I'm sitting in the express train from Berlin to Stuttgart. With tremendous speed, the train is racing through the flat countryside. . . . The rapid change of scenery reinforces the overall image that the big city we have just left has once again impressed on me. The hustle and bustle of the metropolis is simply breathtaking. Just like on the express train, you don't have the leisure to follow a thought through to the end or to finish looking at something, since your attention is immediately caught up by something else. . . . To me, this phenomenon seems to lie at the bottom of all that is metropolitan: the constant hurry and running around, everything imposing its attraction onto people, tearing on them and pulling them in different directions, preventing them from finding themselves. No wonder that both physical and moral resistance are on the wane; the entire environment is directed at destroying it. . . . [T]he city most certainly does not harbor Germany's soul, despite the restless thought and incessant activity that takes place there. The soul of Germany rests in the countryside, in the grace of its rolling hills where man is still part of the land which instills him with the strength to defend himself against the developments of our time that are infringing on our lives.¹

This personal account of a young woman's urban experience reverses the classic "arrival in the city" scene frequently employed in fictional and filmic texts of the 1920s that establish urban space as a place of great expectation for women, a place where changes in traditional gender roles had become most visible and most accepted.² Rather than coming to Berlin to begin a new life, the narrator is relieved to be leaving the city and returning to her hometown in southern Germany. Such a critical contemplation of the hectic urban environment would not come as a surprise, were the narrator a protected daughter from a good provincial family or a housewife and mother returning from a family visit. However, its publication in Junge Kräfte, a professional journal for sales and office employees, suggests that this is the perspective of a working woman whose own life very much embodies the societal changes she observes and critiques. Evidently traveling alone, she appears to
be one of the emancipated young women of the 1920s who have begun to expect a hitherto unimaginable mobility and independence, but have also had to adjust to the idea of having to support themselves and stand on their own feet in the hectic and aggressive urban environment.

"Grosstadtgetriebe" (Urban Bustle), the text from which I drew this quotation in fact dates from 1926, a time when the precarious balance between women's hopes and claims to equality in modern society and their healthy skepticism toward modernization increasingly began to tip in the direction of the resurrection of traditional notions of (German) womanhood. While the narrator's reflections do not in themselves establish a connection between an antimodernist definition of Germaness and the desire for a return to traditional gender roles, they do show a characteristic emphasis on the stressful rather than liberating aspects of women's experience of the modern city. Such emphasis on exhaustion rather than exhilaration with the new ways of life embodied by the flapper, the Girl, the Garçon, is a prominent aspect of the rejection of these "imported" models of femininity. The deconstruction of the "New Woman" paralleled the disillusionment with modernization ensuing from the unsuccessful implementation of modern American economic principles in postwar Germany and the retreat from a French-influenced overt sexualization of the female body.

In 1925, the New York correspondent of the trendy cultural magazine *Uhu*, Maria Leitner, described the hard working day of a young woman from Saxony employed as a waitress in New York City. In 1928, *Uhu* attached a pedometer to the leg of a revue girl to demonstrate the hard labor that went into a seemingly effortless performance. And a 1930 article in the same publication used the description of the life of an American showgirl to demonstrate the downside of the "Girl" lifestyle to its German audience. The dismantling of the Hollywood myth of American women's glamorous modernity was reinforced by accounts of German women's pragmatism. In 1939, *Uhu* published a photo-essay entitled "Ich werde Mannequin, um mein Studium zu verdienen" (I am becoming a model to finance my education) while a 1931 report on twenty-five young women's career plans emphasized the fact that, contrary to what might be expected, all were planning to train for careers other than film. Two years later, however, *Uhu* published a much less optimistic "cross section" of contemporary female existence, "Ich schreibe auf jedes Inserat! ... Querschnitt durch vier Monate Daseinskampf eines jungen Mädchens von heute" (I respond to every job ad—Four months in the struggle of existence of a young woman today). As much as these reports acknowledged and responded to the conflicting desires and harsh realities of women's lives, they also helped to construct a cultural and increasingly political discourse that pitted women's new societal roles against the survival of the German nation.

Sympathetic accounts of the burdens born by the New Woman were paralleled by "scientific" reports that issued warnings to women that the physical strains of their new professional and leisure activities would permanently damage their re-
productive abilities. Representations of pioneering women driving sports cars, flying planes, or working in laboratories increasingly made way for idyllic scenes of mothering that took on increasingly national and racial connotations. The reconstruction of traditional femininity was paralleled by a political reorientation toward the provinces and away from the city. A characteristiclly German regionalism was to present a modern alternative to provincialism. In the same way that the countryside was expected to regenerate the cities, women were expected to become the redeemers of modernization.5

Fantasies of returning to the countryside to escape the pressures and frustrations of urban reality also mark fictional texts by women writers in the early 1930s: sitting in the waiting room of Bahnhof Zoo, faced with the ultimate failure of her aspirations to a life of glamour, Irmgard Keun’s Doris in Das kunstseidene Mädchen (The Artificial Silk Girl, 1932) dreams about a garden colony outside the city limits of Berlin where she envisions herself enjoying respite and a protected domesticity as the companion of her old friend Hans. Christa Anita Brück’s highly autobiographical novel Schicksale hinter Schreibmaschinen (Destinies Behind Typewriters, 1930) ends with the protagonist’s return to her native East Prussia where she hopes to regain the physical and emotional strength she has spent in her unsuccessful struggle to advance professionally in the city. As the sociologist Alice Rühle-Gerstel critically observes in a book review in Die literarische Welt in 1933, such texts by contemporary women writers constitute a delayed fictional representation of women’s disillusionment with the promise of modern independence and urban anonymity.

Literature can only show developments after the fact. While they take place, they are too subconscious to be observed. Thus, war novels started to come out ten years after the war, and those books that convey a well-meaning message to their women readers to return to their traditional roles, are published several years after women have already begun to withdraw; because they knew or because they were tired of being at the forefront where no one wanted to join them or because they were afraid to go further.6

The representational discourses of journalism and literature did indeed lag behind political and economic reality when it came to recording the shift in women’s identification with Weimar modernity and their subsequent withdrawal from the public sphere. Providing them with the right to vote and the assurance of sexual equality—albeit within the boundaries of contemporary gender essentialism—the Weimar Republic initially promised to be an era of professional and political emancipation that women were eager to support. Between 1918 and 1920, female membership in the Social Democratic party (SPD) had risen from only 66,000 to 207,000. The number of women among the Independent Social Democrats (USPD) showed a similar increase within that same two-year period. However, the economic and social reality of Weimar society quickly brought this period of optimism and active participation to a halt. While 9.6 percent of the members of the
Weimar National Assembly of 1918 had been women, by 1930 only 7 percent of all parliamentarians were women. Membership trends within labor organizations even more drastically reflect women's early withdrawal from the public sphere. While female membership in the Central Union of Clerical Staff had quadrupled between 1918 and 1919 to reach 175,204 members, the number dwindled to about 60 percent over the course of the next decade. The Union of Female Retail and Office Staff experienced a similar drop in membership over the course of the decade. However, this development did not mean that women were no longer active in these professions or that working conditions had improved to a degree that rendered activism superfluous. The number of female white-collar workers continued to grow by over 200 percent between 1907 and 1925, and 12.6 percent of all working women were employed in that sector by 1925. As a result of such gender-specific “supportive” work assignments, women averaged approximately 30 pfennig to each mark made by their male colleagues.

Although white-collar employment made working women more visible than ever before—moving them out of the relative privacy of the agricultural sector into the public clerical sector and thus from countryside into the city—it did not substantially increase female employment. By 1925, only 35.6 percent of all women were working, only 0.7 percent more than in 1907. Female employment continued to be regarded as the exception rather than the rule. In 1925, two-thirds of all white-collar workers were single women under the age of twenty-five. Impeded by bourgeois morality and lack of education, their professional lives were in most cases limited to a few years. Weimar’s true emancipatory potential for women lay in the fact that this “intermediary stage of personal independence” [Gertrud Bäumer] between adolescence and marriage/motherhood, albeit economically required, became socially acceptable. As women’s need to work outside the home—increased by the demographic and economic realities of the interwar years—began to threaten the traditional gender balance, women had to retreat from the public sphere. The 1932 Law on the Legal Position of Female Public Servants that disallowed the employment of married women in that sector emphasizes the precarious position of working women in a tight labor market. It also stresses the essentialist approach of Weimar gender politics in the interest of nationalist politics that assigned priority to women’s “natural” roles as mothers over the female individual’s autonomy. Women’s temporary participation in a culture of leisure, consumption, and body consciousness created the powerful image of the New Woman that populated the Berlin of the 1920s, yet this modernist female persona was as short-lived and ambiguous as it was generational.

Despite its limited reality, the icon of the New Woman that emerged from the war years as the embodiment of the sexually liberated, economically independent, self-reliant female was perceived as a threat to social stability and an impediment to Germany’s political and economic reconstruction. The discursive obsession with female identity was prompted by the sexualization of the public sphere resulting from the entry of large numbers of women into the modern workplace, the
perception of a “birth strike” among middle-class women, and the decisively masculine appearance of the New Woman that repressed the physical markers of femininity. In Die Frau von morgen-wie wir sie wünschen (Tomorrow’s Woman According to Our Wishes, 1929), prominent intellectuals of all political hues expressed their hopes that women, after having conquered traditionally male domains, would not become imitators of male ways but rather develop viable alternative lifestyles. Rather than indulge in promiscuity and careerism, women were asked to maintain their internal balance and use their maternal instinct in the interest of the future of humankind.

While the political atmosphere of the influential Sex Reform movement positively acknowledged female sexuality, it was also clearly oriented toward its regulation. Providing women with the means of controlling the size of their families through birth control or legal abortion was motivated by the desire to allow women to combine their reproductive responsibilities with their new role in the working world. The concept of the companionate marriage, proposed by Judge Lindsay, which introduced a personal five-year plan of a childless marriage that could be revoked, and Theodor Van der Velde’s manual Die vollkommene Ehe (The Perfect Marriage, 1928) demonstrate similar attempts to liberate women sexually within acceptable bourgeois forms. Feminist organizations like the Mutterschutzband introduced legal initiatives to legitimize and offer government support for single mothers. Positioning women’s Kinderwunsch (the wish for a child) as the basis of female sexual desire, feminist activists interpreted women’s reproductive rights primarily in the context of procreation. To be sure, the reconstruction of female sexuality in exclusively reproductive terms not only reinforced bourgeois morality but also affirmed female sexuality as healthy and normal for women of all social classes. Yet at the same time, it lent emphasis to women’s crucial role in the creation of a “eugenic utopia.” The celebration of “primitive” beauty, sexuality, and consequently “natural” motherhood also conveyed the message that women should strive to successfully combine their function as workers with their reproductive responsibilities to build a strong German nation.

The essay collection When Biology Became Destiny (1984), edited by Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan, was the first attempt by feminist scholars to document the natalist backlash against women that took place between 1918 and 1933 in the interest of reconstituting a strong sense of nationalism in Germany. More recently, Cornelia Usborne’s study The Politics of the Body (1992) has added another layer of historical detail and critical analysis to the documentation of women’s experience of modernity as dominated by reproductive control. Both studies, significant and influential as they continue to be, have limited themselves to reconstructing the historical and political context of women’s lives rather than analyzing the cultural and representational discourses on gender that shaped women’s identities of the time.

Despite their participatory role in societal reconstruction after World War I, women’s historiography of the period differed significantly from men’s. While the
war experience confronted men with societal displacement and cultural “castration,” it had reinforced women’s growing trust in their own abilities and opportunities. While men experienced the postwar years as a time of chaos and loss of individual boundaries, women had to sustain the conflict between defending their new models of self against the onset of a societal reconstruction. Women’s willing return to traditional gender roles was ultimately determined by their increased awareness of the limitations placed on their emancipation after the onset of the economic decline in the mid-1920s that brought Weimar’s intrinsically patriarchal structures to the fore. The dominant cultural discourses of the time sought to negotiate the acknowledgment of women’s newly won independence with their desire to reconstruct traditional gender roles.

Curiously, studies that explicitly explore the connections between the historical impact of World War I and the cultural (re)constructions of gender in Weimar Germany have focused on the documentation and representation of male experience. Klaus Theweleit’s much-debated *Male Fantasies* (1977, 1987) is extracted from autobiographical texts by Freikorps officers. Theweleit’s analysis of these personal accounts of the interwar years documents an intricate connection between men’s struggle to reconstruct their familiar gender identities in the face of dramatic societal change and their perception of Weimar Germany as a non-nation. The soldiers’ relationships to real women are replaced by their relationship to their “fatherland,” carrying the metaphysical representation of woman to an extreme in the images of the white and the red nurse. Helmut Lethen’s more recent analysis of the interwar culture of New Objectivity, *Verhaltenslehren der Künste: Lebensversuche zwischen den Kriegen* (1994), draws on Hartmut Plessner’s philosophy from the 1930s, which centers around the “cold persona”—the individual who cultivates traditionally negative qualities like anonymity, uprootedness, artificiality, and distraction as a shield against the shock effect of modernity and the trauma of the war. Conscious of the fact that women are not theorized as embodying these personality traits but appear solely as creatures (Kreaturen), that is, as antipodes to the male “cold persona,” Lethen apologetically notes that his study has by default turned into a “male book” (p. 14). Because of woman’s inherent quality as “other,” *Women in the Metropolis*, by contrast, could not be called a “female book.” It is a book about women, about women’s representations and experiences of the interwar years, but it is also a book about men, since the cultural construction of woman embodies the projections of male hopes and anxieties. *Women in the Metropolis* has a dual focus: one is to excavate women’s experience of modernity and urbanization from the life stories of women artists and writers and to discover reflections of these life stories in their work; the other is to document and analyze the cultural discourses that developed to make sense of and regulate the emerging images of femininity. The contributions in the collection seek to reveal the origins and effects of the gendered discourses of modernity in fictional, visual, and scientific texts of the time. Yet they are careful not to employ the category of gender as an exclusively representational concept that diffuses or erases women’s concrete
historical experiences. Instead, they insist on a historical reality for women that both reflects and contradicts these discourses. Consequently, women are not portrayed as mere objects of male-made policies and discourses but as active participants in the construction of their own modernity.

Women in the Metropolis combines the perspectives of art and cultural historians with those of literary and film scholars to outline the emancipatory potential of modernity for women and explore women’s problematic relationship with the process of modernization in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s. The individual contributions analyze women writers’ and artists’ critical engagement with the discourses of rationalization and technology, theorize female spectatorship, investigate the trope of masquerade in the mass media and the fashion industry, and explore the correlation between race, gender, and the nation-state. All texts undertake an archaeology of Berlin as the “city of women” in the 1920s and 1930s, a city that had become the emblem of characteristically German trepidations about the effects of modernization and social change after World War I. Women in the Metropolis thus adds an important German perspective to already-existing studies on gender and national identity in the interwar years in Britain and France.

Lynne Frame’s digest of popular medical research from the 1920s shows how the categorization of physical features, originally devised by nineteenth-century criminologists, was adapted by Weimar scientists to create a typology that would ascertain women’s reproductive potential, deemed crucial for the reconstruction of the German nation. Placing Vicki Baum’s popular novel stud. chem. Helene Willfuer (1927) in the context of this regulatory scientific discourse, Frame demonstrates how popular culture participated in the construction of a female ideal that sought to preserve the moral notion of “true womanhood” while acknowledging the economic need for female professionalism and independence. The cultural and political imperative to halt the masculinization of women and preserve femininity as a utopian category of difference reinforced rather than negated the contradictions Weimar women experienced in their daily lives.

Patrice Petro captures the tensions between the male projection of the New Woman, as described by Frame, and the conflict women experienced between their old and new roles by setting “men’s modernism” against “women’s modernity.” Petro’s theory of a female cinematic spectator argues that the cultural construction of woman as metaphor of modernity actually conceals or distorts women’s (and men’s) actual experience of modernization. Focusing on the category of gender in theoretical texts on spectatorship by Martin Heidegger, Walter Benjamin, and Siegfried Kracauer, she posits that women’s different reality affects their perception of the real world as well as their perception of the realm of illusion. The disqualification of the institution of the cinema as the epitome of a modern culture of distraction, she suggests, reflects the male discomfort with the visual invasion of his individuality through this medium that mirrors the provocative gaze of the increasingly visible women in the modern city. Against the presumed inability of the female spectator to focus on the screen image or disassociate
herself from it, Petro posits the independent, provocative, and emancipated female gaze.

Anke Gleber’s reading of Walter Ruttmann’s Berlin, Symphony of a City provides a striking example for the problematic correlation between the representation of femininity and women’s actual presence in the urban environment. Gleber discovers the precursor of the female flaneur who, as she purports, ultimately comes into her own as the female spectator of the cinema. This discussion prefaces her reinterpretation of a much-quoted scene from Ruttmann’s film: a fashionably dressed young woman stops in front of the shop window of a corner store. Her direct gaze meets that of a gentleman on the other side of the shop window, who eventually joins her and walks off with her. The common reading of this scene immediately attached the label of sexual availability and prostitution to the woman’s active gaze. Gleber, by contrast, identifies several different women participating in this scene, one of whom boldly meets her male counterpart’s gaze and another who walks down the street with yet a different man. Her careful dissection of the filmic collage reveals the interpretive power of the dominant discourse on women in the public sphere that effectively erases the presence of actual women in the city.

Annelie Lütgens introduces Jeanne Mammen as an artist whose life epitomizes the strains of the pioneering female flaneur of the 1920s. The images of working women’s reality she collects while wandering through the streets of Berlin in her characteristically androgynous garb reflect a solidarity with the members of her generation and her sex who feel alienated and overwhelmed by the demands of postwar society. Her protagonists are strangers in the urban context, finding support only among each other. The utopian quality of the girlfriend motif that dominates Mammen’s work of the period culminates in her representation of a lesbian subculture as a harmonious counterworld to an otherwise cold and unbearable city. Mammen’s emphasis on female solidarity introduces an element of resistance to the images, which, commissioned as illustrations for popular magazines and journals, could otherwise easily have been co-opted by the consumer culture they were trying to critique.

While Mammen’s artistic development is tied to her status as outsider—reinforced by her sexual preference—Hannah Höch’s work is marked by her struggle to find acceptance in an all-male artist group. Unlike Mammen whose work betrays a discomfort with postwar Berlin from the onset, Höch’s early work still projects a confident and optimistic attitude toward the emancipatory promise of Weimar democracy that is reflected in her representation of women and technology. Maria Makela’s analysis of Höch’s political stance toward the impact of technology on modern society relates the artist’s disillusionment with Weimar and the subsequent societal critique in her work to her relationship with Raoul Hausmann. The emotional abuse and physical violence Höch suffered in her liaison with the intellectual spokesperson of Berlin dada and the repression and ridicule she was subjected to as a woman artist led her to doubt the presupposition that the process of modernization would by default accomplish women’s emancipation
and equality. Her experience of the clash between modernist theory and personal practice led her to an early and fundamentally gendered critique of technology’s impact on human relationships that differentiates her work from that of her male colleagues.

For Janet Lungstrum, the creation of the woman robot in Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* epitomizes male fantasies of control over female sexuality and technological change. Her analysis of several central scenes from the film focuses on the male loss of control over the machinic other that is of his own creation. Women’s identification with technology, Lungstrum argues, is thus not by default repressive, but offers new ways of self-empowerment for women. Rather than reject gendered images of technology as dystopian and by necessity protofascist, Lungstrum insists that women reappropriate their Medusan heritage and begin to explore the emancipatory potential of the loss of distinction between organism and machine inherent in their cultural construction as technological bodies of modernity.

If Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* conflates male fear of and fascination with modernity and female sexuality in the image of the female robot, the all-black revue of the mid-1920s represents an attempt to regulate and contain the desire for and fear of primitivity and progress that dominated popular imagination in the 1920s. Nancy Nenno’s reading of Josephine Baker’s success story in Berlin hinges on the performer’s symbolic potential as an African-American woman. Although her race and gender linked her to the notion of the primitive and the natural, her citizenship made her a representative of the most modern of nations, allowing the spectator to imagine an unproblematic, safe fusion of the “natural” and the “civilized.” Nenno, however, does not limit herself to an analysis of the commodification of difference through the medium of the female black body, but shows how Baker participated in her own cultural construction, successfully exploiting the marketability of her image as “erotic savage.”

The fictional fate of Irmgard Keun’s artificial silk girl Doris challenges this concept of such an emancipatory potential inherent in women’s active participation in the media construction of femininity. Doris’s intimate relationship with her stolen fur coat, which marks her entrance into a self-perceived semicinematic existence of glamour and eroticism, undoubtedly represents an act of self-empowerment in the face of traditional models of femininity. However, as my reading of Keun’s novel in the context of contemporary discourses on prostitution illustrates, this vital accessory of Doris’s urban existence also functions as a signal of sexual availability within the dominant patriarchal discourse. The clothed body as sign thus takes on different meanings, whether it is performed by the male spectator or the female wearer. Doris’s experience of commodification in the streets of Berlin exposes the hierarchical relationship between both discourses and reveals the limitations of masquerade as a strategy to attain the societal and economic status promised by the mass media.

Sabine Hake’s discussion of fashion as metaphor of modernity focuses on its dual function as visual expression of women’s new societal roles and as regulatory
discourse of femininity. The Bubikopf (pageboy) for example, initially the expression of the adaptation of femininity to the necessities of the modern workplace, quickly turned into the external marker of a culturally prescribed modern female identity. Despite the danger inherent in such a commodification of emancipatory symbols, Hake insists on fashion’s crucial role for the deconstruction of gender identities. In allowing women to act out different visual patterns of femininity through a different staging of their body, she argues, fashion encouraged women’s critical stance toward identity construction and allowed them to maintain a playful attitude toward modernity.

The images of advertising, the mass media, and the shop windows confronted women with their own visually fragmented bodies, while the windows of the metropolis became the keyholes to the visual performance of gruesome male fantasies. Beth Irwin Lewis draws attention to the prominent role of representations of sex murders in the early works of male expressionists like Otto Dix and George Grosz. She identifies the frequent representation of violence against women as a strategy of the male artist to express the damage suffered to his gendered ego through the experience of war and its ensuing social changes in the mutilation of the female body. These images, Lewis insists, do not merely represent the artistic documentation of a violent urban reality, but reveal the misogynist subtext of modernity that had its bearing on the daily lives of women in the metropolis in Weimar Germany.

All the contributions in Women in the Metropolis, in one way or another, focus on women in public spaces, be they spectators in the cinema, artists recording street life, shoppers in the streets, or working women in the office or on the stage. Women’s visibility and their visual representation in the public sphere emerge as the central issue of the gender-focused discussions that make up this volume. Lütgens and Makela focus on women’s own visual representations of this new “public” and publicized femininity. The contributions of Petro, Lewis, and Frame elucidate the processes of male control inherent in the fragmentation and categorization of women’s bodies, and Lungstrum posits a liberating potential of the mechanized female body. Hake, Gleber, and Nenno, in turn, attempt to negotiate the regulatory aspects of the display of women’s bodies in fashion and on the stage with the liberating and playful dimension of these performances of self. My own analysis of Keun’s Das kunstseidene Mädchen perhaps most directly reflects a Foucauldian reading of women’s experience of controlled public space.

The volume’s New Historicism perspective may well elicit skepticism among some readers who may question the adequacy of this methodology when attempting to document women’s experience of modernity. Feminist criticism of Foucault as the main theorist behind this approach has hinged on his failure to acknowledge the omnipresence of the male gaze as enforcing processes of self-surveillance for women in the public sphere that resemble those of men in enclosed institutional spaces. If, however, one accepts Foucault’s analysis of systems of surveillance as self-sustaining—based on the participatory role of their sub-
jects—such an extension of surveilled space for women would negate their potential to resist the dominant patriarchal discourse in their conquest of the public sphere and stamp them as collaborators in their own repression.

Yet women’s multifaceted presence and participation in the public sphere was as central to their emancipatory vision of modernity as their increased visibility was to men’s fears of modernization. Their consciousness or internalization of their position as performers or spectacles in modern urban society only partially reflected a problematic domination of their identities by outside forces. As Helmut Lethen has theorized in his critical analysis of post–World War I culture—Verhaltenslehren der Kälte—the adaptation of self to changing outside conditions does not necessarily predetermine a repressible and antidemocratic personality structure. The contributions in this volume suggest that the positive ability of what Lethen terms the “radar type”—namely, the ability to adapt to external circumstance while preserving internal autonomy and resistance—may in fact be what informs specifically female reactions to and ways of coping with modernity.

NOTES


2. Texts that include such “arrival” scenes are Clara Viebig’s Es lebe die Kunst (1910), Rudolf Braune’s Das Mädchen an der Orga Privat (1929), Irmgard Keun’s Das kunstvollene Mädchen (1932), and to some extent Gilgi-Eine von uns (1931). Naturally, the city is also portrayed as a place where women risk to endanger their good name. M. I. Breme’s Vom Leben getötet (1927) focuses exclusively on that aspect of women’s city experience.


7. All statistical data in these paragraphs are taken from Ute Frevert, Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation (New York, Oxford, and Munich: Berg, 1989), 156–175.

8. Mary Louise Roberts’s cultural history of postwar France, Civilization Without Sexes (1994), provides such an integrated analysis of history, culture, and gender. Contrasting the representational discourse on femininity with the statistical documentation of women’s realities, she reads the three patterns of femininity she identifies in her research—la femme moderne, la mère, and la femme seule—as cultural responses to men’s postwar trauma. Mary Louise Roberts, A Nation Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Post-War France 1917–1927 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

9. For a recent critical response to Theweleit and another analysis of modernity’s impact on male identity, see Bernd Widdig, Männerbünde und Massen: Zur Krise männlicher Identität in der Moderne (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992).