



Environmental Fantasies: Mountains, Cities, and Heimat in Weimar Cinema

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Environmental Fantasies:
Mountains, Cities, and Heimat in Weimar Cinema

A dissertation presented

by

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to

The Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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Abstract

This dissertation analyzes filmic environments within Weimar cinema and argues for a concept of Heimat in which the landscapes of modernity are embedded into the environments of home. Mountain films such as *Der heilige Berg* enact a visual mechanization of the Alpine landscape; industrial films such as *Sprengbagger 1010* constellate pastoral and modernized scenes in a similar fashion to contemporary Heimat club journals; and urban films such as *Menschen am Sonntag* reveal the ways in which the city figures as Heimat within Weimar film. Further, film journals display contradictory discourses surrounding Heimat before the standardization of idyllic rural scenes in the postwar *Heimatfilm* genre.

These filmic environments interact with the real-world environment in complex and multi-directional ways. They participate in the development of new ways of seeing, marketing, and using the environment and function as nodes within sociopolitical debates regarding human communities and physical landscapes. These findings complicate arguments made by environmental historians who have claimed that the German notion of Heimat, encompassing both natural and cultural elements, might offer a useful alternative to the essentialism of the American wilderness ideal. In fact, the image of Heimat as a rural nature-culture hybrid, at least within film, only became dominant in the Nazi era. Within Weimar cinema, the term Heimat represents the focal point of a much more diverse and open discussion of environmental values.

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To Christine

Note

This work contains numerous quotations that were originally printed in German. Unless an English-language version is cited, the translation is my own.

In *Heimatfilm* we are allowed to dream. There the forests rustle, the heath blooms, the lovers meet under the linden tree, the evening bells ring, and traditional parades fill the movie screen.

Wolfgang Liebeneiner, "What is a *Heimatfilm*?"

Heimat was once the heath, the mountain, the linden tree. But that was a long time ago. Fifty years ago a rental apartment could still become a Heimat. A family lived there for twenty years, and the children married into the next block around the corner. One hundred years ago Heimat was a force. Today it is a bourgeois resentment, or more precisely: a requisite for tears with which German film does penance at the box office.

Hellmut Haffner, "The *Heimatfilm* Problem"

Introduction:
Negotiating Filmic Environments

This study examines the German idea of *Heimat* as represented in Weimar cinema.¹ It considers how mountains, cities, and rural settings interact on screen, as well as how they interact with transformations in the physical, non-filmic environment. The project builds on a growing body of film ecocriticism. This introduction begins by situating the present study among past analyses of film and the environment and then lays out the argument to be developed in the following chapters.

The words “landscape,” “environment,” and “nature” will recur throughout this study. Each of these words occupies the center of a broad field of discourse and no single definition would do any one of them justice. Still, an introduction to each word is helpful as a guide. “Landscape” comes from landscape painting, and refers etymologically to a piece of land that is seen or framed. The word is frequently used to describe discreet segments of the physical world, either in the sense of a specific setting such as an urban or rural landscape, or as in a portion of land that is literally framed in a work of visual art.² “Environment” implies a perceiving subject within a

¹ I have chosen not to italicize “*Heimat*” because the word is used frequently in this study and because a number of italicized film titles include the word. In general, however, German words are in italics.

² For a useful overview of the landscape painting tradition and its relevance to cinema, see Tom Gunning, “Landscape and the Fantasy of Moving Pictures: Early Cinema’s Phantom Rides,” in *Cinema and Landscape*, ed. Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2010), 30–70.

landscape. While a landscape is seen from outside, an environment is experienced from within.³ “Nature” is an extremely complex word in both English and German⁴ and has been the subject of much debate.⁵ In this study, “nature” is employed simply

³ Jakob von Uexküll’s discussion of “Umwelt” is crucial to our present understanding of environments. Prior writers had used the word “milieu” to refer to an organism’s material surroundings and took a deterministic approach: the milieu largely determined the course of an organism’s existence. In Uexküll’s writings, much more importance is given to individual subjectivity and perception: the environment is seen as the product of a perceiving subject. See *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans: With a Theory of Meaning*, trans. Joseph D. O’Neill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010). For more on “milieu,” see Armin Hajman Koller, *The Theory of Environment* (Menasha, WI: Banta, 1918). For a discussion of these terms in the context of cinema design, see Paul Dobryden, “Cinema as Environment: The Emergence of German Film Culture” (PhD Diss., University of California at Berkeley, 2014), 89–91.

⁴ Raymond Williams calls “nature” the most complex word in the English language. See *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Flamingo, 1983), 219. Gernot Böhme makes a similar claim for the term “Natur” in German; see *Natürlich Natur: Über Natur im Zeitalter ihrer technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), 11.

⁵ The literature on “nature” is vast; here I list only a few key works that can be used as starting points. For an introduction to ideas of nature and the environment, see Kate Soper, *What is Nature?* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); *Environment: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, ed. Glenn Adelson, James Engell, Brent Ranalli, and Kevin Van Anglen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); and Donald Worster, *Nature’s Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). For a survey of changing European concepts of the relationship between humans and nature, see Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (New York: Pantheon, 1983). William Cronon emphasizes cultural constructions and interpretations of “nature” in “A Place for Stories: Nature, History and Narrative,” *Journal of American History* 78 (March 1992): 1347–1376; and *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: Norton, 1996). In the European context, texts from the Enlightenment and Romanticism offer a crucial background for the understanding of nature. See Kate Rigby, *Topographies of the Sacred: The Poetics of Place in European Romanticism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004); and *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, ed. Laurence Coupe (London: Routledge, 2000). Numerous scholars have emphasized how ideas of nature figure within the dynamics of power, race, and gender. See Carolyn Merchant, “Nature as Female,” in *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco:

to refer to the non-human world of plants, minerals, and non-human animals. The present study aims to use these three key terms to help achieve a closer understanding of Weimar cinema's filmic environments, while not allowing their complexities to get in the way of this overarching goal.

The term "Heimat," literally translated as "home" or "homeland," also requires an initial explanation. Although this study explores changing historical uses of the term Heimat, certain traits remain constant throughout the concept's history. Heimat constitutes a relationship between humans and their physical surroundings. It also invokes an idea of community, of humans living in a shared space. From this simple idea, however, ambiguities and complexities arise. One community sharing a space can easily entail the exclusion of outsiders. Heimat is often invoked as a self-evident common denominator to unite a group of people—not unlike the formation of national communities as analyzed by Benedict Anderson⁶—and the term is therefore susceptible to abuse and propaganda for nationalistic or partisan

Harper, 1982); *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World*, ed. Alison H. Deming and Lauret E. Savoy (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2003); Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?," *Feminist Studies* 1 (October 1972): 5–31; and Raymond Williams, "Ideas of Nature" [1972], in Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays* (London: Verso, 1980), 67–85. Recent scholars have sought new ways to think about nature in light of humans' increasing impact on the physical world. See Will Steffen, Jacques Grinevald, Paul Crutzen, and John McNeill, "The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A* 369.1938 (March 2011): 842–867; Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Random House, 1989); and Böhme, *Natürlich Natur*.

⁶ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

purposes. It likewise can suggest a sense of timeless and unchanging tradition.⁷ This point is crucial because, perhaps more than anything, Heimat is a product of change over time: only when attachments to specific places and communities can no longer be taken for granted do they become reified through the idea of Heimat. The diverse meanings of Heimat, as well as its traits such as nostalgic escapism, have been well studied.⁸ Yet certain historical variations in Heimat discourse have not received close attention. The diverse uses of the term within Weimar film present one such gap in present scholarship and will be examined in the chapters that follow.

Ecocriticism and Film

In examining the intersection of German films with concepts of nature, environment, landscape, and Heimat, this project is part of the burgeoning field of ecocriticism.⁹ It trains the lens of ecocriticism onto an area of German culture that merits closer environmental analysis than it has hitherto received—namely the prominent Weimar film genres built around the specific environments of mountains, cities, and rural landscapes. It builds on a number of noteworthy works that have

⁷ See Peter Blickle's discussion of Heimat in relation to nationalism and a "mythicized sense of time" in *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), 42–56.

⁸ The secondary literature on Heimat is discussed at greater length in Chapter One. For an introduction to the history and various meanings of the term, see Andrea Bastian, *Der Heimat-Begriff: eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung in verschiedenen Funktionsbereichen der deutschen Sprache* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995) and Blickle, *Heimat*.

⁹ See Adrian Ivakhiv, "Green Film Criticism and Its Futures," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 15.2 (Summer 2008): 1–28. Ivakhiv's article offers a comprehensive introduction to past work in film ecocriticism.

studied film and the environment. Early ecocritical film studies, starting around 1999, examined the overtly environmental content of film, including documentary, mainstream, and independent cinema as well as specific genres. A number of scholars have offered detailed histories and analyses of animal films.¹⁰ Others have examined art cinema and suggested that experimental films can offer a sort of Edenic experience within modernity¹¹ or can retrain perception to teach us to think in more sustainable ways.¹² Several books have scrutinized mainstream Hollywood cinema for its environmental content,¹³ including analyses of specific genres such as

¹⁰ Gregg Mitman, *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Derek Bousé, *Wildlife Films* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Jonathan Burt, *Animals in Film* (London: Reaktion, 2000); Cynthia Chris, *Watching Wildlife* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

¹¹ Scott MacDonald. *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). MacDonald's title refers to Leo Marx's classic study of the "machine in the garden" trope in American literature. See Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

¹² See Paula Willoquet-Maricondi, "Shifting Paradigms: From Environmentalist Films to Ecocinema," in *Framing the World: Explorations in Ecocriticism and Film*, ed. Paula Willoquet-Maricondi (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 43–61 and Scott MacDonald, "The Ecocinema Experience," in *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, ed. Stephen Rust, Salma Monani, and Sean Cubitt (New York: Routledge, 2013), 17–41.

¹³ David Ingram argues that mainstream film is worth studying because it mirrors the complex and contradictory status of environmental discourse in American society. Ultimately, he suggests that the profit motive and narrative requirements of Hollywood film undermine their seemingly green messages. See *Green Screen: Environmentalism and Hollywood Cinema* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2000). For a study that attempts to rehabilitate Hollywood cinema as an environmentally helpful cultural form, see Pat Brereton, *Hollywood Utopia: Ecology in Contemporary American Cinema* (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2005).

Westerns, Disney animation, action films, and road movies.¹⁴ Within the field of film scholarship, all of these books provide the equivalent of what Lawrence Buell calls the “first wave” of literary ecocriticism in that they examine overt portrayals of nature within film.¹⁵

Mediation and Ecologies

In their discussions of how film participates in a complex process of mediation between humans, the natural world, and the built environment, Sean Cubitt and Adrian Ivakhiv have moved away from a focus on overtly environmental motifs to probe the complexities of filmic landscapes.¹⁶ Cubitt is fully aware that film emerges from a physical world and impacts that world and that none of the relationships between humans, physical world, and film-world are self-evident. He

¹⁴ See *The Landscape of Hollywood Westerns: Ecocriticism in an American Film Genre*, ed. Rebecca Carmichael (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2006); Robin L. Murray and Joseph K. Heumann, *Ecology and Popular Film: Cinema on the Edge* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), which situates environmental film study within discussions of relativist and postmodern approaches to environmental history; and David Whitley, *The Idea of Nature in Disney Animation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), a sophisticated discussion of Disney’s relationship to the natural world. Two other books by Murray and Heumann offer additional studies of Westerns and animated features; their analyses tend to be slightly less rigorous than those of Carmichael and Whitley, but are nonetheless useful for scholars interested in these specific genres. See Robin L. Murray and Joseph K. Heumann, *That’s All, Folks: Ecocritical Readings of American Animated Features* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011) and *Gunfight at the Eco-Corral: Western Cinema and the Environment* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

¹⁵ See Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and the Literary Imagination* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 21.

¹⁶ Sean Cubitt, *EcoMedia* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005); Adrian J. Ivakhiv, *Ecologies of the Moving Image: Cinema, Affect, Nature* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013).

describes the entire process of filmic world-making as a process of mediation and creation of meaning. In *EcoMedia*, he describes this as a negotiation between three factors: (1) *physis*, i.e., the physical world, including nature but not necessarily excluding humans and emphasizing the processual status of the physical environment; (2) *polis*, which encompasses both humans and human society; and (3) *techne*, comprising not only technology and machines, but also skills, language, and craft—in essence, the tools by which humans mediate between *physis* and *polis*.¹⁷ His three-part analytic structure gives more attention to interaction and change than is possible from mutually exclusive binary terms such as “nature” and “culture.” Humans and the natural world together form a biosphere that is, Cubitt argues, a “history generating system”: the presence of change over time is crucial.¹⁸ By adding history and political discourse to the study of film and the environment, Cubitt’s work serves as a foundation for my emphasis on discourse within film’s environmental implications.

Adrian Ivakhiv, in his 2013 book *Ecologies of the Moving Image: Cinema, Affect, Nature*, pursues a project related to Cubitt’s.¹⁹ For Ivakhiv, cinema exists

¹⁷ For Cubitt’s description and justification of these terms, see *EcoMedia*, 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁹ Both Cubitt’s *EcoMedia* and Félix Guattari’s late work *The Three Ecologies* play a major role in Ivakhiv’s *Ecologies of the Moving Image*. Yet while Cubitt argues that visual media can promote the international flow of information and lead to increased freedom and mobility, Guattari arrives at a markedly different assessment: “Because of the media, he [Guattari] claims, subjects have no way of calling for change. They do not have wider access to their desire nor can they, in the midst of its blare, hear a voice of their own timber.” See Verena Andermatt Conley, *Spatial Ecologies: Urban Sites, State and World-Space in French Cultural Theory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 104.

within a number of overlapping “ecologies” or open-ended processual systems; these include the film-world created within a cinematic work, the way in which viewers experience a film, and the socio-economic frameworks within which films function. Through this and other three-part analytic structures inspired by Charles Sanders Peirce, Ivakhiv seeks to destabilize any fixed binary systems, emphasizing instead the status of cinema within a series of ever-changing relations.²⁰ In Ivakhiv's assessment, film participates dynamically in ecological processes that take place at the social, material, and perceptual level. He focuses primarily on the perceptual—what is seen in film, and what film sees or imagines. Cinema produces worlds that include physical landscapes, people, and animals and it can produce and alter the relationships between all of these groups (including the viewer). Finally, Ivakhiv suggests that his mode of analysis might offer possibilities for thinking more productively, i.e., more open-endedly and creatively, about the problematic state of the natural environment today.

The present study builds on the insights of Cubitt and Ivakhiv in two directions. First, while both Cubitt and Ivakhiv describe film as participating in material as well as perceptual processes, their analyses focus overwhelmingly on the perceptual level. Under Ivakhiv's analysis, films seem to emerge as already-finished media products, enter into perceptual relations with the viewer, and finally rise up into society at large to circulate as discourses. But films emerge out of

²⁰ For a thoughtful introduction to Ivakhiv's concept of “ecologies” and his process-relational account of cinema, see the second chapter of *Ecologies of the Moving Image*, especially 33–42. See also 341–345, in which Ivakhiv succinctly outlines his mode of analysis in graphic form, then in bullet points, providing a useful (if artificially neat) introduction to his approach.

particular historical moments, socio-economic frameworks, and physical environments. Ivakhiv is well aware of this; his thoughtful analysis of Tarkovsky's *Stalker* considers the environmental and political dangers involved in the film's production, including the fact that the film was shot in a highly polluted abandoned industrial site. The exposure to toxic substances while making *Stalker* may have contributed to the cancer and early deaths of several members of the filmmaking team, including Tarkovsky himself. This discussion, however, is only introduced after Ivakhiv has completed his formal analysis of the film, creating the impression that the material reality of the film's production serves as additional evidence for an interpretation that originates from within the film text, rather than existing as a structuring element of the filmic world prior to, and continuing after, the production of the film.

This is not to say that formal analysis and close readings of film sequences are not worthwhile; indeed, many of the scholars discussed above emphasize precisely the complicated and contradictory status of film, a complexity that calls for nuanced textual interpretation. But to do full justice to the ecologies within which films operate, greater emphasis must be placed on the worlds that exist before and after films are made. I acknowledge that these pre- and post-filmic worlds lie furthest from Ivakhiv's—and my own—purview as a film scholar. But, at least as a goal at the outset, I will attempt to compensate for this small but persistent misalignment of interpretive goal and analytic effort in past scholarship.

Another, more fundamental, problem in Cubitt's and Ivakhiv's work arises from the notion of "ecologies" as continually circulating open-ended systems. This

notion obscures the many parts of film history that did not become dominant and thus are not obviously present in the ecologies that seem to be circulating today. Cubitt emphasizes the importance of change over time within notions of ecology; these temporal factors are no less important within film. The present study seeks to better understand historical interactions between film and environment, identifying discourses that were forgotten when other discourses, other ways of surveying the filmic landscape, became dominant. Taking my cue from ecocriticism's interest in how film—or any other cultural product—might prove helpful in understanding environmental challenges, I seek to understand obscured and overlooked environmental themes within Weimar cinema.

Materiality

A recent trend in ecocriticism deals with what has come to be known as “new materialisms” or “material ecocriticism.”²¹ Scholars have begun searching for theoretical and methodological avenues for studying how the other-than-human world can exercise agency. This approach has helped to decenter the focus of literary studies so that humans can still be considered, but are not automatically assumed to occupy the central or most important position. As a result, scholars have become more attentive to facets of the physical world that are not necessarily

²¹ For an introduction to material ecocriticism, see Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, “Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity,” *Ecozon@* 3.1 (2012): 75–91; Iovino and Oppermann, “Theorizing Material Ecocriticism: A Diptych,” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 19.3 (Summer 2012): 448–475; and *Material Ecocriticism*, ed. Iovino and Oppermann (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

dependent on human intention or agency. Adherents to this new line of inquiry insist that cultural products are never merely images or words; they are also tangible materials with their own characteristics and consequences that do not depend on human activities. Film itself is a volatile and fragile object; its physicality plays a significant role in structuring the ways in which films arise and circulate. In a related effort, recent scholars have examined the environmental damage caused by film production. This includes not only the massive waste and pollution produced by the film industry in Hollywood, which according to a 2006 study is the second largest polluter in the Los Angeles area.²² Also at issue is the energy expenditure, waste production, and natural resource exploitation required specifically for digital filmmaking, “still so erroneously assumed to be immaterial or at least less residual than hardcopy predecessors.”²³

My discussion of film’s environmental impact does not focus primarily on physical effects such as the film industry’s carbon footprint, waste production, or resource consumption. Beyond such consequences, the film industry drives environmental transformations by way of the medium’s discourse and visual imagery. An overly constricted study of the “materiality” of film—if narrowly defined as the physical products and immediate physical changes that result from making, marketing, distributing, and displaying films—might imply that discourse should deliberately be excluded. But as a form of visual communication that

²² Nadia Bozak, *The Cinematic Footprint: Lights, Camera, Natural Resources* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 4.

²³ *Ibid.*, 12.

circulates widely and shows viewers new ways of interacting with physical landscapes, film can inspire new behaviors that lead to environmental change. Audience responses provide one clue for studying this process, since they indicate how a film may have affected audience attitudes toward the environment. While reactions to films can be more easily studied now that online forums collect large numbers of responses,²⁴ the critical reviews and letters written about older films also offer significant perspectives.

Seen more broadly, film images interact not only with viewers, but also with other image-makers, allowing for fruitful study of the connections between film, visual art, and advertising.²⁵ This is central to the discussion of mountain films in Chapter Two: In looking at how film comments on and figures into the development of the Alps as a tourist destination, the question of how viewers may have become tourists is only one part of the equation. Mountain films also influenced how tourist destinations were marketed insofar as they participated in landscape art traditions that go beyond the romantic dream of framing and penetrating a landscape to present an experience that sets the landscape into exhilarating, mechanized motion. The films create a language of images that is an integral part of landscape transformation. Put differently, the process of signification cannot be separated

²⁴ For one brief example of an analysis that traces online responses to study films' impacts on their audiences, see Ivakhiv, *Ecologies*, 223–229.

²⁵ In Weimar culture, the boundaries between independent art film and commercially commissioned films or advertisements were quite porous, as Michael Cowan has demonstrated with regard to the work of Walter Ruttmann. See *Walter Ruttmann and the Cinema of Multiplicity: Avant-Garde—Advertising—Modernity* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014).

from the change of physical landscapes, since both the landscapes and the discourses that represent them participate in, and are influenced by, the act of signification.²⁶ The environmental consequences of Weimar films were significant: the films contributed to the large-scale industrial development of Alpine tourism. While the production and distribution of these films caused changes to the environment, such short-term effects comprise only a small portion of the films' "footprint."

Multiplicity

My project also is part of a growing body of scholarship examining the diversity of perspectives within filmic environments. The local, culturally specific, and historically situated aspects of cinematic environments lie at the center of a number of recent studies.²⁷ My specific interest is in peripheral perspectives from non-dominant groups and movements. Recently a number of scholars have

²⁶ Similarly, Timothy Lenoir argues that scientific writing constitutes an important component of the materiality of science, and cannot be fully understood simply as a representation of a signified reality. See "Inscription Practices and Materialities of Communication," in *Inscribing Science: Scientific Texts and the Materiality of Communication*, ed. Timothy Lenoir (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1–19.

²⁷ See Martin Lefebvre, introduction to *Landscape and Film*, ed. Martin Lefebvre (New York: Routledge, 2006), xxxi and Robin L. Murray and Joseph K. Heumann, *Ecology and Popular Film*, 12. Several recent edited volumes offer insightful analyses that, taken together, emphasize the multiple meanings found in filmic landscapes. See *Cinematic Countrysides*, ed. Robert Fish (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); *Cinema and Landscape*, ed. Harper and Rayner; *Framing the World*, ed. Willoquet-Maricondi; *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, ed. Rust, Monani, and Cubitt; and *Film Landscapes: Cinema, Environment and Visual Culture*, ed. Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013).

suggested that Third and Fourth Cinemas can be useful in amplifying non-dominant voices and provide a powerful tool for the self-assertion of minority groups, especially indigenous peoples.²⁸ Further, these scholars offer indigenous cinema as a model for what environmental cinema might look like.²⁹ My findings demonstrate that First Cinema also contains various environmental viewpoints, including views that did not become dominant and were subsequently forgotten. The chapters that follow this introduction will examine Weimar-era sources that have been overlooked because they do not fit into the discourses and genres that became dominant during the following decades.³⁰

²⁸ “Third Cinema” is used to describe films from outside of Western Europe and North America, and “Fourth Cinema” refers to films made locally by indigenous groups. “First” and “Second Cinemas” refer to mainstream and art house films, respectively, from Western Europe and North America. For the original use of “Third Cinema,” see Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, “Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World,” in *Film Manifestos and Global Cultures: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Scott MacKenzie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 230–249. See also *Questions of Third Cinema*, ed. Jim Pines and Paul Willemsen (London: BFI Publishing, 1989).

²⁹ See Jim Leach, “The Landscapes of Canada’s Features: Articulating Nation and Nature,” in *Cinema and Landscape*, ed. Harper and Rayner, 279; Bozak, *Cinematic Footprint*, 15; and Stephen Rust and Salma Monani, “Introduction: Cuts to Dissolves—Defining and Situating Ecocinema Studies,” in *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, ed. Rust et al., 9.

³⁰ The search for suppressed voices regarding filmic environments echoes the concerns of the environmental justice movement, which demands attention to inequalities regarding distribution of the causes and consequences of environmental damage. See *The Environmental Justice Reader*, ed. Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2002), especially the volume’s introduction. With regards to the discourse of overpopulation, and the related “big We” problem—the problematic lumping of all humans together into a single mass when discussing environmental issues—see Sherilyn MacGregor, “Are We Too Many?: Some Questions About the Population Question,” *In-Spire Journal of Law, Politics and Societies* 4.1 (2009): 4–18, especially 9–10.

This discussion, in its attempt to avoid broad generalizations about environmental impacts, forms part of a larger shift within film studies away from an expansive view and toward specificity. In a recent essay on the theoretical underpinnings of ecocritical film studies, David Ingram describes the tension within recent endeavors that emphasize historical, local, and specific phenomena rather than grand theories, while still sharing ecocriticism's totalizing goals, in that they attempt to understand impacts on the entire global environment. Within film and cultural studies generally, metanarratives of this sort have come to be viewed with suspicion. "Ecocriticism, on the other hand," claims Ingram, "remains attracted to metanarratives, or overarching theories, as it necessarily moves beyond the humanities into the natural sciences, especially ecology and biology."³¹ The present project starts from the assumption that the study of environmental meanings within cultural texts becomes most productive when local and historically specific conditions, in all their heterogeneity and messiness, figure in the analysis.

Rather than thinking about the project in terms of totalizing ecologies or circulating images, I examine the images and texts surrounding Weimar-era filmic environments with an eye for fragments, impasses, and unrealized plans, as well as images and texts that strongly deviate from and challenge what we would expect from similar images or texts today. From this perspective, film assumes an important role in the public sphere: it serves as a venue for promoting ideas from

³¹ David Ingram, "Rethinking Eco-Film Studies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, ed. Greg Garrard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 459–474, here 460. In discussing trends away from grand metanarrative within film studies, Ingram draws heavily on Annette Kuhn's article, "Screen and Screen Theorizing Today," *Screen* 50.1 (2009): 1–12.

within the dominant culture, certainly, but it also becomes a focal point for discussing environmental ideas that appear on screen, perhaps before they are realized—if they ever come to fruition at all—in the physical world. Employing a variety of films, reviews, articles, advertisements, and letters, I trace some of the labyrinthine paths that connect Weimar film to Weimar-era social and environmental transformations.

Preview of Coming Attractions

In the following chapters, I examine films, film discourse in the form of journals and letters, as well as articles from *Heimat* journals in order to explore the idea of *Heimat* in German culture as seen through the lens of Weimar film. The immediate motivation for this topic is a recent suggestion that the German notion of *Heimat* might prove useful for environmentalism.³² In response to this suggestion, I argue that the current understanding of *Heimat* has in the main been limited to rural landscapes and anti-modern sentiments; in Weimar discourse, however, we find *Heimat* environments presented and assessed in sometimes quite different ways. These diverse Weimar-era interpretations add complexity to the concept's relevance for present-day environmentalism and yield a more nuanced

³² See Thomas Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity 1885–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 15; and William Rollins, *A Greener Vision of Home: Cultural Politics and Environmental Reform in the German Heimatschutz Movement, 1904–1918* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997). Lekan's and Rollins's arguments are discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

understanding of the relationships between humans and the environment evoked by the term Heimat.

In Chapter One, I reconsider the concept of Heimat, especially as it occurs within films and film discourse of the Weimar era. The chapter begins with an overview of *Heimatfilm* as it appeared in the post-World War II era, when it was one of the most prominent genres of German cinema. Since this is both the era in which *Heimatfilm* became standardized and the time in which the most familiar filmic images of Heimat were made, it serves as the point of departure for my study. In past appraisals of the genre's pre-history, scholars have examined earlier film journals and found a number of films from the first three decades of the century containing characters, landscapes, and titles that resemble the key traits of postwar *Heimatfilme*. These seem to indicate a smooth development of the Heimat idea from the Heimat art and literature movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through the early decades of German film history, all the way to the Adenauer era and beyond. Past studies by and large would have us believe that Heimat represents an ever-present and unchanging theme within German film history. In this study I argue that this understanding of Heimat as a stable concept elides a past marked by diverse views on what Heimat might entail.

To carry out this intervention, I begin by analyzing three different productions of the film *Die Geierwally*, one each from the Weimar, Nazi, and Adenauer eras. I then examine three different films from the late 1920s and early 1930s: *Sprengbagger 1010* (Carl Ludwig Achaz-Duisberg, 1929), *Hunger in Waldenburg* (Phil Jutzi, 1929), and *Der verlorene Sohn* (Luis Trenker, 1934). Each of

these films deals with the contrast between country and city, a crucial opposition in traditional Heimat writing. In analyzing these films, both diachronically and synchronically, we see how the shape and appearance of Heimat is far from uniform. To gather a broader base of information that complements and goes beyond the films under discussion, I examine articles in Weimar film journals that discuss ideas of Heimat. While the word “Heimat” and the designation “*Heimatfilm*” will appear frequently in the coming pages, they do not necessarily refer to the rural scenes that distinguish the Adenauer-era Heimat films. In Weimar journals, Heimat might describe the lives of industrial workers in a big city or the complex relationship of German expatriates to the homeland. Indeed, it will become clear that the legacy of Heimat in German film history contains more conflict and discontinuity than has previously been acknowledged, and that past understandings of Heimat in film have been unjustifiably limited in their focus on peasant life and rural environments. What other contradictions might we find in reevaluating filmic environments that have been too easily included under—or excluded from—the heading of Heimat?

Chapter Two examines one such filmic environment that merits renewed appraisal: the Alpine landscapes within the *Bergfilme* (mountain films) of Arnold Fanck. Fanck pioneered the genre of mountain films, which contained melodramatic plots set in Alpine regions and also featured spectacular landscape shots and action-packed climbing and skiing sequences. The films were shot on location in the mountains, featured accomplished athletes (as both actors and camera operators), and were remarkably popular during the 1920s and 1930s. The mountain films are widely considered to form an important predecessor to the Heimat films of the

1950s, a plausible link given that the cameramen from Fanck's films became some of the primary camera operators and directors of the Adenauer-era Heimat films, and because both genres feature a focus on beautiful landscapes, blurring the line between narrative film and nature documentary.

In addition to their link to postwar Heimat films, Weimar-era mountain films are also frequently cited as predecessors to Nazi cinema, both in terms of their personnel and their aesthetics. Cameramen such as Sepp Allgeier and Walter Riml began their careers working on Arnold Fanck's mountain films in the 1920s, then formed the core of Leni Riefenstahl's camera crews on Nazi films such as *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*, 1935). Riefenstahl herself began her career as an actress in Fanck's Weimar-era mountain films, and Luis Trenker likewise began as a *Bergfilm* actor and later was highly successful as a director within the Nazi film industry. For some critics, these links to Nazi cinema, as well as the celebration of blind heroism within the films, have led to condemnation of the mountain films as a proto-fascist genre.³³

While the links between mountain films and both the Heimat genre and Nazi-era films are significant, mountain films also emphasize modernity. This emphasis

³³ See Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 111 and 258. The reception history of the mountain films will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Two. Opponents of the environmental movement might cite these films' combination of anti-rational heroism and environmental mysticism as evidence for the supposed symbiosis of fascism and environmentalism. However, as a number of historians have shown, the rhetoric of environmentalism in Nazi Germany gave way to a reality of unfettered resource consumption for industrial and military expansion. See *How Green Were the Nazis?*, ed. Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, Marc Cioc, and Thomas Zeller (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005).

occurs both through the presence of advanced technology and sites of modern culture on screen—airplanes, radios, the grand hotels of Alpine tourism—and through the films’ modernist aesthetics, in which skiers are often portrayed in an abstract play of fast, angular motion. In fact, the films bear commonalities with the city symphony genre, epitomized by Walter Ruttmann’s film *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*. In this way, the films function as a predecessor not only to nostalgic Heimat images, but also to the industrialization of Alpine tourism, a process that had already begun in the Weimar era and expanded rapidly after the war. Mountain films foster an iconography that will play a key role in modernizing the Alpine landscape. Despite their connections to the later Heimat genre, they complicate and in some regards contradict the notion of Heimat as a conservative and preservationist discourse. These contradictions suggest that the mountain films’ inclusion in the genealogy of *Heimatfilm* might merit rethinking.

In Chapter Three, I consider an environment that has been unjustly excluded from past discussions of Heimat: the metropolis. By analyzing Weimar-era city films alongside articles from contemporary Heimat journals, I discern an urban Heimat genre that offers an important addition to the way both cities and Heimat figure in Weimar cinema. In this endeavor, I suggest three different forms of urban Heimat in Weimar film. In the first, films such as Ruttmann’s *Berlin* offer entertainment scenes as compensation for traditional culture in a rural community.³⁴ In the second form, as evinced in *Menschen am Sonntag* (Robert Siodmak, Edgar G. Ulmer, et al., 1929)

³⁴ See Anton Kaes, “Leaving Home: Film, Migration, and the Urban Experience,” *New German Critique* 74 (Spring–Summer 1998): 179–192, here 190.

and informed by the work of architects such as Bruno Taut, urban Heimat involves the construction of residential spaces and infrastructures that make the city a more comfortable, livable space. The third form of urban Heimat is at once the most utopian and the most political: rather than emphasizing recreation or dwelling, films such as *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück* (Phil Jutzi, 1929) and *Kuhle Wampe, oder: Wem gehört die Welt?* (Slatan Dudow, 1932) provide a vision of urban Heimat as an ongoing, collective project to build a supportive and just community within a big city setting.

As a whole, my project aims to add new dimensions to discussions of what Heimat might have to offer as an environmental term. I do not suggest that “urban Heimat” is the only, or even the most important, alternate notion of Heimat that circulated in Weimar-era film discourse. Its value lies precisely in the fact that it is one of many possibilities. Environmental historians are correct to suggest that the term Heimat provides ways of thinking about and imagining human relations to the physical environment. But it does so in many different ways. Weimar-era Heimat might prove most helpful not so much because it calls for an environment that includes both humans and the natural world, but rather because it represents an open and diverse forum for working toward a productive balance between a community and the environment that is its home.

Chapter 1. Before Bavaria Conquered the World:

Heimat in Weimar Cinema

This chapter considers the relations between the idea of Heimat, environmental attitudes, and cinema, focusing specifically on the Weimar era. Based on films and written sources, I wish to complicate both familiar notions of Heimat as a rural idyll and also the thesis, proposed by a number of environmental historians, that the Heimat concept might provide a solution for problems in present-day environmentalism.³⁵ To give an idea of the standard narrative that I wish to challenge, I will begin by introducing the *Heimatfilmwelle*—the “wave” of rural homeland films³⁶—from the Adenauer era. Next, I will discuss the history of Heimat literature and art, as well as the *Heimatschutz* movement, both of which provide crucial points of orientation and reference for the postwar *Heimatfilme*. I will then reconsider this standard narrative by examining Weimar-era films, as well as writings in film journals, that employ a much more urban or industrial notion of Heimat. In contrast to the stereotype of Heimat as a traditional rural space, Weimar-era examples frequently position Heimat in explicitly modern landscapes. Finally, I will use these findings to argue that in the Weimar era, Heimat serves as the focal point for a wide-ranging discussion about environment and society.

³⁵ Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature*, 15; and Rollins, *Greener Vision*.

³⁶ For an analysis of the wave metaphor in this and other popular phenomena in postwar Germany, see Johannes von Moltke, *No Place Like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 117.

Heimatfilm

The *Heimatfilm* genre is best known for those films made during the Adenauer era. It was by far the most popular genre in postwar Germany and formed an enormous part of the German film industry in the 1950s, accounting for more than one fifth of all films premiered between 1947 and 1960.³⁷ Adenauer-era *Heimatfilme* bear the reputation of being overly sentimental, a concatenation of kitschy plots, idealized technicolor landscapes, and stereotyped characters. They are generally seen as prime examples of a reactionary escapism that marked West German culture in the 1950s.³⁸ Typical characters of *Heimatfilme* include strong male figures such as farmers and village priests; prodigal sons who leave the farm for the big city, then realize the value of their homeland and return; beautiful farmers' daughters who often rebel, but eventually submit to their role in patriarchal village society; and outsiders or poachers who threaten the stability of the rural community. These human characters are matched by typical visual and aural trappings that include (pseudo-)folk music, village festivals, traditional garb (*Trachten*), and frequent extended shots of the natural landscape, whether the northern German *Heide*, the Bavarian Alps, or the *Schwarzwald*.³⁹ Together, the

³⁷ Willi Höfig, *Der deutsche Heimatfilm 1947–1960* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1973), 166.

³⁸ Johannes von Moltke, "Evergreens: The *Heimat* Genre" in *The German Cinema Book*, ed. Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter and Deniz Göktürk (London: BFI, 2002), 18–28, here 19.

³⁹ For an overview of *Heimatfilm* characteristics, see Moltke, "Evergreens," 18. For an in-depth study of these traits modeled on formalist study of fairy tale elements, including analysis of the relative frequency of each trait and its correlation with other elements, see Höfig, *Der deutsche Heimatfilm*, 392–430.

harmonious human and natural elements form an image of Heimat that serves as an intact, sheltering refuge from the strife of modernity.⁴⁰

Willi Höfig writes that postwar *Heimatfilme* were “in no way an invention of German and Austrian film production of the 1950s,” citing earlier trends in literature, theater, and film as important predecessors.⁴¹ The literary Heimat genre offers one notable starting point: a large number of *Heimatfilme* draw their plots from well-known novels, especially the works of Ludwig Ganghofer and Ludwig Anzengruber.⁴² The tradition of the *Volkstheater* also provided a foundation for *Heimatfilme*, since these rural theater companies had built an artistic genre around traditional stories and festivals. Further, the sets of rural theaters served as temporary film studios for on-location shooting, and *Volkstheater* also provided actors and producers for films.⁴³ The popular Weimar genre of the *Bergfilm* formed another important predecessor in that *Heimatfilm* directors such as Luis Trenker and cameramen such as Sepp Allgeier, Hanns Schneeberger, and Richard Angst all began their careers working on mountain films. Not only the people behind the

⁴⁰ This notion of Heimat-as-refuge has been thoroughly criticized in recent years, for example in Moltke’s study of the genre’s complex and often dark engagement with postwar German history in his book *No Place Like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

⁴¹ Höfig, *Der deutsche Heimatfilm*, 143.

⁴² Ibid. For the particular importance of Ganghofer’s novels as made into films by Peter Ostermayr, see Moltke, *No Place Like Home*, 37.

⁴³ Höfig, *Der deutsche Heimatfilm*, 144. The importance of *Volkstheater* personnel to *Heimatfilm* productions had already been established in the Nazi era, for example in Hans Steinhoff’s 1940s production *Wally of the Vultures*. See Horst Claus, *Filmen für Hitler: Die Karriere des NS-Starregisseurs Hans Steinhoff* (Vienna: Filmarchiv Austria, 2013), 423.

camera but also the photographic style demonstrates continuity between *Bergfilm* and *Heimatfilm*: both focus to a great extent on the physical environment, blurring the line between narrative and documentary cinema. Indeed, *Bergfilm* director Arnold Fanck started out making documentary films about skiing and only added narrative plots when he realized this would make his films more commercially viable.⁴⁴ Similarly, *Der Förster vom Silberwald* (*The Forester of the Silberwald*), a *Heimatfilm* from 1954, was first conceived as a documentary about the natural splendor of the Alpine forest and then converted into a narrative *Heimatfilm*.⁴⁵

In the discussion that follows, as well as in the analysis of *Bergfilme* in the second chapter, I will explore complexities that undermine the idea of a smooth progression from the *Heimatbewegung* (“Heimat movement”) around 1900, through the Weimar-era mountain films, to the Adenauer-era *Heimatfilmwelle*. Before doing so, however, it will be helpful to consider the starting point for discussions of Heimat discourse. The next section briefly examines the emergence of *Heimatkunst* (“Heimat art”) and the *Heimatschutz* (“Heimat protection”) movement in Wilhelmine Germany, as well as past criticism of the Heimat concept.

⁴⁴ See Arnold Fanck, *Er führte Regie mit Gletschern, Stürmen und Lawinen: Ein Filmpionier erzählt* (Munich: Nymphenburger, 1973), 125, 131.

⁴⁵ Moltke, *No Place Like Home*, 86. As Moltke points out, the Austrian landscape is credited as a character at the beginning of *Der Förster vom Silberwald*. Fanck does the same, for example listing Mont Blanc in the credits of his 1934 film *Der ewige Traum / Der König vom Montblanc*.

Heimatkunst

The Heimat films of the 1950s draw on a tradition of Heimat art and literature that peaked around 1900, not surprisingly at a time when the social and political meanings of home were in flux within Germany. Throughout the etymological history of Heimat, the word gains poignance and strength precisely at moments when the status of a stable homeland comes under threat. The words “Heimat” or “Heim” were common within place names during the time of Germanic tribes’ south- and westward migrations and became less frequent when the tribes became more settled. This onomastic trend illustrates that “those who have a ‘Heimat’ talk about it less.”⁴⁶ Through the 1700s, the word “Heimat” referred primarily to property or geographic place of origin; then, during the nineteenth century, the word gained emotional undertones: it now called to mind a lost and better condition.⁴⁷ This shift in meaning came at the same time that increased geographic instability—the product of industrial development, urbanization, and mobility through emigration or (military or colonial) adventure—was rapidly

⁴⁶ Wilfried von Bredow and Hans-Friedrich Foltin, *Zwiespältige Zufluchten: Zur Renaissance des Heimatgefühls* (Berlin: Dietz, 1981), 24. Bredow and Foltin offer a brief overview of the history of the word “Heimat.” See also Höfig, *Der deutsche Heimatfilm*, 3–4. For a book-length study of the history and meaning of Heimat within a variety of fields, including politics, natural sciences, religion, and literature, see Andrea Bastian, *Der Heimat-Begriff*.

⁴⁷ Despite the reputation of Heimat literature for escapist nostalgia, some scholars have argued that the provincial literature of the nineteenth century did not simply resist societal changes; on the contrary, many authors actively engaged with the transformed face of Heimat. On nineteenth-century authors who portray an unstable “häuslich-familiäre Einheit” and national “Einheit” in contrast to other, forced attempts to establish a national literature grounded on stable unity, see Esther Kilchmann, *Verwerfungen in der Einheit* (Munich: Fink, 2009).

rendering obsolete the traditional notion of a rural homeland that remained stable over generations. Following the *Heimatsbewegung* during the rapid urbanization of the Wilhelmine era, the *Heimatfilmwelle* of the 1950s again came at a time of demographic flux. After World War II, village populations in western Germany had been reconstituted through the influx of expellees from the east and refugees from bombed-out cities, while the physical and economic landscape was also changing through booming growth under the Marshall Plan and the so-called Economic Miracle.⁴⁸

During the nineteenth century, the *Heimatsbewegung* gathered traction among writers, artists, and regional history enthusiasts, actively drawing attention to the value of the (mostly rural) Heimat. *Heimatkunst*, especially in the form of the literary genre of *Heimatliteratur*, capitalized on the widespread appeal of stories and images that describe traditional societies, often featuring farmers or hunters as their protagonists and describing conflicts centered on challenges to the traditional social order.⁴⁹ A number of Heimat clubs and museums, devoted to preserving local culture and history, developed in regions around Germany in the mid- to late-1800s.

⁴⁸ As with Heimat literature, it has been argued that many of these 1950s *Heimatfilme* go beyond pure escapism and attempt to work through the upheavals of the postwar years; this is an essential point in Moltke's book, *No Place Like Home*.

⁴⁹ For a thorough overview of *Heimat* literature and journals, see Karlheinz Roszbacher, *Heimatkunstabewegung und Heimatroman: Zu einer Literatursoziologie der Jahrhundertwende* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1975). Willi Höfig provides a detailed structural analysis of both Heimat novels and films in his book *Der deutsche Heimatfilm*. In addition to exploring key motifs within the films, Höfig illustrates the continuities of the genre by pointing out a number of films that were remade in two or more decades. The resulting notion of certain films as "evergreens" is explored by Johannes von Moltke in his essay "Evergreens" and his book *No Place Like Home*.

Yet a Heimat “movement” existed only in a very loose sense. While many regions developed their own Heimat organizations, they tended to be guided by local patriotism and may not even have been aware of participating in a broader trend within Germany.⁵⁰ Still, a number of national journals and organizations attempted to bring together all of these local activities into an organized body.⁵¹ The journal *Heimat: Blätter für Literatur und Volkstum* was founded in 1901 and first edited by Friedrich (Fritz) Lienhard, and the nationwide organization *Deutscher Bund Heimatschutz* was established in 1904 and first chaired by Paul Schultze-Naumburg. Some of these figures, such as Schultze-Naumburg and Lienhard’s early collaborator Adolf Bartels, saw their endeavor as a fight against the evils of modernity, a stance that easily lent itself to rabid anti-Semitism and the discourse of racial purity.⁵²

While the virulently anti-Semitic Bartels might represent a reactionary extreme among *Heimatsbewegung* activists, Lienhard provides a somewhat more moderate example. He also espoused *völkisch* views, believing that Jews represented a foreign element that was harmful to the health of the German nation. Unlike Bartels, however, he believed in assimilation and did not subscribe to the biological determinism of the more radical anti-Semites. After an initial period of collaboration, Lienhard distanced himself from Bartels’s extremely reactionary and

⁵⁰ For discussion of the dispersed nature of Heimat activities, see Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat: A German Dream* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 32, and Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 3–4.

⁵¹ See Boa and Palfreyman, *Heimat*, 30–41, for an overview of the key players in the nationwide Heimat movement.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 35.

racist views.⁵³ Lienhard reaffirmed what he saw as the core German ideals within the context of modernity. He viewed the Heimat movement not as an escape from modernity but rather “ein Durch,” “eine Ergänzung”—a way through or a supplement.⁵⁴ Indeed, his famous article “Los von Berlin?” (“Away from Berlin?”) is written with a question mark at the end of the title, since the author lived in Berlin and was interested in strengthening his conservative values in spite of—but not in full rejection of—Germany’s urbanization.⁵⁵

While such proponents of Heimat art as Lienhard and Bartels shared a racist notion of purity, they simultaneously called for a plurality of German regions that would comprise an “orchestra of literary voices” representing the unique local cultures that made up the newly united nation.⁵⁶ Important regional authors include Hermann Löns, famous for his stories set in the Lüneburger Heide,⁵⁷ Gustav Frenssens from the Dithmarschen region of northern Schleswig-Holstein, and Ludwig Ganghofer from Bavaria.

Regardless of their regional affiliation, German Heimat authors were united by a common opposition to the modern metropolis, a sentiment captured well in the title of Lienhard’s essay, despite its concluding question mark. Proponents of the

⁵³ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁴ Moltke, *No Place Like Home*, 15.

⁵⁵ Boa and Palfreyman, *Heimat*, 33. For Lienhard’s article “Los von Berlin?” see *Die Berliner Moderne 1885–1914*, ed. Jürgen Schutte and Peter Sprengel (Suttgart: Reclam, 1967), 220–224.

⁵⁶ Rossbacher, *Heimatabewegung und Heimatliteratur*, 19.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 14.

Heimat ideal figured within a long history of imagining the country as an idealized alternative to the city. As Raymond Williams demonstrates in his classic book *The Country and the City*, this fantasy of a rural space free of hardship and labor hides tensions between urban centers of power and the exploited peripheral spaces that are crucial to an urbanized population and economic system.⁵⁸ For Heimat authors in Wilhelmine Germany, the imagined dichotomy between country and city was epitomized by the centralization of power in Berlin and by the economic pressures on the small-town middle class, seen to be squeezed both from below in the form of the workers' movement and from above in the form of unfettered capitalism. But above all, the opposition to the city was founded on artistic grounds as a reaction against the literary genre of naturalism, which was thought to drown out regional cultures and traditional values in its emphasis on the anonymous modern urban subject.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Cf. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁵⁹ Rossbacher, *Heimatbewegung und Heimatliteratur*, 30. Rossbacher points out that Austrian "provincial realist" authors such as Adalbert Stifter, Peter Rosenegger, and Ludwig Anzengruber followed a somewhat different trajectory. Though often lumped together with German Heimat authors (in part because they were all adopted into the same *Heimatfilm* tradition after World War II), these Austrian writers followed a rural tradition that was not interrupted by naturalism, and thus had a less polemical and programmatic tone than the German authors reacting specifically against Berlin. See *Heimatbewegung und Heimatliteratur*, 22–24.

Heimatschutz

Although not identical with Heimat literature and art movements, the idea of Heimat protection was closely related to these trends.⁶⁰ Early predecessors of the movement include Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, an eccentric and reactionary figure who already in 1852 called for a “right to wilderness,”⁶¹ and Ernst Rudorff, who around 1880 praised what he described as the garden-like English landscape.⁶² Driven primarily by local Heimat clubs but unified to some degree through national journals and the nationwide group *Deutscher Bund Heimatschutz*, proponents of Heimat protection sought to support what they saw as valuable local landscapes and traditions, often advocating for specific policies that would protect landscapes seen as having particular cultural value. As is clear from a text from a Dortmund-area Heimat journal (described below), the impetus included pushing for government policies that would support Heimat sentiments through targeted modernization, calling for the government to develop convenient transport links between the growing city and surrounding natural landscapes. In other cases, *Heimatschutz* activists sought to preserve cultural landmarks or natural landscapes from future

⁶⁰ Despite many common themes, William Rollins insists that *Heimatschutz* be viewed independent of Heimat art and literature studies. He complains that the two are frequently viewed together and that, in consequence, a “progressivist evaluation of history” has led cultural scholars to devalue both *Heimatkunst* and *Heimatschutz*. As a result, he says, the practical achievements of *Heimatschutz* with regard to environmental reform have been underappreciated. See *Greener Vision*, 14.

⁶¹ Rollins, *Greener Vision*, 70. For additional discussion of the early writers whose ideas later played a role in the *Heimatschutz* movement, see Frank Uekötter, *The Green and the Brown: A History of Conservation in Nazi Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 17–18.

⁶² See Rollins, *Greener Vision*, 74–81.

development, on occasion leading to the passage of laws such as the Prussian *Verunstaltungsgesetz* (“Disfigurement Law”) of 1902. This law protected landscapes of “exceptional beauty” from certain forms of development.⁶³ It was updated after much public debate in 1907 and was followed by similar laws in other German states.⁶⁴

Heimatschutz and Environmentalism

Supporters of the Heimat idea in Wilhelmine Germany sought to protect nature in a way that acknowledged and included the impact of human presence. This hybrid notion of landscape stands in contrast to the wilderness ideal that marks much of American environmentalism. Recent studies of environmentalist culture, especially in North America, have described a contradiction between the goal of preventing further environmental degradation and the celebration of such terms as “wilderness” or “pristine nature.” An influential work in this vein, William Cronon’s chapter “The Trouble with Wilderness,” describes the American notion of wilderness preservation as inherently flawed, since its goal is to protect a realm marked as “wilderness” that is separate from human activity, rather than acknowledging the ways in which human culture is already present and fully embedded within natural systems. Thus, rather than attempting to address environmental degradation at a system-wide level that includes humans,

⁶³ Ibid., 81.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 90.

mainstream environmentalism compartmentalizes nature and culture into separate realms; one realm should be kept pristine while the other is hopelessly blighted.⁶⁵

Looking to work past this spurious dichotomy, some environmental historians have suggested that the German notion of *Heimat* could provide an alternative. Mark Cioc points out that human impact on the central European environment over thousands of years has been so profound that German environmental historians have always assumed the object of their analysis to be a “cultural landscape rather than nature in itself.”⁶⁶ Based on Cioc’s argument, Thomas Lekan suggests that the *Heimatschutz* movement, with its goal of protecting both natural spaces and cultural constructions that were deemed important for local identity, might serve as a model for new kinds of environmentalism not plagued by a divide between nature and culture.⁶⁷

Other scholars have likewise sought to establish links between early twentieth-century *Heimat* discourse and the culture of environmentalism a century later. William Rollins argues for a re-assessment of the *Heimatschutz* movement as an early environmentalist campaign. In his assessment the *Heimat* protection

⁶⁵ William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: Norton, 1996), 69–90. For a witty and insightful application of the “cultural turn” in environmental history, as instigated by Cronon’s work, to the context of American popular culture in the twentieth century, see Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

⁶⁶ Mark Cioc, “The Impact of the Coal Age on the German Environment: A Review of the Historical Literature,” *Environment and History* 4 (1998): 105–124, here 106.

⁶⁷ Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature*, 15.

movement deserves renewed consideration as a remarkably effective effort at nature conservation. Its achievements have been overlooked due to a blanket dismissal of the *Heimat* idea as being ideologically corrupt, based on the fact that key individual figures such as Schultze-Naumburg later became enthusiastic Nazis. Despite a celebratory tone that seems overly eager to rehabilitate the *Heimatschutz* movement, Rollins brings attention to a number of intriguing aspects. Of particular interest is his expansion of the traditional limits of *Heimat* literature to include a number of often-ignored authors who focus on progressive social reforms within a rural and agricultural milieu, as opposed to authors who look to rural and mountain scenes as idyllic alternatives to modernity.⁶⁸

Criticism of the Heimat Concept

While recent environmental historians see the German idea of *Heimat* as a promising way of envisioning the human place in nature, scholars of German culture have been more likely to view the concept with suspicion, seeing it as a tool for creating an imagined sense of identity and community that allows people to forego any individual need for rational judgment and responsibility. This is one of the primary arguments put forth in Peter Blicke's thoughtful book *Heimat: A Critical*

⁶⁸ In a less expansive but more critical and historically nuanced study, John Alexander Williams points out that the *Heimat* protection movement must be seen within the specific context of rapid modernization in Weimar Germany. See "The Chords of the German Soul Are Tuned to Nature': The Movement to Preserve the Natural *Heimat* from the Kaiserreich to the Third Reich," *Central European History* 29.3 (1996): 339–384.

Theory of the German Idea of Homeland. Blicke is fully aware of how interpretations of Heimat vary, depending on one's perspective:

Sociologists often treat Heimat as a functionally defined space with social, emotional, and institutional elements and neglect its philosophical, gendered, and imaginary aspects. Historians, generally speaking, see the Heimat topos as a mobile term in the progression of German provincialism into German nationalism, a development that they think can be comprehensively studied by careful analyses of Heimat associations or *Heimatschutz* (Heimat protection associations). Finally, psychologists, following Sigmund Freud's categories in general and his insights from his essay "Das Unheimliche" (The Uncanny, 1919), in particular, find Heimat to be a term of displacement for the female . . . usually quickly placed in an Oedipal context.⁶⁹

While acknowledging this diversity of perspectives, Blicke makes a recurring argument that Heimat provides a fantasy of unity following what we might call the crisis of modern rationality: the division of knowing subject from known object and the resulting possibility for alienation and isolation of individuals within an unfeeling world. Starting with Kant, Blicke focuses on notions of modernity described by Anthony Giddens and Jürgen Habermas, both of whom describe the sense of discontinuity and division that plagues the modern subject. "Not surprisingly, then, in light of Giddens's and Habermas's theories, Heimat in the modern age becomes an antimodern idea."⁷⁰ Thus conceptualized, the discourse of Heimat figures within a tradition of resistance to what was seen as the

⁶⁹ Blicke, *Heimat*, 5.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 27. For other works that critique the potential of the Heimat idea to become a tool for erasing the individual's power of critical thought, see Bredow and Foltin, *Zwiespältige Zufluchten*, a work that explores the tensions of progressive and reactionary elements within Heimat as the concept was in the midst of a resurgence in the early 1980s; and Seeßlen, *VOLKsTÜMLICHKEIT*, an acerbic critique of the boom in folk and Heimat activities in postwall Germany.

disintegration of living spaces and social formations by modern capitalism and, especially, urbanization. Sabine Hake likewise notes the importance of this sort of thinking among prominent late nineteenth-century German writers. She notes that Heimat discourse is closely akin to Ferdinand Tönnies's notion of "*Gemeinschaft*" (as opposed to the rationalized "*Gesellschaft*") and fits into the same narrative as Oswald Spengler's nostalgic and declensionist conception of "the West."⁷¹ Similar to these notions of an imagined organic community, the embrace of Heimat can mean the abdication of individual responsibility: by committing to a Heimat community, "one's ego receives strength, and one obtains an identity by not having one."⁷² The growth of a group mentality is coupled with the exclusion (whether intended or not) of those who do not fit into the conceived boundaries of Heimat.

Blickle's argument emphasizes aspects of the Heimat concept that are now quite familiar, given the scrutiny of potentially proto-fascist elements within German culture. Although historian Celia Applegate might argue that the Heimat concept emerged from the Nazi era relatively unscathed,⁷³ and while proudly traditional Bavarians or members of a local Heimat club in the Hunsrück region might agree with her,⁷⁴ most educated Germans or scholars of German culture

⁷¹ Sabine Hake, *Topographies of Class: Modern Architecture and Mass Society in Weimar Berlin* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 75.

⁷² Blickle, *Heimat*, 73.

⁷³ Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*, 18.

⁷⁴ In describing his experience attending a screening of Edgar Reitz's 2013 film *Die andere Heimat* within the Hunsrück region, where the film was shot, an acquaintance described to me the reactions of the local audience at seeing their hometown on film. To them, Heimat referred specifically to their local site; critiques

would be surprised to hear anyone claim that Heimat is untainted. There is too much awareness of the Nazi appropriation of all terminology relating to strong communal identity, and of the reputation of 1950s Heimat films as escapist and reactionary, for such an argument to gain much ground.⁷⁵

As an alternative, sociological approaches have examined the way Heimat can be used by diverse groups and can thus subvert some of the very processes of cultural violence outlined by Blickle. Studies in this vein often view Heimat as a basic human propensity—an emotional need that allows for a sense of emotional stability and security, just as shelter provides physical protection. This does not mean that Heimat must be rigidly fixed, let alone reactionary: scholars such as Ina-Maria Greverus examine the way Heimat functions within groups of ethnic minorities, refugees, and emigrants as well as within more traditional social groups. While the concept is open to manipulation, Greverus argues that it derives from a “territorial imperative” that is common to humanity, a desire to establish a space in

of the film were focused on geographic specificity—a church was erased from the image, a building was painted a different color, etc. Interview with Ben Gossen, September 18, 2014. The Hunsrück residents’ insistence that Heimat is purely local, in spite of the fact that political and economic forces are always involved, plays directly into Blickle’s response to historians such as Applegate and Alon Confino. While Heimat might appear in retrospect to negotiate between local and national identities, a given individual may not be aware of the connection to the nation. “The German idea of Heimat is, strangely, an antinational construct that historically has always served to support a broad and not clearly defined nationalism.” Blickle, *Heimat*, 47. See also Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

⁷⁵ Even in their supposedly “sympathetic” critique of Heimat, Foltin and Bredow describe their inability to ignore the many levels at which the “Ideologisierung von Heimat” occurs. See *Zwiespältige Zufluchten*, 12.

which one's needs can be met and social expectations can be known. At the same time, she writes that this is always merely a "Wunschform."⁷⁶ This sense of Heimat as a potential, as something that the individual must be able to strive for rather than a fixed group identity into which an individual can dissolve, is central to Greverus's understanding of the term.⁷⁷

Prehistory of the Heimatfilm Genre

In her discussion of Heimat as a multivocal concept that can be used by many different groups, Greverus provides a basis for my intervention and offers a way to escape the standard narrative of the Heimat genre's development. The customary account of the *Heimatfilm* relies on the 1950s as its key point of reference, the point to which earlier filmic configurations of Heimat inevitably led and upon which later films reflected. In an attempt to fill in a few details regarding the prehistory of the genre, Moltke gives a list of titles that include the word "Heimat" or "Heim" from the early years of German cinema:

Though few films survive that would allow us to evaluate the links between Heimatkunst and the cinema, a number of titles do suggest the presence of such links—even if they remain, in a sense, proto-generic. *Heimatliche Scholle* (1910) is described in censorship documents as a "drama. Peasant boy becomes criminal in the city. Returns home." Even from such a rudimentary description, we can glean a basic pattern that anticipates the constitutive dramaturgical

⁷⁶ Ina-Maria Greverus, *Auf der Suche nach Heimat* (Munich: Beck, 1979), 24.

⁷⁷ Greverus's utopian idea of Heimat is also central to Ernst Bloch's much-cited final sentence of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, in which he describes the endpoint of human striving for self-actualization and real democracy as "etwas, das allen in die Kindheit scheint und worin noch niemand war: Heimat." Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 5 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1959), 1629.

oppositions of many later *Heimatfilme*. Other noteworthy titles include *Heimkehr* (1911), *Wenn die Heimat ruft* (1915), or simply *Heimat*, a title that was used for at least five different films between 1912 and 1919.⁷⁸

This description offers a helpful starting point for considering the function of Heimat within early German film culture. Further, the term “Heimat” was associated with some of the films that were later remade as Adenauer-era *Heimatfilme*, as in a 1926 advertisement that announces the film *Der Jäger von Fall* (*The Hunter of Fall*) by proclaiming, “We bring you the great authentic film of the German Heimat!”⁷⁹ But films that were redone as *Heimatfilme* comprise only one of a variety of uses of the term Heimat in these early film journals. A crucial follow-up question would ask how these issues are treated in any given work or epoch. Unfortunately, an answer cannot be derived from a brief list of titles and plot summaries. In Moltke’s book, the lack of attention to this matter is understandable; he specifically focuses on films of the 1950s, granting attention to an era of German film that had, prior to his study, been largely neglected.⁸⁰ But the scholarly gap has remained with regard to the presence and place of Heimat within Weimar cinema. Subsequent studies have remained satisfied to repeat Moltke’s findings, as is the case in Alexandra Ludewig’s book on Heimat film. Ludewig reiterates the titles from the 1910s, then—again following Moltke’s lead—continues with an examination of Weimar mountain films, without attempting to gain a closer understanding of how films that appear to touch

⁷⁸ Moltke, *No Place Like Home*, 28.

⁷⁹ *Film-Kurier*, 20 November 1926.

⁸⁰ Moltke, *No Place Like Home*, 21.

on the Heimat genre might have functioned in the different context of the Weimar era.⁸¹

In what follows, I want to fill this gap. At what cost have we ignored the presence of Heimat within Weimar film? What can be added to our understanding of *Heimatfilm* by examining sources from the Weimar era? What did Heimat mean before it became standardized under fascism and then generically codified in the cinema of the postwar era? To address these questions, I will first examine the case of *Die Geierwally* (*Wally of the Vultures*), which appeared in distinct versions during the Weimar, Nazi, and Adenauer eras. I will then consider three films made within five years of each other—two from 1929 and one from 1934—that explore a crucial component of Heimat iconography, namely the contrast between rural and urban industrial spaces. In both of these cases—both diachronically in the case of *Wally of the Vultures* and synchronically through the late Weimar and early Nazi films—the various filmic texts reveal significant differences and thereby challenge the notion that a stable idea of Heimat remains intact throughout German film history. Finally, I will examine Weimar-era film journals, looking beyond the titles and themes that later played a role in the *Heimatfilmwelle*, in order to arrive at a more nuanced

⁸¹ Alexandra Ludewig, *Screening Nostalgia: 100 Years of German Heimat Film* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2011), 56. Ludewig attempts to expand the definition of *Heimatfilm* within her study, inverting the narrative of Anton Kaes's book *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). Ludewig's book "looks at the topic 'From Heimat to Hitler and Beyond' through the inclusion of a wide range of films which cannot easily be labeled 'Heimatfilme,'—yet which clearly negotiate Heimat as one of their main foci" (10). Her study is especially useful in bringing postwall films and immigrant visions (or "Hyphenated Heimat," as stated in the title of her final chapter) into the discussion.

understanding of the pluralistic position of Heimat within Weimar film than previous studies have offered.

The Evolution of the Vulture Maiden

Wally of the Vultures is one of the ultimate “evergreens” of German film history, clearly illustrating the sustained appeal of the Heimat idea across time.⁸² The story was first made into a film by E. A. Dupont in 1921, again in the Nazi era (Hans Steinhoff, 1940) and during the 1950s *Heimatfilmwelle* (Franz Cap, 1956), and has seen further adaptations in recent decades (Walter Bockmayer, 1987; Peter Sämman, 2005). The story provides evidence of the continued appeal of the rural mountain farming milieu within literature and film, regardless of the genre designation.⁸³ Yet as each form of the story indicates, Heimat is not constant across time: each iteration treats the tale differently, resulting in varying relationships between humans and their Heimat environment. Some attention has already been given to the political significance of the films, especially the 1940 and 1956 versions.⁸⁴ I am interested here in filmic environments, and I argue that each

⁸² Moltke, “Evergreens,” 20.

⁸³ Since the *Heimatfilm* genre had not yet been standardized, the earlier films are described in various terms: reviews call Steinhoff’s film “the first genuine peasant film” (“Die Geierwally,” *Film-Kurier*, 16 August 1940) and Dupont’s “a chamber play [*Kammerspiel*] from the mountains” (“Die Geierwally,” *Film-Kurier*, 14 September 1921).

⁸⁴ The Tübingen research group on *Heimatfilm* makes an argument about reactionary political tendencies within both Steinhoff’s and Cap’s *Geierwally* films. See Beate Bechtold-Comforty, Luis Bedek, and Tanja Marquardt, “Zwanziger Jahre und Nationalsozialismus,” in *Der deutsche Heimatfilm*, ed. Wolfgang Koschuba (Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde), 33–67. Without going so far as

version serves as a useful record of an imagined relationship between individuals, society, and the natural world. Taken together, the films show that Heimat can have different meanings at different moments. To claim that the term provides a useful way of imagining the relationship between humans and their environment, more precision is required: Heimat for whom, in what place, at what time?

Specific elements of the plot change with each remake, but the basic contours remain constant. The story is set near Sölden in Austria's Ötztal, a region of the Tyrol near the Italian border that contains some of Austria's highest and most remote mountains.⁸⁵ In *Wally of the Vultures*, the titular character Wallburga, nicknamed Wally, is the daughter of the "Höchstbauer" Stromminger, a mountain farmer who is one of the valley's wealthiest landowners. Wally is strong in both will and physique, as demonstrated early in each film when she climbs down or is lowered on a rope to capture a baby vulture from its nest. The bird becomes her companion and the source of the nickname "Geierwally" or "Vulture Wally." Although proud of his daughter's physical strength, Stromminger has no patience for her stubbornness. Equally stubborn himself, he demands that she marry the farmer Vinzenz, a weak, sycophantic, and in some versions devious character who nonetheless loves Wally and refuses to give up hope of winning her hand. Wally, for her part, has no interest in Vinzenz, for she loves the hunter Josef, known locally as

making a full apologia for Steinhoff's film, Horst Claus rejects some of their criticisms of the 1940 release as being founded on anachronisms and hindsight. See Claus, *Filmen für Hitler*, 433–434.

⁸⁵ The Ötztal region's biggest claim to fame in recent history is that it also contained, until 1991, the remains of the famed "ice man" Ötzi.

“Bären-Josef” after he shoots a bear that has been killing the local livestock. Josef is the strongest man and best shot in the valley, which irritates the formerly dominant Stromminger. Enraged at his daughter’s refusal of Vinzenz and infatuation with Josef, Stromminger sends Wally up to the high mountain pasture or *Hochalm*. When she returns to the valley after several months, Wally finds that her father is sick and has given Vinzenz control of the farm. Seeing Vinzenz abusing an old servant, Wally hits Vinzenz on the head, then sets fire to the barn and flees. Finally, after another long period of exile, Wally learns that her father has died and she now has control of the farm. She returns home and runs the farm effectively and fairly. Meanwhile, Josef has adopted Afra, an orphaned female relative from a neighboring valley. Misinterpreting Josef’s relationship with Afra to be romantic, Wally insults Afra out of jealousy, and in retribution, Josef arranges a prank to humiliate Wally during a village festival. In her anger at this public shaming, Wally tells Vinzenz to kill Josef. She later repents and is able to save Josef. Finally, Josef and Wally come together.

Despite the rather convoluted plot, a few very simple motifs drive this story: the high alpine setting, the tension between a strong-willed girl and her stubborn father, the story of love obsessively sustained through hardship, and the conflicts over love and property within the clearly defined roles of a (narratively and filmically imagined) traditional Alpine village community. The variations that each remake brings to these core elements and the ways in which they are represented visually allow a fruitful analysis of the story across time.

Wilhelmine von Hillern, 1873

Wilhelmine von Hillern's 1873 novel *Die Geier-Wally* is very loosely based on the life of the Tyrolian painter Anna Stainer-Knittel, who captured two baby eagles from their mountain nests when young and later married against her parents' wishes.⁸⁶ The ways in which Hillern adapted the factual event into a fictional narrative bear particular significance for the promulgation of Heimat as an environmental term. Perhaps most importantly, the story is transferred about 50 kilometers to the southwest, from Stainer-Knittel's birthplace in the Lechtal Alps, with peaks generally in the mid-2000-meter range, to the much more extreme Ötztal Alps, with peaks in the mid-3000-meter range and some of Austria's largest glaciated regions. Through this shift, the story is framed by the forbidding world of the glaciers rather than simply by the rocky peaks of the Lech valley.

E. A. Dupont, 1921

E. A. Dupont's 1921 film *Wally of the Vultures* was the first production of star actress Henny Porten's newly formed company, and Porten described her satisfaction in having secured "one of the best directors of the day" for the job.⁸⁷ The

⁸⁶ Stainer-Knittel's eagle-capturing feats had already served as inspiration for several textual and visual representations before they came to the attention of Wilhelmine von Hillern. See Evelyn Kain, "Anna Stainer-Knittel: Portrait of a 'femme vitale,'" in *Women's Art Journal* 20.2 (Autumn 1999–Winter 2000), 13–17, 31; and Nina Stainer, "Selbstbild und Fremdbild—Anna Stainer-Knittel und die Geier-Wally," in *Visualisierungen von Kult*, ed. Marion Meyer and Deborah Klimburg-Salter (Vienna: Böhlau, 2014), 191–210.

⁸⁷ Helga Belach, *Henny Porten: Der erste deutsche Filmstar 1890–1960* (Berlin: Haude & Spencer, 1986), 72.

sets were also extremely well looked after, with Paul Leni as art director. Regarding the on-location shooting in the Bavarian Alps, Porten recalls Leni busily gathering traditional regional clothing and sketching locations to be replicated later in the studio. As in the later mountain films and remakes of *Wally of the Vultures*, the mountain scenes were largely filmed outdoors—however, the Bavarian Alps near Garmisch-Partenkirchen substituted for the much less accessible Ötztal.⁸⁸ The film was a commercial success and drew enthusiastic cheers from its premiere audience, a fact that author and journalist Kurt Pinthus attributed above all to the star cult surrounding Porten rather than to the film.⁸⁹ Notably, one reviewer describes the mountain village milieu to be overused and tedious, which Moltke takes as evidence that motifs now associated with the *Heimatfilm* genre were already well established in 1921.⁹⁰ But the thrust of this review is actually that it is the designed sets, not the mountain setting (nor Porten’s star cult), that allow for the film’s success:

But the genius of the film is named: Paul Leni. What this truly productive designer made out of the few hackneyed motifs is amazing. One cannot bear to see any more Tyrolean farms, peasant huts, outdoor dances, or village inns. Nothing about them is pleasing to the eye. Leni grasps the task much differently. He does not construct his spaces realistically (*naturalistisch*), but rather uses given elements to create the spirit of these spaces.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Ibid., 73.

⁸⁹ Kurt Pinthus, “Henny Porten als Reichspräsident,” *Das Tagebuch* 41 (1921), in Belach, *Henny Porten*, 82–85, here 82.

⁹⁰ Moltke, “Evergreens,” 20.

⁹¹ Review from *LichtBildBühne* on 17 September 1921, cited in Belach, *Henny Porten*, 79.

This reviewer suggests that the film indeed relies on spatial elements, as expected of the later *Heimatfilm* genre, and Moltke's observation is accurate in that the comment suggests a fatigue with on-location rural images evocative of a *Heimatkunst* atmosphere. But within this particular film, the reviewer claims, the most successful use of space is the deliberately imaginative locations created in the studio, not the authentic space of the mountains.

Dupont's film follows the plot of Hillern's novel quite closely, but one notable change involves the deletion of the novel's religious subplot. In the book, a village priest counsels Wally at various stages of her estrangement from and reintegration into the community. At her low point, Wally curses the cross, calling it a mere piece of wood; in a redemptive refrain that responds to this blasphemous nadir, the priest repeatedly asserts that God can carve a saint even from a rough piece of wood—implying that Wally is an example of rough material to which cultural refinement must be added. The omission of these events in Dupont's film stands in contrast to the specific and historically resonant ways in which religion returns in the 1940 and 1956 films.

Hans Steinhoff, 1940

Hans Steinhoff's adaptation of the book, like Dupont's, generally follows the plot of the novel, with two primary changes: the religious subplot is largely—but not entirely—omitted, and the action is concentrated into much shorter spans of time. While religion is almost completely absent in the film, an exception occurs when Wally, after being humiliated near the end of the story, curses a crucifix as being just

a useless piece of wood. Recent critics have argued that this scene is incomprehensible given that a prior event from the novel is omitted in which the priest gives her the statue and tells her that God can carve a saint even from rough wood.⁹² The tableau, however, looks forward toward the end of the film, rather than back toward “missing” scenes with the priest. In Steinhoff’s very different portrayal of the ending, Vinzenz tries to shoot Josef just as Josef and Wally meet on the mountain above him.⁹³ A servant has noticed Vinzenz’s intentions and pushes him just in time, so that the shot misses Josef. The bullet instead hits a cross-shaped shrine on the mountain upon which Wally’s vulture is perched. The vulture flies away, free from Wally now that she has Josef; meanwhile, Josef and Wally remain together and unharmed. The shrine stands at the center of this happy ending in which Vinzenz is foiled, the protagonists are reunited, and wild nature is granted its freedom. Wally’s earlier cursing of the cross represents her low point at which order and authority have been rejected. In the rendering of the staunchly Nazi Steinhoff,

⁹² Bechtold-Comforty et al., “Zwanziger Jahre und Nationalsozialismus,” 40.

⁹³ In Steinhoff’s reworking of the tale, Josef immediately repents the fact that he has publically shamed Wally. He catches up with Wally to reconcile with her before Vinzenz is able to carry out Wally’s request that Josef be shot and also before Wally is able to flee to the mountain hut. In the novel and in Dupont’s film, Vinzenz almost succeeds in fulfilling Wally’s commission to murder Josef, and Wally spends weeks or months on the mountain before Josef arrives and forgives her. This is typical of the acceleration of events into much shorter spans of time in Steinhoff’s film—in his finale, events that take months of narrated time and span chapters of text in the novel are condensed into minutes.

her earlier rejection of authority provides an important contrast to the triumph and resurrected order achieved by the strong young heroes.⁹⁴

Franz Cap, 1956

The 1956 remake of *Wally of the Vultures* was a Peter Ostermayr production. Ostermayr's monopoly hold on the stories of Ludwig Ganghofer assured him a lion's share of the successes from the *Heimatfilm* boom of the 1950s. Ostermayr was already well established long before the Adenauer era, with early landscape films in the 1910s and narrative films throughout the Weimar and Nazi eras.⁹⁵ Further, Ostermayr invested in high-quality cinematography and directing; his stamp offered an assurance of quality production values within a genre and market flooded by in many cases quickly made features. Of course, this did not offer any assurance of innovative techniques or engaging scripts: Ostermayr's name became synonymous with the predictable rural storylines and conservative or escapist ideologies that were the hallmarks of 1950s *Heimat* film.

⁹⁴ Steinhoff is most famous for directing the notorious propaganda film *Hitlerjunge Quex*, an important example of the *Bewegungsfilme* that sought to glorify the rise of the Nazi "movement." For a compelling analysis of the film, see Eric Rentschler, *Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and its Afterlife* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 52–69. For a thorough study of Steinhoff's work within Nazi Germany, see Claus, *Filmen für Hitler*.

⁹⁵ Moltke describes Ostermayr as being in many ways the leading figure of the *Heimatfilmwelle* and shows that Ostermayr became associated with ideas of *Heimat* well before the 1950s. However, Moltke rejects Ostermayr's own description of his early "view films" as "*Heimatfilme*," arguing that the genre name was already used in the 1920s but was not institutionalized until the postwar era. See *No Place Like Home*, 36. My findings build on this notion: as I discuss below, the label *Heimatfilm* was used to refer to a variety of films in the 1920s, many of which bear little in common with the idylls of the Adenauer era.

Wally of the Vultures, produced in 1956, is no exception. Using color for the first time to capture the story's spectacular settings, director Franz Cap (as Steinhoff) brought the film crew to the Ötztal region for on-site filming. But unlike Steinhoff, Cap returned to many facets of Hillern's novel that had been omitted. Most notably, religion returns in full force, with the priest now playing a major role. The religious content goes hand-in-hand with a new emphasis on guilt and repentance in place of the violence of prior versions. In the opening disputes with her father, Wally responds to her father's shouting attacks with soft-spoken, demure responses—a sharp contrast to the shouting matches in Steinhoff's film. Wally appears as a suffering heroine rather than a powerful and violent presence. Viewed in its historical context, the film had great resonance for an audience that had been positioned as the bearer of collective guilt.

Nature, Wilderness, and Heimat in Wally of the Vultures

The plots and thematic emphases change slightly with each retelling of *Wally of the Vultures*. Close attention to the individual films indicates that the environmental themes of the Heimat ideal in the novel likewise change with each new version. The frequent remakes of *Wally of the Vultures* demonstrate the different ways in which humans establish a relationship with the natural environment. This is a question central to the *Heimatfilm* genre and a key issue in any attempt to determine whether, and how, *Heimat* might serve as a useful notion for environmentalism.

In each of the works in question, the mountains configure a wild space set apart from the human habitation—but with significant variations in each rendering of the story. In Hillern’s novel, when Wally returns to the high pasture to wait for Josef to recover from his gunshot wound, she tells the priest that she is returning to her “only homeland (*einzig Heimath*),” and is going up to visit “Father Murzoll.”⁹⁶ The priest, in turn, repeats that she is going to visit her father—yet he has claimed her as a faithful Christian and thus spins her words to imply surrender to the will of a paternal Christian god, while also lending the mountains a religious aura.

In film, relationships between humans and the natural world are established visually. At times, this visualization allows nonhuman nature to elude the filmmaker’s control. In Dupont’s adaptation, an early scene on the farm includes a small dog who almost seems to be on screen by accident, wandering idly, scratching itself, and lying down in the bottom left corner of the frame. The dog’s cheerful motions contrast starkly with the slow ponderous acting of the human characters, since Wally has just learned that she is banished to the *Hochalm* and is lamenting her fate to a servant.⁹⁷ Later, Josef captures an escaped bull, shown in a series of brief shots featuring real interactions between man and animal. In something

⁹⁶ Wilhelmine von Hillern, *Die Geier-Wally* (Munich: Lichtenberg, 1972), 208.

⁹⁷ Paul Sheehan discusses the ability of animals to disrupt or elude filmmakers’ efforts at manipulation and control in his essay “Against the Image: Herzog and the Troubling Politics of the Screen Animal,” *SubStance* 37.3 (2008): 117–136. Adrian Ivakhiv weaves Sheehan’s arguments into a wide-ranging exploration of the relationship between animals and cinema in the chapter “Anima Moralia: Journeys across Frontiers” within his book *Ecologies of the Moving Image*, 193–252.

reminiscent of Tom Gunning's notion of the cinema of attractions,⁹⁸ this sequence derives its interest from the sheer physicality of the event. The appeal to film viewers is mirrored through the crowd of onlookers who watch Josef and the bull. A final display of nature as a visual attraction takes place during the rescue sequence as villagers search for Josef in the gorge by torchlight. The smoke and mountain fog blend to create an otherworldly effect, a disorienting and impressive touch that transforms the mountain world into a site of fantastic splendor. Whereas the novel repositions nature within the human realm as the site of spirituality, Dupont's film transforms it into spectacle.

In Steinhoff's rendering, the impact is once again altered slightly. The mountain landscape is emphasized from the opening sequence. In shots inspired by the Tyrolean painter Albin Egger-Lienz, Wally and her father are shown mowing a mountain meadow.⁹⁹ Horst Claus argues that this emphasizes the difficult physical labor of a mountain farmer. Given that Steinhoff's images, unlike those of Egger-Lienz, are set into motion, another aspect emerges. Moving against the immobile slope of the mountain background, the two human characters gain a dimension of

⁹⁸ Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Cinema, Its Spectator and the Avant Garde," in *Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative* (London: BFI, 1990), 56–62. Gunning's formulation provided a convenient term for what Noël Burch and a number of other scholars of early cinema had observed regarding the force of attraction that popular media and circumstance share with cinema.

⁹⁹ Regarding the connection between Steinhoff and Egger-Lienz's paintings, see Horst Claus, *Filmen für Hitler*, 430–434. In asserting the similarity between Steinhoff's film and the earlier paintings, Claus draws on Steinhoff's statements quoted in Hermann Hacker's article "Hans Steinhoff: 'Ich bleibe beim Menschen . . .,'" *Film-Kurier*, 26 September 1939.

graphic expressivity, hunched against their work, with legs spread out just past shoulder-width to balance on the angled ground (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1. The Ötztal as portrayed by Steinhoff, 1940.

Their upright posture stands in contrast to the mountain background in which neither a vertical nor horizontal plane can be identified. Without any view of the valley, the frame reveals only the steep pasture in the foreground, the more forested slopes in the middle ground, and the angular form of the distant high peaks. The vertical shape of the two human figures, rhyming with the right angles of the frame, stands out in this wild Alpine backdrop. This emphasis on humans against nature becomes central to the film's visual impact. Two scenes involve Wally being overwhelmed by the clouds and surreal landscape of the high mountains; they reflect the seductive wildness of the mountain spirits as described in Hillern's novel.

In the second instance, Wally seems to be considering suicide, then turns away and dismisses the visions as fantasy, muttering, “Fairy Tales!” The realm of nature is thus asserted as a wild otherness that is seductive but forbidden.

In the film’s finale, a new plot element—present in neither the novel nor the 1921 film—confirms the separation of humans from the wilderness and displays the cinema as a key tool for presenting this division. When Josef and Wally finally come together, the vulture flies away, as if set free, and the music swells to its final triumphant chords (Figures 1.2–1.4). The servant Klettenmeier states the obvious conclusion: now that she has Josef, Wally does not need the vulture.



Figure 1.2. From *Wally of the Vultures* (Steinhoff, 1940).



Figure 1.3.



Figure 1.4.

But the accompanying shots, which show the vulture from below, soaring against a clear sky, suggest a different possibility. All that is seen are the vulture and the sky, an image of pure nature after many scenes showing the vulture perching, fighting with humans, and even walking alongside Wally. Now, with order re-established, Wally is where she belongs, together with another human and separated from nature. This is confirmed by final the close-ups of Wally and Josef embracing, juxtaposed with the from-below shot of the vulture against the empty sky.

Franz Cap's film of 1956 also ends with the vulture being set free and the reinstatement of wilderness as a separate realm. The relationship between Heimat and the natural world up to this point, however, is quite different. In contrast to Steinhoff's frequent shots of humans midway up steep mountain slopes, Cap's rendition frequently displays images of the horizontal meadows or mountain streams at the bottom of the valley. (See Figure 1.5.) Since both films were shot on location in the Ötztal, this difference in framing reflects a deliberate choice to capture the same landscape in an altered style.



Figure 1.5. The Ötztal as portrayed by Cap, 1956.

Further, a sharp contrast exists between Wally's violent fight against the adult vulture in Steinhoff's film and her quiet rescue of the baby bird in Cap's remake

(Figures 1.6–1.7). In the 1956 version, then, the high mountains exist as a barren and forbidding landscape, but there is another realm of nature that includes the baby bird rescued by Wally, as well as the idyllic green enclaves at the bottom of the valleys. These lush cinematic images are what we have come to expect from the Heimat genre: a space of nature that is welcoming to humans, but sometimes with a barren rocky wilderness in the distance. As the vulture flies away, Wally looks up at it and, in a final act of anthropomorphism, says: “He is like me. He cannot share what he loves.” Human emotions are imputed to the vulture, even as it returns to the wild.



Figure 1.6. Wally fights against an adult vulture (Steinhoff, 1940).



Figure 1.7. Wally smilingly adopts the baby vulture (Cap, 1956).

In these various incarnations of *Wally of the Vultures*, nature appears as spirituality, as spectacle, as forbidden otherness, and as a lush and welcoming setting for human existence. This final relationship between humans and nature is the one that is now most frequently associated with the Heimat genre, with the assumption of a “*heile Welt*” (“intact world”) sheltered from modernity.¹⁰⁰ But it represents only one of many relationships that had been suggested in prior films. Urban and industrial films from the Weimar era, including those discussed below, reveal a number of alternate configurations of human society and the natural world.

¹⁰⁰ Höfig, *Der deutsche Heimatfilm*, 80.

Modernizing Heimat

The various productions of *Wally of the Vultures* show that the same story, remade in various historical moments, can evoke a range of relationships between humans and their environment that might be considered “Heimat.” In what follows, I look at three films made quite closely together in time: two from the late Weimar era and one from early in the Nazi era. These films indicate that such variation is not just a product of passing time; in fact, at a given moment, many different ideas and perspectives on Heimat remain present. All of these films situate Heimat-esque rural sites against urban or industrial landscapes and delineate the relationship between these various environments. While they would not have been described within the genre of *Heimatfilm* at the time of their release, taken together, they provide insight into trends and tensions within the concept of Heimat before it became solidified in the postwar era as a genre of rural nostalgia.

Sprengbagger

Sprengbagger 1010, a 1929 film directed by Carl Ludwig Achaz-Duisberg, portrays the “conflict between the all-consuming machine and the primal power of nature.”¹⁰¹ The ways in which this fight between nature and industrial development is portrayed, and the ways various contemporary critics responded to the portrayal, make it an excellent case study for examining Heimat within Weimar film. In Achaz-Duisberg’s film, engineer Karl Hartmann has just completed the design for an

¹⁰¹ Lucy von Jacobi, “*Sprengbagger 1010*,” *Tempo* 276, 26 November 1929; reprinted in *Lucy von Jacobi: Journalistin*, ed. Rolf Aurich and Wolfgang Jacobsen (Munich: text + kritik, 2009), 180–181.

ingenious new machine that can perform controlled detonations to gain access to underground coal deposits, dig up the coal, and collect it, all within a single process.¹⁰² Hartmann is portrayed as a hesitant genius. He has stayed up all night to complete the designs for his machine, but rather than making him eager to implement the plan, the work has only left him with a desire to get back to his rural homeland, away from the industrial wasteland in which he works. Early in the film, he is shown wandering through the factory landscape as if on a hike through mountain scenery, and when he arrives at a particularly Alpine-looking pile of coal, the image dissolves into a brief shot of skiers gliding down a mountain slope. The overt function of this sequence is to show that the protagonist longs for natural landscapes, but its generic impact is more mixed: while it anticipates later *Heimatfilme* in portraying Alpine landscapes as an antidote to the ills of modern technology, it also creates a visual equivalency between the mountain sublime and the overpowering industrial environments of the factory. This tension remains unresolved throughout the film.

Hartmann does in fact escape from the factory and return to his native soil, where his mother operates a mill that has been in the family for centuries. While home, he falls in love with a landowning aristocrat, Camilla von Einerm; their courtship is played out in rural scenes of bathing in idyllic ponds and riding horses through the green landscape. The ambivalence regarding where he belongs is thus replicated in the romantic tensions of a love triangle: Hartmann leaves his doting

¹⁰² The film's title is the name of this machine: "sprengen" means to detonate, and a "Bagger" is a backhoe. For lack of an adequate translation in English, I leave the title in its German original throughout this chapter.

female colleague Olga Lossen, a character marked by the short hair and seductive sophistication of the Weimar Republic's "New Woman," and returns to a seemingly more wholesome feminine force in his pastoral homeland. But after discovering deposits of coal in the soil of this landscape, Hartmann cannot resist his engineer's urge to put the resource to use. Machines transform the Heimat into a smokestack-ridden scene of industrial progress. In the process, the characters who represent Heimat are sacrificed: Hartmann's mother burns down the family mill (with herself inside) rather than accept the forced sale to industrial developers, and the young Camilla von Einerm wanders into the fenced-off fields while the detonations are underway. With the fate of these two characters, the film strikes a tragic note, yet the final intertitles contradict the tragic impact by celebrating the factory for providing work and bread for hundreds of thousands of people, even as images of flaming industrial smokestacks seem to undermine and condemn such an upbeat conclusion. At the level of images, the loss of the verdant Heimat seems to be mourned, yet the verbal justification sustains the tension between the forces of rationalized industrial progress and nostalgic aesthetic landscape traditions.

The ambiguities within the film are echoed in reviews of the day. Critic Lucy von Jacobi writes:

This is a film of 1930. A problem of 1930. The conflict between the all-consuming machine and the primal power of nature (*Urgewalt der Natur*), which is being fought with brutality and cunning, has escalated to the point that it is an obvious task to take up this problem and give it cinematic form.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Jacobi, "Sprengbagger," 181.

Jacobi praises the film's portrayal of industrial landscapes and asserts that the film deals with an absolutely crucial and timely theme. But she strongly objects to its conclusion: "Hesitating in the face of ironclad necessity is a useless and dangerous waste of energy. We must affirm the world of the machines." In Jacobi's assessment, the new must inevitably triumph. And she writes that, at least according to the printed program at the film's premiere, it does.

[Camilla von Einerm] gets disoriented and wanders into the detonation area; according to the program booklet, she is saved and "strides at the side of her beloved toward a new future." But the film that we saw could not make up its mind. We saw her helpless in the turmoil of the raging masses of earth—then the curtain sank, undecided.

Jacobi endorses modernization and objects to a plot that refuses to follow what she sees as a necessary course. It is of interest here that neither the film itself nor Jacobi's objection calls for the fusion of tradition and modernity that Jeffrey Herf speaks of as "reactionary modernism."¹⁰⁴ The clash between tradition and industrial progress remains intact; the film simply leaves the outcome of the conflict unresolved, whereas Jacobi demands that it be decided in favor of industry.

The *Film-Kurier* reviewer Ernst Jäger also lauds the film's images, although his notice specifically praises the film's nature shots more than the factory images. In praising occasional industrial segments, his response is remarkable for its similarity to contemporary descriptions of the mountain film: "in several moments the machine has a countenance (*Antlitz*)"—precisely the term Béla Balázs uses to

¹⁰⁴ Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

describe Arnold Fanck's portrayal of mountain scenery.¹⁰⁵ In the iconography and in the discourse about it, the industrial sublime merges with the mountain sublime.

The primary focus of the *Film-Kurier* review, however, like that of Jacobi's commentary, lies not in the visual impact of the film but in its thematic content. The review claims that the film shows empty landscapes without social contexts or connections, resulting in "an empty play of motifs" that creates a work of "propaganda for the new German industrialists." The reason: "on the opposite side from the pioneers of industry—stand no workers. Typical: an engineer wanders through the gigantic nitrogen compound of the *Leunawerke*, he sees fairy tale landscapes, no workshops, no workers." This, the review states, is the dream of how industrialists would resolve labor conflicts: "the factory without workers." Instead of pitting industrialists against organized labor, the reviewer laments that the film focuses on an obsolete conflict:

The go-getter spirit of the knights of industry must find an opponent—the authors therefore set forth people who live from the soil, rooted to the earth, loyal to tradition, as the opposing force. Conflicts, therefore, that moved Romantic landscape lovers (*Landschaftsromantiker*) a half century ago. Today without relevance.¹⁰⁶

Attentive readers of *Film-Kurier* would not have been surprised by the fact that the film ignores labor and focuses on the landscape. An article from several months earlier describes the film's production and quotes director Achaz-Duisberg regarding precisely this point:

¹⁰⁵ Béla Balázs, "Der Fall Dr. Fanck," in *Schriften zum Film*, vol. 2, ed. Helmut Diederichs and Wolfgang Gersch (Munich: Hanser, 1984), 287–291.

¹⁰⁶ Ernst Jäger, "Sprengbagger 1010," *Film-Kurier*, 26 November 1929.

The political question, the dispute between capital and labor, is only one side of the issue. We are taking up the other side. That is the fact of the flattening of the earth through technology. Industrialization continues incessantly. Villages are being moved fourteen kilometers, mountains 150 meters high simply shot down. And all to serve purely technical goals.

In all of this, in spite of all objectivity, the machine is nothing less than unromantic. You see, I want to show this rhythm of the machine. And furthermore the clash that arises from the ongoing industrial expansion at the moment when two worlds collide: that of the machines, against that of people who have grown up from the earth (*Erdgewachsenen*).¹⁰⁷

The director views the transformation of rural landscapes into industrial sites as a pressing topic, in stark distinction to Ernst Jäger's *Film-Kurier* review. Further, the director's language emphasizes the inevitability of industrialization that Jacobi calls for: "industrialization continues incessantly." The development continues simply to serve "technical goals"—as if agency is given to the machines themselves rather than the people who create and control them. It is understandable why Jäger complains that the human conflict at the core of industrialism is absent. More remarkable is Jacobi's reaction. She endorses the transformation of the German landscape and takes issue with the negative presentation of this transformation, both in the film's images and (to a somewhat lesser extent) in Achaz-Duisberg's words.

What Jacobi describes in a forward-looking gesture as "a problem of 1930," Jäger's review dismisses as not current or relevant. The film serves as a flash point not only for discussions of questions surrounding industrialization but also for describing which questions are even worth addressing. Through this debate among

¹⁰⁷ Hans Feld, "Ein deutscher Industriefilm wird gedreht," 5. *Beiblatt zum Film-Kurier*, 1 June 1929.

critics, the film inserts itself into broader discourses that were taking place in the precise location where the film was shot. The *Leunawerke* mentioned in both reviews was a factory built in 1916 in the town of Leuna, in western Saxony near Dresden. According to Volker Frank's account of the history of the *Leunawerke*, the factory was built at the expense of the local farming communities: fields of grain, beets, and potatoes disappeared; the landscape of the Saale river changed dramatically; exhaust from the chimneys polluted the area. At the same time, progressive workers made the factory a crucial early site of the German workers' movement.¹⁰⁸ Frank's account, surely in part because of its publication site and date within East Germany, emphasizes the importance of the *Leunawerke* as a site of the workers' movement, yet it ascribes equal significance to the destruction of agricultural landscapes and the pollution from industrial smokestacks.

This dual emphasis is also found in Heimat journals of the era. In keeping with the destruction of rural landscapes to create the *Leunawerke* and the images at the end of *Sprengbagger 1010*, a 1930 article from the newsletter of the Saxony Heimat Protection Club describes an idyllic landscape of ponds and sand dunes that is soon to be destroyed, "a victim of the Werminghoff mine, since exploitable brown coal (*Braunkohle*) deposits have been found under it." The brown coal described in this Heimat journal is precisely the mineral that Hartmann discovers near his home in the film. The article, wasting no ink on lamenting and protesting the impending loss of the landscape, briefly describes the location and the expected mining

¹⁰⁸ Volker Frank, "Nachwort," in Walter Bauer, *Stimme aus dem Leunawerk* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1970), 127.

operation. It then recounts at length a local myth regarding the formation of the pond in which a magician creates workers out of grain seeds. In a scene reminiscent of “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice,” the magician’s servant steals the magic book and attempts the trick but is unable to transform the workers back into seeds. To keep the servants busy, he has them make piles of sand, resulting in the area’s huge sand dunes.¹⁰⁹ The tone of this short piece does not indulge in nostalgia; rather, it simply tells a story, so that the story might be known after the land is transformed.

While this brief anecdote intimates that the Heimat club members and writers quietly mourned the loss of landscapes without necessarily opposing the process of modernization, other sources call more explicitly for a synthesis of tradition and modernity. A poem entitled “Industrial People,” published one year earlier in a Heimat club journal from another German industrial region, concludes with the lines:

We brood—carry—forge
Day after day—
So that finally—finally, after all
Fulfillment will come
To the people
On this earth.¹¹⁰

This poem portrays industrial labor as being carried out in hopes of eventual fulfillment; it expresses a desire to work through, not against, the processes of

¹⁰⁹ Max Nagel, “Der Groß-Särchener Großteich (Kreis Hoyerswerde), ein Opfer der Kohle,” *Mitteilungen des Landesvereins Sächsischer Heimatschutz* 19 (1930): 204–206.

¹¹⁰ Heinrich Schmülling, “Industrievolk,” in *Die Heimat: Monatsschrift für Land, Volk und Kunst in Westfalen und am Niederrhein. Zeitschrift des Westfälischen Heimatbundes* 10 (1928): 194.

modernization. This theme echoes Lienhard's description of the Heimat movement as "a way through" or a supplement rather than a challenge to modernity.

The simplistic tone and thudding rhythm of the poem resembles an exercise in regressive or reactionary modernism. A more intriguing example is offered by the opening text of the same journal. The two-page article offers a response to a proposed plan for the city of Dortmund to incorporate large portions of the surrounding region. The incorporation of many areas into Dortmund, maintains the article, might result in a loss of local identity. This is a more significant issue in the towns, since the cities are populated by a large number of uprooted workers who have already lost their sense of Heimat. The text does not condemn this relative lack of "Heimatgefühl." Instead, it sees the situation as a challenge to the Heimat movement: how, given such realities, might one promote a sense of Heimat? A list of concrete solutions follows:

It must be urged from the government that soon, comprehensive building plans be developed, in which green belts and forests are established as open spaces. A generous transportation policy must go hand in hand with these developments, connecting suburbs, settlements, and forest recreation areas through affordable rapid transit to the city centers and work sites. Bringing the mass of industrial workers back into closer contact with nature is the best way to lead them to support Heimat thinking (*Heimatgedanken*) and take joy in their home (*Heimatfreude*).¹¹¹

This article promotes "Heimatfreude" through a specific vision of city planning. A technological linkage of city to surrounding natural areas, rather than a one-way

¹¹¹ I. Risse, "Zu den Eingemeindungen im Ruhrbezirk," in *Die Heimat: Monatsschrift für Land, Volk und Kunst in Westfalen und am Niederrhein. Zeitschrift des Westfälischen Heimatbundes* 10 (1928): 2-3.

retreat from the city to the country, might foster Heimat feelings for the industrial workers of Dortmund.¹¹²

All of these texts grapple with how to maintain or create a livable homeland out of a newly industrialized landscape as well as how to lessen the shocks of the transformation. In *Sprengbagger*, filmed a year later in an industrial area several hours east of the Ruhr region, the final intertitles address the question of what constitutes a livable landscape, but with none of the Heimat journal's conciliatory tone. In the closing sequence of the film, we read: "Where once a small number of people idyllically dreamed their lives away . . ." Cut to images of the now-demolished pastoral landscape: a shot of the manor house seen through the garden; a slightly high angle shot looking down and across a grain field with a worker mowing; a slow pan across a landscape of mixed fields, trees, and forested hills. Cut to a new title frame: ". . . a vast machine world of strange beauty arises, providing bread and work for thousands!" Finally, cut to images of the *Leunawerke*: a low angle tracking shot moves toward and looks up at towering concrete storage containers. A slow panning shot across a landscape of chimneys and steel frame structures follows, then a superimposition showing giant steam-shovel jaws, flame-spewing smokestacks and towering steel building frames (see Figures 1.8–1.11).

¹¹² For further discussion of the specifically urban vision of Heimat in Risse's article, as well as the representation of urban Heimat in film, see the fourth chapter of this dissertation.



Figure 1.8. From *Sprengbagger 1010*.



Figure 1.9.



Figure 1.10.



Figure 1.11.

The intertitles suggest optimism regarding the impact of technology and industrial development. But these desolate final shots collide with the intertitles and give rise to an unresolved tension. The frame-filling maw of the steam shovel, which could be said to represent the “Bagger” of the film’s title and which in this image seems to breathe fire like a dragon, offers a grim replacement for the solitary worker in the fields just a few shots before. Similarly, the smooth contours of a verdant landscape give way to a straight line of smokestacks extending into the distance, replacing natural curves with rationalized geometric order.



Figure 1.12. Logo of the *Deutscher Bund Heimatschutz*.¹¹³

These images call to mind yet another element from Heimat journals of the day: the emblem for the nationwide *Deutscher Bund Heimatschutz* (German Heimat Protection League) is a pastoral panorama resembling the one that disappears at the end of Achaz-Duisberg's film (Figure 1.12). In sum, the words appear honest in extolling the benefits of industry, yet the images impart a negative charge to this environmental transformation. The film ends by affirming, rather than resolving, the tension. The film neither longs for a return to a pre-modern way of life nor endorses Lucy von Jacobi's paean for technological progress. Instead, it stands deliberately between these competing discourses and visions for the landscape. This ambivalence is precisely what makes the film a useful example of Weimar-era Heimat discourse. Already within the film itself, a variety of viewpoints are portrayed, and this plurality of positions continues into the commentaries that respond to the film. Whereas West German Heimat films of the 1950s have been

¹¹³ Rollins, *Greener Vision*, 182.

described as representing a “flight from reality,”¹¹⁴ *Sprengbagger* functions as a node within a real-world debate about environmental transformations.¹¹⁵

Hunger in Waldenburg

Another film from 1929, Phil Jutzi’s *Hunger in Waldenburg*, portrays a similar situation: a rural landscape that is in the process of being industrialized. But unlike *Sprengbagger*, Jutzi’s film focuses on workers. The film was made as a semi-documentary using local residents who essentially portray themselves on screen.¹¹⁶ The protagonist is the son of a weaver in the rural town of Waldenburg, in the province of Silesia (now in Poland). Fed up with chronic hunger at home, he leaves his village to seek work at a nearby factory. Upon arriving at the factory, the young man struggles to find housing. Another worker comes to his aid and convinces a young woman with a child to make space for the newcomer in her already-overcrowded apartment. The young man fails to find work and is unable to pay rent. Oppressed by the grim environment of the *Mietskasernen* (workers’ slums), he gets into a fight with the abusive landlord and dies when the landlord pushes him down the stairs of his apartment complex. As he is dying, a montage of earlier scenes and

¹¹⁴ Höfig, *Der deutsche Heimatfilm*, 1.

¹¹⁵ The film’s resonance within contemporary political and social movements calls to mind Meyer Schapiro’s 1937 essay on Impressionist painting; see Meyer Schapiro, “The Nature of Abstract Art,” *Marxist Quarterly* 1 (January–March 1937): 77–98.

¹¹⁶ See Bruce Arthur Murray, *Film and the German Left in the Weimar Republic: From Caligari to Kuhle Wampe* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 225–228.

landscapes offers a recap of his short unhappy life amid the poverty of the Silesian weavers and miners.

The film's documentary status derives not only from the use of local residents but also from the visual emphasis on the environments around Waldenburg. Long takes show the workers' apartment buildings and industrial sites, while landscape shots emphasize the juxtaposition of the mines and the surrounding countryside. The contrast is stated explicitly in an intertitle: "The phantom of industry rises up from the winter landscape." The contrast between industry and rural idyll suggests the familiar country-versus-city opposition of Heimat literature, but the film uses this contrast to criticize unequal distribution of wealth rather than to celebrate the countryside as an escape from the city. As the worker walks from his hometown to the industrial site, he traverses a wintry landscape of evergreens and meadows blanketed in a thick coat of snow. At one point, skiers are shown descending the forested slopes. The juxtaposition of these two types of travel emphasizes two very different ways of interacting—both physically and filmically—with the rural landscape. The skiers, presumably tourists, frolic in the outdoor setting; these images are intercut with slowly panning nature shots. While the skiers glide smoothly across the snow, the worker is hurried and jerky in his brisk walk (Figures 1.13–1.14). He blows on his hands and tries to cover his ears to fend off the cold. An intertitle states that "yet again, a young weaver wanders down to the coal mines." The verb "wandern" places his journey in the same regime of outdoor recreation as the skiers. But for the weaver, the walk is marked by discomfort, not recreation; the setting functions as a corridor between

places of poverty rather than a site of leisure. The film thus highlights the struggles of rural life that are absent from idyllic *Heimatfilm* imagery.



Figure 1.13. Skiers in *Hunger in Waldenburg*.



Figure 1.14. From *Hunger in Waldenburg*.

The film uses long takes to emphasize industrial machines and massive apartment blocks. The camerawork in the film is generally static, but these built environments receive more dynamic treatment. The camera gazes at the exterior wall of an apartment building, tilts up, pans across, and then descends back down the wall, all the while revealing only countless identical small windows on an otherwise drab and featureless background (Figure 1.15).



Figure 1.15. From *Hunger in Waldenburg*.

The visual emphasis matches the significance of the *Mietskasernen* within the plot. Key events revolve around the laborious search for housing, the overcrowded apartments, and the continual worry about paying rent. For much of the film, the protagonist's only enemies are physical environments (the crowded apartment building) or mental states (hunger, poverty, anxiety due to unemployment). Later, the landlord and his daughter take on the roles of antagonists; they become the

human face of the apartment building. At the climax of the film, the young weaver attempts to resist the landlord's abusive behavior during rent collection, resulting in the young man's fatal fall down the stairs. As they wrestle at the top of the stairs, a low-angle shot reveals the landlord's head alongside an exposed light fixture, visually connecting the two pale round forms (Figure 1.16). This shot alternates with a high-angle close-up of the fighting men's legs at the top of the narrow stairway. The angled legs of the landlord, closest to the camera, create a visual rhyme with the angled slats of the railing (Figure 1.17). These images suggest an equivalence between the building's physical components and its human managers. The combination of human and environmental violence literalizes Heinrich Zille's statement, featured prominently in another 1929 film directed by Jutzi, that "you can kill a person with an apartment just like with an axe."¹¹⁷



Figure 1.16. Human heads and light fixtures in *Hunger in Waldenburg*.

¹¹⁷ Zille's quotation occupies an important position Jutzi's 1929 film *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück*, analyzed in Chapter Three.

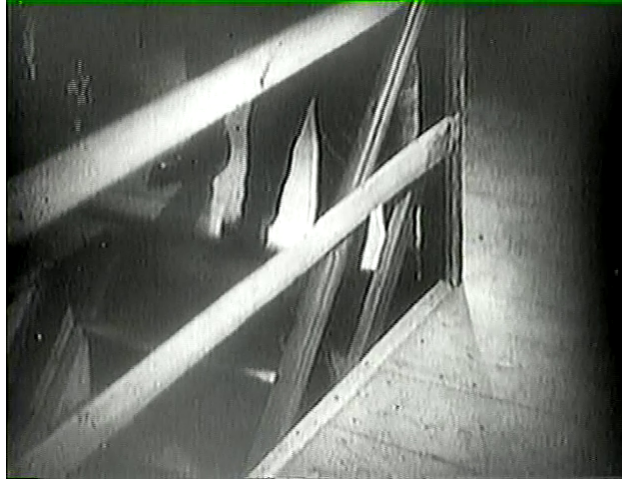


Figure 1.17. Human legs and wooden posts in *Hunger in Waldenburg*.

The poverty of the Silesian weavers was already well known by 1929. Gerhard Hauptmann's play *Die Weber* (*The Weavers*, 1892) had famously depicted the weaver's struggles culminating in the uprising (*Weberaufstand*) of 1844. Hauptmann's play was made into a film of the same title in 1927.¹¹⁸ In *Sprengbagger*, the question of how workers should be included in the film was a source of critical debate. By contrast, because the history of the issue in Silesia was well known, the focus on workers' travails in *Hunger in Waldenburg* was simply accepted as a given. In the *LichtBildBühne* review, a brief comment describes the

¹¹⁸ In his review of *The Weavers*, Rudolf Arnheim claims that the film fails to do justice to the deadly serious topic of the weaver's revolt. "There are themes whose artistic exploitation is at certain times a profanity. A revolutionary people deserve a revolutionary art. But in a country where political and social outrages disturb the public complacency so little, this two-hour revolution, this symbolic ersatz plot that provides gratification without making a contribution is a betrayal of art and of revolutionary thought." In contrast to the "public complacency" that Arnheim decries, critical responses to *Hunger in Waldenburg* and *Sprengbagger 1010* show that filmic portrayals of social issues greatly disturbed some members of the public. See Rudolf Arnheim, "The Weavers (*Die Weber*) (1927)," in Arnheim, *Film Essays and Criticism*, trans. Brenda Benthien (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 125.

photography as being unremarkable (in contrast to reviews of *Sprengbagger*), but the critic's greatest complaint is that the film adds nothing new to viewers' knowledge of the struggles in Waldenburg:

The horrible conditions in Waldenburg are familiar. The documentary (*Filmreportage*) could therefore have counted on receiving strong interest. If we determine that the film disappoints . . . then we are not suggesting that the problems are not so bad. But we do want to say that the surplus of misery in Waldenburg (at least, for example, in comparison to the Berlin Proletariat) can hardly be captured on film in a way that makes us feel this excess of misery. Unfortunately, the film thus loses its effect as an accusatory document. What we already knew about Waldenburg—from words and reports—stirred us decidedly more deeply.¹¹⁹

The reviewer expects the film to provide new information and complains that it does not succeed in portraying the extreme misery and hardship in Waldenburg. While the film may not have provided new information, its visual juxtaposition of rural scenes with industrial sites—and especially its inclusion of labor issues within this constellation—offers a productive comparison to *Sprengbagger*, released the same year. Another film, made just five years later, demonstrates a significant shift in both the portrayal of the relationship between modern and undeveloped sites, and in the way critics responded to (or ignored) environmental and social issues.

The Prodigal Son

Luis Trenker's 1934 film *Der verlorene Sohn* (*The Prodigal Son*) deals with Heimat in various senses of the word. Starting from St. Laurein, an idyllic mountain village in the Dolomites that fits the familiar *Heimatfilm* stereotype of a rural

¹¹⁹ "Hunger in Waldenburg," *LichtBildBühne*, 16 March 1929.

homeland, the film's protagonist Tonio Feuersinger leaves home to seek adventure in New York City. After struggling for months with unemployment and poverty, he finally makes a breakthrough when he crosses paths with Lilian Williams, the beautiful daughter of a New York millionaire whom he had met a year before while she was a tourist in the Alps. Lilian asks Tonio to stay with her, but he realizes that his true home is in the Dolomites—or, as he responds during a scene in New York when asked from where he hails, in “Bavaria . . . Germany!”¹²⁰ He returns to his hometown just in time for the *Rauhnacht*, a winter solstice celebration that is staged with intense energy and tempo. More than New York, Heimat becomes the site of spectacle. Upon his return, Tonio takes over the family farm and reunites with Barbl, his faithful sweetheart from the village.

Heimat in this film assumes many of the meanings that the term has occupied throughout its conceptual history.¹²¹ It is the farm that Tonio will inherit (following the legal sense of the word “Heimat”). It is both the local community as well as the nation to which he claims allegiance. Heimat is that which is familiar—or more accurately, that which is not foreign—and thus the opposite of New York. It is the zone in which language is comfortable and known to insiders, indicated by the slight dialects during the scenes in South Tyrol, most notably the opening dialogue

¹²⁰ Eric Rentschler notes that the “Bavaria” response was not included in the original Nazi-era script and was likely added to make the film more appealing to West German *Heimatfilm* audiences after the war. He examines the multiple valences of Heimat within the film, as well as the use of Manhattan as a site for projecting German anxieties onto a comfortably distant foreign space (rather than as an exercise in proto-Neorealism, the way Trenker himself described the New York sequence). See Rentschler, *Ministry of Illusion*, 85.

¹²¹ See Höfig, *Der deutsche Heimatfilm*, 3–17.

between Tonio and Barbl. Heimat is equated with traditional female roles: in the idyllic opening scene, following a montage of pastoral landscape shots, Barbl sits next to Tonio on a bench, knitting and wearing traditional dress. The transition to Manhattan, in contrast, is triggered by an encounter with the New Woman.

Immediately before the dissolve to New York, Tonio is on a climb with Lilian, the New York heiress who speaks multiple languages and aspires to climb mountains and whose beauty is emphasized through her tall slender build and sleek modern clothes.

In other ways, however, Heimat is equated with culture and coded as masculine, in contrast to feminine nature. During juxtapositions of New York and St. Laurein, the establishing shots for the mountain village show it from a distance, cradled at the base of a valley blanketed in deep snow (Figure 1.18). The framing marks the village as the space of culture, rendered phallic by the erect form of the church tower in the center, in contrast to the smooth, gentle white curves of the snow-covered valley.



Figure 1.18. The bounded Heimat: St. Laurein cradled within the smooth curves of the valley. From *The Prodigal Son*.



**Figure 1.19. The transition from the mountains to Madison Square Garden.
From *The Prodigal Son*.**

This portrayal also emphasizes that Heimat is bounded, whereas New York is borderless, sprawling, and overwhelming—a difference emphasized by a dissolve from the Alpine village in winter to the glittering spectacle of Madison Square Garden (Figure 1.19). Space in St. Laurein is clearly defined against the surrounding mountains, while the scenes in New York are disorienting, with shots leaping from place to place and frequently dissolving from one towering skyscraper facade to another.

Temporally, the mountain homeland offers “seasonal rhythms instead of the march of time”¹²²—a series of festivals marks the passage of time in St. Laurein, from the ski race and ensuing celebration early in the film, to an outdoor mass held on a mountain meadow, to the raucous *Rauhnacht*. In New York, on the other hand, time whizzes by without punctuation or ceremony. Tonio reports that he is “10 months out of a job.” Nothing has happened that might indicate that these months have passed. It is winter during Tonio’s entire stay in New York, even as the image

¹²² Rentschler, *Ministry of Illusion*, 88.

cuts from Tonio freezing in line at a winter soup kitchen to a seemingly contemporaneous mountain mass being celebrated on a blooming summer pasture in the Alps. Over the course of the film, *Heimat* becomes laden with meanings; indeed, the concept is stretched to the point of lacking any core meaning at all. *Heimat* thus bears many roles, matched by the numerous themes—racial, architectural, temporal, moral, economic—for which New York serves as the absolute Other of the Alpine *Heimat*.¹²³

In contrast to the vast collection of themes that can be related to the notion of *Heimat*, the New York sequence makes it easy to identify the things that do not belong in such a collection: among many other aspects, unemployment and hunger. Scenes of work in St. Laurein are portrayed with an abundance of animation and mirth. Lumberjacks sing while chopping wood, break for a moment to have a good-natured wrestling match to compete for the prettiest girl in town, then sing again while walking from the high Alpine forests to the village. During the march downhill, Tonio pauses and—again smiling—takes over his father’s work of plowing the fields. (His father complains of being tired, an ailment to which Tonio appears impervious.) The opening scene is also telling. As Barbl and Tonio sit together on a bench in front of a grandiose Alpine panorama, Barbl tells Tonio: “I’d like to sit here like this forever.” Her wish not only reveals a longing for a “space beyond time”¹²⁴

¹²³ At the same time, as Rentschler has pointed out, the famous dissolve between the Alps and Manhattan reveals an unexpected relationship between the two, suggesting instability in the seemingly timeless homeland. *Ministry of Illusion*, 89.

¹²⁴ Eric Rentschler, “There’s No Place Like Home: Luis Trenker’s *The Prodigal Son* (1934),” *New German Critique* 60 (Autumn 1993): 33–56, here 44.

but also fits much more closely with bourgeois leisure culture than the rigors of Alpine farming.¹²⁵

Looking back at the film as a piece of environmental and social discourse within a particular historical moment, one would expect at least a few contemporaneous critical voices to have complained about what is missing. The film's portrayal of St. Laurein acknowledges neither the presence of unemployment nor the possibility that work in a mountain village could be unpleasant or difficult. Discourse surrounding the films of 1929 showed this sort of vibrant discussion and conflict over how to portray the Heimat, but in response to Trenker's film from 1934, no such discussions arose. The larger concern in contemporary reviews was not social or economic blind spots but the excessively bizarre spectacle of the *Rauhacht* scene.¹²⁶ Film had previously occupied one position within a multivocal, much disputed discursive field. Now, after the process of *Gleichschaltung* ("leveling") under Nazism, no platform remains for the voices that might take issue with Trenker's spectacle-laden vision of Heimat.

Splintered Heimat: Late Weimar-Era Film Discourse and German Identity

In the remainder of this chapter, I broaden my analysis of Heimat within Weimar cinema to include textual as well as filmic sources. Focusing only on films

¹²⁵ The preponderance of leisure moments, as compared to work scenes, calls to mind Uta Ganschow's critique of *Die Geierwally* as a story of bourgeois values rather than realistic events of the mountain farming milieu. See "Die Geier-Wally: Identifikationsfigur für ein Massenpublikum 1873 und 1940," in *Diskurs Zeitschrift für Theater, Film und Fernsehen* 6/7 (1973): 65–76.

¹²⁶ Rentschler, "There's No Place Like Home," 53.

themselves would mean limiting my analysis solely to extant works, many of which are already well-studied and canonized. To supplement the films, I have examined all issues of *Film-Kurier* from 1929, as well as a sampling of issues of the journal from the years before and after. The selection of 1929 as a focal point is not entirely arbitrary: it was a dramatic year of transition from silent to sound films. Weimar cinema is the most famous epoch of German cinema, and Weimar cinema's paradigmatic medium is the silent film. I am thus looking at the year when German film industry and technologies had advanced as far as they could before film would become, in many ways, a different medium.¹²⁷ Several films that were made or premiered in 1929 play important roles in this dissertation, including the mountain film *Die weiße Hölle vom Piz Palü* (*The White Hell of Pitz Palu*), the Berlin films *Menschen am Sonntag* (*People on Sunday*) and *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück* (*Mother Krause's Journey to Happiness*), and the industrial/Heimat films *Sprengbagger 1010* and *Hunger in Waldenburg*.

Scanning the 1929 issues of *Film-Kurier* in search of Heimat discourse, especially bearing in mind the subsequent scholarship on *Heimatfilm*, one notes that mountain films are not discussed in relation to Heimat. Instead, they are aligned with an altogether different category of outdoor and expedition films. Numerous ads, collections of still photos, and reviews describe films about dangerous

¹²⁷ Film theorists have differed in their assessments of sound's impact on the cinematic medium. While Rudolf Arnheim argued that film was essentially a visual art and was hindered by the advent of synchronized sound, André Bazin suggested that, for visionary filmmakers, "total cinema" already existed as an idea before the invention of technologies that would make it possible. See André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Montreal: Caboose, 2009), 13–20.

expeditions or voyages to faraway places. The appeal of these films seems to lie in their ability to offer access to exciting, unreachable spaces for viewers who, for the most part, were still not able to travel far from home due to economic crises and limited mobility during the Weimar era.

Several titles, including *Wenn der weiße Flieder wieder blüht* (*When the White Lilac Blooms Again*) and *Schwarzwaldmädel* (*Black Forest Girl*), would later serve as models for numerous remakes that constituted the *Heimatfilmwelle* of the 1950s. But these 1929 films are not labeled as *Heimatfilme*; instead, perhaps the most common label is “Bauern-Filme,” or peasant films. At the same time, various other films include “Heimat” in the title, and at least one is labeled as a “Heimatfilm.” If 1929 Heimat films were not the same as peasant films, what were they? What kind of Heimat did they portray on screen?

Defining the Beloved Homeland

The term “Heimat” appears at various points in the 1929 *Film-Kurier*, usually in relation to topics very different from those in 1950s Heimat films. Instead of idyllic rural scenes, they focus on everyday lives of German people in the late Weimar era, portraying workers in the cities as well as German emigrants now living abroad. One such film was planned by Arnold Fanck. Together with G. W. Pabst in 1929, Fanck co-directed one of the most successful mountain films, *The White Hell of Pitz Palu*. The same year, he was scheduled to make another film that would take on the topic of Heimat but would occupy a site far from the mountains. The title of the film is *Deine Heimat*, and it was announced in a large advertisement

covering a quarter of a newspaper page.¹²⁸ The text of the ad reads: “In spring, Arnold Fanck will climb down from the mountains to the flatlands and work on German industry just as he has done the mountains. In 1929 he will film the greatest *Heimatfilm* of all time about Germany: *Your Homeland (The People of Work)*.”¹²⁹ The film’s subtitle, *Das Volk der Arbeit*, emphasizes “people” and “work,” two elements that are conspicuously absent from most of Fanck’s films. His mountain films usually focus on solitary individuals—not the collective “Volk”—and feature the sporting activities of mountaineers. They do not show work; further, the protagonists are generally doctors or academics whose elite professions would not be associated with proletariat undertones of “The People of Work.” Perhaps most importantly, there is a self-understood use of the term “Heimatfilm,” suggesting that the designation already had recognition value—but with a very different meaning than it would assume during the Adenauer era. The ad states that Fanck is descending from the mountains to the flatlands in order to give the same attention to German industry that he has given to the mountains and will create “the greatest Heimat film of all time.” The remark sets the flatlands against the mountains and suggests that Heimat is situated in the flatlands and concerned with work and industry.

¹²⁸ *Film-Kurier*, 8 January 1929. The film was never made, but the fact that the plan was advertised so prominently makes it nonetheless noteworthy as an example of Heimat discourse.

¹²⁹ In the German original: “Arnold Fanck steigt im Frühjahr von den Bergen in die Ebene um die deutsche Industrie ebenso zu bearbeiten, wie das Hochgebirge und dreht 1929 den größten Heimatfilm aller Zeiten über Deutschland: *Deine Heimat (Das Volk der Arbeit)*.”

A film bearing the title *Teure Heimat* (*Dear Homeland* or *Beloved Homeland*) was released in 1929. The synopsis explains that the feature praises traditional life, argues against emigration, and shows that life abroad is equally arduous: "Praise of Heimat. Folksy (*volkstümliche*) propaganda against emigration. 'Over there, you still need to slave away.'"¹³⁰ The not altogether positive review is interesting because it gives a list of sites emphasized in the film, none of which would be expected in a feature of this title. The main focus is on the "Berlin proletarian milieu," with occasional characters from different social strata to provide variety. Further, the review describes the film's "glorification of the Berlin weekend life and the beautiful sites of the waters of the March [*Schönheiten der märkischen Gewässer*]." The scenes of *Heimat* thus take the form of workers' lives in Berlin and their leisure activities on the weekend, both in the city and the surrounding rural landscapes. A final setting that comes into play is the Hamburg harbor. Similar to reviews of 1950s *Heimatfilme*, the review praises the outdoor camerawork; yet here the landscapes in focus are the urban sites of Berlin and the industrial harbor of Hamburg.

Beloved Homeland offers an explicit depiction of urban *Heimat*. In addition, it points toward another aspect of *Heimat* discourse that recurs periodically in the 1929 *Film-Kurier*: the attempt to comprehend German identity in the context of emigration. As a series of editorials in the journal demonstrates, this was a fraught, but fascinating, subject of discourse.

¹³⁰ Georg Herzberg, "Teure Heimat," *Film-Kurier*, 1 August 1929.

Cultural Policy

A series of editorials in *Film-Kurier* throughout 1929 discusses film as a medium for broadcasting German culture and solidifying German identity. These articles describe film as a profitable endeavor abroad, a sort of cultural ambassador for Germany to other nations, and a way of connecting with Germans living in other countries. Knowing the nation's subsequent history, one might be somewhat surprised to find that these discussions show only traces of nationalism—the goal is to grapple with and communicate identity within a complicated context of international relations, not to privilege German culture over other cultures. In all of these articles, “Heimat” functions as a way of negotiating complex relations among people and nations.

In a collection of front-page articles dated January 1, 1929, politicians from various factions discuss the importance of German film. Representing the Center Party, Dr. Georg Schreiber describes film as a potential tool for representing German culture abroad. He describes “cultural means” as an alternative to military action and an important tool for foreign policy. Since Germany no longer has the military power to assert itself internationally, it needs to implement cultural values in its international activities. Film is essential in this endeavor: “With its help we can have international influence that enlightens, advertises, and convinces, in order to create space for the notion of Germany’s spiritual and cultural international standing (*Weltgeltung*).” The article goes on to suggest that film can help Germany to make “moral and economic conquests” abroad, and that film within Germany, if it is to truly serve a positive educational function, must be marked by “a certain ethos . . .

otherwise the thoughts of the national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) and the upgrading of German culture will become bland and colorless.”¹³¹

Schreiber’s editorial grapples with the question of German film abroad in a way that takes film seriously as a cultural product and seeks productive ways to enlist it as a foreign ambassador. Although the essay does not explicitly bring up the notion of *Heimat*, it nonetheless lays out several of the themes that are central to further discussions of film, *Heimat*, and German identity in an international setting.

Cultural Community and Germans Abroad

An editorial from the summer of 1929 touches on a more specific aspect of the above-mentioned themes. The column, written by Philippe Fachon and titled “Film und Kulturgemeinschaft” (“Film and Cultural Community”), discusses the issue of Germans living abroad and the question of what role they can (or should) play in the circulation of German films. The column describes film as part of an international cultural process. Fachon writes that film is, and should be, a worldwide industry: audiences support good films, regardless of where they come from. As part of a global cultural forum, film contributes to understanding between nations. At the same time, German films can also help to connect Germans at home with those living abroad. “In this way film can serve to reconcile nations, but it must also be interpreted and clearly understood as a bridge and band between Germans within Germany (*Reichsdeutschtum*) and Germans abroad.”¹³²

¹³¹ Georg Schreiber, “Auf Kulturpolitik kommt es an,” *Film-Kurier*, 1 January 1929.

¹³² Philippe Fachon, “Film und Kulturgemeinschaft,” *Film-Kurier*, 6 July 1929.

In late summer of 1929, an article appeared in *Film-Kurier* entitled “Der Auslandsdeutschtum und der Film” (“Germans Abroad and Film”). Written by Dr. Fritz Wertheimer, director of the *Deutsches Ausland-Institut* (*Institute for Germans Abroad*, henceforth DAI), it offered a response to calls for film to serve an overt function in building German identity, either by making films about Germans abroad to show to people within Germany or by producing films about life in Germany to help bolster the national consciousness of those living abroad. This topic, along with the stated goal of the institute—described in the first lines of the article as fostering a “single German people” with “unified cultural consciousness,” with the added note that film serves as a “valuable and important aid” in this work—might arouse wariness in the post-1945 reader. But the article goes on to combat the notion that German nationhood can be propagated as a unified identity. Instead, the article emphasizes the vast diversity existing among Germans, both within the nation’s borders and abroad, and argues that Germans abroad can only be understood within each community’s unique context:

The DAI proceeds in its activities based on the assumption that Germans abroad cannot be considered apart from their environment, from the land, from the climate, from the soil and its treasures, but also not apart from the people who live and work with them on this soil. For this Germanness [*dieses Deutschtum*, referring to *Auslandsdeutschtum*] does not live in a vacuum. Its activities and its development, its growth and its formation of identity are geopolitically determined. Therefore this Germanness is only comprehensible in the context of international studies [*Auslandkunde*], and much economic and psychological study is required to understand this Germanness correctly and to assign it the proper role within foreign peoples as well as the proper role for benefitting the homeland [*Heimat*].”¹³³

¹³³ Fritz Wertheimer, “Das Auslandsdeutschtum und der Film,” *Film-Kurier*, 17 August 1929.

This passage employs language that we associate with Nazi descriptions of German identity being grounded in the soil of the German homeland. Wertheimer uses this language to illustrate the international status of Germans abroad: they cannot be understood if they are “divorced from their environment, from the land, from the climate, from the soil,” nor if they are “divorced from the people who live and work with them on this soil.” He thus offers a deliberate counter-argument to the blood-and-soil notion that Germanic culture arises from a mythical bond to the German land. Instead, he declares, it is a process of working in a specific place and with specific people that creates identity. The identity of German expatriates—the nature of their “Auslandsdeutschtum”—depends as much on their non-German setting and neighbors as on their German ancestors. Expatriate identity, for Wertheimer, does not exist in a vacuum. His overt argument already challenges *völkisch* nationalist sentiments insofar as it suggests that Germanness is not an ideal in itself but only exists in relation to—and is constantly being formed by—other people and cultures. Further, his denial that Germans abroad might live in a vacuum or in empty space—in the original, “dieses Deutschtum lebt ja nicht im luftleeren Raum”—serves as a reminder that the quest for living space or *Lebensraum*, as was being promoted by nationalistic forces, relies on a fantasy notion that empty space exists elsewhere, simply waiting for Germans to inhabit it.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ The cultivation of, and expansion into, empty space is a common trope in Nazi-era Heimat films. See, for example, the similar final scenes of Veit Harlan’s *Die goldene Stadt* (*The Golden City*, 1942) and Arnold Fanck’s *Die Tochter des Samurai* (*The Daughter of the Samurai*, 1937). In both conclusions, the protagonists cultivate unused space that borders the film’s primary setting—with the remarkable

Halfway through the article, the author draws on the example of Romania to describe the great diversity of Germans abroad—not only within and between the different countries to which Germans have emigrated, but also within German communities in one country: “How varied the history, the constitution, the administration, the legal system, the legislation, the officials, the entire public life, the working, thinking, and feeling!” Mindful of this diversity, Wertheimer questions others (unnamed in the article) who are trying to establish a single party in parliament that would represent all of the Germans within Romania.¹³⁵ In films from the Nazi era, Germans abroad are often portrayed as unified minority communities being persecuted by the majority population; the most notorious of these portrayals are Peter Hagen’s *Friesennot* (*Frisians in Distress*, 1935), Fritz Peter Buch’s *Menschen im Sturm* (*People in the Storm*, 1941), and Gustav Ucicky’s *Heimkehr* (*Homecoming*, 1941). Wertheimer’s text from 12 years earlier reveals a strong contrary voice, demanding attention to plurality rather than attempting to forge unity. Wertheimer goes on to explain that German communities cannot really be thought of solely as German but rather must be seen in active coexistence with numerous other groups: “But these Germans themselves do not live alone in their districts and are not at all as closed off as one sometimes thinks. They live together with Romanians and Hungarians, Jews and Ukrainians, Bulgarians and Belarusians and God knows what other splinters.” The Germans in Romania—which he has already described as a

difference that Fanck’s fantasy of *Lebensraum* expansion is transplanted to Asia, showing Nazi Germany’s new ally Japan expanding into Manchuria.

¹³⁵ Possible opponents might have included the *Alldeutscher Bund* and the *Verein fürs Deutschtum im Ausland*, as discussed below.

“splinter” of the German nation—are immersed in communities made up of other splinters.

The article concludes that it would be impossible for a single film to describe Germanness abroad, just as no single film could fully depict the life of Germans within Germany. But what could be productive, he suggests, would be to show individual slices of life and to focus on everyday endeavors, rather than trying to present a fixed and unchanging identity. He claims that a number of these films already exist, showing the lives and work of German emigrants in Siebenbürgen, Brazil, Canada, and elsewhere. These films offer numerous partial solutions (“Teillösungen”) to the problem of capturing German identity on film. In a final paragraph, the author states that his institute, located in a building called the *Haus des Deutschtums*, offers its help to any project along these lines. The mention of the name of the building calls to mind the Germanic-nationalist undertones of the article’s opening paragraph. The conclusion thereby closes a frame that gestures ironically toward German nationalism, using this familiar and simplified discourse as entry point for discussing a reality of German identity that is irreducibly diverse and complex.

Wertheimer’s emphasis on pluralistic German identity adds to the diversity of Heimat discourse in the Weimar era. The focus on plurality did not last beyond 1933. After the Nazi takeover, Wertheimer was forced from his position as leader of the DAI because of his Jewish ancestry. Thereafter, the institute was reorganized by leaders of the more overtly nationalistic *Verein fürs Deutschtum im Ausland* (Association for Germanness Abroad) and became a vehicle for international Nazi

propaganda and expansionism.¹³⁶ When Walter Ruttmann made a documentary about Stuttgart in 1935, with the secondary title “*Die Stadt des Auslanddeutschtums*” (“The City of Germans Abroad”), he emphasized the unity of German people around the world. In the words of the UFA program materials: “Stuttgart, the metropolis between forest and vines—the city of Germans abroad, home of the DAI, in which the accomplishments of our brothers in all the world are gathered and made useful for the entire German people.”¹³⁷ The documentary features a fictional plot in which, after 10 years abroad, an emigrant returns to his hometown of Stuttgart. Both the program’s emphasis on gathering the accomplishments of Germans around the world and making them useful for “the entire German people” by means of their centralized collection in Stuttgart, and the film’s “Heim ins Reich” plot exhibit a centripetal notion of “Auslandsdeutschtum” that tends inward toward Stuttgart. Whereas the 1929 article in *Film-Kurier* had focused on plurality and interaction with diverse communities abroad, the film of 1935 portrays an international German community whose attention and energy are directed toward this German city.

¹³⁶ Ernst Ritter, *Das Deutsche Ausland-Institut in Stuttgart 1917–1945: Ein Beispiel deutscher Volkstumsarbeit zwischen den Weltkriegen* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976), 54–56.

¹³⁷ UFA program text for the film *Stuttgart, die Großstadt zwischen Wald und Reben. Die Stadt des Auslanddeutschtums* (dir. Walter Ruttmann, 1935). For the film’s personnel, the content of the UFA program brochure, comments by Ruttmann, and a contemporary review, see *Walter Ruttmann: Eine Dokumentation*, ed. Jeanpaul Georgen (Berlin: Freunde der Deutschen Kinemathek, 1989), 146.

Redefining Heimat

Wertheimer's article makes it clear that some groups would have preferred to use film to build a unified and strong German identity. Both the notorious *Alldeutscher Bund* (Pan-German League) and the Association for Germanness Abroad sought to pursue a conservative nationalist agenda that would bring together Germans, including those who had emigrated.¹³⁸ "Heim ins Reich" films from the Nazi era depicted the perils and travails of expatriate communities. One such film, *Frisians in Distress*, shows a Frisian—coastal northwest German, likely Mennonite—expatriate community in Russia suffer persecution before retaliating with violence. In another example, Gustav Ucicky's infamous *Homecoming*, a German community is persecuted in Poland and then (in one of Nazi cinema's classic examples of projection and role reversal) liberated by the advancing German army. These films emphasized a unified German identity and centripetal movement of Germans back toward the Reich. Articles in film journals also demanded strong nationalism rather than an open or international approach: "The best international film is the national film."¹³⁹

¹³⁸ The Pan-German League has been the subject of numerous historical studies; for an overview of the organization's history, see Barry Jackisch, *The Pan-German League and Radical Nationalist Politics in Interwar Germany* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012). On the history of the much less thoroughly studied Association for Germanness Abroad through the beginning of the Weimar era, see Gerhard Weidenfeller, *VDA, Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland. Allgemeiner Deutscher Schulverein (1881–1918): ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Nationalismus und Imperialismus im Kaiserreich* (Bern: Lang, 1976).

¹³⁹ "The National Film is the International Film," *Film-Kurier*, 1 January 1934, cited in Rentschler, *Ministry of Illusion*, 88. A similar article appeared in the *Film-Kurier* on 15 May 1933 with the three-part heading: "Der wahrhaft internationale Film. Film als Produkt der Scholle. Der Film muß einen Standpunkt haben."

Just as the approach to German identity became more restrictive, the concept of Heimat, as seen in film trade papers of the Nazi era, also became narrower. An article from mid-1933 calls out to the German film industry:

Make "Heimat films," whose goal should be to convey German folk culture (*deutsches, völkisches Kulturgut*) to the viewer in a way that is undistorted, dignified, and emphatic and to awaken the urgently needed understanding for Germany, for German character and creativity (*deutsches Wesen und Schaffen*) domestically and abroad! These Heimat films should show German landscape, work, art, research, and science, and should visually and aurally record unique traits, customs, traditions, and especially dialects, folk songs, and folk dances.¹⁴⁰

This editorial features many of the tropes that became central to later *Heimatfilme* and that certainly do not fit the descriptions of *Your Homeland* or *Beloved Homeland* from 1929. But the article is still limited to discussion of *Kulturfilme*. Indeed, to the extent that Heimat films were discussed in relation to the *Heimatabewegung*, specifically in regard to folk art and regional culture, they were generally documentary *Kulturfilme* rather than mainstream narrative *Spielfilme*. By 1936, however, the distinction was loosening: "The *Heimatfilm*, as I see it," writes Kurt Skaldes, "must first of all be a narrative film. But in contrast to other [films], the filmic plot here receives unalterably firm grounding in a very specific landscape."¹⁴¹ Finally, in 1944, a commentator describes the "Bavarian *Heimatfilm*, which by now—it's safe to say—has conquered the world."¹⁴² The article celebrates films

¹⁴⁰ Carlheinz Berg, "'Heimatfilme': Ein Vorschlag zur Beiprogrammgestaltung," *Film-Kurier*, 29 June 1933.

¹⁴¹ Kurt Skaldes, "Bekanntnis zum Heimatfilm," *Film-Kurier*, 4 April 1936.

¹⁴² Wolfgang Petzet, "Im Schatten Ludwig Thomas," *Film-Kurier*, 11 January 1944.

based on Heimat literature such as the writings of Ludwig Thoma. Precisely this sort of film would constitute the *Heimatfilmwelle* of the 1950s. Fifteen years after the flourishing diversity of viewpoints within 1929 film discourse, this article describes a specific, standardized, and internationally successful form for Heimat film: idyllic Bavarian countrysides have, in the assessment of the critic, conquered the world.

Pluralistic Heimat and Environmental Criticism

Thomas Lekan suggests that Heimat could serve as a model for a hybridic approach to nature and culture, an alternative to the dualistic thinking that plagues American environmentalism.¹⁴³ Johannes von Moltke, building on the work of Celia Applegate and Alon Confino, portrays Heimat as a concept that helped people come to terms with modernity, even in the nostalgic Heimat films of the 1950s.¹⁴⁴ Looking at film discourse from 1929, the meaning of Heimat could include both of these interpretations—and many others as well. What makes Germany of the Weimar era so interesting is that “home” was so poorly established as a political entity yet so resonant as a carrier of cultural meaning.

Discourse about German film in the late Weimar era shows an intense interest in building a common identity of Germanness, often using the German homeland and physical environment as a foundation for this identity. The effort was multivocal and pluralistic, displaying great diversity of environmental ideals within Germany, as well as recognition—and acceptance—of the diverse situations of

¹⁴³ Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature*, 15.

¹⁴⁴ Moltke, *No Place Like Home*, 14.

Germans abroad. As I think of *Heimatfilm* now, however, my gaze looks backward: I view questions of Heimat first through the sophisticated sentimentality of the 1980s and the postwall era, then through the critical Heimat films of the 1960s and 70s, and finally, through the unabashedly nostalgic images of the 1950s. As a result of this backward gaze, I picture rural landscapes marked by hills, green pastures, idyllic villages, and mountain backdrops. Likewise, when I think of a term like “Kulturgemeinschaft” or “Auslandsdeutschtum,” I think of nationalistic efforts at consolidation under Nazi rule. Both of these views are filtered through history, and in both cases, a decisive historical event is the *Gleichschaltung* of cultural organizations under National Socialism. This prism obscures a historical moment during which Heimat discourse drew on many different notions of home, not solely a rural homeland, and likewise during which “Kulturgemeinschaft” involved an attempt to connect with an international community—but perhaps not to exclude or dominate.

Looking forward, then, I am reluctant to accept the contention that Heimat offers a productive way of understanding nature and culture as mutually embedded, since this argument is based on a rural notion of Heimat that is only one of many potential interpretations seen in Weimar-era discourse. The shift to Nazi Germany is not marked by the failure of hybridity or decreased environmental awareness (although, as various scholars have pointed out, supposed Nazi environmentalism was trumped by rampant military and industrial development).¹⁴⁵ Instead,

¹⁴⁵ The dissolution of supposed environmental ideals in the face of military and industrial demands within Nazi Germany is discussed in various essays within the book *How Green Were the Nazis?*, ed. Brüggemeier et al.; see especially Michael

discussions of Heimat in Nazi-era film discourse manifest a loss of what we might call productive dissonance. The non-coordinated, many-voiced environmental representations of the Weimar era gave way to the attempt at harmonious orchestration under Goebbels's ministry of propaganda. Here, I rely on Goebbels' own terms—he described an “orchestra principle” for effective use of the mass media, in which many different messages could be delivered through many different means, all leading toward a larger goal.¹⁴⁶ The change in Nazi filmic environments is marked not by homogeneity but simply by an absence of dissonance. In contrast to this forced coordination, Weimar-era Heimat discourse might offer a lesson for environmentalism after all—but not the lesson in hybrid environments that environmental historians have assumed. Instead, this discourse serves as a reminder that the environment of home must be pursued as an open discussion.

Imort's essay, “‘Eternal Forest—Eternal Volk’: The Rhetoric and Reality of National Socialist Forest Policy,” 43–72.

¹⁴⁶ See Rentschler, *Ministry of Illusion*, 20.

Chapter 2. The City in the Country: Mountain Films and Fantasies of Alpine Tourism

Introduction

The previous chapter examined *Heimatsfilm* and reconsidered the history of this genre. In particular, films and journals in the Weimar era manifest uses of the Heimat idea that bear little resemblance to either earlier Heimat art and literature movements or the later *Heimatsfilmwelle* of the Adenauer era. The present chapter considers the Weimar-era *Bergfilme* (mountain films).¹⁴⁷ These films are usually considered within the genealogy of *Heimatsfilme* because of shared personnel and a similar celebration of nature. As a number of recent critics have noted, however, the films also celebrate modernity and frequently display modernist aesthetics.¹⁴⁸ In

¹⁴⁷ I will use the terms “*Bergfilm*” and “mountain film” interchangeably. While I find the English phrase at times to be more appropriate or less awkward, it is worth noting that the German label “*Bergfilm*” has gained some degree of international acceptance. It is used for the German mountain films of the 1920s and 30s, and sometimes for a broader definition of the genre. In one instance, the French-Swiss film scholar Rémy Pithon defines “le *Bergfilm*” according to the political and heroic tendencies he sees within the German films of the interwar era. This political definition allows him to include similar films from other nations under the same heading. See “Image et imagerie, idylle et idéologie: le *Bergfilm* en Suisse et dans les pays de l’arc alpin,” in *Die Alpen! Les Alpes! Zur europäischen Wahrnehmungsgeschichte seit der Renaissance: pour une histoire de la perception européenne depuis la Renaissance*, ed. Jon Mathieu and Simona Boscani Leoni (Bern: Lang, 2005), 391–409.

¹⁴⁸ Eric Rentschler’s 1990 article points out the fusion of mountains and modern technology in Arnold Fanck’s films. See “Mountains and Modernity: Relocating the *Bergfilm*,” *New German Critique* 51 (Autumn, 1990): 137–161. Subsequent studies of *Bergfilm* have confirmed the presence of modern technology and modernist aesthetics in Fanck’s films. Useful examples include Thomas Brandlmeier, “Sinngeschehen und Gedankenbilder: Vier Abschnitte zu Arnold Fanck,” in *Berge, Licht und Traum: Dr. Arnold Fanck und der deutsche Bergfilm*, ed. Jan-Christopher

what follows, I build on these recent studies to explore these films' relationships to the sport of skiing, the culture of tourism, and industrial development of the Alps. Finally, I use viewer responses to the films to reconsider the relationship between *Bergfilme* and Heimat.

Modernist Vision

Skiers speed down a mountain slope, one after another, creating visual rhythms that appear mechanical in nature. The patterns formed by their tracks in the snow also have a mechanized look due to the straight lines at regular intervals, creating a jarring impression in what otherwise seems to be pristine mountain landscape.

Sequences like this are frequent in the German mountain films of director Arnold Fanck (Figure 2.1). Germany of the 1920s and 30s, the era in which the *Bergfilme* were at the height of their popularity, was a site of rapidly growing urban centers and industrialization.¹⁴⁹ Contemporary authors and theorists, like Siegfried

Horak and Gisela Pichler (Munich: Bruckmann, 1997), 69–83, here 73; Lee Holt's dissertation, *Mountains, Mountaineering and Modernity: A Cultural History of German and Austrian Mountaineering, 1900–1945* (PhD Diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2008), 211–247; Jan-Christopher Horak, "Dr. Arnold Fanck: Träume vom Wolkenmeer und einer guten Stube," in *Berge, Licht und Traum*, ed. Horak and Pichler, 15–67, here 28; Moltke, *No Place Like Home*, 48; Christopher Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains: Music, Opera, Cinema* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 90; Christian Rapp, *Höhenrausch: Der deutsche Bergfilm* (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 1997), 137; and Carsten Strathausen, "The Image as Abyss: The Mountain Film and the Cinematic Sublime," in *Peripheral Visions: The Hidden Stages of Weimar Cinema*, ed. Kenneth S. Calhoun (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 171–189.

¹⁴⁹ Anton Kaes points out that Berlin grew from a city of two million in 1910 to 4.5 million in 1925, matched by an explosive growth of the city as both a site and theme of the cinema. See "Film in der Weimarer Republik: Motor der Moderne," in

Kracauer and Walter Benjamin, described the flurry of stimuli that flooded people's senses in urban centers. They presented new modes of perception that people developed in response to this changed environment.¹⁵⁰ While these contributions were inspired by cities of the early twentieth century (above all, Berlin and Paris), Fanck's films demonstrate that these insights also maintain pertinence for the mountains.



Figure 2.1. From *Der weiße Rausch* (*White Ecstasy*, Arnold Fanck, 1931)

Geschichte des deutschen Films, 2nd rev. ed., ed. Wolfgang Jacobsen, Anton Kaes, and Hans Helmut Prinzler (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004), 39–98, here 61.

¹⁵⁰ Prominent examples include George Simmel's *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, available in the volume *Rethinking Architecture: a reader in cultural theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London: Routledge 2002), 69–79; Walter Benjamin's classic essay *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977) and the small volume of essays by Siegfried Kracauer entitled *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964).

Fanck celebrates modern machines and at times employs modernist aesthetics, but his films also portray protagonists who embody a romantic ideal of the solitary mountain climber rather than the mass tourist or skier we might expect in films that embrace modernity. While the ski sequences rely on dynamic editing, in other landscape shots the tempo halts completely. These documentary nature sequences emphasize the seemingly unchanging status of the mountain landscape rather than the arrival of modernity. How can we make sense of this tension within Fanck's films? One answer lies in the development of filmic space within *Bergfilme*. The physical locations seem to emphasize the solitude and permanence of the landscape; critics have thus viewed Fanck's films as "*Höhenkunst*"¹⁵¹ that situates the mountains as an antidote to the corrupt cities of modernity and participates in the wider context of the *Heimatfilm*. But the films' modernist editing also resonated within cultural and environmental developments during the Weimar era, thereby participating in a discourse of touristic modernization rather than Heimat preservation.

Reviews of Fanck's mountain films tended to celebrate the mountain images while condemning the films' plots. Béla Balázs describes Fanck in a 1931 essay as the greatest filmmaker of nature ("*der größte Filmbildner der Natur*"), writing that he brought nature into the films as a living being ("*ein lebendiges Mitwesen*"), and that he gave nature a countenance, thus creating art.¹⁵² Balázs notes that others had made nature films, but Fanck was the first to feature nature as an active presence

¹⁵¹ Moltke, *No Place Like Home*, 38.

¹⁵² Béla Balázs, "Der Fall Dr. Fanck," 287–291.

and participant. Siegfried Kracauer makes a similar gesture, despite his very different assessment. Indeed, Kracauer claimed that Fanck's films were proto-fascist; they displayed heroism and embraced irrationality in a way that prefigures Nazism. He begins his discussion of the *Bergfilm* genre, however, by praising the films' images of glittering glaciers and billowing clouds. He then abruptly changes tone, condemning the films for their heroic plot lines.¹⁵³

More recent critics have desisted from simply defending (as Balázs) or attacking (as Kracauer) the *Bergfilm*. In a 1990 essay that helped open up new discussion about the genre, Eric Rentschler emphasizes the way the films engage with modernity even while portraying primeval mountain landscapes. He writes that the films' appeal "lay in primal nature explored with advanced technology"¹⁵⁴ and cites contemporary reviewers who celebrated the "synthesis of mountains and machines"¹⁵⁵ represented by the *Bergfilm*. These comments emphasize the genre's commingling of mountains and modernity. Subsequent scholars have agreed: in a chapter entitled "Thoroughly Modern Mountains," Christopher Morris argues that "*Der heilige Berg (The Holy Mountain, 1926)* is situated somewhere between the city and the mountains, a testament to the tension between a sublime of nature and a technological sublime."¹⁵⁶ Another film scholar, Thomas Brandlmeier, states that

¹⁵³ Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 111 and 258. Rentschler did much to complicate Kracauer's assessment, pointing out the change in tone midway through Kracauer's discussion of the films. See "Mountains and Modernity," 139.

¹⁵⁴ Rentschler, "Mountains and Modernity," 150.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁵⁶ Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains*, 95.

Fanck's ski films are most closely related to abstract cinema, and writes that the collaboration between G. W. Pabst and Fanck on *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* makes sense because Fanck's ski films were so closely related to the "*Tatsachenpoesie*" ("fact poetry") of New Objectivity. The abstract images of Fanck's ski sequences, like the images of a city symphony or the "facts" of a fact poem, are equivalent and interchangeable.¹⁵⁷ I seek to extend these discussions of *Bergfilm* aesthetics to consider how the films interact with physical mountains of the Weimar era. To do this, a helpful first step is to consider the relation of Fanck's mountain films to another physical environment that was prominent in films of the Weimar era: the metropolis.

The link between Fanck's films and the city symphony is compelling; indeed, Fanck describes one of his films as a mountain symphony.¹⁵⁸ The film genre of the city symphony, popular throughout the 1920s, takes cinematic measure of the modern metropolis. In the words of Sabine Hake, these films thrived on "the productive alliance of artistic modernism with a progressive mass culture" and commented on global economic systems by using film to reveal "the leveling effect of capitalism or communism on the look and feel of individual cities."¹⁵⁹ The genre employed the modern technology of the cinema to record the mechanized

¹⁵⁷ Brandlmeier, "Sinngesetze," 80.

¹⁵⁸ See Brandlmeier, "Sinngesetze," 72. The subtitle of Fanck's *Im Kampf mit dem Berge (In Battle with the Mountain, 1923)* is "an Alpine symphony in images by Arnold Fanck." Fanck's films and the city symphonies also show an interest in mixing artistic mediums, as seen in *Manhatta's* use of a Walt Whitman poem and in Fanck's subtitle for *The Holy Mountain* as "a dramatic poem in images from nature."

¹⁵⁹ Hake, *Topographies of Class*, 259.

appearance of the metropolis. The similar techniques of formal analogy and montage in Arnold Fanck's mountain films likewise show the Alpine landscape as a series of interchangeable patterns.

Fanck recognized the commonalities between his work and the city symphonies: when he needed to hire an additional film editor in order to meet the deadline for his documentary about the 1928 Winter Olympics in St. Moritz, *Das weiße Stadion* (*The White Stadium*, 1928), he chose Walter Ruttmann. Ruttmann had made his influential city symphony *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (*Berlin: Symphony of the Metropolis*) a year earlier. In Fanck's autobiography, he writes that Ruttmann was the one filmmaker skilled enough for the job of cutting without a script to serve as a guide:

Only I myself could edit this film because there was no written script from which another editor could have worked. There was just one other person who had also mastered this free fantasy-play of montage (*dieses freie Fantasiespiel der Montage*)—of combining units into a poetic whole (*des Zusammendichtens*): the director Ruttmann, who had made the successful Berlin film."¹⁶⁰

Fanck views his filmmaking as formal play and recognizes the similarity to Ruttmann's rhythmic montage. Filmmakers portraying cities in the Weimar era also saw the affinity with ski films. Ruttmann's *Berlin* includes a brief ski sequence in its final scene, and László Moholy-Nagy's *Dynamik der Gross-Stadt* (*Dynamic of the Metropolis*, 1921/1922)—which exists in manuscript form but was never produced

¹⁶⁰ Fanck, *Er führte Regie*, 193.

as a film—acknowledges the formal link to Fanck’s ski sequences by including images from Fanck’s films within Moholy-Nagy’s city-film-to-be.¹⁶¹

Modernity Thesis

In Fanck’s mountains films key elements include abstraction, modernist aesthetics, mass tourism, and industrial development, all of which could be considered within the discursive field of “modernity.”¹⁶² It is worth a brief pause, therefore, to situate the *Bergfilm* in relation to the debate regarding the so-called “modernity thesis.” This field of scholarship arose during the 1990s, as scholars including Tom Gunning, Miriam Hansen, Lynne Kirby, and a number of others explored ways in which early film reflects and enacts modernity in both its subject matter and stylistic elements. Modernity, they suggest, comprises a network of

¹⁶¹ Both of these examples are discussed at greater length in the next chapter. For Moholy-Nagy’s manuscript, see “Dynamik der Gross-Stadt,” in Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei Fotografie Film* (Mainz: Kupferberg, 1978), 122–135, here 134. See Chapter Three, Figures 3.1–3.3.

¹⁶² To clarify, by “modernism” I refer to specific artistic developments; “modernity” refers to cultural and technological developments—or more precisely, developments in the discourse about society and technology—while “modernization” denotes the transformations within society in shifts toward “modernity.” Modernity and modernism have been suggested to be in opposition, with artistic modernism providing an outlet for artists to shelter their individualism from the mass trends of modernity. For an article that insightfully critiques the notion of clear divisions between modernism, modernity, and modernization—examining Ruttmann as a figure involved in all three trends—see Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, “Walter Ruttmann: 1929,” in *1929: Beiträge zur Archäologie der Medien*, ed. Stefan Andriopoulos and Bernhard J. Dotzler (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), 316–349. See also the introduction to Michael Cowan, *Walter Ruttmann*. In a similar argument regarding Fanck’s mountain films, Rentschler demonstrates that “customary dichotomies between art film and genre cinema, between avant-garde endeavor and mass culture, collapse when we speak of the mountain film.” See “Mountains and Modernity,” 146.

forces and influences that provide fruitful context for the analysis of early cinema. This argument gave rise to a debate; an influential group of scholars saw Gunning's claims as overwrought, implausible, and unproductive.¹⁶³ One notable argument from this group has to do with the notion of modernist perception. Gunning calls on theorists such as Walter Benjamin and Georg Simmel who argue that twentieth century modernity gave rise to a changed form of perception, a new experience of the world marked by speed, noise, shocks, and flows. While modern technology certainly did bring more speed and noise to people's lives, critics such as David Bordwell point out that human senses have evolved over vast time frames, making it

¹⁶³ For a helpful and brief overview of the debate, including a list of important literature, see Tom Gunning, "Early American Film," in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 255–282, here 266–271. A more in-depth exploration of the discussion can be found in Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 101–130. Essays by Miriam Hansen from the late 1980s and early 1990s, in which she explores Walter Benjamin's and Siegfried Kracauer's writings on cinema, provide an important predecessor to the modernity thesis; see, for example, Miriam Hansen, "Benjamin, Cinema, and Experience: The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology," *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987): 179–224. A short sampling of key works in support of the modernity thesis include Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990); Tom Gunning, "The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7.2 (Fall 1994): 189–201; and Gunning, "Modernity and Cinema: A Culture of Shocks and Flows," in *Cinema and Modernity*, ed. Murray Pomerance (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 297–315. For arguments that express skepticism regarding the modernity thesis, see David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 141–146; and Charlie Keil, "'To Here from Modernity': Style, Historiography, and Transitional Cinema," in *American Cinema's Transitional Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices*, ed. Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 51–65. Keil and Stamp's edited volume, *American Cinema's Transitional Era*, is an especially helpful collection because having been published a decade into the debate, it contains essays from leading scholars on both sides of the issue.

unlikely that the development of new technology over just a few decades could have such a dramatic impact on the human sensorium. Bordwell suggests that we would do better to think of modernity as giving rise to new “habits and skills” rather than new modes of perception. He also argues that the proposed connection between film and modernity does not lend itself to fine-grained attention to stylistic differences.¹⁶⁴

Mountain films are useful in any consideration of such objections. Issues of modernity are vital to understanding Fanck’s films, and an analysis of modernity within the films need not contradict the emphasis on stylistic developments demanded by Bordwell. Indeed, Fanck’s innovations in film technique were a direct result of his fascination with the products and practices of modernity, including the skills and equipment of mountaineering, the technology of Ernst Udet’s airplanes, and—above all—the technology of photography and filmmaking. In his autobiography, Fanck repeatedly boasts of his successes in designing or altering cameras in response to specific technical challenges. He describes such efforts already in his work making facsimiles for German spying operations during World War I, then again during his efforts to make mountain films.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Bordwell, *History of Film Style*, 142–143.

¹⁶⁵ For just a few examples, see Fanck, *Er führte Regie*, 100–102 (on his camera innovations while working for German intelligence during the war), 115 (on his initial fascination with slow-motion cameras, which arose when he saw explosions filmed in slow motion as part of German weapons research), 138–140 (on Fanck’s experimentation with extremely long focal lengths), 166 (on his development of techniques to allow the cinematographer to film ski sequences while in motion on skis). In his photography books, Fanck portrays himself as a pioneer in the use of film strips to demonstrate motion in still photographs, a discovery that he claims as his innovation. See Arnold Fanck and Hannes Schneider, *Wunder des Schneeschuhs*:

Modernist Mountaineering

For Fanck's films, another crucial interaction with modernity abides in the films' relationship with the developments and debates surrounding Alpine sports. As recent scholars have pointed out, Fanck's editing techniques add a sense of dynamic change to mountain landscapes. The specific way in which this sense of motion and transformation occurs in Fanck's film *The Holy Mountain* reveals a surprising complication in how Fanck's modernist aesthetics interact with the project of modernization in Alpine tourism: the athletic endeavors on screen do not appear to be the same activities that viewers could enjoy if they travelled to the Alps, even if they had the skill of the films' athletes.

In part, viewers could not replicate the sports sequences portrayed on screen because Fanck's portrayals of the mountain landscape and mountain sports rely on film editing. Key dramatic moments of the plot make it clear that the mountain landscape is built on an aesthetic foundation of dynamic change and manipulation. When Luis Trenker's character, labeled simply "the Friend," sees his betrothed having an intimate moment with another man, an inner monologue shows the peak of his favorite mountain exploding: human emotions, or at least the filmic representation of them, are displayed as having the power to move mountains; as

Ein System des richtigen Skilaufens und seine Anwendung im alpinen Geländelauf (Hamburg: Gebrüder Enoch, 1928 [1925]), 18; and Arnold Fanck, *Das Bilderbuch des Skiläufers: 284 kinematographische Bilder vom Skilauf mit Erläuterungen und einer Einführung in eine neue Bewegungs-Fotographie* (Hamburg: Gebrüder Enoch, 1932), v.

Rentschler puts it, the mountain “explodes with the force of his inner turmoil.”¹⁶⁶ The timeless peak becomes subject to the pressures of an obviously unstable mental world. Later, in the Friend’s vision of an ice cathedral near the end of the film,¹⁶⁷ he and his beloved Diotima meet in front of an altar of ice. Not only is the stability of the “eternal ice”¹⁶⁸ of the mountains called into question at an extra-diegetic level simply by the existence of the ice cathedral (the massive and hugely expensive set was created especially for the film), but the altar again explodes at the end of the scene. In each of these two examples, a mountain or a studio set that represents an Alpine religious fantasy is rapidly and grossly altered. While the film’s appeal draws largely from the spectacular landscapes, filmic dynamism provides the more powerful force. But these two sequences, in which mountains are rapidly transformed, are exceptions. For the most part, the methods by which Fanck shows the mountains to be a dynamic modern landscape are more nuanced, emerging at

¹⁶⁶ Rentschler, “Mountains and Modernity,” 155.

¹⁶⁷ Fanck’s *Eisdome* suggests parallels with another Alpine vision in which the mountains offer escape from mental turmoil. Bruno Taut’s illustrated volume, *Alpine Architektur*, heavily influenced by Paul Scheerbart’s science fiction writing and drafted during World War I, creates a utopian vision of the Alps refigured to become homes, cathedrals, and works of art carved out of ice and snow. The text accompanying the images describes the project as an inverted reality responding to the horrors of war: “In any case, Europe has proven one thing in the war: of what mental strength (*Nervenkraft*) and energy it is capable. And if we succeed in directing these powers onto a different, more beautiful path, then the Earth will truly be a ‘good dwelling.’” Bruno Taut, “Alpine Architektur: Vorwort des Herausgebers” [1917], in *Bruno Taut: Natur und Fantasie 1880–1938*, ed. Manfred Speidel (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1995), 164–171, here 165.

¹⁶⁸ Fanck, “Die Zukunft des Bergfilms,” in *Berge*, ed. Horak and Pichler, 149.

the basic level of how the shots of mountains are edited together and integrated into the film story.

In the film's opening sequence, rather than an establishing shot that shows the center of human activity for the film—appropriate subjects might include either the mountain town that hosts the ski race or the grand hotel where Diotima dances—we see an image of a mountain rising above the sea. The frame contains two distinct landscapes, superimposed as a filmic special effect.¹⁶⁹ The superimposition is noteworthy because of what precedes it: the film opens with a scrolling text that states that the film was created using real skiers and climbers, not trick photography, and that the plot is based on real events. By emphasizing the role of reality within the film, but then showing an establishing shot that unites two supposedly natural landscapes—the sea and the mountains—by means of a special effect, the film suggests that technology and manipulation are an inherent aspect of the way in which nature is seen and experienced.

The foregrounding of technology in this opening sequence is again emphasized in the first mountain climbing sequence nineteen minutes into the film. It takes place just after Vigo, the more lively and gregarious of the two male protagonists, has met Diotima at her car following her dance performance. The dialogue between Vigo and Diotima is portrayed through a series of conventional shot–reverse shot cuts. In the following sequence, the Friend ascends the mountain, seeking higher terrain where he can savor the emotions that overwhelmed him upon seeing Diotima's dance. As the Friend climbs, the initial shots are joined by

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Rentschler, "Mountains and Modernity," 153–4.

means of dissolves rather than cuts. This filmic device adds a sense of movement to the slow ascent; the use of dissolves has the secondary effect of foregrounding the cinematic intervention into the image, rendering the various shots equal and interchangeable. As in the prelude's fusing of disparate images of nature, the Friend's ascent into nature ("up there, in nature" is how Diotima refers to the site of his wanderings) is portrayed using filmic manipulation to set the natural world in motion. As the Friend continues to climb, he reaches a vertical section of cliff. The ice-covered wall occupies much of the frame—only the left-most twenty percent of the frame shows an open sky. From the top left corner, the Friend's ice axe shoots down to chip away at the ice—but we do not see the climber himself, nor even his hand attached to the axe (Figure 2.2). The axe appears as a disembodied piece of technology shown independent of any human context. Its movement creates an abstract play of shapes and motions, with the backdrop of the abyss just visible on the left edge of the frame.



Figure 2.2. From *The Holy Mountain*.

The ski race sequence about halfway through the film serves as a showcase for the self-conscious display of cinematic experimentation. At several moments, a camera mounted on a ski records the descent,¹⁷⁰ emphasizing speed and motion without fixed points of visual reference. Masks are occasionally used to frame the shot, thus adding intensity through interventions into the image.¹⁷¹ Shapes and motions are frequently repeated by a series of skiers, creating a sense of abstract rhythm rather than narrative continuity. One notable example is the sequence following the intertitle “Colli goes wrong.” Colli is a rival skier competing against Vigo; he makes a wrong turn at this point, resulting in an impressive jump off the roof of a mountainside hut. Colli’s feat is repeated by other skiers in a series of matching shots shown in quick succession (Figures 2.3–2.5). The daredevil antics of the skiers are certainly impressive and fit the expectation created by the scrolling text at the start of the film. But owing to the rapid repetition of matched shots, this ski sequence, like the prelude’s opening shot, also foregrounds technological manipulation through editing techniques.

¹⁷⁰ If this seems reminiscent of Alpine chase sequences in James Bond movies, the link is not coincidental. The ski scenes for a series of Bond films were filmed by Willy Bogner, a postwar German skier, fashion designer, and filmmaker who very much saw himself following in Fanck’s tradition. See *Faszination Bergfilm: Himmelhoch und Abgrundtief. Eine Dokumentation von Hans-Jürgen Panitz und Matthias Fanck* (SWR / ARTE, 2008), DVD.

¹⁷¹ Rentschler notes that such ornamentations of the filmic image are especially prominent in Fanck’s early ski films. See *Mountains and Modernity*, 147.



**Figure 2.3. From
*The Holy Mountain.***



Figure 2.4.



Figure 2.5.

Of course, both skiing and climbing rely on tools that allow speed and human access to places normally out of reach.¹⁷² One might therefore say that sequences foregrounding the cinematic apparatus are not surprising; they simply overlay one level of technology with another.¹⁷³ But in Fanck's skiing and climbing sequences, the editing shows self-awareness not only in regard to the technology of climbing; shots of the landscape, such as the ice-covered cliff in the climbing sequence, are also implicated in the emphasis on technological manipulation of the film image. Fanck states that the mountains only come into their own when captured by the filmic apparatus.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, it is specifically the mountains, the rugged coastal scenes of Diotima's opening dance in *The Holy Mountain*, the polar regions of *S.O.S. Eisberg* (*S.O.S. Iceberg*, 1933), and the volcanoes of *Die Tochter des Samurai* (*The*

¹⁷² Historian Andrew Denning argues that Alpine skiing gained its appeal by combining the speed of modernity with access to seemingly pristine nature, even before the coming of film. See Andrew Denning, "Alpine Modern: Central European Skiing and the Vernacularization of Cultural Modernism, 1900–1939," *Central European History* 46.4 (2013): 850–890.

¹⁷³ In describing Fanck's self-aware sequences, Jan-Christopher Horak writes that this trait ("dieses Sich-auf-sich-selbst-aufmerksam-Machen") is a hallmark of all modern art; he then notes that Fanck, alongside writers Gottfried Benn and Ernst Jünger, belongs to a peculiarly German tradition of arch-conservative avant-garde artists. Horak, "Träume vom Wolkenmeer," 28.

¹⁷⁴ Discussed in Rentschler, "Mountains and Modernity," 146.

Daughter of the Samurai, 1937), where Fanck's modernist aesthetics emerge. As seen in the dialogue between Vigo and Diotima discussed above, scenes in town are shown with more straightforward editing; only in seemingly wild natural landscapes does Fanck's editing become more dynamic.¹⁷⁵

Many of the film's most compelling images involve spectacular mountain panoramas, yet the editing seems to deconstruct these very scenes. This tension is central to the film, and is enacted by the main characters: the Friend, with his surly personality, embodies the individual Alpinist who seeks to escape the crowds and witness the mountains in their pre-technological auratic splendor. Diotima and Vigo, meanwhile, embody mass tourism, an opposing approach to the mountain scenery that is also celebrated in the film. Indeed, much of *The Holy Mountain* is devoted to "the bustle of winter sports," as one intertitle declares. The long-distance ski race occupies a full ten minutes of the film's 106-minute running time, and Fanck uses various effects including masks to focus attention on the skiers' motion, mobile cameras mounted on skis, and numerous shots of quick, repeated motions by a number of skiers. These sequences make the skiers blend together into anonymous shapes and patterns; the "bustle" of the race presents a polar opposite to the isolated Friend, who at the same moment in the plot is alone in the high mountains.

¹⁷⁵ Fanck described the static quality of the mountains as the primary challenge of filming in the Alps. The landscape lacked motion, so as a filmmaker, he needed to find ways to create it. Arnold Fanck, "Die Zukunft des Naturfilms" (1928), in *Berge*, ed. Horak and Pichler, 152. According to Thomas Brandlmeier, these scenes of dynamic editing are the strongest part of Fanck's films: "Where Fanck gets into experimentation, he is always at his best." See "Sinngeschehen," 72.

The *Bergfilm* genre, like modern tourism, allows mass access to the mountains and therefore, one might suggest, erodes the mountains' aura in the same way that, as described by Walter Benjamin, technological reproducibility destroyed the traditional work of art's aura. Yet Fanck also celebrates the character of the solitary climber. Within the broader context of Weimar culture, the *Bergfilm* participates in discussions over the future of the Alps, in which traditional Alpinists lamented and resisted the growth of tourism, while its supporters celebrated Alpine tourism as a democratizing process, making the beauty of the mountains accessible to all. Within these tensions, Fanck's films occupy a highly ambivalent position.

Bergfilm and Tourism

It has become a truism that Fanck played a key role in the growth of the ski industry. This thesis has been in place since the days when Fanck was still making films: a 1933 book on the rise of the Arlberg ski industry maintains that Fanck's films won over thousands of new skiers for the sport and for ski tourism in the Arlberg region in particular, and argues that the impact of these films would be difficult to overstate.¹⁷⁶ Jan-Christopher Horak notes that both Fanck and his early critics were convinced of the direct link between his films and the popularization of skiing. Horak writes that Fanck saw film as an excellent way to promote the sport¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Arthur Flaig, *Arlberg: Ski und Schule* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1933).

¹⁷⁷ Horak, "Dr. Arnold Fanck," 23. Horak links Fanck's tireless promotion of skiing to his lifelong obsession with mountain sports as a tool for public health ("Volksygiene"). Horak situates the origin of Fanck's interest in sports and public health with Fanck's story of gaining his own health through mountain sports, after being sickly and weak as a child. See Horak, "Dr. Arnold Fanck," 21–23.

and cites a review of *Der weiße Rausch* (*White Ecstasy*, 1931) asserting that skiing would not have reached its then-current level of popularity without the help of Fanck films. In a letter written four decades later, the director brags that his films brought hundreds of thousands, probably even millions, to the sport of skiing.¹⁷⁸ At the same time, Fanck's films seem to celebrate the solitary Alpinist and look down on the masses of tourist skiers. In his autobiography, he laments that the beautiful sport of skiing has now become a "circus," and that those who only know skiing from the groomed slopes of ski resorts have no idea what skiing really means.¹⁷⁹ This mixture of self-congratulatory praise and nostalgic lament indicates a more complicated, indeed conflicted, interaction between Fanck's films and the rising ski industry.

Past scholarship has commented on both sides of this tension. Lee Holt emphasizes the role of Fanck's films as a catalyst for ski tourism; the *Deutscher Alpenverein*, a club of mountaineers that largely opposed mass tourism and sought to preserve the Alps as an undeveloped space for expert climbers, largely condemned the genre. While mountaineers universally praised the films' landscape images, Holt notes that "they were equally unanimous in their denunciation of the genre's melodramatic plots and of the representations of mountaineers as foolhardy romantic madmen who risked their lives in the mountains for love."¹⁸⁰ These

¹⁷⁸ Arnold Fanck to Klaus Kreimeier, 24 April 1972, included in the papers for Kreimeier's seminar *Fanck—Trenker—Riefenstahl: Der deutsche Bergfilm und seine Folgen* (Berlin: Stiftung deutsche Kinemathek, 1972).

¹⁷⁹ Fanck, *Er führte Regie*, 89.

¹⁸⁰ Holt, *Mountains*, 246.

climbers sought documentary films that would accurately represent the techniques and calculated risks of mountaineering, and saw Fanck's melodramatic conflicts and foolhardy climbs (such as the fatal ascent in *The Holy Mountain*) as a harmful and distorted version of the sport.

In contrast to Holt, who relies on the films' reception among mountaineers, Nancy Nenno bases her argument on a close analysis of the films themselves and comes to a very different conclusion. In *The Holy Mountain*, Leni Riefenstahl represents the urban tourist who seeks pleasure as a passive viewer of the mountain's beauty. This is emphasized when the character of Diotima looks out of her hotel window at the flowering meadows below, then rushes out to join the local peasants and frolic with the flocks in their Alpine idyll. The scene's satirical intent, Nenno suggests, is established through "a series of highly artificial parallel edits" in which "Diotima shares the mountain landscape with the alpine peasants, nostalgic, sentimental images of the mountain folk at work and play," resulting in "the first overt parody of the tourist in German cinema."¹⁸¹ As a positive alternative to this negative portrayal of mass tourism, according to Nenno, the film endorses solitary mountaineering through the character of the Friend. The conflict between two

¹⁸¹ Nancy P. Nenno, "Postcards from the Edge: Education to Tourism in the German Mountain Film," in *Light Motives: German Popular Film in Perspective*, ed. Randall Halle and Margaret McCarthy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 61–84, here 70. While focusing primarily on gender, which plays a more minor role in Nenno's argument, Ingeborg Majer-O'Sickey reaches a similar conclusion. Majer-O'Sickey argues that Diotima and Vigo represent "the trespassing Other into hyper-masculinized mountain spaces"—the films thus celebrate the solitary climber, while revealing anxiety about the threat of the New Woman and urban modernity. See "The Cult of the Cold and the Gendered Body in Mountain Films," *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* 75 (2010): 363–380, here 378.

realms of tourism is thus staged along gender lines. In the Friend's climactic fatal climb with his partner and rival Vigo, the film "resolves the narrative conflict introduced by the urban woman by reinvoking the code of masculinity that properly belongs to the mountain world."¹⁸² Diotima learns from her lovers' sacrifice: in the final shots,

she has revised her simplistic vision of nature. Finding herself the victim of nature's power rather than the consumer of its beauty, she recants her modernity and dons the veil that visually links her to the rural mountain folk. Within the diegesis, the film has accomplished its task: it has 'educated' the modern tourist to the realities of the mountain world.¹⁸³

While their conclusions seem to point in different directions, Holt and Nenno are aware of the contradictions within the relationship of *Bergfilm* to tourism. Holt points out that the two leading male characters of *Der heilige Berg* represent stereotypes of a "romantic adventurer, solitary and laconic" in the form of the Friend; and a "playful athlete, sociable and gregarious"¹⁸⁴ in Vigo. Holt further notes Fanck's own comments that the film should be viewed as a celebration of camaraderie among mountaineers; nonetheless, Holt emphasizes that the climbing community rejected these supposedly positive portrayals and saw the films as a threat to their sport. Nenno, meanwhile, acknowledges that Fanck's films contributed to the Alpine tourism industry and notes that mountain climbers

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 71–72.

¹⁸⁴ Holt, *Mountains*, 237.

frequently criticized the films for being misleading, but she views these responses to the films as ironic or contradictory, given the film's celebration of the solitary climber.

In fact, these conflicting assessments of the relationship between Fanck's films and mountain tourism reflect a contradiction within the Alpine spaces represented in the films themselves. Laura Frahm's discussion of filmic space is helpful here: Frahm describes filmic space as being inherently constructed, moving, and transformative. Filmic spaces are always in flux; movement might be seen as the founding element, rather than something that is done to initially stable images.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, as Rentschler and Brandlmeier have argued, the appeal of the mountain films derives from the way in which they set the mountains into motion.¹⁸⁶ Fanck's goal of showing movement in a moving way ("Bewegung bewegt wiederzugeben"¹⁸⁷) echoes the emphasis on movement and transformation in Frahm's analysis.¹⁸⁸ In addition, Frahm analyzes filmic space as a product of the tension between film's topographical and topological dimensions.¹⁸⁹ Filmic topography consists of the sites explicitly shown on screen; topology has to do with

¹⁸⁵ Laura Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums: Zur filmischen Topologie des Urbanen* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2010), 15.

¹⁸⁶ Rentschler, "Mountains and Modernity," 147; Brandlmeier, "Sinngzeichen," 70.

¹⁸⁷ Fanck, unpublished manuscript, cited in Horak, "Träume vom Wolkenmeer," 23.

¹⁸⁸ To be sure, movement has been seen as the core element of film from very early film theory (see Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums*, 146). Frahm's key point is that the movement is unrelated to plot; it renders space dynamic rather than serving to further a human story.

¹⁸⁹ For an convincing example of these terms being used to analyze a film sequence, see Frahm's treatment of the short film *Demolishing and Building up the Star Theater* (1901) in *Jenseits des Raums*, 189–190.

how those sites are brought together. Topography thus emerges as a series of visual experiences, whereas topology is a mode of understanding and ordering them. Fanck's topography consists of mountain slopes, valley villages, glaciers, crevasses, etc. His topology sets them in motion: the ski sequences break up the slopes into abstract moments; the slow climbing sequences use dissolves and framing to create a dynamic impression where there is little motion in the filmed landscape. In other words, the topography consists of a series of landscapes filmed from real places in the Alps (as Fanck repeatedly emphasized when defending himself against claims that his films were faked or unrealistic), but the topology complicates and dynamizes the topographies. The topography of the *Bergfilm* is indeed built on authentic mountain landscapes, but in its topology, the landscapes can be manipulated or mobilized without any regard for their supposedly "authentic" location and character.

Fanck imagines an environment where the masses traverse the mountains, where speed on skis is celebrated, and where—at the same time—the mountains offer pristine landscapes for heroic solitary wanderers. He conjoins them through the visual mobility of film. The presence of technology within *Stürme über dem Montblanc* (*Avalanche*, 1930) has received substantial critical and scholarly attention,¹⁹⁰ but it is noteworthy that none of the tools shown—weather instruments, telegraph and radio, telescope, not even Ernst Udet's airplane—are related to the action-packed speed of the ski sequences that form the core of Fanck's

¹⁹⁰ See Rentschler, "Mountains and Modernity," 156–157; Brandlmeier, "Sinngeschehen," 73; Holt, *Mountains*, 232–234.

modernist aesthetics. Fanck presents a topography of high mountains that includes modern machines, but it is in the films' topology where sites and tools merge to create a modernist environment. The space of the film thus involves a degree of mobility and speed that is not possible by means of the objects within the film. Fanck's construction of filmic space helps to clarify the ambivalent relationship between his films and the ski industry: while favoring the solitary touring skier through their narratives, his films create a space marked by mobility and speed that fits much better within the context of an industrialized ski resort.¹⁹¹ Fanck's ski sequences thus act out a type of tourism that looks forward to the way skiing will become.

I have suggested that the connections between film and environmental change—in the case of Fanck, between mountain films and the development of tourist infrastructure in the Alps—are complex, involving networks of discourse and resistance as well as overt physical changes.¹⁹² It would be wrong to suggest that Fanck's films created an influx of tourist development incited purely from the

¹⁹¹ The tension between solitary stoicism and mass excitement has persisted in mountain films after Fanck. Many climbing films continue to portray the sport as a solitary heroic endeavor, for example *Touching the Void* (Kevin Macdonald, 2003) and *Nordwand (North Face)*, Phillip Stölzl, 2008). Others—perhaps most notably, Willy Bogner's ski sequences for James Bond films and his own action-packed (and often campy or slapstick) films such as *Feuer, Eis & Dynamit (Fire, Ice & Dynamite, 1990)*—emphasize speed and excitement as key traits of mountain sports. In a number of annual mountain film festivals in winter sports locations such as Banff, Telluride, and Tegernsee, both solitary heroism and dynamic spectacle are consistently represented in each year's films. For information on one major international network of mountain film festivals, see <http://www.mountainfilmalliance.org>.

¹⁹² See the subheading "Materiality" in the present study's introduction.

outside. As Ben Anderson has shown regarding the development of mountain tourism in the nineteenth century, and Robert Groß has examined in reference to Austrian ski resorts in the mid-twentieth century, a strong push for development came from individual entrepreneurs within mountain communities.¹⁹³ The local impetus involved not only the development of mechanized infrastructure, as Groß describes, and more luxurious lodging and visitor facilities to support the tastes of middle-class tourism, as explored by Anderson, but also artistic developments that arose at the same time as Fanck's first mountain films. Tyrolian painters Albin Egger-Lienz and Alfons Walde portrayed their home landscapes for art audiences at the same time as filmmakers brought them to the cinema.¹⁹⁴ (See Figures 2.6 and 2.7.) Before they served as inspiration for Nazi-era *Heimatfilm* imagery, as discussed in the previous chapter, Egger-Lienz's paintings reflected a keen commercial awareness, drawing on the painter's combination of a close knowledge of his Tyrolian landscape, connections with local leaders, and an urban education to effectively mass-market images of rural Tyrol to a broader audience. In this way he

¹⁹³ Ben Anderson, "Alpine Communities as Entrepreneurs: Developing the Eastern Alps as an Economic Resource in the mid-Nineteenth Century" (paper presented at European Society for Environmental History Summer School "Mountains Across Borders," Lavin, Sitzerland, 18 August 2013), accessed 2 December 2013, http://www.ruralhistory2013.org/papers/6.2.3_Anderson.pdf; Robert Groß, *Wie das 1950er Syndrom in die Täler kam: Umwelthistorische Überlegung zur Konstruktion von Wintersportlandschaften am Beispiel Damüls in Vorarlberg* (Regensburg: Roderer, 2011). Anderson's findings can be seen within a broader study of mountain tourism and modernity in his forthcoming book, *Modern Natures: Mountain Leisure and Urban Culture in England and Germany, 1885–1918* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, Forthcoming).

¹⁹⁴ See Wido Sieberer, "Der 'Lebensraum Großstadt' als Bedingung für die Malerei in der Region," in *Egger-Lienz / Walde / Berg: Über das Land*, ed. Silvia Ebner, Arthur Ottowitz, and Wido Sieberer (Vienna: Hirmer, 2012), 14–27.

participated in the process that “connected the affective register of the Alps to middle-class urban cultures.”¹⁹⁵ Paintings of winter sports scenes by Alfons Walde fuse modern tourism with modern art in a similar fashion and during the same years as Fanck carried out his first filmic experiments with winter sports. While Fanck’s films reached millions of cinema-goers, thus having a broader audience than either Egger-Lienz’s or Walde’s paintings, they participate in an Alpine modernist visual culture that stemmed from local communities as well as distant urban centers.



Figure 2.6. Egger-Lienz, *Zwei Bergmäher* (Two Mountain Mowers, 1907)



Figure 2.7. Walde, *Kristiania* (around 1925)

¹⁹⁵ Ben Anderson, “The Construction of an Alpine Landscape: Building, Representing and Affecting the Eastern Alps, c. 1885–1914,” *Journal of Cultural Geography* 29.2 (2012): 155–183, here 177. Elsewhere, Anderson describes the local impetus for tourist development as coming from a “small, but increasingly mobile number of local ‘professionals’, who”—like Egger-Lienz and Alfons Walde—“received their education in the ‘bourgeois culture’ of the liberal mid-nineteenth century, returned to their home villages and set about ‘improving’ the resources of the landscapes.” Anderson, “Alpine Communities,” 7.

In addition to their simultaneity with other works of visual art, Fanck's ski sequences also create a complex relationship with the viewer. It would seem logical to assume that tourists visited the Alps after viewing Fanck's films in order to imitate the activities they have seen on screen; Fanck himself described his films as propaganda for the sport of skiing. But Fanck's films do not simply show shots of skiing; they choose, manipulate, and edit those shots together in an imaginative way. It is the resulting filmic fantasy of skiing to which tourists respond. Fanck's filmic topology links Weimar-era mountain films and the very different form of ski tourism that subsequently emerged. His modernist filmic spaces anticipate the mechanization of skiing in years to come. Evidence for this connection can be found in art and advertisements from the geographic regions frequently seen in Fanck's films—notably the Vorarlberg province of Austria, birth place of the "Arlberg technique" that Fanck found most amenable for the filming of skiing, and home of the ski star Hannes Schneider who figures prominently in Fanck's films.

Downhill Desire

In his study of winter tourism history in Austria's Vorarlberg province, Robert Groß describes the different images and ways of representing touring skiing versus downhill skiing in the 1920s. He describes touring skiers as being marked by, among other things, an appreciation for the landscape, whereas downhill skiers were primarily defined by athleticism. Groß makes this distinction in a visual

analysis of postcards and advertisements from Austrian ski resorts.¹⁹⁶ He mentions Arnold Fanck's films in this context, but fails to note an intriguing contradiction. Fanck's images frequently correspond to photographic representations of downhill skiing. In the case of *Der heilige Berg*, however, it is not downhill skiing that Fanck claims to be showing. The ski race is described in the German intertitles as a "Dauerlauf" and translated into English as a "long-distance run." Such races were a major event in the Arlberg region where Fanck filmed many of the ski sequences for his films. To think of them as primarily downhill would be far from the mark: one competition, the third-annual "Arlbergrennen" ski race in 1906, covered 16.5 kilometers of distance and required competitors to climb a total of 1140 meters.¹⁹⁷ Yet in the "long-distance run" shown in *Der heilige Berg*, the vast majority of the footage shows skiers speeding downhill. Flat cross-country segments are rare, perhaps illustrating a change of lead within the race, and are often followed by downhill sequences filmed by a cameraman on skis. The moving camera shots

¹⁹⁶ Groß, *1950er Syndrom*, 112. Groß's monograph focuses on the building of large-scale tourist infrastructure, especially ski lifts, using Marshall Plan funds after World War II. His analysis of images comes near the end of the study as he discusses the "tourist gaze" that accompanied the industrialization of ski tourism. Groß's thoughts rely on John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London: Sage Publications, 1990); Urry's terms are also applied to German and Alpine tourism by Cord Pagenstecher in *Der bundesdeutscher Tourismus. Ansätze zu einer Visual History: Urlaubsprospekte, Reiseführer, Fotoalben 1950–1990* (Hamburg: Kovač, 2012). While Groß's analysis offers a useful history of the tourist gaze, the intertextual links with Fanck's films form an important part of this story that he leaves unexplored.

¹⁹⁷ Sabine Dettling, "Die historische Entwicklung von Skisport und Skitourismus von 1860 bis heute, Schwerpunkt Arlberg-West," in *Schnee: Rohstoff der Kunst*, ed. Tobias G. Natter (Bregenz, Austria: Vorarlberger Landesmuseum, 2009), 54–64, here 56.

amply compensate for any loss of tempo.¹⁹⁸ Despite the race's designation as a long-distance (and, we can safely assume, uphill as well as downhill) event, Fanck's choice of shots and editing creates an overwhelming focus on downhill portions, and above all, on speed.

While these images display only a skier in a landscape, they are inextricably linked to the rise of machines in the same landscape, for the popularity of downhill skiing was in large part linked to the rise of motorized lifts. In photography and film, artists can create images that focus exclusively on thrilling descents simply through their choice of what to include and exclude within the frame; this can be further emphasized through stylistic choices in framing or editing. In building physical ski resorts, this was not an option. The ski tourism industry could only achieve a similar focus on descent by installing machines to decrease the time and effort involved in the ascent.

Beyond their creation of a filmic space promoting environmental desires that helped to spur an industrialized Alpine skiing landscape, Fanck's films also introduce aesthetic touches essential to the way the sport will subsequently represent itself. Fanck's images—which show downhill skiing as an act of speed and

¹⁹⁸ Fanck's supporters would note that he had used this form of moving camera years before the "entfesselte Kamera" made its supposed first appearance in F. W. Murnau's *Der letzte Mann*. While this is not an accurate assessment of the origin of the moving camera, it calls to mind a lineage that has gone largely unnoticed. As early as the 1890s, the so-called "phantom ride" films used a camera mounted on a vehicle to provide the experience of movement, which commentators at the time already saw as a distinctly modern type of filmic vision. Fanck takes the modernist experience of a "phantom ride" on skis, then augments the effect through his modernist cutting style. For a compelling examination of phantom ride films, see Tom Gunning, "Landscape and the Fantasy of Moving Pictures."

motion without acknowledging the supporting infrastructure—would find echoes in marketing for ski tourism (Figures 2.8–2.12). Images from ski resorts of the 1930s display aesthetic qualities strikingly similar to ski sequences from Fanck’s films. In Figure 2.8, the emphasis on diagonals and the trail of flying snow behind the skiers, combined with the contrasting directional flows between the two images, display an affinity for the angular composition and disjointed editing prominent in Fanck’s ski sequences (Figure 2.9). Both concentrate on the speed and power of downhill skiing, while excluding from the image the forces that help to create that speed.



Figure 2.8. From the advertising brochure "Vorarlberg, Österreich," dated before 1938. Robert Groß, *1950er Syndrom*, 136.



Figure 2.9. From *The Holy Mountain*.



Figure 2.10. Postcard "Madloch Abfahrt," Vorarlberg, 1928. Risch-Lau collection, Landesbibliothek Vorarlberg.



Figure 2.11. Postcard, Vorarlberg, 1940. Risch-Lau collection.



Figure 2.12. Postcard, Vorarlberg, 1940. Risch-Lau collection.

Another sort of resonance emerges when we look ahead to advertising images from the 1950s, by which time ski lifts had been added to many Austrian resorts (Figures 2.13 and 2.14). While these advertisements do not deny that industrial machines were part of the downhill skiing experience, they picture the machines blending in seamlessly with the surrounding landscape of mountain peaks and rural Alpine villages, or disappearing entirely so that skiers seem to float on the mountain or in the air, aided by all-powerful but invisible machines.

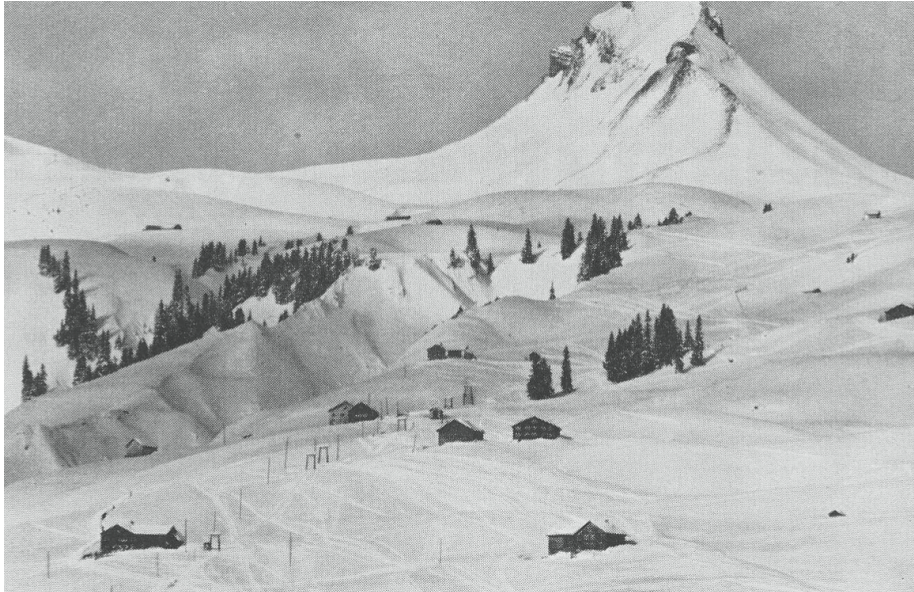


Figure 2.13. In this advertising brochure from Vorarlberg, around 1952, the three towlifts are barely visible. Groß, *1950er Syndrom*, 119.

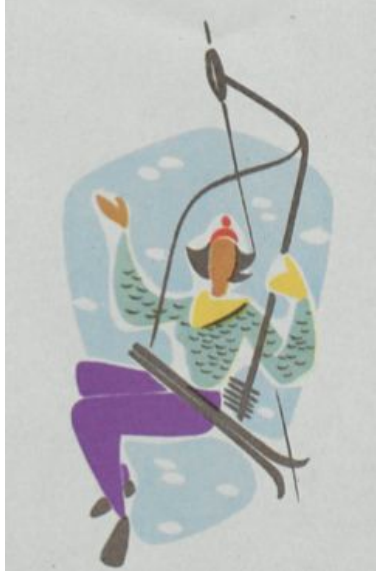


Figure 2.14. The chairlift disappears under the skier in this advertising image from the early 1950s. Groß, *1950er Syndrom*, 128.

Fanck's films come before the age of chairlifts that could quickly transport a skier to the mountaintop, effectively erasing the tedious and arduous uphill portion of the skiing experience.¹⁹⁹ But his films—through the machinery involved at all stages of production—create an environment of cinematic fantasy in which motion is by and large downhill. This speed-saturated vision gives new meaning to the assertion that Fanck served as a great supporter and propagandist of the sport of skiing. While his ski propaganda features images of skiing from before the explosion of industrial ski resorts in the eastern Alps, his editing combines individual shots into sequences marked by abstraction and mechanization. His films took part in a desire not only to be closer to the mountains, but also to experience them through

¹⁹⁹ Austria's first ski lift was built in 1937. For a concise history of skiing in the regions emphasized in Fanck's ski films, see Dettling, "Die historische Entwicklung von Skisport und Skitourismus." For a more in-depth global history of skiing, see E. John B. Allen, *The Culture and Sport of Skiing* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).

constant accelerated motion. The industrialization of the ski industry might thus be seen not only as a response to a boom in the sport's popularity, but also as a response to a more fundamental development: the desire for an environment infused with the speed and convenience of industrial modernity. Regardless of Fanck's stated intentions, his films enact this desire.

Heimat and Bergfilm

The tensions within Fanck's films, in that they simultaneously endorsed the solitary, heroic elitism of nineteenth-century mountain climbers and visually celebrated mass tourism and downhill skiing, help to explain the diverse ways in which people responded to his films. As stated, critics generally praised the films' images and condemned their plots, but these concerns were not the only contradictions regarding Fanck's *Bergfilme*. In describing the relationship between his movies and the real mountains, Fanck himself offered conflicting comments. His mixed sentiments were expressed in his own writings and echoed in letters written to Fanck and published criticisms of his films.

Fanck made numerous contradictory remarks regarding the authenticity of his films' landscapes. In one text, he describes his goal as being to show "nature as is" to the masses in the city.²⁰⁰ In defending himself against accusations that *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* was not actually filmed in challenging Alpine terrain, he repeatedly points out the physical difficulty and danger of the conditions,

²⁰⁰ Fanck, "Zukunft des Naturfilms," 143.

emphasizing that he worked with world-class skiers and mountain climbers.²⁰¹ At the same time, he defends himself against attacks that his films fail to realistically portray the sport of mountain climbing by maintaining that film is art: “A film is not there to mirror reality, but rather to produce art, which is the polar opposite of reality. Film should not, may not, and cannot ever show reality.”²⁰² Fanck thus argues both that his films are grounded in the reality of the Alps—a statement that calls to mind his training as a scientist and initial intention to make documentary rather than narrative films—and, at the same time, that an unbridgeable gulf separates his film art from reality. Fanck’s statements seem to embrace both the romantic aura of the mountains and their dissolution into modernist abstraction. Further, Fanck proudly asserts his role in bringing the mountains to the masses and claims that he has met countless more “valuable people” among the working classes than in the elite clique of mountain climbers,²⁰³ yet he still celebrates the experience of solitude achieved only by skilled mountaineers.²⁰⁴

Another related set of contradictions arises in viewers’ responses to the films as evidenced in letters written to Fanck and contemporary reviews. Some viewers see the films as offering a visual representation of an authentic mountain Heimat,

²⁰¹ Fanck, “Brief an die Chefredaktion der *Dresdner Neuesten Nachrichten*” (1930), in *Berge*, ed. Horak and Pichler, 146–149.

²⁰² Fanck, “Brief an Herrn Dr. Bing” (1932), *Berge*, ed. Horak and Pichler, 154.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 158.

²⁰⁴ See Fanck, “Zukunft des Bergfilms,” 143; and Fanck, *Er führte Regie*, 89.

praising Fanck for showing the “deep, unapproachable purity of our mountains”²⁰⁵ or a “piece of reality . . . natural from beginning to end.”²⁰⁶ This is especially true among audience members born in the mountains who have moved away. As one viewer writes: “Since I was born in the mountains and spent my entire youth there, now that am far away from the mountains I am perhaps touched even more deeply by your art.”²⁰⁷ Another respondent still living among the Alps (in Innsbruck) describes *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* as containing “images that make an unforgettable impression” (“*Bilder von unvergesslichem Eindruck*”).²⁰⁸ At some points, the link to Heimat discourse becomes explicit. In a review of Fanck’s first narrative feature, *Der Berg des Schicksals* (*Mountain of Destiny*, 1925), a contemporary critic claimed that the film’s nature shots—time-lapse images of clouds over the mountains, quiet Alpine lakes, and rushing streams—evoke a “love of the Heimat.”²⁰⁹ Viewer appreciation is not limited to visual elements, nor to the films’ realistic portrayal of nature. A resident of the Engadine valley in Switzerland who assisted in the making of *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* lauds Fanck for using “our

²⁰⁵ Margit Edmund to Arnold Fanck, 16 November 1929, Arnold Fanck papers, Munich Film Museum archive.

²⁰⁶ Adolf Bauer to Arnold Fanck, 30 November 1929, Fanck papers.

²⁰⁷ A. M. Holsbaer to Arnold Fanck, 18 November 1929, Fanck papers.

²⁰⁸ K. Mazzotti to Arnold Fanck, 24 November 1929, Fanck papers.

²⁰⁹ Cited in Horak, “Träume vom Wolkenmeer,” 29.

beloved Engadine mountains as leading actor”²¹⁰ and thanks him for the “inestimable value”²¹¹ his film will add to the region’s tourism industry.

The above comments endorse Fanck’s contribution to the mountain landscape, although they have very different views regarding the nature of that contribution. In contrast, a column published in the *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten* describes a mountain meeting between the author and a guide from the Engadine. The guide claimed that Fanck had faked the mountaineering stunts of *The White Hell of Pitz Palu*, and insisted that the whole film was shot a few meters from the shelter of a mountain hut. While the legitimacy of these accusations is questionable,²¹² the column is intriguing because it places Fanck’s films in a very different relation to Heimat. The columnist insists that the mountain guide is connected to nature and firmly rooted to his mountain home: “He must have these mountains in order to be able to live.” The guide is thus portrayed as the embodiment of Heimat: “And he slightly despises his brother, who owns a car and is now driving around on Mont Blanc with a film crew. Also a former mountain guide, but a disloyal one. One who participates in the ‘swindle.’”²¹³ Film, along with other agents of modernity employed by both Fanck and the guide’s own brother, is portrayed as the opposite

²¹⁰ Wilhelm Hatecke to Arnold Fanck, 2 June 1929, Fanck papers.

²¹¹ Wilhelm Hatecke to Arnold Fanck, 1 July 1929, Fanck papers.

²¹² Fanck did not find the criticisms to be justified, as indicated by a long letter to the editor of the *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten* in which he disputes the attacks and insists on the authenticity and difficulty of the film’s mountaineering sequences. See Fanck, “Brief an die Chefredaktion,” 146–149.

²¹³ Karl Schönewolf, “Der Schwindel vom Piz Palü,” *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten*, 18 July 1930; in Horak, *Berge*, 212–214, here 213.

of the guide's rootedness in his mountain home. In this column, Fanck's *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* provides a negative foil for the mountain guide's close relationship with nature. The film epitomizes the creeping effects of the modern world, while the guide stands firm as representative of a mountain Heimat.

In response to the same film, some viewers see Fanck's *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* as an authentic representation—even an iconic copy—of the mountain landscape, while others see it as an incursion of modernity, a simulation of Heimat created for the mass tourism industry of skiing and the mass medium of film. Like the films showing rural and industrial sites described in Chapter One, Fanck's films about the mountains become a point of intersection for diverse and contradictory viewpoints regarding humans' relationships with the environment.

Conclusion: Heimat Revised

Based on their mix of modern and traditional views of nature, connections to the industrialization of the ski industry, and diverse viewer responses, Fanck's mountain films display a pluralistic discourse. To be clear, this chapter should not be read as an apologia for the mountain film. Many of the ideological criticisms that have been leveled against Fanck and the mountain film genre are justified. The films certainly advocate heroism and loyalty, and Fanck wrote numerous texts affirming the cult of strength and heroism that plays out in his films.²¹⁴ Nonetheless, his

²¹⁴ In his letter to Klaus Kreimeier on 24 April 1972, Fanck responds to critics who link his films with fascism. He denies any connection to Nazism and insists that he was excluded from the Nazi film industry after refusing Goebbels's request that he join the party. Still, Fanck acknowledges that he endorses a "heroic outlook on life," arguing that this puts him in the company of nearly all great Germans from

Weimar-era *Bergfilme* gave rise to diverse responses, especially regarding the physical environment.

Fanck himself provides evidence of the shift between Weimar-era mountain films and the later Heimat films. *The White Hell of Pitz Palu*, shot with co-director G. W. Pabst, could well be considered his most successful feature. It offers disorienting shots of mountaineering accidents, eerie torchlit scenes of a massive rescue operation inside a glacial crevasse, and multiple sequences that involve ace aviator Ernst Udet flying over the mountains. In the same year, an advertisement (discussed in Chapter One) appeared in *Film-Kurier* for Fanck's planned film *Deine Heimat* about industrial workers. The mountains, as well as the notion of Heimat, are infused with modernity both in their content and their aesthetics.

Fast forward to 1952: Fanck proposes a series of *Kulturfilme* with the title *Kennst du deine Heimat? (Do You Know Your Heimat?)*. The films are intended to give cinema audiences a sense of the beauty and variety of the German landscape. The project would consist of a number of short segments to be shown immediately after the weekly *Wochenschau* newsreel; taken together, Fanck argues, they would give the viewer “an overpowering impression . . . of the undreamed-of abundance of his fatherland's beauties and the height of its cultural achievements.”²¹⁵ The film

centuries before Hitler. A similar statement, but with more overt political content, appears in another letter. Fanck welcomes the negative reception of his films in communist newspapers, “which—with a correct instinct—sense within Alpinism a movement of feudal ruling men” (“*die mit gutem Instinkt in der alpinen Bewegung eine feudalistische Herrenmenschenbewegung verspüren*”). See Fanck, “Brief an Herrn Dr. Bing,” 156.

²¹⁵ Arnold Fanck, “Kennst du deine Heimat? (Ein Filmvorschlag),” unpublished manuscript from 1952 (?), Fanck papers, Munich Film Museum archive. While the

proposal might well be seen as a response to the 1929 *Film-Kurier* article by Fritz Wertheimer discussed in Chapter One. Wertheimer emphasizes the irreducible plurality of German cultures and landscapes, both within Germany and abroad. To give a complete impression of the great diversity of German cultures, Wertheimer asserts, would be impossible.²¹⁶ In contrast, Fanck's film proposal from 1952 intends to do just that: after months of individual short films about locations around Germany, the result would be a "total picture of the beauty of German culture and German cities and landscapes."²¹⁷ Moreover, Fanck describes the goal of showing recognizable landmarks for the edification of the viewing public. As examples, he suggests film segments about the Freiburg cathedral, the Wartburg, a section of "Alt-Rhein," a segment "about the theme 'Black Forest House' or an idyllic corner of Upper Franconia . . . or a piece of typical folk life [*ein Stück typischen Volkslebens*] with old customs somewhere, etc. etc."²¹⁸ In short, he emphasizes sites of seemingly ancient German architecture located in pre-modern landscapes, coupled with traditional folk festivals. This postwar project coincides with the landscapes and cultural events favored by the *Heimatschützer* around the turn of the twentieth century and also seeks to profit from the popularity of the Adenauer era's *Heimatfilme*. The contested and urban Heimat sites of the 1920s have faded from

manuscript itself is not dated, the archive also contains two letters sent to Fanck in response to his film proposal, both marked early September 1952.

²¹⁶ Wertheimer, "Auslandsdeutschtum."

²¹⁷ Fanck, "Kennst du deine Heimat?" 3.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

view, as have the mountains that Fanck had brilliantly reimagined as modern sites in his classical mountain films.

Chapter 3. Urban Heimat in Weimar Film

This chapter interrogates the relationship between city and Heimat in Weimar cinema. It builds on past studies of the urban environment in cinema, a topic that has received much scholarly attention, usually with a focus on the shared trait of dynamic motion and constant transformation in both the cinema and the metropolis. Expanding on the first chapter's discussion of the varied representation of Heimat in films from different eras, as well as the second chapter's criticism of the supposed genealogy of *Heimatfilme* that leads back to Weimar-era mountain films, this chapter explores written discourse and filmic examples of an urban alternative to the rural idea of Heimat. As already discussed, a number of Weimar-era film journal articles make explicit reference to Heimat, often in connection with urban and industrial landscapes. In what follows, I will consider films and written sources that deal with the task of creating Heimat within the city.

A small number of past studies have laid the groundwork for a productive but still largely unstudied field. A chapter entitled "Stadt(heimat)film," from the 1989 study *Der deutsche Heimatfilm* by scholars in Tübingen, discusses sociologists' and urban planners' comments on the potential of Heimat within the city. It then briefly analyzes a series of city films that might be considered as urban *Heimatfilme*, drawing on a broad range of German film history and emphasizing films in which city-dwellers strive to make the urban space a home.²¹⁹ In a related study, albeit not

²¹⁹ Herbert Grammatikopoulos et al., "Stadt(heimat)film," in *Der deutsche Heimatfilm: Bildwelten und Weltbilder*, ed. Wolfgang Kaschuba (Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 1989), 171–191.

directly focused on film, Christian Sieg discusses how Alfred Döblin and Siegfried Kracauer describe Berlin in a way that seeks to overcome the alienating strangeness often ascribed to the city. These two authors, Sieg argues, offer no sense of nostalgia or of a utopian homeland, nor even a clear linear narrative that fits all characters and scenes into a neatly circumscribed whole: “Instead, creating Heimat becomes a fundamentally open-ended human task, which also involves a revision of memory practices.” Familiarity with the urban Heimat, in Döblin’s and Kracauer’s visions, does not depend on fixed qualities of a space or delineation of an enclosed place of home, but rather requires “knowledge of the everyday practices that produce space. A concept of space grasped in this way offers no nourishment for strategies of enclosure and exclusion, which have yielded catastrophic political consequences in the history of the Heimat concept.”²²⁰ Döblin and Kracauer create a process-oriented vision of Heimat that views neither the city nor the countryside as a static environment. This vision allows the term Heimat to be decoupled from the spatial and ideological dichotomies that have often troubled its usage, so that it may reside for instance in Berlin, which during the Weimar era was home to four million Germans.

While I find the impetus of these approaches useful, I think their scope is too narrowly circumscribed regarding the forms that urban Heimat can take. Examining a number of films alongside written sources and historical developments in

²²⁰ Christian Sieg, “Heimat Berlin: Siegfried Kracauer und Alfred Döblin als urbane Ethnografen der klassischen Moderne,” in *Heimat: At the Intersection of Memory and Space*, ed. Friederike Eigler and Jens Kugele (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 93–107, here 106–107.

architecture and city planning, I suggest that familiar Berlin films of the Weimar era reveal at least three distinct strands of urban Heimat. The first strand, represented by Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (*Berlin: Symphony of the Metropolis*, 1927), focuses on entertainment as compensation for migrants' lost Heimat and builds on discussions of urban life and distraction by Georg Simmel and Siegfried Kracauer. The second strand, seen in the films *Die Stadt der Millionen* (*City of Millions*, 1925) and *Menschen am Sonntag* (*People on Sunday*, 1930), emphasizes dwelling places and connection to nature, in conjunction with discourse by architects, urban planners, and Heimat activists in Weimar Germany. In the third strand, neither of these efforts to construct a replacement for Heimat within the city—whether in the form of fast-paced entertainment or opportunities for leisure and contact with nature—are present. Instead, many proletariat films present the potential for Heimat as a utopian and revolutionary urban project. In this final view, Heimat is defined by the organization and empowerment of people rather than by the construction of livable spaces.

The City in Weimar Cinema

Despite the presence of a popular film genre set in the Alps and a number of rural films that resemble the later Heimat genre, the primary setting for Weimar film was the city. Most of these filmic cities were shot indoors and in studio spaces, from the stylized sets of Robert Wiene's *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1920) to the massive urban street scenes constructed for films like F. W. Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* (*The Last Laugh*, 1924) and the innovative visual effects of

Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927). However, several of them were filmed outdoors and on location, usually in Berlin; Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin* is the prime example.

Many recent scholars have examined the way the metropolis and the cinema arose together as modern phenomena, probing the ways in which the cinema has helped to shape urban space as well as how urban space has become a prominent cinematic locus.²²¹ In the last decade in particular, scholars have carried out sophisticated analyses of the spatial dynamics that arise when a three-dimensional urban landscape is represented in two-dimensional cinematic images, building on the insights of the spatial turn in the humanities.²²² Throughout these texts, a common thread is the shared dynamic status of urban space and the city: unlike the more stable and relaxed countryside, the city appears to have the default status of being in motion and undergoing constant change, making it an environment well-suited to the art of the moving image.²²³

²²¹ See, for example, David B. Clarke, ed., *The Cinematic City* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Laura Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums*; Holger Majchrzak, *Von Metropolis bis Manhattan: Inhaltsanalysen zur Großstadtdarstellung im Film* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1989); Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice, eds., *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001); Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice, *Screening the City* (London: Verso, 2003). For studies focusing specifically on German contexts, see Hanno Möbius and Guntram Vogt, *DreHORT Stadt: Das Thema "Großstadt" im deutschen Film* (Marburg: Hitzeroth, 1990); Irmbert Schenk, ed., *Dschungel Großstadt: Kino und Modernisierung* (Marburg: Schüren, 1999); and Guntram Vogt, *Die Stadt im Kino: Deutsche Spielfilme 1900–2000* (Marburg: Schüren, 2001).

²²² Shiel and Fitzmaurice, *Screening the City*, 1; Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums*, 40–42.

²²³ For discussion of the shared dynamic status of cinema and the city, see Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums*, 10. The relationship between cinema and the speed of modern transportation, especially the railroad, becomes important in modernity studies; see Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) and Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The*

The city symphonies occupy an important position in this discussion. These films constitute a genre based on the dynamic rhythms, constant movement, and formal patterns that mark the physical and human elements of the metropolis. The city symphony genre is especially important for studies of Weimar cinema, since Ruttmann's *Berlin* is widely recognized as an exemplar (or even the prototype) of the genre.²²⁴ It was made as a *Kontingentfilm* for Fox-Europe. American studios were required to produce films within Germany in order to be allowed to import their own titles. The resulting "quota films" were usually cheaply and quickly made and unremarkable; Ruttmann's *Berlin*, however, became one of the groundbreaking films of Weimar cinema. It shows a day in the life of the city from 1926, starting with a prelude that involves a train ride into the city from the surrounding countryside, followed by a series of dissolves between long shots showing the city's rooftops from the air, a series of building facades, and finally, eye-level shots of city streets. The film then progresses through the course of a day: it starts with the quiet and

Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Robert Fish questions what he considers an excessive emphasis on urban space in cinematic studies, arguing that this has led to the faulty assumption that "country-sides are somehow 'non-cinematic' in form and experience." See Fish's introduction to *Cinematic Countrysides*, 3.

²²⁴ Other key works include Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler's *Manhatta* (New York, 1921), Antonio Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures* (Paris, 1926) and Dzigo Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (Moscow, 1929). For an introduction to the city symphony genre, see Hake, *Topographies of Class*, 259; for a more detailed analysis, see Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums*, 232–256. The city symphonies should not be confused with the *Städtefilm* genre, a type of documentary short (*Kulturfilm*) that served as advertising for specific cities. See Jeanpaul Georgen, "Urbanität und Idylle: Städtefilme zwischen Kommerz und Kulturpropaganda," in *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland, vol. 2: Weimarer Republik 1918–1933*, ed. K. Kreimeier, A. Ehmman and J. Georgen (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005), 151–172.

empty streets in the early morning, then shows the morning commute and the opening of businesses, building momentum to an initial climax marked by the frantic activity of the morning work shift. A lunch respite follows, showing humans of all social classes as well as dogs, horses, and zoo animals taking their midday meal. After this pause, an afternoon work session accelerates toward a second climax that juxtaposes a ride on a roller coaster, a series of newspapers scrolling down the screen with individual words such as “murder” and “money” popping out in bold print, and finally, a woman jumping off a bridge to commit suicide. After the workday ends, the film’s final act cuts between various leisure and recreation activities, followed by a fast-paced finale portraying the city’s nightlife. Throughout, the film relies almost entirely on documentary footage of people in the city—largely unaware that they are being filmed—and cuts these images together to emphasize formal patterns and rhythms of the big city.²²⁵

Ruttmann’s *Berlin* has received a great deal of scholarly attention. Scholarship has followed four significant directions: in the first, already in Siegfried Kracauer’s review of the film (or even earlier, in statements from filmmakers involved in the film’s conception), critics accuse Ruttmann of concealing social issues behind the film’s dynamic editing based solely on tempo, rhythm, and formal

²²⁵ The formal patterns, claim most scholars, tend to emphasize formal similarities rather than visual or social contrasts or conflicts. Michael Cowan sees this as the cause for much criticism that accuses the film of aestheticizing issues that should be treated more critically. He asserts that the technique can instead be understood in terms of the discourse of “*Querschnitt*” and the project of ordering of the ever-growing archive of images in Weimar Germany. See *Walter Ruttmann*, 55–81.

analogy.²²⁶ Secondly, a number of studies have carried out symptomatic analyses of Ruttmann's film to explore gender and psychoanalytic themes.²²⁷ Taking a more

²²⁶ See Kracauer's review entitled "Wir schaffens," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 13 November 1927, reprinted in *Walter Ruttmann*, ed. Georgen, 118. John Grierson offers a similar critique in his book *Grierson on Documentary*, ed. Forsyth Hardy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966 [1947]), 149–151. See also Kracauer's comments on Ruttmann's film in *From Caligari to Hitler*, 182–188. Kracauer mentions that Carl Mayer had entertained similar objections to the film, and dropped out of the project because of Ruttmann's "surface approach." A number of scholars and critics have offered social or political criticisms that build on Kracauer and Grierson: see, for example, Klaus Wildenhahn, *Über synthetischen und dokumentarischen Film: Zwölf Lesestunden* (Frankfurt am Main: Kommunales Kino, 1975), 80–81; Sabine Hake, "Urban Spectacle in Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin, Symphony of the Big City*," in *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*, ed. Thomas W. Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994), 127–137; Martin Gaughan, "Ruttman's *Berlin*: Filming in a 'Hollow Space,'" in *Screening the City*, ed. Schiel and Fitzmaurice, 41–57. Other critics have taken issue with Kracauer's influential condemnation of the film, suggesting that his critique is based on an idea of mimesis that does not fit the transformative visual language inherent to the cinema. See David Macrae, "Ruttmann, Rhythm, and 'Reality': A Response to Siegfried Kracauer's Interpretation of *Berlin. The Symphony of a Great City*," in *Expressionist Film: New Perspectives*, ed. Dietrich Scheunemann (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003), 251–270; and Wolfgang Natter, "The City as Cinematic Space: Modernism and Place in *Berlin, Symphony of a City*," in *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle: A Geography of Film*, ed. Stuart C. Aitken and Leo E. Zonn (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994).

²²⁷ James Donald discusses the film's presentation of the "urban uncanny." Carsten Strathausen suggests that the film engages with the uncanny and displays anxiety regarding the persistent failure of enlightenment. Andrew Webber suggests that the film reveals anxiety about death through its engagement with the relationship between film and still photography. See James Donald, "The City, the Cinema: Modern Spaces," in *Visual Culture*, ed. Chris Jenks (London: Routledge, 1995), 77–95; Carsten Strathausen, "Uncanny Spaces: The City in Ruttmann and Vertov," in *Screening the City*, ed. Shiel and Fitzmaurice, 13–40; and Andrew Webber, "Symphony of a City: Motion Pictures and Still Lives in Weimar Berlin," in *Cities in Transition: the Moving image and the Modern Metropolis*, ed. Andrew Webber and Emma Wilson (London: Wallflower, 2008), 56–71. Feminist critics have analyzed the film's negotiation of gender, albeit with differing outcomes: Katharina von Ankum argues that the film reasserts male domination; while Anke Gleber suggests that the film shows a potentially liberating practice of female flânerie. See Katharina von Ankum, "The Cinematic Engendering of Urban Experience: Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin, die Symphonie einer Großstadt*," *Colloquia Germanica* 29.3 (1996): 209–221;

formalist rather than ideological or symptomatic approach, other scholars have analyzed the contribution of rhythmic, visual, and spatial traits to the film's impact.²²⁸ Finally, in recent years, scholars have devoted renewed attention to the historical context for Ruttmann's film, including social, architectural, artistic, and commercial elements that might not be deducible from the film's formal traits, or that might be distorted in ideological and psychoanalytic analyses that rely on a

and Anke Gleber, "Female Flanerie and the Symphony of the City," in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 67–88. See also the discussion of visual pleasure in Ruttmann's film in Sabine Hake, "Urban Spectacle."

²²⁸ Jean-Paul Georgen analyzes the formal traits of Ruttmann's film within a much larger, and very useful, study of Ruttmann's biography and filmic work. See "Walter Ruttmann—ein Porträt," in *Walter Ruttmann*, ed. Georgen, 17–56. Studies that focus on the formal aspects of Ruttmann's *Berlin* include Nora Alter, "Berlin, Symphony of a Great City (1927): City, Image, Sound," in *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide to Classic Films of the Era*, ed. Noah Isenberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 193–215; Matthias Bauer, "'... das Gesicht, das ich enträtseln möchte': Berlin im Spiegel der Film- und Kinogeschichte," in *Berlin: Medien- und Kulturgeschichte einer Hauptstadt im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Matthias Bauer (Tübingen: Francke, 2007), 225–279, especially 236; Matthew Bernstein, "Visual Style and Spatial Articulations in Berlin, Symphony of a City (1927)," *Journal of Film and Video* 36.4 (Fall 1984): 5–12, 61; Jiri Kolaja and Arnold W. Foster, "Berlin, the Symphony of a City as a Theme of Visual Rhythm," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 23.2 (Spring 1965): 353–358; Macrae, "Ruttmann, Rhythm, and 'Reality'"; Michael Minden, "The City in Early Cinema: *Metropolis*, *Berlin* and *October*," in *Unreal City: Urban Experience in Modern European Literature and Art*, ed. Edward Timms and David Kelley (New York: St. Martin's, 1985), 193–213. Many of these essays describe the emphasis on "tempo" in the film, a trait already present in many of Ruttmann's own comments about the film. See Ruttmann's comments reprinted in Georgen, *Walter Ruttmann*, 79–80. Georgen's book (containing a thorough biographical essay by Georgen, several essays by other scholars, and a number of important primary sources), along with the sourcebook edited by Leonardo Quaresima, are essential reading for any study of Ruttmann. See Leonardo Quaresima, ed., *Walter Ruttmann: Cinema, pittura, ars acustica* (Calliano, Trentino, Italy: Manfrini, 1994).

close formal reading.²²⁹ My analysis takes its cue largely from this fourth strand of criticism, looking at Ruttmann's film and other Berlin films within the context of discussions about the physical environment and Heimat that are not immediately evident from the film itself. Formal aspects of the films themselves will still play a role, providing insight into ways in which surrounding contexts interact with Ruttmann's specifically filmic text.

While much scholarship has focused on the dynamic status of the big city, at least one scholar has acknowledged a sort of Heimat revealed by Ruttmann's film: in his essay on migration to Berlin as seen in Ruttmann's film, Anton Kaes argues that the final entertainment scene provides a substitute Heimat for new city-dwellers who have left their homes.²³⁰ Of course, it is a false *Heimat*; shock and displacement

²²⁹ Thomas Elsaesser (2008), Janet Ward, Sabine Hake, and Anthony McElligott have situated the film within architectural and infrastructural developments in Weimar-era Berlin. Anton Kaes discusses the film with regard to the experience of migrants to the city. Michael Cowan (2007) explores the relationship of the film to Weimar-era discourse regarding organic rhythm ("Rhythmus") versus rationalized tempo ("Takt"). Finally, a number of scholars (Barry Fulks, Thomas Elsaesser, Malte Hagener, and Michael Cowan) have studied the context of modernist artists in Weimar and Nazi Germany, pointing out the widely held fallacy that artistic modernism was inherently aligned with the goals of Weimar democracy and opposed to the status of art under Nazi rule. Michael Cowan, "The Heart Machine: 'Rhythm' and Body in Weimar Film and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*," *Modernism / Modernity* 14.2 (April 2007): 225–248; Cowan, *Walter Ruttmann*; Thomas Elsaesser, "City of Light, Gardens of Delight," in *Cities in Transition*, 88–101; Elsaesser and Hagener, "Walter Ruttmann: 1929"; Barry A. Fulks, "Walter Ruttmann, the Avant-Garde Film, and Nazi Modernism," *Film and History* 14.2 (May 1984): 26–35, 46; Sabine Hake, *Topographies of Class*, 242–274; Anton Kaes, "Leaving Home"; Anthony McElligott, "Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: The Symphony of a City*: Traffic-Mindedness and the City in Interwar Germany," in *The City in Central Europe: Culture and Society from 1800 to the Present*, ed. Malcolm Gee, Tim Kirk, and Jill Steward (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999), 209–238; Janet Ward, "Kracauer versus the Weimar Film-City," in *Peripheral Visions*, 21–37.

²³⁰ Kaes, "Leaving Home."

are briefly forgotten, but not overcome. I agree with Kaes's suggestion that Ruttman presents, but inverts, a sort of Heimat for workers in Berlin. Indeed, the film's final scenes contain shots of skiing and sledding, reminiscent of the sort of Heimat imagery we would expect to see far from the city. They show images from a ski hill that was erected indoors, in Berlin's *Sportpalast*, in 1927. To better appreciate these images—especially in light of the previous chapter's discussion of Weimar mountain films—I pause here to examine an important predecessor to Ruttmann's film, László Moholy-Nagy's film manuscript *Dynamik der Gross-Stadt* (*Dynamic of the Metropolis*).

The Dynamic City

László Moholy-Nagy wrote *Dynamic of the Metropolis* in 1921–1922. Because he could not find a producer willing to support the experimental project, the film was never produced. Starting in 1923, he taught the introductory course at the Bauhaus school, and there, together with founding Bauhaus director Walter Gropius, he conceived the series “Bauhaus-Bücher” (“Bauhaus Books”). His film manuscript appeared as part of the eighth book in this series, *Malerei Photographie Film* (*Painting, Photography, Film*), in 1925; the spelling was changed to *Malerei Fotografie Film* for the 1927 edition cited here. Both the 1925 and 1927 editions contain images and text.²³¹

²³¹ A slightly less complete version, with text in Hungarian and a few sketched images but no photographs, was published in 1924 in the Hungarian avant-garde art journal *MA*. Further, a text-only version was published in a May 1925 special edition of *Film-Kurier*.

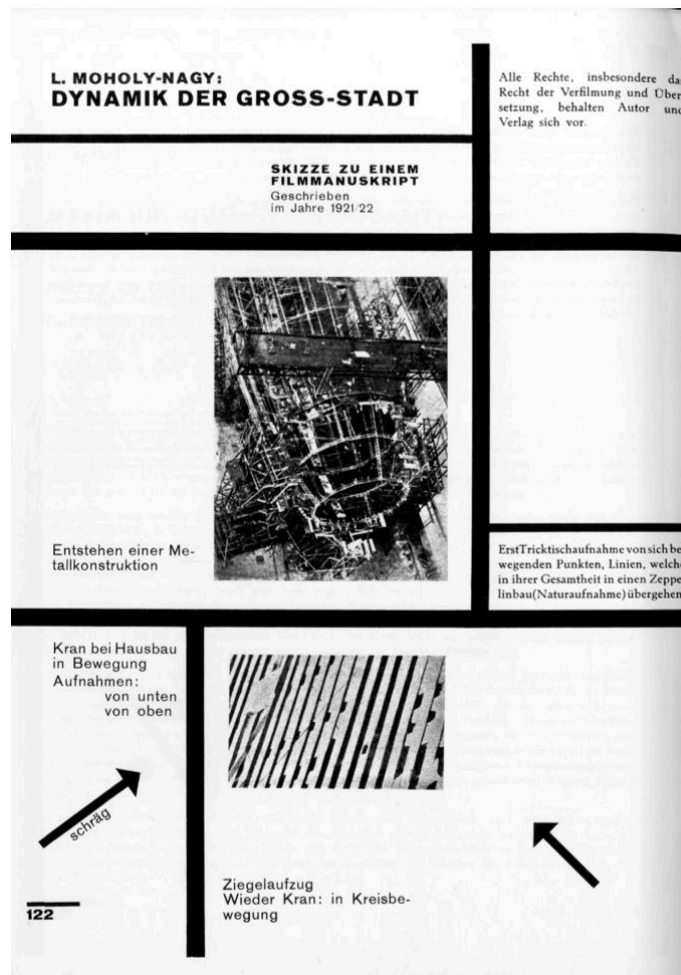


Figure 3.1. First page of Moholy-Nagy, *Dynamik der Gross-Stadt*.

Moholy-Nagy's sketch displays several motifs that play a key role in Ruttmann's *Berlin* film, including a focus on motor vehicle traffic, point-of-view shots from moving vehicles, contrasting angles and directions of motion (including both high-angle shots of the city from an airplane and underground shots of sewers and canals), zoo animals, popular performing artists, and—of note in the present context—skiers.

The affinity between Moholy-Nagy's manuscript and Ruttmann's film has been noted before (with the exception of the shared motif of skiing in both works).

But critical and scholarly attention has been limited to the status of Moholy-Nagy as a direct precursor to Ruttmann, with attention focused only on the similarities between the two projects.²³² In fact, several key scenes in Ruttmann's film diverge from Moholy-Nagy's sketch. These differences indicate that Moholy-Nagy's manuscript aims to use elements of the city to perform an experiment in visual art: images from the city—and elsewhere—provide the basis for his exploration of perspective, motion, and contrast. The images are used as optical elements, interesting primarily for their formal contrasts rather than as a means to construct a filmic version of urban space. In Ruttmann's film, on the other hand, the viewed landscape remains intact as a city. In spite of its focus on abstract rhythm, the film's overarching structure is that of a day in the city, marked by important and easily identifiable moments in the course of a workday.²³³ In Moholy-Nagy's sketch, no such temporal or spatial structuring element is present: the manuscript calls for

²³² Moholy-Nagy's *Dynamik der Gross-Stadt* is mentioned as a precursor to Ruttmann's *Berlin* in Vogt, *Stadt im Kino*, 179; Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums*, 233; Karl Prümm, "Dynamik der Großstadt": Berlin-Bilder im Film der Zwanziger Jahre," in *Berlin . . . Blicke auf die deutsche Metropole*, ed. Gerhard Brunn and Jürgen Reulecke (Essen: Hobbing, 1989), 105–123. More detailed analysis or comparisons, though still not concerned with divergences between the two, are found in Webber, "Symphony of a City," 59–61; and Ankum, "Cinematic Engendering of Urban Experience," 214–215. Edward Dimendberg gives more sustained attention to Moholy-Nagy's manuscript and bemoans the lack of critical study it has received; see his essay "Transfiguring the Urban Gray: László Moholy-Nagy's Film Scenario 'Dynamic of the Metropolis,'" in *Camera Obscura, Camera Lucida: Essays in Honor of Annette Michelson*, ed. Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 109–126.

²³³ For an analysis of the tension between the film's abstract rhythms and the "natural" structure provided by its dawn-to-dusk progression, see Derek Hillard, "Walter Ruttmann's Janus-faced View of Modernity: The Ambivalence of Description in *Berlin, die Sinfonie der Großstadt*," *Monatshefte* 96.1 (2004): 78–92.

images of machines, animals, and buildings throughout, with perhaps a slight increase in human activity (primarily athletes and performers) in the second half of the manuscript, but with no narrative continuity from beginning to end. Instead, occasional textual instructions indicate that entire sections should be repeated ten times, played in slow motion, or replayed in fast reverse. The work is unified by its exploration of the possibilities of visual manipulation and reconfiguration offered by the cinema rather than by any coherent sense of time or space.

Ruttmann's film focuses at great length on people at work, while Moholy-Nagy uses people as just another formal element. Of course, *Berlin* does not get close to people; they are viewed from a distance, walking, eating lunch, typing, playing. Indeed, Ruttmann's film shows Berlin residents through a somewhat distant or superficial lens, lending credence to Siegfried Kracauer's accusation that the film avoids social commentary. And yet the city's human inhabitants play a greater role in Ruttmann's film than in Moholy-Nagy's sketch; in the latter, people frequently appear simply to emphasize striking movements or manipulations, with their status as humans of secondary importance to the visual impact. A close-up of two women suggests a scene that might offer more emotional connection to human characters, except that it is not a photo of inhabitants of the city but a still from a 1923 popular film. In the description for this scene, Moholy-Nagy writes: "2 two women pull their heads back with lightning speed." This comes immediately after an object is accelerated toward the camera lens. The close-up of the two women's heads serves not to provide images of human residents of the city but instead to emphasize contrasting directions of motion.

The use of animals in each film marks a further difference. In Ruttmann's film, cuts between workers, soldiers, and cattle being led to the slaughterhouse offer cynical commentary on the fate or condition of the people in the city. Meanwhile, Moholy-Nagy uses animals to produce visual shock rather than social commentary. In the explanatory note that accompanies an early sequence juxtaposing a caged tiger with speeding urban traffic, he states that such contrasts are crucial to the project. "The tiger: contrast of open, unhindered racing with claustrophobic, constricted space. In order, right from the start, to get the audience used to surprises and non-logical connections."²³⁴

It is significant that the shot of the two women is taken from a popular film. Moholy-Nagy's manuscript constitutes a bricolage of images from various sources including other films, theater groups, magazines, some of Moholy-Nagy's own photos, and at least two pictures of New York. Of course, it is possible that the actual film would have worked differently; he might have used pre-existing photos for the manuscript, while intending to shoot new footage of Berlin for the film itself. But at the very least, Moholy-Nagy's manuscript suggests another possible approach to the making of a city film. Since cities were the primary subject or location for cinema, there was ample footage at hand for such an enterprise. In *Berlin*, however, Ruttmann chose to shoot completely new footage, entirely within the city of Berlin.

In Moholy-Nagy's bricolage, one of his assembled sources is of particular interest for this study: two still photos of a skier are displayed on the penultimate page of the 13-page manuscript. In the image index that follows the manuscript, we

²³⁴ Moholy-Nagy, *Dynamik*, 123.

learn that these two images are taken from the instructional ski book *Wunder des Schneeschuhs*, written by Arnold Fanck and Hannes Schneider and first published in 1925. By using Fanck's images, Moholy-Nagy seems to appreciate the mechanized aesthetics that form the core of Fanck's ski films. We might even say that both Fanck's films and Moholy-Nagy's reference to them reveal an underlying affinity between the pre-industrial but still technologically facilitated speed of skiing and the industrialized tempo of the metropolis.

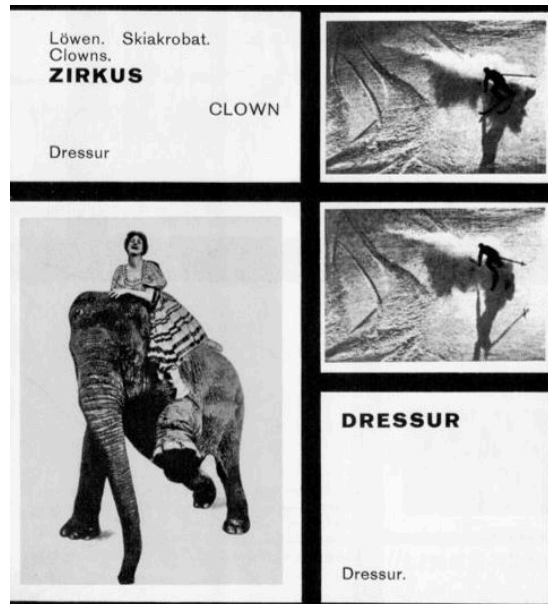


Figure 3.2. Moholy-Nagy, *Dynamik der Gross-Stadt*, 134.

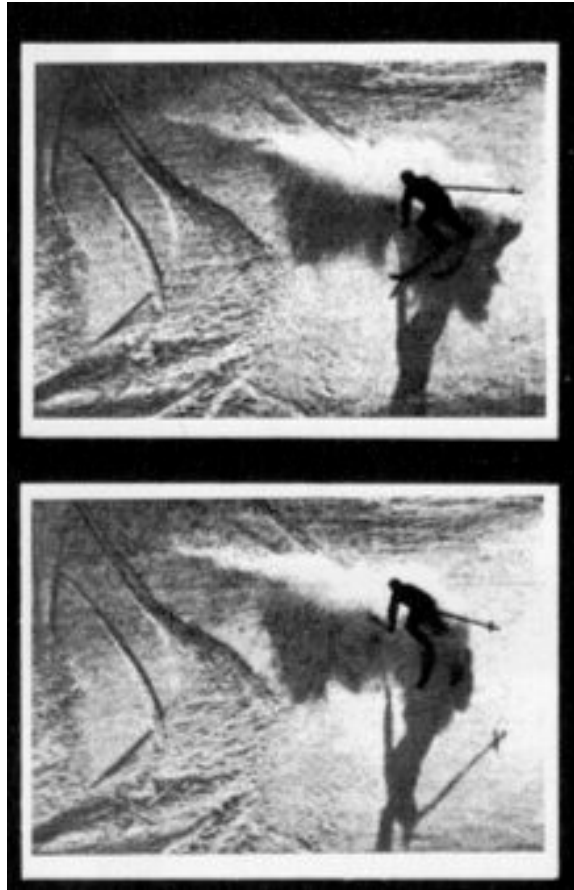


Figure 3.3. Detail from Moholy-Nagy, *Dynamik der Gross-Stadt*, 134.

Moholy-Nagy does not simply insert Fanck's images without comment. The photos are integrated into a page filled with circus imagery. The text for this section of the manuscript reads: "Lions. Ski-acrobat. Clowns. **CIRCUS.**" (Figure 3.2.) The images of a skier are sandwiched between shots of an acrobat and an elephant-rider.²³⁵ Through the juxtapositions of text and image, Moholy-Nagy relates the athleticism of Fanck's ski films not to a distant realm of ski tourism or racing, but to urban circus showmanship. At the same time, the images clearly show a skier

²³⁵ The skiing photos are in fact already present in the 1925 edition of Moholy-Nagy's book, published the same year as Fanck's book. The word "Skiakrobat," however, is not present in the 1925 edition of Moholy-Nagy's book, and is added for the second edition in 1927.

against a background of deep powder snow, with other skiers' tracks also visible (Figure 3.3). The skier's long shadow and silhouette indicate strong backlighting from the sun. It is an image from the mountains; there is no suggestion that this could be a ski shot restaged in the city. Moholy-Nagy deliberately brings in an image that seems far removed from the metropolis. Finally, the order is reversed: based on the angle of the skis and the direction of the skier's turn, we can see that the bottom image in Moholy-Nagy's manuscript is actually the earlier frame from Fanck's film strip. It is unlikely that this was accidental. The two strips of film from which these still images were cut are also included in Moholy-Nagy's *Malerei Fotografie Film*. The film strips appear a few pages before the introduction to *Dynamik der Gross-Stadt*. Within the broader context of the book, which describes a number of avant-garde techniques and practical uses for photography, the images offer an example of how film strips can be used in a book to teach physical movements. In the strips printed in Moholy-Nagy's book, the bottom image from the left-hand filmstrip has been removed, as has the top image from the right-hand filmstrip (Figure 3.4). Clearly, Moholy-Nagy knew the origin and chronological order of the two images. Their reversal was deliberate.²³⁶ As such, he draws on Fanck's images—which already contain a strong sense of mechanized motion—and further emphasizes

²³⁶ Moholy-Nagy's use of Fanck's film strips, and the individual images used in his film sketch, can be seen on pages 116 and 134 of *Malerei Fotografie Film*. In Fanck's book (co-authored with the ski star Hannes Schneider), the same images can be seen listed as "Reihen" (rows) 113 and 114, in the section (without page numbers) of "kinematographische Reihenbilder." See László Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei Fotografie Film* (Mainz: Kupferberg, 1978 [facsimile of 1927 edition]); and Arnold Fanck and Hannes Schneider, *Wunder des Schneeschuhs*.

their technological implications by reassembling them in reverse order as part of his own film project.

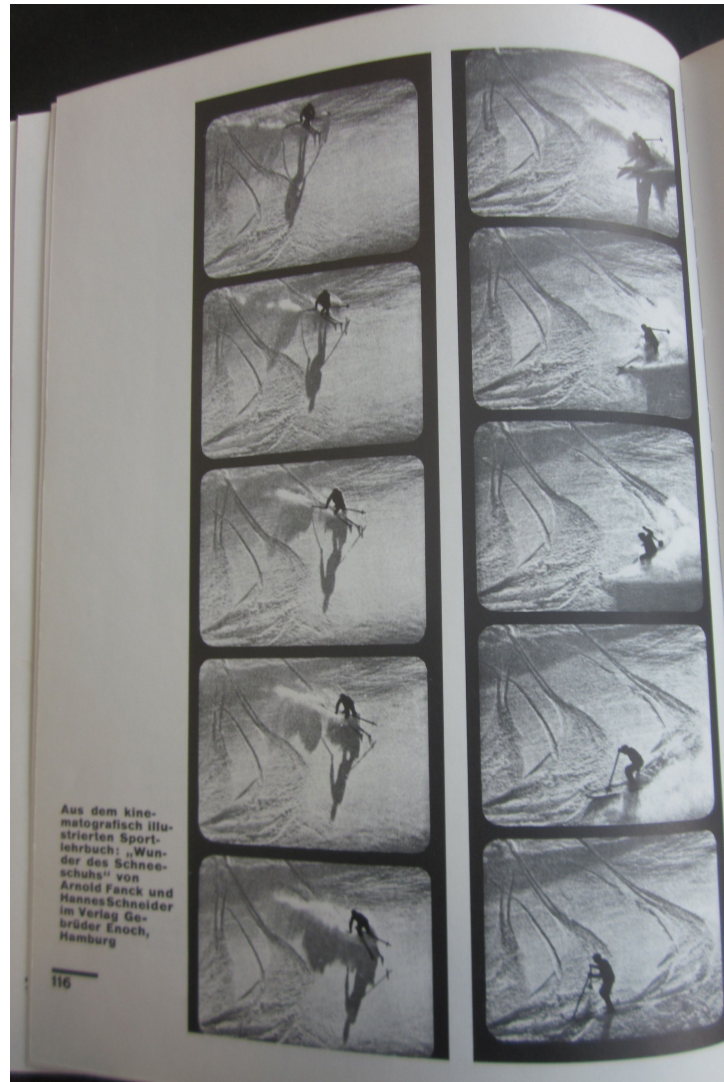


Figure 3.4. Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, 116.

Skiing in Berlin

Ruttmann's *Berlin* has received much scholarly attention as an exemplar of the city film. As was the case with Moholy-Nagy's manuscript, revealing insights also arise in a comparison with Arnold Fanck's mountain films. As an initial example,

Ruttmann's traffic montages show strong parallels to Fanck's ski sequences. At 29:40 in *Berlin*,²³⁷ we see a spinning spiral that emphasizes the city's constant movement, followed by a traffic cop waving and whistling, trying in vain to maintain order in the face of chaotic motion. The image then shifts to a traffic montage showing streets crowded with pedestrians and vehicles, cutting between cars driving in various directions: only the filmmaker can grant order to the overwhelming sensations and provide the tools for "managing the 'flood' of photographic representations" that marked late-1920s Berlin.²³⁸ In showing ski races, Fanck's editing places a similar emphasis on speed and angular cuts, foregrounding both the speed of the sport and Fanck's own artistic control as film editor. Near the end of *Berlin*, we see an even stronger link to Fanck's films: several shots of snowshoeing and ski jumping are inserted into the middle of the scenes of Berlin nightlife. The snowshoeing comes first, as a line of girls march in step on snowshoes, suggesting a curious fusion of a group hike and a dance revue. Like the girls seen dancing on a nightclub stage two minutes earlier, the snowshoeing girls are shown in close-ups that emphasize the synchronized motion of individual body parts. They appear as rationalized, machine-like objects rather than human beings.

These scenes illustrate the "mass ornament," a term Siegfried Kracauer uses to explore the way in which humans become subsumed into larger technological

²³⁷ This time code refers to the 2007 reconstruction by the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, released commercially on DVD by the Munich Film Museum (*Edition Filmmuseum* 39, film&kunst GmbH), 2008.

²³⁸ Cowan, *Walter Ruttmann*, 59.

and political forms within rationalized economic and urban society.²³⁹ Kracauer writes of the Tiller Girls, an English dance troupe renowned for synchronized choreography similar to that of the dancers—and snowshoers—in Ruttmann’s film. The mass ornament in itself is empty of meaning. However, it can be put to any number of uses, from mass crowd scenes in Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* to dance numbers in Hollywood musicals or Super Bowl halftime shows.²⁴⁰ In *Berlin*, mass ornaments integrate well into the scenes of urban entertainment and distraction throughout the final act of the film. But there is also an odd similarity to Fanck’s films: his ski sequences frequently show large groups of skiers shooting down the mountain in unison or waddling back up a white slope (see Figure 2.1). These shots of uphill motion make no logical sense in the middle of a downhill ski chase; their inclusion is motivated purely by the formal interest in the shape formed by a mass of skiers moving together, just as the snowshoers in Ruttmann’s film embody the rationalization of human forms within the urban entertainment of Berlin. These images offer an industrialized vision of individual human bodies merged into the crowd and participate in the visual imaginaries of mass tourism and entertainment.

As the girls snowshoe toward the camera, a wall is dimly visible in the background. At first glance, it is not entirely clear what type of wall it is—perhaps

²³⁹ Siegfried Kracauer, “The Mass Ornament” [June 1927], trans. Thomas Y. Levin, in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 75–86.

²⁴⁰ For a discussion of the politicization of mass ornaments within Nazi cinema, see Eric Rentschler, *Ministry of Illusion*, 14.

the facades of buildings at the edge of a park being used for the snow sequences, or perhaps a wall marking the edge of an interior space. The following shot provides the answer. While still not in focus, a high roof can be seen overhead, with lights shining down on the snow. The ski and snowshoe sequences are part of an indoor entertainment event.²⁴¹ The scene brings together distant environments in a way that is related to the *Bergfilm* but yields a very different result. In Fanck's ski films, the speed and angularity of the cuts bring a mechanized aesthetic to the mountainside; the crowded metropolis is reenacted on the outdoor mountain slope. Meanwhile, Ruttmann's *Berlin* shows us that the mountain itself has been brought to the city and restaged inside an enclosed urban space.

The concluding sequence of Ruttmann's *Berlin* depicts mass gatherings in the various entertainment locales of the metropolis. In precisely the moment within the narrative when later *Heimatfilme* would feature a village festival or parade—usually a celebration of the restoration or reconciliation of a community after facing a threat from an outsider²⁴²—Ruttmann's film displays mass gatherings of people in search of diversion.²⁴³

²⁴¹ The world's first indoor ski slope was created in Berlin's *Sportpalast* in 1927. See E. John B. Allen, *Historical Dictionary of Skiing* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2012), xxvii. Additionally, Bernhard Tschofen quotes a review from the *Frankfurter Zeitung* that describes—with an appropriate dose of irony—a 1927 winter festival set up inside an exhibition hall in Berlin, featuring an indoor sledding and skiing hill alongside a snack bar, live music, and yodeling revelers. See "Schnee-Kulturen: Vorüberlegungen zu einer Anthropologie des Schnees in populären Bildwelten," in *Schnee: Rohstoff der Kunst*, ed. Tobias G. Natter (Bregenz, Austria: Vorarlberger Landesmuseum, 2009), 30–42, here 39.

²⁴² See, for example, the final sequences of *Schwarzwaldmädel* (*Black Forest Girl*, Hans Deppe, 1950), *Grün ist die Heide* (*The Heath Is Green*, Deppe, 1951), *Am Brunnen vor dem Tore* (*At the Fountain by the Gate*, Hans Wolff, 1951), or the half-

Ruttmann's film participates in a discourse that has been well studied with regard to city symphonies, but which also offers insight into an understanding of urban Heimat. In writing about emotional responses to life in a metropolis, Georg Simmel states that city-dwellers are bombarded by an excess of stimuli and therefore build up a guarded persona that can shield them against being paralyzed by so many competing sensations. Simmel writes that this actually leads to a renewed freedom, in that city-dwellers are subsequently able to choose their own activities and social circles with a liberty unknown to people in small towns. Simmel's essay offers an early example of urban sociology as well as a more progressive response to reactionary critics of urbanization who see Berlin as a site of rationalized anonymity that suppresses any chance for individual creativity.²⁴⁴ However, it also stresses the response of city dwellers shielding themselves against the surplus of urban stimuli, and gives little attention to the ways in which people willingly merge into an urban mass. In this regard, Siegfried Kracauer—Simmel's student—proves helpful. In his analyses of the culture of distraction epitomized by Berlin's movie palaces, Kracauer argues that these movie theaters provide a

hour scene of a village festival, treated with self-aware irony regarding the genre convention yet still building a sense of nostalgia and resolution, in the final episode of Edgar Reitz's *Heimat: eine deutsche Chronik* (1984).

²⁴³ This similarity to the Weimar-era rural films of 1950s *Heimatfilme* lends credence to Anton Kaes's assertion that these sites of distraction provide a substitute Heimat.

²⁴⁴ Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life." Simmel's essay has been frequently mentioned in discussions of the city symphony genre since it was first used by Annette Michelson as an intertext for *Paris qui dort*. See Annette Michelson, "Dr. Crase and Mr. Clare," in *October* 11 (Winter 1979), 30–53. See also Edward Dimendberg, "Transfiguring the Urban Gray," 109.

necessary response to life in Berlin. In what Kracauer calls a “*total artwork* [*Gesamtkunstwerk*] of effects,”²⁴⁵ the films offer a barrage of surface entertainment, meeting an audience demand that stems from the rationalization of the workforce and leveling of the bourgeoisie and working classes due to inflation. In contrast to the culture of intellectual depth and contemplation of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie, the shallow escapism of the movies provides exactly the remedy needed for an audience overburdened with work but lacking stability, security, or fulfillment. Of course, Kracauer acknowledges that the films are produced by the same dominant business interests that give rise to the workers’ dismal situation. As a result, films hide rather than expose the workers’ status. Nonetheless, Kracauer ends with a utopian notion that film, precisely through its emphasis on surface appearances, might produce “a kind of distraction that exposes disintegration instead of masking it.”²⁴⁶ Film could thus reveal the worker’s plight and lead to self-awareness and emancipation of the masses.

Kracauer’s dream of an emancipatory cinema intersects with the notion of *Heimat* insofar as it defines the identity of a group of people living in a specific location and sharing communal experiences. The cinema fulfills a function similar to a village festival, giving people the chance to gather together and “[obtain] an identity by not having one,”²⁴⁷ as Peter Blickle suggests. At the same time, Kracauer

²⁴⁵ Kracauer, “Cult of Distraction,” in *Weimar Essays*, 322–328, here 324. Emphasis in original.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 328.

²⁴⁷ Blickle, *Heimat*, 73.

suggests that spectacles of urban entertainment might go beyond merely providing a mass identity into which one can merge. He thus calls to mind Ernst Bloch's notion of Heimat as somewhere that everybody knows in childhood, but where nobody has ever been: cinema might help in the ongoing pursuit of community, in that it could reveal to the masses the shallowness of their workaday lives.²⁴⁸

Mass urban entertainment in Ruttmann's film provides a communal experience, albeit without the liberating consequences that Kracauer hopes for.²⁴⁹ Near the end of the film, a rain shower offers a suggestion of unity, with the rain falling on all Berliners equally. This scene carries on the symbolic function filled by images of water throughout the film. In the film's opening shot a high-angle close-up of rippling water dissolves into a sequence of abstract animation. The suicide scene at the film's midpoint offers an attempted return when a woman jumps from a bridge: in despair, she seeks to escape the unceasing rationalized tempo of the city by returning to watery nature. But the interruption lasts only a moment; the city immediately regains its momentum in the following scene. In both the introduction

²⁴⁸ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, 1629. Note that Bloch, while he praises Kracauer's ability to write straight to the core of Berlin white-collar worker's lives (referring to Kracauer's essay "Die Angestellten"), does not seem to share Kracauer's idea of a utopian potential within mass culture. He writes of urban workers' lives: "The gray daylight hours and distracted evenings define their days, fill them . . . life as an 'enterprise' (*Betrieb*): as a wasteland during the day, as an escape at night." See "Künstliche Mitte" (1929), in *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1962), 33–35.

²⁴⁹ See also Kracauer's essay "The Mass Ornament" for its discussion of how audiences and performers alike become abstracted parts of a larger whole in sites of urban entertainment.

and the suicide scene, an apparent escape from the city quickly yields to continued formalism and abstraction.



Figure 3.5. From Ruttmann's *Berlin*.

Similarly, the unifying presence of the rain over Berlin offers only a sense of communal anonymity. In the final moments, the rain falling from the sky gives way to a camera gazing back toward the heavens, showing fireworks overhead and, finally, the hypermodern form of the Berlin radio tower. (See Figure 3.5.) The tower was new in 1926, a shining symbol of the city's ability to connect places and people separated by great distances. Seen differently, it was the ideal symbol of the city as a virtual or abstract community. Like the rain, the radio tower sends its signal out to all, with no concern for whom it touches. Individuals can receive its messages and learn their place within the technologically organized urban community, but they cannot send out signals of their own. This is the Heimat that Anton Kaes identifies in Ruttmann's film, one marked by unceasing activity and an inundation of stimuli that

unites all, but offers them no chance to support each other as individuals, only a coercive invitation to blend into the mass.

Dwelling in the City

While Ruttmann's film suggests an urban Heimat based on fast-paced entertainment, other films focus on urban developments that allow a relaxation of pace, often by emphasizing links between residential areas and nearby green spaces. Taken together with ideas in architecture and city planning, these films show an alternate vision of urban Heimat, one focused on dwelling rather than distraction. Ruttmann emphasizes the speed and dynamic rhythms of the city, and entertainment sites are an important element within this dynamic urban vision. A related film from just two years earlier takes a very different approach. Adolf Trotz's film *Die Stadt der Millionen* (*City of Millions*) uses many of the same sites as Ruttmann's film, but—rather than emphasizing the city's permanent status of flux—it uses the unifying structure of film to bring all of these elements into a coherent whole.²⁵⁰

Trotz's *City of Millions*, released in 1925, was the first feature-length documentary to provide a filmic portrait of Berlin. The film presents the city through a tourist gaze,²⁵¹ focusing on famous landmarks and reenacting scenes

²⁵⁰ In providing a unified vision of Berlin, Trotz's film fits more clearly into the *Städtefilm* genre. For a discussion of the film within this genre context, see Georgen, "Urbanität und Idylle," 167–170.

²⁵¹ See John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*.

involving well-known political or literary figures from the city's past.²⁵² The film begins with a view of Berlin from an airplane; the frame then descends to ground level and shows various Berlin sites from a tour bus. While Ruttmann's film cuts between sites to emphasize rhythm and formal similarity, *Trotz* shows these sites from a specific standpoint: that of the modern urban tourist. To emphasize that the filmic gaze is firmly situated in the perspective of a tourist on the street, the final scene returns to the sky, with the camera looking up from within a crowd gathered around the *Siegestäule*, watching a massive zeppelin floating overhead.

Another significant difference to Ruttmann's film exists in the dynamism that drives *Berlin*. Although a number of shots focus on city traffic and intertitles draw the viewer's attention to the "hot spots (*Brennpunkten*) of traffic," the editing—which acts as the primary source of dynamic energy in Ruttmann's film—is relatively static in *Trotz*'s documentary. Guido Altendorf points out that the film was made before Soviet montage had arrived in Germany. As a result, the rhythmic montage style that Ruttmann employs in 1927 is absent in this film from just two years earlier²⁵³ and the Berlin that is shown in 1925, stripped of the filmic

²⁵² Jesko Jockenhövel contrasts this emphasis on individual sites and people with Ruttmann's focus on the general ("das Allgemeingültige"). Jockenhövel, "Von Fichte bis zum Alten Fritz: Der touristische Blick auf *Die Stadt der Millionen*," included in the booklet accompanying the DVD *Die Stadt der Millionen*, dir. Adolf Trotz (Filmmuseum Potsdam and absolut Medien, 2014), 11–14.

²⁵³ Altendorf suggests that, although the editing lacks the complexity of later montage practices, the special effects of *City of Millions* nonetheless provide an impressive array of the cinematic tricks available at the time, including multiple exposures, split screens, slow-motion or accelerated shots, and animated sequences juxtaposed with live-action sequences. See Guido Altendorf, "*Die Stadt Der Millionen. Ein Lebensbild Berlins: Film als Illustrierte*," also included in the DVD Booklet for *Die Stadt der Millionen*, 5–10.

manipulations of Ruttmann's film, is surprisingly tame and sedate. Contrary to Karl Scheffler's famous quote from 1910 that Berlin is condemned, "continually to become and never to be,"²⁵⁴ the city in Trotz's film is remarkably intact, with very few construction sites appearing on screen. Mario Geßler asserts that this is a fact of the city itself in 1925, not mere omission by the filmmaker: the rapid growth of the capital during the *Gründerzeit* had passed, and the next stages of massive construction (and destruction) would not take place until the Nazi era.²⁵⁵

The relatively intact image of Berlin in Trotz's film serves as a reminder that the massive growth of Berlin in the 1920s came less from an influx of migrants and construction of new buildings than from an expansion of the city's geographic area. Still, the stretching of Berlin's administrative borders required an increase in infrastructure and social support systems. This is shown in Trotz's film no less than in Ruttmann's, with numerous shots of nature around Berlin. The city's mayor Gustav Böß is celebrated in the film's intertitles as a tireless promoter of young people's health, and his tenure as mayor from 1921 to 1929 coincided with the major development of parks, recreation sites, and sports facilities.²⁵⁶ The film's closing special effect also draws attention to the increased rail infrastructure needed to connect people to the green space around the city. In the final shot, a

²⁵⁴ Karl Scheffler, *Berlin: ein Stadtschicksal* (Berlin: Reiss, 1910), 267.

²⁵⁵ Mario Geßler, "Die Stadt der Millionen, Im Strudel des Verkehrs: Der entfesselte Moloch," in DVD Booklet for *Die Stadt der Millionen*, 15–19, here 15.

²⁵⁶ Geßler, "Der entfesselte Moloch," 19.

collage of seven train tracks converge in the middle of the frame, with the bear that symbolizes Berlin at the point where the tracks meet (Figure 3.6).



Figure 3.6. From *City of Millions*.

No less than other Berlin films of the 1920s, Trotz's film recognizes the importance of modern transportation, not only at the "hot spots of traffic" but also between the city and its green periphery. It locates this expanding urban infrastructure within a filmic city that appears relatively stable. Ruttmann emphasizes the city's constant motion, something that individuals could not fully perceive on their own. In contrast, Trotz suggests that an individual resident or tourist can comprehend the city through a single day of leisure travel, and thus suggests a mode of urban Heimat based on attentive dwelling rather than distraction.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ While I will not go into a detailed analysis of Heidegger's notion of "dwelling" (the usual translation for "Wohnen," especially in the essays "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" and "Poetically Man Dwells"), I use the term deliberately. The second and third forms of urban Heimat I discuss—the city as a dwelling, and as a utopian

Film Without Industry: People on Sunday

Like Ruttmann's *Berlin*, the 1930 film *People on Sunday* was a surprise success. Although *Berlin* was made as a cheap local film to satisfy an international agreement regarding imported American films, it was made by prominent and well-established figures within the German film industry; regardless of its avant-garde artistic status, the film arose as a product of the film establishment.²⁵⁸ *Menschen am Sonntag*, on the other hand, was made by a set of people whose names would become associated with prolific Hollywood careers, but who were virtually unknown at the time.²⁵⁹

project—depart from Ruttmann's vision of the city in a way that fits with Heidegger's philosophical project to seek a less functionalist relationship with the physical world. See Heidegger's essays in *Rethinking Architecture*, ed. Leach, 100–120. See also Michael Zimmermann, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, Art* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 157; and Timothy Clark, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 55–59.

²⁵⁸ Michael Cowan argues that Ruttmann and other Weimar-era artists were in fact not opposed to business interests, but instead saw their artistic talents as a form of expertise, building on psychology and advertising theory, that could be put to various productive uses from product advertisements to political propaganda. Cowan suggests that this helps account for Ruttmann's easy integration into Nazi film production. See Cowan, *Walter Ruttmann*, 25–28.

²⁵⁹ The exception is the film's cameraman, Eugen Schüfftan, who designed the so-called "Schüfftan process," a method of using mirrors and miniature models to create the illusion of monumental sets. The process was made famous by the impressive special effects it lent to Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* of 1927. The other filmmakers' obscurity would rapidly disappear following this film, as they experienced success in Germany during the early 1930s, then fled to the United States at the rise of Nazism and continued making films in Hollywood. Useful background information on the film can be found in Guntram Vogt, *Die Stadt im Kino*, 224–237; Lutz Koepnick, "The Bearable Lightness of Being: *People on Sunday*," in *Weimar Cinema*, ed. Noah Isenberg, 237–253; and Hervé Dumont, "Robert Siodmaks avantgardistische Filme," in *Filmkultur zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik*, ed. Uli Jung and Walter Schatzberg (Munich: Saur, 1992), 142–151.

People on Sunday features a plot that contains little more action than what is already evident in the title. The film shows a group of five young Berliners on a typical Sunday, engaging in leisure activities of various sorts on their one day off from work. The film opens on a Saturday afternoon. We see the five main characters finishing their workdays and planning their excursion for the following day. Wolfgang, a traveling wine salesman, approaches Christl, a film extra, when he notices that she is standing alone in front of Berlin-Zoo train station, apparently having been stood up by somebody she was going to meet. The two settle into a café together, and he invites her to join the excursion to a nearby lake the next day. We then see Erwin, the taxi driver, arrive home after work. While getting ready to go out for the evening, he and his girlfriend Annie get into a fight, at which point Wolfgang, Erwin's friend, invites himself over, and the two men play cards while Annie sulks. All are planning to join the next day's excursion. But the next morning, Annie does not get out of bed. She sleeps literally all day; meanwhile, Erwin, Wolfgang, Christl, and Christl's friend Brigitte all meet at the Nikolassee station. The four of them spend the day swimming, picnicking, strolling in the woods, flirting, and paddle-boating. At day's end, they return to the city and part ways, and Erwin arrives home to find Annie still in bed. In the final sequence of the film, we see a montage of crowd scenes and the individual characters from the rest of the film, all moving quickly in their workday routine. The final intertitles appear, one word or phrase at a time: "4—million—people—wait—for the next—Sunday."

While Ruttmann's film is all about the tempo of an urban workday, this film shows a weekend city that is permeated with the leisure represented by the

peripheral countryside. The origin of the film (or at least one version of the story of its origin) also matches this portrayal of utopian leisure space within the city. While the interviews from brothers Robert and Curt Siodmak, Billie Wilder, Edgar Ulmer, and Fred Zinnemann differ as to the role of each person in the conception and making of the film, a charming anecdote holds that the idea grew out of a gathering of the four young filmmakers at the Romanisches Café in Berlin. The project was made possible by a sum of a few thousand marks (even then an extremely small amount for a film) given to Robert Siodmak.²⁶⁰ The conflicting accounts and likelihood of each have been analyzed elsewhere;²⁶¹ for my purposes, it is intriguing to note that the film reportedly arose from precisely the sort of situation shown within the film: an act of spontaneity and leisure, born out of individual interest and desire. The story of the film's conception depicts a utopian moment of productive, self-directed leisure that stands in contrast to both the depiction of the city—and the inception as a result of international trade agreements—of Ruttmann's *Berlin*.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ Billy Wilder's own account confirms this narrative; see Charlotte Chandler, *Nobody's Perfect. Billy Wilder: A Personal Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 47.

²⁶¹ See Guntram Vogt, *Die Stadt im Kino*, 226–228 for an overview of conflicting statements from the various filmmakers involved.

²⁶² For an eloquent discussion of the film's utopian origins as a collective project, as well as insights regarding the film's allure due to its use of novice actors, its status as a silent in the newly begun age of sound, and border-crossings between narrative and documentary film styles, see Raymond Bellour, *Les hommes, le dimanche: Menschen am Sonntag de Robert Siodmak et Edgar G. Ullmer* (Crisnée: Yellow Now, 2009).

In his essay about *People on Sunday*, Lutz Koepnick suggests that “the city is secretly present in nearly every shot of the film.”²⁶³ Although most of the plot takes place in the idyllic countryside around the Wannsee, the five main characters establish the film’s urban status from the moment of their introduction. Laura Frahm notes that each of the five protagonists carries out a typically modern line of work within the commerce and transportation systems, key industries that mark the rise of urban modernity.²⁶⁴ Additionally, the film attempts to enhance its sense of authenticity by stating, in intertitles, that the five actors are performing in a movie for the first time. In interviews after the film’s release, the filmmakers maintained this notion of authentic representation: the actors in fact played themselves on screen; after shooting the film, they returned to the jobs described within the film. Through this unremarkable but still effective device, the profilmic city and the filmic city are folded into each other, appearing to overlap around the edges, just as the countryside and city overlap within the film.

Frahm argues that the topology of *People on Sunday* is built on a rhythm of departure from and return to the city, and the resulting structure is one of deceleration and acceleration.²⁶⁵ The film certainly revolves around this

²⁶³ Koepnick, “The Bearable Lightness of Being,” 251. Koepnick’s essay describes the “lightness of being” that marks the film’s portrayal of Sunday leisure activities. Hanno Möbius and Guntram Vogt make a related point in their shorter treatment of the film in *Drehort Stadt: Das Thema “Großstadt” im deutschen Film* (Marburg: Hitzeroth, 1990). They compare *Menschen am Sonntag* to Arnold Fanck’s ski film *Der weiße Rausch*, arguing that both films display city dwellers who bring their urban habits with them to the countryside.

²⁶⁴ Laura Frahm, *Jenseits des Raums*, 232.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 231.

relationship between the leisure space at Wannsee and the urban working space of Berlin. But it is not an equal relationship. The accelerated world of Berlin exists only as a frame. The film presents a manipulation of time no less extreme than *Berlin: Symphony of the Metropolis*, but in the opposite direction. While Ruttmann's *Berlin* creates a sense of the perpetual motion and accumulation of rational, organized events that comprise the big city, *People on Sunday* moves in the other direction, creating a cinematic space in which events are spontaneous and unstructured.

This temporal structure determines Berlin's everyday as portrayed in the film and emphasizes the booming culture of recreation in Weimar Germany. The film spends most of its time in the green space around the city, but is bookended by workdays marked by perpetual motion. The film portrays an urban life founded on this dual environment: the rationalized workspace of the city is complemented by the escape to the country and ensuing return to the city. Berliners trudge through their working lives from Monday to Saturday, always waiting for the next Sunday. The day of leisure can only exist because of the income and infrastructure provided by the workers' place in the urban economy, but the characters define their identities based on the one day of play rather than the six days of work. *People on Sunday* illustrates the segmented spaces of vocation and recreation in the metropolis, which together form a functional whole.

Berlin had expanded tremendously during the decade before the film was made, both in population and geographic size. This is reflected in the film's erasure of distance between the center of the city and its periphery. To represent the trip from the city to the lake, a traffic montage—drawn out for one minute and forty

seconds—displays images quite similar to those in Ruttmann’s *Berlin* or the opening of Joe May’s *Asphalt* (1929). Crowds of pedestrians fill the streets; people climb onto buses or exit subway stops; travelers pass by in trains, cars, or on motorcycles; facades of elegant row houses pass by, seen through vehicle windows; trees line the boulevards; brick apartment buildings skirt the railroad tracks, covered with advertisements four stories high. A train crosses the frame from right to left; the shot dissolves to a phantom ride in which the camera travels from left to right, which then dissolves to another phantom ride moving straight forward through a tunnel. Throughout this sequence, there is no sense of orientation or continuous movement in a direction, only undirected motion: the perpetual buzz of traffic within the city. Further, it is quite clearly *in* the city, marked by tall buildings, a complex urban infrastructure, and heavy traffic. Finally, a shot of about five seconds shows a train traveling through a green landscape, and in the next shot, the train—having presumably stopped and unloaded its passengers—leaves the station at Nikolassee. Judging from the minimal time that passes between the images of the center and the countryside destination, Nikolassee is shown as a point within the city.

This sequence gains significance when considered in the context of Berlin’s expansion in the Weimar era. When the film was made, the Wannsee boasted the largest inland bathing beach in Europe. The lake had become easily accessible with the opening of the “Wannseebahn” train line between Berlin and Potsdam in 1891, although swimming there had not become legal until 1907.²⁶⁶ The lake provided a

²⁶⁶ Matthias Oloew, *100 Jahre Strandbad Wannsee* (Berlin: Nicolai, 2007), 15.

bathing spot for hundreds of thousands of Berliners annually, drawing huge weekend crowds of workers. The popularity of the site rose most spectacularly during the late 1920s: between 1926 and 1930, the number of annual visitors increased from 750,000 to 1.3 million.²⁶⁷ To move people between their homes in the city and parks on the periphery, Berlin's transportation network had been expanding and modernizing rapidly during the 1920s. The train line to Wannsee had been electrified in 1928. In that same year, the Berliner Verkehrs-Aktiengesellschaft or BVG was formed. Through this organization, the conglomeration of Berlin transportation networks became the largest communally-owned corporation in the world and the third-largest corporation of any kind in Germany.²⁶⁸

Given that the train line to Nikolassee had just been expanded and electrified, and that the BVG had just been formed as an immense public transit system, the film shows scenes at the center and at the periphery of a rapidly growing urban transportation network. This brief sequence reminds the viewer that the sense of calm leisure within the film, and the resulting way in which the city seems to take on traits of the countryside, is predicated on the frantic pace of expansion that preceded the film's production.

²⁶⁷ Eva Büchi, *Als die Moral baden ging: Badeleben am schweizerischen Bodensee- und Rheinufer 1850–1950 unter dem Einfluss der Hygiene und der "Lebensreform"* (Frauenfeld, Switzerland: Verlag des Historischen Vereins des Kantons Thurgau, 2003), 122–123.

²⁶⁸ Henning Köhler, "Berlin in der Weimarer Republik," in *Geschichte Berlins, Zweiter Band: Von der Märzrevolution bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Wolfgang Ribbe (Munich: Beck, 1987), 797–923, here 859.

Transportation Policy and Heimat Thinking

People on Sunday folds the recreational sites around Berlin into the city. The film offers a visual illustration of just the sort of project described by a 1929 Heimat journal article, already mentioned in my second chapter, which calls for expanded mass transit networks to give the residents of the Dortmund area access to the natural sites outside of the city. The article from the *Zeitschrift des Westfälischen Heimatbundes* bears revisiting:

It must be urged from the government that soon, comprehensive building plans be developed, in which green belts and forests are established as open spaces. A generous transportation policy must go hand in hand with these developments, connecting suburbs, settlements, and forest recreation areas through affordable rapid transit to the city centers and work sites. Bringing the mass of industrial workers back into closer contact with nature is the best way to lead them to support Heimat thinking (*Heimatgedanken*) and take joy in their home (*Heimatfreude*).²⁶⁹

The article works toward an idea of the city that is also a Heimat. The suburban trains and, in particular, the Wannseebahn around Berlin, could be seen as a fulfillment of these demands. The lakeside frolicking portrayed in *People on Sunday* suggests itself as precisely such “Heimatfreude” within a rapidly expanded urban setting.

Of course, this focus is not unique to Heimat journals. In the broader context of discussions about the transformation of society during the Weimar era, urbanization (and, as is familiar from the standard interpretation of Heimat

²⁶⁹ Risse, “Zu den Eingemeindungen im Ruhrbezirk.”

discourse, the rural pushback against urbanization²⁷⁰) plays an important role. Facing massive overcrowding in Berlin's apartment buildings, architects pursued major projects—both in theory and in realized buildings—in their quest to create a livable city for workers. The proponents of “New Building” designed community-oriented mass living spaces with close connections to nature. Indeed, for a brief span of time, Bruno Taut believed urbanization to be a phenomenon that would be overcome as the population spread out again into nature during more advanced stages of modernization.²⁷¹ In a related effort, the Garden City movement sought to give all urban dwellers access to their own garden space.²⁷² These projects sought to increase urban residents' connections to nature, thus building Heimat within the city—as explicitly stated in the Dortmund author's call for infrastructure that can promote “Heimatsfreude.” This, then, forms the second strand of urban Heimat discourse in relation to Weimar film, one that would lend a feeling of the countryside to workers' new homes in the city.

²⁷⁰ The rural pushback might actually be seen as the phenomenon that represents the broader swath of the Weimar population: “despite the dramatic, long-term trend toward urbanization in Germany . . . the populace of the Weimar Republic was primarily rural, living mostly in small villages and towns.” See “Berlin and the Countryside,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 412.

²⁷¹ Bruno Taut, “The Earth is a Good Dwelling,” in *Weimar Sourcebook*, ed. Kaes et al., 456–459. Taut later rejected these anti-urban sentiments. For a study of *Neues Bauen* amid other phenomena of Weimar-era Berlin architecture, see Hake, *Topographies of Class*.

²⁷² Dr. N., “A Contemporary Garden City,” in *Weimar Sourcebook*, ed. Kaes et al., 465–466.

Heimat as Utopian Project

Not all commentators endorsed these visions of a comfortable urban Heimat filled with gardens and connected to the countryside. In fact, responses to the relaxed pace of Trotz's *City of Millions* were overwhelmingly negative, bemoaning the "horse carriage tempo"²⁷³ of the film and complaining that it portrays the city "through the eyes of a Romantic (*eines Idyllikers*) who feels more comfortable in the Berlin of our fathers than in the city of today."²⁷⁴ Some workers' movement organizers and filmmakers also considered the benefits of residential building projects such as Bruno Taut's "Hufeisensiedlung" (Horseshoe Estate) not worth the costs to their political cause (Figure 3.7). Connecting workers' housing to parklands, they worried, would diffuse the revolutionary potential that resulted from dense inner-city proletarian neighborhoods. For this group, Heimat was a utopian project founded on workers' liberation and community rather than comfortable dwelling. Slatan Dudow's films, for instance, emphasized class solidarity and the potential for social change resulting from the concentration of workers in Berlin neighborhoods such as Wedding and Kreuzberg.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ K. Gl., "Berlin, wie es nicht aussieht," unidentified archival news article from 1925, cited in Georgen, "Urbanität und Idylle," 169.

²⁷⁴ "Die Stadt der Millionen," *Film-Kurier*, 29 May 1925, cited in Georgen, "Urbanität und Idylle," 169.

²⁷⁵ Hake, *Topographies*, 258.



Figure 3.7. Bruno Taut's "Horseshoe Estate,"²⁷⁶ built 1925–1933.

Seen in the context of these discussions, workers' films push in different directions. Phil Jutzi's "Zille film" *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück* (*Mother Krause's Journey to Happiness*, 1929) creates a melodramatic plot based on the notion that workers' housing in Berlin is unlivable. The march of the final scene thus seeks an escape from what is seen as an incurably flawed system of living. Dudow's *Kuhle Wampe oder: Wem gehört die Welt?* (*Kuhle Wampe, or: Who Owns the World?*, 1932²⁷⁷) as well as his earlier short *Wie der Berliner Arbeiter wohnt* (*How the Berlin Worker Lives*, 1930) respond differently to the same housing situations. As Sabine Hake writes: "Rejecting the melodramatic tradition of the Zille films, which took a

²⁷⁶ Sebastian Trommer, "Luftbild Hufeisen und Hüsung in der Hufeisensiedlung," *Wikimedia Commons*, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0, accessed 4 May 2015, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luftbild_Hufeisen_und_H%C3%BCsung_in_der_Hufeisensiedlung.jpg.

²⁷⁷ "Kuhle Wampe" translates literally as "cool pit" or "cool hollow." I leave it in the original for the sake of clarity, since the German appellation is quite familiar and refers to the proper name of the tent community. In addition to Dudow's work as director, the film has gained fame for Bertolt Brecht's script and Hanns Eisler's soundtrack. For background information and an analysis of the film within its political context, see Murray, *Film and the German Left*, 216–224.

deterministic approach to social milieu, Dudow included extended documentary sequences (e.g., of a worker's sports festival and a street performance of the Red Megaphone theater group) to show the importance of class solidarity and the possibility of radical change."²⁷⁸ In spite of their different responses to crowded and unhealthy proletarian housing, however, both *Mother Krause* and *Kuhle Wampe* illustrate how the workers' movement had created, in the words of one Weimar-era proletarian author, a "new emotional Heimat"²⁷⁹ for migrants to the city.

Mother Krause

Phil Jutzi's 1929 film *Mother Krause's Journey to Happiness* was marketed as a "Zille-Film"—a film in tribute to, and borrowing from, the work of Berlin author and artist Heinrich Zille. Zille's drawings and writing were dedicated to the lives of lower-class workers in Berlin; in *Mother Krause*, some of his stories are rendered on film in a collaboration of leftist artists including Jutzi, Käthe Kollwitz, and the proletarian painter and friend of Zille's, Otto Nagel. In positioning *Mother Krause* as a "Stadt Heimatfilm," the authors of the Tübingen group cited above claim the focus on social conditions in working-class neighborhoods sets this film apart.²⁸⁰ Previous

²⁷⁸ Hake, *Topographies*, 258.

²⁷⁹ Ernst Preczang, "Tendenzdichtung und das Reinmenschliche," in *Proletarische Lebensläufe: autobiographische Dokumente zur Entstehung der zweiten Kultur in Deutschland*, vol. 1, ed. Wolfgang Emmerich (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1974), 289. The quoted text is from a memoir published by Preczang in 1920; the quotation about the workers' movement as a "neue seelische Heimat" derives from an earlier piece he had written around 1888. See also Grammatikopoulos et al., "Stadt(heimat)film," 174.

²⁸⁰ Grammatikopoulos et al., "Stadt(heimat)film," 178.

city films had portrayed the city primarily as a site of excitement, danger, temptation, or corruption, rather than as a living space. I have argued that earlier films in fact portray a different kind of urban Heimat, either by creating mass experiences that compensate for lost rural communities or by improving the comfort of the city through pleasant residential spaces and transit connections to the countryside. Still, the more revolutionary tone of Jutzi's film creates a different sort of Heimat, one founded on striving toward a better community rather than constructing physical structures.

Following Zille's attempt to draw attention to the workers' plight and bring about improvement of living conditions for the urban proletariat, the film portrays a group of characters crammed into Mother Krause's tiny apartment. In so doing, Jutzi's film prefigures a number of key traits of 1950s' rural Heimat films. It contains a similar mix of indoor family scenes, pubs or *Gasthäuser* as sites of community gossip, exterior landscapes, and of course a final parade. But each of these sites, in stark contrast to the wide open Alpine spaces in *Wally of the Vultures* or *The Prodigal Son*, exists within the built environment of the city.

In a cliché of later Heimat films, a key site for exposition is a farmhouse kitchen, the gathering place for the family and servants and an easy site in which to showcase the traditional crafts celebrated by the Heimat genre.²⁸¹ Rather than in a

²⁸¹ Edgar Reitz's *Heimat* of 1984 is similar in that the Simon family's kitchen gradually becomes more and more crowded with village residents who stop in to visit Paul Simon, just returned from World War I, in the opening episode. Reitz's film—in spite of its ambivalent relationship to Heimat and history that caused major critical debate upon its release—is useful for the present study as a self-aware engagement with ideas and expectations surrounding the notion of Heimat, explicitly reinterpreting key figures and locations of the genre.

large, warm, and welcoming country kitchen, Jutzi's film begins in the overcrowded kitchen inhabited by Mother Krause, her daughter Erna, her son Paul, and two lodgers with their young child. Likewise, gossip (often leading to misunderstanding or circulating news of good or bad fortune) takes place in a pub. But rather than the "*gemütliche Stube*" of a village guesthouse or a cozy mountain hut, the urban equivalent is a dark basement saloon. This is where Mother Krause's son Paul drinks away her money, and here is where Mother Krause learns of this misfortune. Outdoor landscapes are also used to frame the indoor sequences and emphasize that the story does not simply occur. It *takes place*, inseparable from its geographic location. And again, the environment in question is one of claustrophobic urban crowding: *Mother Krause* opens with a series of exterior shots of the massive featureless *Mietskasernen* in Weimar-era Berlin.

Midway through the film, a friend gradually convinces Max, Erna's boyfriend, that Erna's past difficulties derive from the inhuman environment she lives in rather than from her own moral failing. The friend explains: "The milieu (*Milljöh*) is to blame, not the girl." Max is convinced when his friend cites Zille: "You can kill a person with an apartment just like with an axe." The film thus overtly proclaims that it is focused on environments. Certain physical surroundings, such as the *Mietskasernen* shown in the film, do not provide the setting for a human Heimat. In spite of the emphasis on untenable living conditions, *Mother Krause* does not portray the city as the downtrodden reverse of the countryside. Instead, due to its sympathetic portrayal of people within these landscapes, it suggests that community persists in spite of the physical surroundings and implies a demand for

an improved living environment. In the opening sequence, the camera drifts across gigantic apartment blocks, tilts to scan them top to bottom and pans across to show them in their full immensity, suggesting that the buildings are too bulky to fit entirely in the frame. The structures appear as a series of gray walls filled with nameless tiny windows. Yet below these walls, children play in the courtyards. On the street benches, we see a group of old local residents, smiling good-naturedly as they chat, framed in a cheerful medium close-up. The landscapes are shown as incommensurable—indeed, this is the one explicit message of the film, stated in the Zille quote that compares apartments to weapons. But the city, specifically the proletarian Wedding neighborhood of Berlin, is also a home to people, and the film portrays these city dwellers with sensitivity as they try to create a livable space and functional community within their urban home. While Dudow might reject the film's melodramatic plot as being deterministic, suggesting that the workers are doomed by their abominable surroundings, Jutzi's film in fact ends with a hopeful gesture that is very similar to that of Dudow's *Kuhle Wampe*. The final shot of the film shows a socialist march on the streets of Berlin. While a standard *Heimatfilm* plot of the postwar era concludes with a festival, often a parade in which conservative values and traditions are celebrated, this film ends with a community parade promoting change rather than tradition.

Of course, socialism is not the only political movement that attempted to attract members by offering an ersatz Heimat in the city. Hans Steinhoff's 1933 propaganda film *Hitlerjunge Quex* (*Hitler Youth Quex*) replaces the young protagonist's communist family with a new, more stable and welcoming Nazi

community. Steinhoff's film bears a number of parallels to *Mother Krause*, ranging from the basic narrative element of troubled characters finding refuge in a political movement, to the mother in each film attempting to kill herself and her child by leaving a gas line open, to the closing images of a political march.²⁸² Steinhoff's film, in a very different way than Jutzi's, narrates the conversion to a new socio-political understanding. In Jutzi's film, the conversion occurs in a tiny attic apartment, when a friend convinces Max that Berlin's inhumane apartments are responsible for social problems. Starting from a confined indoor space, Max comes to see himself united with an international community of oppressed workers. Steinhoff's film makes the opposite transition: in an outdoor scene in a park, the protagonist's father, formerly a stalwart communist, begins to sympathize with the Nazis and see himself as specifically German rather than as a member of an international socialist movement. The outdoor setting already calls to mind Heimat feelings. A much stronger link to familiar Heimat discourse emerges in the means of persuasion used by the Hitler Youth leader, Bannführer Kaß. Kaß guides Father Völker through a process of geographic naming: What river flows through Berlin? Where is the river? Where is Berlin? Eventually, he arrives at the answer he wants: "In Germany." Kaß starts with an immediate, local connection and gets slowly more distant, broadening to "our Germany"—but no further. He thus links the local level of Heimat, both in Father Völker's urban sense of the term and in the sense of natural landscape suggested by the Spree river, to the political level of the nation and a national community. This

²⁸² For discussion of way Steinhoff recycles Weimar film imagery, but charges that imagery negatively as a foil for the positive portrayal of Nazism, see Rentschler, *Ministry of Illusion*, 61–62.

process of mediation between the local and national levels is what two leading historians of the *Heimat* concept, Celia Applegate and Alon Confino, argue is the crucial attribute of the term in Germany after 1871. Ironically, while Applegate suggests that *Heimat*'s local flavor protects it from becoming too tainted by Nazism, this exchange shows that the process of mediation between local and national levels can be instrumentalized extremely effectively as propaganda.

Father Völker's conversion to Nazism bridges a generational as well as political gap. The communists in Steinhoff's film are primarily members of the older generation. Meanwhile, the Nazis are just old enough for Heini Völker to look up to them as he begins to be fascinated by fascism, yet young enough that he can become a peer. With the death of Heini's mother and the conversion of his father, the Nazi party supersedes the nuclear family. One by one, the older men, formerly communists, also join: Father Völker repeats Kaß's lesson in German nationalist geography to his friend Stoppel, and Stoppel in turn shows subtle signs that he is becoming more favorably disposed toward the Nazis.²⁸³ The film unites generations within a single party; this all-inclusive political unity becomes the basis for its portrayal of urban community.

Generations in the City: Kuhle Wampe

The 1932 film *Kuhle Wampe* creates another image of urban *Heimat* in the service of socialist reform. Anni, a young woman in a working-class family, lives with her parents and brother in Berlin. After her brother commits suicide following

²⁸³ See Rentschler, *Ministry of Illusion*, 66.

lengthy unemployment, she and her parents move to the tent community called “Kuhle Wampe” on the outskirts of the city. Their lives initially seem idyllic, yet before long destructive petty bourgeois habits return, leading to a generational divide. When Anni becomes pregnant, a wedding is hastily arranged between Anni and her boyfriend Fritz. During the wedding dinner, members of the parents’ generation drink themselves to oblivion. Anni realizes that the tent community has provided only a brief escape from the difficulty of establishing a home within the city. She leaves the celebration and returns to Berlin. The wedding in the tent, and Anni’s decision to re-enter the city, are anything but the restorative conclusion that would normally end a traditional rural film. In the standard plot of a peasant film or postwar *Heimatfilm*, the stability of a rural village is threatened either by an outsider or by a rebellious community member who resists social norms. In the film’s climax, the outsider or rebel is either eliminated or re-integrated, and a concluding village festival celebrates the restored community. In *Kuhle Wampe*, Anni’s pregnancy, her marriage to Fritz, and the wedding celebration fit into this traditional narrative arc. But rather than restoring the status quo, this film demands critical engagement: Anni leaves the celebration (marked by exactly the “Prosit” song and Bavarian brass music that would accompany the concluding scenes of a *Heimatfilm*) and re-joins her sports club. Meanwhile, her friends raise money for her to get an abortion.

Later in the film, a lengthy sequence offers a different kind of festival. In a final excursion to the city’s periphery, the scene shows a day of workers’ sports competitions. *Bergfilme* and *Heimatfilme* frequently feature individual and

traditional sporting events—stoic loners climbing mountains, men wrestling to settle old feuds, or hunters wandering the heath. *Kuhle Wampe*, by contrast, shows modern competitive sports.²⁸⁴ Athletes often participate on teams, and always compete against other people. Far from being a tool for attaining physical perfection away from the conflicts of society at large, sport here becomes a social endeavor. Bertolt Brecht's lyrics to Hanns Eisler's fight song, which serves as non-diegetic accompaniment for the sports scenes, emphasize the social goal: "Gather together, in order to fight collectively!" ("*Findet Ihr euch zusammen, um gemeinsam zu kämpfen!*")

Various writers have claimed that *Heimat* resides in language.²⁸⁵ The style of language in *Kuhle Wampe* indicates the type of urban *Heimat* that the film embraces. During the lively conversation on the train back into town after the sports competition, an exhausted man mutters to his companion: "The two of us won't change the world." The delivery of his words, flat and without articulation, suggests that his statement is true: he certainly will not change the world. A question follows: who will? Anni's friend Gerda gives the final answer: those who are dissatisfied. Her response is conclusive because of its delivery as well as its content. Her voice is firm and assertive. In the earlier sports competition, the fight song is accented but not

²⁸⁴ For an analysis of the tension between supposedly traditional and "modern" sports, see Michael Mackenzie, "From Athens to Berlin: The 1936 Olympics and Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*," *Critical Inquiry* 29.2 (Winter 2003): 302–336. See also Andrew Denning's discussions of winter sports and modernity, especially with regards to the inclusion of winter games in the modern Olympics. Andrew Denning, "Alpine Modern."

²⁸⁵ See the section entitled "Das Heimatbild der Dialektdichtung," in Ina-Maria Greverus, *Auf der Suche nach Heimat*, 70–95, here 71.

quite regular in its rhythm. Unlike the brass music or chants of “Prosit” at the wedding, into which a listener can be absorbed unthinkingly, Eisler’s chorus demands critical attention while still calling for participation. The film ends with the well-known solidarity song. The first and most famous line of this chorus is remarkable for its concentration of syllabic and musical emphasis: “*Vor-wärts, und nicht verges-sen.*” The final verses are similar: rather than the simple iambic rhythms of the film’s alternate title, “Wem gehört die Welt,” the final lines pose the same question with much more rhythmic insistence: “Wessen Straße ist die Straße? Wessen Welt ist die Welt?” The rhythmic energy results, firstly, from the simple lengthening of the verse, and secondly, from the accumulation of accented syllables in the second iteration of the question: “Wessen *Welt ist die Welt.*” The adjacent accented syllables, “Welt” and “ist,” prevent the listener or singer from floating along in a comfortable alternation of stress and relaxation. In the film’s soundtrack, the performance emphasizes this rhythmic drive even more: all syllables of the line, including seemingly insignificant sounds such as the end of the word “Straße,” are delivered percussively, with strong rhythmic emphasis.

The English translation of the film’s title, “Who Owns the World,” loses some of the German title’s grammatical impact. In the question “Wem gehört die Welt?,” the subject is “the world.” In the closing of Eisler’s song, this effect is doubled: in “Wessen Straße ist die Straße? Wessen Welt ist die Welt?,” both the words “Straße” and “Welt” recur in the respective questions. This doubling emphasizes the material world that will, inevitably, be controlled by somebody. In sum, the utterances of the film’s closing scene—Gerda’s confident response on the train, and the song’s closing

lines—do not answer the question of who will control the world, but they do suggest who can change it. And in their assertive declamatory style, they provide an idea for how. If Heimat resides in language, the film calls for a critical Heimat that demands active attention and participation.

In essence, the question discussed on the train—who will change the world?—is answered with two more queries: who owns the streets? and who owns the world? In response to both questions, however, the film seems to offer Gerda's response of "die, denen sie nicht gefällt." At the same time, the film defers any conclusive response by ending with the interrogative sentences of Eisler's song rather than a single declamatory statement. In portraying the possibility of Heimat within the city, this open-endedness calls to mind Ernst Bloch's utopian notion of Heimat as a not-yet-realized goal, a place "where nobody has yet been."²⁸⁶ Seen in this light, Karl Scheffler's claim that Berlin is a city of perpetual becoming is actually a worthwhile goal.²⁸⁷ For both Bloch, and for socialist artists such as Dudow, Brecht, and Eisler, the state of "becoming" represents the ideal form of an urban Heimat.

Conclusion

As Heimat journals, film trade papers, and other sources above have indicated, Weimar culture involved a striving for Heimat within various social groups and environments. These included the industrial working masses, new recruits to the workers' movement, and urban harbor workers considering

²⁸⁶ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, 1629.

²⁸⁷ Scheffler, *Berlin*, 267.

emigration, as well as rural traditionalists fearing for their cherished landscape. Urban Heimat is not the only angle worth considering in light of these discourses, but at the very least, it represents one of many areas worthy of closer examination.

To understand both the turn-of-the-twentieth-century Heimat movement and the 1950s *Heimatfilmwelle*, we do well to be aware of the processes to which these phenomena were reacting. These processes go beyond the material transformations of modernity such as the development of cities and industries. They also include the movement of people to live in those cities and to work in those industries. The emigrants to the city, along with the diverse ways they sought to create a home within the metropolis, constitute an urban counterpart to the rural notion of Heimat.

Conclusion

Past scholars of *Heimatfilm* have traced the history of Heimat as a genre. In this study, I have focused on Heimat discourse within Weimar cinema. I have directed my attention as well to fragments and planned projects that did not coalesce into a genre, including some that did not even become finished films. This emphasis provides an alternative view of Heimat that demonstrates the period's great interest in industrial sites, urbanization, and German identity in an international context. Film thus becomes the focal point for diverse discussions about widely varied environments and communities.

Bearing in mind Sean Cubitt's notion of film as a process of mediation and Adrian Ivakhiv's discussion of filmic ecologies, we can discern how these Weimar-era films participate in complex, multi-directional interactions with the physical world. They circulate in networks of image production and consumption, tourism development, and societal flux. Seen in this way, the environmental "footprint" of cinema extends far beyond the immediate physical degradation resulting from its production and distribution. Rather than a physical footprint, films offer a mental blueprint for how people might interact with the environment in the future, navigate rapidly changing landscapes, and mediate between traditions and emerging practices at the individual and community levels.

Wally of the Vultures, in its literary and filmic renditions of 1873, 1921, 1940, and 1956, bears out the changing status of idyllic imagery. The different remakes respectively emphasize spirituality, spectacle, authority, and sheltering refuge as the

core of human interaction with the natural world. The combination of industrial and rural landscapes in *Hunger in Waldenburg* and *Sprengbagger 1010* inspired conflicting critical responses regarding the status of labor and industry within environmental transformations. Meanwhile, *The Prodigal Son* demonstrates that while a film can display gross contradictions, those tensions might not enter into broader discourses for reasons related to the historical moment and sociopolitical context. Although *The Prodigal Son* is the only one of these three films that would be called a *Heimatfilm* today, it provides less fertile ground for examining Heimat discourse than either *Sprengbagger* or *Hunger in Waldenburg*. Articles and advertisements from Weimar-era film journals confirm that Heimat discourse existed quite broadly and independently of what became the Heimat genre.

By attending to the fragments, dead ends, and unexpected connections of Heimat discourse, we can also identify new lines of influence between filmic fantasy and touristic development. While the Weimar mountain films are frequently seen as forerunners of the Heimat genre, their stylistic features endow Alpine sports with the speed of industrial machines. Even as they offer narratives that celebrate the pristine ice-capped wilderness, the films' aesthetics reveal a desire and reverence for modern technology.

Heimatfilme of the 1950s are not simply works of escapist fantasy.²⁸⁸ Conversely, these modernist, urban, and industrial films of Weimar cinema are not inherently progressive or socially engaged. Arnold Fanck's mountain films envision a modernized form of ski tourism, but they still celebrate blind heroism. Urban films

²⁸⁸ See Moltke, *No Place Like Home*.

attempt to compensate for lost Heimat within the big city, yet they do not offer an adequate replacement. In Ruttmann's *Berlin*, the crowds partaking of the city's nightlife and the signals transmitted from the new radio tower provide a soulless substitute for the Heimat that migrants have lost when coming to the city. *People on Sunday* provides a more hopeful image of a city that is linked to the countryside, yet its portrayal of urban Heimat depends on the characters' spatially and temporally fragmented lives: one day of leisure must provide enough freedom and pleasure to sustain people through six days of toil among the anonymous masses. The utopian project of leftist films such as *Mother Krause's Journey to Happiness* and *Kuhle Wampe* might provide the most hopeful notion of urban Heimat, but they remain utopias—visions of a more pleasant urban experience that have *no place* inside Weimar Berlin.

While not necessarily progressive, these films are all concerned with the landscapes of the future. Many of them express environmental fantasies. Films from the workers' movement present the hopeful dream of a home within the city; mountain films show an imagined future of accelerated Alpine sport; *Sprengbagger* portrays an industrialist's fantasy in which machines tower overhead without any workers who might cause trouble. The films are intriguing environmental documents not just because of changes they wrought to the land during the production process, but much more so because of changes they imagined on screen. No film is purely escapist or engaged, progressive or reactionary: each motion picture mediates between individual, community, nation, and world and negotiates between tradition, adaptation, and transformation. The discourse surrounding

films—critical reviews, statements by the filmmakers, works by other artists, and audience responses—add breadth and complexity to this process of mediation. By expanding the study of Heimat within film to include a wider range of Heimat discourse, and not just examples from the *Heimatfilm* genre, and by pursuing a study of environmental fantasies rather than environmental footprints, we begin to glimpse the rich diversity of the environmental imaginary within Weimar film.

Certainly, Heimat is a key term for thinking about humans and nature in German culture, and Heimat might serve as a productive term for environmental thought. In Weimar cinema, it provides a conceptual tool for imagining—from many perspectives—the environments and places people might call home.

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