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## Afterlives of *Anders als die Andern* and of Weimar

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### Abstract

This article uses reconstructions of the 1919 German LGBTQ+ rights film *Anders als die Andern* (*Different from the Others*) to consider the meaning of the Weimar Republic. It surveys Weimar's historiography, memorialization efforts, public commemorations, museums, and film reconstruction, drawing connections between these fields. The film as an incomplete document becomes a metaphor for incomplete histories. As such, it offers suggestions for engaging with fragmentary pasts.

**Keywords:** Germany; cultural history; gender; memory studies; twentieth century

“Together, we have an extraordinary opportunity not only to make history, but to preserve history in the process.”

—from the Kickstarter page for the Outfest Legacy Project restoration of *Different from the Others*, 2012

“Ursprung ist das Ziel.”

—from Karl Kraus, *Worte in Versen I* in Walter Benjamin's fourteenth thesis, *On the Concept of History* (*Über den Begriff der Geschichte*), 1940

“Diese Augen!”—those eyes!—begins reporter Andrea Surkus, unclear if mocking or in admiration. The scene is a star-studded 1999 Munich AIDS benefit; the event highlights a screening of the 1919 German LGBTQ+<sup>1</sup> rights film *Anders als die Andern* (*Different from the Others*). “Bewitching, this finesse!”<sup>2</sup> The reporter liberally quotes prominent guests, some regarding a lost queer world with exoticizing voyeurism, others deeply affected by the melodrama. The “beautiful long hands,” the elegant furniture (“other men of course have only their leather sofa that they watch soccer from”),<sup>3</sup> the story so tragic that one woman admitted she had to hold her friend's hand. Some reflect on the medium itself. “It is fascinating how the medium of film eighty years later conveys a human's presence,” said one guest, “fascinating like a fax machine ... how material disintegrates and then comes back together, that makes me happy.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Although there are many terms to describe what Hirschfeld termed *sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (sexual intermediaries), this article will use the contemporary term “LGBTQ+” for its comprehensiveness and brevity.

<sup>2</sup> Andrea Surkus, “Betörend, diese Finesse! ‘Anders als die Andern’—ein Schwulenfilm von 1919 kommt heute Aidskranken zugute,” *Szenario*, May 31, 1999. All translations mine unless otherwise stated.

<sup>3</sup> Surkus, “Betörend, diese Finesse!”.

<sup>4</sup> Surkus, “Betörend, diese Finesse!”.

What is left of *Anders als die Andern* is the best-known *Aufklärungsfilm* (literally “enlightenment film” but better translated as “sex education film”) made during the November Revolution. Mere days after the armistice, Germany’s provisional government, demonstrating its faith in democracy, lifted all forms of federal censorship.<sup>5</sup> This faith was short lived; a new censorship law specifically for film was instated in May 1920, and this is attributed to the very popular, scandalous *Anders als die Andern*.<sup>6</sup> But the film did not disappear immediately. Its scientific advisor, sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, continued screening it at his famed Berlin Institute for Sexual Science. But for silent films, survival is the exception, not the rule. The Nazis sacked Hirschfeld’s institute in 1933, and all copies of *Anders als die Andern* were presumably lost in the wreckage. The sexologist had, however, cut the 1919 footage into a different *Aufklärungsfilm*, a copy of which traveled as far as Ukraine. Rediscovered in a Soviet archive, it was first screened outside the Eastern Bloc in neutral Austria at a 1971 retrospective honoring the Viennese director Richard Oswald, who had directed *Anders als die Andern* among other *Aufklärungsfilme*. By the 1980s, copies circulated in western Europe and North America. At the time of this writing, four *Anders als die Andern* reconstructions exist, three of which approximate the 1919 release.<sup>7</sup>

*Anders als die Andern* tells the story of a homosexual violinist, played by rising star actor Conrad Veidt, who falls victim to blackmail, a well-known effect of the German penal code’s paragraph 175, which criminalized male homosexual acts. The violinist also falls in love and is counseled by Hirschfeld himself, who also gives a lecture intended to educate the extradiegetic audience as well as the protagonists. Ultimately, the violinist is sent to prison under paragraph 175, which even the court admits is absurd. Upon his release, shunned by society and his own family, the violinist commits suicide. The sexologist delivers a stirring message at his funeral, breaking the diegesis again to encourage both the characters and the audience to fight for justice and overturn paragraph 175.

*Anders als die Andern* is a strange emissary—what if the future it demanded had come to pass? Even knowing what transpired in the century that has since elapsed, even with the continued presence of paragraph 175 in West Germany (the paragraph would not be fully struck until 1994),<sup>8</sup> the past looks bright in the tattered, incomplete strips of celluloid.

<sup>5</sup> The provisional government’s proclamation on November 12, 1918, abolished censorship. This was largely symbolic. Vague exchanges between the provisional government and the film industry only a few weeks later indicate that because local police had been responsible for film censorship before World War I, abolishing federal censorship would have little effect. See Rat der Volksbeauftragten (Deutschland) Archives, International Institute of Social History, <https://search.iisg.amsterdam/Record/ARCH01166> 66; “Scheidemann über Filmzensur,” *Der Film*, November 30, 1918, 48. For scholarship on censorship’s lifting, see Klaus Petersen, *Zensur in der Weimarer Republik* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 1995); Kara Ritzheimer, “Trash,” *Censorship, and National Identity in Early Twentieth-Century Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Jill Suzanne Smith disputes *Anders als die Andern* being the most significant contributing factor to censorship’s reinstatement, drawing attention to its two-part predecessor *Die Prostitution*. *Anders als die Andern* was however the first film banned under the new censorship regime. See Jill Suzanne Smith, “Richard Oswald and the Social Hygiene Film: Promoting Public Health or Promiscuity?,” in *The Many Faces of Weimar Cinema: Rediscovering Germany’s Filmic Legacy*, ed. Christian Rogowski (New York: Camden House, 2010), 13–30.

<sup>7</sup> The film has also attracted significant scholarly attention from historians, Germanists, and film scholars. Richard Dyer, James Steakley, Ervin Malakaj, Lauren Pilcher, Laurie Marhoefer, Robert Beachy, Jill Suzanne Smith, Ina Linge, Kai Nowak, Rainer Herrn, Manfred Herzer-Wigglesworth, Ursula von Keitz, Jürgen Kasten, Jeanpaul Goergen, Vito Russo, Malte Hagener, Ulf Schmidt, Eva Sturm, Matthias Weber, Wolfgang Burgmair, Valerie Weinstein, and So Mayer have all addressed *Anders als die Andern* in their work or even specifically written on it.

<sup>8</sup> Section 175 was initially preserved in its harsher Nazi formulation in West Germany before being weakened in 1969 and 1973 to amount to a higher age of consent. East Germany adopted a supplementary criminal code that decriminalized male homosexual sex. For a comprehensive discussion of the legal changes in both Germanys, see Samuel Clowes Huneeke, *States of Liberation: Gay Men between Dictatorship and Democracy in Cold War Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022).

Yet the past that briefly flickers to life onscreen is fragmentary; whatever lessons it holds for the present are unclear and demand the viewer's active engagement in order to make any sense. Reconstructed from about a third of its original footage, *Anders als die Andern* is as much an archival experience as a cinematic one. Film reconstruction draws on Gestalt theory, postulating that a film is more than the sum of its parts.<sup>9</sup> In order to be watchable, a film must function as a whole, but should its history?

*Anders als die Andern*'s multiple reconstructions are documents of their eras, of the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s, as well as the 1920s. Engagements with this film over the last few decades reveal how these presents engage with the Weimar past, what connections are sought, and what meanings are found. Like Weimar's historiography, the film's fragments have been reassembled many times, always with different meanings and for different purposes. But, as the film also demonstrates, fragments can be left as such and meanings are elusive. Weimar's most recent historiography attends more to fragmentation than synthesis.<sup>10</sup> I argue that this film and its reconstructions mirror this late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century historiography, rendering it and its implications visible on a physical object.

The first section of this paper contextualizes *Anders als die Andern*'s rediscovery with West German gay liberation in the 1970s and 1980s, which viewed itself as restarting a progressive trajectory from the 1920s. The second addresses *Anders als die Andern*'s most current reconstructions (by the Filmmuseum München in 2004/2019 and Outfest in 2013), their moments, and their politics. The last section maps the film and its reception onto Weimar historiography, chronicling Weimar's meanings over the last few decades. A century-old message film that still points past us today, *Anders als die Andern*'s mere presence challenges teleological notions of progress. It exemplifies Weimar's paradoxical immediacy and remoteness; it is both past and present. The *Anders als die Andern* case draws attention to the space between these opposites, how it has been negotiated, and what its historiographical potentials might be.

### Picking Up Where History Left Off

*Anders als die Andern* returned at a moment when the past itself was returning. The miniseries *Holocaust* airing in West Germany in January 1979 set off a vast public reckoning with recent history. A *Der Spiegel* article puzzled on the phenomenon: "An American television series of trivial design did what hundreds of books, plays, films and television programs, thousands of documents and all concentration camp trials in three decades of postwar history could not."<sup>11</sup> Underscoring both the power of the postwar mass medium of television and also of melodrama, the miniseries and the events surrounding it put on display the ignorance, still-prevalent antisemitism, and pain festering as the fiftieth anniversary of 1933 approached. In contrast, the *Anders als die Andern* fragment recovered the previous decade did not play much of a role in 1980s memory culture, and LGBTQ+ rights had not reached wide societal acceptability. The film did however offer a glimpse into the world the Nazis had destroyed.

The first showing of *Anders als die Andern* since the Institute for Sexual Science's destruction was at a 1971 Richard Oswald retrospective ("Wien-Berlin-Hollywood—Richard Oswald") in Vienna. The Filmarchiv Austria had, due to Austria's Cold War neutrality, a direct connection to Moscow that the Bundesarchiv in West Germany did not, and exchanges with the Soviet film archive Gosfilmofond's vast inventory for American films were a regular

<sup>9</sup> Andreas Busche, "Just Another Form of Ideology? Ethical and Methodological Principles in Film Restoration," *Moving Image* 6, no. 2 (2006): 1–29.

<sup>10</sup> One methodology, "queering history," questioning historical sources and narratives on the basis of their heteronormative assumptions, according to Jennifer Evans involves "keeping the analytical threads frayed." Jennifer Evans, "Introduction: Why Queer German History?" *German History* 34, no. 3 (2016): 371.

<sup>11</sup> "Holocaust': Die Vergangenheit kommt zurück," *Der Spiegel*, January 28, 1979.

occurrence.<sup>12</sup> The version of *Anders als die Andern* shown at the retrospective bore little resemblance to the 1919 film or to Hirschfeld's message. The sexologist himself recut *Anders als die Andern* into the final segment of his 1927 film *Gesetze der Liebe* (Laws of Love), produced by Humboldt-Film. *Gesetze der Liebe*, like other late-1920s *Aufklärungsfilme*, was overwhelmingly scientific, utilizing animations, stills, and footage of animals. This was a calculation on Hirschfeld's part to circumvent censorship. *Gesetze der Liebe* was nonetheless banned upon its release in Germany, as was a shorter version comprising the final segment entitled *Schuldlos geächtet. Tragödie eines Homosexuellen* (Blamelessly Ostracized: The Tragedy of a Homosexual) from 1928. That same year, *Gesetze der Liebe* was exported to Czechoslovakia (where the censors had no problem) and to Ukraine, then part of the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup> It is this version, about twenty minutes with Ukrainian intertitles, that ended up in the Moscow Gosfilmofond. Shortly after the Austrian retrospective, the film traveled to the Staatliches Filmarchiv der DDR in East Berlin, where evening showings of its *Anders als die Andern* footage took place at the archive's theater, the Studio Camera, in 1972.<sup>14</sup> By the 1980s, the footage appeared in film festivals on the other side of the Iron Curtain, for instance in West Berlin's answer to the Studio Camera, the Arsenal.

At the same time, efforts to recognize sexual minorities' place in Germany's history gained steam. The Third Reich and immediate postwar era became interruptions in a story of progress; gay liberation activists endeavored to pick up where their forebears had left off. The Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft's ("Magnus Hirschfeld Society," MHG) founding act in 1982 was to recast a 1926 bronze bust of the pioneering sexologist, which, when the institute was looted on May 6, 1933, had been stuck on a pike, paraded through the streets, and burned in effigy. To use historian Tiffany Florvil's concept, the MHG was the work of "quotidian intellectuals," people operating just outside the margins of academic discourses, whose expertise and lived experiences equipped them for rigorous, unconventional, and interdisciplinary research.<sup>15</sup> Their work was a political act of restitution, but also analytic, historicizing Hirschfeld's context, his milieu, and his methodologies.<sup>16</sup>

The MHG's larger goal was to reestablish Hirschfeld's institute in Berlin, hopefully at the Freie Universität. MHG cofounder Ralf Dose contacted the parties and factions of the West Berlin Senate in December 1982. He outlined two goals: first to ensure that homosexual men and women were not overlooked in the 1983 commemorations because they too were victims of fascism and had received no monetary compensation, and second to draw attention to the institute, its place in Berlin's history, and its targeting in the Nazi book burning.<sup>17</sup> The responses he received varied considerably.<sup>18</sup> The Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland (SPD) wrote back a few weeks later with tepid support, promising to

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Stefan Dröbler on March 20, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> See the second footnote on page 12. James Steakley, *Anders als die Andern. Ein Film und seine Geschichte* (Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2007), 12–15. Interview with Dröbler. In "Cinema and Censorship in the Weimar Republic," Steakley cites the film's export year as 1928. He explains that correspondence with Gosfilmofond representative Vladimir Dmitriev in 1991 indicated that there are no extant records of where and when *Gesetze der Liebe* was shown in the Soviet Union. James Steakley, "Cinema and Censorship in the Weimar Republic: The Case of *Anders als die Andern*," *Film History* 11, no. 2 (1999): 194, 203.

<sup>14</sup> Manfred Herzer-Wigglesworth, "Anders als die Andern in Ostberlin," *Mitteilungen der Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft* 64 (February 2020): 49–51.

<sup>15</sup> Tiffany Florvil, *Mobilizing Black Germany: Afro-German Women and the Making of a Transnational Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020). Samuel Clowes Huneke cites her term to describe East and West German gay activists he is writing about; see Huneke, *States of Liberation*, 280.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Manfred Herzer-Wigglesworth on April 18, 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Dose's letter dated December 1, 1982, is reprinted in *Mitteilungen der Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft* 1 (July 1983): 6.

<sup>18</sup> Dose also received much shorter supportive responses from the Bereich Schwule (which agitated for lifting not only section 175, but also section 174 and section 176, which forbid pedophilia), and the Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP), which would give support only if the institute upheld the highest scientific standards. Reprinted in *Mitteilungen* 1, no. 11.

allocate funds for the 1983 commemoration plans and promising to suggest housing the new institute at the Freie Universität to the Berlin House of Representatives (*Abgeordnetenhaus*).<sup>19</sup> The Sozialistische Einheitspartei Westberlin (SEW), sister party to East Germany's ruling Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland, responded in March 1983 in a far more political tone, calling the lack of attention paid to the issues Dose raised a scandal. Taking aim at the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) senate majority, the letter accused that party of harboring fascists and neo-Nazis and voiced full-throated support for the MHG's goals, aligning them with a common project of anti-fascism.<sup>20</sup> The CDU answered last, sending the shortest letter in June 1983, expressing the vaguest support and thanking Dose for bringing the issue to their attention.<sup>21</sup>

Interest in Hirschfeld went beyond Nazi atrocities, it took on immediate relevance for the present. Manfred Herzer-Wigglesworth, heavily involved in sexual minority activism in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the Homosexuelle Aktion Westberlin<sup>22</sup> (HAW) and a cofounder of the MHG, described the interest in Hirschfeld and in this hitherto unexplored history as, on some level, a student's project. Studying sociology at the Freie Universität, he said, "How do we organize our emancipation struggle? Students fight best with theory."<sup>23</sup> Inspired by the Internationale ("we can only do it ourselves") and Bertolt Brecht ("workers must free themselves"), they took the gay liberation fight into their own hands.<sup>24</sup> Hirschfeld, Herzer-Wigglesworth said, was a great inspiration, and the post-sexual-liberation 1970s was a far better time for emancipation.<sup>25</sup> In addition, James Steakley, then an American doctoral student in Berlin and later professor of German at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, had introduced the American idea of "conscious-raising groups." In these, people gathered together and told one another about their lives. Emphasis on their own stories and their own history, in other words, emphasis on self-knowledge, provides a different perspective on the movement. For these activists, early-twentieth-century history became not just a source of atrocities, but also an inspiration.

"At the Beginning Stood Berlin,"<sup>26</sup> "50 Years After,"<sup>27</sup> "In Berlin, Sex Will Be Studied Again"<sup>28</sup>—the press represented the MHG as rectifying interrupted progress. Rescuing German history from itself, however, ran into limits. Re-founding the institute at the Freie Universität was blocked by the Berlin Senate,<sup>29</sup> and the MHG held its lecture series at the Jüdische Volkshochschule in Berlin. An attempt to rename a street after Hirschfeld failed (they had chosen the "Schlieffenufer," named for the Prussian general Alfred von Schlieffen, architect of the Schlieffen Plan, and located not far from where Hirschfeld's institute once stood).<sup>30</sup> Requests for official funding for inclusion in Berlin's 750th anniversary

<sup>19</sup> Letter dated December 16, 1982, and signed by Gerhard Schneider. Reprinted in *Mitteilungen* Nr. 1, no. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Letter dated March 2, 1983 and signed by Bernard Langfermann, reprinted in *Mitteilungen* 1, no. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Letter dated June 20, 1983, and signed by Sybille Slomeyer. Reprinted in *Mitteilungen* 1, no. 10.

<sup>22</sup> The HAW was, as Huneke puts it, at the forefront of a new sort of activism pushing for political solidarity and self-identification as a minority group over homophile groups' emphasis on respectability. Huneke, *States of Liberation*, 125–27.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Herzer-Wigglesworth.

<sup>24</sup> Herzer-Wigglesworth also stressed that this had to do with stages of societal development and homophobia would thereby be eradicated. Interview with Herzer-Wigglesworth.

<sup>25</sup> Quotes from the Internationale and Bertolt Brecht. Interview with Herzer-Wigglesworth.

<sup>26</sup> "Am Anfang stand Berlin," *Sexualmedizin* 12, no. 4 (1983): 162–65.

<sup>27</sup> Volkmar Sigusch, "50 Jahre danach," *Sexualmedizin* 12, no. 6 (1983): 252.

<sup>28</sup> "In Berlin soll der Sex wieder erforscht werden," *BZ*, March 15, 1983, 5.

<sup>29</sup> The senate gave several reasons for declining, among them that they did not see a practical need, the Freie Universität's financial difficulties, or the project's politicization. See reprints of the senate document. "Die Stellungnahme des Senats," *Mitteilungen der Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft* 3 (July 1984): 8–13. The Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft's commentary concluded that what was lacking was political will. "Die Stellungnahme des Senats," *Mitteilungen der Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft* 3 (July 1984): 15–19.

<sup>30</sup> *Mitteilungen der Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft* 2 (December 1983): 3.



celebration were ignored,<sup>31</sup> though activists were able to plan a Hirschfeld exhibition at the Berlin Staatsbibliothek for the fiftieth anniversary of the sexologist's death in 1985. In any case the bronze Hirschfeld bust had been made, just in time to be displayed at the first museum exhibition to celebrate Berlin's LGBTQ+ history.<sup>32</sup>

In 1983, the Berlin Museum in the western district of Kreuzberg began planning an exhibition on homosexual life in the city entitled "Eldorado—Geschichte, Alltag und Kultur homosexueller Frauen und Männer in Berlin 1850–1950" to run from May to June 1984. The name referred to a famous Weimar-era Berlin nightclub with a sexual minority clientele, but early drafts of the exhibition plan suggest various names, initially "Die Homosexuellen-Bewegung in Berlin 1850–1950,"<sup>33</sup> "ANDERSRUM," and "Anders als die Andern."<sup>34</sup> Without addressing the present moment, the exhibition nevertheless had a political edge. An exposé dated August 15, 1983, from the new museum director Rolf Bothe braided LGBTQ+ history into Berlin's history and its particular relevance for the Weimar and Nazi periods,<sup>35</sup> implicitly critiquing the 750th anniversary celebration's dismissal.

The MHG's work dovetailed with collecting material for the Eldorado exhibition, constituting what appears to have been the first sustained effort to track down traces of Hirschfeld, his work, and the sexual minority scene in 1920s Berlin. For the MHG, Herzer-Wigglesworth described attempts to find Weimar eyewitnesses, looking for anyone who had worked at Hirschfeld's institute or could give some impression of the time.<sup>36</sup> Eldorado sought famous eyewitnesses as well as current luminaries who might comment productively on the time.<sup>37</sup> Although much of the exhibition's film content centered on known LGBTQ+ Weimar celebrities such as film director Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, correspondence between researcher Wolfgang Theis and numerous film archives documents attempts to find material on *Anders als die Andern*.<sup>38</sup> The archives answered in the negative.

In the 1970s and 1980s, *Anders als die Andern* served the purpose of providing evidence of the gay rights movement's longer history, a historical artifact that did not need to dialogue with the present. The film merited only a single vitrine at the Eldorado exhibition.<sup>39</sup> Theis downplayed the film's impact in the 1980s, emphasizing that it was only a fragment. *Mädchen in Uniform* (1931), he felt, was more significant.<sup>40</sup> As for his initial impressions, Theis said the film was "historically interesting" due to its subject matter, but also because it was "as one can say, an agit-prop film."<sup>41</sup> "It took forever," he continued, "actually until [film director

<sup>31</sup> *Mitteilungen der Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft* 4 (October 1984): 4; "Programm soll verständlich und ideologiefrei sein," *Tagesspiegel*, October 1, 1984, 6.

<sup>32</sup> *Mitteilungen der Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft* 3 (July 1984): 3.

<sup>33</sup> Draft dated May 9, 1983. Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, Hausarchiv, Berlin-Museum, BM 318 K ELDORADO, Ausstellung, Schriftentausch, Schriftverkehr, 1982–1983.

<sup>34</sup> 2. Work paper dated June 1983. "Anders als die Andern" is handwritten above "ANDERSRUM" and noted as "Vorschlag" or "suggestion." Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, Hausarchiv, Berlin-Museum, BM 318 K ELDORADO, Ausstellung, Schriftentausch, Schriftverkehr, 1982–1983.

<sup>35</sup> Rolf Bothe, "Zur Ausstellung 'Homosexuelle Maenner und Frauen in Berlin 1850–1950 Geschichte, Alltag, Kultur,'" August 15, 1983. Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, Hausarchiv, Berlin-Museum, BM 318 A ELDORADO, Ausstellung, Schriftentausch, Schriftverkehr, 1982–1983.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Herzer-Wigglesworth.

<sup>37</sup> The contact list included Lotte Eisner, Susan Sontag, and Christopher Isherwood. Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, Hausarchiv, Berlin-Museum BM 317 L–S Homosexuellen Bewegung in Berlin, Ausstellung "Eldorado," 1983–1984.

<sup>38</sup> Letters from Wolfgang Theis to the Filminstitut der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf dated September 10 and 28, 1983, the Deutsches Filmmuseum in Frankfurt, dated August 27, 1983, the Bundesarchiv Koblenz dated August 27, 1983, the Filmmuseum im Münchner Stadtmuseum dated August 27, 1983, and the Österreichisches Filmmuseum dated August 27, 1983. Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, Hausarchiv, Berlin-Museum, BM 317 A–W Homosexuellen Bewegung in Berlin, Ausstellung "Eldorado," 1983–1984.

<sup>39</sup> The Eldorado exhibition's *Anders als die Andern* vitrine included photographs, reviews, prints of the *Jahrbuch der sexuellen Zwischenstufen*, film programs, and a censor card. Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, Hausarchiv, Berlin-Museum, BM 318 K ELDORADO, Ausstellung, Schriftentausch, Schriftverkehr, 1982–1983.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Wolfgang Theis on January 20, 2020.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Theis.

and activist Rosa von] Praunheim, that something like that was possible again.”<sup>42</sup> Theis and Dose indicated that the early Studio Camera evening showings of *Anders als die Andern* were difficult to watch. They recall the sleep-inducing whirr of the projector, Cyrillic intertitles, and speak-over translations.<sup>43</sup> James Steakley saw the film in Berlin in the 1970s and wrote the definitive book on it in 2007;<sup>44</sup> he described a slightly more compressed turn of events. The film’s significance, he said, was instantly clear; it was also clear that the film had been tampered with as the Ukrainian intertitles ran counter to Hirschfeld’s original intent.<sup>45</sup> “So the question is,” Steakley said, “what is going on here?”<sup>46</sup> Soviet censors twisting the film’s message to make it homophobic,<sup>47</sup> the truncated runtime, and “how [the scenes] had been jumbled” made it, in Steakley’s telling, an enigma, a puzzle to be pieced back together.<sup>48</sup>

### Lacunae in the Archive and in Film

Piecing an old film back together is, like writing history, a dialogue between past and present. For history-writing, the “origin” is a phantom; the same is true for film. Film, or as Walter Benjamin put it, “art in the age of mechanical reproduction,” has no single original document. Instead, there is a multiplicity of “originals,” each with their own history and list of alterations. Neither does restoring individual frames amount to restoring the film since films are experienced as projections and an authentic 1920s viewing experience cannot be restored. Restorers balance their own positionality with fidelity to that phantom “origin,” historical accuracy.<sup>49</sup> *Anders als die Andern*’s most recent iterations by the Filmmuseum München in 2004/2019 and by Outfest with the help of the University of California, Los Angeles Film & Television Archive in 2013, perform this balancing act in differing ways.

*Anders als die Andern*’s reconstructions raise issues beyond filmic concerns. The film attempts a realistic documentation of LGBTQ+ experiences. However, historical methodologies developed for interpreting traces of queer lives do not quite fit a fictional melodrama.<sup>50</sup> Scholars must find alternate ways of bridging *Anders als die Andern*’s past and present. Film scholar Lauren Pilcher is the first to weave *Anders als die Andern*’s twenty-first-century reconstructions into an argument that accounts for its original and current states. Attributing the film’s censorship to its risqué visuals, they interpret *Anders als die Andern*, its fragmentation, and its reconstructions as indicative of marginalizing queer desire in archival practice and historical narrative construction.<sup>51</sup> Although

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Theis. Rosa von Praunheim is a German film director and LGBTQ+ activist; Theis is referring to his 1971 film *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt*.

<sup>43</sup> Conversation with Ralf Dose on September 22, 2020. Interview with Theis.

<sup>44</sup> Steakley, *Anders als die Andern*.

<sup>45</sup> Among the initial Berlin viewers was a Slavacist who translated the Ukrainian intertitles and “so immediately virtually overnight once we saw that, got all the subtitles translated into German and we knew what kind of an object this was and what was being said in it.” Interview with James Steakley on March 23, 2022.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Steakley.

<sup>47</sup> Hirschfeld welcomed Soviet scientists to his institute with showings of *Anders als die Andern*, but official attitudes toward homosexuality in the Soviet Union changed over the course of the 1920s. Homosexuality between men was recriminalized in 1934.

<sup>48</sup> Although the Eldorado exhibition used the West Berlin Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, Steakley described his initial excavation of the film fragment as taking place at the Staatliches Filmarchiv der DDR. Interview with Steakley.

<sup>49</sup> Film reconstruction is not standardized. There is a code of ethics by the Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film, most recently revised in 2008, which can be found at <https://www.fiafnet.org/pages/Community/Code-Of-Ethics.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Work on photographs by Birgit Lang and Katie Sutton explores agency, identity formation, and scientific portrayals of queerness in Weimar era scientific, artistic, and legal contexts. See Birgit Lang and Katie Sutton, “An Ethics of Attentiveness: Photographic Portraits and Deviant Dwelling in German Queer and Trans Archives,” *Monatshefte* 114, no. 3 (Fall 2022): 363–83; Katie Sutton, “Sexology’s Photographic Turn: Visualizing Trans Identity in Interwar Germany,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 27, no. 3 (September 2018): 442–79.

<sup>51</sup> Lauren Pilcher, “Querying Queerness in the Film Archive, the Ephemeral *Anders als die Andern* (Different from the Others) (1919),” *Synoptique* 4, no. 1 (Summer 2015): 57–58.

this is undoubtedly true, glancing back to 1919 shows that the film's Weimar-era controversies did not hinge on eroticism. Stated concerns were more often youth protection, biopolitics, competing definitions of "Germanness," as well as the appropriateness of using film and science in this manner as public health education.<sup>52</sup> *Anders als die Andern*'s creators were cautious, and even conservative critics tended to admit that the film was not visually offensive.<sup>53</sup> In looking for the "real" *Anders als die Andern*, it might be productive to center its 1919 intentions as an entertainment film and as science-backed education. Taking *Anders als die Andern* at its word, at face value, shifts its fragmentation from signifier to practical problem. As quite literally artifacts of two different times, the reconstructions throw mismatched pasts and presents into sharp relief, suggesting strategies for negotiating temporal distance.

Film reconstruction deviates from history writing in that methodologies, drawing from fine art restoration and psychology, exist to provide guidelines for filling in the gaps.<sup>54</sup> Film scholar Andreas Busche references art historian Cesare Brandi, who differentiated between an artwork's historical and aesthetic value, and, using Gestalt psychology, prioritized the whole over the parts. Film restoration, according to Busche, has to strike a compromise between aesthetic unity and the marks that history has left on the material being restored.<sup>55</sup> Lacunae, defined as gaps in the film footage, can result from a variety of factors, including censorship, cuts, and celluloid degradation. A viewer might notice that the film occasionally skips; they might (or might not) notice that entire scenes are missing. Lacunae are part of an object's history and are thus part of the object itself, even if they detract from the film's aesthetic unity.<sup>56</sup> "The integration of loss," Busche writes, "has to be conducted in a manner that lacunae do not disrupt the unity of the image ... the critical intervention must conceal the interruption—without hiding the evidence."<sup>57</sup> Film restorers must make lacunae visible while preserving a sequence's continuity. This could involve leaving the skips or inserting a black screen to mark them.<sup>58</sup>

What remains of *Anders als die Andern* has more lacunae than actual footage. All reconstructions work from an 871-meter-long fragment with Ukrainian intertitles, roughly a third of the 1919 film's 2,115–2,200 meters.<sup>59</sup> This fragment comprises the film's blackmail plot. It was arranged to hide a missing subplot including dancer Anita Berber as a love interest, and it recuts scenes that appear in the middle of the 1919 film as a flashback into a chronological narrative. The fragment thus presents a semblance of continuity, whereas subsequent *Anders als die Andern* reconstructions, from 2004, 2013, and 2019, look skeletal because the lacunae are made visible.

Reconstructing *Anders als die Andern*'s original form and message required restorers to revisit documents that had accompanied the 1919 film, as not only was the footage scrambled, but both the Ukrainian fragment's titles and the 1932 export version of *Gesetze der Liebe*

<sup>52</sup> Hirschfeld's appearance in the film was seen by some members of the scientific community as inappropriate. See Matthias M. Weber and Wolfgang Burgmair, "'Anders als die Andern' Kraepelins Gutachten über Hirschfelds Aufklärungsfilm. Ein Beitrag zur Psychiatriegeschichte der Weimarer Republik," *Sudhoffs Archiv* 81, no. 1 (1997): 10.

<sup>53</sup> See for instance a collection of Hamburg press clippings in "Anders als die Andern. In Hamburg," *Der Film*, no. 37 (1919): 77–79. For a conservative critique that nevertheless admits the film is well made, see Johann Ude, "Wissenschaftlicher Kinoschund!," *Christliche Volkswacht* (October 1919): 12.

<sup>54</sup> Busche attributes this to the film's relative newness as a medium and inability to self-reference. Busche, "Just Another Form of Ideology?," 5.

<sup>55</sup> As Leo Enticknap notes, "original" is flexible—if a movie had cuts because of the 1934 production code (the "Hays Code"), Hollywood's self-censorship measure, it is an original documentation of the production code. Leo Enticknap, *Film Restoration: The Culture and Science of Audiovisual Heritage* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 21.

<sup>56</sup> See Julia Wallmüller, *Kriterien für die digitale Laufbildbearbeitung in der Restaurierung. Theoretische Diskussion und praktische Umsetzung* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2008), 16.

<sup>57</sup> Busche, "Just Another Form of Ideology?," 19.

<sup>58</sup> Busche, "Just Another Form of Ideology?," 22.

<sup>59</sup> Steakley, *Anders als die Andern*, 10.



titles they derived from told a different story.<sup>60</sup> Hirschfeld's message in his discussion with the film's doomed protagonist, Paul Körner, reads in its English translation: "Your love of people of your own sex is an abnormal, innate tendency ... which does not yield to your will nor to medicine.... You must avoid everything that leads to wantonness.... Besides, the law severely punishes this type of fornication ... to protect youth of both sexes."<sup>61</sup> This text and its German language equivalent for the Staatliches Filmarchiv der DDR are direct translations from the Ukrainian. The 1932 *Gesetze der Liebe* text, for comparison, reads: "Your love for the same sex is an abnormal natural predisposition that is powerless against individual will as well as the medical arts. Nevertheless, here, this act is punishable by law. You have the solemn duty to avoid everything that could be interpreted as seduction. Besides, the law rightly punishes indecent conduct with people protected by the youth protection clause."<sup>62</sup> To approximate *Anders als die Andern's* 1919 text, the Filmmuseum München mined Hirschfeld's detailed summary of the film in his *Jahrbuch*, where the sexologist is quoted as saying "Don't despair! As a homosexual you can still make valuable contributions to humanity!" as well as *Gesetze der Liebe's* 1927 pamphlet, which reads, "This person comforted him with the advice that love for the same sex actually can be as pure and noble as that for the opposite sex, and that this orientation can be found in many respectable people in all levels of society. Only ignorance or bigotry can condemn those who feel differently." The resulting text for the 2004/2019 version, in Steakley's English translation, combines the two, reading, "Love for one's own sex can be just as pure and noble as that for the opposite sex. This orientation is to be found among many respectable people in all levels of society. Only ignorance or bigotry can condemn those who feel differently. Don't despair! As a homosexual, you can still make valuable contributions to humanity."<sup>63</sup> The Outfest version's translation combines elements of both for this scene, making Hirschfeld seem rather ambivalent: "Love for one's own sex is an anomaly of nature that cannot be mastered through will-power. There is no cure. Only ignorance can condemn those who are different from the others. Don't despair! As a homosexual, you can still contribute to humanity."<sup>64</sup>

In 1999, with a commission from the French-German broadcasting station Arte, the Filmmuseum München under the direction of Klaus Volkmer reconstructed footage obtained directly from the Gosfilmofond into the first approximation of *Anders als die Andern's* 1919

<sup>60</sup> The 1932 *Gesetze der Liebe's* differences reflect mid-1920s political trends and legal developments. Historian Javier Samper Vendrell traces tensions between respectability politics and youth seduction in print media aimed at the LGBTQ+ community. Javier Samper Vendrell, *The Seduction of Youth: Print Culture and Homosexual Rights in the Weimar Republic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020). Laurie Marhoefer draws attention to the 1926 Filth and Trash Law's effects on suppressing queer media. See chapter 1 in Laurie Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016). Historian Peter Jelavich argues that German media increasingly self-censored over course of the 1920s. He cites violent Nazi demonstrations in Berlin against the 1930 American film *All Quiet on the Western Front* as a turning point in leftist self-censorship. Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Radio, Film, and the Death of Weimar Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). The different message is reflected in an undated program from the Filmmuseum Potsdam: "This film, which has its legends, is intended to warn of the dangers of sexual perversion between men—and actually nothing more." University of Southampton Special Collections, MS 380 A3064/3/1, Folder 2, Filmmuseum der DDR Potsdam, "Die Filme des Conrad Veidt," Cinegraph-Filmprogramm no. 25/26, n.p.

<sup>61</sup> Richard Oswald, director, *Anders als die Andern* (1919), English and Ukrainian subtitled version, Vito Russo, host, Bob Morris, director, Educational Broadcasting Corporation, 1986.

<sup>62</sup> Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, *Gesetze der Liebe*, BArch Prüfnummer 31922.

<sup>63</sup> Versions appear in multiple archival sources. 1) Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, *Gesetze der Liebe*, BArch Prüfnummer 31922. 2) Translation from the Ukrainian by R. Freund, *Anders als die Andern* (*Das Gesetz der Liebe*), Staatliches Filmarchiv der DDR, October 9, 1989, source: Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft archive. 3) Magnus Hirschfeld, ed., "Aus der Bewegung," *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 19, no. 1/2 (October 1919): 11. 4) Magnus Hirschfeld and H. Beck, ed., *Gesetze der Liebe. Aus der Mappe eines Sexualforschers* (Berlin: Verlag der Neuen Gesellschaft, 1927), 34. 5) Richard Oswald, director, *Anders als die Andern* (1919), English subtitled restoration by Stefan Drößler, Filmmuseum München, 2004.

<sup>64</sup> Richard Oswald, director, *Different from the Others* (1919), English subtitled restoration by Outfest, UCLA Film & Television Archive, 2013.

form. Film reconstructor Stefan Drößler, who became director of the Filmmuseum later that year, emphasized that the Arte *Anders als die Andern* is a compromise: Should the footage be reconstructed as a *Gesetze der Liebe* segment or as *Anders als die Andern*? The Arte version chose a middle path (*Mittelweg*), using accounts of the press premiere, Hirschfeld's summary in his *Jahrbuch*, the 1932 censor card for *Gesetze der Liebe*, and the *Gesetze der Liebe* pamphlet for information concerning both *Anders als die Andern*'s and *Gesetze der Liebe*'s premieres. Yet this version, titled *Schuldlos geächtet* hewed, in Drößler's words, too closely to the 1932 *Gesetze der Liebe* censor card,<sup>65</sup> which in itself is compromised by its distance to the 1927 film.<sup>66</sup> Drößler made a new reconstruction for commercial release in 2004, relying less on the 1932 censor card and consulting with Steakley, who also provided the translations for the English-language version.<sup>67</sup> In 2019, the Filmmuseum München restored *Gesetze der Liebe*, producing an updated but not substantially changed *Anders als die Andern* as a byproduct.

From *Anders als die Andern*'s positive reception at the 1999 Munich AIDS benefit, it seems probable that the Arte version was screened. As Steakley related, when he had shown the film in Wisconsin in the 1980s and 1990s, despite explaining how the 1919 original conveyed a different message, it did not seem to catch on.<sup>68</sup> But:

What happened after the Munich reconstruction became available, is people got the “wow” effect, now I get it! In other words, it was never enough to show the rotten version, the Ukrainian version, and to explain to people ... because they'd sort of gotten their overwhelming impression of what it's about and what Hirschfeld's like and what the whole thing is like from just watching.<sup>69</sup>

Once the film's inconsistencies were smoothed out, once its progressive message was restored, people “were really impressed by the movie and really thought that it was amazing that Hirschfeld was doing this so early,” even the film's age and stylized acting no longer posed a barrier.<sup>70</sup> The new reconstruction, in his words, collapses past-present distinctions, audiences “can relate to the movie through the reconstruction very well.”<sup>71</sup> Steakley further stressed the difficulty not only in physically accessing the film prior to the 2004 restoration, but that misunderstandings even among film scholars and activists on *Anders als die Andern*'s actual meaning existed due to the Ukrainian cut's distortions.<sup>72</sup> The 2004 restoration thus cleared up the film's ambiguous message, making it more coherent as a viewing experience as well as a historical document.

The Outfest Legacy Project, a program of the Los Angeles-based Outfest nonprofit that promotes LGBTQ+ film and organizes film festivals, created a Kickstarter campaign in October 2012 for its own restoration of *Anders als die Andern*. For the restoration itself, they partnered with the UCLA Film and Television Archive. The Kickstarter campaign emphasized personal involvement in preserving an essential part of LGBTQ+ history. Its treatment of this history is rather vague, stating incorrectly that *Anders als die Andern* “is believed to be the only film of a group of gay-friendly movies made during Germany's Weimar Era that escaped systematic destruction by the Nazis.”<sup>73</sup> The next statement, “Our

<sup>65</sup> Censorship cards were produced by one of Germany's two federal censorship offices and accompanied distributed copies of films.

<sup>66</sup> This version, which mirrors Hirschfeld's 1928 short film *Geächtet. Tragödie eines Homosexuellen*, is included as a bonus on the Filmmuseum's DVD release of its 2004 *Anders als die Andern*. Interview with Drößler.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Drößler; interview with Steakley.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Steakley.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Steakley.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Steakley.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Steakley.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Steakley.

<sup>73</sup> Website of the Kickstarter campaign: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1041058527/different-from-the-others-1919-restore-this-histor?lang=de>.

work on this film will ensure that the message of tolerance and acceptance that was made so courageously in 1919 in Germany will continue to inspire generations to come,”<sup>74</sup> is even more vague, as the Filmmuseum München’s version already existed. In any case, Outfest intended to increase the film’s reach in the North American LGBTQ+ community. The Outfest version’s enthusiastic reception in American news media suggests that it touched a different nerve than previous versions of the film.<sup>75</sup>

The Kickstarter page contains a short video from Michael Reisz of the Outfest Board of Directors, in which he invokes a narrative of rectifying historical wrongs. Reisz starts by sketching a gay utopia obliterated by the Nazis (“in 1919 in Germany a group of films was made that portrayed gay people as living and loving with no apologies and no shame”),<sup>76</sup> odd considering that *Anders als die Andern* ends with a suicide and was banned during the Weimar era. Claiming that the film was destroyed because the Nazis sought to erase gay history and thereby gay people themselves, Reisz positions the Kickstarter as a project reminiscent of the West German postwar (and ongoing) *Wiedergutmachung*, an attempt to right past wrongs. As to the Outfest Legacy Project’s intervention in restoring *Anders als die Andern*, Reisz emphasizes the “terrible, terrible shape” of the surviving film fragment and, without naming the Filmmuseum München explicitly, describes its efforts as having pieced together existing material, but falling short of what he terms a “full restoration.”<sup>77</sup>

The Outfest version introduces the film as an artifact. It begins with two paragraph screens, while in the bottom right corner of the screen, a man provides keyboard accompaniment. The paragraphs give a very brief historical overview of the film fragment from its inclusion in *Gesetze der Liebe* to the current version, based on the Munich one, which was “a semblance of the original 1919 release.” Outfest notes “some changes and additions” have been made, the intertitles “derived from a German synopsis, censorship records, the Ukrainian [sic] titles, and other sources,” and that stills, repeated “or otherwise manipulated” shots have been used to cover for missing sequences.<sup>78</sup> The film is thus prefaced with an explanation of how it was reconstructed.

The initial title card itself (inaccuracies and misspellings aside) has a simple, neutral, elegant design that bears no resemblance to the Filmmuseum München’s Jugendstil one, which is lifted from *Anders als die Andern*’s brochures. As the Outfest version’s introductory text notes, titles and intertitles are “re-created in the style of English-language releases of German films from the period.”<sup>79</sup> This creates something of a counterfactual, or an alternate history for the film. In 1919, after Germany’s defeat in World War I, its films faced embargoes from its former adversaries, and *Anders als die Andern* had no English-language release.

The scrolling text that introduces the film in the Munich version derives from leaflets distributed prior to *Anders als die Andern*’s showings at Weimar movie theaters. This leaflet addresses the controversy surrounding paragraph 175 and promotes the film as addressing the issue with scientific rigor and a humanistic touch—hallmarks of the *Aufklärungsfilm* genre. “These people,” it concludes, “deserve not contempt but sympathy, and the film teaches us, that in this new Germany it is time to do away with philistine prejudices as well.”<sup>80</sup> Rather than introducing *Anders als die Andern* as a fragment, describing its post-censorship and post-1933 history as the Outfest version does, the Munich version introduces

<sup>74</sup> Emphasis in the original. <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1041058527/different-from-the-others-1919-restore-this-histor?lang=de>.

<sup>75</sup> See Daniel Wenger, “The Tragic Lessons of Cinema’s First Gay Love Story,” *New Yorker*, February 14, 2017; Robert Ito, “A Daring Film, Silenced No More,” *New York Times*, November 17, 2013.

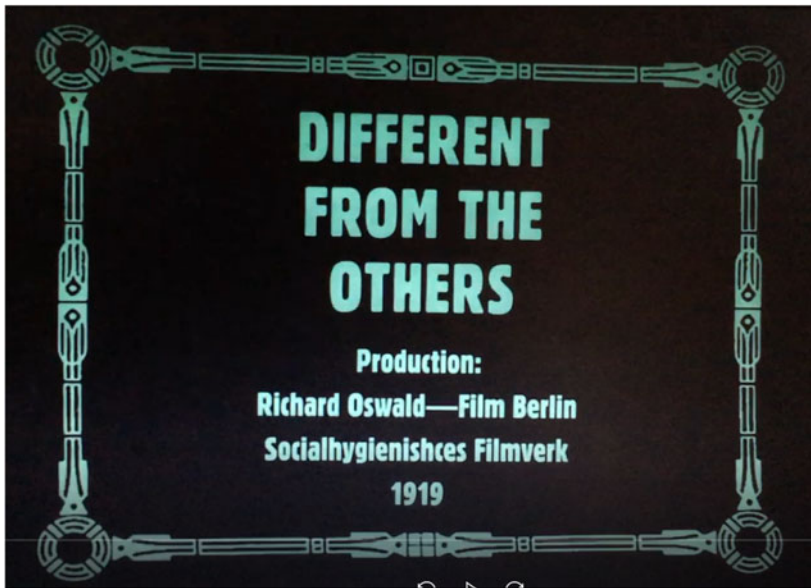
<sup>76</sup> Kickstarter link: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1041058527/different-from-the-others-1919-restore-this-histor?lang=de>.

<sup>77</sup> Kickstarter link: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1041058527/different-from-the-others-1919-restore-this-histor?lang=de>.

<sup>78</sup> *Different from the Others*, Outfest, UCLA Film & Television Archive, 2013.

<sup>79</sup> *Different from the Others*, Outfest, UCLA Film & Television Archive, 2013.

<sup>80</sup> *Anders als die Andern*, Filmmuseum München, 2004.



UCLA initial title card



Filmmuseum München initial title card

the film within its revolutionary context. It presents the audience with a “brochure” to read, historicizing the experience.

The Munich version asks its audience to be historians; the Outfest version asks them to view the film as history. Pilcher cites differing intent: the Munich reconstruction contextualizing the film within a circumscribed archive of extant Weimar documents and the Outfest reconstruction envisioned as a starting point for a far more expansive (and expanding) virtual archive intended to be educational, interactive, and community-building.<sup>81</sup> In their

<sup>81</sup> Pilcher, “Querying Queerness in the Film Archive, the Ephemeral *Anders als die Andern* (*Different from the Others*) (1919),” 50–55. Pilcher’s observation is confirmed with the 2019 *Anders als die Andern* DVD set from the Filmmuseum

view, the Munich version, with its wealth of found material and scientific overtones, presents *Anders als die Andern* as part of an established queer Weimar archive, a clearly demarcated space within which the audience can, drawing on the available evidence, enter into and piece together the film's narrative. With its social media outreach efforts, Pilcher sees in the Outfest version an attempt to expand the filmic experience beyond the archive, in their words, allowing "the LGBTQ-aware Americans to read themselves into a virtual site of lost history via interactive engagement with contemporary technologies."<sup>82</sup> Expanding on Pilcher's line of argument, the Munich version asks its audiences to engage in the historian's first task of reconstructing shreds of material from a faraway past into a coherent narrative whole, whereas for the Outfest version, the past *Anders als die Andern* represents, is communal, the past of a unified queer present. Yet both versions, it seems, stop short of asking for critical engagement with how, why, and when this film was made and what its impact was in its time.

Interestingly, both aims skirt the possibility that a twenty-first-century audience might, like the film's 1919 audience, want to watch *Anders als die Andern* for entertainment and to be moved by its melodrama. They might even identify with its tragic main character. This was, after all, the intent of the film's creators and is reflected in at least some of its press and popular reception.<sup>83</sup> *Anders als die Andern* was not designed to titillate; it was designed to humanize and foster empathy for a marginalized group of people, play on the audience's sense of justice, and through this, inspire a popular push for legal reform. Scholarly engagements with the film-as-film, most notably by film scholars Richard Dyer and Ervin Malakaj, explicate how *Anders als die Andern*'s visuals and plot were calculated to play on human emotions.<sup>84</sup> Dyer references Weimar-era cultural cues and signifiers whereas Malakaj's argument, namely that the film's power comes from possibilities inherent in its melodramatic form, could just as well apply to twenty-first-century viewers. Malakaj has further argued that the film forges powerful connections to its (queer) viewers then and now through its tragic story, creating a sense of community and identification through the negative feelings that story engenders.<sup>85</sup> His takes, in particular, show how *Anders als die Andern* can still function as an experience, not a mere artifact. Recent scholarship also illuminates other integral aspects of *Anders als die Andern* as a Weimar cultural phenomenon, such as sexology's development as a discipline and *Aufklärungsfilme* as public health education.<sup>86</sup> This context's absence, more even than the reduced shock factor of gay rights, forms perhaps the most significant gap between the film's initial audiences and its audiences today.

The divergence between the Munich and Outfest versions is particularly evident in their treatments of Hirschfeld's mid-film lecture. Hirschfeld's own photos of LGBTQ+ individuals at his clinic evince a colonialist gaze; they reflect early-twentieth-century science's reliance on impersonally displayed bodies, and as such, they read as exploitative or pathologizing

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München, which includes two other feature-length Weimar sex films and numerous archival texts as PDF documents.

<sup>82</sup> Pilcher, "Querying Queerness in the Film Archive, the Ephemeral *Anders als die Andern* (*Different from the Others*) (1919)," 58.

<sup>83</sup> For Hirschfeld's selections of positive and negative press clippings, scientific opinions, and letters from the public, see Magnus Hirschfeld, ed., *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 19, no. 1/2 (October 1919): 15–51, and Magnus Hirschfeld, ed., *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 19, no. 3/4 (May 1920): 111–21. For a take from the sexual minority community magazine *Die Freundschaft* that emphasizes the film's modesty and quality, see Giovanni Nemo, "Conrad Veidt," *Die Freundschaft* 1, no. 18 (December 1919): 6.

<sup>84</sup> Richard Dyer, "Less and More than Women and Men: Lesbian and Gay Cinema in Weimar Germany," *New German Critique*, no. 51, special issue (Autumn 1990): 5–60; Ervin Malakaj, "Richard Oswald, Magnus Hirschfeld, and the Possible Impossibility of Hygienic Melodrama" *Studies in European Cinema* 14, no. 3 (2017): 216–30.

<sup>85</sup> See Ervin Malakaj, *Anders als die Andern* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2023).

<sup>86</sup> See Ina Linge's work on sexology's use of film as an educational tool and as a medium. Ina Linge, "Sexology, Popular Science and Queer History in *Anders als die Andern* (*Different from the Others*)," *Gender & History* 30 no. 3 (October 2018): 595–610.



today.<sup>87</sup> The Munich version's slide show uses Hirschfeld's photos; these are often clinical, some depicting nude figures, some comparison shots of the same individual wearing male- and female-coded clothing, and some "candid" photos depicting people going about their daily life in ways that illustrate the early-twentieth-century theory of sexual inversion (mismatched genders between "soul" and "body") and Hirschfeld's own theory of a "third sex."<sup>88</sup> The Outfest reconstruction takes a far more aesthetically pleasing approach, using paintings and portraits of attractive, fully-clothed, and dignified sexual minorities. Rather than engaging in daily life, some of these people are depicted in model-like poses or in the act of creating artwork. Known personalities like Ludwig II of Bavaria and Oscar Wilde are used to illustrate "men with female traits"; photos of respectable, masculine-looking couples illustrate the statement that some homosexual men give no feminine impression. In line with today's mores, there are no comparison shots, which imply that the individual's gender presentation is inauthentic or at odds with their physical body. The sole nude image illustrates Hirschfeld's remarks about longstanding violence against sexual minorities; it shows two bloodied corpses artistically arranged side by side. Though the images differ starkly from Hirschfeld's customary use of photography, the Outfest version claims to use images sourced from Hirschfeld's work, or at least from 1920s Germany.

Although the Munich 2004/2019 version hews closer to scholarly conventions of film reconstruction than the Outfest version, Drößler's primary concern in reconstructing a film is that it functions as an emotional experience. Making the reconstruction's interventions clear can impede this.<sup>89</sup> Yet the Munich version makes the film's lacunae visible. Missing plotlines and scenes are documented with black screens bearing text summarizing the action. These sudden walls of text break up the film's narrative flow, but they preserve *Anders als die Andern*'s incompleteness. One technique for filling in a missing scene Drößler utilizes is to have a slide of text, a photo of the missing scene, and a text following the photo.<sup>90</sup> The audience, he said, is conscious that something is missing, yet the method chosen to smooth over the gap is calculated to convey a modicum of dramatic tension. The Outfest version deals differently with lacunae; it avoids paragraph-length intertitles describing missing scenes and subplot, hinting at them instead with series of sentence-length intertitles. This maintains the film's flow, resulting in a brisk but not skeletal-seeming *Anders als die Andern*. But in this semblance of a whole, it is much easier to overlook what is missing.

Making *Anders als die Andern* seem too complete could render its history less complete. In her appeal to queer German history, historian Jennifer Evans notes that overeager attempts at historical restitution, especially those aimed at making alternative lifestyles visible, risk obscuring the very past they attempt to access.<sup>91</sup> Queering, in her definition, necessitates looking beyond established narratives and normativities, reading "against the grain," and searching for meanings and experiences that are not evident, erased through self-censorship, neglect, or even violence. Instead of collapsing distinctions between past and present, Evans also asks if we might, mindful of our own positionality, endeavor to reach across temporal distances.<sup>92</sup> Queering history, allowing for or even emphasizing fragmentation and disconnection, might seem to work at cross-purposes with film reconstruction's use of Gestalt theory to create a watchable whole. Reconciling queering with reconstruction

<sup>87</sup> Heike Bauer addresses this regarding photographs displayed at the institute, but with a nod to Sutton's argument in "Sexology's Photographic Turn," she notes that the intent was also to normalize, and the photographs were part of self-representation and identity creation. Some of these photographs are featured in the Munich *Anders als die Andern*. See Heike Bauer, *The Hirschfeld Archives: Violence, Death, and Modern Queer Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2017), 89–90.

<sup>88</sup> The Filmmuseum München images are sourced from the *Gesetze der Liebe* booklet. Magnus Hirschfeld and H. Beck, *Gesetze der Liebe. Aus der Mappe eines Sexualforschers* (Berlin: Verlag der Neuen Gesellschaft, 1927).

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Drößler.

<sup>90</sup> Drößler claims this conveys better the complexity of the scene. Interview with Drößler.

<sup>91</sup> Evans, "Introduction: Why Queer German History?" 375.

<sup>92</sup> Jennifer Evans, *The Queer Art of History: Queer Kinship after Fascism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2023), 19.

might entail taking silences, the object's lacunae, into account, making them part of its history.

*Anders als die Andern's* fragmented form and current iterations result not from the decay or artistic concessions that often affect recovered silent films, but from the ravages of inter-war German history, particularly as it pertained to suppression of and violence toward sexual minorities. Should present-day *Anders als die Andern* bear the scars of censorship, repression, and war, a past so far from the future it imagined? Does fidelity to the film's original intent entail (or excuse) what might amount to erasing what happened between 1933 and 1945, not to mention the impact those years had on the film's largely Jewish and anti-fascist creators? *Anders als die Andern's* reconstructions avoid confronting (or making the viewer confront) these issues. In expecting audiences to fill in *Anders als die Andern's* history or create an alternate one, neither the Munich nor the Outfest version asks for a critical engagement with the early Weimar moment; they do not force audiences to consider the space between originals and reconstructions.

### Weimar Then and Now

*Anders als die Andern* now contains multiple temporalities. Film scholar Vivian Sobchack uses the phrase "twice-told tales" to describe a documentary about a 1920s film set depicting ancient Egyptian ruins and now a ruin of itself rediscovered decades later in the Californian desert sands; by the same token, *Anders als die Andern* is at least twice-told.<sup>93</sup> Both past and present in its physical reconstructed form and in its still-relevant subject matter, the film's reconstruction processes seem akin to writing histories of the Weimar Republic. Weimar's urgency in a new time of democratic crisis makes its historiography not only a story of the 1920s, but also of individual historians' moments. This last section will draw parallels between *Anders als die Andern* as a transhistorical document and the last few decades of Weimar's historiography. As this historiography grows more expansive, more inclusive, and less intent on having any sort of meaning, it seems to make most sense as a series of fragments.

The Nietzschean paragraph closing historian Detlev Peukert's 1987 classic *Die Weimarer Republik* suggests Weimar, or more accurately, perceptions of it, as a dialogue between past and present:

From the *antiquarian* point of view, the 1920s, in assuming the features of classical modernity, also reveal to us the emergence of the world we inhabit today. They show us a society on the threshold between what has since become our familiar present and what has turned into a strange and shadowy past—a society which shared our own hopes and anxieties, but one whose fantasies and phobias also present us with a bewildering caricature of what is now our normal everyday life. And yet, even in this respect, the shadowy figures that look out at us from the tarnished mirror of history are—in the final analysis—ourselves.<sup>94</sup>

Peukert deftly captures the Weimar Republic's challenges for the present day as well as its continued fascination—the reason that we are compelled to look back into it, hoping to see something more. His book transformed Weimar historiography and, despite its age, it is still considered the most fundamental work on the subject.

Why does current Weimar historiography now start with Peukert? In contrast to explanatory historiographical efforts, which looked for what went wrong and assigned the blame to

<sup>93</sup> Vivian Sobchack, "What Is Film History? or, the Riddle of the Sphinxes," in *Reinventing Film Theory*, ed. Linda Williams and Christine Gledhill (London: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>94</sup> Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill & Wang: 1992), 282. Friedrich Nietzsche outlines three types of history: monumental, antiquarian, and critical in his 1874 *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*.

one or more factors,<sup>95</sup> Peukert diagnosed problems without overgeneralizing and without creating teleologies. His diagnoses reached beyond his historical case studies, inviting self-critique, and they were imbued with a sense of immediacy and urgency. His work centered on what he termed modernity's "pathologies,"<sup>96</sup> among them racism and assigning "lesser value" to some human lives.<sup>97</sup> Though critiques of his analyses say they risked losing the specificity of Nazi crimes,<sup>98</sup> Peukert's efforts nevertheless insisted that "never again" is a living project. Two decades into the twenty-first century, where modernity's inherent problems have still not been solved, Peukert's book holds a mirror up to his present-day readers. Rather than asking "What went wrong?" he seems to ask "What is wrong?"

What went wrong was, to be sure, the focus of 1980s efforts to distance the present nation from the past, and that was also the context that Peukert was writing in. That decade saw a rash of commemorations, museum exhibitions, speeches, and controversies from Bitburg to the Historikerstreit. Writing from the vantage point of the early 1990s, historian Alf Lüdtke delineated persistent difficulties in facing and accounting for the crimes of the Third Reich, particularly concerning "overlooked" victims.<sup>99</sup> Among these were sexual minorities. Perhaps the most conspicuous instance is the 1985 speech on the fortieth anniversary of World War II's end in Europe by Bundespräsident Richard von Weizsäcker. Weizsäcker's speech, claiming May 8th as a "Tag der Befreiung" but acknowledging its importance as a "Tag der Erinnerung," listed victims of war and tyranny for national commemoration and mourning, and included homosexuals.<sup>100</sup>

"What went wrong" with Weimar still has a grip on popular imagination, but for the last thirty years has not animated Weimar scholarship. This scholarship tell Weimar's story from its beginning rather than from its end, investigating specific aspects extensively and on their own terms.<sup>101</sup> Film scholar and historian Anton Kaes flipped a particularly tenacious tendency to see the era's silent films as harbingers of fascism, reframing the films as reactions to World War I trauma.<sup>102</sup> Historian Rüdiger Graf reconceptualized the era's myriad crises as opportunities for possible futures rather than portending doom.<sup>103</sup> Historian Tim Müller presented the Weimar Republic as a remarkably durable example of interwar democracy.<sup>104</sup> Historian Robert Gerwarth showed that the 1918 German Revolution was no failure and

<sup>95</sup> Historian Eberhard Kolb noted that single-cause explanations for Weimar's end gave way to multi-causal ones. In the 1950s, scholars focused on the end, shifting in the 1960s and 1970s to the beginning. The 1980s crises renewed interest in the end, but the middle remained relatively understudied. Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, trans. P.S. Falla (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1988), 129–37.

<sup>96</sup> See, for instance, Peukert's 1982 book, *Volksgeossen und Gemeinschaftsfremde. Anpassung, Ausmerze und Aufbegehren unter dem Nationalsozialismus*, as well as *Die Weimarer Republik*.

<sup>97</sup> Detlev Peukert, "The Genesis of the 'Final Solution' from the Spirit of Science," in *Reevaluating the Third Reich*, ed. Thomas Childers, Jane Caplan (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishing, 1993), 235.

<sup>98</sup> See Charles Maier in the foreword to *Reevaluating the Third Reich*; also see Rüdiger Hachtmann and Sven Reichardt, ed., *Detlev Peukert Revisited: Überlegungen zu seiner historiographischen Einordnung* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2015), and Nikolaus Wachsmann's "Rewriting resistance and repression under the Nazi regime. Perspectives on the work of Detlev Peukert" in *Detlev Peukert und die NS-Forschung*, ed. Rüdiger Hachtmann and Sven Reichardt (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2015).

<sup>99</sup> Alf Lüdtke, "Coming to Terms with the Past: Illusions of Remembering, Ways of Forgetting Nazism in West Germany," *Journal of Modern History* 65, no. 3 (September 1993): 568.

<sup>100</sup> Richard von Weizsäcker, Gedenkveranstaltung im Plenarsaal des Deutschen Bundestages zum 40. Jahrestag des Endes des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Europa, Bonn, May 8, 1985, [https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Richard-von-Weizsaecker/Reden/1985/05/19850508\\_Rede.html](https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Richard-von-Weizsaecker/Reden/1985/05/19850508_Rede.html).

<sup>101</sup> This is the stated project of the 2022 *Oxford Handbook of the Weimar Republic*. Nadine Rossol and Benjamin Ziemann, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Weimar Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 1–24.

<sup>102</sup> Anton Kaes, *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>103</sup> Rüdiger Graf, "Either-Or: The Narrative of 'Crisis' in Weimar Germany and in Historiography," *Central European History* 43, no. 4 (December 2010): 592–615.

<sup>104</sup> Tim B. Müller, *Nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Lebensversuche moderner Demokratien* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2014).

deserved its name.<sup>105</sup> Historians Peter Fritzsche and Benjamin Ziemann pushed against the notion that there is anything resembling a cautionary tale to be drawn from this period.<sup>106</sup> Both Fritzsche's summation of Weimar as a series of experiments with fascism being just one, and Ziemann's assertion that Weimar's tragedy has no greater meaning and tragic instead are constant attempts to conscript it for instruction, encourage a plurality of narratives. Historian Michael Wildt's 2022 book, *Zerbrochene Zeit. Deutsche Geschichte 1918–1945*, particularly describes the period as “shattered” and, in contrast to conventional historical syntheses, his book unfolds as a series of episodic fragments.

Unlike in the 1970s and 1980s, when *Anders als die Andern* was first rediscovered, queer German studies' fragments are coalescing into an active and growing field. Historians Laurie Marhoefer, Jennifer V. Evans, Anna Hájková, Javier Samper Vendrell, Robert Beachy, and Xavier Nunn, among others, call attention to gaps in established queer German historical narratives. In one powerful example, Marhoefer ends their 2016 study of lesbian persecution in the Third Reich by noting that ignoring these cases simply because there were no explicit laws assumes Nazi violence was by the book. This, they argue, has implications for the present: societal prejudice continues even after repressive laws are eliminated.<sup>107</sup> Reinserting subaltern perspectives aims not just for completeness or restitution, but is necessary because past erasure amounts to present erasure.

Erasure no longer threatens *Anders als die Andern*. The film is now a presence in Weimar, queer, and film studies. Wolfgang Theis's final curated exhibition as director of the Schwules Museum in the fall of 2019 was on *Anders als die Andern*. Why that film? “That's just because of the date!,” Theis remarked.<sup>108</sup> The year marked, after all, the hundredth anniversary of *Anders als die Andern*'s premiere. When asked what he thought of the film, he answered, “*Anders als die Andern* is a historical document,”<sup>109</sup> a milestone and a *Zeitzeugnis* (“witness of its time”), but little else. Theis's statements enter into more general tension in *Anders als die Andern*'s scholarship that tends to weigh in either on its value as a historical artifact or its qualities as a filmic melodrama.<sup>110</sup> Regarding LGBTQ+ emancipation, Theis noted that every generation has to reinvent the wheel and, as vanguard ideas circle back into outdateness, *Anders als die Andern* stands, in his words, as an unchanging reference point. Underlining his words, a photocopy of a 1919 *Anders als die Andern* film program in the Schwules Museum's library bears an inscription indicating that it was given to the IHB (presumably the Initiativgruppe Homosexualität Bielefeld) by an “old homosexual on 10.6.76.”<sup>111</sup> The man, seventy-five years old, handed them an original yellowed film program, “so that you see what was going on earlier.”<sup>112</sup>

Theis's 2019 exhibit included a wall of impressions on *Anders als die Andern* from Germany's contemporary LGBTQ+ and film communities. These statements mirrored to a surprising extent the enthusiastic letters printed in Hirschfeld's journal, the *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* upon *Anders als die Andern*'s release.<sup>113</sup> The film's emotional impact, its

<sup>105</sup> Robert Gerwarth, *November 1918: The German Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>106</sup> See Peter Fritzsche, “Did Weimar Fail?,” *Journal of Modern History* 68 (September 1996): 629–56; Benjamin Ziemann, “Weimar Was Weimar: Politics, Culture and the Emplotment of the German Republic,” *German History* 28, no. 4 (2010): 542–71.

<sup>107</sup> Laurie Marhoefer, “Lesbianism, Transvestitism, and the Nazi State: A Microhistory of a Gestapo Investigation, 1939–1943,” *American Historical Review* (October 2016): 1194–95.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with Theis.

<sup>109</sup> He also calls it a “historisches Fragment.” Interview with Theis.

<sup>110</sup> The idea of *Anders als die Andern* as a relic is expressed by multiple scholars. Richard Dyer argues: “but *Anders*, though touching and moving, is a museum piece needing an act of imagination to see beyond its fragments.” Dyer, “Less and More than Women and Men,” 60. Pilcher agrees with Dyer, noting that the risqué aspects, significant to the original experience, are now lost. Pilcher, “Querying Queerness in the Film Archive, the Ephemeral *Anders als die Andern* (Different from the Others) (1919),” 36.

<sup>111</sup> Schwules Museum Bibliothek, gSH, HS und Film, Fassbinder Schroeder, 13, H503.

<sup>112</sup> Schwules Museum Bibliothek, gSH, HS und Film, Fassbinder Schroeder, 13, H503.

<sup>113</sup> Hirschfeld, *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 19, no. 1/2.

meaning for the LGBTQ+ community, and the electric effect of seeing Hirschfeld himself onscreen form the main themes in both sets of commentary. To be certain, these are curated comments. Hirschfeld quoted from positive letters, and a museum exhibition on *Anders als die Andern* would logically feature statements from people who found the film meaningful. Film curator Kristina Jaspers, moved by the century-old letters and their continued relevance, stated that “a film can hardly achieve more: to foster empathy, to provide role models, to show that one is not standing alone.”<sup>114</sup> Film director Rosa von Praunheim thanked Oswald “for the historic, hysteric film.”<sup>115</sup> Publisher and activist Egmont Fassbinder, associated with Germany’s first gay press, the Rosa Winkel Bibliothek, described his first encounter with *Anders als die Andern* at the Studio Camera in the winter of 1972–1973. Among a group of West Berlin HAW activists waiting in the cold for the film to begin, he spotted another group of people dressed in gray. Surprised at first that there seemed to be no gay East Berliners in attendance, he then realized “that the grays were not just any cineastes, instead they were our sisters from the East.”<sup>116</sup> These reactions, historical and present day, testify to the fragmented film’s ability to forge ties, create immediacy, and make the past present.

*Anders als die Andern* is now an unlikely classic, ascending to the Weimar pantheon on the basis of its subject matter rather than its artistry. Steakley provided the most positive take on the film, that it is an enigmatic document constantly changing and being reborn.<sup>117</sup> This dynamism made it a generative object of study, and Steakley spoke of continually reworking his own scholarship on the film.<sup>118</sup> Drößler spoke about the different levels upon which film can hit (artistic, technical, political, economic), and when one of those levels attains a certain level of meaning, he said, it can be incendiary. Such films are not, he added, necessarily masterpieces, more films where something comes out of balance, where something unusual is sparked. These he finds more interesting than “uniform, perfect films.”<sup>119</sup> Theis expressed similar opinions. While *Caligari* and *Metropolis* might boast historically significant aesthetics, he finds Oswald’s “writing of history that relies on moving emotions” much more interesting.<sup>120</sup> For both, *Anders als die Andern* may be less interesting as a film, but fascinating as a symptom of its moment. As Theis said, the film is a *Zeitzeugnis*, but he admitted that learning from history’s witnesses is too much to expect.<sup>121</sup> Herzer-Wigglesworth echoed Theis’s statement; history offers no lessons other than that it is problematic when misused. Why bother with history? “It’s fun” (“Es macht Spass”),<sup>122</sup> said Herzer-Wigglesworth, bluntly underlining an essential aspect of *Anders als die Andern*’s appeal, as well as Weimar’s.

Current open-ended Weimar scholarship acknowledges desires to seek guidance from the failed democracy while leaning into its ambivalences. Peukert’s work foreshadows this; he tended to end his works with a set of theses rather than conclusions.<sup>123</sup> Like puzzle pieces, the theses can remain fragmented or be assembled by the reader. In contrast to his predecessors as well as countless politicians then and now, Peukert seems to want to avoid making Weimar mean any one thing. He fits it instead into a paradigm of modern industrial societies; its heuristic potential comes from this and also from rigorous attention to everyday lives during its fourteen-year span.<sup>124</sup> A sense of incompleteness hangs over Peukert’s intellectual trajectory as well since he did not live to finish his projects or see how influential his

<sup>114</sup> Kristina Jaspers, *Anders als die Andern* exhibition, 2019, Schwules Museum Berlin.

<sup>115</sup> Rosa von Praunheim, *Anders als die Andern* exhibition, 2019, Schwules Museum Berlin.

<sup>116</sup> Egmont Fassbinder, *Anders als die Andern* exhibition, 2019, Schwules Museum Berlin.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Steakley.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Steakley.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with Drößler.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Theis.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Theis.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Herzer-Wigglesworth.

<sup>123</sup> See *Die Weimarer Republik*, “The Weimar Republic—Old and New Perspectives,” and *Volksgegnossen und Gemeinschaftsfremde. Anpassung, Ausmerze und Aufbegehren unter dem Nationalsozialismus*.

<sup>124</sup> Peukert, “The Weimar Republic,” 136–38.



book would become.<sup>125</sup> He died of AIDS in 1990. The book's English translation, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, appeared in 1991 and noted simply on the inside cover that the author had died aged thirty-nine.

## Conclusion

The AIDS crisis in the West was fifty years in the future, but *Anders als die Andern*'s opening scene, in which the protagonist reads newspaper obituaries and becomes increasingly horrified over the unexplained deaths of young men, might, for today's viewers, recall this point in collective LGBTQ+ memory. Blackmail is replaced with the virus; connotations of shame and ostracization remain intact. Similarly, a century after the Weimar Republic's beginnings, its struggles can seem frighteningly familiar in a new time of democratic crisis. But *Anders als die Andern* reminds its twenty-first-century viewers that while Weimar might feel immediate, it is in fact distant.

What relevance does *Anders als die Andern* now have? Why is it continually reconstructed and given the task of explaining its history, queer history, and Weimar history? This explanatory task serves to render it more artifact than film, more tool than experience. *Anders als die Andern* lends historical weight to ongoing liberation struggles, it shows how activists fought then with implications for how they fight now. Making this film watchable for late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century audiences puts them face to face with the early Weimar Republic. It is a case study for engaging with Weimar history, with Weimar's "modernity" and its mass culture, in particular. It forces renegotiation of popular perceptions of the republic as a feeble democracy destined to fall to fascism; at the same time, it sheds light on that too. It literally records a moment in which German democracy was new and appeared able to take on any shape, and the belief that with science and reason, a populace could be taught empathy.

But seeing *Anders als die Andern* as an artifact of Weimar, as a history of the current moment, or as a reference point for people fighting the same fight today is Peukert's anti-quarian mirror. Its reconstructions are as much windows on their respective moments (and how the early Weimar Republic was viewed at these times) as they are windows into 1919. Perhaps, in making *Anders als die Andern* legible for the twenty-first century, its strangeness might also deserve attention. The distances between its twice-told stories might be as important as the connections.

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**Competing interest.** None

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<sup>125</sup> See Frank Bajohr, "Detlev Peukerts Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte der Moderne," in *Zivilisation und Barberei. Die widersprüchlichen Potentiale der Moderne*, ed. Frank Bajohr, Werner Johe, and Uwe Lohalm (Hamburg: Christians, 1991), 7.

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