

Annette Brauerhoch. *Fräuleins und GIs*. Frankfurt am Main und Basel: Stroemfeld Verlag, 2006. Pp. 532. Paper, €28.00.

According to Annette Brauerhoch, prior to the Second World War, the figure of the *Fräulein* signified an independent, single, working woman (9); in the years following the war, however, the term acquired a much more negative connotation, implying a hedonistic, sexualized woman who sought contact with American soldiers (11). In the discourse of postwar German-Allied relations, the *Fräulein* is predominantly discussed in terms of her role as a sexual object, such as a prostitute in Martin Meyer's book *Nachkriegsdeutschland im Spiegel amerikanischer Romane der Besatzungszeit 1945-1955* or a rape victim in Elizabeth Heinemann's article "The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's 'Crisis Years' and West German National Identity."<sup>1</sup> In *Fräuleins und GIs*, Brauerhoch wishes to give the *Fräuleins* of postwar Germany a chance to speak for themselves; a chance, she claims, they have never been given before (48). Brauerhoch focuses primarily on the portrayal of *Fräuleins* in four American and six German films from 1945-1961. She ends her discussion with 1961, the year in which Helmut Käutner's *Schwarzer Kies* was released, because she is specifically interested in the topic of *Fräuleins* and GIs in the immediate postwar period. Brauerhoch, one of the editors of the journal *Frauen und Film*, draws on film theory, feminist theory and cultural theory for her analyses. For the purpose of this review, I will focus on her discussion of masculinity and race.

One might expect film to be an important medium for unveiling the role of the *Fräulein* in German society, because film stresses the visible (*sichtbar*), and should therefore stress the realm of the *Fräulein*, whose fraternization with GIs and perceived sexual promiscuity was as visible as the public's condemnation thereof. In this book, however, Brauerhoch reveals how *Fräuleins* were actually made invisible (*unsichtbar*), especially in postwar German films, which had an investment in promoting positive images of German women. Consequently, these films did not dare to take *Fräuleins* as their focus, but rather condemned them to supporting roles. Nevertheless, despite their marginalized roles on screen, Brauerhoch argues, *Fräuleins* can still be found in these films in transitory spaces such as ruins, hallways, nightclubs, and construction sites (496).

Brauerhoch does not portray *Fräuleins* as merely the victims or objects of men. Instead, she looks at *Fräuleins* as subjects trying to survive a difficult period, and actively seeking out GIs to enable their survival. Considering the *Fräuleins*' confident sexuality, Brauerhoch sees them in part as the heirs of 1920s flappers and wartime swing kids, and she views their successors as the teenage female fans of the 1950s rock 'n' roll era. The *Fräuleins*' sexual assertiveness not only allowed them a certain amount of freedom, though, it also posed a threat to traditional models of masculinity.

The crisis of German masculinity is at the center of Brauerhoch's argument. According to Brauerhoch, German masculinity was threatened by the loss of high-ranking positions in the social realm following the war. In the domestic sphere, German men were threatened with replacement by American GIs, who were viewed as physically superior. Additionally, *Fräuleins* were seen as hostile to German masculinity because of their suspected self-indulgent lifestyle, promiscuity, prostitution and fraternization with the occupiers. The demasculinization of German men and the perceived "conquering" of Germany by way of its women led to occupiers' having a feminized ideal of Germany, a subject which has also been addressed in Petra Goedde's *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender and Foreign Relations*. Brauerhoch primarily discusses masculinity

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<sup>1</sup>*The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (Apr., 1996), pp. 354-395.

in the chapter *Zwischen Infantilität und Todeslust*, where she analyzes Gerhard Lamprecht's *Irgendwo in Berlin* (1946), in which naïve, resilient children replace guilt-ridden, broken fathers as protagonists – a motif typical of rubble films (*Trümmerfilme*). Masculinity is also the center of her discussion of a film which attempts to re-establish gender roles, Rudolf Jugert's *Hallo, Fräulein* (1949), in the chapter *Demokratie und Musik*. Due to the Nazi propaganda that classified blacks as racially inferior, German masculinity and national pride were especially impacted by the *Fräuleins'* relations with African-American GIs. German men perceived such relations as a second defeat (179).

Brauerhoch explores race in a chapter dedicated to African-American soldiers, *Schwarze GIs*. In this chapter, she argues that the presence of African-American GIs was limited, not only in the army itself, but in films as well. Yet although their numbers were few, those African-American GIs present in Germany were made extremely visible due to their skin color. Brauerhoch accounts for the mutual attraction between African-American GIs and *Fräuleins* by claiming that the two groups evoked mutual sexual fantasies and felt a certain solidarity due to their high visibility and the discrimination they faced in society. In *Phantasien der Vermischung*, Brauerhoch discusses postwar literature that thematizes the relationships between African-American GIs and *Fräuleins*. These fictional images were often carried over into film, where African-American GIs were portrayed both as a physical threat and as protectors, with the emphasis in both roles falling on their physicality. In this chapter Brauerhoch goes beyond the boundaries of German and American film, introducing examples from Italian films in which African-American GIs were presented more sympathetically, yet still represented as being capable only of an almost courtly love with white women, and suffering persecution because of their race.

A separate chapter is dedicated to the discussion of children born to African-American GIs and German women. Brauerhoch considers the ramifications that the children of African-American GIs had for German society and the discourse on German identity, an issue also discussed in Heide Fehrenbach's *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America*. While Fehrenbach focuses more broadly on the significance of Afro-German children in the democratization of Germany by analyzing a variety of texts, ranging from films and cartoons to newspaper articles and educational reports, Brauerhoch limits her discussion mainly to R.A. Stemmlé's film *Toxi* (1952). Prior to *Toxi*, black characters occasionally appeared in German films throughout the fifties, playing unserious, stock roles. Stemmlé's film moves a black character to the center of attention, but like its predecessors, it makes use of German racial stereotypes, portraying Toxi as inherently musically talented and positive-natured. With his melodrama, Stemmlé hoped to evoke sympathy for the children of occupation by turning a societal problem into a familial and emotional problem with a happy ending, in which everyone's troubles are resolved and Toxi is reunited with her biological father. Brauerhoch sees *Toxi* as an indirect confrontation with the Holocaust and reparations, where the Afro-German protagonist simply takes the place of the Jew as the "other." This argument is similar to Fehrenbach's reading of the film as a postwar shift from a preoccupation with anti-Semitism to one with blackness.

Regrettably, by limiting her consideration of films to those produced prior to 1961, Brauerhoch intentionally factors examples of New German Cinema such as Fassbinder's *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (1978) out of her analysis, although this film has played an important role in the discourse on postwar Germany. Despite this limitation, *Fräuleins and GIs* still offers a very comprehensive discussion of postwar German-American relations. The book covers many

different genres of film in which *Fräuleins* are featured, from rubble films, melodramas and comedies to propaganda and documentary films of the period, and Brauerhoch draws on a multitude of sources, including film reviews, interviews, newspapers, memoirs, fictional and non-fictional texts, military documents, and military films. Unfortunately, though, she does not give information about the statistical success and attendance figures of the films discussed. *Fräuleins und GIs* develops themes previously addressed in other texts, such as Fehrenbach's *Race After Hitler*, Maria Hohn's *GIs and Frauleins: The German American Encounter in 1950s West Germany*, Erica Carter's *How German Is She? Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman* and Goedde's *GIs and Germans*, all of which highlight the articulation of race and gender during Germany's transition from a defeated nation to a nation rebuilt under occupation. Nevertheless, *Fräuleins und GIs* is unique in that it focuses on film and therefore not only provides in-depth analyses of well-known films like *A Foreign Affair*, but also engages lesser-known films like *Schwarzer Kies*. Tying these film analyses together is Brauerhoch's intention to tell a story of agency regarding the *Fräuleins* rather than a story of dependency. For those interested in German film, history, and gender and race in German society, this book offers fascinating material from the postwar period and contributes to a discussion about a variety of postwar films.

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