-Mauer.” *Vossische Zeitung* 19 Nov. 1929: [8].
- “Bestien in Menschengestalt: Wieder ein Mordversuch an einem Kinde.” *Berliner Tageblatt* 8 June 1926, Morgen-Ausgabe: [20].
- “Bluttaten in Düsseldorf: Berliner Kriminalisten zur Aufklärung entsandt.” *Vorwärts* 1 Oct. 1929, Morgenausgabe: [6].
- “Das Nachtgespenst erneut vor Gericht.” *12 Uhr Blatt* 2 July 1931: [3].
- Degner. “Ein neuer Beitrag zum Thema ‘Hellsehen und Kriminalistik’.” *Kriminalistische Monatshefte* 3.9 (1929): 196-200.
- “Der ‘Fluch’ von Düsseldorf gewichen: Kürten ein typischer Sexualmörder.” *Kölnische Zeitung* 26 May 1930, Abend-Ausgabe: [1].
- “Der Düsseldorfer Mörder gefaßt: Der Hergang und die Taten.” *Kölnische Zeitung* 26 May 1930, Morgen-Ausgabe: [1-2].
- “Der Massenmörder von Hannover: Eine öffentliche Protestversammlung.” *Berliner Tageblatt* 11 July 1924, Abend-Ausgabe: [3].
- “Der neue Kindermord in Düsseldorf: Busdorf nach Düsseldorf beordert.” *Kölnische Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1929, Erste Sonntags-Ausgabe: [2].
- “Der Vampir von Düsseldorf: Eine neue Bluttat.” *Vorwärts* 14 Oct. 1929, Der Abend: Spätausgabe des ‘Vorwärts’: [2].
- “Der Vampir von Düsseldorf: Kürten berichtet ohne eine Spur von Reue.” *Vorwärts* 14 April 1931, Morgenausgabe: [5].
- “Der Vampir von Düsseldorf: Zwei Mädchen ermordet, ein drittes schwer verletzt.” *Berliner Tageblatt* 27 Aug. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe: [2].
- “Der Vampyr von Düsseldorf: Neuer Ueberfall auf eine Frau.” *Vorwärts* 26 Oct. 1929, Der Abend: Spätausgabe des ‘Vorwärts’: [2].
- “Die Düsseldorfer Mordserie: Ein zweites Schreiben über eine Mordtat.” *Berliner Tageblatt* 13 Nov. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe: [7].

- “Die falsche Spur: Erklärung des Kriminalrats Gennat.” *Berliner Tageblatt* 20 Nov. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe: [6].
- “Die Leiche des Dienstmädchens Hahn in Pappendell gefunden: DAS MORD-MYSTERIUM: Grosse Erregung in der Düsseldorfer Bevölkerung.” *Berliner Tageblatt* 16 Nov. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe: [4].
- “Die Polizei fahndet nach einem verdächtigen jungen Mann: Die Mördersuche in Düsseldorf: Aufrufe in den Tanzlokalen.” *Berliner illustrierte Nachtausgabe* 18 Nov. 1929: [3].
- “Die Polizei warnt: Sittlichkeitsverbrecher suchen ihre Opfer: Vorsicht bei Herrenbekanntschaften.” *12 Uhr Blatt* 3 July 1931: [2].
- M, Dr. “Das bisherige Ergebnis: Geistesschwacher Staußberg einer der Täter? Er gesteht, aber...??” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 11 Nov. 1929: [3].
- — —. “Der erste Fingerzeig!” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 11 Nov. 1929: [3].
- — —. “Jeder sucht einen Mörder.: Düsseldorf, die Stadt der Detektive: Arme Polizei, die allen Vermutungen nachgehen muß!” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 21 Nov. 1929: [3].
- — —. “Konnte mehr erreicht werden?: Wie weit ist man in Düsseldorf?: Erste Bilanz.” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 26 Nov. 1929: [3].
- “Düsseldorf in Schrecken: Der vermißte Schüler von der Polizei aufgegriffen.” *Vorwärts* 17 Nov. 1929, Morgenausgabe: [7].
- Eik, Peter. “Das Untier von Hannover: Berlin und Hannover.—Großmann und Haarmann.” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 12 July 1924: [3].
- “Ein Brief des Kindermörders.” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 11 Nov. 1929, Abendausgabe: [3].
- “Ein Massenmörder in Hannover verhaftet.” *B.Z. am Mittag* 2 July 1924: [2].
- “Ein weiteres Mordopfer: Die Leiche der Maria Hahn in Düsseldorf gefunden.” *Vorwärts* 16 Nov. 1929, Morgenausgabe: [6].
- “Eine neue Spur in Düsseldorf.” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 18 Nov. 1929, Abendausgabe: [3].
- “Erfolglose Suche in Düsseldorf.” *Vossische Zeitung* 22 Nov. 1929: [4].
- “Erfolgreiche Schlüsselprobe: Neue Spuren in der Düsseldorfer Mordserie.” *Berliner Morgenpost* 15 Nov. 1929: [3].
- Gennat, Ernst. “Die Düsseldorfer Sexualverbrechen.” *Kriminalistische Monatshefte*. 4.1 (1930): 2-7; 4.2 (1930): 27-32; 4.3 (1930): 49-54; 4.4 (1930): 79-85.
- — —. “Die Düsseldorfer Sexualverbrechen: (Fortsetzung und Schluß).” *Kriminalistische Monatshefte* 4.4 (1930): 79-85.
- — —. “Der Kürtenprozeß: (Düsseldorfer Sexualverbrechen).” *Kriminalistische Monatshefte* 5.5 (1931): 108-11.
- Georg, Manfred. “Haarmann—Mensch und Tier.” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 20 Dec. 1924: [3].
- “Haarmann und die Polizei.” *B.Z. am Mittag* 13 Dec. 1924: [2].
- “Haarmann von dem Breslauer Lustmörder überboten: Eine neue, beispiellos viehische Tat.” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 8 June 1926: [2].
- “Hanussen freigesprochen: Gericht will nicht richten, wo die Wissenschaft noch nicht entschieden.” *Vorwärts* 28 May 1930, Morgenausgabe: [6].
- Hyan, Hans. “Der Düsseldorfer Polizeiskandal.” *Die Weltbühne* 27.17 (1931): 613-17.
- Kaminski, Hanns-Erich. “Gespenster in Berlin: Ist das Nachtgespenst ein Vampir oder der Teufel?” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 14 Dec. 1929: [9].

- Karpfen, Fritz. "Mordwerkzeug des Düsseldorfer Unholds gefunden?: Die Entdeckung in der Laube." *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 19 Nov. 1929: [3].
- Karrasch, Alfred. "Die Stadt der unaufgeklärten Bluttaten: Zerschnittene Bilder des letzten Düsseldorfer Opfers.—Demonstrationen des Täters?" *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 14 Nov. 1929, Morgenausgabe: [2-3].
- Kiaulehn, Walter. "Der Würger von Düsseldorf." *Berliner Tageblatt* 17 Nov. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe: [5-6].
- Kiaulehn, Walther. "Der Mörder und das Grauen." *Berliner Tageblatt* 20 Nov. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe: [5-6].
- "Kommt Licht in das Dunkel?: Spuren des Düsseldorfer Mörders?: Zusammenhang zwischen der Ermordung der Breslauer Kinder Fehse und den Jetzigen Untaten?" *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 12 Nov. 1929: [15].
- Kronfeld, Arthur, and Erich Scheuermann. "Das lateinische M in der menschlichen Hand." *Die Woche* 31.41 (1929): 12, 14-5.
- "Kündigungsgrund: Gespenster: Aerztekonzferenz im Charlottenburger Amtsgericht." *B.Z. am Mittag* 21 Nov. 1929: [2].
- "Kürten neunmal zum Tode verurteilt: Der Verteidiger plaidiert auf Totschlag—Urteil auf Grund der Sachverständigengutachten: Eine Moralpredigt Kürtens." *Kölnische Zeitung* 23 Apr 1931, Morgen-Ausgabe: [5-6].
- lictor. "Von Großmann zum Düsseldorfer Mörder: Der Schrecken der Sexualmorde: Das schwierigste Gebiet der Kriminalistik." *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 18 Nov. 1929, Der Montag: Die illustrierte Montagszeitung: [7].
- "Lokaltermin mit dem Nachtgespenst: Das Erlebnis einer Belastungszeugin: Hat sie richtig gesehen?" *Berliner Morgenpost* 5 July 1931: [7].
- "Lustmord an einem achtjährigen Mädchen." *Kölnische Zeitung* 9 Feb. 1929, Abend-Ausgabe: [3].
- "Massenmord auch im Raxgebiet?: Zwei Tote gefunden, sechs Personen vermißt." *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 22 Nov. 1929, Morgenausgabe: [3].
- "Mörderspuren in Düsseldorf gefunden!: Bestimmte Vermutungen der Berliner Kriminalkommissare!: Eine Frau Helferin?: Man erkennt Zusammenhänge." *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 13 Nov. 1929: [1-2].
- "Neue Aufregung in Düsseldorf: Ein dritter Brief des Mörders/Ein neues Opfer?/Fieberhafte Suche der Polizei/Verbindungen nach Berlin?" *Vossische Zeitung* 17 Nov. 1929: [16].
- "Neue Berliner Spezialisten greifen ein!: Suche bisher erfolglos!" *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 21 Nov. 1929: [1].
- "Neue Brief der Düsseldorfer Bestie." *Kreuzzeitung* 22 Nov. 1929: [8].
- "Neue Funde in Denkes Wohnung: Bisher 13 Opfer des Unholds festgestellt." *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 31 Dec. 1924: [3].
- "Neuer Mord in Düsseldorf?" *Berliner Morgenpost* 21 Nov. 1929: [2].
- "Neues Opfer in Düsseldorf: Ein Knabe verschwunden." *Berliner Tageblatt* 16 Nov. 1929, Abend-Ausgabe: [6].
- "Nichts Neues in Düsseldorf." *Vossische Zeitung* 21 Nov. 1929: [4].
- "Noch ein Frauenmord?: Gegenstände einer Vermißten gefunden.—Eine neue geheimnisvolle Zuschrift." *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* 15 Nov. 1929, Morgenausgabe: [3].

- “Noch tappt man im Dunkeln: Wieviele Düsseldorfer Mörder? Polizei steht vor Rätseln!” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 11 Nov 1929: [3].
- Ossietsky, Carl von. “Der Verrat an Kürten.” *Die Weltbühne* 27.18 (1931): 642-44.
- “Polizei ihm gegenüber machtlos?: Nachtgespenst zieht durch Berlin: und man kann es nicht fassen!: Wie lange noch soll dieser Verbrecher-Spuk die Bevölkerung ängstigen können?!” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 5 Dec. 1929: [16].
- “Polizei versagt: Neuer Mord in Düsseldorf!: Heute der 7. Fall entdeckt: Diesmal ein kleines Mädchen.” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 9 Nov. 1929: [2].
- Pulver, Max. “Unheimliches Schrift des Mörders: Brutal, kaltblütig—und doch geisteskrank!” *Vossische Zeitung* 19 Nov. 1929: [3].
- Ruben, Regina. “Das Nachtgespenst.” *Die Weltbühne* 25.52 (1929): 963-64.
- “Sachverständigen: Kürten zurechnungsfähig!: Er hat alle Verbrechen mit Ueberlegung ausgeführt!: Todesurteil gewiß?: Analyse eines Unmenschen.” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 21 Apr 1931: [2].
- “Schwindel über Düsseldorf: Der Düsseldorfer Polizeipräsident wendet sich gegen die Sensationspresse.” *Vorwärts* 22 Nov. 1929, Morgenausgabe: [5].
- Steiner, Staatsanwalt. “Okkultismus und Strafrecht.” *Deutsche Juristen-Zeitung* 35.23 (1930): 1496-500.
- “Täter abermals entkommen: Drei neue Ueberfälle auf Frauen in Düsseldorf!: Vergebliche Nachforschungen der Polizei.” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 26 Oct. 1929: [16].
- “Ueberfallpsychose in Düsseldorf.” *Kölnische Zeitung* 9 Nov. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe: [3].
- “Vor der Entdeckung des Düsseldorfer Mörders?: Man kennt den Besitzer des blutigen Halstuchs: Die Verfolgung der neuesten Spur.” *B.Z. am Mittag* 19 Nov. 1929: [1-2].
- “Wegen achtzig Mark hingeschlachtet!: Zwei Bestien in Menschengestalt: Die Germersdorfer Bluttat vor Gericht.” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 21 June 1926: [3].
- “Wichtige Spur in Düsseldorf: Der Mörder der Hausangestellten Hahn festgestellt: Zwei bedeutungsvolle Zeugen: Der blonde Mann mit der Hornbrille.” *Berliner Tageblatt* 26 Nov. 1929, Morgen-Ausgabe: [7].
- “Wie der Düsseldorfer Mörder verhaftet wurde./Er ist durch einen Zufall festgestellt worden.” *Berliner Tageblatt* 25 May 1930, Morgen-Ausgabe: [4].

Primary Sources: Texts

- Berg, Karl. *Der Sadist: Gerichtsärztliches und Kriminalpsychologisches zu den Taten des Düsseldorfer Mörders Peter Kürten: Mit 39 Abbildungen, zwei Artikelserien des Kriminal-Polizeirats Ernst Gennat und der Verteidigungsrede von Dr. Alex Wehner*. 1931. Ed. Michael Farin. Munich: Belleville, 2004.
- Bettauer, Hugo. *Der Frauenmörder*. 1922. Vienna: R. Löwit, 1926.
- Alraune und der Golem*. Dir. Nils Chrisander. Deutsche Bioscop, 1919.
- Ewers, Hanns Heinz. *Das Cabaret*. Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1904.
- — —. *Edgar Allen Poe*. Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1906.
- Ewers, Hanns Heinz, ed. *Führer durch die moderne Literatur*. Berlin: Globus Verlag, 1906.
- Ewers, Hanns Heinz. “Abgeklopft.” *Der Roman der XII*. Berlin: K.W. Mecklenburg, 1909. 243-86.
- — —. *Der Zauberlehrling oder die Teufelsjäger*. 1909. Munich: Georg Müller, 1920.

- — —. *Vampir: Ein verwilderter Roman in Fetzen und Farben*. 1920. Berlin: Sieben Stäbe Verlags- und Druckerei-Gesellschaft, 1928.
- — —. *Horst Wessel: Ein deutsches Schicksal*. Stuttgart: Cotta, 1932.
- — —. “Die Spinne.” 1908. *Seltsame Geschichten*. Munich: Verlag Kurt Desch, 1964. 7-34.
- — —. *Alraune: Die Geschichte eines lebenden Wesens*. 1911. Munich: Herbig, 1973.
- Farin, Michael, and Christine Poszár, eds. *Die Haarmann Protokolle*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1995.
- Freud, Sigmund. “Das Unheimliche.” 1919. *Studienausgabe*. Eds. Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, and James Strachey. Vol. 4 [Psychologische Schriften]. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1970. 241-74.
- — —. *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*. 1905. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997.
- — —. “Die Verdrängung.” 1915. *Werkausgabe in zwei Bänden*. Eds. Anna Freud, and Ilse Grubrich-Simitis. 2 vols. Vol. 1 [Elemente der Psychoanalyse]. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2006. 435-44.
- — —. “Die Wahn und die Träume in W. Jensens ‘Gradiva’.” 1907. *Werkausgabe in zwei Bänden*. Eds. Anna Freud, and Ilse Grubrich-Simitis. Vol. 2 [Anwendungen der Psychoanalyse]. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2006. 68-127.
- Alraune*. Dir. Edmund Fritz, and Eugen Illés. Luna-Film, 1919.
- Das Abenteuer des Sibylle Brant*. Dir. Carl Froehlich. Henny Porten-Froelich Produktion GmbH, 1925.
- Alraune*. Dir. Henrick Galeen. Ama-Film, 1927.
- Gennat, Ernst. “Die Düsseldorf Sexualverbrechen (1930).” 1931. *Der Sadist: Gerichtsärztliches und Kriminalpsychologisches zu den Taten des Düsseldorf Mörders Peter Kürten: Mit 39 Abbildungen, zwei Artikelserien des Kriminal-Polizeirats Ernst Gennat und der Verteidigungsrede von Dr. Alex Wehner*. Ed. Michael Farin. Munich: Belleville, 2004. 7-68.
- Heindl, Robert. *Der Berufsverbrecher: Ein Beitrag zur Strafrechtsreform*. 1926. Berlin: Pan-Verlag R. Heise, 1928.
- Hoffmann, E.T.A. “Der Sandmann.” 1817. *Nachtstücke*. Ed. Eduard Grisebach. Vol. 3. E.T.A. Hoffmann’s sämtliche Werke in fünfzehn Bänden. Leipzig: Max Hesse’s Verlag, 1900. 7-39.
- Alraune, die Henkerstochter, genannt die rote Hanne*. Dir. Eugen Illés. Neutral-Film, 1918.
- Jensen, Wilhelm. *Gradiva: Ein pompejanisches Phantasiestück*. Dresden: Carl Reissner, 1903.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. “Der Detektiv-Roman: Ein philosophischer Traktat.” [1922-25]. *Schriften 1: Soziologie als Wissenschaft, Der Detektiv-Roman, Die Angestellten*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1971. 103-204.
- Kubin, Alfred. *Die andere Seite: Ein phantastischer Roman: Mit einer Selbstbiographie des Künstlers, zweiundfünfzig Abbildungen und einem Plan*. 1909. Ed. Hanns Heinz Ewers. Galerie der Phantasten 5. Munich: Georg Müller, 1917.
- Lang, Fritz, and Thea von Harbou. *M: Protokoll*. Cinemathek 3. Hamburg: Schroeder, 1963.

- “15 000 Mark Belohnung! Der Massenmörder von Düsseldorf (Sonderausgabe of the Kriminal-Magazin, 1930).” *Leben und Wirken des Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf*. Eds. Elisabeth Lenk, and Roswitha Kaever. Leipzig: Rogner & Bernhard, 1974. 13-37.
- — —, eds. *Leben und Wirken des Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf*. Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1974.
- Lessing, Theodor. *Haarmann: Die Geschichte eines Werwolfs*. Ed. Rudolf Leonhard. Außenseiter der Gesellschaft: Verbrechen der Gegenwart 6. Berlin: Die Schmiede, 1925.
- Liszt, Franz von, Ernst Delaquais, and Eduard Kohlrausch. *Strafgesetzbuch für das Deutsche Reich mit Nebengesetzen: Textausgabe mit Anmerkungen und Sachregister*. Deutsche Reichsgesetzgebung (: Guttentag'sche Sammlung deutscher Reichsgesetze) 2. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1928.
- Lombroso, Cesare. *Der Verbrecher (Homo Delinquens) in anthropologischer, ärztlicher und juristischer Beziehung*. 1890. Trans. M.O. Fraenkel. 2 vols. Hamburg: Verlagsanstalt u. Druckerei, 1890.
- Meyrink, Gustav. *Der Golem*. 1915. Augsburg: Weltbild, 1995.
- Musil, Robert. *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften: Erstes Buch Kapitel 1-80*. 1930. Ed. Adolf Frisé. Gesammelte Werke 1. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978.
- Alraune*. Dir. Richard Oswald. Richard Oswald-Produktion, 1930.
- Panter, Peter, [Kurt Tucholsky]. “Hanns Heinz Vampir.” *Die Weltbühne* 46 (1921): 511.
- Raether. “Ärztliche Begutachtung durch Dr. Raether.” *Leben und Wirken des Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf*. Eds. Elisabeth Lenk, and Roswitha Kaever. Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1974. 271-82.
- Schiller, Friedrich, and Hanns Heinz Ewers. *Der Geisterseher: Aus den Papieren des Grafen O***: 1. Teil hrsg. von Friedrich von Schiller; 2. Teil hrsg. von Hanns Heinz Ewers*. 1789. Munich: G. Müller, 1922.
- Schlegel, Friedrich. *Lucinde: Ein Roman*. 1799. Ed. Karl Konrad Polheim. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1963.
- Sioli. “Ärztliche Begutachtung durch Professor Sioli.” *Leben und Wirken des Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf*. Eds. Elisabeth Lenk, and Roswitha Kaever. Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1974. 256-71.
- Soergel, Albert. “Hanns Heinz Ewers.” *Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit: Eine Schilderung der deutschen Literatur der letzten Jahrzehnte von Albert Soergel*. Leipzig: R. Voigtländers Verlag, 1911. 817-21.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. 1886. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981.
- Strobl, Karl Hans. “Das Aderlaßmännchen.” 1909. *Lemuria: Seltsame Geschichten*. Galerie der Phantasten 4. München: Georg Müller, 1917. 231-54.
- — —. “Das Grabmal auf dem Père Lachaise.” 1913. *Lemuria: Seltsame Geschichten*. Galerie der Phantasten 4. München: Georg Müller, 1917. 191-230.
- — —. “Die arge Nonn’.” 1911. *Lemuria: Seltsame Geschichten*. Galerie der Phantasten 4. München: Georg Müller, 1917. 271-313.
- Walpole, Horace. *The Castle of Otranto*. 1764.

— — —. “The Castle of Otranto.” 1764. *The Castle of Otranto, by Horace Walpole; Vathek, by William Beckford, The Vampire, by John Polidori: Three Gothic Novels.* Ed. E.F. Bleiler. New York: Dover, 1966. 1-106.

Secondary Literature

- Albrecht, Richard. “Von Roman der XII zum Kollektivroman: Wir lassen uns nicht verschaukeln: Aspekte literarischer Gemeinschaftsproduktionen in der deutschen Literatur des 20 Jahrhunderts.” *Neohelicon: Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* 14.1 (1987): 269-85.
- Andriopoulos, Stefan. “Ungeheuer, Vampire, Werwölfe: Fiktionale Strategien der Horrorkliteratur in kriminologischen Darstellungen von Serienmördern.” *Serienmord: Kriminologische und kulturwissenschaftliche Skizzierungen eines ungeheuerlichen Phänomens.* Eds. Frank J. Robertz, and Alexandra Thomas. Munich: Belleville, 2004. 314-29.
- Bakhtin, M.M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin.* Trans. Caryl Emerson, and Michael Holquist. University of Texas Press Slavic Series 1. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.
- Baron, Lawrence. “Noise and Degeneration: Theodor Lessing's Crusade for Quiet.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 17.1 (1982): 165-78.
- Beiser, Frederick C. “Early Romanticism and the *Aufklärung*.” *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions.* Ed. James Schmidt. Berkeley: U of California P, 1996. 317-29.
- Bernheimer, Charles, and Claire Kahane, eds. *In Dora's Case: Freud-Hysteria-Feminism.* 2nd ed. New York: Columbia UP, 1990.
- Bhaskar, Roy. *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences.* 1979. 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Bischoff, Eva. “Mee/at Your Neighbors: Dangerous Encounters in Weimar Germany.” *Perspectives on Endangerment.* Eds. Graham Huggan, and Stephan Klasen. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2005. 97-108.
- — —. “‘Between Animal Instinct and Morality’: The Construction of White Masculinity in Medico-psychiatric Discourse in Weimar Germany.” *Historicising Whiteness: Transnational Perspectives on the Construction of an Identity.* Ed. Katherine Ellinghaus. Melbourne University conference and seminar series 15. Melbourne: RMIT Publishing, 2007. 427-35.
- Bleiler, E.F. “Horace Walpole and *The Castle of Otranto*.” *The Castle of Otranto, by Horace Walpole; Vathek, by William Beckford, The Vampire, by John Polidori: Three Gothic Novels.* Ed. E.F. Bleiler. New York: Dover, 1966. vii-xviii.
- Botting, Fred. *Gothic.* Abingdon [UK]: Routledge, 1996.
- Boyd, Amanda. “Demonizing Esotericism: The Treatment of Spirituality and Popular Culture in the Works of Gustav Meyrink.” Diss. University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 2005.
- — —. “Gustav Meyrink and the Evolution of the Literary Vampire: From Feared Bloodsucker to Esoteric Phenomenon.” *Neophilologus* 90 (2006): 601-20.
- Bradbury, Malcolm, and James McFarlane, eds. *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature: 1890-1930.* 1976. London: Penguin Books, 1991.

- Brandenburg, Ulrike. *Hanns Heinz Ewers (1871-1943): Von der Jahrhundertwende zum Dritten Reich*. Studien zur Deutschen und Europäischen Literatur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts 48. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2003.
- Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale UP, 1995.
- Brückweh, Kerstin. "Unerwünschte Expertise: Theodor Lessing und der Fall Haarmann 1924/25." *Lustmord: Medialisierungen eines kulturellen Phantasmas um 1900*. Eds. Susanne Komfort-Hein, and Susanne Scholz. Königstein: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 2007. 149-64.
- Büsser, Martin. *Lustmord—Mordlust: Das Sexualverbrechen als ästhetisches Sujet im 20. Jahrhundert*. Mainz: Ventil Verlag, 2000.
- Butler, Judith. "'Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All': Althusser's Subjection." *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjugation*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997. 106-31.
- — —. "Subjection, Resistance, Resignification: Between Freud and Foucault." *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjugation*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997. 83-105.
- Clute, John, and John Grant. "Germany." *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*. St. Martin's Press, 1999. 397-99.
- Cole, Simon A., and Rachel Dioso-Villa. "CSI and its Effects: Media, Juries, and the Burden of Proof." *New England Law Review* 41.3 (2007): 435-69.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Différance." *Critical Theory Since 1965*. Eds. Hazard Adams, and Leroy Searle. Tallahassee: Florida State UP, 1986. 120-36.
- Eisner, Lotte. *The Haunted Screen*. Trans. Roger Greaves. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969.
- Elder, Sace Elizabeth. "Murder Scenes: Criminal Violence in the Public Culture and Private Lives of Weimar Berlin." Diss. U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2002.
- Englisch, Paul. "Die sexuelle Frage in Literatur, Kunst, Presse und Film der Zwanziger Jahre." *Zwischen zwei Katastrophen (früher: Sittengeschichte der Nachkriegszeit)*. Eds. Magnus Hirschfeld, Andreas Gaspar, and Friedrich E. Ziehlke. 2nd ed. Sittengeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts 2. Hanau a.M.: Karl Schustek, 1966. 217-53.
- Evans, Richard J. *Rituals of Retribution: Capital Punishment in Germany, 1600-1986*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996.
- Farin, Michael, and Christine Poszár, eds. *Die Haarmann Protokolle*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1995.
- Föllmer, Moritz, and Rüdiger Graf, eds. *Die "Krise" der Weimarer Republik: Zur Kritik eines Deutungsmuster*. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2005.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Das Unbehagen in der Kultur." 1930. *Werkausgabe in zwei Bänden*. Eds. Anna Freud, and Ilse Grubrich-Simitis. 2 vols. Vol. 2 [Anwendungen der Psychoanalyse]. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2006. 367-424.
- Frisby, David. *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin*. Ed. Thomas McCarthy. Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. "Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method." *History Workshop* 9 (1980): 5-36.

- Goddu, Teresa A. *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. 1962. Cambridge: Polity, 1989.
- — —. “Modernity versus Postmodernity.” 1981. Trans. Seyla Ben-Habib. *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*. Ed. Clive Cazeaux. London: Routledge, 2000. 268-77.
- Hake, Sabine. “Saxa loquuntur: Freud's Archaeology of the Text.” *boundary 2* 20.1 (1993): 146-73.
- Hall, Murray G. *Der Fall Bettauer*. Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 1978.
- — —. *Österreichische Verlagsgeschichte, 1918-1938: Geschichte des österreichischen Verlagswesens*. Vol. 2 [Belletristische Verlage der Ersten Republik]. Vienna: Böhlau, 1985.
- Helduser, Urte. “Von Giftmörderinnen und Werwölfen: Hania Siebenpfeiffer untersucht Gewaltdiskurse in der Weimarer Republik.” *literaturkritik.de*. March 3, 2006. http://www.literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez_id=9192&ausgabe=200603 (accessed August 3, 2008).
- Hermant, Jost. “Neue Sachlichkeit: Ideology, Lifestyle, or Artistic Movement?” *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*. Eds. Thomas W. Kniesche, and Stephen Brockmann. 1994. 57-68.
- Herzog, Harold R. (Todd), III. “Criminalistic Fantasy: Imagining Crime in Weimar Germany (Alfred Doebelin, Peter Kuerten, Fritz Lang).” Diss. U of Chicago, 2001.
- Herzog, Todd. “Crime Stories: Criminal, Society, and the Modernist Case History.” *Representations* 80 (2002): 34-61.
- Höcker, Arne. “Die Lust am Text: Lustmord und Lustmord-Motiv.” *Lustmord: Medialisierungen eines kulturellen Phantasmas um 1900*. Eds. Susanne Komfort-Hein, and Susanne Scholz. Königstein: Helmer, 2007. 37-51.
- — —. “Eine Ordnung des Verbrechens: Epistemologie und Ästhetik des Lustmords in Kriminologie und Literatur um 1900.” Diss. Johns Hopkins, 2008.
- Hoffmeister, Maren. “Der Körper des Täters in der Deutung des Lustmords.” *Kriminologisches Journal* 35.3 (2003): 212-23.
- — —. “Autopoiesis und Lustmord: Materialität des Rechts im Spannungsfeld zwischen dem Rechtssystem und populären Ideen.” *Paragrana: Internationale Zeitschrift für historische Anthropologie* 15.1 (2006): 100-13.
- Huysen, Andreas. “The Disturbance of Vision in Vienna Modernism.” *Modernism/modernity* 5.3 (1998): 33-47.
- Jelavich, Peter. *Berlin Cabaret*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992.
- Jenkins, Philip. *Using Murder: The Social Construction of Serial Homicide*. New York: A. de Gruyter, 1994.
- Johnston, William M. *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1972.
- Jones, Ernest. *Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*. Abr. ed. New York: Basic, 1974.
- Juhnke, Karl. *Das Erzählmotiv des Serienmörders im Spielfilm: Eine filmwissenschaftliche Untersuchung: Mit einem Geleitwort von Prof. Dr. Kiefer*. Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitäts-Verlag, 2001.
- Kaes, Anton. *M*. 2000. BFI Film Classics. London: BFI Publishing, 2001.

- — —. “M.” *British Film Institute: Film Classics*. Vol. 1. New York: Taylor and Francis, 2003. 138-69.
- Kailer, Thomas. “Werwölfe, Triebtäter, minderwertige Psychopathen: Bedingungen von Wissenspopularisierung: Der Fall Haarmann.” *Wissenspopularisierung: Konzepte der Wissensverbreitung im Wandel*. Ed. Carsten Kretschmann. Wissenskultur und gesellschaftlicher Wandel 4. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2003. 323-59.
- Kayser, Wolfgang. *Das Groteske*. Oldenburg: Gerhard Stalling Verlag, 1957.
- Keilson-Lauritz, Martina. “Theodor Lessing und der Fall Haarmann.” *‘Sinngebung des Sinnlosen’: Zum Leben und Werk des Kulturkritikers Theodor Lessing (1872-1933)*. Ed. Elke-Vera Kotowski. Haskala Wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen 31. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2006. 95-110.
- Keiner, Reinhold. *Hanns Heinz Ewers und der phantastische Film*. Studien zur Filmgeschichte 4. Hildesheim: Olms, 1988.
- Knobloch, Marion. *Hanns Heinz Ewers: Bestseller-Autor in Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik*. Marburg: Tectum, 2002.
- Kompisch, Kathrin, and Frank Otto. *Bestien des Boulevards: Die Deutschen und ihre Serienmörder*. Leipzig: Miltitzke, 2003.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. “Der Detektiv-Roman: Ein philosophischer Traktat.” [1922-25]. *Schriften 1: Soziologie als Wissenschaft, Der Detektiv-Roman, Die Angestellten*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1971. 103-204.
- Kristeva, Julia. “Approaching Abjection.” 1980. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. European Perspectives. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. 1-31.
- — —. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. 1980. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. European Perspectives. New York: Columbia UP, 1982.
- Kugel, Wilfried. *Der Unverantwortliche: Das Leben des Hanns Heinz Ewers*. Düsseldorf: Grupelli Verlag, 1992.
- — —. “Zeittafel zur Biographie von Hanns Heinz Ewers.” *Der Zauberlehrling oder Die Teufelsjäger; Alraune*. Ed. Wilfried Kugel. Gesammelte Werke 1. Erfstadt: Area, 2005. 789-800.
- Lacan, Jacques. “Of the Gaze as Objet Petit a.” Trans. Alan Sheridan. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan*. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: Norton, 1998. 67-122.
- Lang, Fritz, and Gero Gandert. “Fritz Lang über M: Ein Interview.” *M: Protokoll*. Cinemathek 3. Hamburg: Schroeder, 1963. 123-28.
- Lang, Raimund. “Der Dramaturg von Prag - Karl Hans Strobl als studentischer Dichter.” *Zwischen Weltoffenheit und nationaler Verengung*. Eds. Frische, and Becker. *Historica academica* 39. Würzburg: Studentlichgeschichtliche Vereinigung des Coburger Convents, 2000. 137-66.
- Largier, Niklaus. *In Praise of the Whip: A Cultural History of Arousal*. Trans. Graham Harman. New York: Zone Books, 2007.
- Lee, Christopher A. “E.T.A. Hoffmann's ‘Mademoiselle de Scudéry’ as a Forerunner of the Detective Story.” *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 15.2 (1994): 63-73.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. 1974. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

- Lenk, Elisabeth, and Roswitha Kaefer, eds. *Leben und Wirken des Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf*. Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1974.
- Lenman, R. J. "Art, Society, and the Law in Wilhelmine Germany: The Lex Heinze." *Oxford German Studies* 8 (1973): 86-113.
- Lethen, Helmut. *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*. Trans. Don Reneau. Weimar and Now: German Cultural Criticism 17. Berkeley: U of California P, 2002.
- Lewis, Beth Irwin. "Lustmord: Inside the Windows of the Metropolis." *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis*. Eds. Charles W. Haxthausen, and Heidrun Suhr. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990. 111-40.
- Lieberman, Ben. "Testing Peukert's Paradigm: The 'Crisis of Classical Modernity' in the 'New Frankfurt,' 1925-1930." *German Studies Review* 17.2 (1994): 287-303.
- Lindner, Martin. "Der Mythos 'Lustmord': Serienmörder in der deutschen Literatur, dem Film und der bildenden Kunst zwischen 1892 und 1932." *Verbrechen--Justiz--Medien: Konstellationen in Deutschland von 1900 bis zur Gegenwart*. Eds. Joachim Lindner, and Claus-Michael Ort. Tübingen: 1999. 273-305.
- Lloyd-Smith, Alan. *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction*. New York: Continuum, 2004.
- Melzer, William. "Introduction." *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*. New York: Italica Press, 1993.
- Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. 1977. Trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982.
- Meyer, Heinrich. "Bestseller Research Problems." *The German Bestseller in the 20th Century: A Complete Bibliography and Analysis 1925-1940*. Ed. Heinrich Meyer. German Studies in America 2. Bern: Herbert Lang, 1968. ix-xv.
- Mort, Frank. *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England since 1830*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Mücke, Dorothea E. von. *The Seduction of the Occult and the Rise of the Fantastic Tale*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." 1975. *Feminism and Film Theory*. Ed. Constance Penley. New York: Routledge, 1988. 57-68.
- Noveck, Beth. "Hugo Bettauer and the Political Culture of the First Republic." *Austria In The Nineteen Fifties*. Eds. Günter Bischof, and Anton Pelinka. Contemporary Austrian Studies 3. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1995. 138-70.
- Petro, Patrice. "Perceptions of Difference: Woman as Spectator and Spectacle." *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*. Ed. Katharina von Ankum. Berkeley: U of California P, 1997. 41-66.
- Peukert, Detlev J.K. *Die Weimarer Republik: Krisenjahre der Klassischen Moderne*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1987.
- Podlas, Kimberlianne. "'The CSI Effect': Exposing the Media Myth." *Fordham Intellectual Property, Media and Entertainment Law Journal* 16.2 (2006): 429-65.
- Poley, Jared. *Decolonization in Germany: Weimar Narratives of Colonial Loss and Foreign Occupation*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005.
- Reuveni, Gideon. *Reading Germany: Literature and Consumer Culture in Germany Before 1933*. Trans. Ruth Morris. New York: Berghahn Books, 2006.

- Richards, Donald Ray. *The German Bestseller in the 20th Century: A Complete Bibliography and Analysis 1925-1940*. Ed. Heinrich Meyer. German Studies in America 2. Bern: Herbert Lang, 1968.
- Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. 2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980.
- Rumold, Rainer. *The Janus Face of the German Avant-Garde: From Expressionism to Postmodernism*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2002.
- Ruthner, Clemens. *Unheimliche Wiederkehr: Interpretationen zu den gespenstischen Romanfiguren bei Ewers, Meyrink, Soyka, Spunda und Strobl*. Studien zur phantastischen Literatur 10. Meitingen: Corian-Verlag, 1993.
- — —. “Andererseits: Die deutschsprachige Phantastik des frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts in ihrem kulturhistorischen Kontext.” *Der Demiurg ist ein Zwitter: Alfred Kubin und die deutschsprachige Phantastik*. Eds. Winfried Freund, Johann Lachinger, and Clemens Ruthner. Munich: Fink, 1999. 165-80.
- Schwab, Angelica. *Serienkiller in Wirklichkeit und Film: Störenfreid oder Stabilisator? Eine sozioästhetische Untersuchung*. Nordamerikastudien 1. Hamburg: 2001.
- Sedgwick, Eve K. *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*. London: Methuen, 1986.
- Seltzer, Mark. *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Sennewald, Michael. *Hanns Heinz Ewers: Phantastik und Jugendstil*. Eds. Willi Flemming, and Kurt Wagner. Deutsche Studien 22. Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1973.
- Siebenpfeiffer, Hania. “Kreatur und kalter Killer – Der Lustmörder als Paradigma männlicher Gewalt in der Moderne.” *Gewalt und Geschlecht: Bilder, Literatur und Diskurse im 20. Jahrhundert*. Eds. Hanno Ehrlicher, and Hania Siebenpfeiffer. Große Reihe: Literatur – Kultur – Geschlecht 23. Cologne: Böhlau, 2002. 109-30.
- — —. „Böse Lust“: *Gewaltverbrechen in Diskursen der Weimarer Republik*. Cologne: Böhlau, 2005.
- Siebers, Tobin. *The Romantic Fantastic*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984.
- Sloterdijk, Peter. *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983.
- Smith, Andrew. *Gothic Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008.
- Spector, Scott. *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin de Siècle*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2000.
- — —. “Modernism without Jews: A Counter-Historical Argument.” *Modernism/modernity* 13.4 (2006): 615-33.
- Speitkamp, Winfried. “Jugendschutz und kommerzielle Interessen: Schunddebatte und Zensur in der Weimarer Republik.” *Konsumpolitik: Die Regulierung Des Privaten Verbrauchs Im 20. Jahrhundert*. Ed. Hartmut Berghoff. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999. 47-76.
- Stockhorst, Stefanie. “Populäre Kulturvermittlung nach 1900: Selbst- und Fremdbilder in den Reiseberichten von Hanns Heinz Ewers.” *Fallstudien zu Wegen ins deutschsprachige System*. Eds. Florian Krobb, and Sabine Strümper-Krobb. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001. 167-81.
- Tatar, Maria. “The Houses of Fiction: Toward a Definition of the Uncanny.” *Comparative Literature* 33.2 (1981): 167-82.
- — —. *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995.

- Theweleit, Klaus. *Männerphantasien: Band 1: Frauen, Fluten, Körper, Geschichte*. 1977. Munich: Piper, 2000.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. 1970. Trans. Richard Howard. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1975.
- Tyler, Tom R. "Viewing CSI and the Threshold of Guilt: Managing Truth and Justice in Reality and Fiction." *The Yale Law Journal* 115.5 (2006): 1050-85.
- Vidler, Anthony. *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.
- Walkowitz, Judith. *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*. Women in Culture and Society. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.
- Warwick, Alexandra. "The Scene of the Crime: Inventing the Serial Killer." *Social Legal Studies* 15.4 (2006): 552-69.
- Webber, Andrew. *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature*. New York: Oxford UP, 1996.
- Wenig, Alexandra. "Serienmord in Deutschland 1900-1945: Eine historische Betrachtung des Phänomens serieller Tötung." *Serienmord: Kriminologische und kulturwissenschaftliche Skizzierungen eines ungeheuerlichen Phänomens*. Eds. Frank J. Robertz, and Alexandra Thomas. Munich: Belleville, 2004. 91-109.
- Wetzell, Richard F. *Inventing the Criminal: A History of German Criminology, 1880-1945*. Studies in Legal History. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2000.
- Willet, John. *Expressionism*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970.
- Wright, Elizabeth. *Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 1998.