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*“Unreal, Purely Formal Relations”: Realism  
in Christian Schad’s Drawings of Queer  
Nightspots for *Ein Führer  
durch das ‘lasterhafte’ Berlin* (1931)*

Abstract

Art historian Benjamin Buchloh influentially framed the career of German artist Christian Schad (1894–1982) as exemplifying the “return to realism” undertaken by many formerly avant-garde European artists post-World War I. In 1917, as an adherent of Zürich Dada, Schad created the first intentionally abstract photograms. However, by the 1920s, the newly Berlin-based Schad turned to copiously realistic paintings of urban modernity’s paradigmatic figures – including, uniquely among his fellow *Neue Sachlichkeit* painters, denizens of the German capital’s then-burgeoning queer social spaces. By analysing in-depth Schad’s pen-and-ink illustrations of Berlin’s queer nightspots for Curt Moreck’s sensationalistic 1931 tour-guide *Führer durch das ‘lasterhafte’ Berlin*, this paper will, for the first time, connect Schad’s return to illusionistic pictorial representation to his representation of queer communities. Positioning Schad’s figuration not as regressive or reactionary but as defined by the hollowing out of realist mimetic conventions and their humanist ideological underpinnings, I propose Schad’s ink lines both denied and asserted their capacity for spatial illusion. Historicising this self-negating realism through Siegfried Kracauer and Georg Simmel’s writings on urban spatial alienation, I argue Schad pictured these nightspots as paragons of the general impossibility of intimate connection under Weimar modernity, popularly attributed to sexual desire’s perceived rampant commodification and dramatised in his drawings through the insistently non-reciprocal play of gazes between their figures. Ultimately, I contend Schad’s portrayal of queer nightspots as privileged sites of a generalised sexual alienation neither indicted nor celebrated Weimar Berlin’s sexual and gender minorities. Rather, their alienated atmosphere reflected Schad’s incapacity, in a fundamentally incoherent society, to forge a self-contained aesthetic whole from the dizzying array of social and sexual experience in Weimar Berlin, that “city of many possibilities and impossibilities.”

**Keywords:** Christian Schad, Berlin queer culture, interwar Germany, realism, avant-garde

## Introduction

In his still-influential 1981 essay “Ciphers of Authority, Figures of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting”, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh mounted a polemic against the post-Conceptual neo-Expressionist return to realism by framing the return to realism in post-World War I Europe, negating the disruptions of the historical *avant-garde*, as its historical precedent. For Buchloh, this phenomenon was not only regressive and reactionary. The impulse towards figuration, re-naturalising the “hierarchies” of mimetic realism, reflected a broader radical right impulse to re-naturalise society’s traditional hierarchies that found its ultimate political expression in fascism.<sup>1</sup> Within Buchloh’s argument, German artist Christian Schad (1894–1982) serves as a paradigmatic case study of a former *avant-gardiste* who succumbed to realism’s temptations, beset by the psychological condition Buchloh christened “authoritarian alienation.”<sup>2</sup> Schad, a founding member of Zurich Dada who made the first non-objective photograms (eponymously titled *Schadograms*), had begun by the mid-1920s, to paint interwar urban modernity’s representative types, from “New Women” to heavily-tattooed journalists, in the highly finished “manner of Renaissance portraits”, following his relocation to Vienna and then Berlin.<sup>3</sup> Buchloh upholds Schad’s 1926 artist’s statement<sup>4</sup> as a catalogue of authoritarian alienation’s most prominent symptoms: “an idealisation of the painter’s craft” that sought to “halt modernism and deny its historical necessity.”<sup>5</sup> While Buchloh’s tone marks the essay as an artifact of fiercely partisan 1980’s art world battles over postmodernism, Schad’s centrality to the piece reflects an undeniable reality: that his career path condenses, to a superlative degree, the contradictions of early 20th-century European art’s political and stylistic contradictions. Emblematically, Schad’s work appeared in two 1937 exhibitions at opposite ends of the aesthetic and ideological spectrum: a *Schadogram* in *Dada and Surrealism* at New York’s Museum of Modern Art and two realist paintings in Munich’s *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great German Art Exhibit), a showcase for works epitomising Nazi artistic ideals.<sup>6</sup>

1 B. H. D. Buchloh, “Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting”, *October*, 1981, 16, p. 39.

2 Ibid., p. 53.

3 After a stay in Italy, Schad relocated to Vienna in 1925 and moved to Berlin in 1927. See M. Eberle et. al., *Christian Schad*, West Berlin, 1980, p. 248.

4 The statement appeared in the pamphlet accompanying Schad’s first solo exhibition at the Galerie Würthle.

5 Buchloh, op. cit., p. 50.

6 R. Storr, “Of Talent, Ambivalence, and the Worst of Times: Christian Schad and the Neue Sachlichkeit”, in: *Christian Schad and the Neue Sachlichkeit*, eds. J. Lloyd, M. Peppiatt, New York–London, 2003, p. 57. For a recent investigation of the extent of Christian Schad’s ties to Nazism, see B. Keß, “Mitglied (kein Amt, kein Rang): Christian Schad im Nationalsozialismus. Ein neuer Blick auf Eigenbild, Fremdbild und Quellen”, *RIHA Journal*, 2019, 0210, <https://doi.org/10.11588/riha.2019.0.69960>.

Fittingly, Schad's place in the history of European modernism remains vexed – and, owing to a paucity of research, opaque compared to that of fellow prominent *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) painters like Otto Dix or George Grosz. Robert Storr claimed that Schad was "damned to art historical purgatory" because of his affiliation with Nazi official art culture, ratified by his Party membership post-1933.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, the deficit of scholarship on Schad can also be attributed to the fact that he only became a pivotal figure in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement during its rediscovery and retrospective reconstruction from the late 1960s on. In the catalogue to the 1969 Weimar realism exhibit in Hanover, a milestone in the movement's art historical recovery, curator Wieland Schmied deemed Schad's portraits "*der Härteste, der Exakteste, der Sachlichste*" ("the hardest, the most exact, the most objective") of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* painters – to be, indeed, crystallisations of the movement's essence.<sup>8</sup> Over the intervening decades, Schad's portraits attained the status of emissaries from Berlin's Weimar past, their hyperreal surfaces embodying its doomed decadence unmediated by historical distance, as well as definitive examples of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*'s clinical, detached gaze upon that mythologised past. This culminated when a close-up of the heavily-rouged transvestite in Schad's *St. Graf Genois d'Anneaucourt* (1927) featured as the backdrop to the poster advertising *Glitter and Doom*, a 2007 blockbuster exhibition of Weimar portraiture at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, Schad featured neither in the 1925 Gustav Hartlaub-curated Kunsthalle Mannheim exhibition that gave *Neue Sachlichkeit* its name nor in Franz Roh's influential treatise on contemporary realism of the same year. Schad sold four paintings and held two commercial gallery exhibitions in the interwar years – both critical and commercial failures.<sup>10</sup> Lacking contemporaneous primary sources, scholarship on Schad has suffered, in quantity and quality, from its necessary reliance on a set of "cryptic explanations from Schad's own pen" composed from memory in the late 1970's, as Verena Dollenmaier alleged in 2005.<sup>11</sup>

The situation has improved since, as plentiful scholarship analysing Schad's work *vis a vis* broader Weimar discourses on fashion, gender, and vision has materialised.<sup>12</sup> However, this work remains focused on Schad's famed portraits, ignoring

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7 Storr, op. cit., p. 57.

8 W. Schmied, *Neue Sachlichkeit und Magischer Realismus in Deutschland, 1918–1933*, Hanover, 1970, p. 50.

9 For a critical discussion of this poster and the connection it implies between deviance from gender and sexual norms and the rise of fascism, see Å. Söll, "Fashion, Media, and Gender in Christian Schad's Portraiture of the 1920s", in: *Fashion Media Past and Present*, eds. D. Bartlett, S. Cole, A. Rocamora, London, 2013, p. 93. Also see S. Rewald et. al., *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920's*, New Haven, 2007.

10 J. Lloyd, "Christian Schad: Reality and Illusion", in: Lloyd, Peppiatt, op. cit., p. 15.

11 V. Dollenmaier, "Die Erotik im Werk von Christian Schad", PhD diss. (Freie Universität Berlin, 2005), p. 11. Up to that point, most scholarly work on Schad had appeared in exhibition catalogues, notably including Eberle et. al., op. cit.; T. Bezzola et. al., *Christian Schad: 1894–1982*, Zurich, 1997; Lloyd, Peppiatt, op. cit.

12 See particularly Å. Söll, *Mode, Modernität, und Geschlecht in den Männerporträts von Dix, Schad, und Raderscheidt*, Paderborn, 2013 and K. Schroeder, "How to Look *Sachlich*: Fashion and Objectivity in Weimar Germany", PhD diss. (University of Michigan, 2017).

the graphic work – particularly as a book illustrator – through which he supported himself economically in his Berlin years.<sup>13</sup> These include Schad's drawings of Berlin nightspots catering to male and female homosexuals and transvestites, particularly in the city's working-class eastern precincts, for Curt Moreck's 1931 *Ein Führer durch das "lasterhafte" Berlin* (Guide to 'Depraved' Berlin), a sensationalistic travel guide for strait-laced provincial tourists seeking out the city's erotic underbelly.<sup>14</sup> Upon receiving the commission, Schad undertook a tour of these establishments to study them "from life", gaining access to these spaces through his appointed guide, a homosexual male journalist.<sup>15</sup> Drawn before he read the corresponding texts,<sup>16</sup> Schad's illustrations – also including two renderings of heterosexual nightspots in the same districts of Berlin – often diverge from Moreck's exoticising, prurient tone in their characterisation of particular locales.<sup>17</sup> Recent scholarship on the *Führer*, seeking to contest earlier negative assessments of its representation of women and sexual minorities,<sup>18</sup> has either given Schad's illustrations cursory mention<sup>19</sup> or discussed them briefly as supplements to Moreck's text.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Schad-specific scholarship has also scarcely mentioned the works.<sup>21</sup>

13 For brief overview of Schad's graphic output, see Matthias Eberle, "Christian Schad's Drawings", in Lloyd and Peppiatt, op. cit., pp. 51–56.

14 Schad likely came to know Moreck through the circle of the Stegeman Verlag at the Romanisches Café in Berlin, to whom he was introduced by his former Dada compatriot Walter Serner, several of whose books he illustrated. See Eberle, op. cit., p. 188.

15 T. Röske, "Liebende Knaben – Die Darstellung homosexueller Männer und Frauen im Werk Christian Schads", in: *Festschrift für Fritz Jacobs zum 60. Geburtstag*, eds. O. Klodt, K. Michels, et. al., Munster, 1996, p. 199.

16 Ibid., p. 200.

17 Christian Schad published a total of ten illustrations in *Ein Führer durch das 'lasterhafte' Berlin*. Five portrayed homosexual or transvestite nightspots and two heterosexual nightspots. There were also three figure studies.

18 For an example of a condemnatory viewpoint towards Moreck's text, see A. Lütgens, "The Conspiracy of Women: Images of City Life in the Work of Jeanne Mammen", in: *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. K. von Ankum, Berkeley–Los Angeles–London, 1997, p. 50.

19 See S. J. Smith, "Just How Naughty Was Berlin? The Geography of Prostitution and Female Sexuality in Curt Moreck's Erotic Travel Guide", in: *Spatial Turns: Space, Place, and Mobility in German Literary and Visual Culture*, eds. J. Fisher, B. C. Mennell, Amsterdam–New York, 2010, p. 66; D. J. Prickett, "'We Will Show You Berlin': Space, Leisure, Flânerie, and Sexuality", *Leisure Studies*, 2011, 30:2, p. 158.

20 C. Smith, "Challenging Baedeker Through the Art of Sexual Science: An Exploration of Gay and Lesbian Subcultures in Curt Moreck's *Guide to 'Depraved' Berlin*, 1931", *Oxford Art Journal*, 2013, 36:2, p. 237.

21 The full set of five drawings of gender and sexual minority nightspots appeared in Schad's landmark 1980 exhibition at the Kunsthalle in West Berlin and the corresponding catalogue: Eberle, op. cit., pp. 188–196. The originals were first published in P. Weiermaier, *Aspekte der neuen Sachlichkeit: Handzeichnungen und Aquarelle*, Innsbruck, 1972. However, they have been left out of significant exhibits since then, including the 2003 Neue Galerie, New York/Musee Maillol, Paris exhibit and the 2008 Leopold Museum, Vienna exhibit and their corresponding catalogues (respectively Lloyd, Peppiatt, op. cit., and T. Ratzka, et. al., *Christian Schad. Retrospektive. Leben*

Despite this neglect, Schad's illustrations for the *Führer durch das "lasterhafte" Berlin* are of direct relevance to two aspects of Schad's work routinely foregrounded in its contemporary reception: its realism and its portrayal of gender and sexual minorities, a focus unique to Schad among *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists. Countering Thomas Röske's statement that they focus more on presenting the nightclub's figures as typically homosexual than on their "spatial atmosphere",<sup>22</sup> the *Führer* drawings problematise spatial illusionism to an unusual degree among Schad's Weimar-era works. Unlike all Schad's portraits and almost all his other graphic work, which position three-dimensional foreground figures against flattened or highly simplified backgrounds, the Berlin nightclub drawings venture a perspectival representation of spatial depth. While this difference can be attributed to their function – to evoke prospective travel destinations – they nonetheless elucidate Schad's approach to a cornerstone of mimetic realism absent from his other *Neue Sachlichkeit* works. They therefore provide an ideal departure point for an investigation of the historicity of Schad's Weimar-era realism. Rather than reiterating a historically invalidated paradigm of mimetic realism – seeking to "halt modernism and deny its historical necessity", as Buchloh alleges – I contend that Schad's *Führer* drawings, per Devin Fore, "did not reiterate previous paradigms naively, but rather invoked them self-consciously."<sup>23</sup> In his illustrations for Moreck's guide, Schad forged a mimetic realism that, by subtly negating its formal precepts, exposed the exhaustion of its humanist ideological premises.<sup>24</sup> Framing the connection between the drawings' form and content through Siegfried Kracauer's critique of Georg Simmel's conception of social space, I argue that this hollowing-out of mimetic realism reflected Schad's portrayal of Berlin's nightspots, both queer and straight, as pervaded by the alienation resulting from the submission of sex and love to commercial logic. Departing from views of Schad's portrayal of gender and sexual minorities that either ascribe its character to Schad's psychoanalytic disposition<sup>25</sup> or anachronistically impose upon them postmodern formulations of identity deconstruction,<sup>26</sup> I hope to offer an account of Schad's depiction of queer people and spaces that accounts for its modernist specificity.

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*und Werk im Kontext*, Cologne–Vienna, 2008. Other brief discussions of the drawings in Schad literature include Röske, op. cit., pp. 199–201 and Dollenmaier, op. cit., pp. 218–219.

22 Röske, op. cit., p. 200.

23 D. Fore, *Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature*, Cambridge, 2012, p. 10. For a partial dissent to Fore's view of the interwar "return to realism", see R. Golan, "Is Fascist Realism a Magic Realism?", *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 2020, 73:1, pp. 229–231.

24 Ibid., p. 12.

25 Röske, op. cit., pp. 205–206. Röske argues that Schad's relatively friendly attitude towards male homosexuals stemmed from an internalised "narcissism", while his relatively negative attitude towards female homosexuals stemmed from the threat they posed to his male ego.

26 See E. Bauer, "Penetrating Desire: Gender in the Field of Vision in Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* and Christian Schad's *Graf St. Genois d'Anneaucourt*", *Monatshefte*, 2009, 101:4, pp. 483–498 and E. Bauer, "Female Sexuality and Corporeal Agency in Christian Schad's *Zwei Mädchen*", *Feminist German Studies*, 2019, 35, pp. 53–84.

## 1.

The seven nightspots Schäd depicted for the *Führer durch das 'lasterhafte' Berlin* varied widely in their clientele, ranging from the notorious homosexual hustler hangout of the Adonis-Diele to the mainstream Residenz Casino (*Resi*), a famed gathering place for Weimar Berlin's burgeoning masses of salaried low-level white-collar workers.<sup>27</sup> However, Schäd portrayed all seven as embodiments of a fear pervasive in the Weimar discourse on sexuality, both left- and right-wing: that modern capitalism's penetration into the "stable, intimate private sphere" of romantic and sexual relations, particularly through the supposed "Americanising" force of mass culture, threatened the integrity and authenticity of amorous bonds.<sup>28</sup> This was, itself, inextricably intertwined with the "crisis of traditional male authority, agency, and identity" brought about by the advent of female suffrage and constitutional equality and women's massive entry into the workforce in the Weimar period, personified in the frequently conflated figures of the "New Woman" and the prostitute.<sup>29</sup> Recent historical accounts emphasise that conceptions of a widespread crisis of "immorality" responded as much to homosexuality's new visibility as to changing gender roles.<sup>30</sup> As such, the overarching theme connecting the series of illustrations for Moreck's guide – commerce's corruption of amorous relations – cannot be seen as bestowing a particularly amoral character to homosexuality.

Schäd's rendition of the *Adonis-Diele* (fig. 1) makes clear his view of rationalisation's impact on sex and love. Contemporary commentators sensationalised the Adonis-Diele as a shelter of pursuits conflating courtship and commerce, in particular the exchange of cocaine for sexual favours.<sup>31</sup> In the *Führer* itself, Moreck writes about the Adonis-Diele: "*Vom weißen Gift bis zur Liebe jeder Art wird alles hier gehandelt, was sich im Geldeswert umsetzen läßt*" ("From white poison (cocaine) to love of any kind, anything is traded here that can be converted into monetary value").<sup>32</sup> Within the bar's spartan space, nearly every man – except for the intoxicated-seeming

27 For a discussion of the *Resi*, see K. Wolffram, *Tanzdielen und Vergnügungspaläste: Berliner Nachtleben in den dreißiger und vierziger Jahren*, Berlin, 1992, p. 56. Also see Siegfried Kracauer's *feuilleton* for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* from October 1930, "Spuk im Vergnügungslokal", compiled in S. Kracauer, *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo*, Frankfurt am Main, 2009), pp. 93–96.

28 R. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and "New Objectivity"*, New York–Basingstoke, 2001, p. 2.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 3. As an introduction to the rich literature on the cultural construction of the "new woman" in Weimar German modernity, see such classics as P. Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany*, Princeton, 1989 and the anthology edited by K. von Ankum, *op. cit.* For a broader historical overview, see J. Roos, *Weimar Through the Lens of Gender: Prostitution Reform, Women's Emancipation, and German Democracy, 1919–1933*, Ann Arbor, 2010.

30 L. Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Sexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis*, Toronto–Buffalo–London, 2015, p. 9.

31 J. Dobler, *Von anderen Ufern: Geschichte der Berliner Lesben und Schwulen im Kreuzberg und Friedrichshain*, Berlin, 2003, p. 130.

32 C. Moreck, *Führer durch das 'lasterhafte' Berlin*, West Berlin, 1987, p. 137. Translation by author.





**Fig. 1.** Christian Schad (German, 1894–1982). *Adonis-Diele*, 1930. Pen and black ink on paper. Private collection. Published in Curt Moreck, *Ein Führer durch das "lasterhafte" Berlin* (West Berlin: Divan, 1987), 137. © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

youth whose profile pierces the foreground – exhibits his body brazenly to advertise its desirability or scans the space frantically for potential objects of desire. Younger men exploit their bodies' exchange value, seeking to stimulate the older men visually to negotiate bonds as much erotic as economic. However, despite all the fervent glances, no eyes meet, and no agreements are brokered between buyers and sellers. The self-engrossed man in the room's rear corner, like the man in the foreground, seems completely submerged in himself, a metonym for the space's general condition of alienation. In the *Adonis-Diele*, Schad establishes the unreturned look<sup>33</sup> as both symbol and condition of the estrangement inherent to *verkaufte Liebe* ("sold love"), a device whose implications Schad explores more deeply in *Bürger-Casino an der Friedrichsgracht* (fig. 2).

<sup>33</sup> Esther Bauer extensively discusses the "averted gaze" in relation to Schad's painting *Zwei Mädchen* (1928). This recalls my notion of the "unreturned look", but Bauer does not extensively discuss the "averted gaze" relative to Schad's other work and employs the concept to other ends. See Bauer, "Female Sexuality...", op. cit., pp. 75–76.



**Fig. 2.** Christian Schäd (German, 1894–1982). *Bürger-Casino*, 1930. Pen and black ink on paper. Stadtmuseum Berlin. Published in Curt Moreck, *Ein Führer durch das "lasterhafte" Berlin* (West Berlin: Divan, 1987), 135. © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

Schäd's *Bürger-Casino* depicts a nightclub on the Spree River reputed to be a haven for homosexual pederasts,<sup>34</sup> filled with teenage boys eagerly selling their affections to older admirers. In the foreground, we see a balding, rotund middle-aged man, his features conforming to George Grosz's caricature of the venal *bourgeois*, embracing a long-lashed adolescent male. The boy nestles, eyes shut, satiated and immobile, upon his benefactor's chest. Although the *bourgeois*' chin grazes the boy's tousled hair, his gaze strays from his young lover. Both the man's averted gaze, staring upward into nothing, and his smug glower reveal that his pride over his conquest does not extend to actual affection for the conquered. Their ocular disconnect betrays the emotional detachment beneath their seeming intimacy, emblematic for

<sup>34</sup> Moreck, op. cit., p. 207.



Schad of amorous relations conducted according to commerce's cold logic. However, recapitulated throughout the composition of the *Bürger-Casino*, the divergent gaze functions as more than a static signifier of the alienation intrinsic to *verkaufte Liebe*. Its dynamic links the club's occupants together in a ring of unanswered looks, forging a narrative that guides the viewer's eye across the drawing's shallow space. Peeking out from behind a latticework partition, a pianist rotates in his chair to stare – delectation evident in his pursed lips – at the youth sprawled across the *bourgeois'* shirt front. Behind him, a typified effete homosexual covetously peers down his pointed nose at the pianist. To the left, behind another partition, a female-attired figure regards the pianist with her right eye and the embracing pair in the foreground with her left, returning the picture's narrative to its starting point. Schad's lightly comical, caricatured rendering of the *Bürger-Casino*'s figures belies the desperation inherent to this closed circuit of unrequited longing. Crammed into the composition's compressed space, they are sealed into an eternal cycle of frustrated desire. Even the man and boy embracing in the foreground – who have achieved the pairing towards which the others' unreturned glances strive – partake of a togetherness that is only superficial, the meeting of their gazes forever foreclosed. In the *Bürger-Casino*, the unreturned look acts as both a symbol standing for and a narrative device promoting amorous alienation. Schad will extend this keystone of the *Bürger-Casino*'s visual economy outward to the viewer, incorporating them into the picture's diegetic – and social – space.

Schad poses the denizens of the *Bürger-Casino*'s middle-ground in a diagonal row roughly parallel to the embracing pair's line of contact. As such, those three seem as much spectators to the scene transpiring in the foreground as active participants alongside the couple in a unified narrative. The picture's viewer finds themselves parallel to this trio, creating a scenario whereby the viewer seems to stare across the stage of a theatre-in-the-round at fellow audience members seated opposite. However, neither the fellow spectators to the foreground's drama nor the drama's actors return the viewer's look. On one level, this simply aligns the *Bürger-Casino*'s composition with the norms of post-Renaissance Western illusionism, whereby the beholder looks into a picture as through a window into another world, spatially and temporally divorced from the beholder's. In this schema, the failure of represented figures to look back at the viewer cements the viewer's power relative to its contents. However, in the *Bürger-Casino*, Schad pushes illusionism's conventions to their limits. Schad places the rotund *bourgeois* and his boy in uncomfortable proximity to the viewer – pushed so far into the foreground they seem superimposed atop the picture, rather than contained within it. Alongside the equivalence Schad draws between the viewer and the middle-ground trio, the couple's proximity suggests that the beholder stands *within*, rather than looks *into* the *Bürger-Casino*. For the reader of Moreck's guide, presumed heterosexual, this would have been a disquieting (if potentially pruriently exciting) proposition. Further, Schad's composition renders this simulated presence disquieting relative to established norms of viewership. Because the *Bürger-Casino* seems to assimilate the viewer into its representational space, the failure of that space's occupants to return the viewer's look becomes, rather

than a guarantor of authority, a signal of the viewer's estrangement. By inverting the value attached to one of illusionism's founding principles, Schad assimilates the *Bürger-Casino's* beholder into its visual economy of the unanswered look – and therefore into its overarching alienation.

German sociologist Georg Simmel's theory of the gaze helps explain how the unreturned look structures the *Bürger-Casino* and Schad's other *Führer* illustrations.<sup>35</sup> For Simmel, the "eye-to-eye bond" achieved when individuals look at one another is the "most immediate and purest relationship" possible between two individuals. Its unparalleled closeness stems from its mutuality, in which the distinctions become blurred between subject and object, observer and observed. As Simmel writes, by the "look which takes in the other" – through which "the subject seeks to know its object" – "it surrenders itself to the object." Without the mutuality of the eye-to-eye bond, Simmel contends, "the entire interaction of human beings... would be incalculably changed." However, this vital relationship is both fragile and fleeting. "So strong and sensitive" is this bond, "borne only by... the straight line between the eyes", that "the least diversion... the slightest glance to the side, fully destroys" its singularity. Moreover, the eye-to-eye bond does not "crystallize" in any "objective formation", leaving any trace intelligible to those outside its intersubjective communion. The "unity" it builds between two people exhausts itself in the moment of its establishment, "(remaining) directly dissolved in the event" of ocular connection.<sup>36</sup>

Detailed in a chapter of Simmel's compilation *Soziologie* entitled *Der Raum und die räumlichen Ordnung der Gesellschaft* ("Space and the Spatial Organisation of Society"), Simmel's theory of the look cannot be understood apart from his broader theory of how social formations make themselves legible in and through space. As articulated by architectural historian Anthony Vidler, Simmel conceived of space as the expression of social conditions.<sup>37</sup> Interactions between people are "space-filling": "empty space... becomes immediately filled and animated by the reciprocal relations between individuals." For example, when Simmel writes that the eye-to-eye bond stems only from "the straight line *between* the eyes", the *between* to which he refers is as much spatial as functional. The mutual gaze, rather than a purely psychological phenomenon, manifests itself concretely "between the two points in space occupied by the... individuals themselves." The spatial form produced through the "reciprocal relation" of the mutual gaze, in turn, becomes indelibly characterised by that relation.<sup>38</sup> Particular social relations imbue the space in which they transpire with their content, identifying that space with those relations. Vidler reads this process to argue that Simmel conceives of the relation between space and society as "reciprocally interdependent", opposing both the conceptions of space as socially

35 A. J. Vidler, "Agoraphobia: Spatial Estrangement in Georg Simmel and Siegfried Kracauer", *New German Critique*, 1991, 54, p. 39.

36 G. Simmel, *Sociology: Inquiries into the Construction of Social Form*, ed. and transl. A. J. Blasi, A. K. Jacobs, M. J. Kanjirathinkal, Leiden–Boston, 2009, p. 571.

37 Vidler, op. cit., p. 38.

38 Ibid., p. 39.

formative and "as an illustration of social history."<sup>39</sup> This interdependence lays the groundwork for another premise of Simmel's sociology: that one can identify "spatial unities...framed by borders coincident with the locations of particular social groups." To Simmel, the boundaries between these unities perpetually shift; people belong to as many of these spatial formations as they have social associations, from the family to the school to the state. Nonetheless, the border lines delimiting these spaces act like a frame surrounding a picture, "announcing that...within the border line is a world subject to its own norms, entirely divorced from the world outside."<sup>40</sup> Schäd represents each nightspot as the locus of a distinct socio-spatial unity per Simmel, eliding the distinction between a bar or nightclub's physical site and the social group constituted by its patrons. Each drawing offers a window for the presumably heterosexual reader of the *Führer durch das 'lasterhafte' Berlin* onto a discrete space governed by radically different norms of sexual and gendered behaviour.

However, as shown by the *Bürger-Casino*, Schäd deploys manifold pictorial devices to render the viewership of these illustrations self-reflexive. This indicates that we must approach these drawings not only as stand-ins for an absent space and its form of sociability, but as pictorial re-stagings of those spaces endowed with their own immanent presence. Rather than ethnographic descriptions, they are independent socio-spatial unities. Befitting the work of a sociologist who analysed social formations aesthetically,<sup>41</sup> Schäd's drawings analogise Simmel's conception of society and space's reciprocal interdependence on a pictorial register. The inhabitants of the *Bürger-Casino* lend narrative coherence to the image through their characteristic mode of social interaction: the unreturned look. In turn, the physical design of the nightclub's interior promotes a social dynamic motivated by the unanswered glance. The succession of latticework partitions dividing the *Bürger-Casino*'s interior space gives rise to a series of niches, each occupied by one or two figures. These niches enforce physical distance between the club's inhabitants, but their semi-transparent gridded surfaces encourage their penetration by the gaze. The *Bürger-Casino*'s décor thus furnishes the ideal social environment to generate a chain of unreturned looks. Two vertical posts even frame the man and boy embracing in the foreground, echoing a proscenium arch to emphasise their position as the locus of spectatorship, both for the space's other occupants and its unseen viewer.

The process through which space and social interaction shape one another in the *Bürger-Casino* structurally accords to Simmel's theories. However, the *Bürger-Casino* inverts and ultimately negates Simmel's conception of how this exchange produces meaning. The psychological alienation borne of metropolitan modernity was one of Simmel's most important research themes, most famously expounded upon in his 1903 essay *Die Großstadt und das Geistesleben* ("The Metropolis and Mental Life"). To

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>41</sup> For an influential formulation of this argument, see M. S. Davis, "Georg Simmel and the Aesthetics of Social Reality", *Social Forces*, 1973, 51:3, p. 320. For a dissent, see D. Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin*, Abingdon, 2013.

Simmel, the unnerving sensory experience of urban life, its “swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli”, forced the city-dweller to adapt to its shocks by adopting a distanced mode of relating to others – one privileging intellect over emotion and sight over speech.<sup>42</sup> Simmel attributes the visual sense’s prominence in city life to self-protective estrangement. Nonetheless, the value he places on the eye-to-eye bond as the “most immediate and purest” mode of relation between two people upholds visual interaction’s potential to foster intimacy. Rather than the mutuality of the eye-to-eye bond, however, the inhabitants of the *Bürger-Casino* are bound together by its antithesis: the unanswered glance. Rather than leading to a joint self-exposure that renders irrelevant the distinctions between subject and object, the unreturned look ensures that each denizen relates to another inhabitant as subject or object. And the estrangement that this both promotes and reflects is the converse of the intersubjective communion to which Simmel’s “social unities” aspire. Rather than the transcendence of a distanced metropolitan relationality, we find a mode of attempted connection that only seems to redouble the alienation born from the entanglement of commerce and courtship.

The ontological conditions of the *Bürger-Casino* and Schad’s other illustrations for the *Führer* also differ from those of Simmel’s socio-spatial unities. The boundaries of Simmel’s spatial unities are constantly in a state of dynamic flux; they are multiple and overlapping, perpetually generated anew as the individual enters new social relations. Although Schad sketches out implied narrative relations between its figures, the aesthetic unity he constructs in the *Bürger-Casino*, as a two-dimensional still image, is fixed and static.<sup>43</sup> Schad’s pen locks its patrons into their positions beneath the establishment’s latticework bowers and against the page’s white ground. Within this spatial unity, its boundaries constant and unchanging, the space’s inhabitants congeal into a singular, self-contained social unity defined by frustrated desire. Each new viewer’s glance sets the ring of looks linking them together into its prescribed course of narrative motion. If we take looking into a representational picture as a “space-filling” social relation per Simmel, the act of viewing the *Bürger-Casino* binds the drawing’s figures with the viewer into a discrete socio-spatial unity. However, the relations animating the space between the picture and the viewer are, counter Simmel, as non-reciprocal as those between the *Bürger-Casino*’s denizens. Whereas Simmel’s eye-to-eye bond produces a profound unity, looking at Schad’s drawing only extends rationalised desire’s inherent alienation to the viewer.

42 Vidler, *op cit.*, p. 37.

43 I do not intend to claim here, in a Lacanian-inflected manner, that human subjects are deadened or mortified through their representation in two-dimensional images, as Elisabeth Bronfen claims relative to Schad’s portraiture of women in E. Bronfen, “Weibliches Antlitz, weibliche Figur, weiblicher Blick: Christian Schads Frauenporträts”, in: *Christian Schad: Texte, Materialien, Dokumente*, ed. G. A. Richter, Rottach-Egern, 2004, pp. 113–130, or that still images cannot have narrative potential. For a brief overview of the latter aesthetic debate and its history, see K. Parna, “Narrative, Time, and the Fixed Image”, in: *Time, Narrative, and the Fixed Image*, eds. J. Baetens, M. Ribière, Amsterdam–Atlanta, 2001, pp. 84–94.

The *Bürger-Casino* and Schad's other drawings for the *Führer* stage socio-spatial unities whose unity, built on compromised affective foundations, emerges as essentially superficial. They therefore resemble the social "ornaments" conceived of by Simmel's onetime pupil, the Frankfurt School-linked Marxist social critic Siegfried Kracauer: "metaphors for a nonorganic, apparent unity", according to sociologist Helmut Staubmann.<sup>44</sup> World War I had thrown the integrity of the autonomous, self-sovereign post-Enlightenment subject – a key presupposition of Simmel's socio-spatial unities – into doubt. As the humanist subject's reality came into doubt, so did the internal coherence it once had imposed upon reality. Therefore, Kracauer could no longer presume, like Simmel, that autonomous individuals held the power to "introduce meaning into their environment" through social interaction. In a reality rendered "devoid of essence" by the collapse of Western humanism's "structure of meaning", as Kracauer wrote in 1922, social unity could only manifest as a surface phenomenon.<sup>45</sup> Rather than by internally-motivated subjects, the ornament is a social formation "produced and controlled solely by external factors" – namely those of capitalist rationalisation, as Weimar society became shaped in all spheres of life by Taylorist and Fordist "economic calculus".<sup>46</sup> As Kracauer employed Simmel's prototype of the socio-spatial unity only to invert it, rendering its internal coherence into a surface effect, Schad's drawings for Moreck's guide invoke the conventions of mimetic realism only to hollow them out from within, rendering themselves into pictorial ornaments. In the next section, I will how Schad's *Führer* images undercut illusionism's bases, demonstrating its dubiousness as its ideological precepts – the social unity and the sovereign subject – underwent an epochal crisis of meaning.

## 2.

In *Die Hotelhalle* ("The Hotel Lobby"), an extract from his book-length study on the detective novel written between 1922 and 1925, Kracauer demonstrates how Simmel's conception of the reciprocal interdependence between space and society has been sapped of its essence in the age of "transcendental homelessness."<sup>47</sup> Kracauer structures *Die Hotelhalle* around the opposition of the church and the typified hotel lobby, filled with individuals unmoored from their typical spatial and social locations by the exigencies of travel. Through shared communion with the divine, the members of the congregation transcend the limits of their individual subjecthood,

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44 H. M. Staubmann, "The Ornamental Form of the Iron Cage: An Aesthetic Representation of Modern Society?", *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 1997, 10:4, p. 597. This is a review essay of S. Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed. T. Y. Levin, Cambridge, 1995.

45 Ibid., p. 605.

46 Ibid., p. 597.

47 "Transcendental homelessness" is a term drawn (*transzendente Obdachlosigkeit*) from György Lukács' 1914–15 essay "Theory of the Novel." For a brief discussion of the concept relative to Kracauer, see Vidler, op. cit., p. 32.



unifying into a community “oriented” towards God. In contrast, only a shared condition of anonymity constitutes the hotel lobby’s inhabitants as a community. As Kracauer writes, in “in the hotel lobby, equality is based not on a relation to God, but on a relation to nothing.”<sup>48</sup> The relation of the occupants to one another is therefore restricted to the “aesthetic”: an “aesthetic that has become an end in itself.” The hotel lobby pushes the Kantian definition of beauty as an “isolation of the aesthetic” indifferent to content to an absurd extreme, completely detaching it from Kant’s “upward-striving intentions” towards an integrated personhood. Rather than a “higher level” of existence, the aesthetic as an end in itself “refers only to its own emptiness”, becoming an “unreal, purely formal relation.”<sup>49</sup> Kracauer explicitly contrasts this aesthetics of social togetherness to Simmel’s: instead of “fulfillment”, the “formal similarity of the figures” in the hotel lobby reveals only the vacancy of purpose and meaning.<sup>50</sup> The interaction of the hotel lobby’s congregants confines itself to a “fleeting exchange of glances which creates the possibility of exchange”, spurring the invention of “monological” narrative fantasies about their neighbours based solely on surface appearance. Rather than by the promise of connection, they are attracted to look at one another by the opportunity to “reaffirm” the distance between them through an aesthetic play of associations. The guests’ aggregation into a purely formal socio-spatial unity, moreover, uncovers the hollowing out of their sovereign subjecthood: they are “pure exterior.”<sup>51</sup>

Kracauer’s descriptions of the hotel lobby visitors’ largely ocular interactions with one another echo those of the figures in Schad’s *Führer* drawings. Evoking the prowling, hungry eyes of the denizens of the *Bürger-Casino* or *Adonis-Diele*, Kracauer writes that, in the hotel lobby, the church’s shared “...devotion congeals into erotic desire that roams about without an object”.<sup>52</sup> The behaviours of Schad’s nightclub patrons and Kracauer’s hotel visitors likely accord because, for their creators, their modes of togetherness demonstrated rationalisation’s alienating impact upon Weimar life. However, for Kracauer, unlike Schad, *Ratio* has an explicitly ideological, Marxist meaning: it refers to the process by which the inhuman logic of capital has come to operate autonomously, reifying the entirety of social life.<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless, Kracauer’s analysis in “Die Hotelhalle” proves useful for illuminating the relation between form and content in Schad’s nightclub images. Schad solders together his drawings’ representational contents into a seeming aesthetic unity: what appears, at first glance, to be an illusionistic representation, presenting the world as if seen through a window. At the same time, he undermines the conventions by which such pictures establish themselves as credible representations of human bodies in real space. Kracauer establishes the hotel lobby’s visitors as a “nonorganic, apparent uni-

48 Kracauer, op. cit., p. 179.

49 Ibid., p. 177.

50 Ibid., p. 179.

51 Ibid., p. 183.

52 Ibid., p. 178.

53 Staubmann, op. cit., p. 600.

ty" – in his terms, an ornament – by framing their relation to one another in terms of its purely aesthetic character, in which formal consonances supplant meaningful connection. Paralleling Kracauer's epistemological framework, it is precisely through their character as seeming aesthetic unities that Schad's drawings disclose the void of meaning beneath their constitutive communities. Schad's self-negating mimetic realism takes Kracauer a step further, revealing that his strategies of signification have been as thoroughly hollowed of meaning as the social spaces they signify.

Among the series of drawings for the *Führer*, the *Mikado* (fig. 3) best exemplifies Schad's self-negating formal strategy. Contemporary accounts of the transvestite club Mikado from a Berlin homosexual newspaper emphasised the domination of



**Fig. 3.** Christian Schad (German, 1894–1982). *"Mikado"*, 1930. Pen and black ink on paper. Private collection. Published in Curt Moreck, *Ein Führer durch das "lasterhafte" Berlin* (West Berlin: Divan, 1987), 163. © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

“atmosphere and joy” (“*Stimmung und Freude*”).<sup>54</sup> In contrast, Moreck’s sensationalistic account of the space emphasises the rapacious behaviour of its female illusionists towards its largely heterosexual clientele. Moreck frames the transvestites as actors in a deceptive performance of desire, one aimed to disabuse the stuffy *kleinbürgerlich* (*petit bourgeois*) patrons of the contents of their wallets.<sup>55</sup> Schad’s illustration strikes a tone between the two textual accounts. Amidst the faux-Japanese kitsch, the jaded, hungry stare of the foreground’s female-clad figures and the mustachioed gentlemen at the rear’s voyeuristic gaze throw the authenticity of the convivial interactions in the middle-ground into doubt. Through these contrasts, Schad aims to expose the alienation organising the scene’s sociality. At the same time as it admits the psychological divide between the *Mikado*’s figures, Schad’s pen unites them in two ways: one affirming the power of mimetic realism and one negating that power. Like Schad’s other illustrations of Berlin nightspots, the *Mikado* cites the post-Western paradigm of perspectival illusionism, even as Schad puts that paradigm under stress through the space’s steep slant, leading its inhabitants to threaten to tumble out of the image. Seen as such, the *Mikado* affirms the power of the mimetic picture to naturalise its contents and thereby impose a semblance of order on a disordered modern world. Interpreted as an aesthetic unity, the *Mikado* asserts Schad’s power to transform his materials purposefully: to convert lines of ink into components of a convincing representation of real space. However, accounting for the signification of multiple figures by the same line, the speciousness of the picture’s unity becomes evident. Schad’s seeming validation of the conceits of mimetic realism emerges as their negation.

Schad composes the drawings for Moreck’s guide overwhelmingly from attenuated black contour lines. At the same time, he refuses to employ interior shading to model form, denying it three-dimensional mass. He instead shades the drawings’ linear topographies with fields of black dots, applied with varying degrees of density. In the *Mikado*, Schad only casts a faint drizzle of points of ink within the lines demarcating the cloche cap of a female-dressed figure in the foreground, back turned to the viewer. Behind this broad-shouldered figure’s head, the same line comes to signify the pyramidal bald pate of the man in the middle-ground and the chin of the effeminate man perched above him, surveying the scene like from a theatre box. Another line, jaggedly snaking upwards behind the vase in the foreground before descending downwards to its right, simultaneously serves to represent a chair back and the heavy-jawed transvestite’s blouse. A third arched line dually figures as the brim of the latter figure’s own headpiece and the bald man’s sleeve edge; a fourth, rotated ninety degrees into near verticality, slides beneath the interlocked arms of the two transvestites dancing at the image’s left edge. It serves both as the border between the rear partner’s skimpy outfit, revealing her bare chest, and the front partner’s halter-clad right side. United in the material fibre of their pictorial existence, the *Mikado*’s figures cease to be truly distinct entities. Their bodies, strung

54 *Das Freundschaftsblatt*, 1928, 6:3, quoted in Dobler, op. cit., p. 50.

55 Moreck, op. cit., p. 177.

together by loping lines, become passages within a pen-and-ink design unsure of whether it wishes to resolve itself into a representation.

The *Mikado*’s wandering lines, in their duplicity, undercut the foundations of post-Renaissance Western pictorial mimesis: spatial recession and, more basically, the division of figure and ground. Through this rejection, Schad denies the *Mikado*’s coherence as an aesthetic unity, extending the doubts about the *Mikado* patrons’ coherence as a social unity sown by their ocular interactions. The facing dancing partners seem stand at two different points in perspectival space, positioned behind the other. By simultaneously occupying two points in the drawing’s recessive space, however, the sinuous line delineating one dancer’s dress and the other’s rear collapses the differentiation between those two points – and the perspectival logic underlying the image’s entire spatial schema. Moreover, Schad’s tendency to fragment contour lines at their points of contact chips away at pictorial depth. In a symptomatic instance, the line delineating the amply curved buttocks of the ambiguously gendered, crop-coiffured figure in the *Mikado*’s centre cracks open in avoidance of the bob haircut of the cigarette-smoking woman in the foreground, suspicious and pensive in her demeanour. Moreover, a cavity opens in the line demarcating the ambiguously gendered central figure’s coquettishly tilted head at its point of overlap with a vertical axis of the room’s paneling. Here, Schad sets the stage for forms to overlap – a cornerstone of spatial illusionism – and then withdraws that proposition. Through line’s extension and fragmentation, Schad pulls back the curtain on the *Mikado*’s mimetic realism to admit that its spatial depth is an artistic contrivance.

As much a pictorial surface as a pictorial space, as much a window onto another world as a series of marks arranged on a page, the *Mikado*’s status as a mimetic image is tentative. Yet, Schad’s subtle but precise hobbling of mimetic realism’s fundamentals is anything but tentative: *Mikado*’s lines seem to rebel against the forms they constitute. Through this self-negating representational enterprise, Schad denies mimetic realism the power to engender a coherent, self-contained whole from its objects. He thereby exposes the futility of mimetic realism’s illusionistic goals in light of meaning’s evacuation from reality under rationalised Weimar modernity. Schad constructs mimetic realism here as an edifice about to crumble, its foundations cracking under the weight of centuries of outmoded convention. Rather than a regressive return to realism, Schad invents a fractured mode of realism that declares the exhaustion of its traditional premises. This realism does not appear as the organic outgrowth of a sovereign, internally directed subjecthood that impresses meaning on reality. Analogising Kracauer’s ornaments, aesthetic order must instead be imposed externally. In failing to penetrate reality’s surface to fill the emptiness at its core, this aesthetic scheme cannot help but expose its own artificiality.

My goal in this paper has not been to claim for Schad the status of a critical, much less a politically committed, artist. Rather, it has been to demonstrate that Schad, in his *Führer* drawings, forged a mode of mimetic realism whose superficial resemblance to past representational paradigms, per Fore, “confirms nothing so

much as the ineluctable fact (of its) historical non-equivalence.”<sup>56</sup> Against Buchloh’s assertion that realism’s return in the 1920’s necessarily “sought to halt modernism and deny its historical necessity”, I propose that Schad’s realism, in its self-negating thrust, testifies to the specificity of its historical moment: Weimar Germany’s utterly modern crisis of the sovereign subject and therefore of meaning. Following Fore, my analysis of Schad’s drawings has emphasised their “formal dimension”, in part to counter the presumption that his – or artwork (any artwork) – communicates its contents transparently and therefore “(provides) its own interpretation spontaneously.”<sup>57</sup> However, departing from Fore’s precedent, I focus on interwar “realist works that (take) the human body as their explicit motif”, which Fore deems less worthy of study than contemporaneous examples of mimetic realism “that had nothing at all to do with subject matter per se, but instead pursued realism’s humanist agenda at the level of artistic technique”, such as those by John Heartfield or Laszlo Moholy-Nagy.<sup>58</sup> By highlighting the reciprocal interdependence of Schad’s artistic technique for representing space with those spaces’ social character, I argue both for the mutual implication of form and content in Schad’s work and for the legitimacy of “subject matter” – focused realism’s inclusion in the central debates of modernist art history.

What, however, does all of this have to do with the queer heritage of Central Europe, a subject the contents of Schad’s *Führer* drawings seem to embody? In this paper, I hope to model an approach to studying modernist representations of sexual and gender minorities that accounts for their historical specificity, rather than projecting postmodern hermeneutic strategies or models of political liberation onto them. Andreas Huyssen has warned against reading Weimar texts as “anticipating postmodernism”, engaging in a “presentist appropriation” denying the historical specificity of Weimar cultural life.<sup>59</sup> In her recent essay on Schad’s *Zwei Mädchen*, showing two women – possibly lesbians – in lingerie masturbating side by side, Esther Bauer undertakes an acute analysis of Schad’s formal presentation of the painting’s figures to argue that its “rejection of traditional viewing patterns and power dynamics”<sup>60</sup> reveals erotic art to be “a highly scripted genre.”<sup>61</sup> By confronting the viewer with the constructed and arbitrary nature of erotic art’s gendered power relations (and ultimately, gender-specific sexual behaviour), Bauer alleges *Zwei Mädchen* encourages them to reconsider their notion of “female sexuality as necessarily oriented towards men.”<sup>62</sup> However, the formal strategies Bauer argues

56 Fore, op. cit., p. 11.

57 Ibid., p. 13.

58 Ibid., p. 1. Paralleling Buchloh, in spite of the manifest differences of their argument about interwar realism, Fore mentions Schad on the opening page of *Realism after Modernism* in passing as a paradigmatic example of a “reformed Dadaist” who embraced mimetic realism.

59 A. Huyssen, *Miniature Metropolis: Literature in an Age of Photography and Film*, Cambridge, 2015, p. 12.

60 Bauer, “Female Sexuality...”, op. cit., p. 55.

61 Ibid., p. 79.

62 Ibid., p. 55.



work towards this end – the figures' "averted gazes"<sup>63</sup> and the presence of subtle spatial incongruities and distortions that both invite and reject the viewer's own gaze<sup>64</sup> – echo the terms through which I argue Schad's *Führer* illustrations of queer nightspots pessimistically present the void of meaning beneath contemporary life. As such, we must consider whether Schad's characteristic distortions of mimetic realism's formal inheritance, when deployed in the representation of gender and sexual minorities, indeed promote a self-critical, liberatory deconstruction of identity – or whether they simply represent queer people in as cynical a light as the rest of Schad's investigations of Weimar modernity.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 65–72.

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