Cinema Triumphs in the Ideological Battle: Entertaining Propaganda Creates the Third Reich

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Abstract

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This thesis expands on the idea that cinema from the Third Reich used entertainment as a form of propaganda. During the Third Reich, over one thousand films were made, only a small portion of which were considered overt propaganda. Goebbels preferred the covert method, and believed that film was the best medium for the job. Cinema has a unique ability to capture the audience into a new reality by combining music, text, and visuals. Goebbels honed in on this ability and used it to his and the Nazis advantage. There was a shift in the usage of propaganda by the Nazis, and specifically Goebbels, which allowed for total control of the culture. Films promoted Nazi ideologies, including pro-Nazism, anti-Semitism, anti-communism, and fear of the foreigner. Nazi cinema succeeded in endorsing these ideologies by utilizing escapist and narrative films. Goebbels took complete authority over cinema production and reception, which allowed him to manipulate the masses into following Hitler's reign and philosophies. This thesis argues that cinematic techniques, tone, music, and characterizations played a crucial role in the creation of an entertaining form of propaganda. This thesis closely analyzes key films from the Third Reich, such as, *Hitlerjunge Quex, Hans Westmar, La Habanera, Wunschkonzert, Robert und Betram,* and *Jud Süss.*

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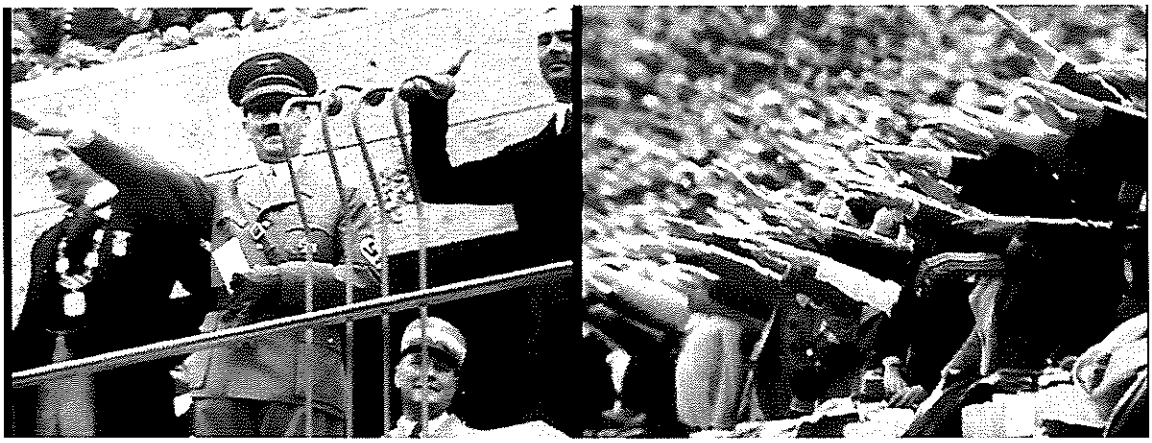
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Introduction

Goebbels Takes Control of Culture and Cinema



Nazi propaganda cinema is a well-known and well-researched topic. There are dozens of books, hundreds of articles, and even several documentary films investigating the 40 surviving films, their uses and purpose, and the enormous effect that this uniquely purposed cinema had on German citizens during the Third Reich. When thinking of German propaganda cinema, the first thing that comes to most knowledgeable minds is Leni Refienstal's *Triumph of the Will* (1935). However, of the some 1,100 films made during the Nazi regime, about 86 percent of films were not considered overtly political or propagandistic, and in fact about half of the films made were comedies and musicals (Reimer). Because of this, the notion of Nazi entertainment films as a way of enchanting the public and swaying the masses became a popular idea to write about.

The first key book written on this idea was entitled Ministry of Illusion by Eric Rentschler in 1996. This book is highly cited and referenced in many of the books and articles that share the opinion that Nazi cinema was used tactfully as propaganda and masked as entertainment. Rentschler's argument is based on 5 premises. The first premise

is that "The cinema of the Third Reich is to be seen in the context of a totalitarian state's concerted attempt to create a culture industry in the service of mass deception" (16). Through the Ministry of Propaganda, Goebbels and the Nazis took complete control over the German culture, aimed to distract and aid the political body. The second premise is that "Entertainment played a crucial political role in Nazi culture" (16). Entertaining film and radio used escapist vehicles to aid in a larger ideological endeavor. The third premise states that, "Nazi film culture—and Nazi propaganda in general—must be understood in terms of what Goebbels called an 'orchestra principle'" (20). The orchestra principle is Goebbels theory of the film industry, which states that when going to a concert, not everyone is playing the same instrument or the same note, but together they create a symphony. This is the same idea Goebbels wished to use for all media in Germany, where documentaries, feature films, newsreels, mass rallies, etc., created a propagandistic symphony. The fourth premise states, "It is by a truism that we cannot speak of National Socialism without speaking about aesthetics" (21). Each aspect of German culture during the Third Reich was connected to aesthetics, which was ultimately linked to politics. These aesthetics were visible and prominent in everyday life, utilizing patterns of recognition. The fifth and final premise is that "When critics decry Nazi cinema as an abomination, they protest too much. Commentators today speak of Nazi aesthetics in general as parasitic, distorted and inhuman, invoking (in a curious act of retrospective projection) those very propensities Hitler and Goebbels ascribed to a maligned 'degenerate' art" (22-23). When looking at Nazi cinema, it is important to put aside the disgust of a post-war perspective. Rentschler wanted to look at cinema from the Third Reich not in terms of the Holocaust, but in terms of its valuable and cunning aesthetics. These premises are important for this thesis as well,

as they put emphasis on the entertaining aesthetic that was crucial for creating the Nazi regime.

Another key book to further this argument is written by Mary-Elizabeth O'Brien, entitled Nazi Cinema as Enchantment (2004). These books, and many others, argue that during the Third Reich, narrative cinema, ostensibly providing simple escapist entertainment, was key in reflecting and reinforcing Nazi ideology, and effective in influencing the public to accept these ideologies. The famous films that are most discussed in reference to clear propagandistic and specifically anti-Semitic values are *Jud Süss* (Viet Harlan, 1940) and *The Eternal Jew* (Fritz Hippler, 1940). The Nazis also used many newsreels and other modes of overt propaganda to convince the public that the Jews were the enemy. However, these notorious films, though important as prime examples of overt propaganda, only make up a small percentage of the more than one thousand films made during the Nazi Regime. O'Brien states, "National Socialism promised to fill the void by re-enchanting the world, recapturing the sense of wonder, wholeness, and authenticity previously attained through religion and shattered by modernity... The film industry in particular seemed tailor-made to the National Socialist agenda" (3). The overall goal of cinema during the Third Reich was to create a sense of community filled with fascination, that both diverted the audiences' attention from the perils of reality, and instill political ideologies. As Schulte-Sasse states, "cinema reinforced Nazism's 'impossible' harmony by organizing desire, by creating what Benedict Anderson calls an imagined community of watchers feeling 'at home'" (11). In order to create this community filled with desire, art and film had to be utilized to its fullest extent. O'Brien also states.

> Goebbels maintained that effective propaganda has to go beyond mere proselytizing; it must appeal to the emotions. 'Art,' he asserted, 'is nothing more

> than a shaper of feelings. It comes from feeling and not from reason; the artist is nothing more than an interpreter of this feeling.' Film was considered one of the most powerful media in this regard, for as Reich Film Dramaturge Dr. Fritz Hippler insisted, 'in contrast to the other arts, film has by virtue of its capacity to work primarily on the optical and emotional, this non-intellectual, levels, an especially penetrating and lasting effect from a mass psychological and propagandistic standpoint. It does not influence the opinion of exclusive circles of connoisseurs, rather it seizes the broad masses.' (8)

Film and art helped shape the emotional state of the masses. Goebbels quickly realized his goal for propaganda to be aesthetic and emotional, as he felt it was the best way to reach the masses.

Goebbels wanted to control culture by quickly instating laws as the Minister of Propaganda. He had an overwhelming desire to be perceived as great and wanted to enact this through his love of film. "Joseph Goebbels was determined to go down in German film history as a kind of inspirational force" (Longerich 287). On March 13th, 1933 Hitler appointed Goebbels as the "Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda" (Hull 18). On June 30th, 1933, Goebbels put "New Cinema Laws" into place (Hull 26). One of the first acts of the "New Cinema Law" was the "Aryan Clause." This completely restricted Jews from the film industry (Hull 26). This law also required that all workers wanting any kind of film job must provide proper identifications showing that both their parents and grandparents were "Aryan" (Hull 26). The rationale was that "German films must be made by Germans who understand the spirit of the German people. All non-German distributions must go" (Hull 23). On February 16th, 1934, a "New Cinema Law" was enforced, which also increased censorship (Tegel 41). Tegel states,

> Previously, the censors had had the power to ban any film likely to 'endanger public order or security, harm religious sensibilities, brutalize or deprave, or endanger German prestige or Germany's relations with foreign states'. In 1931 this was broadened to include endangering 'the essential interests of the states'. Paragraph 1 protected the authority of the state, including the military, judiciary and civil

> service, professionals such as doctors, and legal relations, including the institution of marriage. In 1934 this was extended to race and politics, and also to taste, including 'the violation of artistic feeling.' Films could now be censored on a variety of grounds, some spurious: endangering vital state interests, public order or security, German prestige or its relationship with Foreign states; or even offending National Socialists, religious, moral or artistic sensibilities. This even extended to foreign films with German actors. (42)

This censorship was under the direct control of the ministry, which also meant Goebbels had complete authority (Tegel 42). Goebbels also implemented a form of pre-censorship that could prevent films from being made, which was under an office called *Reichsfilmdramaturg* (Tegel 42).

Another way in which control was taken over the film industry in addition to censorship was through *Prädikate,* which acted as a "form of negative taxation," that gave each film a rating (Tegel 43). The *Prädikate* had already existed during the Weimar era, but was mostly used for guidelines of education.

> These educational classifications were still retained, but new ones were added, several in 1933; 'politically especially valuable'; 'artistically especially valuable'; a combination of both; or merely 'politically valuable'; 'artistically valuable'; or 'culturally valuable'... if a film received the *Prädikate* 'politically and artistically especially valuable', the entire programme was exempted from entertainment tax; other classifications brought proportionate reductions. On the other hand, if a film obtained no classifications whatsoever, its screening was jeopardized, since permission for exhibition had to be applied for. (Tegel 43)

These laws and taxes ensured the control of the industry for Goebbels and helped maintain the aesthetic of entertaining propaganda.

Goebbels established complete control over culture by setting up these laws as well as creating or encompassing culture offices under the jurisdiction of the ministry. On September 22, 1933, a Reich Chamber of Culture was established (Hull 28). Within this chamber, there were seven sub-chambers, including; broadcasting, press, literature, fine

arts, theater, music and film (Hull 28). This chamber also had control over choirs, orchestras, libraries, and acting schools.

> The Chamber of Film, or *Filmkammer,* was broken down into the following sections: General administration, politics and culture policy, artistic supervision of film production, movie economics, professional film organizations, film production, movie management in the industry, movie theaters, film technique, with professional committees, cultural and propaganda films and their display. (Hull 28)

Goebbels was meticulous in his authority over culture and film, making sure every detail could be governed. Even film editors were subjected to laws, such as the "law for editors," which mandated that editors needed a license from Goebbels in order to work (Hull 28).

Not only did Goebbels ensure that he had thorough oversight on the production of cinema, he also controlled the reception of film. In 1936 Goebbels banned film criticism. Critiques turned into reviews that simply provided detailed reports (Tegel 44). Tegel quotes an article, titled 'The Critique of Criticism,' written by Wilhelm Weiss, which states, "The critic of today is no longer a private individual who arbitrarily determines his attitude to art according to some personal or other point of view; today's critic has a public duty assigned to him by the National Socialist state and the National Socialist ideology" (44). Both the film itself and what was written about the film was based on Nazi ideologies. Through all of these means, Goebbels truly did have complete control over German culture, which allowed politics and propaganda to rule. For Goebbels, propaganda was a war by other means and was meant to mobilize the masses.

For this thesis, it is important to define the term propaganda and note its origins. Tegel, in her book Nazis and the Cinema (2007), outlines the origin of propaganda as follows:

> Propaganda has a long history. The word, derived from the Latin *propagare*, to propagate or spread the word, was first used explicitly during the Counter-

> Reformation in 1622 when the Catholic Church set up a new papal department, a committee of cardinals or sacred congregation, charged with propagation of the faith (*Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*). This proselytizing group was entrusted with the task of winning back the faithful (those attracted to Protestantism). By 1718 the word Propaganda had come into use in English where it meant the advancement of sincerely held beliefs. During the nineteenth century, political visionaries in France also used the term propaganda, by which they meant persuading others through reason to see the rightness of their cause. Nevertheless, in 1911 the *Encyclopedia Britannica* still associated propaganda with religion. (12)

It was not until the First World War when the British used propaganda for war. The British set up an office for "enemy propaganda" (Tegel 12). Tegel states,

> 'Propaganda' was reserved for the enemy; the home front received 'information', while heavy censorship (negative propaganda) suppressed unpleasant truths – propaganda and censorship went hand in hand. Both offices were quickly dismantled after the war, by which time propaganda had become associated with lies and atrocity stories and had begun to acquire its negative meaning as persuasion by underhand methods. (12)

Hitler acknowledged that during WWI, Germany had lost the "propaganda war" and it was argued that it may have cost them the war itself (Tegel 9). This was a driving factor for the Nazis increase in propaganda efforts.

Baruch Gitlis explores the definition of propaganda in his book, Cinema of Hate (1996), which focuses on the image of anti-Semitism used in Nazi cinema. Gitlis asks the question, "Do these films reflect the mentality of the German people in a more comprehensive way than other forms of art and do they represent a collective thought pattern and character of the German people?" With this question in mind, Gitlis discusses the many definitions of propaganda, but comes to the conclusion that they all have one major thing in common: that propaganda is a transfer of information, ideas or values from one person to another or group (23). However, the purpose of propaganda is where the definitions shift. Gitlis states that propaganda is "The manipulation of public opinion by means of political symbols. It is not the use of bombs or starvation, violence, blockade, or

bribery which constitute propaganda, but words, pictures, songs, parodies, and similar methods" (31). Using Gitlis' definition, I wish argue that Hitler and Goebbels change the definition of the purpose of propaganda during their reign into the idea that propaganda is a key tool to move the masses into following an inherent ideology, meaning that propaganda is a political weapon. Goebbels and Hitler understood the importance of propaganda, after seeing its use by the British, and decided to transform it to their benefit. Gitlis uses this argument by breaking the myth that propaganda was not created by totalitarian regimes, as many believe, but when exploited by governments, it can be used by anyone (23). He then emphasizes that propaganda was not created by the Third Reich, but that the Third Reich was created with propaganda (Gitlis 23).

Hitler emphasizes in his book Mein Kampf (*My Struggle,* 1925*)* that propaganda must not introduce new ideas, but build on and accentuate ideas that are already in the minds of the people. Hitler also emphasizes the idea that propaganda must not be scientific but emotional and shown to the masses, and the masses are inherently dumb. Hitler writes, "its (propaganda's) effect for the most part must be aimed at the emotions and only to a very limited degree at the so-called intellect. All propaganda must be popular and its intellectual level must be adjusted to the most limited intelligence among those it is addressed to" (180). The focus of exploring propaganda from the Third Reich should not be on films that were commissioned by the state, but those instruments that are useful to it, as Tegel argues. Tegel quotes Hitler saying,

> An agitator can be one: he has the ability to transmit an idea to the broad masses, must always be a psychologists and, even if only a demagogue, is still more suited for leadership than the 'unworldly theoretician who is ignorant of people'. '*Leading means: being able to move masses*' (Hitler's emphasis). (10)

Hitler's main goal was to move the masses, which meant following his leadership, and to do so he needed propaganda.

Cinema is both highly accessible and extremely influential—and it was a relatively new art form and technology in the 1930s. Goebbels recognized the power of film to engage the emotions, and presumably shape opinion. There was another aspect of cinema that made it the ultimate propaganda tool. Cinema is unique in that it combines three separate aesthetics - the visual, textual, and the musical. All of these disciplines were used separately for propagandistic purposes. The use of these aesthetic tools together in a single artistic experience helped create the change in definition of propaganda. O'Brien states,

> If the government could ascertain and satisfy the audience's emotional and psychological needs, then it could simultaneously influence them without much resistance. Like sugarcoating a sour pill, the Nazis hoped to present their ideas so pleasantly that they would be readily acceptable. Goebbels advocated 'invisible' propaganda that educated the masses, appealed to the emotions, and stressed behavior and moral values over overt political ideology. He urged the motion picture industry to create films in which the fascist agenda was motivated by the story and characters, not mere veneer applied to conform to the propaganda ministry's expectations. (8)

Goebbels and the Nazi filmmakers used aesthetics to fulfill emotional desire. The way in which the government was able to give the masses the "sour pill" was through the guise of cinema. As Schulte-Sasse puts it, "Fantasy masks the fact that desire is by definition never satisfied." Cinema has the power to give a false-sense of fulfillment of desire, which enables authority over the masses.

This thesis will build on the important notion that entertainment films were a crucial part of swaying the masses and promoting Nazi ideology. The main argument of this thesis is that, as implemented by Goebbels, Nazi cinema used different approaches, including tone, themes, characterizations, attitudes, and music, that framed the way in

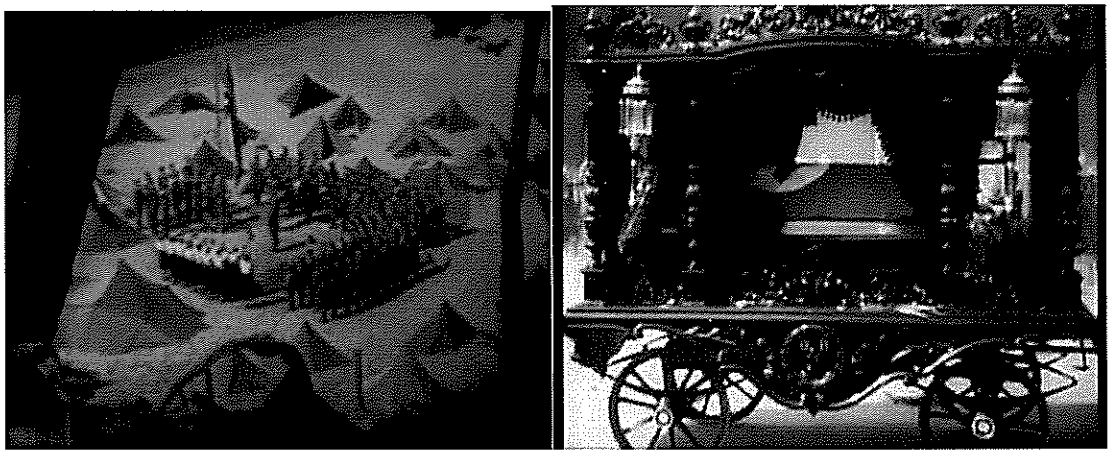
which such a cinema as a whole created a new form of covert propaganda which put forward Nazi ideology. In vilifying Jews and extolling the virtues of Aryans, every aspect of cinema was employed. Some propaganda was "pro:" pro-Nazism, or pro-euthanasia, for example. Much was negative, with again every means at cinema's disposal used to incite hatred of Jews, Poles, Communists and others. Disguised as entertainment, films subtly used music, words, and visual images to distract from the films' pernicious messages. In this cinema of opposites, films such as *Robert und Betram* (Hans H Zerlett, 1939) use the positive mode, where the ideologies being put forward are comedic and light-hearted. Films such as *Jud Süss* use a negative approach, where the film is more dramatic, while still being entertaining. This negative manner means that the film is dark, depressing and morose, leaving the audience with more fear than laughter. However, whether positive or negative in its propagandistic approach, the entertainment value of each kind of film remains important, and each play an important instrument in Goebbels' orchestra.

The first chapter of this thesis explores the idea of "Pro-Nazism." This chapter discusses two films; Hans Steinhoff's *Hitlerjunge Quex (Hitler Youth Quex)* (1933) and Franz Wenzler's *Hans Westmar: Einer von Vielen, ein deutsches Schicksal aus dem Jahre 1929 (Hans Westmar: One of Many, a German Fate from the Year 1929)* (1933). These films paved the way for the oncoming idea of entertaining propaganda, as both are heroic Nazi narratives. The second chapter focuses on the music utilized in cinema, discussing the films, *La Habanera* (Detlev Sierck, 1937) and *Wunschkonzert* (*Request Concert*) (Eduard von Borsody, 1940). These films are contrasted in their political affiliations, but both employ music as a key strategy in enhancing the entertainment value. The third and final chapter discusses anti-Semitism through *Robert und Betram* and *Jud Süss*. The focus in this chapter

is on the characterization of the Jews and how they provide entertaining and menacing roles, while still in a narrative function. Each of these chapters and films plays a part in the redefining of propaganda and how cinema was expertly and affectively used by the Nazis to sway the masses. Goebbels created the perfect orchestra by combining all the elements that cinema and media has to offer. Humor, drama, music, entertainment, and visual aesthetics are all combined in the whole of cinema by Goebbels to devastating and climatic affect.

Chapter 1

Pro-Nazi Films Pave the Way



1933 was a pivotal year for the Nazis in many regards, including the coming to power of Hitler, Goebbels' appointment of "minister of popular enlightenment and propaganda," and the release of decisive propagandistic entertainment films. Two such films are Hans Steinhoff's *Hitlerjunge Quex (Hitler Youth Quex)* (1933) and Franz Wenzler's *Hans Westmar: Einer von Vielen, ein deutsches Schicksal aus dem Jahre 1929 (Hans Westmar: One of Many, a German Fate from the Year 1929*) (1933). These heroic films reflect the emergence of Nazi power through an entertaining martyr story during the Weimar republic. These films reflect the transition of power from the Weimar era to the Nazi regime by showing compelling stories of men who die in order to further the Nazi movement.

Hitlerjunge Quex revolves around a fourteen year-old boy, Heini Völker (Jürgen Ohlsen), who is later nicknamed Quex (quicksilver) by his comrades in the Hitler Youth. He is the son of a fat, drunk Communist, played by Heinrich George, referred to as "father." Heini lives in a cramped and dirty apartment with his mother (Berta Drews) and father and works in a printing press. The film begins with a young boy stealing an apple from a grocer.

The theft quickly turns into a public conflict, showing Germany in peril. Some people defend the boy by saying how broken their society is—a young boy is hungry, and he should be allowed to take the apple. Yet others believe the young boy is a thief and should be jailed. The scene escalates and the police arrive. The film begins with chaos, which underscores the idea that Germany needs help, and help comes from the Nazis. Meanwhile, Heini's father is injured. Stoppel (Hermann Speelmans), a Communist comrade, brings the father home and the mother begins to care for him. The father asks where Heini is, and the mother informs him that he is at work. The audience, then, first sees Heini as he is working in a printing press—setting up Heini's strong work ethic and therefore a suitable contribution to the Nazi party. Back in the apartment, the father demands a "man's drink" and throws a tantrum to get money from his wife, highlighting that the Communist father is a drunk. She claims and maintains that she has none, even as the father tears the apartment apart and attacks her. Heini comes home and secretly gives his mother the *Mark* he earned to get the father to leave the mother alone. Heini then goes to a carnival in an attempt to win a knife from one of the games. The carnival is a hectic environment, with a carousel in the center; this becomes the symbolic habitat for the disorganized Communists. At the carnival, Heini runs into Stoppel, who tells Heini that he will get him the knife on the condition that he meet him tomorrow at the train station.

When Heini goes to meet Stoppel, he is dragged along by the Communist youth group to a camp outing. At the train station, an organized group of Hitler Youth are also boarding the train for a camping trip, and the two groups get in a verbal altercation. The Communist youth group is chaotic, disorderly, overtly sexual, and drunk. They play a spanking game, and pass around a bottle of alcohol (in which Heini shows no interest), and

have no official campsite. While in the forest, Heini wanders off and finds the Hitler Youth camp, with a roaring fire, and they sing a catchy song while marching in perfect order. This area becomes the associative realm for Nazis, linking them to the purity of nature. On the outskirts of the campsite, Heini marches along in place and is obviously drawn to the aesthetics of the Hitler youth. Heini finds his own way home and immediately shows his excitement about the Hitler Youth to his mother. He begins to repeat the song he heard from the Hitler Youth, but his father overhears him and storms into the room. The father forces Heini to sing the Communist song instead. Later, outside of Heini's school, a few Nazi youth boys hand out leaflets. Stoppel tells Gerda (Rotraut Richter), the main Communist youth girl, to distract the boy with her sexuality, which she accomplishes. Heini talks to the other boy and expresses his interest in joining the Hitler Youth, and the boy takes him to his open and lavish home where his sister is cooking lunch. The boy and sister invite Heini to their meeting that evening, but when Heini is on his way, the Communist youth attack the Hitler Youth. Heini is falsely accused of revealing their location and is no longer accepted by the Hitler Youth. Later, Stoppel informs Heini that they are going to bomb the Nazis, and Heini immediately warns the Hitler Youth. Stoppel figures out that Heini interfered with their plans and threatens his mother. His mother is afraid of Heini's fate, and tries to kill them both by leaving the gas stove on as Heini sleeps. Heini survives, but the mother does not. While in the hospital, the Hitler Youth leader visits Heini at the same time as the father. They discuss where Heini should go next, and he convinces the father that Heini belongs with the Hitler Youth. While at the Hitler Youth dorms, Heini insists that he hand out leaflets in the Communist quarters since he knows the area well. However, when the Communists hear of his arrival, they chase him down and stab him to death with

the knife that was originally meant for Heini. He dies a hero, and his last words are the opening lines of the Hitler youth song that is repeated throughout the film: "Our banner flutters before us." The film ends with shots of Nazis marching to the song.

Hans Westmar tells a similar story of a hero fighting against the Communists. This film tells the story of the student, Hans Westmar (Emil Lohkamp), who is disgusted by the Communist popularity in the late 1920's of Berlin. In the beginning of the film, Hans is in Vienna talking to an American-German man and his daughter. The film cuts to a scene of a group of Communist men and one woman around a table discussing the territories of Germany, emphasizing that the majority of Germany is "red," meaning Communist. They are plotting the take-over of Germany and the world with communism using the refrain of "hail Moscow." As Hans returns to Berlin and to his studies, the film shows him in a lecture hall. The professor is discussing the Treaty of Versailles, and expresses his opinion that Germany has and should become "borderless" and part of "the international." This lecture is aggravating to Hans. The professor preaches for peace and encourages Germany to "lay down their weapons." In an ironic cut, the next line is "raise your weapons," showing Hans is in a fencing duel, which has been forbidden in Germany. While the police come and break up the duel, the men have hidden the weapons and fool the police by singing "The God whose Iron's Growing Here." Out of the window, Hans and his friends see a Communist march in the street. Hans tells his friends, "The international, that is our fight. Down there is our fight. I am telling you, all of Germany is at stake down there in the street."

After this gathering, Hans meets up with the Americans from Vienna and shows them around Berlin. While driving down the street, the American says that he no longer recognizes Berlin, and signs flash in front of his face: "Hungarian cuisine," "Italian

Restaurant," "Se Habla Español." The American insists they stop at a bar he used to frequent and drink the best beers from Munich. Once they get to the establishment, they find it completely changed. The bar only serves English beer, and all the food is from other countries. Hans is outraged by the internationalization of Germany and states that Germany is now "somewhere else." The film cuts to fighting in the trenches and a shot of a cemetery, then to Hans talking to a comrade noting, "Three million people had to die, and these people; they dance, get drunk and bellow." Later, Hans and his comrades attend a Communist meeting, where Hans gives a speech trying to get the Germans to "wake up." This incites a massive brawl and shots are fired on both sides. Hans and his friends manage to escape, but when they split up to walk home, one of his friends is attacked, beaten, and thrown into the river. The Nazis then march to show their mourning for the death of their comrade, but the Communists attack again.

Later, Hans is sitting at a restaurant when one of the Communist leaders, Camillo Roß (Heinrich Heilinger), sits down at his table. He tells Hans that he will never be able to understand the Communists because he is not part of the working class. Hans decides Roß is right and quits his studies to work as a construction worker by day and a taxi driver by night. Hans, through his work, is able to convince many of the workers to join the Nazi party, and the Nazi votes grow considerably. However, Hans is still not satisfied because the Nazi party is not victorious. The Communists attempt to use Agnes, a woman who has met Hans once, to try and seduce him and spy on him—a tactic also seen in *Hitlerjunge Quex,* where communism is linked to a sexualization. She ultimately warns Hans instead and tries to protect him. The Communists are outraged that the Nazi vote has increased and theirs has decreased, so they plan to kill Hans. Their first attempt fails, but the second time,

they shoot him as he answers the door. Hans is taken to the hospital where he later dies, and his last word is "Germany." At his funeral, the Nazis are forced to cover their flag on his coffin with flowers. However, in the end, similar to that of *Hitlerjunge Quex,* the film shows Nazis marching to a patriotic song, and the Communist salute turns into the Hitler hail.

These two films come at a decisive point for Nazi propaganda cinema. *Hitlerjunge Quex* was released in September of 1933, and *Hans Westmar* was released in the following December. In many ways, these films paved the way for propaganda and entertainment cinema made and released by Goebbels and the Nazi party. The technologies of the films shifted into a political realm, while at the same time reflecting public life, and slightly hiding its political leanings. Rentschler states:

> Goebbels pointed the way to a popular, contemporary, and distinctly national cinema. Film, he proclaimed, should emanate from political life and find its way to the deepest recesses of German soul and soil... Political ideas must assume aesthetic forms. That did not mean reenacting parades and spectacles, photographing marching storm troopers, and fetishizing flags and emblems. 'Arousing the masses, that's something we know a thing or two about,' Goebbels boasted, and in so doing set aside a special place for film apart from mass rallies and overt agitation. Mere loyalty to the party would not guarantee success. Authentic film art must transcend the everyday and 'intensify life.' (54-55)

These films reflect this shifting application of cinema. It must insert the political agenda yet make it aesthetic. It must demonstrate the reality of the world and expand into something beautiful, appealing, and imaginative. *Hitlerjunge Quex* and *Hans Westmar* depict this conversion of the capabilities and application of film for the Third Reich. Each are loosely based on real stories that show the transitional period at the end of the Weimar era. They take reality and exemplify it into an emotional and captivating visual story. They show the political shift for the Nazis coming to power, yet make humanizing and relatable characters

for the audience to identify with. While both of these films are considered 'overt' propaganda, they present propaganda to have the capacity for entertainment.

The effectiveness of these stories relies on the techniques of cinema. The aestheticizing of politics is imperative for the efficacy of propaganda cinema. Rentschler states, "We dare not underestimate the formal surfaces and visual strategies of Nazi films, even in the case of one of its most undeniably propagandistic productions. Goebbels and directors such as Steinhoff understood well the power of images, how they could stir imaginations and activate emotions" (66). *Hitlerjunge Quex* has been compared stylistically to Weimar films (Rentschler 61 and Schulte-Sasse 258). This comparison is rooted in how *Hitlerjunge Quex* utilizes an active mise-en-scène (Rentschler 69). This helps the audience transfer its past notions of cinema onto the oncoming cinema controlled by Goebbels.

The real story behind *Hitlerjunge Quex* concerns a young Hitler Youth member, Herbert Norkus. Communists killed Norkus while he was distributing leaflets in a working-class district of Berlin in 1932. Later in 1932 a book was published by the same name of the film, written by Karl Aloys Schenzinger. The book was required reading for German youth and was vastly popular (Rentschler 55). The film received an award for being "artistically especially worthy" and was one of the most successful propaganda films, both in terms of Goebbels' praise and commercial viewership (Rentschler 55-56). Norkus was a well-known Nazi martyr, and the day of his death became an annual ritual observance for the memory of all the deceased Hitler Youth members (Rentschler 55). In *Hitlerjunge Quex*, Heini embodies this Nazi martyr as a young influential and likeable boy who overcomes his Communist family. His surname is deliberate, as '*Völker*' means 'of the people,' and Heini responds to the needs of the *Volk*. The film demonstrates the importance of youth and how

the Nazis believe these boys should be raised. The youth of Germany should be separated from their parents and raised by the state. The Hitler Youth members who welcome Heini into their home for lunch have no parents present. The brother and sister seem to live alone in a big house. As well, Heini is taken from his home and father and goes to live in a Hitler Youth dorm. His new father figure is the Hitler Youth leader and the Hitler Youth itself. He becomes his own man, but for the part of the '*Volk.*' The film implies that this is where the youth belong, as a part of Germany.

The pivotal scene in the film is when the youth leader convinces Heini's father that he belongs with the Hitler Youth. The youth leader asks if the father was in the war. The father exclaims that of course he was in the war, but he was injured and came back to unemployment and a lack of movement. He says he is not fat because he eats too much, but because he has no job and nowhere to go. Because of this, he claims he needs to stay with his own class, and this is where Heini belongs as well. The youth leader asks if by his own class he means "the international," to which the father answers "yes." The youth leader then asks where the father was born. He answers in Berlin, and the youth leader retorts, "But where is Berlin?" The father responds, "On the Spree," and the youth leader again asks, "But in what country?" The father, now impatient, answers, "In Germany, of course." The youth leader then declares calmly, "Yes, of course, in Germany – in *our* Germany. Now I want you to think about that." The emphasis is that these men are German, and do not belong with the international, but with their own kind, with Germans. This scene has been heavily analyzed before (see Rentschler, Schulte-Sasse and Tegel); however, it is important to note its significance. Heini belongs with the German '*Volk*' and so do all the German youth.

Later in the film, the father repeats this dialogue with a slightly different emphasis. The father is sitting at a bar with Stoppel, hunched over a small round table. The camera is placed at a lower angle, and Stoppel asks where Heini is. A hefty bartender brings them each a beer, and as he leaves, the camera tracks into Stoppel and the father. The dialogue is as follows:

Father: Looking at these two beers here, where do you suppose they might have been brewed? What are we drinking?

Stoppel: We are drinking Helle.

Father: But where is Helle brewed?

Stoppel: What do you mean where is it brewed? In Berlin.

Father: In Berlin.

Stoppel: Yes.

Father: But where is Berlin?

Stoppel: Where is Berlin, Berlin is on the Spree River. (The camera tracks in closer onto their faces)

Father: Yes of course, on the Spree, but where is the Spree?

Stoppel: The Spree is in Germany.

Father: Yes, in German. In *our* Germany. You think about that. (Father walks away, and the camera lingers on a perplexed Stoppel who nods his head.)

The Hitler Youth leader has now persuaded two Communists into thinking about the importance of what "our Germany" means. He has invoked a sense of patriotism. This scene is also connected to a scene in *Hans Westmar.* When Hans is showing the Americans around Berlin, they stop at a bar. However, when they arrive, the man tries to order a beer from

Munich, but the restaurant no longer serves German beers, only English. The man refuses to drink an English beer and orders wine instead. The message in this scene is contempt for internationalization, and a desire for German patriotism. Germans should drink German beer and eat German food—this is, after all, "our Germany."

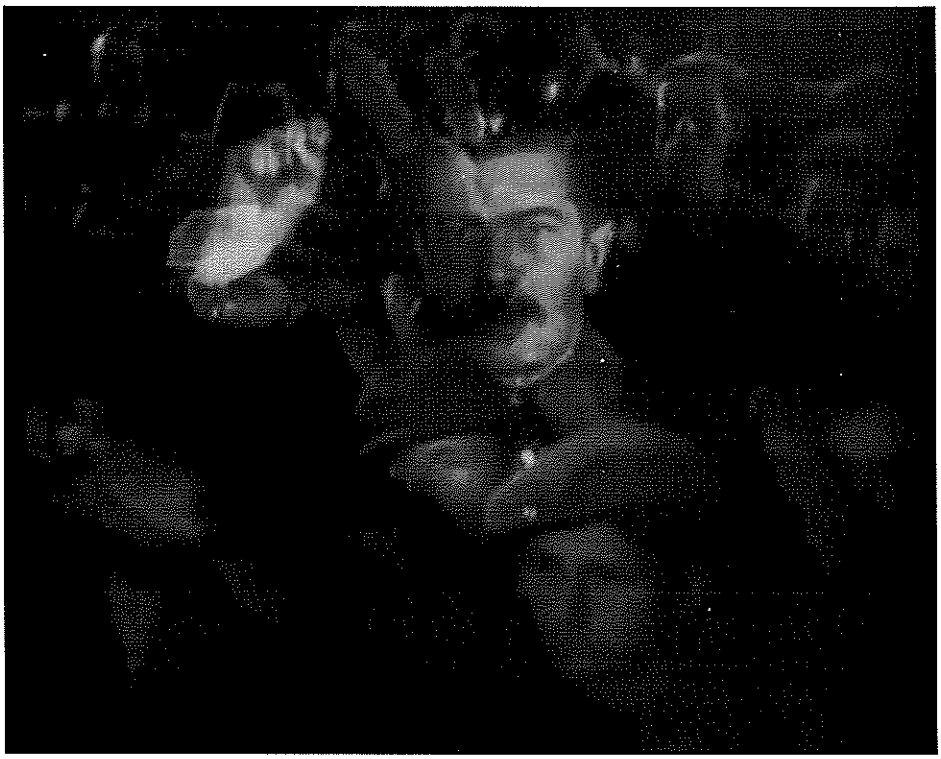
In both of these films the characterization of the Communists and the Nazis is vital. The Communists are shown to be brutish, alcoholic, violent, disorderly bullies. The Nazis, in contrast, are organized, clean, abstain from copious amounts of alcohol, are physically fit, and rarely stray from their beliefs. In contrast to the significance of drinking German beer, the Communists are shown to have a heavy reliance on alcohol. In *Hans Westmar,* the Communists are plotting to murder Hans because he has been converting workers into Nazis. The Communists view Hans as a threat to the international, and because of him, they have lost thousands of votes. The Communists ask Hans' neighbor to inform them when he is alone. After the election, Hans falls ill and can barely get out of bed, which makes him vulnerable. The female Communist finds out that Hans is alone, sick in his apartment. She goes to tell the others, whom are all drinking at a bar. They are hesitant, and the woman says, "Do you have to get drunk first to find the courage?" One replies, "You said it," and orders more drinks. The Communists are all drunk around the table and inevitably miss this opportunity, as Agnes warns the Nazis, and they move Hans to a secure location. Throughout each film, the Communists drink and get drunk. The Nazis, however, are never drunk and are only seen briefly drinking German beer.

Another way in which the Communists are shown to be inferior is in their violence and brutishness. In both films, the Nazis do not murder a Communist, but the Communists kill Nazis. In *Hans Westmar,* the first murder is after the Communist meeting when Hans

gives his speech. Hans' comrade is followed on his way home and brutally beaten by the Communists and thrown into the river. Following this scene, the film shows the Communist heads discussing the events of the night before. The woman mentions that there were injuries on both sides. One of the main leaders then informs the others with a smile, "One fatality, for the fascists. Our men bashed his head in, threw him into the channel, where the scumbag drowned." After informing them, he giggles. Camillo Roß, however, retorts, "Completely unnecessary brutality." Yet, the main Communist leader, Kuprikoff (Paul Wegener), responds, "Brutality? (taking a drink) You must overcome your mawkishness, Comrade Roß. Become tougher." Roß then counters with, "That is how we breed fanaticism in others," and the leader says, "I am not interested in your opinion. Just leave the direction to Moscow." This scene shows what the Communist values are—violence and chaos. They applaud murder and brutality. However, the film acknowledges, through Roß, that these values are flawed and outrageous. As well, their values are not German, but Russian, as they look for guidance from Moscow.

In both films, a crucial part is the transforming of the Communist ideal. In *Hans Westmar,* by the end, the Communists, specifically Kuprikoff, who looks like Stalin, have turned to the Nazi party. This is shown by the final scene where their salute has turned into the raising of their arm to Hitler. In *Hitlerjunge Quex,* the father and Stoppel have changed their allegiances. During the ending chase in which Heini is trying to get away from the Communist assailants, Stoppel points the men in the wrong direction. As we have seen, the father's opinions have changed once he accepts that he is first and foremost a German. The importance of these films lies in the premise that men can change their opinion, just as Goebbels envisions for propaganda and cinema as a whole. Film can 'show' the audience

the way, and while reflecting common opinions, also influences men to see the 'right way.' Tegel states, "In the novel (Hitlerjunge Quex), a Communist, by definition, is bad... The film reflected the fact that the Nazis were no longer aspiring to power but were in power... The film suggests that Communists are not inherently bad but have been mislead by their leaders" (59). Even though the Communists ideals are 'wrong,' in a way it is not their fault. They can be shown the 'right' way by accepting Nazi ideology, and join the German '*Volk*,' which ultimately entails joining the Nazi party.



The potency of these films comes from the juxtaposition of communism and Nazism. Film must not only show Nazis as glorious, but as heroic in contrast to the barbaric Communists. Film as a medium has the ability and power to contrast images and create new meaning. The audience can clearly see the difference between communism and Nazism. Schulte-Sasse states;

> What makes *Hitler Youth Quex* more interesting than the other early films is its skill in mobilizing many levels (spatial, bodily, familial, specular, acoustic-musical) to displace the political onto the aesthetic, to realize aesthetically the ideology in the 'conversion' scene quoted above. Ideology critique can easily uncover the film's tension between 'communism' as chaos (unbridled drive and violence) versus National Socialism as order (containment and 'inner peace'). This binarism determines the juxtaposition of spaces (the Völker family's cramped flat vs. his Nazi friends' spacious, bourgeois apartment), of women (the sexually aggressive communist girl Gerda vs the deeroticized, boyish League of German Girls member Ulla), of modes of behavior (the neat columns of Hitler youth vs. the boisterous disorder of communist youth on the train platform), and of music styles (the buoyant enthusiasm of the Hitler Youth song vs. the drunken slurring with which Heini's father belts out the 'Internationale' – literally belting his son in the process for having sung the Nazi song). (262)

Hitlerjunge Quex and *Hans Westmar* emphasize the notion that Nazism is the correct path to choose, and men have died to show this and by dying have shown their never-ending devotion. The Communists are presented as the ideological opposites to the Nazis—as Schulte-Sasse pointed out—through spaces, women, behavior and music.

Music is one of the most instrumental techniques for each of these films. In *Hitlerjunge Quex* the same anthem is repeated throughout the film. The lyrics repeated throughout are as follows; "Our flag flutters before us / Into the future we march side by side / We are marching for Hitler / Through night and despair / With our flag of youth for freedom and bread, our flag flutters before us / Our flag is the new age / And the flag guides us to eternity / The flag means more than death." This song is upbeat, uplifting, and creates a unifying feeling. This song draws Heini into the Hitler Youth and makes him feel like he is a part of something great. The last words he utters are the beginning of the lyrics, and the final words of the film are the last. While Heini is in the woods, frantic and hectic music is playing on the score, but as he walks closer to the Hitler Youth camp, the music fades into the organization of this song. The anthem symbolizes the creation of the '*Volk*' as well as the ideologies of the Nazis and the Hitler Youth. Men and boys are more than

themselves, they are part of a collective and the flag is the representation of unity. Single lives are not important, but Heini's and other deaths are considered to be for the greater good. Heini realizes his importance as part of the group and he knows he is dying for the flag, for Hitler, and for the Nazi collective, which makes him a hero. The song also makes the audience feel a part of this community.

In *Hans Westmar* music plays an equally important role. Horst Wessel is the true figure on which Hans Westmar is based. Tegel states, "Horst Wessel's main contribution to the Nazi movement was to write the words of the Nazi party anthem or signature tune, which subsequently became known as the '*Horst Wessel Lied*' (Horst Wessel song)" (64). The 'Horst Wessel *Lied*' was the second national anthem after 'Deutschland über Alles.' Wessel's lyrics say, "Hold the flag high! Close the serried ranks! / The SA marches with firm, bold step / Comrades shot by the Red Front and the Reaction march is spirit in our ranks / The street free from the brown battalions / The street free for the storm troopers / Millions full of hope look up to the swastika / The day of freedom and bread dawns." These lyrics are rather similar to those from the Hitler Youth march, as they both mention freedom, bread, the flag, and marching together. As seen through the importance of Wessel, music is the great unifier. The Communists killed Wessel because he was a threat, mostly because of song lyrics. The melodic march in the tonality of these songs, combined with the nationalistic and galvanizing lyrics, make songs an effective tool for propaganda, especially in film. The audience sees the coordinated Nazi march while hearing the triumphant voices enforcing Nazi values, such as freedom and nationality.

As well as the importance of the historical significance of Horst Wessel in *Hans Westmar*, singing and music become a continuous motif. In *Hitlerjunge Quex* the same song

is repeated throughout, however, in *Hans Westmar* there are many sequences that highlight how music can influence the tone and meaning of a scene and film. In the beginning of the film, while the Communists are sitting around the table discussing the power they hold, they indicate that "Thousands were singing 'the Internationale.'" Singing the 'Internationale' has the same meaning as singing the 'Horst Wessel *Lied,*' which is the way to show affinity and allegiance to the party. Music is also a great form of distraction. A few minutes later in the film, in the scene when Hans and his friends are fencing, to deter the police from further investigation, Hans starts the group in singing "The God whose Iron's Growing Here." This shows the collectivity of singing, while at the same time distracting the police from their pursuit. However, their song is interrupted by the trumpets from marching Communists, and the singing of the 'Internationale.' This is where Hans exclaims that their fight is in the street. Later at the nightclub where Hans goes with the Americans, the band and singer are black and have a jazzy style. When a hefty man requests "The Watch on the Rhine" Hans is outraged because the band is butchering this German song with a jazz style, not sung or played by Aryans. He demands the song end, and storms off. Music for the Nazis must be German and nationalistic, although they do acknowledge the collectivization power, even when it is not perfectly German, in the case of the 'Internationale.'

The ending sequences of both *Hitlerjunge Quex* and *Hans Westmar* have similar cinematic styles and ideological significance. In the ending sequence of *Hitlerjunge Quex,* Heini is putting up posters throughout the city when he hears the Communist whistle, indicating danger. He runs out of a building and as he approaches a street corner a group of men come out of the shadows of the corner of the building, and Heini's face is shown in a

close-up with fear as he turns and runs away. While running, a few more groups come out of the shadows and form a large group in pursuit of Heini. He runs down an ally, and we see Stoppel hide in a doorway, and watch as Heini runs by. He steps back into the darkness, then re-emerges when the Communist group comes by. They ask him if he saw Heini, but Stoppel plays dumb and claims he had no idea Heini was around. The blocking of this scene is symbolic, as it signifies Stoppel's emergence from the darkness of communism. He has seen and been influenced by Heini, who makes him notice the negatives of communism, and by bringing him out of the dark—literally in the film as he steps out and figuratively by not giving up Heini—the emphasis remains that Communist opinions can change.

The chase scene continues and Heini ends up at the carnival grounds. He hides in one of the tents, but he gets scared and backs up into one of the props that starts playing a drum. The film shows a close up of the drum, then cuts to the Communists opening the tent door, then cuts to an extreme close-up of Heini's face, wide eyed and frightened. Another quick cut follows and the camera is now placed outside the tent, with no people seen, but Heini's scream is heard. The camera then points to the ground as the Communists feet run in and out of frame, followed by Heini's stumbling feet. Cut to one of the Hitler Youth boys, then quick cut again to Heini laying face down on the wet ground. The Hitler Youth rush over to him, flip him over, and the film uses a high angle over Heini as he mutters the words of the song. As he murmurs these words both the image and sound crossfade into the jubilant song and a fluttering Nazi flag. The flag then dissolves into a wide-angle shot of thousands marching to the Hitler Youth song. This ending sequence uses superimposition to show the fluttering flag, the multitude of people, and the movement of marching in

unison. The final shot is the Nazi flag with the swastika transparent, showing the marching men inside of it, and the final words "The flag is greater than death."



The final sequence of *Hans Westmar* is remarkably similar to that of *Hitlerjunge Quex.* Hans' funeral procession has been described as so realistic it seems as though it was archival footage. There are thousands of men in the streets as Hans' casket is driven through the city. The film intercuts between shots of the casket and the men rioting and fighting with each other and police, and also shows his mother in a carriage dressed in all black with a veil over her face. The film then brilliantly shows the casket (with the flowers now removed which unveils the Nazi flag) in the center of the frame, and then pans over to the mass chaos. The audience is then shown Agnes standing in the street, peering at the casket, as men run away behind her. In contrast to the anarchy shown, the film cuts to a

perfect line of Nazis on either side of a pathway, saluting as Hans' body is carted through. Another cut then shows the line with a multitude of Nazi flags fluttering and centering both the frame and the pathway. The carriage moves through the flags and when it ends at its destination, men take the casket out.

There is a brilliant shot of the casket with the flag over it in the forefront, with the other raised flags behind it with the Nazis still saluting. The casket is then carried through the pathway of Nazis, and the films shows a shot of Agnes through a black fence—as she is metaphorically jailed by the demise that communism brings. They lower the casket to the ground, and a voice is heard saying; "Now we bow our flags deeply over you, Comrade! But then the word will be – The flag on high! And the flag will rise again, from death on up to shining life. And with it your spirit will rise from the grave, will enter us, and march along within our ranks, when, one day, we will assume power for the brilliance and glory of the new Reich!" These final words are reflective of this song and mirror a lot of the same concepts, such as the dead marching with comrades in spirit. The sentiments are also an echo of the final words of *Hitlerjunge Quex*. As these last words are uttered, the film fades into a shot of the clouds in the sky, and the 'Horst Wessel *Lied*' begins. Superimposed over the clouds, a singular Nazi marches forward with a flag in his hands. The film then cuts to thousands marching in perfect unison, showing the march from different angles. Then another superimposition begins as a singular Nazi marches in front of the mass. This implies the ideal of one man being a part of many. The film continues to cut to different angles of the march, from above, the side, and right in the faces of saluting men and women. In the background of the march, the Brandenburg gate stands tall. After the many cuts showing marching at different angles, the Communist men in their cloth caps are shown by

the masses with their hands in the position of the Communist salute, which slowly turn into the Hitler heil. While their hands are transitioning, the film has a slow crossfade, putting Roß in the center frame also changing his salute. The final shot of the film is from a birds eye view of a sea of men marching, and the final words of the song; "The ranks tightly closed."



Both of these final sequences highly reiterate the power of masses and the influence of Nazism. The films stress the status of the flag among the ranks of men. The endings also reinforce the heroic prestige of their main characters. The films show the audience that death can be grand and for the greater cause. Heini and Hans are each the definition of a martyr for the Nazi party. Each of these men stood by their beliefs, even in the perils of their environment. Their deaths have consolidated the masses, as the film literally shows

and juxtaposes their deaths with shots of men standing and marching together. As well, the symbol of the flag led them forward to strength, courage and brotherhood of National Socialism. It is also significant that each film ends with an anthem over-scoring the marching of a unified *Volk*. The final words are not spoken, but sung by many men. There is strength in the collective voice, showing the audience a motive and reason to join the Nazi party.



The need for a collective is a key motif in these films. Men must belong to a group to fulfill their masculine identities. Schulte-Sasse offers a comparison of war films from American to those of Nazi Germany—specifically the ones discussed in this chapter, and American films such as *The Best Years of our Lives* (Willian Wyler, 1946). The American

films pose masculinity in terms of phallic power, and those who return from war are 'lacking' such power. However, for Germany, men desire a different fulfillment. Schulte-Sasse states;

> In all of these films, history functions not as the collective mirror it is in most Nazi and, indeed, most Hollywood films, but as a force of dislocation generating trauma within an established system of representation, one which profoundly affects subjects depending on those systems for their sense of identity... Despite these similarities, a fundamental difference separates Nazi films of this genre from at least those American films that, as Silverman argues, do not attempt to align male subjectivity with phallic values... The Nazi films, by contrast, unequivocally equate war with the fulfillment of manhood; in war men are intact and bonded together, in war even 'half-children' are 'whole men.' (269)

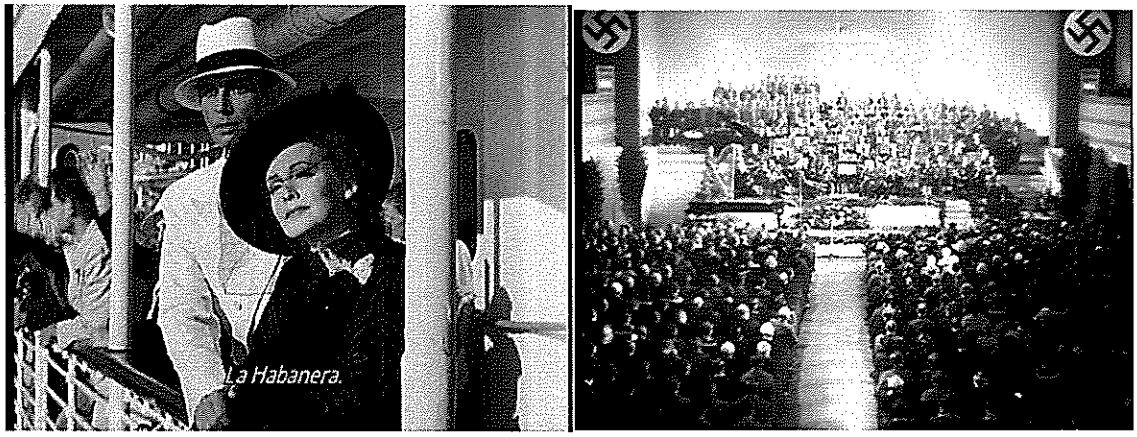
The phallic ideologies of American films are replaced with a need for brotherhood. In films such as *The Best Years of Our Lives,* the closure and reestablishing of phallic power is linked with marriage. In contrast, the Nazi films, such as both *Hitlerjunge Quex* and *Hans Westmar,* the resolution lies in political kinship. Heini is drawn to the Hitler Youth because of the organizational closeness. The final scenes reaffirm the power of masses, as shown by the immense number of men marching together. As well, a key component of the collective ideal resides in faith. Heini states in a conversation with Stoppel, "I am part of the movement because I have faith in it, just as my Führer and my comrades have faith in it." Heini not only emphasizes his faith in National Socialism, but his confidence is due to the faith of others. Heini desires to be a part of something that is greater than himself—Heini and the Nazis are 'selfless.' Phallic power, as a means of fulfillment, belongs to the self; it is part of the physical male body. In contrast, Nazi fulfillment relies on the spiritual—going beyond the selfishness of singular power, but the potential for the masses.

As we have seen, *Hitlerjunge Quex* and *Hans Westmar* are incredibly decisive in their use of entertaining propaganda as their aesthetics transcend reality and the political.

Hitlerjunge Quex gives a lasting impression of camaraderie in the youth. Rentschler shows how audiences at the time viewed the film by quoting a man who had seen the film when he was ten years old in 1933. Rentschler quotes him, saying, "I still remember today that after the film we all agreed: the Nazis made an altogether great impression, there was discipline, we wanted to join in. The Communists, on the other hand, no, our parents would never have let us be part of a bunch like that" (60). Goebbels and Steinhoff were successful in portraying the Nazis in an alluring manner, using the aesthetic techniques of film. *Hans Westmar* maintained a similar attraction, although Goebbels himself was not particularly pleased with the film. Goebbels was a personal friend of Wessel and felt as though the film did not do him justice. Upon its initial release, Goebbels banned the film but was later forced to rerelease it, with minor editing adjustments (Tegel 64). Goebbels was, however, "careful to say that the music was outstanding as were the scenes with the SA" (Tegel 64). The overall importance of *Hans Westmar* was its ideological representation. The full title of this film highlights this ideology – "One of many." Westmar represents the story of many men who have died for the cause, and maintain an undying devotion to the Nazi party. Both films critically analyze the conflict between the Communists and the Nazis, and aesthetically put the Nazis in the position of establishing power.

Chapter 2

Music as Emotional Distraction



A key component of Nazi films are the way in which music is utilized. Music is a persuasive art form that plucks emotional heartstrings and elicits feelings, such as happiness, discord, serenity, and passion. Because of this, music can also be a powerful mode of welcome distraction and emotional persuasion. Music is a decisive segment of film but is largely neglected in analysis. The way in which it is used in Nazi cinema is particularly interesting, specifically in terms of diegetic sound. Music lends itself well to the concept of entertainment and escapist films that mask propaganda. Two fundamental films that are exemplary in their use of music are Detlev Sierck's 1937 film *La Habanera* and Eduard von Borsody's 1940 film *Wunschkonzert* (*Request Concert*). In each of these films, music plays an important role in creating an entertaining aesthetic, although the function is slightly different. *La Habanera* is not an overt propaganda film, yet it is a crucial example of entertainment that fits well in Goebbels' propaganda vision. In contrast, *Wunschkonzert* is more overt in its propagandistic tone, yet remains entertaining, as it is centered on music and the radio.

La Habanera is categorized as a musical drama that tells the story of a young and beautiful Swedish woman who goes on vacation with her aunt, Ana (Julia Serda), to Puerto Rico and falls in love in many different ways. The popular Swedish actress Zarah Leander plays the young woman named Astree. Leander was the highest paid actress in Germany at the time (Reimer 65) and was considered the "replacement" for Marlene Dietrich and the German counterpart for Greta Garbo (Rentschler 135). She was incredibly beautiful in an "Aryan" way and brought star quality and name to the films in which she acted. While Astree is on vacation in Puerto Rico, she is enchanted by the music (a fitting and ironic metaphor) and falls in love with a rich and powerful man, Don Pedro de Avila (Ferdinand Marian). She decides to stay in Puerto Rico while her aunt returns to Sweden, and marries Don Pedro. After the aunt leaves, the film jumps forward ten years, revealing an unhappy Astree with one ("Aryan"-looking) son, Juan (Michael Schulz-Dornburg). Astree no longer loves her husband, and they have different ideas on how to raise their son. Astree wants him to have Swedish values and be cultured, whereas Don Pedro wants him to be immersed in Puerto Rican culture, which includes bullfights. Astree wishes she could raise her son in Sweden and misses her home country terribly. When the film first cuts to ten years later, we are introduced to Dr. Nagel (Karl Martell), who is attending a party thrown by Ana. Dr. Nagel informs Ana that he is on his way to Puerto Rico to study the "Puerto Rican Fever" that is claiming the lives of many citizens. Ana asks him to find Astree and bring her home. When Dr. Nagel arrives in Puerto Rico, Don Pedro is informed of his presence, and he feels threatened by Dr. Nagel and attempts to forbid the doctor from researching the illness. However, Dr. Nagel secretly continues working on his cure in his hotel room. In the meantime, Astree has booked passage back to Sweden for herself and

her son, and when Don Pedro finds out, he is furious and believes that it is Dr. Nagel's fault. Don Pedro hosts a party and invites Dr. Nagel while he has his men search the doctors hotel room, who then destroy all of his research and the cure. At the party, Don Pedro falls ill with the Puerto Rican fever and dies because he seals his own fate by destroying the cure Dr. Nagel created. After Pedro's death, Astree is free to return back to Sweden with her renewed love, Dr. Nagel, and her son.

La Habanera is a unique film, which on the surface does not seem to hold much value for propaganda. However, it plays an important role in Goebbels' orchestra principle. Rentschler states:

> The German 'film world' (Filmwelt) enjoyed a reputation as a safe haven for dreams and illusions, as a sanctuary for beauty, privilege, and opportunity, as a place that prided itself on its cosmopolitan flare... German studios, it is said, allowed filmmakers to escape from the Nazi everyday and to create fictional realms unencumbered by ideological dictates and party doctrines. (127)

La Habanera functions as this escape of Nazi doctrines and the overwhelming recurring images of war, and of Nazis, their flags, their uniforms, and their marches. The film is devoid of Nazis and even of any Germans. The main characters are either Swedish or Puerto Rican, even though everyone is speaking German. However, the Swedish characters are representative of the "Aryan" race, and the Puerto Ricans are the 'other' or 'outsiders.' The structure of the narrative imposes the idea that the "Aryan" race must stay 'home' and should not be mystified by the 'other.'

The Puerto Ricans are characterized in opposition to the "Aryan" Swedes and are ultimately villainous. During Aunt Ana's visit in the beginning of the film, she refers to the Puerto Ricans as "filthy natives" and is repulsed by them and their country. Aunt Ana sees the country and the people negatively, even though Astree is originally enchanted by their

culture, music, and nature. When the audience is first introduced to Don Pedro de Avila, he is on horseback, which associates Puerto Ricans as an underdeveloped society. Don Pedro then takes Astree and Ana to a bullfight, which is brutish and violent. Astree and Ana are horrified by the bullfight and can barely watch it. This bullfight also points to the cruel and brutal nature of Puerto Rico, as this is an important cultural event for them. The man who sells Astree the boat tickets back to Sweden calls the Puerto Ricans "barbarians," which furthers the negative characterization of the foreigner. The Puerto Ricans are also stubborn and prideful. When Dr. Nagel first arrives, he goes straight to the hospital to get to work. However, before he enters, Puerto Rican doctors are discussing their arrival. They insist that Dr. Nagel will not be allowed to access a single drop of patients' blood or any information they have. One of the doctors says that Dr. Nagel must be smart because he arrived two days before they typically see fever outbreaks. However, the head doctor states, "There is no fever, gentlemen." He refuses to believe the fever exists and also rejects the help of Dr. Nagel.

The fear of the foreigner is an essential theme of this film in terms of Nazi ideology. Thomas R. Nadar points out, "The negative depiction of foreign cultures in the films may also represent the new order in Germany," and "*La Habanera* seems to demonstrate more pronounced xenophobic tendencies" (Reimer 75). Even though Astree in the beginning of the film is fascinated by Puerto Rico, she sees the error of her ways. Soon after Dr. Nagel arrives, the film shows a confrontation between Don Pedro and Astree. The scene begins with Don Pedro alone in a room, dressed in a suit, and holding a cane next to a vase the size of him, and a chair with a white dress laid on it. As he says, "Juan is nine years old," he aggressively touches the dress with the cane. He begins to walk away from the dress as he

says, "For 200 years the heir in our family upon reaching the age of nine has attended the bullfight on our patron saint's day." He forcefully drops his cane on the table and continues, "You can't prevent me from raising my son as my successor." He is now placed next to a doorway, puts his hands on his hips, then leans over and asks, "Do you hear me?" Don Pedro moves back over to the dress and rips it, while saying, "Don't accuse me of taking Juan from you too early. I've left him with you long enough. I've watched how you've made him into your friend and estranged him from me. You're cruel and egotistical." Astree then peeks out into the doorway, and Don Pedro moves further into the room, and the camera follows him. He continues his rant, now yelling, "I'm sorry I must tell you this. You want to make him into a Swede, but now I'm asserting my claim. I won't ask again! You must obey me!" While Don Pedro says this, he sits down in a chair at the back of the room in front of a large mirror. Astree is seen through the mirror as she moves through the doorway, and the film cuts to her as she calmly says, "Pedro, I know you very well that you don't have to ask me. You are the master here. Not just in this house, but on the entire island." She seems as if she has been beaten down and no longer has the energy and happiness she had in the beginning of the film. After she says this, she looks down and notices her torn dress, and before she can say anything, Don Pedro admits, "I tore it. You know that dress brings back unpleasant memories. I hate that dress! I asked you never to wear it again." Astree is clutching the dress, looking down, and responds, "Because an English marine officer once thought it was pretty. Your jealousy is really incomprehensible." Don Pedro says, "Perhaps for you. I know you'd deceive me with the first man to come along if you dared." He is assertive and aggressive, yet jealous and self-conscious. Astree tells him, "Believe me, I would dare, if it was what I wanted," as she walks away. Pedro says, "No, you wouldn't

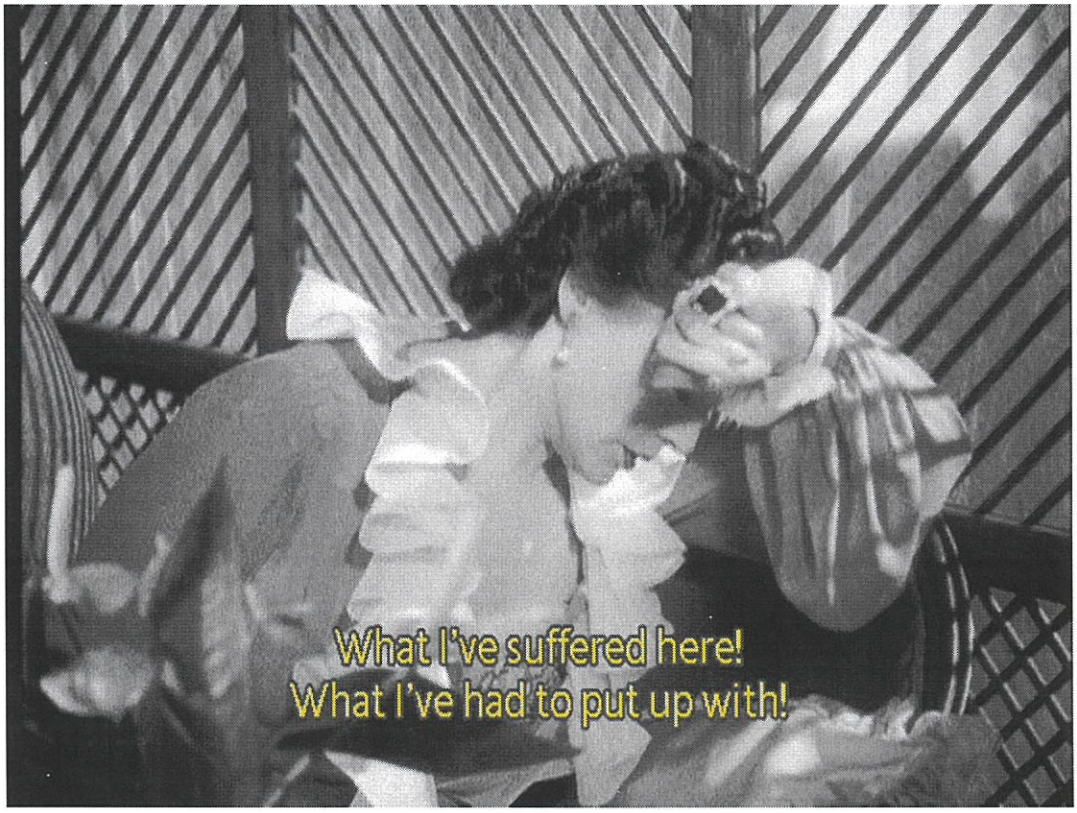
dare, because you know it would mean losing Juan to me. That's the only thing that stops you from leaving me." Astree responds, "Of course, you're right. I wouldn't dare because of Juan. But Pedro, at least don't force him to watch this horrid bullfight." This scene sets up the conflict between Don Pedro and Astree and the difficulties of cultural difference. Don Pedro wants to assert his right as a father and make his son into his Puerto Rican heir, whereas Astree wants him to have Swedish values and not be subjected to horrid violence. Don Pedro, in this scene, is loud and threatening, and Astree is quiet and submissive in her tone of voice and body language.

The film cuts to showing Juan getting dressed in a traditional Puerto Rican outfit, but then returns to Don Pedro and Astree fighting. Their argument about the bullfight continues, and as Don Pedro is standing tall by the window, Astree is sunken into a couch. She exclaims,

> What I've suffered here! What I've had to put up with! This country is still foreign to me, just as you are still foreign to me, everything is foreign. I've been abandoned by everyone, left all alone. Everything that seemed so charming ten years ago has turned repulsive: this eternal summer, the stupid gaiety that gets on my nerves, the 'Habanera' drives me crazy. I thought this was paradise, but it's hell. I feel the fever wind days in advance. This is the tenth season that I must endure it. Don't you understand that I am wasting away here?

Throughout this speech, the film cuts between Don Pedro angrily standing by the window, with shadows across his face and body, and Astree slumped over on the couch, looking down. Astree's commentary reinforces this idea of fear of the foreigner. She realizes the error she made by staying in a foreign country and marrying a foreign man. Puerto Rico,

she claims, is hell, and she belongs back in her native Sweden. Sierck uses dialogue to enforce this idea, as well as an active mise-en-scène. The characters are constantly moving throughout two rooms, making the scenario foreign to the audience. The arrangement of Astree on the couch and Pedro standing by the window during the speech places Astree in a vulnerable state, connected to the home and loneliness of inside and Don Pedro with power and a connection to the country outside. Astree does not belong in this foreign land, with a foreign man. She belongs with the "Aryan" race back in Sweden.



Throughout the film, there are three important songs that help juxtapose Sweden and Puerto Rico. The first, most obvious imperative song is the "Habanera." This song, which was Leander's most popular recording, was written for the film by Ufa staff musical writers Lothar Brühne and Bruno Balz (Reimer 73). The "Habanera" functions as the native Puerto Rican song that is repeated within the film in different iterations. The main lyric is,

"The wind sang me a song, of happiness too beautiful to describe." These lyrics are a reflection of the island of Puerto Rico, which initially captivates Astree's desire. Astree first hears the song with Ana at a small concert by the native islanders. Ana calls the music "noise" and is not amused by the song. On the cab ride to their hotel, which is intercepted by Don Pedro, the cab driver sings his version of the song as well. "It would seem everyone on the island knows this tune!" (Reimer 73). Since everyone seems to know it, the song operates as a unification of the Puerto Rican culture, which is attractive to Astree. When Astree and Ana are about to leave on the boat back to Sweden, it is the "Habanera" that 'convinces' her to run off the boat at the last minute and stay in Puerto Rico. When she reconnects with Don Pedro, she tells him "it was the 'Habanera' more than you" that gave me the courage to stay. Initially this song is engaging and promotes happiness, as the lyrics suggest. The song, both to the audience and the characters, brings people together and has a romantic feeling. However, as Astree says in her speech, it becomes a feeling of dread. The song acts as a "siren song," luring Astree into her demise. When the cab driver is singing, the music is upbeat and his voice is in a higher pitch. As well, when Astree hears the song from the boat, it sounds romantic and enticing.

The crucial scene in which the "Habanera" is sung is by Astree near the end of the film. During Don Pedro's party, in which he has invited Dr. Nagel so he can destroy his belongings, Dr. Nagel and Astree are reunited. Astree has conflicting feelings, as she deeply wants to return to Sweden with Juan and Dr. Nagel, but she feels trapped and as if she must stay with Don Pedro in Puerto Rico. As a woman and a wife, she must fulfill her wifely duties and make her husband happy. At the party, Astree asks Don Pedro if she can sing the 'Habanera' for him, which Don Pedro says "makes me very happy." Astree puts on a Puerto

Rican 'costume' that Don Pedro has made for her and sings the song in front of the guests. As the song begins, the camera pans across the band until it lands on Astree moving from behind an exotic flowering plant. This iteration of the song has a slow beat, and Leander's voice is in a lower octave. The song begins with, "In the night I am alone, watching and listening deep in my soul. Oh my heart do you hear how the palm trees sing and rustle. The wind sang me a song of happiness too beautiful to describe. It knows what causes my heart to long for whom it beats and burns like fire." Ironically, as Astree is singing about happiness, she looks somber, and her eyes are glazed over as she looks up. During different points in the song, the film shows both Don Pedro and Dr. Nagel making it ambiguous to whom she is singing and to whom her heart truly belongs. Since the song is in a lower octave and is slower, it shows the conflicted feelings of Astree and the disenchantment of the native culture for her. At the end of her singing is when Don Pedro dies from the fever. Astree's singing allows her to be free, which ironically means returning to Sweden, away from the "Habanera."

The final time the song is heard is when Astree is getting on the boat back to Sweden with Dr. Nagel and Juan. Nadar states, "The *mise en scène* (sic) is virtually identical to the opening sequence: passengers on a cruise ship sung to by native entertainers. This final reprise of the song serves as a reminder for Astree not only of the sorrows of her life there but also of the undeniable pleasures she experienced in these exotic surroundings" (Reimer 74). Astree states that she does not regret the last ten years, and the last words she utters are "La Habanera." A singular song holds so much meaning and drives an entire story. The song functions as a form of escape for Astree, just as the film does for the audience. The

song begins as a way to flee the monotony of life back home, but when she realizes home (Sweden) is where she belongs, the song once again allows her to break free.



There are two other songs within the film that act in contrast to the "Habanera." Sierck himself wrote the lyrics of both of these songs. The first song is "You Cannot Know," which within the film is written by Astree. Sierck regarded the musical sequence in which it is sung as the most important of the film (Reimer 72). Astree and Juan are sitting by the piano talking about the snow in Sweden and how beautiful it is there ("Much more beautiful than here [Puerto Rico]" – Astree), and he asks if she will play him the song he wrote for him. She agrees, but tells him he must come closer because she has to sing it quietly. She must be quiet because she does not want Don Pedro to hear, as the Nordic song of Sweden will anger him. The song begins, "You just cannot know how there are twirling white swirls of snow / You just cannot know how silent the house stands when the winter

wind blows / A star melts on the tip of your nose while hundreds of more kiss your cheek." When Astree is singing this song to her son, she is smiling, and the tone of the song feels happy. This is in contrast to when she sings the somber "Habanera" with an emotion of sorrow. The song reflects her life back in Sweden and the beautiful white snow that does not exist in Puerto Rico. Thinking of home brings her joy, as well as the thought of Christmas in Sweden. The lyrics, "you just cannot know," shows her desire for her son to be raised in Sweden and know the joys of her homeland. Juan is a very "Aryan" looking child, with perfect blond hair, and obviously looks as though he belongs in an "Aryan" country. Within the song, Astree sings about practicing a Christmas song with Juan quietly. Within the context of the song, the audience sees the repression she feels from Puerto Rico and Don Pedro, and the joy she desires that going back to Sweden will provide. The song drives the narrative forward and compactly expresses the longing for home, the contempt for where she is, and her connection to her son. The song ends with, "From heaven on high. All of these things you cannot know," as she embraces Juan, almost in tears. Juan tells Astree that he wants to go to Sweden, and Astree tells him they will. From heaven on high is a direct quote from a quintessential German Christmas carol written by Martin Luther (Reimer 72). This connects the song and Astree to German/"Aryan" tradition and her desire for Juan to be a part of it.



The other song, which Sierck also wrote the lyrics for, is the "*Kinderlied*" ("Child's song"). This song is a combination of a nursery rhyme and bedtime song. Astree and Juan sing it together playfully, both smiling. The song's lyrics include the alphabet and lines such as, "The snow in the garden is up to my knees. The cuckoo sang the summer long, in our woods its cuckoo song." The cuckoo is reminiscent of Northern Europe, just like the snow. This song has a similar impact as "You Cannot Know," showing Astree's longing for home and Juan's desire to find his roots in Sweden. As Nadar points out, "[H]e (Sierck) uses the duet to lighten the mood of the film by positioning it between two dramatic expository scenes dealing with the outbreak of tropical fever on the island" (Reimer 73). The music then functions to drive the narrative forward, provide information for the viewer, and contribute to the ideological assertions.

The music in *La Habanera* provides entertainment to the viewer, while also serving a narrative purpose. The function of this film within the canon of Nazi propaganda is rooted in its escapist entertainment value. Nadar argues that *La Habanera* was "primarily intended as entertainment of purely escapist nature, containing virtually no political references or undertones" (Reimer 74). The overall lack of politics in this film is both true and important.

As Rentschler states, "The Ministry of Propaganda relied on cinema to divert the masses as well as to direct their attentions; it used displaced settings to enact and resolve domestic dilemmas" (125). The film does contain Nazi ideology in the form of the *Heimat* (the relationship of Germans to their homeland), however, lacks a political affinity by having no direct reference to Nazism. The film distracts the audience from their everyday lives and the military operations of the Nazis. This film was made during the time in which Germany intervened in the Spanish Civil war, so in order to divert the attention of the masses, a non-political entertainment film was necessary. It is important to remember, and break the myth, that a very low percentage of films made by the Third Reich were overt in its propaganda. Distraction is a key part in the overall operation of cinema by Goebbels.

The absence of politics is also due to Detlev Sierck. The films Sierck made in Germany are considered aesthetic resistance (Rentschler 127). Sierck left Germany in 1937 soon after the release of this film and became a prominent director in Hollywood under the name Douglas Sirk. He is well known for his contribution to the genre of Melodrama, with films such as *Imitation of Life* (1959). However, the scriptwriter for *La Habanera,* Gerhard Menzel, was a known Nazi and party loyalist (Rentschler 131). There is an interesting dichotomy between the Nazi opposing director and the pro-Nazi scriptwriter. As we have seen, this film is not fully devoid of Nazi ideologies. As Rentschler points out, "Various elements of Menzel's script echoed Nazi politics: the racist separation between a civilized and a primitive world, its anticapitalism (sic) and anti-Americanism, its *Heim ins Reich* rhetoric" (132). However, on the surface the film provides an entertaining narrative with enchanting music and a beautiful actress. This film is a fantastic combination of underlying Nazi ideologies and a form of amusing distraction for the German audience.

It was no accident that Goebbels chose to allow *La Habanera* to be directed by Sierck, a known leftist, and star Leander, who was initially thought to be an "enemy of the Germans" (Rentschler 135). "Goebbels wanted directors such as Sierck and players such as Leander, that their talents did not stand outside the party's program, but fit readily into the ProMi's designs" (Rentschler 135). Sierck had a talent for the implementation of music, creating a compelling melodrama, and having a beautiful and active mise-en-scène. In order to fulfill Goebbels' vision of a whole cinema, he must allow pure entertainment films as a means to keep the audience engaged. If the audience were seeing countless overt forms of propaganda, they would stop going to the movies. As Rentschler states,

> The Ministry of Propaganda recognized the reality of needs not satisfied in everyday life. Goebbels fostered films that addressed those needs, meeting those desires half way in an attempt to regulate errant emotions... The cinema served the minister as a site of illusion and delusion: one got one's cake, and it tasted sweet even though it was laced with bitter ingredients. Films like *La Habanera* demonstrated that excess, irony, and distanciation that could reaffirm rather than destabilize the status quo. (144)

The illusion of *La Habanera* lies within the three main songs, enchanting both the characters and the audience. The music allows and creates an underlying ideological affirmation that juxtaposes two cultures, asserting that women should not wander from their Aryan *Heimat.*

Wunschkonzert is distinguished from *La Habanera* as it has obvious propagandistic tones, which glorify the Nazis and the military. However, the conception of the film is also in based on terms of entertainment using music. O'Brien states,

> In order to generate widespread optimism, Goebbels conceived the motion picture *Wunschkonzert* (Request Concert) based on an immensely popular radio show featuring soldiers' musical requests. Goebbels personally worked on the screenplay and chose much of the cast... Borsody's film has two stars: the Second World War and armed forced radio. In *Wunschkonzert* war takes place on the symbolic level of

> art and popular entertainment and is presented in terms of musical performance, sport, technology, comedy, and heroism. (121-122)

The function of this film lies in both its ability to "generate optimism" and celebrate heroism and war. The combination of the radio show and narrative sub-stories provides an interestingly heightened form of propagandistic entertainment.

Wunschkonzert begins in 1936 at the Berlin Olympics where a Flight Lieutenant, Herbert Koch (Carl Raddatz), meets Inge Wagner (Ilse Werner), and within a few days they fall in love. However, before they are able to get married, Herbert is called away to the Spanish civil war where he is unable to have any contact and cannot even tell Inge where he is. Three years go by, setting the story now in September of 1939, and Inge cannot forget Herbert, even though she never hears from him. Herbert and his fellow soldiers are talking around a plane about the "Request Concert," and he gives them 20 *Marks* to donate to the radio and requests the Olympic fanfare. In requesting this song he hopes that Inge will be listening. As WWII begins, a few of Inge's friends are recruited into the war and Helmut (Joachim Bennecke), whom wants to marry Inge, is stationed with Herbert. Inge is able to find and contact Helmut, and they set a time to meet each other in Hamburg. Before Herbert can meet Inge, he and Helmut must go out on a reconnaissance flight, during which they crash over the Atlantic. They are rescued by a German U-boat and taken to the hospital, where he and Inge are reunited. The film intercuts between this narrative story and others and a live recording of the "Wunschkonzert" in Berlin.

The story beginning at the Olympics is significant, both in terms of music and archival footage of the opening ceremony. The film begins by showing the unification of the German people, as well as images of Hitler at the ceremony, taken from archival footage. The actual Olympic events are not shown, only the opening ceremony. As Hitler and the

people arrive, triumphant music plays and the film shows the masses saluting. By not showing the sporting events, the emphasis is placed on the collective of the German people and a theatrical ritual (O'Brien 125). The film uses multiple aerial shots of the crowds as Hitler comes into the arena and the sports teams march. Three countries are shown before Germany comes in with a standing ovation. The three other countries are, Japan, Sweden, and Italy. These are the only countries present in the film because of their political or Aryan connection to Germany. These countries can be cheered on because Japan and Italy are axis powers that are on the side of the Germans. The Swedish are not as politically connected to Germany, but fall under the Aryan ideal and do not pose a threat to the Germans. However, when the Germans come into the arena, the masses are brought to their feet. As O'Brien states,

> German uniqueness is cinematically demonstrated by a musical variation of the Olympic fanfare upon the athletes' arrival and by an aerial shot of their marching columns. Since Germany has the largest contingency and the only one framed in an extreme long shot, German superiority is confirmed in visual terms. (126)

The film begins by placing the Germans within an attractive aesthetic form and creating a unifying environment that the audience of the film can feel a part of, or where they remember being in person. When the Germans are shown, the film cuts to a shot of a flock of birds flying above the arena, symbolizing freedom and unity. The film also shows many shots of Nazi flags with the large swastika taking over the frame. Throughout this entire sequence, the music is jubilant and a prominent technique in asserting the Germans as superior and undivided.

Wunschkonzert was a highly successful film in terms of the masses it reached. It was one of the highest grossing films of the Third Reich and was seen by an estimated 26.5 million people (O'Brien 121). The effectiveness of this film lies in its combination of the

musical radio and the visual aesthetics of cinema. The film in centered on the "*Wunschkonzert für die Wehrmacht*" (Request concert for the armed forces), which began in October of 1939 and aired every Sunday afternoon (O'Brien 123). The film provided the unification of the radio program with entertaining story lines in visual form. O'Brien states,

> The manner in which the motion picture *Wunschkonzert* utilizes the media of radio and film to capitalize on changes in perception caused by technological advances corresponds to Walter Benjamin's theory of the fascist aesthetic. In his essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,' Benjamin notes that new technologies seek to fulfill 'the desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly.' Borsody's film satisfies both longings. By incorporating into the medium of film a successful radio program that stresses audience participation and unites soldier and civilian, *Wunschkonzert* overcomes physical distance and emotional separation. Furthermore, by connecting each emotionally charged wartime experiences with a sentimental musical performance, it also triumphs over the coldly impersonal aspect of the scientific age. Finally, *Wunschkonzert* brings things closer spatially and humanly by providing a visual image of famous personalities known only by sound in the radio program and by framing newsreel footage within the context of a fictional but very human story. (124)

Furthermore, the music of the radio program and in terms of diegetic sound fulfills this theory. The music within the film plays a crucial role in bringing the people of Germany and the characters together. Had it not been for music, Herbert and Inge would not be reunited. As O'Brien said, the film takes a popular radio show and humanizes it in terms of visuals, but the film also connects the characters through the radio show and music. Mothers and wives back home feel connected to the soldiers abroad, and the audience of the film feels connected both to the radio show and the characters surrounding it.

An important story within this film is that of Schwarzkopf (Walter Ladengast). The audience is first introduced to Schwarzkopf by auditory means. One of the other characters, Friedrich (Malte Jaeger), is tending to his pregnant wife, when he goes up to his neighbor, Schwarzkopf's, apartment. As Friedrich is walking up the stairs in the apartment building,

the piano starts to be heard. Friedrich enters the apartment, and the film shows Schwarzkopf sitting at the piano, with his mother knitting at a table next to him. Schwarzkopf looks at Friedrich and says, "Beethoven." Friedrich smiles and takes a seat to listen to the music. Another character who is visiting Friedrich and his wife comes up to tell Friedrich the coffee is ready, but when he enters, before he can finish his sentence, Friedrich tells him, "Shhh, Beethoven." The man takes a seat to listen as well. The wife then hears the music and comes up to join in the listening. When she enters, the man says, "Beethoven." The film shows close-ups of each character, exhibiting their enchantment with the music. The film then frames the characters smiling around Schwarzkopf as he continues to play. Sitting above Schwarzkopf's piano is a bust of Beethoven, shown as if he is also listening with the others. The film has created a small community, with the men all in uniform, centered on musical mastery and a shared appreciation of the German musical icon. The film cuts to a shot outside the window of soldiers marching in the street singing while others salute them. Music is connected to the family as well as the soldier and military unit. O'Brien points out,

> Well before it assumed power in 1933, the Nazi Party attempted to use cultural heroes like Ludwig van Beethoven to legitimize its political agenda. Beethoven was promoted as an artist who, like Adolf Hitler, embodied National Socialist heroic ideals. Music scholars drew explicit parallels between Beethoven and Hitler, emphasizing their artistry, patriotism, and leadership qualities. Critics portrayed Beethoven as not just a great composer but also a legendary spiritual leader who could unify the folk with his powerful art. (131)

The music of Beethoven connects the characters in the film together, as well as the audience to the film. Within the film, the word "Beethoven" carries so much meaning that no further words are necessary. Each time a character tells another, "Beethoven," they are immediately enthralled and cannot stop listening. The music of Beethoven within the film

is then also connected to the power of music to unify the German people, as it cuts to the soldiers marching.



Later in the film, Schwarzkopf plays another critical role in terms of music. After the U-boat has rescued Herbert and Helmut, the film cuts to a group of soldiers tactfully moving through a street full of rubble next to a church with a giant statue of Jesus on the cross. Friedrich and Schwarzkopf are ordered to be a lookout in the church and only fire when attacked. The rest of the battalion moves through a field full of landmines, with orders to meet back at the church if they get lost. However, the sky is dark and the field is covered with fog, and the troops cannot find their way back. Schwarzkopf, while on lookout, realizes that his fellow soldiers are lost in the fog and cannot see how to return to the church. In a heroic act to help them return, he begins to play the organ in the church. Schwarzkopf knows that this will draw the enemy to him and disclose his location, but he

plays anyway. While he is playing, the church is bombed and Schwarzkopf is killed. He dies at the piano, with no wife or child to remember him, only his mother and his music. His act of heroism is directly linked to music. As O'Brien states,

> Ironically, the soldier who does not fire a single shot saves his unit. Schwarzkopf's death is staged with religious iconography that exalts his sacrifice but shifts it from Christian to Nazi martyrdom. His death is set to organ music, a variation on Bach and the Olympic fanfare, which suggests a bridge between Germany's glorious past and the Nazi present. (130)

The act of heroism does not glorify murder, but is shaped in a way that allows the common folk to be included. Schwarzkopf is both a musician and soldier, and the two are linked. He is connected to the past, present, and future. The past is resembled by the music of the old German 'greats.' The present is his Nazi sacrifice and heroism. And the future is that of his legacy and the continuation of the rest of his battalion.



The final fifteen minutes of the film provide the largest connection between the "Request Concert" and the stories in the film. These final minutes also connect all of Germany to the music within the radio. Featured in the "Request Concert" are a traditional Bavarian man, a children's choir, a popular and beautiful female performer, and large orchestral pieces. At one point, the radio announcer introduces the next song, "Gutte Nacht Mutter" by saying, "Dear soldiers and listeners, a mother has called, one of many mothers, whose son has died in action. His comrades removed his dog tag and sent his possessions to his mother. The mother has told us, 'I have the notebook of my beloved son, on the last page he wrote down a song that he loved to sing. It's called, 'Good Night, Mother.' Can I hear it one last time?'" During this song, the film cuts (while the song is still playing) to the camera tight on a radio. The camera slowly pans over a piano, revealing a photo of Schwarzkopf on a table next to the piano. The camera then stops on a medium shot of Schwarzkopf's mother sitting at the same table she sat listening to him play Beethoven, reading the notebook, with tears streaming down her face. This sequence shows the ability of music to play with emotions, both in terms of the audience and the characters. This song is powerful in connection to the visual reveal of Schwarzkopf's piano and crying mother. The combination of the impassioned orchestral piece in the radio with the visual aesthetic of the scene creates a poignant piece of propaganda.

While the radio concert persists, the film shows shots of different groups listening. The audience sees soldiers, families, wives, mothers, men, women, and children, all listening to the same radio broadcast. The film literally unifies the German *Volk* around the radio program and music. As well, the audience of the film is connected to others in the audience and those listening to the radio. The audience will now be enticed to listen to this

program, if they have not already been. The combination of elements to unify the *Volk* is what makes this film so affective. As O'Brien states,

> *Wunschkonzert* visualizes armed forces' radio for moviegoers to illustrate how soldiers and civilians can form a single unified front... Each wartime experience is narratively linked to a musical performance on the radio, which unites the folk in its support of the war and in its consumption of entertainment. The radio, rather than any single character or narrative strand, becomes the unifying principle in Borsody's film and the means to achieve the *Volksgemeinshaft,* a harmonious notational community bound by blood and cultural traditions. (122)

This film functions as the ideal creation of entertaining propaganda for Goebbels. It allows the German audiences to feel connected and supportive of the war, entertains them, and drives their desire for more entertainment and propagandistic entities.



Even though *La Habanera* and *Wunschkonzert* approach the idea of propaganda differently, they have a similar affect. Both provide entertainment for the audience, as well

as uphold Nazi ideologies. Music in both films helps form and establish the characters for the audience to identify with and feel emotionally connected to. O'Brien states,

> Every effort was made to boost morale and ensure that civilian life remained as stable as possible. Going to the movies and listening to the radio could provide distraction from food and coal shortages or worries over family members in the service. Motion pictures could play an important role in raising everyone's spirits, and keeping movie theaters open would demonstrate the unbroken continuity and power of German culture even under duress. Goebbels promised, "The darker the streets are, the brighter our theaters and movie houses will shine in the splendor of lights. (120)

Both of these films came at critical times when Germany was at war. By drawing on a shared pride in German cultural history, they suggested a heroic future of the Third Reich. The films boosted morale and entertained the masses. They made the Germans feel connected to their family and community, history and values, through music as a symbol of patriotic pride employed in film.

Chapter 3

Representations of Anti-Semitism



Within a year and half, the Third Reich released three notorious and important anti-Semitic films. However, these three films approach anti-Semitism in different ways, each contributing to the "orchestra" of Goebbels' filmic reign. The first of these films to be released was Hans. H. Zerlett's *Robert und Betram* in July of 1939. Over a year later, Veit Harlan's *Jud Süss* made its début in September of 1940, followed in November by Fritz Hippler's *Der Ewige Jude (The Eternal Jew).* Zerlett's film is a lighthearted musical comedy, which depicts Jews as bumbling fools. Harlan's film is a dark melodrama that portrays Jews as evil incarnate. In contrast, Hippler's film is a "documentary" characterizing Jews as vermin and bestial. The first two films are entertaining, while the third is supposed to be "informative."

Robert und Betram tells the story of two vagabonds, who are Robin Hoods of sorts, who escape from jail and go on an adventure. Before the story begins, the audience is told that "This is the story of two vagabonds who, in spite of their misdeeds, went to heaven because they possessed the most beautiful of human virtues: gratitude." The first scene begins at an inn where two men are wooing a young woman, Lenchen (Carla Rust). One of the men, Herr Biedermeier (Arthur Schröder), is extremely forward and attempts to

blackmail Lenchen's father into letting him marry Lenchen because the father is in his debt. The other man, Michael (Heinz Schorlemmer), is soft and awkward and spends most of his time alone. He carves a heart with their names in a tree, but cannot admit to Lenchen that he loves and wants to marry her. Michael is about to go off and join the army, and on his way, he goes to see his uncle, Strambach (Fritz Kampers), the jail warden where the vagabonds are locked up. While Michael is visiting the jail, Robert and Betram find each other in their cells and manage to escape together, locking Michael and Strambach in one of their cells. As the vagabonds escape, they wander into Lenchen's inn and ask for work in exchange for food. The inn is hosting a wedding, and as the vagabonds introduce themselves as musicians, they are asked to perform. As they are performing a song they get money from the listeners and steal Biedermeier's wallet. Later they examine the contents of the wallet and find a letter that says he owes a large sum of money to a man named Ipelmeyer (Herbert Hübner). The vagabonds find Ipelmeyer, who is a rich Jew, and swindle their way into an invitation to his party, claiming that one of them is a famous music instructor and the other his star student. While there, they steal all of the Jews' jewels, which they send to Lenchen. In their package to Lenchen they include a note that explains that these jewels can be used to pay off Biedermeier so he can no longer blackmail Lenchen into marriage, and then Biedermeier can pay off Ipelmeyer with his own jewels, therefore returning what they stole to the original owner. The vagabonds then move on to a fair dressed as women, which leads to chase where they escape in a hot air balloon that takes them to heaven.

The film is based on a play, first staged in 1856, written by Gutav Räder. The film follows the basic story line, but Zerlett changed some key details and this makes the film

more anti-Semitic than the original version. The story of Robert and Betram was not considered anti-Semitic until the 1939 film version (Tegel 117). Zerlett changed a few key lines to emphasize the negative aspects of the Jewish characters. However, the main difference between the play and the film is the ending. In the original version, the Jewish servant teams up with the police and they capture the vagabonds and bring them to justice. However, in 1939, Jews are not supposed to be on the side of the law, which makes this ending impossible. As well, in 1939, it seems as though the vagabonds have not truly committed any crime. Their biggest transgression was stealing from the Jews, but since in the eyes of the Nazi's, Jews are not people, it is not considered theft. In essence, the vagabonds have saved the pure Aryan bloodline and helped Aryans in need. Although Biedermeier is not Jewish himself, he is in cohorts of sorts with Jews, which makes him scandalous by association. Because Robert and Betram gave the money to Lenchen, it allows her and Michael to be married, and everyone lives happily ever after, except the Jews.

Robert und Betram effectively affirms and reiterates the stereotypes that already existed against Jews, and does so in a few key ways. The first way is through language. The Jewish characters speak what the Aryan's would call a "butchered" form of German. This butchered form is a mix between Yiddish and German, which causes the Jews to both mispronounce and misuse words. In the hilarious sequence at Ipelmeyer's masquerade ball there are many comedic moments in which the Jews are shown as idiots. During the ball, Ipelmeyer's daughter, Isadora (Tatjana Sais) is dressed as Cleopatra, who the servant, Jack (Robert Dorsay) calls "Queen Kleptomania." This is a double-edged joke that Zerlett added, which both points to his stupidity in not knowing history and language, and also references

the Jews desire for money (Tegel 119). In another moment at the ball, Frau Ipelmeyer (Inge van der Straaten) recognizes her lover, Fochheimer (Erwin Biegel), which surprises him, because he believes he has a good costume. Frau Ipelemeyer comments that she recognizes him from his feet. Again, this joke comes in two forms. The first is that she pronounces the German word for foot, as *"Fiss"* instead of the correct *Füss*. Her mispronunciation is due to her Yiddish accent, marking her as not a "real" German. The other part to this joke comes from the Jewish stereotype that Jews are flat footed. In today's viewing, this joke would mostly be lost on the audience, since this is not a prominent issue. However, the reason that Jews being flat-footed was more relevant in WWII Germany is due to that flat-footed people were considered unfit for military service, making them useless and not 'strong' enough. The language issues of this film come off as a joke, yet are most often at the expense of Jews, therefore making the audience view them as inferior.

The second way in which Jews become their stereotypes in this film is through money. Jews' affinity for money is one of the biggest stereotypes attributed to Jews both in the past and the present. Jews are seen as greedy and stingy, especially when they are rich. Ipelmeyer is shown to care a great deal about money. Ipelmeyer's bookkeeper, Samuel (Arnim Münch) is in love with his daughter and wishes to marry her. However, Ipelmeyer does not approve of this match because Samuel doesn't make enough money. When the bookkeeper asks Ipelmeyer for the daughter's hand with the claim of how much he loves her, Ipelmeyer replies with "Are you meschugge? What does 'love' mean on 600 talers a year wages? My daughter will not 'love' for less than a million." "Meshugge" is a Yiddish word meaning crazy. The use of this word re-inscribes his Jewish nature. Even though Ipelmeyer is already rich himself, he is shown as greedy, wanting more money through the

'selling' of his daughter. Ironically, Ipelmeyer sets his wages, so there is no hope for poor Samuel.

Another indication of anti-Semitic stereotyping in the film is through appearance. Ipelmeyer lives a lavish life style, throwing massive elegant balls while he and his family wear extravagant and showy jewelry and clothing. It was suggested by the Nazis that Jews would attempt to fit in with 'high' German society by wearing Aryan attire and shaving their beards. The long unkempt beard with the side curls, with the hats and robes, were seen as clues and markers to identify a Jew (Gitlis 175). This point is also mentioned heavily in *The Eternal Jew,* as the film attempts to show the audience how to identify a Jew in order to avoid them. The latter film also shows that some Jews have tried to hide their identities by changing their clothes and shaving, but a "trained eye can still detect a 'hidden' Jew." Before the ball begins in *Robert und Betram,* each character is shown in their rooms changing into their costume. The camera tracks from room to room, outside the windows. While the camera is tracking by a room, each character, respectively, goes and shuts the blinds on the camera. This effect insinuates the 'masking' of the identities as the Jews put on the garb to fit into history and society. The camera has a voyeuristic effect that puts the audience in a feeling of power. Symbolically, this scene encourages audience members not to be fooled by the Jews who change their appearance to fit in. As the characters shut the blinds, they are attempting to hide their changes, in order to fool the others. Each costume is at some point made fun of, or called by the wrong name. Samuel's costume is a knight's armor, which leads to a comedic interaction with each character. During the ball, Isodora asks Samuel to dance, which he has to decline because he cannot move well in the metal suit. Isodora teases him into thinking they could make love, which is

impossible for Samuel due to the suit. Samuel's costume is rather ironic because he is attempting to be a strong and capable man, but ultimately, he is not. As we see in the interaction between Fochheimer and Frau Ipelmeyer, Jews are not fit to be soldiers due to their flat feet. Therefore, Samuel fails at being a knight, which also makes him fail to be a man, in the eyes of the Nazis. Not only has Samuel failed to mask himself as a man and a soldier, he has failed to appear as a 'real' German.

Another key way in which the Jewish characters are stereotyped is through their sexual promiscuity. Both Herr and Frau Ipelmeyer are having affairs. During the ball there is a break for a group of ballerinas to perform a dance. The camera tracks over everyone watching, and we see Fochheimer try to grab at Frau Ipelmeyer. The camera then moves over to Ipelmeyer as he is talking to his doctor. The doctor greets Ipelmeyer by his name, and Ipelmeyer asks how he recognizes him. The doctor responds with, "If I couldn't tell by the pronunciation, I would know by your wayward glances at the dance soloist," as the camera cuts back to a medium shot of the ballerina. Again there is a double jab at the Jew for his language as well as his sexual desires. The exchange between the doctor and Ipelmeyer continues as Ipelmeyer points out that it was the doctor who recommended the to soloist to him in the first place. However, the doctor tells Ipelmeyer that he is not allowed to touch her, because he is married. To which Ipelmeyer responds, "Your worries, and my money." This perpetuates the impression that a Jew is concerned with both money and sex. Ironically, it is his money that also allows Ipelmeyer to be promiscuous. Ipelmeyer then tells the doctor that he should be less worried about his desires and more concerned about his health. The implication here is that Ipelmeyer is in some way impotent, and the only way to continue his sexual desires is with the help of medicine. This again affirms that

Ipelmeyer must spend money, and take medicine in order to maintain his sexual appetite, which presents the Jew as 'negative' in many regards. The doctor goes to Jack and requests he fetch his medicine case. Jack asks if everything is alright, to which the doctor responds, yes but Ipelmeyer must have his medication. Jack says, "No wonder. What a life he (Ipelmeyer) leads." These interactions indicate again that the medicine is for Ipelmeyer to fornicate with the ballerina. When Jack brings the doctor his case the doctor implies that the medicine is poison. Jack responds with, "You've got a lot of Zionism," and the doctor replies, "I suppose you mean cynicism," and Jack says, "Well, that depends." The mistaking of the word Zionism for cynicism both makes Jack look dumb, and again connects Judaism to a negative attribute, cynicism. As Jack leaves, the camera moves into a close-up of the doctor's hands in his case. He reaches for a bottle, which he puts back, then pulls out a case labeled "sleeping powder." The film then cuts to Ipelmeyer talking to the ballerina, telling her he has an offer and wants to see her in his office. She tells him she must change her outfit, which Ipelmeyer says he would like to observe. When Ipelmeyer goes to take his medicine, he is really taking the sleeping powder, which makes him fall asleep on his chair, making it easy for Robert and Betram to steal his jewels. It is ironic that his Jew's lust is what leads him to being robbed. It was not only Herr Ipelmeyer that was fooled by lust, but also Frau Ipelmeyer. Betram is heavily flirting and caressing Frau Ipelmeyer while he takes off all of her jewelry. Due to the sexual attention that Frau Ipelmeyer is receiving, she doesn't notice her jewelry is missing until later.



In addition to portraying the Jewish characters as conforming to such negative stereotypes, the film builds up the "Aryan" characters, especially that of Michael. At the beginning of the film, Michael is weak and unfit to breed. He has long and messy blonde hair with unfitting clothes. He has difficulty talking to Lenchen and has no confidence. When he goes to visit his Uncle, Strambach, on his way to the army, he is the subject of laughter. While at the jail, he and his uncle reunite and discuss his journey to the army. During this time, Betram is being detained in his jail cell, which he doesn't know is right below where Robert is held. Robert cuts through the floor and manages to make a hole. When the hole is finished, Robert and Betram are reunified. In a hilarious sequence, Robert and Betram manage to lock Michael and Strambach in one of the cells as the vagabonds escape. This sequence is made to make Michael look like a fool. While Robert and Betram are at the inn with Lenchen, the film cuts to a scene of Michael training with the army. The

men are learning how to use and carry their rifles, but Michael keeps dropping his and messing up the routine, which again shows Michael's incompetence. Later, when Lenchen and her father receive the package from the vagabonds, Michael confidently bursts through the door. He is dressed in perfect uniform, with his hair in pristine condition. He gives Lenchen their engagement ring and they share an embrace. Lenchen is impressed with his transition, and he is now a robust man who is able to provide for and create a family. The film thus suggests to the audience that to become a man and be able to contribute to society, one must join the military. While the film is promoting anti-Semitic values, it is also encouraging the men to become soldiers and slyly implying they join the Nazi party. By showing the audience that boys become men if they join the army, the film shows them that joining the Nazi party will win them the respect of their women and society. It is important for propaganda films to provide a juxtaposition between the negative and positive characters and their attributes. Although Robert and Betram are the main protagonists of the film, they are still slightly unlawful, which does not make them substantial enough to be the contrasting positive characters to the Jews. The film must provide a secure and forceful Aryan character for the audience to identify with and look up to.

Throughout the film, music plays an interesting and important role. However, there are a few contrasting uses of the music. The film is categorized as a musical mostly due to how much Robert and Betram sing and dance, which is usually used as a ruse for them to steal or escape. The vagabonds' singing and dancing provides additional entertainment value of the film for the audience. Music is a great way to take ones mind off the negatives and accentuate emotions – which in the case of this film is joy and laughter. Music is also a way to bring people together and create a community, which is where the term 'folk' music

comes from. The German word '*Volk*,' translates to 'nation' or 'people,' and the attempt of music is to form the '*Volk*.' In a lot of ways, the audience, and the characters, are brought together through the songs and can become lost in the music. However, Tegel points out,

> The music may also have caused offence. The characters sing well-known arias from Mozart, Beethoven, Weber and Schubert, but often with different words, spoofing sacred German classical music tradition. This will have offended members of the *Musikkammer* (music board). Folk song – so differently deployed in *Triumph of the Will* – is also parodied, which for some again was no laughing matter. (123)

It is hard to say what the audiences of the time thought while viewing the film, but there are two possibilities. One is that the Germans in the audience appreciated and enjoyed hearing familiar songs that remind them of Germany's rich and illustrious musical history. Germany had numerous famous classical musicians, which enhanced society. When hearing these arias the common folk in the movie theater could imagine a time that they could be at an orchestral concert. However, Tegel's argument might also be correct, and the audience could not enjoy hearing these classic songs being butchered and mocked. However, whether or not the audience appreciated these songs, the sentiment and potential for gratification remained. The purpose of the music is a distraction. The audience came to the movies to be entertained and escape their everyday lives, and to be transported into another realm. The music of this film helped with this, as it encouraged the audience think of something other than the life outside the theater, whether or not in a good or bad way.

The entertainment value of this film is undoubtedly high, and effectively perpetuated anti-Semitic attitudes while providing comedic relief. *Robert und Betram* is light hearted, and even today, it holds its charm and enjoyment. O'Brien states,

> Happy and carefree people populate the silly and harmless world of the farce. This philosophy has serious consequences when applied to the absurd and unbelievable aspects of everyday life in Nazi Germany. *Robert und Betram* frames the expropriation of Jewish property as socially just, fun, and within a historical

> tradition, and the studio publicly stated that it wanted viewers to draw parallels to the contemporary treatment of Jews in Germany. In a similar manner, the film shows how asocials are literally eliminated from the picture and imprisoned in a place imagined as paradise, while the publicity campaign spells out how central work is to the identity of the national community. This musical farce trains viewers to hum the pleasant tunes, adopt the carefree attitude, revisit the calming or funny images, and adjust one's mind to the notion that the absurd, no matter how unbelievable, is part of everyday reality in the Third Reich. (45)

By promoting anti-Semitism in a comedic way, the film desensitized the audience to the perils they would find in reality, and encouraged them to believe that Jews were not 'real' people, and even further, that they would be better off without them around. Jews are presented as a threat to their bloodline, and as inclined towards sexual promiscuity. The film suggests that those who help the German community, even at the expense of the Jews, will be rewarded. Entertained by the music and film, the audience has the potential to be diverted from the perils of their reality.

Even though this film is an exemplary entertaining propaganda film, Goebbels' did not believe it to be the best work. He wrote in his diary: "Examined the film *Robert und Betram:* a weak piece of work by Zerlett ... The Jewish problem is touched upon very superficially, without any real empathy" (Tegel 123). According to Goebbels, the film seemed to not be harsh enough against the Jews. It is possible that Goebbels believed that the audience may not have fully picked up on the hatred for Jews that he deems necessary because *Robert und Betram* only shows the stereotypes that were already in the minds of the people and does not show Jews as a threat or danger. The film lacks a full empathetic character that has been hurt by the Jews. The film shows anti-Semitism in a buoyant manner and merely affirms the already held stereotypes of Jews, but does not push further. As Rentschler, in reference to *Robert und Betram,* states, "What is most surprising and shocking about the film, Enno Patalas later observed, is the fact that the anti-Semitism of

1939 has nothing special about it; it draws on paradigms and clichés of long standing" (153). However, even though *Robert und Betram* is not considered a perfect form of propaganda by Goebbels, it still accentuates the combination of entertainment and anti-Semitic values in a single film. It is a pertinent example of the kind of film released at the height of the Nazi Regime and provides a key example of how Jews were viewed and characterized within film and media.

A year after the release of *Robert und Betram,* the most infamous and notorious anti-Semitic film, *Jud Süss,* was released. This film was a great success in the eyes of Goebbels, Hitler, and the German people. It is considered to be the most effective anti-Semitic propaganda film released by the Third Reich and remains the most widely discussed Nazi propaganda film. The film was directed by Veit Harlan, who after the war was tried for "crimes against humanity." The trial attempted to say that the film helped in allowing the Nazis to use the final solution. Harlan was ultimately acquitted, but his career and reputation were scarred for the rest of his life (Rentschler 166). Sociologically and lawfully it was difficult to determine the exact influence that a film can have on a populace. However, it is undeniable that this film was immensely popular and became the quintessential example of an entertaining form of propaganda.

The film begins with an overture of the famous German song, "My Thoughts Are With You," which gets drowned out by a Rabbi singing a Jewish prayer. The film shows a blurry image of the Rabbi singing, which then dissolves into the first scene, depicting the new Duke of Württemburg, Karl Alexander (Heinrich Georg), being sworn in. The Duke is loved by his people, but it is quickly realized that he is poor and is making high demands for his entertainment, such as a ballet, opera, and a personal guard. The Duke sends his

assistant to the Jewish quarter to buy jewelry for the Duchess. The assistant goes to see the Jew, Süss Oppenheimer (Ferdinand Marian), however, the jewels that Oppenheimer shows him are too expensive for the Duke. Oppenheimer strikes a deal with the assistant that he will give him the necklace at a large discount, on the condition that the Duke allow him to enter the city, which at the time was strictly forbidden to Jews. The assistant accepts the deal. However, Oppenheimer must disguise himself by shaving his beard and wearing more Aryan clothes. On his way to the city, Oppenheimer insists the carriage travel faster, which leads to it falling over and crashing. Luckily, the young, beautiful (and perfectly Aryan) daughter of the councilman Sturm (Eugene Klöpfer), Dorothea Sturm (Kristina Söderbaum) is riding by and offers Oppenheimer a lift, not realizing that he is a Jew. When Oppenheimer reaches the city, he escorts Dorothea home, and her betrothed, Faber (Malte Jaeger), immediately recognizes Oppenheimer as a Jew. Oppenheimer then goes to meet with the Duke and promptly begins to manipulate him. Oppenheimer recognizes that the Duke has no money but desires a great many things. Oppenheimer tells the Duke that he will be his financer, on the condition that the Duke allows him to start taxing the roads, and collecting the majority of the money for himself. Once the Duke agrees, Oppenheimer becomes his "financial advisor" and gains significant power over the Duke. The people are unhappy with this arrangement as the prices of all goods increase due to the road tax. Oppenheimer throws the Duke a ball with a ballet dance, which is also a way to lure young daughters into the Duke's bed. Oppenheimer attempts to woo Dorothea and steal her from Faber. In the meantime, Oppenheimer has convinced the Duke to lift the ban on Jews in the city altogether. As more and more outrage comes from the people—both because of the tax increase and the recent emigration of Jews—Oppenheimer convinces the Duke, through an

astrologer, which is his Rabbi, to disband the council and only have a small group of advisors, creating a monarchy. In order to do so, the Duke must hire mercenaries to fight the rioting people, which he funds through the Jewish community. In the midst of this, Oppenheimer manages to have both councilman Sturm and Faber arrested, forcing Dorothea to come to him directly asking him to free her lover and father. In an intense scene, when Dorothea goes to Oppenheimer, he ends up raping her. After the rape, Oppenheimer releases Faber, who finds Dorothea has killed herself by drowning. Faber brings her body to the palace, which increases the rioting. The councilmen go to the Duke to try and release him from the clutches of Oppenheimer and make the madness end. In this altercation, the Duke falls dead, presumably from a heart attack. Once the Duke is dead the council is able to bring Oppenheimer to trial. Oppenheimer pleads that he was only following the orders of his Duke—which is an interesting foreshadow to the Nazi trials after WWII. However, Oppenheimer is sentenced to death, and is publicly hung from a metal cage. While Oppenheimer is being hung, Sturm makes a speech that reinstates the banning of Jews in the city, and emphasizes that he hopes the people have learned a lesson for the safety of themselves and their children.

Jud Süss is based on a 1925 novel by the same name, written by Leon Feuchtwanger. The novel is less anti-Semitic than the film, mostly due to the fact the Feuchtwanger is Jewish. Eltin states,

> Feuchtwanger gives Süss a chaste daughter, Naemi; he made Süss into a hero, who plots against the Duke Karl Alexander's abuses of power. Feuchtwanger gives Süss moral and religious redemption: Süss is but half-Jewish... Enter Joseph Goebbels, who ordered the German film industry in November 1938 to make films with overt anti-Semitic themes. (142)

The original story itself made Oppenheimer as an empathetic character with little weight put on his religion. However, since Goebbels decreed that cinema must show anti-Semitism, Oppenheimer's Judaism is emphasized and he becomes the villain. The stereotypes used for Oppenheimer are similar to those of Ipelmeyer in *Robert und Betram*, however, instead of making Oppenheimer a comedic character used for relief, he is shown to be closer to that of a devil. The stereotypes used to depict Oppenheimer are his manipulative and sneaky nature, his sexual 'predatoriness', his appearance, and his greed. It is interesting to note that Nazi cinema has now taken two previously existing stories and made them anti-Semitic.

Oppenheimer's ability to control and manipulate the Duke stems from his money, but flourishes through his wielding of language and action. Unlike the Jewish characters in *Robert und Betram*, Oppenheimer does not speak a 'lower' form of German, and the way he formulates his ideas to the Duke is devious. When Oppenheimer first meets the Duke he says, "I think... With your permission, your highness, I can't understand how out of 400 villages and 70 cities that no more money can be had." The Duke and his assistant then mention the 352,000 Talers that he owes to Oppenheimer. The Duke asks if he must pay him the money, to which Oppenheimer responds, "Your highness, I did not demand a thing." The Duke replies, "Your demands shall be fully met. I don't take gifts from Jews." Oppenheimer answers, "Of course not. I know civilized people pay debts." They quip back and forth over how to pay the debts, as the Duke suggests that he could seize what he owns. Oppenheimer jokes around and asks what the Duke possesses, which is Württemburg. As the joking continues, Oppenheimer implies that he is only a Jew so the Duke could hang him. After this back and forth, Oppenheimer suggests that the Duke give him control of the

roads, because he wants to fix them due to their terrible condition, and that he would implement the road tax. In this whole dialogue, Oppenheimer is very clever in how he addresses and proposes things. He makes sure he calls the Duke "your Highness" and gives him many small compliments throughout. As well, he makes himself seem as though he is being generous to the Duke and not demanding anything, but simply asking permission and giving the Duke a better option. He is also placating the gluttony of the Duke that cannot be fulfilled without money. Oppenheimer highlights that he feels as though the Duke deserves the things he desires, and the way for him to achieve them is through Oppenheimer's wallet. Throughout the film, each piece of advice that Oppenheimer gives the Duke is to accomplish his own selfish goals. On top of manipulating the Duke through language, he also does so in action. When Oppenheimer is trying to convince the Duke to dissolve the council, he tells him to look to the stars and find that they are aligned in his favor. The Duke asks if he sees the stars, and Oppenheimer tells him he knows someone who does. Oppenheimer takes the Duke to his Rabbi—who he has had a prior conversation with, telling the Rabbi to make sure he tells the Duke the constellations are in his favor—and they look through a telescope and the Duke is convinced by the Rabbi that he should get rid of the council. When Oppenheimer urges the Duke to forgo the council, he suggests creating a small cabinet of advisors, including Sturm. He suggests Sturm not because he trusts him, but due to his lust for Dorothea. Oppenheimer's manipulative nature encourages the audience not to trust Jews because they are ultimately selfish and will bring about the demise of man and country.

This manipulation is to fulfill Oppenheimer's greed, another negative trait ascribed to Jews. When the assistant first goes to buy jewels from Oppenheimer, the films shows an

interaction between two Jews—one on the street, and the other leaning out the window next to his half naked daughter. The dialogue is as follows:

> Old man in the window: Isaac, what is that goy-ish looking prig what from our Oppenheimer?
>
> Isaac: Do you need to ask?
>
> Old man: You mean he needs money?
>
> Isaac: What else?
>
> Old man: But he won't give him any?
>
> Isaac: He will lend him money, plenty of it. So that we can take, take, take.

The film immediately sets up the Jews as filthy, greedy and selfish. The audience is also told overtly that Oppenheimer will be rapacious and is not to be trusted. These Jewish characters are also unappealing in appearance. Their faces are dirty and the beards are grungy and bedraggled. They both have large hooked noses and Isaac has a lazy eye. The daughter hanging out the window with a lack of clothing implies that their women are untamed and sexually promiscuous as well. Gitlis points out that, "One of the repetitious motifs of the ghetto Jew in the Nazi films is the portrayal of the home and street as continuous" (150). This motif is shown through the conversation between one being 'in' the home and the other on the street. They have no barriers between them. Each of these minute details adds to the severity of the anti-Semitism.

The biggest threat that Oppenheimer poses is through sexuality. Oppenheimer's biggest transgression within the film is the raping of Dorothea. As Gitlis puts it,

> However, the moment he uses his influence and control through the power of money, the Jew transcends the borders of his sphere and constitutes a perceptible threat. This danger is not expressed only by economic achievements or taking bread out of the mouths of the Aryans. The greater danger is the threat of conquering the

> Aryan woman and polluting her blood, as a result of which the entire race is destroyed. (149)

In his trial, Openheimer claims that he was only following the orders of the Duke and was in servitude to him. This argument may have worked if not for the rape and death of Dorothea. Although, with Goebbels in charge of the film, the ending had to hang the Jew and make him pay, no matter how big or small his crimes. However, because of the ultimate sin of combining Jewish and Aryan blood, his punishment must be severe.



The rape scene is highly emotional, psychological and intense. The film intercuts Faber's torture with Dorothea's rape, as Oppenheimer makes sure she knows her husband is in pain. The sequence begins with bringing Faber into his torture chamber, which consists of a chair that on the arm rests have two finger crushing devices. As they put him in the chair they ask if the ring should come off, but deciding since it is a wedding ring, it should be left on. The film then cuts to innocent Dorothea bringing Oppenheimer a written

request to free her father and Faber. Oppenheimer tells her that only the Duke can pardon them, but he is away, and even if he were here he would tear up this request, which he then does, and as he does so he shuts the door, locking her and the audience in his clutches. She asks him if he has mercy and heart. Oppenheimer explains that he *had* a heart, as he takes off her scarf and grabs her hand. He points out her wedding ring and she tries to offer it to him. He tells her the ring is very small, and asks if she wants to see a "real" ring, bringing her into his bedroom. He shows her the ring and moves behind her, bringing her into an embrace and slips his hand into her top. She fights him off her, pushing him over into a table and then goes and rests by a window.

Oppenheimer tells her that if she wants her father to be free, this is the only way to do it. He then pulls out a handkerchief and places it on the open window. As Oppenheimer places the handkerchief, the film cuts to a new shot from inside Faber's torture room, which is across a courtyard from the bedroom. The man notices the cloth and tells them the signal is there. The camera shows a medium close up of the screaming Faber and slowly pans out as his fingers are being crushed. He screams again and the film cuts to Dorothea in the window looking concerned. Oppenheimer asks if she recognizes the voice and tells her to take the kerchief off the window. As he takes it off and shows her, the screaming stops. He then puts it back on and the screaming continues. Dorothea has realized she has 'control' over the torture of her husband. She takes the handkerchief and refuses to give it back, which Oppenheimer says is ok but... and tries to bring her back into his embrace. Dorothea begins to pray, and Oppenheimer says, "Pray, pray to your God. Go ahead and pray. But not only Christians have a God. We Jews have one too. An avenging God, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Dorothea asks to be let go, but Oppenheimer asks if she

wants her traitor husband to be shot. He tells her not to worry and later she can have her "secretary" (Faber) back, but as he says this he pulls her off the wall and throws her into the bed, landing on top of her. The film then cuts to Faber being released, which confuses him and asks how. They tell him that Dorothea has asked Oppenheimer in person. Faber leaves in a panic to find his wife. The film cuts to a disheveled Dorothea running alone in the wilderness. When Faber goes to find her, she has already drowned herself, the film then cuts to a handful of boats on the river in darkness and the audience sees Faber carrying the lifeless Dorothea in his arms. The film does not explicitly show her rape or her death, but the sequence provides enough drama and gloom to make the scene terrifying and somber. The effectiveness of this scene relies on the dialogue and forcefulness of Oppenheimer, making him a frightening sexual predator. This scene emphasized the corruption and inhuman nature of Jews. They are willing to torture a seemingly innocent German, defile a naïve and virtuous daughter, and destroy the Aryan bloodline.



The film is an effective attempt at showing the "true face" of Jews, in order desensitize the German public in seeing the depletion of Jews. This "un-masking" of Jews is later reiterated in the film when the drunk Duke asks Oppenheimer to take off his "last mask," although he is not wearing anything on his face. As Rentschler puts it, "Harlan's film penetrated surface appearance and promised to show the Jew's 'real face'" (155). This film takes anti-Semitism into a terrifying realm, making not only Jews as a laughing matter—such as in *Robert und Betram*—but as a real threat to society. It was pertinent to not only show Nazi's as great, but to show their horrible enemy. Rentschler puts it perfectly when he states;

> Nazi propagandists created the disturbed great men of the genius films and fixated on the mortal enemies of the Aryan race. The Jew empowered Germans by demonstrating everything they were not; their sense of being derived more strongly from a negative image than it did from an ideal type. The logic here was that of the projection: Nazis did not consider the Jew to be just a minority, but rather a racial opposite and negativity incarnate. (159)

'True' Aryans are not impure, they are not rapists, they are not greedy, and they are not grotesque. In emphasizing this contrast between the heroic Aryan (Faber/Sturm) and the grisly Jew (Oppenheimer), audiences are asked to accept the reality they are shown when they leave the theater. Gitlis states that, "Oddly enough, the chief vehicle of the film's propagandistic message is not Süss, who is portrayed as the embodiment of ugliness of his race, but the Duke. Through the Duke's fate, the audience is warned to take heed" (154). This juxtaposition and complex characterization is what allows this film to rise to the top of its class. The film is compelling and draws its viewers in, making them see a sharp contrast between good and evil. The film also is a lesson from history to not fall for the destructive lies of Jews. This film creates an aura of entertainment through the lavish sets, ornate costumes and high production values. However, not only is this film entertaining to the

audience, but Oppenheimer as a character uses entertainment to his advantage. Oppenheimer entertains the Duke by throwing extravagant parties and getting women into his bed. Watching the Duke be delighted also amuses the audience. Therefore, entertainment becomes a key motif within the film itself and to the characters, whose lives it depicts.

It is pertinent to see how Goebbels attempted to find the correct way to promote anti-Semitism through film. Interestingly, *Jud Süss* was not marketed as anti-Semitic but as an "entertainment film" (Gitlis 157). What makes *Jud Süss* more effective as propaganda than *Robert und Betram* and *The Eternal Jew?* The combined elements of a captivating story line, with high production values, as well as an important balance between showing negative Jewish stereotypes and making them unsympathetic, while not being too funny or too harsh. *Robert und Betram* may have been so effectively comedic in its portrayal of the Jews that it did not convey their threat to society. *The Eternal Jew* was extremely graphic and vulgar, as Tegel puts it, "Overload and overkill was the style of the film.... This film is a particular case in point, because it was so crude, repellent and outrageous in its statements. Can it have worked (as propaganda)?" (165). Tegel also points out that *The Eternal Jew* had less than between one-tenth and one-quarter of the viewership of *Jud Süss,* and only an estimated one million people actually paid to see *The Eternal Jew.* Both cinema owners and viewers were "resisting" the film, as it had "limited appeal" (Tegel, 166). Tegel also states;

> What its reception reveals is that many Germans preferred entertainment, and indeed may, to some extent, have even been impervious to the message, certainly if presented in this guise. Indifference may not have been what Goebbels desired, but it was not a complete disadvantage when the first deportations of Jews began two months later from Stettin on the Baltic. Audience comments, which the Secret Police chose to include in their reports, support both sides: some of the comments recorded suggest that the film reinforced anti-Semitic beliefs and whipped up

> viewers, while others indicate that members of the audience were turned off by the film. (166)

The Eternal Jew lacked the charm and grace of 'fictional' film. *Jud Süss,* however, straddled the line of entertainment and hard-hitting drama with an obvious message that Jews posed a serious danger to Germany. It was precisely this balance that created effective propaganda, able to persuade and teach audiences. The argument of Aryan superiority and the moral imperative to defend against this evil enemy of the state is made with great clarity in *Jud Süss,* arguably the most effective anti-Semitic film of the Nazi era due to its entertainment value.

Conclusion

Entertaining Propaganda



Throughout this thesis we have seen how cinema was utilized during the Third Reich. Filmic techniques played a crucial role in establishing an entertaining aesthetic for cinema as a whole during the Nazi regime. Goebbels quickly took over the culture of Germany and his love of film was translated into an institution for swaying mass opinion into following Nazi ideologies. Although mass rallies, literature, art, and speeches played an important role in creating the Nazi party, film had a unique advantage in unifying the public. Cinema is easily accessible and provides fulfilling illusions of desire, while at the same time shaping ideas about reality. The term propaganda is utilized heavily in connection to the Nazis, most often in relation to Leni Riefenstahl's films. However, as seen in this thesis, more than a thousand other films were made, each having their own importance, and each propagandistic in its own ways.

The first chapter shows how cinema shifted into an entertaining form of propaganda. Both films discussed, *Hitlerjunge Quex* and *Hans Westmar: Einer von Vielen,* have obvious propaganda affiliations, yet the narrative function of each film allows it to capture and enthrall the audience. Each film is based on a historic Nazi hero and tells their story aesthetically. These films establish the power of the Nazis within the context of the film, allowing the audience to align their views with the Nazis and easily accept their coming to leadership. The main characters of each film are portrayed as men who are willing to die for the Nazi cause, which helps further the audiences' acceptance of the Nazi party, as they are encouraged to identify with these characters. Both films depict the Nazis rising against the threat of the Communists, granting them the ultimate victory as they win over the hearts of the people.

Hitlerjunge Quex shows the importance of the Hitler Youth, as a young Communist boy follows the teaching of the Nazi party. Heini shows perseverance as he continues to try and join the Hitler Youth, even when they deny him multiple times for fear of his communist family. Heini is devoted to the Nazis after his first encounter with them on the camping trip. He is attracted to the organization, camaraderie, and culture of the Hitler Youth, which is in opposition to the chaotic and juvenile Communist youth. The film imposes the idea of children being raised by the state, following a Nazi leader instead of the parents, just as Heini moves into the Hitler Youth dorms and replaces his father with the youth leader. Heini puts his flag and his country before his own life, which shows even a child can become a hero in the eyes of the Nazis. As Hitler and the Nazis came to power, it was important for the Germans to believe in the programs they established. Rather than simply informing the public of the purpose of the Hitler Youth, the film was able to placate

the emotions by showing a compelling story. The Hitler Youth was an instrumental portion of the Nazi plan, and *Hitlerjunge Quex* helped prove to the masses its importance and value.

Both *Hitlerjunge Quex* and *Hans Westmar* juxtapose the Nazis with the Communists, allowing for a heightened appearance of the Nazis. The Communists are shown as alcoholic, violent, and uncivilized. The Communists align themselves with the working class, but in *Hitlerjunge Quex,* the Communists realize that above all they are German, and that is more important, shown by the father's conversation with Stoppel. In *Hans Westmar* the Communists have a similar realization, as the ending shows their conversion from the Communist salute to the Hitler heil. *Hans Westmar* showed contempt for the "Internationale," which also put emphasis on the desire to be exclusively and purely German. The ending of each film shows select characters changing their allegiance to the Nazi party, emphasizing to the audience that they should follow their leadership as well.

Both films display the Nazis with appealing aesthetics. The narrative hero story combined with alluring aesthetics creates a Nazi cinema this is an entertaining form of propaganda. *Hitlerjunge Quex* was compared to Weimar films that were known for their innovative aesthetics, specifically the mise-en-scène. Although both of these films pose overt ideological values, by utilizing specific cinematic techniques, such as the combining of music and pleasing visuals, the films begin to fulfill Goebbels' vision for subversive and captivating cinema.

The second chapter focused on the importance and application of music to create enjoyable films with Nazi ideologies. Music has the ability to be persuasive by evoking emotions, including happiness, serenity, discord, and passion. Germany has a rich musical history associated with high culture. German music is therefore often linked to nationalism

and pride. Within film, music plays two roles, the diegetic and the non-diegetic. Songs within the film play an important role in the shaping of characters, but also in connecting the audience to the characters. The cinema during the Nazi regime was comprised of over half in the musical and comedy genre. Musicals lent themselves perfectly to entertainment, yet could still be full of Nazi ideologies and nationalism.

La Habanera is a striking example of a covert entertainment film that utilized music extraordinarily well. This film mostly functioned as a distraction from the everyday perils of life in Nazi Germany, as Nazis are never specifically mentioned or seen within the story. However, subtle Nazi ideologies are still perceptible within the film, such as the fear of foreigners. Puerto Ricans are characterized as naïve and nefarious, juxtaposed with the Swedes who represent the pure Aryan bloodline that must be protected from the 'other.' Don Pedro, the Puerto Rican functions as the villain, and Dr. Nagel, the Swede, is the hero that saves the beautiful and Aryan Astree from the foreigners. The director of the film, Detlev Sierck, was a known leftist, yet the screenwriter was a known Nazi supporter. The dichotomy of these important figures involved in the production helped create a film that was ultimately entertaining and distracting, while still fitting into Nazi culture.

Within *La Habanera* music was a crucial component used to contrast the Aryans and the Puerto Rican 'other,' as well as functioning as a distracting amusement. Three key songs were written for the film, two of them with lyrics by Sierck. The main song has the same title as the film, and is the native song of Puerto Rico, which is repeated throughout the film. When Astree sings the "Habanera," her voice is low and somber, showing the distress caused by the foreign country and people. The other two songs are reminiscent of Sweden,

sung by Astree to her son. These songs function as entertainment for the viewer, yet also serve a narrative function of racial contrast.

The other film discussed in this chapter, *Wunschkonzert,* has obvious political tendencies, and also revolves around music. The film glorifies war, the Nazis, the military, and militaristic heroism. However, the film uses music to create a community, connecting families with soldiers, and all of Germany to the war efforts. Within the film, the characters have the ability to be optimistic in relation to the war because of the radio broadcast every Sunday. The film brings the radio station that the German audience was most likely already listening to, which makes them feel even more included. Heroic characters, such as Schwarzkopf, further emphasized the connection between music and the German *Volk.* Schwarzkopf sacrifices himself for his battalion by playing Beethoven, the quintessential German composer. This film relies heavily on the unique aspect of film, connecting the visual, musical, and textual. Being able to see heroic soldiers listening to the same radio broadcast as those at home creates a unification connected to emotion.

The final chapter discussed the function of anti-Semitism within film. Anti-Semitism was obviously the quintessential Nazi ideology, and film played a critical role in helping further this to the masses. *Jud Süss* is one of the most notorious anti-Semitic films made during the Third Reich. Another key anti-Semitic film was *Robert und Betram.* These films are different in tone, yet both further Jewish stereotypes, putting the Aryans on higher level than the Jews. *Robert und Betram,* a lighthearted comedy film, uses language, appearance, and sexual promiscuity to show the Jews in a negative manner. The Jewish characters within the film are constantly misusing and mispronouncing words, connecting them to stupidity. These characters are also overweight, with big noses, dark hair, and flat feet,

making them undesirable. The Jews are also shown having affairs and connecting sex to money, which fulfills yet another Jewish stereotype. Ipelmeyer is easily fooled by Robert and Betram because he is too busy seducing a young ballerina. The film also uses the character of Michael to show the importance of the Army, and how Aryans instill perfect masculinity, as he returns from his duty and wins the heart of a young beautiful woman. This film falls perfectly into the entertainment category, as it provided hilarious amusement, mostly at the expense of the Jews. This film was able to distract the audience while promoting the Jews as the inferior race in terms of intellect, appearance, and greed.

Jud Süss used many of the same techniques to show the Jews in a negative light, but did so in a more dramatic manner. The characterization of Oppenheimer made him into a villain, rather than someone to laugh at. Oppenheimer was greedy, manipulative, and a sexual threat. He was cunning with his use of language and was able to weasel his way into a position of power, but the masses revolted against him. This film shows the danger of allowing Jews into your community. The biggest threat is the destroying of the pure Aryan bloodline and the innocence of women, as Oppenheimer rapes a young German woman. The film grants no pity for the Jew as he is put to death, but instead ends with a warning to the city in the film, but also to the audience watching it. The effectiveness of this film lies in the enthralling nature of the narrative, while at the same time being heavy hitting with its anti-Semitism. The audience cannot overlook the connection between the drama and the Jew, yet is still able to escape the everyday life by enjoying the film.

The films discussed in this thesis were shown to utilize music, characterization, tone, and themes to create experiences of entertainment that promoted Nazi ideology and recreate propaganda. Each film played its own instrument in Goebbels' orchestra by

providing different levels of pleasure. The films promoted Nazism with heroism, they provided a welcome distraction to war and created a community through music, and instilled anti-Semitism through negative characterizations. The Nazis in general, and Goebbels in particular, gained control of German culture through cinema, a medium that allowed for the systematic fulfillment of desires by offering mass entertainment through film that was ultimately a clever use of propaganda.

Cinema has a unique ability to capture the audiences' attention and throw them into a new reality. By combining the visual, textual, and musical this new reality is bewitching, and this allows for a thorough distraction. During the war, German audiences were drawn to the bright lights of the cinema, desiring a form of escape from the perils of their lives. Many go to the movies to think of things other than their own issues. However, while at the cinema, we must ask, "whose thoughts are we thinking?" When the characters are scared, so is the audience. When the characters laugh, so does the audience. When the characters choose a hero, the audience chooses the same. Because of this phenomenon, Goebbels and the filmmakers of the Third Reich were able to take over the German's thoughts. Goebbels identified the ability of cinema to persuade the audience, and utilized it to the Nazis advantage.

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