

Chapter 7

**PROSTITUTES, RESPECTABLE WOMEN,
AND WOMEN FROM “OUTSIDE”**

The Carl Grossmann Sexual Murder Case in Postwar Berlin

Sace Elder



Few of Weimar Germany's notorious criminals epitomize the sexual and moral decadence often associated with the period better than the “sexual murderer” Karl (who went by Carl) Friedrich Wilhelm Grossmann. Known popularly as the Blue Beard or the Beast of the Silesian train station district of Berlin, Grossmann won infamy in August 1921, when he was discovered in his one-room apartment in one of the poorest of Berlin's proletarian districts, standing blood-soaked over the lifeless body of young Marie Nitsche. After many weeks of interrogation, Grossmann admitted to the murders of two other women. Officials, however, became convinced that he was in fact responsible for the violent deaths of many more women, some of whom had never been identified.¹ The most horrifying aspect of the murders was the brutal dismemberment of the bodies, which had been tossed into the canals and channels of eastern Berlin. Grossmann's motive, officials and medical examiners believed, had been sexual: Grossmann was, they argued, a classic sexual murderer who achieved sexual satisfaction through killing his victim during sexual intercourse. Like the period's other notorious sexual predators, Fritz Haarmann and Peter Kürten, Grossmann's story has become iconic as a symbol of the criminality and gender anxiety of the 1920s. The Grossmann case in particular provided a set of visual themes for artists such as George Grosz and Otto Dix. Scholarly literature on the subject of sexual violence in Weimar culture has demonstrated the prevalence of representations of violated female bodies in avant-garde art and literature and has suggested that the images of mutilated breasts, ripped wombs, and slashed vaginas were indicative of a

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male psychological trauma stemming from the war and the disruption of prewar bourgeois gender norms.²

Grossmann thus perpetrated his crimes in a society that was very much concerned with sexual and criminal deviance.³ Historian Kerstin Brückweh has explained the twentieth-century fascination with sexual murder in terms of “an ambivalent emotion defined by attraction and interest” that is conditioned in part by feelings and also by fantasy.⁴ Perhaps this fascination is why the story of Grossmann and his victims became as elastic and mythologized as any urban legend, even in criminological literature. Already before the trial, rumors circulated that Grossmann, who had worked as a butcher’s apprentice earlier in life, had sold the flesh of his victims to unsuspecting neighbors.⁵ Later descriptions fictionalized the case to fit certain notions of criminality. In a treatise on the “professional criminal,” the criminologist Robert Heindl, for example, described Grossmann as a dangerous criminal who profited from his crimes by selling the flesh and clothing of his victims to unwitting neighbors. According to Heindl, Grossmann’s motives were purely economic and Grossmann was therefore a professional or habitual criminal who needed to be removed from society.⁶ By contrast, in his 1930 work *Sex and Crime (Geschlecht und Verbrechen)*, sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld regarded Grossmann as a typical *sexual* murderer who, far from selling anything, ate the flesh and drank the blood of his victims.⁷ According to Curt Elwenspoek’s 1930 book on the criminal police (intended to popularize police work), Grossmann was an anonymous urban killer whom no one suspected until it was too late.⁸

Grossmann’s crimes became the stuff of legend even before his trial was held. During the months-long investigation and his abbreviated trial, the press, crime experts, and local citizens all sought to make sense of Grossmann and his crimes. The case captured the public imagination in 1921–1922 precisely because it touched on the themes most relevant to the topsy-turvy world of postwar and postrevolutionary Germany. Whereas Grossmann may have represented the pathology of urban anonymity, his victims represented the social and cultural crises feared by many observers: rural-urban migration increased by privation in the countryside, the “surplus of women” produced by wartime mobilization, the alleged decline in morality among women and juveniles, and the increased criminality in the city. In the end, the Grossmann case was about sex in the way that sex is always about everything else, and in this instance, it was about the state of German gender and class relations.

The Carl Grossmann case was thus quintessentially “Weimar” because it reflected the contested nature of social and gender relations in the immediate postwar period. It is therefore important to interrogate the specific historical context in which the narratives were first formulated and understand what they might have meant for the construction of lower-class sexuality and gender roles in the postwar years.⁹ Crime reporting in the metropolitan press had been a

crucial component in the *reading* and *writing* of urban space in the prewar years, and it would likewise help shape perceptions of social reality in the postwar period.¹⁰ The Grossmann case thus provides a useful vantage point from which to observe the public anxieties about sexuality, the family, and womanhood, while also providing clues as to how these were being culturally reconstituted in the postwar era.¹¹

The extensive and sensationalized press coverage associated with the criminal investigation and trial placed Grossmann, his victims, and his proletarian neighborhood under close public scrutiny. In addition, countless women from Grossmann's milieu revealed to investigators and court officials that they, too, had experienced Grossmann's violence. The copious court records generated by the investigation reveal a set of social relations in the poorest parts of proletarian Berlin that was at odds with the often salacious and sensational public narratives written about the perpetrator and his victims. It is in the space between the public narratives told about Grossmann's victims and their milieu and the stories that the women of the Silesian train station neighborhood told about themselves that the significance of the Grossmann case for early Weimar class and gender relations can be found.

Grossmann's Victims and Their Milieu

The area surrounding the Silesian train station in the eastern part of the Berlin was one of Berlin's most economically depressed neighborhoods and a reputed crime district (*Verbrecherviertel*). The economic and social conditions of the postwar period created a mixed population of permanent residents and transients passing through the city on their way to and from the eastern provinces. Factory workers, day laborers, seasonal workers, prostitutes, the unemployed, peddlers, shopkeepers, wives, and mothers called this district home. Police found it difficult to maintain their accustomed control over such a population. Registration of domicile with the local police precinct was the chief means by which police could control and identify individuals, yet migrants and runaways tended to live unregistered, moving from one temporary housing situation to another.

Despite the clandestine activities, life in the district was extremely public. As in all working-class districts of Berlin, many of life's daily activities were carried out in the streets, especially in the summertime, when the narrow and poorly ventilated tenement houses were particularly uncomfortable. The local pubs, the market, and the train station itself were favorite meeting places for lonely-hearts, as well as prostitutes and their clients. Hans Ostwald, in his prewar study of prostitution in Berlin, described the scene in this corner of the city: "In the sooty Koppfenstraße at the Silesian train station poor, weathered, and wrecked creatures walk around nightly, especially on Saturdays, without head-covering and with

blue kitchen aprons. They count on the drunken workers returning home, to whom they can offer themselves for one to two Marks.”¹² In this public life of the streets and parks, Grossmann, who had moved to the neighborhood from a cabin in a suburban garden colony in 1919, made the acquaintance of many women. As Grossmann well knew, the neighborhood’s close proximity to the train station as well as the openness of the street facilitated encounters with the residents and migrants in the neighborhood, many of whom were unemployed. Among the area residents’ favorite gathering and resting places was the Andreasplatz, a small park just one block north of Grossmann’s apartment building in Lange Straße; it was in this park that Grossmann met many of his female acquaintances. One resident of the area who had known Grossmann for two years and frequently went to Andreasplatz “on doctor’s orders” for fresh air reported that Grossmann was a “well known personality” in the park because “he was there almost daily and always had a different friend with him.”¹³

To the women he met who were in dire economic circumstances, Grossmann would often offer food, shelter, money or, in many cases, employment as a housekeeper. Many residents of the neighborhood availed themselves of Grossmann’s financial assistance. As a relatively successful street peddler in this economically depressed neighborhood, Grossmann was an employer of women, a customer of prostitutes and local drinking establishments, a moneylender to neighbors, and to a few, a drinking companion. Grossmann certainly performed these roles with an eye to his own interests, exploiting the economic, physical, and sexual vulnerabilities of his would-be beneficiaries. His economic position, although marginal by middle-class standards, afforded him in this neighborhood the status of benefactor of last resort.¹⁴ The very neighbors who reported Grossmann to the authorities, for example, also owed him money and were known to have socialized with Grossmann in local drinking establishments and amusement parks. A married woman who lived on Grossmann’s floor admitted to police in her first interview that she and her husband owed Grossmann 58 Marks.¹⁵

In his neighborhood, then, Grossmann was no anonymous urban predator like the Ripper of Whitechapel, with whom he would later be compared. He was, on the contrary, quite well-known, if not universally liked. He participated in the open sociability of the neighborhood inhabited by both transients and long-term residents. The women who accepted work, food, or clothing from Grossmann in exchange for labor or sexual favors were all very poor, but came from a range of occupational backgrounds and family situations. One resident of Grossmann’s building told police that the women he had seen trafficking in Grossmann’s apartment had been “mostly prostitutes, partly also respectable [*anständige*] women. . . . Partly he also had women from outside [Berlin] in his apartment.”¹⁶ We know quite a bit about the women who made Grossmann’s acquaintance in this way because many of them came forward to give testimony regarding Grossmann’s sexual behavior and social connections. The stories some

of these women told of sexual abuse at the hands of Grossmann were used as evidence of his propensity to sexual violence. According to their statements and testimonies, many of the women who had accepted Grossmann's offers were single women with no social networks, whether they had recently arrived in the city or had lived there for some time. Although some of his "guests" were registered prostitutes, others were mothers living in the neighborhood. One woman told police that she had met Grossmann through a friend and, after leaving her six-year-old son at home, went to Grossmann's apartment. In return for sleeping with him she received some used clothing.¹⁷ Another woman who lived in the building next door to Grossmann's had met him in the summer of 1920 on Andreasplatz and had agreed to have sex with him in exchange for food for herself and her child.¹⁸ An unemployed worker, who was married when she gave her statement in August 1921, told officials she had lived briefly with Grossmann under similar circumstances in his cabin in 1918.¹⁹

In 1921, these women of the Silesian train station district were still feeling the economic and social effects of the war and postwar demobilization. They were the women that historian Belinda Davis has identified as the "women of lesser means" whose marginal existences during the war drew considerable public attention and produced widespread criticism of the Imperial government's wartime policies. In fact, the neighborhood was the site of two butter riots in October 1915.²⁰ For many of these women, the war effort had meant bearing the double burden of running the household while the men of the family were away, only to end up unemployed at the end of the war. Even in the fall of 1920, when unemployment had begun to abate elsewhere in Germany, Berlin, along with Saxony and Hamburg, still had one of the highest rates of unemployment in the immediate postwar years. Part of the reason for the high unemployment rate in Berlin was the high level of immigration to the city. Unemployment among women was particularly high in Berlin, where women made up 47 percent of those looking for jobs.²¹ Even with the return to full employment in 1922, the labor market was not favorable to women seeking heavy industrial jobs, as demobilization policies carried out by employers tended to displace women back into traditional jobs of cooking, cleaning, and textiles.²²

That many women in this area of Berlin, whether recent arrivals or long-term residents, had turned to domestic labor or prostitution to make ends meet was not unusual for women of their milieu. In fact, the biographical profiles of the women who had turned to Grossmann for material aid were very much typical of the profiles of prostitutes in general, who were usually women of marginal social status who resorted to prostitution as a transitional strategy to cope with changed economic circumstances. Often these women later returned to other forms of employment, although the regulation of prostitution, which included compulsory registration, could make this return to so-called respectability difficult.²³ Hans Ostwald categorized such women with gainful employment who

occasionally exchanged sex for money, gifts, or food as “casual prostitutes” (*Gelegenheitsdirnen*), whose numbers he estimated at five to ten times the number of registered prostitutes. Prostitution such as this was casual because it did not constitute an occupation or a complete lifestyle. Unlike many critics of prostitution at the time, Ostwald saw this kind of pecuniary sexual activity as an economic strategy rather than the result of sexual perversity or innate moral depravity.²⁴

Although Ostwald admitted that it was often difficult to tell the difference between casual prostitution and a love affair, it is clear that many of the women who came into contact with Grossmann fit Ostwald’s description of occasional prostitutes. To be sure, some of Grossmann’s guests were registered prostitutes, but most did not practice prostitution as a sole means of support. Among those women interviewed by officials, some indicated that they had understood from the beginning that Grossmann had expected sexual favors in return for his beneficence. Others indicated that they had accepted Grossmann’s invitation as a legitimate offer of employment or aid. One unemployed industrial worker, for example, accepted Grossmann’s offer of employment as a housekeeper in August 1921. After she had worked for a day performing household tasks for Grossmann, he drugged and raped her.²⁵ Most of the women who had had remunerative sexual relations with Grossmann had a range of occupational experience, although virtually all were unemployed.

Most of the women who had visited Grossmann’s apartment had worked for him or had exchanged sexual relations for food or money and could therefore not be categorized as *Straßendirnen* (streetwalkers) or *Kontrollmädchen* (registered prostitutes) who sustained themselves through illicit sexual behavior. Significantly, in some cases it was precisely those women who had the most experience in such situations who avoided the fate of Grossmann’s victims. Prostitute Erika, for example, found Grossmann’s residence and his demeanor too “creepy” to complete the sexual transaction to which she had agreed,²⁶ while Johanna, a recent migrant to the city, gladly and perhaps naively accepted Grossmann’s invitation to dinner. But neither were these women who had never run into trouble with the law. Nitsche, Grossmann’s final murder victim, had been enjoying her first day of freedom after a month-long stay at Moabit prison when she made Grossmann’s acquaintance on the street. After an evening of drinking in the local pubs, Grossmann and Nitsche retired to Grossmann’s apartment, where he laced her coffee with cyanide, bound her hands and feet, and beat her head until she was dead.²⁷

In sum, the women of Grossmann’s milieu shared a marginal subsistence-level existence conditioned by the adverse conditions of urban migration, postwar mobilization, and economic destabilization; and they all faced employment and residential options circumscribed by the exigencies of official and unofficial gender politics. But in terms of their family status, their relationship to their community, their occupational and residential histories, the community of women

that the Grossmann case revealed was fairly diverse. The women's testimonies suggested, in fact, that marriage and motherhood had not protected women from the dangers of Grossmann's apartment.

What the women did share was an aversion to state authority that dissuaded them from seeking the aid or protection of the police. Although not all of the women who admitted having had sexual intercourse with Grossmann had had violent experiences with him, many of the women told harrowing stories of sexual abuse. One woman told police that Grossmann had laced her coffee with a sedative that made her unconscious, and when she awoke she found herself bound to the bed and experienced pain in her genitalia. She suspected he had inflicted some kind of "perversity" on her.²⁸ When another woman visited Grossmann's apartment, he bound her to his bed and brutally thrust his hand into her vagina so that she bled profusely.²⁹ That none of the women had made an official complaint to the police was due to several interrelated factors. Helene B. admitted in her second interview with detectives that she had been so ashamed of what Grossmann had done to her she had initially lied to them about her relationship with him. That the damage he had done to her vagina had resulted from initially consensual intercourse had no doubt led her to avoid police rather than seek their protection.³⁰

There was no space in the judicial system to redress the grievances of these women because of their compromised relationship with the police. If suspected of solicitation, a woman would have been registered as a prostitute with the morals police and subjected to the regular medical examinations of prostitutes provided for in the German criminal code. Although the registration of prostitutes did not stigmatize them within working-class communities in Germany to the degree that it did in France, Britain, and Italy, the practice did limit their ability to move freely about the city and made it more difficult for women to find adequate housing or to return to other forms of employment.³¹ Even if they did not fear being suspected of prostitution, some of the women probably worried about being cited for living unregistered in Grossmann's apartment, as all city residents were (and are) required by law to register their addresses with the local police. The women thus had reason to see the police not as protectors, but as persecutors. Furthermore, the police saw these women's stories as evidence in a murder case, not as evidence of violent crimes committed on their persons.³²

Grossmann was able to use the antagonistic relationship between the authorities and the women of the neighborhood to his advantage. He became notorious at the local police station for accusing his female housekeepers of stealing money from him; at least until the police grew tired of his frequent visits. By the time the police questioned Emma B. about Grossmann's accusations, they were more inclined to believe her because Grossmann had become something of a nuisance with his frequent visits to the police station.³³ Frieda T., however, did not escape so easily. Charges against her were dropped only after Grossmann was apprehended and she agreed to testify against him at trial.³⁴

On the surface, Carl Grossmann's life history looked very much like those of other members of Germany's lower classes in the period of rapid industrialization. He was born in 1863 as one of seven children of a merchant in Neuruppin where he attended school until he was fourteen years old, when he went to work in a textile factory to help support his family. At age sixteen he left Neuruppin with a friend for Berlin, where he hoped to find work. In Berlin he held many jobs, including an apprenticeship at a butcher's shop. At age nineteen he was drafted into the military, but was released due to a hernia. After his release he returned to Berlin, and later Pomerania, Mecklenburg, and other rural areas, where he worked as an agricultural laborer, always returning to Berlin in between. In the ten years before his capture, Grossmann had been a permanent resident of the capital city, in various apartments in the eastern part of the city and in a cabin in an allotment garden (*Laubenkolonie*), which he left in 1919, when he took up permanent residence at Lange Straße 88/89.³⁵ In light of his crimes, Grossmann's wanderings may have been attributed to a shiftless and criminal nature. In fact, however, his geographic and occupational mobility was quite characteristic of the rural-urban migrants who, in the last phases of urbanization before the war, slowly began to settle permanently in urban areas.³⁶

Where Grossmann stood out from his milieu was in both the length and the nature of his criminal history. His criminal record began at age twenty, when he was sentenced to three days in jail for begging. After that, Grossmann spent much of his life serving short sentences for begging, theft, vagrancy, and crimes against decency. Such petty crimes, of course, were common both in Berlin and in the countryside. In 1896, however, he was convicted of "unnatural sexual assault" on a sheep in Mannheim; in 1897 for sexual assault against a twelve-year-old girl in Nuremberg; and in 1899 he was sentenced to fifteen years hard labor in the penitentiary for the rape of two small girls, one of whom was badly injured in the assault.³⁷

At the time of his apprehension in August 1921, Grossmann had been a member of the Silesian train station neighborhood for about two years. He was a frequent if unwelcome guest at the local police station with his fallacious reporting of missing and felonious housekeepers. He was also well-known in his tenement house at Lange Straße: quite notorious, in fact, for returning home to his one-room apartment very late in the evenings with one or more women, creating quite a racket as they ascended the numerous flights to the top-story apartment. Strange noises and noxious odors emanated from his apartment, prompting residents to wonder aloud what went on there so late in the evenings.

A crowded apartment building, open streets, familiar bars—how did Grossmann manage to rape, murder, and dismember the bodies of his victims? Based on their statements to investigators, the reaction of Grossmann's neighbors was indicative of a broad cultural acceptance of violence against women, which was regarded as an essentially private matter. Domestic abuse was pervasive in the

working-class communities of the Weimar era (and indeed, earlier) and was one of the most insidious ways in which male authority in the working-class household was maintained. Very seldom did neighbors intervene on behalf of a battered wife. The informal mutual-help networks of women that were such an integral part of female working-class life were usually only able to provide solace after the fact.³⁸ Grossmann's womanizing became most bothersome to his neighbors when it became noisy and invaded their private space, but even then their interventions were limited. The frustrated demand of a neighbor one evening that Grossmann desist from abusing his female visitor, whose screams could be heard throughout the floor, was met with an angry "Shut your face!" ("Halt die Schnauze!") from Grossmann's side of his closed apartment door.³⁹ No one made sure that the woman in Grossmann's apartment was safe; they were only concerned that the noise stop. Max Neumann, also on Grossmann's corridor, tried to defend this behavior by telling police that the cries they heard had not been cries for help (*Hilferufe*) but rather cries of pain (*Wehrufe*).⁴⁰ Whether this distinction was his own or prompted by police, the fact that a distinction was made at all indicates that investigators and witnesses were seeking to explain why no one had intervened more forcefully on behalf of Grossmann's victims.⁴¹

Grossmann's neighbors thus confessed that they had known that he had abused his many female visitors. And although they occasionally demanded that he desist from that abuse, this was done only when the violence caused enough noise to disturb the neighbors in their own apartments. Although Grossmann's behavior was bothersome, it was not so far out of the ordinary as to be considered criminal. Not until police posted public notices of the latest crimes in early August 1921 and made it known that they suspected that the murderer lived in the Silesian train station district did his neighbors suspect that Grossmann could be involved in the crimes. Helene and Mannheim Itzig, corridor neighbors of Grossmann's, admitted to having bored a hole through Grossmann's door in order to better observe his activities, having noticed how roughly he treated women. The wanted posters regarding the murdered women in the neighborhood led them to think "instinctively" of Grossmann. "As a consequence, he was closely observed by us."⁴² It is impossible to know whether they were observing Grossmann out of a sense of civic responsibility, a hope for reward, or to blackmail him. Perhaps it was a combination of all three. Whatever their motivations, the Itzigs did on a certain level behave exactly as the police expected them to: They carefully observed the suspicious activities of a neighbor and eventually brought these activities to the attention of the authorities.

Aside from the commotion created by the cries of pain coming from Grossmann's apartment, the malodorous smell emanating from the bloody body parts also drew the attention of his neighbors. But when Grossmann was asked about the foul stench emanating from his apartment, he answered simply that chicken meat had spoiled, an explanation readily accepted by neighbors living in the

same crowded and poorly ventilated apartment building in the stifling July and August heat. Although the smell was unpleasant, only in retrospect did it become criminal.

In view of the physical features of Grossmann's living situation, the brutal elements of his crimes appear to have had a practical aspect as well. In this crowded apartment building, removing the body from the fourth floor would have been most difficult without attracting attention. By dismembering the bodies, Grossmann was able to remove them from his apartment in inconspicuously small paper packages and burn some of the pieces in his apartment oven. To dispose of not just one but several human corpses in such a way surely required a certain amount of sadism and psychopathic misogyny. At the same time, however, the elements of the crime that most aroused the morbid fascination of the public and most attested to Grossmann's sadistic perversity were also practical (criminal) responses to the challenges presented by the urban environment.

The Silesian train station neighborhood was a marginal community whose economic conditions facilitated Grossmann's violence against women. Far from being the innocuous neighbor described by Elwenspoek, Grossmann was a familiar, although to many unpopular, figure in the neighborhood. His somewhat better economic position (however attained) made him a significant if unsavory resource not only for single women, but also for established residents of the community. Grossmann was able to carry out his violent abuse of women not simply because of their economic situation, but because of the prevailing codes of behavior in urban tenement houses, which reinforced the boundaries between public and private, and because of a system of regulation that discouraged women from discussing their experiences with the authorities. The social identities of these women cannot be reduced to that of prostitute because mothers, wives, and women with previous occupational experience could be counted among the visitors to Grossmann's apartment. If anything, the testimonies of the witnesses in the Grossmann trial revealed that traditional family roles—motherhood, marriage, domestic work—had not provided protection from the sexual danger Grossmann presented. All this is especially significant because the ways in which the press and crime professionals sought to make sense of the crimes only served to mask these complex social identities and reinforce the power relations that made Grossmann's crimes possible in the first place.

Public Narratives of the Crime

Grossmann was apprehended in August 1921. His trial was held in early July 1922 and was cut short after three days by his jail-cell suicide. In the intervening months, the primary detectives in the case, Werneburg and Riemann, as well as the state attorney's office sought to establish the full extent of Grossmann's

crimes. As the investigation wore on, the press, police, and other criminological experts tried to reconstruct Grossmann's crimes by establishing just who Grossmann's victims were. The social and moral identities of Grossmann's victims were of singular importance to the investigation for two reasons. First, the police had been investigating the unsolved murders of many young women since 1919, some of whom had been dismembered and found in the Luisenstadt Canal and the Engelbecken reservoir. Officials had been unable to put names to some of the corpses, so that the identities of these victims remained a mystery. Second, as in many murder cases, the identity of the victims held the key to the degree of the perpetrator's guilt. This was particularly important in the Grossmann case because Grossmann claimed that his victims had provoked his violence by stealing from him, but it was also true with respect to the public's perception of Grossmann's criminality: a killer of innocents seemed more horrifying and less explicable than a killer of prostitutes. As Judith Walkowitz has argued with regard to the Jack the Ripper case, the moral status of the victims taught newspaper readers important lessons about the dangers of the city.⁴³ Although the Social-Democratic newspaper *Vorwärts* reported that the Grossmann case excited a "great furor" and "has caused primarily the feminine population of Berlin understandable anxiety and excitement,"⁴⁴ most of the reporting on the Grossmann case separated the identities of the victims from so-called respectable society, reassuring the reader of (her) safety. The German detective and criminologist Robert Heindl would point out later, with regard to Jack the Ripper, that most Londoners were, in fact, as safe as ever in 1888 when the Ripper was prowling Whitechapel.⁴⁵ Press reports, forensic experts, and crime professionals established essentially two sets of identities for Grossmann's victims: prostitutes and innocent young girls from the countryside. Both groups of women fell outside the protective confines of family and community and placed themselves in danger.

There were many reasons why the Grossmann murders became a public sensation. In the heady years of the immediate postwar period, bloated, water-logged bodies—dismembered or otherwise—frequently surfaced in the city's numerous waterways. Victims of political violence, such as Karl Blau, of domestic violence, such as Anselm Hemberger, or of neighborly disputes found their penultimate resting places in the Landwehr Canal, the Luisenstadt Canal, the river Spree, or the lakes on the outskirts of town, to be found by unsuspecting citizens.⁴⁶ In the context of postwar disruptions and urban migration, unidentified victims of murder or suicide were especially disconcerting for a public already distressed by the high number of persons who seemed to have disappeared into the anonymity of metropolitan life. On 7 August 1921, Egon Jacobsohn published an article in the *Berliner Morgenpost* titled "Persons who Disappear," in which he reported that 3,425 people had been reported missing in Prussia and other German states in 1919, and that the number climbed to 4,280 in 1921. Many of these were young runaways, Jacobsohn wrote, especially attractive young women seeking fame on

the stage or film.⁴⁷ Just two days later, *Morgenpost* readers would have found evidence of the dire consequences of the missing-persons epidemic when the paper reported the discovery in the Luisenstadt Canal of the lower leg and spinal cord of an unidentified woman in her early twenties.⁴⁸

Particularly sensational was Grossmann's official designation as a sexual offender. Already two weeks before Grossmann was apprehended, newspapers were reporting that the murdered women whose dismembered bodies had been found in the city's waterways in previous months had fallen victim to a *Lustmörder* (sexual murderer).⁴⁹ Grossmann initially insisted that the three murders to which he confessed had been acts of passion (*Affekthandlungen*), that the women had tried to steal money from him, and that he had killed them in a rage. He further contended that he had dismembered his victims' bodies only to dispose of the corpses—a strategy other murderers had used in the crowded tenements of Berlin in the very months when Grossmann had committed his crimes.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, there was no doubt in the minds of investigators and medical experts that Grossmann was a sexual murderer. By 1921, sexual murder was a well-documented and well-defined phenomenon, which experts understood as a pathological manifestation of psychosexual dysfunction. According to one of the period's most prolific authors on the subject, the jurist Erich Wulffen, true sexual murder was related to rape and was one in which the motive was the "manifestation of a degenerate sexual urge."⁵¹ Criminalists associated the mutilation of corpses with sexual perversions that resulted in particularly gruesome violent acts. According to jurists and criminologists, *Lustmörder* were sexually aroused by extreme violence to the victim's body, by the sight of blood, or by sexual intercourse with a corpse; such crimes did not necessarily require the completion of the sexual act on the part of the murderer. Murders committed after sexual contact but for different motives, such as from fear of discovery, were generally not considered true sexual murders. The criminal psychology of sexual murder became such an important factor in the determination of criminal indictments (murder versus manslaughter) that by 1941 the motive of sexual desire, along with greed and the drive to kill, was added to the German penal code as a prerequisite for first-degree murder.⁵²

But the sexual perversion of the murderer alone did not suffice to make the murders morally and culturally legible. Even before the identities of the murderer and his victims were known, the social geography of the city played a key role in the investigation of the crimes. The location of the discovery of the unidentified bodies not far from the Silesian train station gave them a moral and social identity and also indirectly confirmed the assumption that the murders had been sexual. Following the profile of the sexual criminal that had been most influentially articulated by Erich Wulffen, the police assumed that the women, given the location of their bodies, had been prostitutes. Wulffen and others had maintained that most sexual murders involved prostitutes because they supposedly exposed themselves to male sexual perversion more than did respectable women. Pursuing this

line of argument, a newspaper article in the *Berliner Morgenpost* published shortly after Grossmann was arrested reassured readers that although Grossmann could be counted among such notable serial killers as Jack the Ripper, most such murderers victimized prostitutes. As if to further reassure respectable female readers of their safety, the article continued: "In Berlin the murders of women have been carried out in rather considerable numbers. Most of these are isolated crimes."⁵³

Murders of prostitutes tended to receive less attention from police and the public than did murders of innocent children and "morally upstanding" women.⁵⁴ The violent demise of a prostitute seemed explicable because she exposed herself to aggressive male sexuality and cheapened her own life through the commodification of her body. This popular attitude was evident in October 1920 when newspapers reported the murder of prostitute Frieda Schubert, whose death was later attributed to Grossmann. On 16 October the *Berliner Morgenpost* related the gory details of the crime, explaining that the murder appeared to have been the work of a sadist, who "sawed the bones apart with unbelievable brutality and tore the heart from the ribcage and the right arm from the shoulder."⁵⁵ The horror of the story was alleviated, however, by its incongruous juxtaposition on the page with an unrelated market report with the byline "Meat is Getting Cheaper" (*Das Fleisch wird billiger*). Whether the alignment of these two stories was the result of newsroom humor or editorial oversight is not clear. However, a callous attitude toward the brutal death of the young woman was clearly evident in an article the following day, which reported that the Identification Service of the Berlin Police had identified the victim through fingerprint records. Thirty-three year-old "street girl" Frieda Schubert, born in Dresden, "was not particularly well liked in her neighborhood because of her impudent behavior [*freches Auftreten*]." On the day of her disappearance, the story continued, Schubert had approached several men on the street until one unidentified man (supposedly the murderer) accepted her services.⁵⁶ The implication of the article was clear: Schubert's lifestyle, which her cheeky behavior indicated was chosen rather than forced upon her, had led to her ultimate demise; in the end, she was responsible for her own death. The descriptions of Schubert's character in the press were in keeping with the ways in which crime professionals characterized the women of Grossmann's milieu, to whom they attributed low-level criminality and social and mental inferiority. According to Peter Becker, as criminal science became medicalized in the latter part of the nineteenth century, German criminological discourse characterized the prostitute as both a victim and a vehicle of social degeneration; her mental and physical development were supposedly hindered by inherent physiological conditions or by the environment. Under this paradigm, according to Becker, prostitutes were seen as psychologically and physically weak, unable to protect themselves from moral depravity or to live in respectable society.⁵⁷

Once the identity of Berlin's serial sexual murderer was discovered, the Berlin newspapers' treatment of the murder victims masked the social identities and

experiences of Grossmann's victims in a variety of ways. The rather conservative *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, for instance, was much more interested in the criminal than in his victims. Grossmann was a "degenerate" (*Wüstling*), a "homely, ugly man" (*unscheinbarer, häßlicher Mensch*), who preyed on women who "suffered from need and hunger."⁵⁸ The newspaper was only interested in the identity of the victims insofar as they could prove the number of women Grossmann had killed. "The homicide squad has conclusive evidence that Grossmann's victim's number at least 15 to 20 who were murdered not just in Berlin but also outside of the city," the newspaper reported on 4 September.⁵⁹

By contrast, in the pages of the liberal Ullstein newspapers, the portrayals of Grossmann as a morally aberrant sexual predator featured characterizations of his victims as weak and vulnerable. Although most of the information about Grossmann's sexual exploits came from women who had experienced this firsthand, the newspapers' descriptions of the unidentified murder victims differed from the identities and experiences of these female witnesses. The *Morgenpost* characterized Grossmann's murder victims as young, single migrants from the countryside. The women were thus made out to be, as Grossmann's defense attorney later described them, "poor girls from the provinces."⁶⁰ In a report on the case a day after Grossmann's capture, the *Berliner Morgenpost* dramatized for its readers what a meeting between the murderer and his victim might have been like:

[He] goes searching the streets. There stands a girl looking greedily into a grocery store. "Well, little one, do you want to eat?" inquires Grossmann. "Yes, but I have no money!" is the unhappy answer. That is his cup of tea. He seeks out the hungry. They are the most submissive. "Would you like to be my housekeeper?" he asks and pulls from his coat pocket his wallet with numerous hundreds. Overjoyed the suffering one seizes the opportunity. [She] goes with the old one. Fearless. What can this weak fellow do to her? He stands there, says a witness later, before his deathbed. [She] receives, of course, not one penny in wages. Only plenty to eat. And that is the most important thing.⁶¹

The vignette, written in the style of crime fiction, contrasts the street-smart and calculating urban male predator against the naive, weak, and trusting female victim, whose sexual exploitation is made possible by her material destitution. The young woman is apparently oblivious to the sexual intentions of her host, who dupes her with the promise of legitimate employment. The reader already knows how the scenario ends: the young woman's desperation ends in her violent death.

The *BZ am Mittag* similarly reconstructed for its readers how one missing person and alleged murder victim, Melanie Sommer, might have met Grossmann in a restaurant one day in December 1920. "She shuddered with disgust as she saw this old, unclean and repulsive man before her but, after a long resistance, followed him despite this because in her great need she preferred staying with him to dying of hunger."⁶² The fictional description of Sommer's reaction

to Grossmann's appearance morally separated the criminal from his victim by emphasizing his advanced age, his unpleasant physical attributes, and the victim's negative reaction to his presence. The physical presence of the victim, on the other hand, is only signified through her physiological need for food. Her decision to follow him, in spite of her revulsion, is portrayed as an act of desperation.⁶³

These images of the female murder victims served as a foil for Grossmann's characterization as a sexual predator. According to these images, the murder victims' behavior arose from their economic desperation, while the murderer's behavior was based on malevolent calculation for the satisfaction of his perverse sexual appetite. This did not mean, however, that the victims were morally innocent. Grossmann's victims supposedly represented the young, single women newly arrived in Berlin with no family, no social network, and no job, who were at the mercy of the impersonal forces of the urban terrain and the market. In other words, they stood outside the protective confines of conventional gender roles of marriage, motherhood, and family. According to the *Berliner Morgenpost*, one missing person and possible murder victim, Emma Baumann, came from a "good family" in Mecklenburg. After a fight with her father—a landed proprietor, the newspaper helpfully detailed—she ran away to Berlin "without money and without protection." The police found her name and vital information in a list made by the morals police (*Sittlichkeitspolizei*) during a hotel raid in December 1920.⁶⁴ According to the *BZ am Mittag*, Emma was a "picture-pretty, nineteen year-old girl" who had run away on foot and, in her doubtful circumstances, ran into Grossmann on her first day in Berlin.⁶⁵ Implicit in the reporting was the fate of the wayward daughter: her fractiousness led to a life of prostitution and later murder. The women were thus not merely victims of circumstance; they were also partly to blame for the violence committed against them because they lived outside the protective confines of family and community.

By presenting the women as victims of circumstance rather than as whores (as with Frieda Schubert), the liberal Ullstein Press's narratives of Grossmann's crimes magnified Grossmann's social, sexual, and moral depravity. Clearly, these characterizations of Grossmann's victims were rather more sympathetic in their appreciation of the dire material circumstances that would have led young women into Grossmann's apartment. Nevertheless, the moral status of the victims was not unequivocal. The narratives of the crimes were tragic because the victim's own waywardness had led them into desperate situations and thus made them vulnerable to the sinister sexual criminal Grossmann. By living away from family and social networks, the young women had exposed themselves to the predatory male realm of the city. Neither the *Morgenpost* nor the other popular newspapers examined the broader economic and social circumstances that shaped these women's experiences and made Grossmann an alternative to "dying of hunger." The fatal result of the victims' transgressions eliminated the possibility of redemption and reconciliation with respectable society.

The public fascination with Grossmann's self-titled "housekeeper system"—luring women into his apartment with an offer of employment as his cleaning woman—showed that the public was struggling to make sense of the social and moral ambiguity of the victims. "Residents [of Grossmann's apartment building] speak of at least 150 [housekeepers]!" was one exclamatory report in the *Morgenpost*. The press routinely referred to Grossmann's victims and the women involved in the case as "housekeepers," using quotation marks to expose Grossmann's intentions and the sexual nature of the relationship, which even the most sensational reports never explicitly discussed. When the press referred to Grossmann's victims as "housekeepers," the quotation marks implicated the women in the crimes committed against them by exposing the attempt to legitimate illicit sexual relations through an employer-employee relationship. The image of the household servant or "domestic" would have been a complicated one for the *Morgenpost's* readers. Middle-class concerns about morality among young girls and within the family had long connected domestic service with sexual license and prostitution. Since the turn of the century, socialists and social reformers alike had been drawing public attention to the psychological impact of domestic service, which supposedly rendered young girls submissive, lacking in self-awareness, and easily turned toward sexual impropriety. Such reformers maintained that domestic servants were statistically far more likely to become prostitutes, produce illegitimate children, and commit infanticide.⁶⁶

Grossmann and his "housekeepers" were clearly engaging in what Hans Ostwald called casual, or "occasional," prostitution. During the war, such exchanges were characterized as "secret prostitution"—that is, prostitution not registered with the police. Secret prostitution became a grave concern to policymakers worried about low birth rates and morale at the war front, who saw it not as a strategy for economic survival but rather as the frivolous deviance of married and unmarried women who had forgotten their familial and social responsibilities while their men were away at war.⁶⁷ Officials' concern with secret prostitution reflected wartime anxieties about the erosion of the family and women's purported resistance to rational mobilization. After the war, reformers used casual prostitution as evidence for the failure of regulation to put an end to prostitution altogether. In the years following the 1918–1919 Revolution and the extension of the franchise to women, anti-regulationists campaigned for the limitation of the powers of the morals police.⁶⁸

The press and crime experts also made morally legible the women on whom the police depended for information about Grossmann's victims and violent proclivities. A psychiatrist commenting on the Grossmann trial spoke of Grossmann's victims in the Social-Darwinist terms of being "not fit for the struggle for survival." The "indolence" and "emotional apathy of th[e] low social sphere" these women inhabited explained why no one interfered in Grossmann's

activities before his capture.⁶⁹ In his view, Grossmann's milieu bore part of the blame for the crimes because of its alleged passivity and moral turpitude. Another forensic psychiatrist warned prosecutors that "the girls whom he [Grossmann] took in came mostly from completely depraved and evil social circles, and certainly many exaggerate and lie."⁷⁰ Similarly, the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, perhaps the least sympathetic to the women in the Grossmann case of all the Berlin dailies, declared that "about half of the female witnesses [in the case] are homeless, belong in part to the offscouring [*Hefe*] of the population, and can only be located and brought forward by a detective" when they are needed.⁷¹ Those who believed in the fundamental depravity of the women and their milieu found evidence for their convictions when Grossmann's neighbor was arrested for allegedly having blackmailed Grossmann before his arrest. The *Berliner Volkszeitung* dramatized for its readers a fictitious scene between Grossmann and the neighbor, putting in her mouth the words "Now hand over fifty Marks, or I'll turn you in!"⁷²

The *Berliner Morgenpost* was the only newspaper to address the issue of the regulation of prostitution as a deterrent to the female witnesses against coming forward with their experiences sooner. The daily paper explained, correctly, that the female witnesses "never would have wanted to make an official complaint to police because they feared that they would have been held responsible because they lived with him unregistered [with police]."⁷³ But the implication of the report was also that although the women were performing their civic duty by offering their knowledge to investigators, it was not to be forgotten that this knowledge was gained through illicit activity. Furthermore, the report was misleading in suggesting that it was not registration as prostitutes that the women feared but being caught without proper residential documentation.

Just as in Victorian London, the public narratives of Grossmann's crimes also held lessons for women about the consequences of living outside the parameters of moral and social respectability in the city. Ignoring the experiences of Grossmann's known victims—both living and dead—the press's narratives concealed the extent to which family, motherhood, and social connections within the city had failed to protect Grossmann's victims against economic deprivation and sexual exploitation. Instead, the press identified migration to the city and the economic and social independence of working-class women as the source of the victims' downfall. Two narrative strategies explained the women's situations: The first characterized them as fallen women of a criminal milieu; the second saw them as atomized victims of male sexual aggression whose desperation and vulnerability resulted from tragic individual choices. Yet even where they focused on the victims, the public narratives were ultimately about Grossmann and his crimes; the vulnerability and fear of the female victim only served to distance the murderer morally from the newspaper-reading public.⁷⁴

Conclusion

The public narratives constructed to explain Grossmann's crimes offered no clear villains, victims, or heroes and diverged on several key points. Grossmann was either a cunning scoundrel clever enough to evade police or an imbecile with no control over his baser instincts. His victims were either hapless innocents or depraved women. Their milieu was either a community of virtuous citizens or an assembly of apathetic and callous denizens of iniquity. In sum, the press reporting on the Grossmann case revealed a tension between two narrative themes. In one, the killer was a faceless psychopath, whose predatory activities were made possible by the anonymity of the city, which hid both his identity and those of his victims. Only with the watchfulness of attentive citizens cooperating with the authorities was such an urban monster brought to justice. In the other version of the story, the killer was a product of his milieu, which existed on the social and moral margins of the city. The criminality of the milieu thus explained the depravity of the criminal, the fate of his victims, and the inattention of his community. Neither version bore much resemblance to the social reality in which the crimes took place.

The Grossmann case touched a variety of raw nerves in postwar Berlin. The elusiveness of the victim's identities was a testament to the anonymity of city life and the inadequacy of bureaucratic attempts to police the movements of individuals in the confusion of postwar demobilization. It was especially disturbing for lower-class citizens who had lost track of loved ones in the rural-urban migration that followed the war. For left-liberal observers, the case was a reminder that the poverty and class divisions that urbanization had brought about had not disappeared but been exacerbated by the war. For conservative observers, Grossmann's crimes brought to light the immorality and criminality that lurked in Berlin's marginal neighborhoods.

Public narratives of the Grossmann case did not, then, make the city "legible," but imposed particular identities on the perpetrator and his victims: social and moral identities that served to make sense of the social and gender relations of the immediate postwar years. The experiences of the witnesses and victims as well as the public narratives that were told about them suggest that criminal stories were a powerful tool for re-stabilizing prewar gender relations in the postwar period.

Notes

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1. The exact number of Grossmann's victims is unknown. Although he was (and is) widely rumored to have killed fifty, police in 1921 hoped to pin as many as twenty-seven on Grossmann, but a more conservative number of six was mentioned in an undated police report (Landesarchiv Berlin (hereafter: LAB) A Rep. 358-01 Generalstaatsanwaltschaft bei dem Landgericht Berlin 1919–1933, Nr. 1522, Bd. 1 (Reel 741), Bl. 60–66.
2. Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, 1995); Beth Irwin Lewis, "Lustmord: Inside the Windows of the Metropolis," in Charles W. Haxthausen and Heidrun Suhr, eds., *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis* (Minneapolis and Oxford, 1990), 111–140; Martin Lindner, "Der Mythos 'Lustmord.' Serienmörder in der deutschen Literatur, dem Film und der bildenden Kunst zwischen 1892 und 1932," in Joachim Linder et al., eds., *Verbrechen-Justiz-Medien. Konstellationen in Deutschland von 1900 bis zur Gegenwart* (Tübingen, 1999), 273–305; Sabine Smith, *Sexual Violence in German Culture: Rereading and Rewriting the Tradition* (New York and Frankfurt/Main, 1998). On sexual violence and sexual crimes in Imperial Germany, see Tanja Hommen, *Sittlichkeitsverbrechen: Sexuelle Gewalt im Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt/Main and New York, 1998).
3. For recent retellings of the Grossmann case intended for a popular audience, see Kathrin Kompisch and Frank Otto, *Bestien des Boulevards: Die Deutschen und ihre Serienmörder* (Leipzig, 2003), 58–76; Jan Feustel, *Raub und Mord im Kiez. Historische Friedrichshainer Kriminalfälle. Begleitmaterial zur Ausstellung* (Berlin, 1996); Horst Bosetzky, *Die Bestie vom Schlesischen Bahnhof* (Berlin, 2005).
4. Kerstin Brückweh, *Mordlust: Serienmorde, Gewalt und Emotionen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/Main and New York, 2006), 14. Translation mine. Brückweh offers an analysis of four serial murder cases involving male perpetrators and male victims: Fritz Haarmann, Adolf Seefeld, Erwin Hagedorn, and Jürgen Bartsch.
5. *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* (BLA), n. 412, 1. September 1921.
6. Robert Heindl, *Der Berufsverbrecher. Ein Beitrag zur Strafrechtsreform* (Berlin, 1926), 141.
7. Magnus Hirschfeld, *Geschlecht und Verbrechen* (Leipzig, 1930), 209–211.
8. Curt Elwenspoek, *Mord und Totschlag: "Polizei greift ein!" So kämpft die Kriminalpolizei!* (Stuttgart, 1930), 16–18.
9. On the historicizing of narratives of sexual violence, see Judith R. Walkowitz, "Jack the Ripper and the Myth of Male Violence," *Feminist Studies* 8, 3 (1982), 541–574.
10. Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin, 1900* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1996), 59, 83–86.
11. That the First World War had disrupted prewar marital and family relations and gender roles more generally is clear. What is less clear is whether those prewar gender relations were reconstituted or altered. A provocative if inconclusive essay in this regard is Elisabeth Domansky, "Militarization and Reproduction in World War I Germany," in *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870–1930*, Geoff Eley, ed. (Ann Arbor, 1997), 427–463. For a tentative revision of the view that Weimar was characterized by gender anxiety see Birthe Kundrus, "The First World War and the Construction of Gender Relations in the Weimar Republic," in Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Oxford and New York, 2002), 159–179.
12. Hans Ostwald, *Das Berliner Dirnentum*, Hans Ostwald, ed., vol. 6, *Großstadtdokumente* (Berlin, 1905), vol. 1, 20.
13. LAB A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 1522, Bd. 4 (reel 742), Bl. 134.
14. Brückweh has observed that Fritz Haarmann, the serial murderer of Hannover apprehended in 1924, also used "bait" to secure his victims. Brückweh, *Mordlust*, 59.
15. LAB A Rep. 358-01, Bd. 1 (reel 741), Bl. 21–22. Grossmann actually implicated Helene as an accomplice, saying that she had known about the murders and had used this knowledge to blackmail him. Police took these charges seriously enough to take her into custody, but

- without corroborating evidence released her, assuming Grossmann's accusation was an act of revenge toward those who had turned him in. *Ibid.*, 31–38.
16. *Ibid.*, Bl. 19.
 17. *Ibid.*, Bd. 3, Bl. 42.
 18. *Ibid.*, Bd. 3, Bl. 92–93.
 19. *Ibid.*, Bd. 3, Bl. 61–62.
 20. Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill and London, 2000), map p. 84.
 21. Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford and New York, 1993), 154–160.
 22. *Ibid.*, 163–164.
 23. Regina Schulte, *Sperrbezirke: Tugendhaftigkeit und Prostitution in der bürgerlichen Welt* (Frankfurt/Main, 1979); Lynn Abrams, “Prostitutes in Imperial Germany, 1870–1918: Working Girls or Social Outcasts?” in *The German Underworld: Deviants and Outcasts in German History*, Richard J. Evans, ed. (London and New York, 1988), 189–209.
 24. Hans Ostwald, *Das Berliner Dirnentum*, vol. 8, Hans Ostwald, ed., vol. 6, *Großstadtdokumente* (Berlin: 1905), 3.
 25. LAB A Rep. 328-01, Nr. 1522, Bd. 3, Bl. 89-91 (Reel 742).
 26. *Ibid.*, Bd. 3, Bl. 3.
 27. *Ibid.*, Bd. 1, Bl. 8, 34–37 (reel 741).
 28. LAB A Rep. 358-1, A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 1522, Bd. 3, Bl. 1–3 (reel 742).
 29. *Ibid.*, Bl. 4-6; LAB A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 1522, Bd. 6, Bl. 26, (reel 743).
 30. LAB A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 1522, Bd. 3, Bl. 29–30.
 31. Lynn Abrams, “Prostitutes in Imperial Germany,” 193. See also Richard Evans, “Prostitution, State, and Society in Imperial Germany,” *Past and Present* 70 (1976), 106–129; Evans, *Tales from the German Underground: Crime and Punishment in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, 1998). For comparison, see Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge and New York, 1980); Mary Gibson, *Prostitution and the State in Italy, 1860–1910* (New Brunswick, 1986); Jill Harsin, *Policing and Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton, 1985); Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1990 [1978]).
 32. Brückweh finds this treatment of the surviving victims as witnesses rather than as victims of violent crime in the four cases of serial murder she analyzes, all of which involved male victims and homosexual murderers. She also observes that women were more likely to be perceived as victims than were men. Brückweh, *Mordlust*, 42–49.
 33. LAB A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 1522, Bd. 4, Bl. 128–130 (reel 742).
 34. LAB A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 1522, Bd. 3., Bl. 205–210 (reel 742).
 35. LAB A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 1522, Bd. 1, Bl. 31–38, (reel 741).
 36. Stephan Bleek, “Mobilität und Seßhaftigkeit in deutschen Großstädten während der Urbanisierung,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 15, 1 (1989), 5–33.
 37. LAB A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 1522, Bd. 10 (reel 744), Personalakten; LAB A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 1522, Bd. 4, Bl. 247–249 (reel 743).
 38. Eva Brücker, “‘Und ich bin da ‘rausgekommen’: Gewalt und Sexualität in einer Berliner Arbeiternachbarschaft zwischen 1916/17 und 1958,” in *Physische Gewalt: Studien zur Geschichte der Neuzeit*, Thomas Lindenberger and Alf Lüdtkke, eds. (Frankfurt/Main, 1995), 337–365. On domestic violence in imperial Germany, see Lynn Abrams, “Martyrs or Matriarchs? Working-Class Women’s Experience of Marriage in Germany before the First World War,” *Women’s History Review* 1, 3 (1992), 357–376, and Abrams, “Companionship and Conflict: the Negotiation of Marriage Relations in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Gender Relations in German History: Power, Agency and Experience from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, Lynn Abrams

- and Elizabeth Harvey, eds. (Durham, 1996). On the normalization of domestic violence in the Weimar period, see Sace Elder, *Murder Scenes: Normality, Deviance, and Criminal Violence in Weimar Berlin* (Ann Arbor, 2010), 157–189.
39. LAB A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 1522, Bd. 1, Bl. 20 (reel 741).
 40. LAB A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 1522, Bd. 3, Bl. 65 (reel 742).
 41. Equally bothersome to neighbors as the cries, and in retrospect equally as significant, was the stench that emanated from Grossmann's apartment. Several neighbors questioned Grossmann about the strong smell of rotting meat that clearly came from his room, but willingly accepted the explanation that that he had forgotten to remove a chicken that had spoiled in the summer heat.
 42. LAB A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 1522, Bd. 1, Bl. 21 (reel 741).
 43. Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago, 1992). See also Marie-Christine Leps, *Apprehending the Criminal: The Production of Deviance in Nineteenth-Century Discourse* (Durham and London, 1992), 112–134.
 44. *Vorwärts* (VW) n. 427, 10 September 1921.
 45. Heindl, *Der Berufsverbrecher*, 197;
 46. *Berliner Morgenpost* (BMP), 26 February 1920; BLA, 2 July 1921. On the Blau case, see LAB A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 386 (reel A463).
 47. "Menschen, die verschwinden," BMP, n. 186, 7 August 1921, 1. Beilage. Jacobsohn admonished all missing persons to report to the police missing person's center.
 48. BMP, n. 188, 9 August 1921, 1. Beilage.
 49. VW, n. 374, 10 August 1921.
 50. See, for example, BLA 4 July 1921 (Morgenausgabe).
 51. Erich Wülffen, *Der Sexualverbrecher. Ein Handbuch für Juristen, Verwaltungsbeamte und Ärzte*, Encyklopädie der modernen Kriminalistik (Berlin, 1910), 454. Richard Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der conträren Sexualempfindung* (Stuttgart, 1903), 47ff. See Maren Hoffmeister, "Lustmord: Widerständige Körper im Deutungssystem Justiz," in *Körper und Recht. Anthropologische Dimensionen der Rechtsphilosophie*, Ludger Schwarte and Christoph Wulf, eds. (Munich, 2003), 339–355. On German criminology, see Richard Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal: A History of German Criminology, 1880–1945* (Chapel Hill and London, 2000).
 52. Swen Thomas, *Geschichte des Mordparagrafens—eine normalgenetische Untersuchung bis in der Gegenwart* (Bochum, 1985), 255–265; Michael Schetsche, "Der Wille, der Trieb und das Deutungsmuster vom Lustmord," in *Sexuelle Sozialisation: Sechs Annäherungen*, Renate Berenike Schmidt and Michael Schetsche, eds. (Berlin, 2009). On criminal biology and the prosecution and punishment of murder, see Richard Evans, *Rituals of Retribution: Capital Punishment in Germany, 1600–1987* (Oxford, 1996), 528–533.
 53. *Berliner Morgenpost* (hereafter: BMP), no. 200, 24 August 1921, 1. Beilage.
 54. Tatar, *Lustmord*, 53–54.
 55. BMP, no. 266, 16. October 1920, 1. Beilage.
 56. BMP, no. 267, 17. October 1920.
 57. Peter Becker, "Weak Bodies? Prostitutes and the Role of Gender in the Criminological Writings of 19th-Century German Detectives and Magistrates," *Crime, Histoire and Societies* 3, 1 (1999), 45–69. See also Becker, *Verderbnis und Entartung. Eine Geschichte der Kriminologie des 19. Jahrhunderts als Diskurs und Praxis* (Göttingen, 2002), 117–175.
 58. *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* (hereafter: BLA) 23 August 1921 (Morgenausgabe).
 59. BLA, 4 September 1921 (Sonntagsausgabe).
 60. Erich Frey, *Ich beantrage Freispruch* (Hamburg, 1959), 44.
 61. BMP, no. 199, 23 August 1921, 1. Beilage.
 62. *BZ am Mittag*, no. 199, 26. August 1921.

63. Many observers, including Magnus Hirschfeld almost ten years later, expressed surprise that the wizened, unattractive, slovenly-looking man could lure so many women into his apartment. In his *Geschlecht und Verbrechen*, Hirschfeld placed a caption under a photograph of Grossmann that read, "Grossmann, the bluebeard of the Silesian train station who despite his appearance always found women." Hirschfeld, *Geschlecht und Verbrechen*, 215.
64. BMP, no. 296, 14. December 1921, 1. Beilage.
65. *BZ am Mittag*, no. 197, 24. August 1921.
66. Gertraud Zull, *Das Bild vom Dienstmädchen um die Jahrhundertwende. Eine Untersuchung der stereotypen Vorstellungen über den Charakter und soziale Lage des städtischen weiblichen Hauspersonals* Reihe Kulturwissenschaften (Munich, 1984), 175–186; Karin Walser, *Dienstmädchen. Frauenarbeit und Weiblichkeitsbilder um 1900* (Frankfurt/Main, 1985); Dorothee Wierling, *Mädchen für Alles. Arbeitsalltag und Lebensgeschichte städtischer Dienstmädchen um der Jahrhundertwende* (Berlin, 1987).
67. Ute Daniel, *The War from Within: German Working-Class Women in the First World War*, trans. Margaret Ries (Oxford and New York, 1997; orig. 1989), 138–147.
68. Julia Roos, *Weimar Through the Lens of Gender: Prostitution Reform, Women's Emancipation, and German Democracy, 1919–1933* (Ann Arbor, 2010), esp. 97–136; Julia Roos, "Backlash against Prostitutes' Right: Origins and Dynamics of Nazi Prostitution Policies," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1, 1/2 (2002), 67–94; and Elisabeth Meyer-Renschenhausen, "The Bremen Morality Scandal," in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan, eds. (New York, 1984), 87–108. On prostitution in the Kaiserreich, see Nancy Reagin, "A True Woman Can Take Care of Herself: The Debate over Prostitution in Hanover, 1906," *Central European History* 24, 4 (1991), 347–380.
69. Arthur Kronfeld, "Bemerkungen zum Prozeß gegen Karl Großmann," *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft* 9, 5 (1922), 138–139. Arthur Kronfeld, "Bemerkungen zum Prozeß gegen Karl Großmann," *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft* 9, 5 (1922), 137–149. Robert Heindl would later echo such sentiments when he wrote, "In the area around the Silesian train station one did not like to interfere in the love affairs of his fellow men." See "Das Berufsverbrechertum der Großstadt," in *Unser Berlin: Ein Jahrbuch von Berliner Art und Arbeit* (Berlin, 1928). For Heindl, this observation served to demonstrate the essential depravity of this *Kriminalviertel*.
70. LAB A Rep. 358-01, Nr. 1522, Bd. 4, Bl. 227 (reel 743).
71. BLA 20 Sept. 1921, 1. Beiblatt (Morgenausgabe).
72. *Berliner Volkszeitung* (hereafter: BVZ), no. 437, 16 September 1921.
73. BMP 30. August 1921, 1. Beilage.
74. Karen Halttunen has described how in the early American context, Enlightenment notions of human nature and free will necessitated the alienation of the murderer from so-called normal citizens, in contrast to colonial murder narratives that emphasized the sinfulness of all humans as an invocation to repentance on the part of all members of a community. Karen Halttunen, *Murder Most Foul: The Killer in the American Gothic Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998).