

FALL 2024

FALL 2024

BEFORE THE MUSIC STOPPED

Marjorie Rosenfeld's Sexual Awakening in Weimar Germany



Figure 1: Marjorie Rosenfeld in Berlin, c. 1928-1932.

by **Stella Gray, Yale University '24**

Written for **HIST 495/496: The Senior Essay**

Advised by **Professor Marci Shore**

Edited by **Sophie Garcia, Maya Mufson, Elijah Hurewitz-Ravitch, Oliver Giddings, Eliza Daunt, and Teddy Witt**

INTRODUCTION

MARJORIE ROSENFELD, a 24-year old American Jew, wrote to her mother from Berlin on August 9, 1929, “I would like to chat with you — not as Mother and daughter — but as woman to woman.” She explained: “People seem to be so much freer about sex here. You hear things on all sides — It makes you wonder what are morals after all — isn’t a person moral so long as he assumes the responsibility for everything he does? And isn’t it rather ridiculous not to live life as fully as possible if one doesn’t hurt ones fellows by doing it?” Marjorie had been in Berlin for less than a month, but she felt the Weimar Republic pulsing with the energy of freedom — sexual freedom in particular. The liberation of her spirit and her own sexual awakening were so exhilarating that she could think of little else.¹

Marjorie moved from Los Angeles to Berlin in 1929 to earn her PhD in psychology. She was simultaneously pursuing two educational paths in Berlin: she was working towards her PhD in child psychology at the University of Berlin, and she was also undergoing psychoanalytic training at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute. She was 5 feet 4 inches tall, lean, with chocolate brown eyes and dark brown hair. Her ancestors had emigrated from Germany, fleeing economic hardships and political revolution, to New York where her secularized Jewish family prospered as bankers. Marjorie’s mother, Ida Goldsmith Rosenfeld, born in New York on October 1, 1884, was raised as a sophisticated Victorian lady. She was forbidden from leaving the house without being fully laced up into an S-bend corset along with a full complement of Edwardian skirts, blouses, long gloves, and an imposing hat. At age 18, Ida married her 40 year-old cousin George who prohibited her from seeing friends of her own age. One year later, at age 19, Ida became a young mother to Marjorie, and two years later, she had a son, Peter. Ida’s husband died suddenly

in 1920, leaving her a widow at age 36, grappling with depression and chronic sinus infections. His death, however, prompted her to break free from the confines of her Victorian lifestyle and relocate to Los Angeles in 1921. She changed her name to Peggy, began reading about psychoanalysis, and opened a business importing French lingerie to the United States. Peggy remarried in December 1923 to a working-class, non-Jewish man named Girard “Con” Batelle whom she tried to “cultivate.” Marjorie hated her mother’s new husband, finding him unsophisticated and culturally at odds with her Jewish family. Nevertheless, one year after their marriage, Marjorie and Peter moved across the country to join their mother and Con. Upon arrival, Marjorie attended the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) from 1924 - 1928 where she earned her B.A. in Psychology.²

One year after graduation, in 1929, Marjorie left Los Angeles and moved to Berlin in pursuit of her psychology degree. She felt determined to immerse herself in the thriving psychoanalytic community. Her mother emotionally and financially supported her daughter’s trip to Berlin. While abroad, Marjorie wrote home regularly to her mother, divulging her sex life, frivolous spending, and ruminations on the inconsistencies of morality. Marjorie also kept a diary while abroad, replete with observations about her travels — from the cabarets she attended, to psychoanalysts she admired, to doodles of fat men she saw at cafes. Tucked in between the pages of her thick diary were a few rare notes that were too intimate to share with her mother. Both these candid letters and personal diary entries illuminate a time of dazzling excitement on the precipice of unthinkable darkness.

1 Marjorie Rosenfeld to Peggy Rosenfeld, August 9, 1929, private collection.

2 George Rosenfeld’s death in 1920 coincided with a significant milestone: women gaining the right to vote. Ida’s two children stayed behind in New York until they graduated from the elite private school Ethical Culture Fieldston. R. Leonard, Curriculum Vitae, 1978.

SECTION I

A Virgin in Weimar

ON APRIL 29, 1929, Marjorie boarded a Panama Pacific Line ship, advertised as a “sparkling sight-seeing opportunity,” sailing from the West to the East Coast of the United States. She scribbled a letter on the Panama Pacific Line stationery describing the eccentric passengers on the boat, thanked her mother for the care package full of sweets, and complained about the oppressive humidity and sea-sickness. She reassured her mother that she would document “everything that is happening” so that her mother would not be concerned.³

Marjorie also said goodbye to her boyfriend Ralph K. Day, a young physicist at CalTech who had supported her decision to move to Europe in pursuit of studying psychoanalysis. “America cares less for the inner feelings of people and human nature than it does for greater efficiency and machine productiveness. Europe cares for the individual...that is the development of genius and works of Art,” he wrote to Marjorie on May 5, 1929. Marjorie and Ralph were in agreement



Figure 1.1: Marjorie Rosenfeld in Germany ca. 1929-1930.

that Berlin was experiencing a cultural renaissance unlike anywhere else in the world. Psychoanalysis was flourishing alongside avant-garde art, experimentalist theatre, and groundbreaking research by intellectuals. Despite their shared understanding of Europe’s promise, Marjorie was already starting to feel distant from her boyfriend as she traveled across the open sea. She confessed to her mother, “there’s now freedom in this love...and whether anything more ever comes of it doesn’t really matter.” Writing on June 6, 1929, Marjorie expressed her relief that she and Ralph never consummated their relationship: “When it came to the show down I couldn’t with him — for many reasons — mainly because it wouldn’t have meant enough.”¹⁰ And so, she traveled to Berlin as a virgin.⁴

After a second transatlantic ship, on July 4, 1929, Marjorie stepped into what the German-American historian Peter Gay called “The Golden Twenties” of the Weimar Republic. Besides her excess luggage of silk gowns and long furs, she came to Berlin with little emotional baggage. Marjorie arrived in an elevated financial situation relative to most Germans still reeling from World War I reparations and a faltering economy. The possibility of reinventing herself as a foreigner was invigorating. At the time of Marjorie’s arrival, there were roughly four million people packed into Berlin, the largest city in Germany by far. The megalopolis was full of contradictions. The abject poverty and tenement blocks resembled the dirtiest slums in Europe. The American historian Eric Weitz described walking Berlin as a walk through ugly modernity: “the sight, smell, and taste of traffic congestion, industrial smog, polluted rivers and canals; the press of crowds jostling one another on the streets, train platforms, and subway cars.” Yet the streets glittered at night with bars, cabarets, and the promise of sexual promiscuity. Men experimented with cross-dressing and women experimented with smoking cigarettes, showing their mid-calves, and wearing cloche hats.⁵

Berliners felt a sense of rootlessness that

3 Panama Pacific Line. *Pamphlet for Proposed sailings, rates of passage, Panama-Pacific line: New York and San Francisco through the Panama Canal* (California: Panama Pacific Line, 1915); Marjorie to Peggy, April 29, 1929.

4 Ralph K. Day to Marjorie, May 5, 1929; Marjorie to Peggy, April 29, 1929; Marjorie to Peggy, June 6, 1929.

5 Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), xiv; Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 41, 42; Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 563.

generated both fear and desire within themselves. In part, this could be attributed to the fact the Weimar Republic was born from Germany's defeat in World War I in November 1918, and the shocking abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II. The collapse of monarchy made way for the Weimar Republic, declared on November 9, 1918, which offered the possibility of a democratic future. Dorothy Rowe characterizes Weimar Berlin as an "intoxicating paradise" for Germans who had suffered through the war years and for foreigners who arrived unknowingly. It offered the promise of rejecting militaristic expansion in favor of intellectual cosmopolitanism. Rom Landauer, a writer for *The Weimar Chronicle*, tried in 1936 to define why Berlin had become so exhilarating: "It had no traditions to speak of; its yesterday had been irrevocably destroyed; the standard of living had sunk unspeakably low. To replace the pleasures of a lost past, Berlin was providing a riot of new sensations."⁶

Marjorie stepped into a city sexualized as feminine:

Some saw her as hefty, full breasted, in lace underwear, others as a mere wisp of a thing, with boyish legs in black silk stockings... All wanted to have her, she enticed all ... to conquer Berlin was to conquer the world. The only thing was — and this was the everlasting spur — that you had to take all the hurdles again and again, had to break through the goal again and again in order to maintain your position.

This is the playwright Carl Zuckmayer's description of Weimar Berlin. The city was feminized in a manner similar to that of Eve in the biblical story of the fall from grace; she was a temptress, luring natives and foreigners with her danger and mystery.⁷

This image of Berlin as an overtly sexualized

woman did not emerge from nowhere. In 1918, Magnus Hirschfeld founded the Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin, making the city the epicenter of the sex-reform movement. Members of two left-wing political groups, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), supported sexual freedom as the "salvation for the human race." Jews and Marxists became equated with sexual immorality in the eyes of conservatives, given their outsized support for these leftist political groups. The conservative National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party) believed that the sex-reform movement signified the destruction of the patriarchal family. The newspaper of the Nazi Party, *Der Völkischer Beobachter*, described Berlin in 1928 as "a melting pot of everything that is evil — prostitution, drinking houses, cinemas, Marxism, Jews, strippers, Negroes, dancing and all the vile offshoots of modern-art." Regardless of one's feelings on the matter, Weimar Berlin became synonymous with sexual liberation.⁸

Marjorie loved Berlin. Nearly two months after arriving, she wrote: "I'm not homesick. I'm too busy and too happy... Gosh mummy! I must knock on wood - but I've never felt more whole and healthy and alive in all my life." In a letter on August 9, 1929, she expressed how she had already fallen out of love with her long-distance boyfriend: "how much I love(d) Ralph...I no longer desire him." As Marjorie understood it, her lost love made room for new experiences: "Well, since that outlet for my feelings is no more — I've been having one flirtation after another — having a gay time taking no one seriously." Although she claimed to not seriously consider any of her flirtations, she dedicated the rest of her letter home to the description of one man: Hugo Landgraf. According to Marjorie, he was "a queer duck" she had met at Am Deutschen Institut Für

6 Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 134, 139; Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 563; Rom Landauer, *Seven*, 1936, in A. de Jonge, *The Weimar Chronicle*, 1978, 134, as cited in Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany*, 139.

7 C. Zuckmayer, *Als Wäre ein Stück von mir*, 1966, reprinted as *A Part of Myself*, trans. R. and C. Winston in 1970, 311-314, as cited in Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany*, 139.

8 Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 4; Cornelia Osborne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany* (London: Macmillan Press, 1992), 70; Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018) 100-109.

Ausländer An der Universität Berlin, where she had enrolled in a program for foreign students. Landgraf was a 33-year-old World War I veteran who had sustained a serious leg injury while serving in the German bicycle brigade. After returning home to Berlin, he became an active member of the Freikorps, a right-wing volunteer militia group that battled Communists and the Weimar government. Hugo had participated in the Kapp Putsch of March 1920, a radical attempted coup against the Weimar Republic. Like Hugo, most members of the Freikorps were former military personnel and unemployed youth. A failed academic, Hugo became a guide at the Institut, taking the foreign students around Berlin and teaching lectures on Art and architecture. “He’s not at all good looking” according to Marjorie, “but he’s tall and slim — a rather tense type — quite an attractive personality.”⁹

Marjorie’s relationship with Hugo escalated quickly. She recounts how coffee at a Knoll (hill) in the Tiergarten turned into drinks and then dinner dates. When they first met, Hugo told Marjorie that his wife, Gisela, was “taking a vacation from marriage” on a trip to India. Over a series of dates, she learned that Hugo had married his wife four years prior and “considers himself happily married” with a three-year-old child named Ute. Yet his definition of marriage confounded Marjorie. It was based on the notion that couples must be physically suited to each other in order to maintain harmony. He advocated for polyamory: “if they are well suited, then they can allow each other perfect freedom without jealousy because they can feel sure that the other will come back.” He had a lover, whom he called



Figure 1.2: Marjorie Rosenfeld in Germany ca. 1929-1930.

his “close friend,” Mrs. Elizabeth Seyfert. Marjorie told her mother how Elizabeth “has a fine house which various men pay for (she’s divorced). She goes to one man every two weeks or so for awhile and he L.[andgraf] lives with her at other times.”¹⁰

Marjorie quickly understood sexual norms to be different in Berlin. Sex was expected of her: “I know what he wanted of me. European men don’t trouble to hint it.” She wrote, “men are such a scarcity here they

9 Marjorie to Peggy, September 30, 1929; Marjorie to Peggy, August 9, 1929; Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 70, 129; Wolfgang Kapp, a German WWI veteran, led Freikorps divisions into the capital in an attempt to overthrow the Weimar Republic. The coup ultimately failed after five days. Peter Fritzsche argues: “Despite the failure of the Kapp Putsch, the opponents of the Weimar Republic appeared formidable in the late spring of 1920, when national elections revealed a strong rightward drift...the aftermath of the Kapp Putsch had been enough to square working-class socialists and bourgeois nationalists off into mutually opposed and increasingly radical camps.” Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 129; Andreas Weigelt, *Umschulungslager Existieren Nicht: Zur Geschichte des sowjetischen Speziallagers Nr. 6 in Jamlitz 1945-1947* (Berlin: Brandenburgische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung im Ministerium für Bildung Jugend und Sport, 2001), 77; “Hagen Schulze accurately describes the Freikorps volunteers as nihilists.” Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 125.

10 Marjorie to Peggy, August 9, 1929; Although Marjorie writes about the child and has pictures with her, she never explicitly explains who takes care of the child. Marjorie’s harsh description of Elizabeth on August 9, 1929 suggests jealousy: “typical heavy set poorly dressed German type of woman.” She later amended her description: “Incidentally, I made that summary of her before knowing more of her.”

seem to be able to get almost anything they want.” Marjorie’s observation squares with the post-WWI imbalanced gender landscape, in which women outnumbered men by roughly 100 to 88. Embedded within that same sentence about scarcity is her understanding of a culture that expected women to be sexually licentious. Hugo’s approach to sex felt quite inconsistent with “[her] upbringing,” but Marjorie quickly embraced the *Neue Sexualmore* in Berlin and its dissolution of taboos. She criticized the American social order for its “queer streaking cloud of rationalization” and yearned for a boundary-free society: “If people could really be as free as L[andgraf] describes... if people really could be that free — wouldn’t it be ideal?... one could satisfy one side of oneself with one person — and another with another how much fuller life would be!” Monogamy felt like entrapment. This was a topic she would continue to explore, writing of freedom more than ten times in her letters home during August 1929.¹¹

“Besides, free love is no longer an exception in Germany,” Marjorie declared to her mother. Although the older German generation still championed the morals of a nuclear family, free love remained the “general attitude” among young people. She understood that it was all “a bit out of the ordinary for Americans.” An avid thinker and budding psychoanalyst, Marjorie searched for historical proof of the morality of polyamory.

If free love really isn't fundamentally wrong then why is it, and has it been for such centuries, considered so? — and then the answer was that the world has been man-made, and man controlled, that women have been regarded as man's property and that man was jealous of sharing his property with anyone else. So of course it was illegal and wicked for a woman to give herself to but one man — just as it was illegal in the south for a slave to run away from his master...How much better that it should be a free gift on both sides!

Marjorie accused the patriarchal systems of anchoring

morality to monogamy to bolster men’s power. It is unclear whether Marjorie believed her new hypothesis or just wanted to justify her blossoming sexual relationship with a 33-year-old man who already had a wife, another lover, and a child. Either way, in August 1929, she felt overwhelmed with joy, writing to her mother: “Darling, the sun — my sun, is shining again, — and I’m way up in the clouds.”¹²

In September 1929 Marjorie excitedly told her mother about the loss of her virginity. She and Hugo had taken a romantic trip to the beaches of Sylt, a German island, where they “pretended to be Mr. and Mrs. L for two weeks.” Marjorie wrote: “Why is happiness so intangible, so much more indescribable than all its opposites?” She expressed immense satisfaction for “having done it.” Marjorie felt changed: “I feel newly made, and reborn. I feel a unity within myself between my mental and physical self that I never thought could be possible, and because of that, certainty and security.” She again questioned moral conventions, asking



Figure 1.3: Marjorie Rosenfeld in Germany ca. 1929-1930.

11 Marjorie to Peggy, August 9, 1929; Jörn Boehnke and Victor Gay, “The Missing Men: World War I and Female Labor Force Participation,” *Journal of Human Resources* 57, no. 4 (2022): 1209-1241; When she refused to let him do more than kiss her hand, Hugo became “somewhat like a sulky child.” Marjorie to Peggy, August 9, 1929. Rudolf Arnhem, *Die Weltbühne*, 1929, (II, 32), 206, as cited in Willem Melching, “A New Morality’: Left-Wing Intellectuals on Sexuality in Weimar Germany,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, no. 1 (1990): 81; Marjorie to Peggy, August 11, 1929.

12 Marjorie to Peggy, August 11, 1929.

her mother “Why is ‘illegitimate’ love painted so black when it can be so gloriously lovely?” On September 21, 1929 she declared her own personal renaissance: “I feel that a new Me [sic] has been born, a me with whom I’m not very well acquainted as yet — but who is much wiser and much more self confident.” Marjorie perceived the loss of her virginity as the dawn of an existential transformation.¹³

Marjorie was not alone in experiencing sexual liberation in Berlin at this time. The Reichstag had passed a law in 1927 that decriminalized female prostitution, making it legal for women to sell their bodies without police interference. That same year, the government also passed the Law to Fight Venereal Disease, which made doctors legally obligated to treat all women with sexually transmitted diseases, even if they were engaged in prostitution. Furthermore, WWI had opened up the labor market for women and forced the separation of sexuality and procreation. The *Die Weltbühne*, a weekly magazine on art, politics, and economics, argued for the dissolution of traditional marriage. Franz Blei, an Austrian essayist and playwright, published a novel arguing that the government should abstain from regulating relationships through marriage certificates and concern itself only with the registration of newborn children. According to the readers and writers of the *Die Weltbühne*, every citizen deserved the inalienable right to optimal sexual freedom: “Sexual freedom, therefore, was a substantial contribution to the improvement of society.”¹⁴

Marjorie dove headfirst into the liberated sexual culture of Berlin. She started a polyamorous relationship with Hugo and Elizabeth Seyfert, writing on October 29, 1929, that she and Elizabeth “have become very good friends.” Elizabeth, a mother of two from her previous marriage, navigated

her newfound status as a divorced woman by exploring sexual relationships with multiple men, including Hugo Landgraf. Marjorie shared her married boyfriend with his lover: “sometimes all three of us go places together as to the Ball for example.” She felt confident that her relationship with Hugo was special. She boasted to her mother, “in Landgraf’s own words to me, ‘Ich bin eimmes [immer] für dich da,’” which translates to “I’m always here for you.” Since their initial meeting, Hugo had remained her tour guide, promising to always protect her. As an older man, native to Berlin and the German language, he adopted the role of guardian.¹⁵

Marjorie’s mother was skeptical of her daughter’s care-free exuberance. Writing to her on October 29, 1929, Peggy warned Marjorie:

This man’s wife and another woman — are you sure he is not playing with you. . . to live with a man sexually builds spiritual ties — a unit as you put it — to which we become unutterably attached, do what you will — it is the nature of such a situation. I can only see you becoming closer & closer to this situation. He getting everything & you giving, & to what end — you will contradict this last.

Peggy feared that Marjorie risked losing her independence in this new relationship. She saw Marjorie’s freedom differently; Hugo — it seemed to her mother — had all the power.¹⁶

Marjorie cast aside Peggy’s concerns, deeming her thinking to be provincial: “I realize that the majority of Americans are much more narrow-minded than Europeans in general.” In her own paradise, she had tasted the forbidden fruit and found it delicious.

13 Marjorie to Peggy, August 11, 1929; Marjorie to Peggy, September 21, 1929.

14 The Law to Fight Venereal Disease is called Reichsgesetz zur Bekämpfung der Geschlechtskrank in German. It should also be noted that Laurie Marhoefer argues that sexual liberation existed for some only because it excluded another category of people who were deemed sexually disordered. Laurie Marhoefer, “Degeneration, Sexual Freedom, and the Politics of the Weimar Republic, 1918-1933,” *German Studies Review* 34, no. 3 (2011): 532; Hubert C. Kennedy, “Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (1919-1933),” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 1 (2002): 122; Willem Melching, “‘A New Morality’: Left-wing Intellectuals on Sexuality in Weimar Germany,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, no. 1 (1990): 75, 81; Stöcker, *Weltbühne*, 1928, 1933 (I, I), 25, as cited in Melching, “‘A New Morality’: Left-Wing Intellectuals on Sexuality in Weimar Germany,” 82.

15 Marjorie to Peggy, October 29, 1929; Marjorie to Peggy, November 11, 1929.

16 Share prices on the New York Stock Exchange had collapsed in September 1929 and “the Great Crash” generated panic throughout the country. October 24, 1929 became known as “Black Thursday” after the market lost 11% of its value overnight. A few days later, on October 29, “Black Tuesday” signified a \$14 billion loss of stock value and a shocking 30.57 point drop in the Dow. During this day of unprecedented economic turmoil, her mother felt the need to ground Marjorie. Charles R. Morris, *A Rabble of Dead Money: The Great Crash and the Global Depression: 1929-1939* (New York: Public Affairs, 2017), 174-175; Peggy to Marjorie, November 5, 1929.

*I am sorry that you associate Hell with this relationship of mine. To me the Garden of Eden is somewhat better. There all sides of life ever represented, good, bad, ugly, and beautiful and by choosing carefully one could make life what one wished. On second thought, however — That's not such a good metaphor. After all, Adam and Eve were given only the choice of ignorance and bliss, or knowledge. I am more than glad that I have eaten the Apple.*¹⁷

SECTION II

The Price of Free Love

FREE LOVE COULD flourish in Berlin because of access to contraception. Liberated from the fear of pregnancy, women could partake in sexual exploration. Marjorie yearned for this freedom, and so, in the beginning of December 1929, she searched for a reliable contraceptive in Berlin. She wrote to her mother: “Dr. Rado suggested that I should go to one in order **contrimower** [sic] — a contraception that is really safe. Its [sic] a little metal cap that fits [on the mouth] of the womb. I had [quite a trial] learning how to put it on and off! Well, that’s that!” Dr. Sandor Rado, Marjorie’s training analyst, suggested the cervical cap, a form of birth control invented by a German gynecologist, Friedrich Adolphe Wilde in 1838. The cap posed safety risks due to its challenging insertion process, resulting in a high risk of human error, and its failure to provide protection against

sexually transmitted diseases. Although the cervical cap was widely used in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, it was not approved by the FDA in the United States until an updated version in 1988. Based on the American FDA reports, the effectiveness of the cervical cap ranged from 82-92% if inserted properly.¹⁸

At the beginning of the Weimar Republic, advocates for birth control revived the 18th century Malthusian belief that controlling the birth-rate could improve national well-being. Thomas Malthus, an English economist, had advocated birth control as a solution to overpopulation, specifically targeting impoverished people or people belonging to the “race of barbarians” from having offspring. In 1798, Malthus wrote *An Essay on the Principles of Population* in which he argued that the rising population rate resulted in worse living conditions, including lower wages and fewer resources. After World War I, Malthus’ essay became increasingly relevant in Germany, as people far outnumbered their resources. Marjorie, for instance, was stunned by the “scarcity of homes” in Berlin which resulted in most people “shar[ing] an apartment, kitchen, and one bath, with another family.” The intense poverty triggered a moral panic surrounding the potential outbreak of venereal diseases and large influx of impoverished children. Birth control advocates argued that: “it was more sensible to manage and steer the birth rate decline than to mourn it.” In keeping with this Malthusian logic, the Weimar government embraced liberal reproductive laws — far more lenient than those that existed under the Kaiser’s reign.¹⁹

Birth control became relatively accessible to all women in Berlin from 1927-1933. During a 1927 trip

17 Marjorie to Peggy, November 11, 1929; Marjorie to Con, November 31, 1929.

18 Marjorie to Peggy, December 7, 1929; A doctor fitted the cervical cap to a woman’s cervix where it would remain for a month at a time. At the time of menstruation a woman would go back to the doctor to have her cap extracted and later put in place. Finding the proper sized cap was a crucial element to this form of contraception, given that a loose cap could fall out and a tight cap could irritate the cervix. James Woycke, *Birth Control in Germany, 1871-1933* (London: Routledge, 1988), 41; Moreover, around 30% of women could never use this method of contraception due to “anatomical differences.” Ann Japenga, “Birth Control Method in a Cap,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 8, 1980; Allan Parachini, “Cervical Cap Gets Final Federal OK,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1988; Kathleen Doheny, “Updating Birth Control: Choosing the Method That Best Suits Your Health and Lifestyle,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 14, 1989.

19 Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (London: J. Johnson, 1798), 116; Marjorie to Family, March 22, 1930; Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 14-15; In 1918 they lifted the censorship law for advertising contraception. Osborne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany*, 4, 78, 202.



Figure 4: Hugo with his wife Gisela and their daughter Ute, photographed by Marjorie on June 8, 1930.

to Germany, the American feminist and sex activist Margaret Sanger observed how all of the large towns in Germany had contraceptive advisory centers with traveling services for more rural parts of the country. She marveled at the breadth of postgraduate courses on birth control for training doctors in Berlin. The historian James Woycke categorically declared that “by 1930 virtually everyone had access to modern methods of birth control” in Germany.²⁰

The growing access to contraception triggered intense opposition from right-wing groups in Germany, including the Nazi party. In 1929, Joseph Goebbels, chief propagandist for the Nazi party, explained that

women are meant to serve as engines of reproduction: “The mission of woman is to be beautiful and to bring children into the world.” Nazis feared the declining birth rate of the Weimar Republic, illustrated in Goebbels’ speech on “German Women” in 1933 when he declared: “The liberal attitude toward the family and the child is responsible for Germany’s rapid decline.” He blamed the sexually permissive culture for the country’s demographic challenges; between 1895 and 1935, German fertility fell by half. Access to contraception symbolized the modernity of Berlin that the Nazi party so fervently hated.²¹

By 1930, Weimar Germany also boasted one

20 Henry P. David, Jochen Fleischhacker, and Charlotte Hohn, “Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany,” *Population and Development Review* 14, no. 1 (1988): 87; Woycke, *Birth Control in Germany*, 5.

21 Joseph Goebbels, *Michael: Ein deutsches Schicksal in Tagebuchblättern* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Frz. Eher Nachf., 1929), as cited in George L. Mosse, *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life in the Third Reich* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 41; Joseph Goebbels, “German Women,” speech delivered at the opening of a women’s exhibition in Berlin, March 18, 1933; Osborne cites a chart of the “[a]verage number of children born per marriage, date of marriage and profession” that depicts the decrease in births in every profession mentioned, as well as an overall decrease for the population. Reinhard Spree, “Der Geburtenrückgang in Deutschland vor 1939,” *Demographische Informationen* (1984): 62, as cited in Osborne, *The Politics of The Body in Weimar Germany*, 33.



Figure 5.1: Marjorie in Berlin ca. 1931.

of the most liberal abortion policies in the world. Similar to the policy changes surrounding birth control, Germany altered their abortion laws at the start of the Republic. Abortion had been illegal for both patients and doctors since 1870 under §218 of the German criminal code. A pregnant woman seeking to “kill a child in utero” or a doctor who helped her procure the procedure faced a prison sentence of up to five years. In 1926, however, §218 was amended, declaring a simple abortion — a woman’s action to terminate her unwanted pregnancy — a misdemeanor instead of a crime against life. One year later, in 1927, the Supreme Court legalized “therapeutic abortion,” an abortion carried out in

order to protect the health of the mother. Doctors estimated that up to one million abortions were performed annually in Germany during the Depression.²²

Despite the prevalence of the procedure, abortions were still extremely dangerous. Many women chronicled their long-term health effects of abortion: “Among a sample of one hundred women treated for abortion during 1927-1932, two-thirds subsequently complained of disruptions in menstruation, anomalies of uterine position, or pathological disorders of the ovaries.” In total, roughly 30 percent of all women who underwent abortions in Germany from 1927-1932 became sterile. Even more frightening than the possibility of sterilization was the possibility of death. §220 of the German Criminal Code accounted for the fact that a doctor might intentionally or unintentionally kill a patient while performing an abortion, implying that this was not a rare occurrence. The level of risk for a given patient correlated closely with her financial status, as poorer women were frequently exploited by lay-practitioners. The lack of government regulation increased the risk: “Anyone could become an abortionist. Even people with no medical experience could buy a gynecology textbook and syringe and set up shop.”²³

Abortion occupied lots of space in the conceptualization of Berlin both for liberal artists who wanted to expose the exploitation of women, as well as for conservative activists who aimed to show the moral degradation of Weimar society. Abortion became a leading subject for plays and books in Weimar. Friedrich Wolf, a Jewish member of the German Communist Party (KPD) and doctor who performed abortions, wrote a play called *Cyankali* that exposed the dangerous risks women face when abortion is illegal. The play premiered in Berlin in 1929 and became a huge hit throughout Germany. In addition to Wolf, another notable medical practitioner, Carl Credé, wrote a play titled *Paragraph 218* that centered around the suffering of an impoverished, working-class woman seeking an abortion. *Cyankali* and *Paragraph 218* advocated for female agency

22 There were exception of terminations of rape induced pregnancy during the first 12 weeks. Cornelia Usborne, *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 3, 5; Henry P. David, Jochen Fleischhacker, and Charlotte Hohn, “Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany,” *Population and Development Review* 14, no. 1 (1988): 85; This reduction of severity applied to the doctor or lay-abortionists who provided the service as well. Woycke, *Birth Control in Germany*, 68.

23 Woycke, *Birth Control in Germany*, 68, 76, 92; Henry P. David, Jochen Fleischhacker, and Charlotte Hohn, “Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany,” *Population and Development Review* 14, no. 1 (1988): 83.

and portrayed women seeking abortions as heroines.²⁴

Marjorie faced a devastating decision in 1930 that so many other women in Berlin had confronted. Despite being able to afford the most expensive birth control on the market, she became pregnant with Hugo Landgraf's child. The poem suggests that Hugo, a married man, did not want her to keep the baby. She never shared her decision to get an abortion with her mother.

Instead, in January of 1930, she wrote a secret prose-poem on the yellowed pages of her journal:

*Beloved One:
My heart seems about to burst.
It is so full of inexpressibilities! The inexpressible.
I have loved you so!
Were it only possible
How much I would like to nourish and cherish
The life
Our happiness has given
Being
But we must bow to that
Grizzly witch, Convention And
the living symbol of our joy
Must die.
Yet life is not the only thing
that love creates
Within me grows a something
which not even experience
the cleverest of all surgeons can sever from
me A Something
A part of your ideal
A part of your wisdom
A part of our gay and
Serious moments together
A something
intangible
utterly indescribable
The essence which is you.²⁵*

Here Marjorie expresses her unconditional love for her unborn child. She blames “that grizzly witch” of convention for keeping her from raising the child with her lover Hugo. Although she wrote little more on her abortion, her poem makes clear the tragedy of this moment. Abortion was still taboo in Germany, even after being decriminalized. Very few women directly referred to their procedure, but instead used euphemisms similar to Marjorie's. Many patients reported the “restoration of their delayed menses” instead of the termination of pregnancy, with phrases like “blocked menses” or “obstruction of menstruation.” Marjorie likely had an easier time getting her abortion in 1930 in Berlin than she would have had back home. The Comstock Act of 1873, in the United States, criminalized the distribution of information about contraceptives and abortion through the U.S. postal system.²⁶

In her letters to her mother, Marjorie stayed silent on her abortion while framing her life as too good to be true. Hugo's wife, Gisela, returned home from India at the end of January 1930. She resembled a mischievous boy with her short hair and tailored clothing, according to Marjorie. “Yet there is a softness about her profile,” she wrote. To her pleasant surprise, Marjorie seamlessly blended into the relationship with the married couple. She wrote gleefully:

As for other things, it's all like a myth or fairytale: “And the queen came back, and finding a princess in her bed, took her in her arms saying, ‘my dear, we shall be like sisters,’ and so they all lived together and were happy ever after!” Well darling, it's not quite like that, but so nearly, but if you ever read anything like it in a novel you would be sure to say, “what a vivid imagination that writer has. He must have thought he was writing a fairytale.”

Marjorie took long walks with Gisela through Grunwald

24 Robert Heynen, *Degeneration and Revolution: Radical Cultural Politics and the Body in Weimar Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 551, 569; Osborne, *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany*, 3, 49; Friedrich Wolf and his wife were arrested in Berlin in 1931 for performing abortions. After Hitler came to power he fled to Moscow, until he was arrested in France and sent to a concentration camp. Having survived, he served as the first ambassador of East Germany to Poland.

25 Marjorie Rosenfeld diary, January 1930, private collection.

26 Osborne, *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany*, 146; Glenn Cohen, Eli Y. Adashi, and Mary Ziegler, “The New Threat to Abortion Access in the United States—The Comstock Act,” *JAMA* 330, no. 5 (2023): 405-406.

forest. As a budding psychoanalyst, Marjorie was fascinated by Gisela's utter lack of jealousy. Marjorie and Elizabeth, Hugo's two lovers, blended themselves into the fabric of the Landgraf home. The Landgrafs' daughter and Elizabeth's children all named Marjorie "Tanta [sic] Marji" which translated to Aunt Marjie. She wrote excitedly to her mother about Gisela: "she has become more than cordial, even quite intimate with me." Her ambiguous words leave room for interpretation about the potentially sexual aspect of their relationship. She never explicitly described how they all shared Hugo.²⁷

In the winter of 1930, Marjorie decided "the world seems a much nicer place to live than most people are willing to credit it with." She reflected on her magical year in Berlin in a letter to her family: "And gosh! What an eventful, full, and instructive year! Gee, I feel like the luckiest person in the whole world to have been able to have this opportunity!" Part of her joy stemmed from her recent move into an apartment that she shared part-time with Hugo. On February 15th, 1930, she wrote to her friend Herb: "The most marvelous part about it all is how absolutely selbstverständlich they take our situation," German for "matter of fact." A married man living with his lover generated no shock from the landladies or neighbors in Berlin, making Marjorie deeply critical of America's intolerant culture: "...Lord—America will certainly seem tame." Her ménage à trois was working out quite well; "in fact the whole situation is solving itself so much more easily and simply than I ever thought possible."²⁸

It is during this time that Marjorie endeavored to live in the present and stop worrying about the future: "I'm becoming more and [more] convinced that in general it is stupid to try to anticipate a situation. One must live in the present and learn to trust in our instincts." As the ice started thawing and the days grew longer, Marjorie's buoyancy grew: "Spring is in the air. One can smell it and feel it. And I feel so gorgeously red-blooded and healthy that I want to run and dance and shout."²⁹

27 Marjorie to Peggy, January 23, 1930.

28 Marjorie to Peggy, January 23, 1930; She hypothesized that her landlady was a war widow, an astute guess given the number of deceased veterans. Marjorie to Peggy, February 15, 1930; Marjorie to Peggy, March 1, 1930.

29 Marjorie to Peggy, March 1, 1930; Marjorie to Peggy, March 9, 1930.

SECTION III

Mobs & Excitement

MARJORIE'S JOY AND newfound desire to worry less did not stop her from noticing the violent encounters bubbling over in the streets of Berlin. In March 1930, Marjorie had befriended a couple, Dick and Jane, whom she described as "active communists." While she was eating dinner at their house, Dick spent most of the meal warning her about the worldwide demonstration that was set to take place on Thursday, March 6th, 1930. Marjorie dismissed some of his fear as mania, telling her mom: "Like all the rest of them he's quite fanatical and exaggerates terribly. He said that it would be unsafe to be on the streets on Thursday, that there would be barricades and shooting and whatnot." Not taking his warnings seriously, she went about her business as usual on Thursday, but "[kept] my eyes peeled for mobs and excitement." Disappointed by the lack of "excitement" she witnessed, she told her mom "Aber ledier [unfortunately], nothing to be seen but cops." Marjorie had just witnessed "Red Thursday," otherwise known as "International Unemployment Day," a worldwide protest organized by the Communist Party. Hundreds of thousands of protestors gathered in large cities around the world at the behest of the Communist Press: "Communist party calls jobless and employed workers to mass action for unemployed demands: Strengthen your fight against capitalism! Prepare the powerful arm of the political mass strike!" *The New York Times* headline from the next day read: REDS BATTLE POLICE IN UNION SQUARE: SCORES INJURED, LEADERS ARE SEIZED; TWO DEAD, MANY HURT IN CLASHES ABROAD." The subheading read: "German police kill two at Halle—20 are hurt, 115 held in Berlin." Regardless of headlines, Marjorie felt confident that certain neighborhoods within Berlin were unconditionally safe, "But of course, I stayed within the bounds of

the respectable parts of town. There actually were several scraps in the northern and eastern parts of the city where the workers live.” Marjorie felt invincible, even within the charged atmosphere of Germany.³⁰

Although Marjorie personally felt immune to the economic and political unrest in Berlin, she did see the general dissatisfaction of German citizens. As unemployment rose in Germany, morale sank. She told her mom on March 10, 1930:

With unemployment increasing all over the world, unless the existing governments do something radical to remedy the matter, which is not very likely, their present attitude being to cover things up, to put all the blame of strikes and other uprisings on the workers, well I don't believe it will be so very long before the lid will blow off the pot. And when the lid does blow off, I wouldn't be very much surprised if things started here in Germany. Conditions are still most unstable. The financial condition is almost hopeless, as witness, the fact that Germany is in debt to the world, but is unable to reestablish her exports, which before the war were her main means of support. No one is able to save money, wages are low, expenses high, and even the poorest has to pay 10% income tax! Small wonder that the finance ministers resign their job in despair.³¹

Whatever danger Marjorie felt about the “lid blowing off” in Germany was trumped by her feelings of personal freedom. But perhaps danger and freedom were of the same blood. As the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka argued, the orgiastic and demonic are closely intertwined. What is liberating and freeing is often only a hair’s breadth away from what is terrifying and destructive. Marjorie reveled in the thrill of it all. Compared to the poverty around

her, she seemed on top of the world. Most married young couples could not afford to have their own homes, yet she had an individual apartment to share with her lover. Marjorie felt like she had won the lottery.

And I feel myself so marvelously lucky to have this gorgeous opportunity to be seeing things. Was ever any girl as lucky as I? I am so awfully, awfully happy. This last year has been so brim full of marvelous opportunities and experiences, if only the next brings half as much, I shall feel like a millionairess.³²

SECTION IV

Unexpressed Emotions Will Never Die

ALTHOUGH MARJORIE NEVER wrote home about it, on Sunday, September 14, 1930, 82% of the German people turned out to vote in the Reichstag election. The Nazi Party surged to power, winning 6 ½ million votes and increasing their deputies in the Reichstag from 12 to 107. The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) just barely won the election with 143 seats, which marked a 10 seat loss from their previous election.¹³⁰ For progressive liberals, the election signaled an ominous shift away from the freedoms associated with the Weimar Republic. Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Nazi Party,

30 Marjorie refrains from sharing Dick and Jane’s last names, hinting that “Dick and Jane” might be placeholder names. If so, she was protecting their identity as Communists. Marjorie to Peggy, March 9, 1930; “Strike! Demonstrate Today!” *The Daily Worker*, March 6, 1930; The New York Times article mentions the protests in Berlin, New York, Vienna, Prague, Hamburg, Munich, Warsaw, Paris, London, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Athens, and more. Riots had erupted all around the world, including a violent mob in Union Square in New York. The article reads, “The unemployment demonstration staged by the Communist party in Union Square yesterday broke up in the worst riot New York has seen in recent years when 35,000 persons attending the demonstration were transformed in a few moments from an orderly, and at times bored, crowd into a fighting mob.” “REDS BATTLE POLICE IN UNION SQUARE: SCORES INJURED, LEADERS ARE SEIZED; TWO DEAD, MANY HURT IN CLASHES ABROAD,” *The New York Times*, March 7, 1930.

31 Marjorie to Peggy, March 10, 1930 (emphasis in original).

32 Rodolphe Gasché, “European Memories: Jan Patočka and Jacques Derrida on Responsibility,” *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 293; Marjorie to Peggy, March 24, 1930.

espoused a vision of territorial expansion, racial intolerance, and violence. The Nazis garnered mass popularity by positioning themselves as a party antithetical to the Republican regime and communism. The party's rhetoric of hatred and anti-semitism resonated with a suffering population. Paradoxically, an intensifying sense of doom added to the exhilaration of Weimar.³³

One month after the Nazis gained power in the Reichstag, Hugo Landgraf wrote a love letter to Marjorie recounting his experience attending a Nazi rally with his other lover, Elizabeth. Hugo writes to Marjorie while she is visiting Paris: "you are my life, my thoughts, my heart, the present, the future, joy, I kiss you my darling a thousand times. Love me, don't forget me." A National Socialist riot targeting Jews had erupted at the Reichstag's opening on October 13, 1930. Hugo distanced himself from the involvement in the rally, attributing his attendance to Elizabeth's curiosity: "Elizabeth really wanted to experience something and pulled me into it. But everything was over already and so she did not make the acquaintance of the *Schupo* night stick/baton." He satirically expresses regrets that Elizabeth did not get attacked. His dark humor permeates his description of the Reichstag riots: "the National Socialists have begun to repair the German economic crisis by shattering the shop-windows in Wertheim and at the Café Dobrin... This morning all glaziers in Berlin have work. Brilliant solution to unemployment!" Hugo made light of the violence with his depression-era cynicism and a flippant mocking of antisemitism. After sharing the news of the Nazi rally, Hugo told Marjorie he would shelter her from the violence in Germany: "But you need not to be afraid, stay in Paris, no, no! I shall protect you as your knight!" He ended his note with another overwrought declaration of his love: "I love you my sweet darling. My heart is longing for you and your love" signing off with his recurring nickname Marco.³⁴

Journalists at the same Nazi rally experienced the event quite differently than Hugo. *The New York Times* headline read: "HITLERITES IN RIOTS, STONE



Figure 1.4: Marjorie Rosenfeld in Germany ca. 1929-1930.

JEWISH SHOPS AS REICHSTAG OPENS." The subhead of the article read: "Youthful Fascists Run Wild in Downtown Berlin, Smashing Department Store Windows." The opening paragraph warned of Nazis' insurgent power:

BERLIN, Oct. 13 — Window-smashing, stone-throwing and isolated pistol shots helped to impress on the minds of Berliners that a new Reichstag containing 107 Fascists, where twelve had been before, had come into being today. Numerous large Jewish-owned stores and cafés were broken into the cry of "Down with the Jews!" from scores of ardent young members of the National Socialist storm troops.

The fascist mobs, wearing brown shirts decorated with swastikas on their armbands, threw stones at Jewish shops around the Potsdamer Platz, Tiergarten, Peace

33 Seats were needed for a majority of the 577 seats in the Reichstag. Thomas Childers, *The Nazi Voter: The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany, 1919-1933* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 72; Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider*, xiv.

34 Hugo Landgraf to Marjorie, October 14, 1930. Translated from German into English by Roswitha Schweichel;

Alée, and Victory Alée from 4pm until the early hours of the morning. The *Times* recounted, “The crowds got bigger and rougher as the day wore on,” causing the police to fire alarm shots into the air. There were shouts of “Germany, awake” and antisemitic slurs as mobs took the streets. The *Times* reporter likened the participants to sports fans “at a football game, roaring ‘Hail’ in unison at every conceivable opportunity.” In spite of the journalist’s casual comparisons, he expresses a fear that the riots were the tip of an iceberg: “It was as typical of the nervousness which has seized the city as was the oft-heard remark, ‘This is just the beginning.’” Marjorie, however, sent a telegraph to her family: “Dearests: Yes here I am again, all safe and sound.”³⁵

Marjorie never wrote about Hugo’s attendance at the rally, but from the start of their relationship, she had written about their religious differences. In November 1929, she wrote to her mother: “Only two of my [close friends] know of it [her affair] — one a girl from New York with whom I’ve gotten on rather well at times — she’s not a Jewess and therefore, even if she couldn’t keep a secret — which she said she can — won’t come in [contact] with our N.Y life.” Her comment reveals how Marjorie predominantly socialized with Jews back home, and so it seems that her relationship with a non-Jew was a novelty for her. In January 1930, religion would be one of her concerns about her intensifying relationship with Hugo: “Differences in nationality, race, religion, temperament, in age and experience.”³⁶

It is clear that Marjorie never hid her Jewishness from Hugo, who wrote about her being an exotic and barbaric woman due to her religion. Among many nicknames for her, “my little black woman” remained a tried and true phrase. Throughout their entire

relationship, he saw her as a dark-haired beauty, belonging to a different race. In a letter from April 13, 1930, he explicitly mentioned her Jewishness: “Wasn’t Prague soft and warm, almost dreamlike, yet so eastern, barbaric, foreign. It is a disturbing, tormenting city. You may have quickly connected with it due to your Jewish heritage, for it is imbued with the spirit of your race.”³⁷

Meanwhile, Marjorie grew increasingly focused on her psychoanalytic work during the spring of 1930. She embedded herself so deeply in Freudian analysis that she felt it made her “see people through a microscope.” Sigmund Freud offered the key to the inaccessible workings of the mind. A non-practicing Jew himself, Freud remarked: “I found that I was expected to feel myself inferior and an alien because I was a Jew.” Despite his self-doubt, Freud had completely altered the landscape of psychoanalysis and neurology by 1930. According to the historian Peter Gay, Freud considered actions that seemed remote from sexuality, such as “child’s rage at its newborn sibling, the adolescent’s volatile friendships, the spinster’s unappeasable fear of sexual assault,” as manifestations of erotic urges. He defined the origins of neuroses, perversions and normal erotic gratification. As Marjorie understood it: “The Freudian method seems to dig deeper into original causes of present motives, into the childhood experiences... the Freudian says that if one examines and understands the past, the present and future will take care of themselves.”³⁸

The present in Germany, however, was impossible to ignore. The economic situation continued to worsen considerably over the course of 1930. Chancellor Heinrich Brüning, who began ruling as a presidential dictatorship in July of 1930, implemented an

35 “Hitlerites in Riots, Stone Jewish Shops As Reichstag Opens,” *The New York Times*, October 14, 1930; Hugo Landgraf and *The New York Times* both mentioned the famous Jewish-owned department stores, Wertheim and Café Dobrin, which served as targets for the Nazi mobs. Hitler was staying at a hotel near the Potsdamer Platz during the time of the mob. Marjorie to Family, October 20, 1930.

36 Marjorie to Peggy, November 11, 1929; Marjorie to Peggy, January 30, 1930.

37 Hugo to Marjorie April 13, 1930; Hugo to Marjorie, April 16, 1930.

38 Marjorie had already been studying at the Institute for over a year, but she most likely started writing more frequently about her work because she had acquired greater fluency in German. Marjorie to Peggy, May 18, 1930; Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Basic Books, 1953), 17; His analysis of dreams as subconscious wishes, theory of repression and the id, ego and superego became part of a shared cultural consciousness. Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1988), 10, 88; Katie Sutton, *Sex between body and mind: Psychoanalysis and Sexology in the German-speaking world, 1890s–1930* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2019), 7–8; Marjorie to Peggy, March 8, 1930.

emergency decree which involved increased taxation, high tariffs on foreign agricultural products, reduced government spending, and reductions in salaries, further crippling the German economy. Marjorie recognized the destitution of most people: “People have so little and put up such a brave front.”¹⁵⁶ She explained to her mom how “most students live on next to nothing, in holes and terribly primitive.” Although she spent more liberally than her peers, she insisted that she spent frugally: “According to our values, I am living very economically. I haven’t been extravagant.” She also seemed ignorant of the tolls of the Depression on her own family’s wealth. She innocently asked her mom, “Would it be so very terrible to eat into our capital a bit?”³⁹

As spring swept over Berlin, foliage and flowers bloomed, replacing the barren tree trunks and gray skies. Marjorie described the marvelous changes she witnessed, “Berlin seemed to change its cold grey winter skin like a snake, with a few painless wiggles blossoming into a medley of gay colors. First the fruit blossoms, then — lilacs!” She enthusiastically proclaimed, “It’s a great life!” Marjorie possessed a feeling of boundless joy, immune to financial, romantic, or professional troubles. In May of 1930, she told her mom: “There is something about Europe that gets under one’s skin. It’s that Bestimmte Etwas [certain something] that America just hasn’t got, that New York strives for so frantically, call it culture or what you will. It’s as indefinable as God, yet just as certainly there, if not more so. Sometimes I think that if America didn’t mean family and home I’d just as leave stay here.”⁴⁰

Seven months later, in January 1931, Marjorie’s infatuation with Berlin shifted dramatically, after her relationship with Hugo took a dark turn. She did not divulge details of their fight to her mother, possibly protecting herself from her mother’s judgment, but suddenly she had a new theory about love: “In other words, don’t ever let love die. Kill it first. The last dying spasms of what was once so lovely, are simply too gasty [sic].” The souring of her relationship with Hugo

catalyzed a change in her perception of the city. She became aware of a growing darkness lurking in the shadows of Berlin. By the end of January 1931, Marjorie wrote about “a dream infested with the smell of death.” As Marjorie felt her love for Hugo and Berlin waning, she surmised that love and death are not actually opposites. A sense of foreboding greatly diminished her joy.

Which brings me to philosophize over death and dying. The process of dying is essentially hideous, it reeks of decay. The disintegration of a something so intrinsically beautiful, as for example love, serves by comparison to emphasize the loathsomeness of the dissolution. The complete dissolution, Death is however something positive, absolute, and by this very quality suggests Life and hope.⁴¹

SECTION V

Twilight on Weimar

I N FEBRUARY OF 1931, Berlin hosted a grand horse show that ran for ten straight days. As an enthusiast of German social events, Marjorie attended an afternoon show. She was not particularly fascinated by the horses but by something else she witnessed — German culture: “it gave me, for the first time, an insight into one side to the German people’s way of thinking that has always troubled me, — namely, Militarism.” Marjorie felt Germany had an obsession with war that distinguished the country from the United States. “In spite of its a [sic] most complete suppression since the war, there are certain remnants, that continually remind one of what was particularly the — ‘Ja wohl, mein herr’ — the click of heels, and the low bow, and the attitude of officials and demi-officials everywhere,” she explained to her mother. Beyond the hierarchical rituals, Marjorie noticed a

39 Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider*, 136; In part, this was no fault of her own, as she had left Los Angeles before their wealth had been depleted. Marjorie to Peggy, May 18, 1930.

40 Marjorie to Peggy, June 7, 1930; Marjorie to Peggy, May 18, 1930.

41 Marjorie to Peggy, January 21, 1931.

German urge to celebrate war. The horse show opened with mounted soldiers in white wigs and vintage German uniforms carrying swords and pistols to honor a military General. Marjorie's ears rung, with six men on horseback firing gunshots next to a machine gun brigade. She noted that the commemoration of famous war generals was not particularly distinct from the United States, however: "The distinguishing, and I think particularly German thing about it was the very strong intermingling flavor of pomp ceremony and order. Particularly the 'order.' This more than anything else I think has served to clothe militarism in a semi-science, and this science in turn so all engrossing that people forgot that it ever had or could have anything to do with man-killing." Usually swept up in the excitement of the crowd, Marjorie began to feel the danger hidden in the displays of order and synchronization. As her ardor for Hugo waned, Marjorie awakened to the mounting threats around her.⁴²

Marjorie's observations of the violence lurking in

German culture did not detract from her involvement in Berlin's dazzling social scene. A week after attending the horse show, she spent her Saturday night at an extravagant costume ball attended primarily by artists. Guests adorned in ball gowns, silk pants and brightly colored scarves waltzed on the dance floor and reclined on the orange furniture. She described her outfit as "sort of crazy to say the least, but it put me in a good mood, and I danced like a wild woman!"⁴³

When she wasn't attending lavish parties, Marjorie focused intently on her psychoanalytic studies. In June of 1931, roughly two years after her arrival, Marjorie declared "I have started analyzing at last! It is terribly fascinating and I am awfully glad to have started really working." In July 1931, she spoke at a colloquium on Ernst Kretschmer's idea of "Erlebnis and Neurosenentstehung" (experience and neurosis-development). "[I] found myself practically giving an impromptu lecture on repression; — the cause and what dynamically



Figure 2: Marjorie and Hugo, ca. 1929.

⁴² Marjorie to Peggy, February 16, 1931.

⁴³ Marjorie wore black silk pants and a fiery red scarf. She wrapped fringe around her wrist as makeshift bracelets and tied a tassel on black kerchief around her head. Marjorie to Peggy, February 16, 1931.

speaking takes place in the analysis,” she wrote to her mother. Marjorie hoped to attend the Psychoanalytic Congress in Switzerland in September before taking on more patients in Berlin during the fall of 1931, while she worked on writing her thesis titled “Reactions to Success and Failure in Children.”⁴⁴

Peggy was skeptical about Marjorie’s primary motivation to stay in Berlin. She suspected it had less to do with psychoanalysis, and more with Hugo Landgraf, whom her daughter continued to be romantically involved with, despite their fighting. Marjorie dismissed her mother’s concerns, telling her she possessed “the false assumption that I am staying over here because I’m too much in love to come home.” Marjorie claimed “I would take the next boat home if my work were finished.” She insisted on staying in Berlin until she had her degree safely tucked away in her trunk: “I shall stick it out, unless something very urgent arises.”⁴⁵

Meanwhile, Marjorie’s family finances back home became so untenable in June 1931 that she could no longer ignore them. Up until this point, Marjorie had made no compromises on her spending. She wrote about custom dress fittings, lavish dinners, and extravagant gifts she shipped home for holidays. Her letters frequently included some mention of a recent purchase: “I finally got a sport coat, a sort of Ulster, supposedly of English material, for, don’t gasp! All of 25 dollars! Was I rite [sic] or wasn’t I to buy in Germany?!?” Yet, during the summer of 1931, the global economy took a hit: the second major round of bank failures occurred in the United States and the German banking crisis accelerated, with the Reichsbank losing 840 million marks in less than 3 weeks. Marjorie hoped that the Hoover plan would eventually stabilize the economy, but until

then she told her mother, “it might be safer just the same to send me money in dollars than in marks. And if it weren’t too much trouble, it might be better to send it oftener [sic] in smaller doses.” The Danatbank, the second largest bank in Germany, filed for bankruptcy on July 13, 1931, triggering a chaotic rush to withdraw money from all of the other banks. Marjorie joined the rush: “As things began to look worse instead of better, and not only the Danat but other banks had stopped payments, I withdrew in marks (dollars were no longer to be had) practically all my savings account” she wrote to her mother. The economic historian Harold James argues: “Capitalism appeared to have crashed with the banks, and this helped to discredit existing political systems.” Marjorie lamented the cancellation of the Psychoanalytic Congress she had planned to attend in Switzerland “due to the general financial situation.” But, she felt optimistic: “there probably will be no more trouble for the immediate present.”⁴⁶

As autumn drew near, the weather in Berlin worsened. “It has been beastly cold,” Marjorie wrote on October 1, 1931. She was still romantically involved with Hugo but “on a new basis.” Her tone had shifted from unbridled joy to pragmatic realism. She had no regrets about her emotional attachment to her lover, despite her mother’s insistence that she had invested too much in a married man: “I don’t agree with you, — to my mind there is no such thing as ‘waste’ in human relationships. Even if we had broken completely, which we haven’t, there still would remain all that fund of experience, which to my mind is ‘money in the bank.’” Marjorie believed that the acquisition of experience was of value unto itself.⁴⁷

Marjorie wrote an alarming letter to her family

44 Marjorie’s first patient was a twenty-four year old girl and she hoped she would soon start working with a few children. Marjorie wrote to her mother about her elevated confidence in analysis. Marjorie to Family, June 6, 1931; Marjorie to Peggy, July 19, 1931; Marjorie to Peggy, July 6, 1931.

45 Marjorie to Peggy, June 21, 1931.

46 Marjorie to Family, October 20, 1930; Robert L. Hetzel, *German Monetary History in the First Half of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2, 14; Marjorie refers to President Herbert Hoover’s policy to promote economic prosperity by allowing the government to have a heavier hand in the economy. He planned to eliminate federal regulations to allow for growth. William J. Barber, *From New Era to New Deal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 111; Marjorie to Peggy, July 6, 1931; Marjorie to Peggy, August 1, 1931; Harold James, *The German Slump: Politics and Economics 1924–1936* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 283–284.

47 Marjorie to Peggy, October 1, 1931; Marjorie to Peggy, September 4, 1931.

on the first day of the New Year, 1932. She titled the letter “Code Word,” offering her family a secret key to hidden messages. Each generic word corresponded to the political or economic status in Berlin. If she wrote “automobile,” for instance, that indicated “All conditions [here] entirely satisfactory. Be fully re-assured. Am in good health, safe, etc.” Another seemingly innocuous word, “furniture,” however, stood for “Believe conditions here justify leaving Berlin at once.” If her family wrote her “clothing” she understood that meant “We are well, but financial and other conditions make it necessary ask you start for America at once.” Marjorie never explained what prompted her to write this letter, but it speaks to her growing disillusion with the safety of Berlin. That said, she definitely had no immediate intention of leaving, as she hired a seamstress one week later to start working on custom gowns for the upcoming ball season.⁴⁸

Even with the swirl of political and economic upheaval, Marjorie’s studies were rich and rewarding. After more than two years studying in Berlin, she felt that sexual gratification explained most human instincts. Freud encouraged her to view sex as the underlying cause of personality, and permissive sexuality became the lens through which she understood the world. The Freudian influence is apparent in a letter Marjorie wrote on March 4 to a leading psychoanalyst in New York, trying to determine whether “Ausstobung” translated more closely as “ejection” or “ejection as the oral mode of genital rejection.” Marjorie wrote to Dr. Searl in London, asking his opinion on the “nature of the repressing factor, that instinct-contradictory part of the personality.” She was deeply interested in how man is governed by sexual instincts. “How does Man come to inhibit the path of his own instincts which promise him pleasure through their gratification?” she asked Dr.

Searl. Embedded within her belief that sex guides decisions was the questioning of morals overall.⁴⁹

Kurt Lewin, the founder of social psychology and Marjorie’s Jewish PhD advisor in Berlin, prompted Marjorie to apply to Stanford University’s graduate program in March 1932. Lewin had recently left Germany, sensing that he would not be able to obtain a permanent position there as a Jewish professor. Marjorie anxiously awaited the admission decision on her application, writing to her brother in June 1932: “it is possible that the quota for women for October’s entree may already be filled.” A young, confident Marjorie believed that quotas were the only reason she would not be admitted into Stanford. To her delight, Marjorie received her acceptance letter a few days later. Yet, Marjorie was torn between her ambitions for Stanford, commitment to studying with Kurt Lewin, and her love for Berlin. Ultimately, she decided that she could not leave Berlin in time for the October 1st start date.⁵⁰

In June 1932, Peggy’s husband Con started raising serious concerns about the possibility of a political eruption in Germany. Marjorie belittled Con, a working class man whom she considered far less sophisticated than her intellectually engaged mother. Marjorie wrote to him: “As far as the political situation here goes, there is no point in trying to discuss it by mail.” Marjorie suggested a level of secrecy via mail that mirrored her vigilant tone in the Code Word letter she had sent on January 1, 1932. It is also possible that she was being condescending to Con, dismissing his ability to understand the German situation from merely “read[ing] all about it in the papers.” She told Con that the chaotic political situation was nothing new in Germany since the pressures of the first World War: “Although it’s extremely topsy-turvy and enough to make any intelligent person’s blood boil (everyone is disgusted on the

48 Marjorie to Family, January 1, 1932 (emphasis in original); Marjorie had integrated herself in the Berlin costume ball scene. She told her mother, “It’s the season for them again,” as she was a regular attendee by 1932. Marjorie to Peggy, January 8, 1932.

49 Marjorie wrote that these two different interpretations were derived from the “International Journal of Psychoanalysis Vol. xix. No. 3, pg 321.” Marjorie to Dr. Jones, March 4, 1932; Marjorie to Dr. Searl, March 24, 1932.

50 Kurt Lewin had accepted a temporary job at Stanford. Kurt Lewin’s daughter, Miriam Lewin, wrote an article about her father, exploring aspects of Lewin’s personal life that affected his approach to psychology, with a large focus on the antisemitism he experienced. In 1932, “As he descended from the train his first words to her were, ‘We must leave Germany. Life here is out of the question.’ They both agreed. A Jewish physician in Sagan had just been beaten to death by Nazi thugs...Lewin began to look for a job abroad.” Miriam Lewin, “The Impact of Kurt Lewin’s Life on the Place of Social Issues in His Work,” *Journal of Social Issues* 48 (1992): 24.



Figure 3: Hugo Landgraf, photographed by Marjorie during a vacation to the North Sea island of Sylt in September, 1929.

one hand, and on the other are relieved that the Nazis at last have a chance to show themselves up) **there is at present absolutely no cause for worry.**⁵¹

On June 13, 1932, Marjorie assuaged her family's concerns once again. She wrote to them: "**As for the Hitlerites**, there is no fear of their getting in "over-night" as "they already have a pretty big thumb in the political plum-pudding." Marjorie argued that since the Nazis had been relevant in Germany for a while, it was misinformed to fear their sudden surge to power. She predicted that their use of violence was a fear tactic that would last temporarily: "And it looks as though they shall have less and less need for physical violence, (against the Jews, — battles with Communists will probably merrily continue) as there is a good deal of talk that they will be able to put through a law preventing the Jews from practicing certain professions." To Marjorie, the Nazi plans of prohibiting Jews from working were unrelated to their violence in the streets. She emphasized this point, typing in bold font: "**Their main goal is to throw the Jews out of the important, influential, and lucrative positions,**

cultural and political, which they hold here." Despite being an aspiring Jewish psychoanalyst, Marjorie felt immune to any potential discrimination by Nazis as a foreigner. She informed her family that a woman in her financial position, living in a safe neighborhood, had nothing to worry about: "The above mentioned battles with the communists take place between the workers, and consequently in the sections of the city where they live, which don't happen to be the parts of town which I frequent, so you see the chances of my being caught in a scuffle are decidedly less than that of getting bumped by an Auto or such." Marjorie reiterated her safety with condescension: "[Although] I am not much good at complicated mathematics I am sure that, seeing that nothing has happened to me in these three years, that the probability of something occurring in the next couple of months would figure out to a comfortingly small number."⁵²

In June 1932, tense letters between Marjorie and Peggy erupted into openly hostile confrontation. On June 12, 1932, *The Los Angeles Times* reported on the "acute danger that the National Socialists, should they

51 Marjorie to Con, June 5, 1932 (emphasis in original).

52 Marjorie to Family, June 13, 1932 (emphasis in original).

gain power, would encounter no resistance from the army.” Dr. Julius Curtius, the former German Minister of Foreign Affairs, warned that “autocratic rule by the Nazis might conjure up civil war.” The June 17, 1932, publication of *The Los Angeles Times* reported on violent protests after the Von Papen Ministry passed a “decree re-establishing the legality of the outlawed Hitlerite militant organization.” The Nazi Party Newspaper, *The Voelksischer Beobachter* described the decree as “the forerunner of the coming seizure of power by National Socialism.” On June 18, 1932, Peggy erupted to her daughter: “what the devil are you staying over there for, and why the hell don’t you come home?!” Her mother insisted Marjorie return to the United States, regardless of her unfinished degree and thesis; “September first at latest, otherwise failure certain” she warned Marjorie. Peggy would not budge: “This our final attitude, regardless all letters both received and enroute. Mother.” For the first time since Marjorie left to study abroad, Peggy signed off without her typical endearing phrases such as “just oodles of love, Peggy” or “hugs — & fond kisses, love-love-love, Peggy.”⁵³

Marjorie felt baffled by her family’s level of concern about her staying in Berlin: “I don’t get you at all! If you had hit me over the head with a club I couldn’t feel more dazed.” She admitted: “the reasons you give me leave me stumped. I can’t believe that they are the real reasons.” She brushed off her family’s concerns: “Is it simply *Sensucht*?” she asked, a German word which translates to longing. If her family’s fears were legitimate, she considered the three potential contributing factors: her delayed thesis, her family’s financial situation, and the escalating political tension in Germany. In a letter written on June 26, 1932 she addressed each concern individually. In defense of finishing her thesis, she wrote: “Having spent three years in this pursuit, wouldn’t it be nothing short of ridiculous to cut off the decisive month and a half?” She also argued that she had spent over \$10,000 on her psychoanalytic training and could not comprehend why her family would “skimp on the last 500 and the month and a half necessary to be able to practice as a recognized analyst to say nothing of the

clear conscience???!” Though Marjorie’s family continued to endure the economic hardships back home, she refused to accept her new financial situation.⁵⁴

Marjorie staunchly defended the stability of the political situation in Germany. She reminded her family: “I have already tried to indicate that the conditions here need give you no cause for worry.” She had been talking to various friends of hers who were better equipped to judge the current state of affairs. An unnamed close friend of hers, who had a prestigious role at the Central Union for German Citizens of Jewish Belief, insisted that their organization was successfully fighting against the hate: “The main purpose of this union is to collect material concerning the anti-semitic activities of the Nazi [sic], to distribute propaganda to fight them, to protect the lives and property of the Jews.” Another friend named



Figure 5.2: Marjorie in Berlin ca. 1931.

53 Curtius Julius, “Bruening Removal Seen As Curb for Hitlerism: Curtius Declares Von Hindenburg’s Action Averted Potential Civil Conflict,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 1932; “Storm Troops’ Protests Rise: Lifting Ban on Hitler Force Assailed by States Baden Wins Exception on Militant Groups Local Rules Also Control Display of Uniforms,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 17, 1932; Marjorie to Family, June 18, 1932; Peggy to Marjorie, June 25, 1932; Peggy to Marjorie, December 9, 1929; Peggy to Marjorie November 5, 1929.

54 Marjorie to Family, June 26, 1932 (emphasis in original).



Figure 6.1: SS Untersturmführer Hugo Landgraf, ca. 1938.

Herbert Klein, a journalist at the Chicago Tribune, offered Marjorie further reassurance after he had a promising conversation with the American Consul to Germany, William Dodd. Marjorie summarized their optimism on the German political situation:

They all agree in saying that even the German press is not to be trusted as stating the true conditions over here. Each paper belongs to a definite political party and is chiefly concerned in putting the competitors in a bad light. A scrap between two or three members of the communist and Nazi parties, is described as a bloody street fight between the two groups. The correspondents of the American papers, as they haven't enough reporters to cover the cases themselves, take over what they read in the German papers, sometimes even translating incorrectly, and of course never failing to make a really "good" story out of it!

Marjorie argued that American newspapers were sensationalizing Berlin news. Competing political parties were capitalizing on the negative coverage of the Nazis ahead of the Reichstag elections: “the former governing parties consisting in the Catholic Central, the Democrats, and the socialistic parties, and the Communists, find it to their advantage to play up the present difficult conditions, in order to show that as long as they are not in control of the government, Germany will never find peace and quiet, law and order.” Intellectuals and professionals in Berlin told Marjorie that she had nothing to worry about: “even the best informed sources are not counting on their [sic] being a revolution or any serious disturbances.” Her note is historically revealing, capturing the widespread sense of safety and prosperity amongst Berlin’s educated, liberal elites.⁵⁵

In her three-pronged rebuttal to her family, Marjorie could not totally ignore the persecution of Jews in Berlin. She admitted that Jews had been targeted, but dismissed the possibility of it being a real strategy for a professional political party: “As for anti-semitism, it is true that the Nazi[s] have since the beginning of their campaign shoved this into the foreground. They did this with the purpose of attracting the masses to their party, and having succeeded in this, anti-semitism has lost its importance for them.” The Nazis had more important goals than physically attacking Jews: “Their main purpose now is to acquire control of the government and they will do what they can to keep the Jews from having their influence.” She cited some more promising insights into the goals of the Nazi leadership: “Recently, the Nazi Reichstag leader, Strasser, made a statement over the radio as to the goal of his party. Amongst other things he mentioned the attitude toward the Jews as not attacking their lives, rather their maintenance of important positions in relation to the government and perhaps also their right to hold property.” She sensed that the incidents of outright violence were coming to an end. “Everyone says the individual Jew has nothing to fear. But the Jews on the whole are wondering how they are going to manage to earn their living next year.”⁵⁶

55 The organization in German is known as the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens. Marjorie to Family, June 26, 1932; *In the Garden of Beasts* focuses on William Dodd’s story as American Consul to Germany. Erik Larson, *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler’s Berlin* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011).

56 Marjorie to Family, June 26, 1932.

She concluded by repeating a steadfast declaration of her safety: “I hope you will realize now that there really and truly is no cause for alarm, that I am not going around blindly and foolheartedly, but really have my eyes open and have no intentions whatever [sic] of taking chances.” To her family’s dismay, she intended to remain in Berlin: “I must in any case remain here until the first of August.” Marjorie likely felt a potential loss of autonomy about the prospect of returning home. In Berlin, she stayed independent and free.⁵⁷

Her family responded to her defiant letter from June 26, 1932, with harsh criticism. Con started his letter “Dear Marje: Cannot say how disappointed we all are over your latest letters and the subsequent cables.” He accused her of being selfish and blind to the world around her: “where there is so much smoke there must be some fire.” On July 1, 1932, Marjorie responded to Con’s reprimand in a cable: “can’t leave [here] at present.”⁵⁸

Peggy could not understand her daughter’s sense of blissful calm. The foreign reporting on Berlin had an increasingly alarmist tone. On July 2, 1932, *The Los Angeles Times* reported “Forty-two Persons Die Rioting in Germany” in a battle between Communists and Hitlerites. The article reported the escalating violence of the Nazi party, a “Nazi shot three men, killing one of them.” The next day, *The Los Angeles Times* reported an article headlined “Nazis Kill Two More In Reich.” The journalist reported the “systematic Nazi attacks on various Communist meeting places at midnight. Among the injured were two women.” *The Los Angeles Times* article from July 11, 1932, captured the escalating violence in Berlin, “Three Dead and Many Wounded in German Riots” including a “A Republican Reichs Bannerman was killed at Eckernfoerde in an encounter with National Socialists, in which many were wounded by bullets.” One day later, on July 12, 1932, *Los Angeles Times* reported, “GERMANS SLAIN OVER POLITICS: Seventeen dead reported in Weekend Clashes.” Clashes between Adolf Hitler’s National Socialist followers, Communists and Republican



Figure 6.2: SS Untersturmführer Hugo Landgraf, ca. 1938.

Reichsbannermen became deadly: “Seventeen persons were killed, ten more were at the point of death and 181 were seriously injured over the week-end in political clashes in various parts of Germany. The bloodiest Sunday the nation has experienced during all the recent political turmoil.”⁵⁹

On July 14, 1932, Peggy wrote Marjorie: “You picture us worried and correctly, about European and more definitely German politics but you figure that the chances of these disorders touching you is remote. Perhaps you are right and if you wish to take the risk, again you are right.” If her daughter refused to accept the growing political danger in Berlin, then she should be forced to consider the economic burden she was placing on her family. “The difficulty of the times here cannot be

57 Marjorie to Family, June 26, 1932.

58 Con to Marjorie, June 28, 1932; Marjorie to Family, July 1, 1932.

59 “Three More Die Rioting in Germany: Forty-two Persons Hurt When Communists and Hitlerites Battles,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1932; “Nazis Kill Two More in Reich,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1932; “Three Dead and Many Wounded in German Riots,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1932; “GERMANS SLAIN OVER POLITICS: Seventeen Dead Reported in Week-end Clashes Disputes Over Reparations Settlement Stir Turmoil Reichswehr Called to Aid of Police in Silesia,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 1932.

minimized... Peter has not made a cent in three months that I know of and we get daily reports that our investment returns are curtailed or cannot be paid," wrote Peggy. Their family could no longer afford to sponsor Marjorie in Berlin. "We cannot advice [sic] you more definitely than we have — forestall what the end of the year may bring — you know it is the aggregate of our yearly income we live on — Which might diminish appallingly any day." Marjorie felt the world collapsing on all sides. She was being exiled from paradise and summoned back to a constrained life.⁶⁰

On July 14, 1932, Peggy purchased a one-way ticket home for Marjorie via a steamer passage. Her daughter's ignorance confounded her: "How you continue to say you do not understand is beyond me." Peggy had been watching the "disturbances in Germany" rise steadily since Marjorie left three years prior. She reminded her daughter that she had never intervened in her foreign affairs since she left, offering her unlimited independence: "I cannot judge for you nor assume at your age to steer [sic] your life for you — I can only suggest and react to the best of my ability."⁶¹

On July 20, 1932, Marjorie finally relented. She could not survive in Berlin without her allowance. She decided to use her one-way ticket to America. She would return home in early August — thesis and PhD unfinished. Stubborn and bold, Marjorie did not go home without a fight. She issued her final declaration of independence in a scornful and patronizing letter to Con. Marjorie warned him that she was coming back as a modern woman.

You speak of my "virginity" but what you call virginity can only be said truly of girls of previous generations who were allowed to know nothing of love or sex, who were married at sixteen or seventeen, or even earlier, truly unaware of their physical feelings. But say what you will, this generation is different.

Berlin had clearly changed Marjorie. She would carry a piece of the dazzling city, thriving intellectual community, bold nightlife, and boundless sexual freedom home with her. It was in this state of mind that Marjorie begrudgingly began her return home to Los Angeles on August 11th, 1932.⁶²

EPILOGUE

Killers of Culture

A DOLF HITLER WOULD BE appointed chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933, roughly six months after Marjorie returned to the United States. On April 8, 1933, nine months after Marjorie departed Berlin, Hugo Landgraf applied to join the Nazi party. His transition from Freikorps to Nazi member was not rare. He belonged to a group of men physically and psychologically damaged by the first World War and longing to reestablish German dominance.⁶³

Hugo applied directly to Hans Hinkel, the state Commissioner of the Reich Ministry of Propaganda, responsible for designing the policy of excluding Jews from German cultural life. In his application titled the "National External Propaganda," Hugo cited his "previous ten years of experience in teaching and organizing events for foreigners" as invaluable experience for the job in the propaganda ministry. According to Hugo, Nazi propaganda had a mission: "to show that Adolf Hitler's National Socialist government is an expression of national cultural power, that its roots lie in a history spanning two thousand years and that it is working, for

60 Marjorie registered with the American consul in early July, giving her mother some sense of ease, but not enough. Peggy to Marjorie, July 14, 1932.

61 Peggy to Marjorie, July 14, 1932.

62 Marjorie to Con, July 20, 1932.

63 Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider*, 145; Hugo Landgraf, "National External Propaganda Application" (April 8, 1933), National Socialist Ministry of Science, Arts, and Public Education, private collection. Peter Fritzsche argues: "The Freikorps were the 'vanguard of Nazism' largely because the Nazis declared them so... many Freikorps veterans eventually made their way into the Nazi movement." Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 124. Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the city in Imperial and Weimar Germany*, 134-135; Laurie Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of Nazis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 150-153.



Figure 6.2: Hugo Landgraf's book, *Kampf um Danzig*.

the best in Germany and the world, as a responsible advocate of the creative German spirit and will." Fearing the potential threat posed by international leaders and "malicious propaganda of other nations," he advocated for the National Socialist Party to employ any necessary tactics, including "repressive measures" to maintain dominance. He advocated purging people from positions of power: "It

is significant that Jews and Marxists are still on the Institute's summer program today as speakers on real national questions... A state of affairs impossible for such a facility today." Hugo defined German culture in opposition to Jews, communists, sex-reformers, and avant-garde artists, stressing the moral depravity of the enemy from within: "Don't forget that the counter-propaganda has no scruples in turning the "land of poets and thinkers" into a dangerous "hotbeds" where the researcher and the engineer jointly devise "plots against the civilization of mankind." This polyamorous lover, who had a Jewish girlfriend, presented himself to the Nazi propaganda ministry as a champion of German traditional values.⁶⁴

Hugo quickly ascended within the Nazi ranks, serving as an SS Untersturmführer, second lieutenant, on-air host for German State Radio, and eventually a war correspondent broadcasting from the Eastern front. As a combat reporter, he created dramatic radio dispatches from the front lines, highlighting the strength and courage of SS fighters as they invaded Poland and the USSR. He designed racist propaganda inciting fear and hatred of Jews and worked closely alongside insidious members of the SS, like Joseph Goebbels.⁶⁵

When Germany finally surrendered on May 7, 1945, the Soviet intelligence arrested Hugo with hundreds of other "culturally influential Nazis." The Soviets incarcerated Hugo in a former concentration camp in the remote East-German village of Jamlitz near the Polish border, within a secret prison designated NKVD Special Camp No. 6.268 The Soviets filled the camp with the most prominent Nazi writers, artists, directors, and journalists.²⁶⁹ Hugo died in the camp's infirmary on November 28, 1946 due to

64 Landgraf, "National External Propaganda Application" (April 8, 1933), National Socialist Ministry of Science, Arts, and Public Education, private collection.

65 Andreas Weigelt, *Umschulungslager Existieren Nicht: Zur Geschichte des sowjetischen Speziallagers Nr. 6 in Jamlitz 1945-1947* (Berlin: Brandenburgische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung im Ministerium für Bildung Jugend und Sport, 2001), 73; Hugo Landgraf wrote a book titled *Battle For Danzig: With Microphone and Steel Helmet on the Danzig Front*. This book by Hugo Landgraf describes front-line soldiers during the Battle of Danzig in September 1939. Pictures include the Schleswig-Holstein bombarding the Westerplatte; the battle for the Polish Post building; Radio communications in the front line before Westerplatte; Storming of the Westerplatte; Occupation of the Westerplatte and Polish Prisoners; White Flag on the Westerplatte and a Destroyed Polish Bunker on the Westerplatte; Taking of Gdingen; Placement of Anti-Tank Cannon; Radio Reporting of the Surrender; Occupation of the State Government Building in Gdingen; Adolf Hitler in Danzig; Admiral Raeder reviews the Marine Troops that took part in the taking of the Westerplatte; Hitler by the Westerplatte; Occupation of the Polish Harbor of Sela. Hugo Landgraf, *Kampf um Danzig: mit Mikrophon und Stahlhelm an der Danziger Front* (Dresden: E. F. Thienemann, 1940); Ralf Georg Reuth, *Goebbels* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993).

sickness and starvation, one month before his 51st birthday.⁶⁶

Heinrich Himmler, a leading architect of the Final Solution, understood the cognitive dissonance between Nazi ideology and the practical experience of relationships that SS members had experienced. He made a speech in Poznań in 1943 revealing his exterminationist mindset, reminding the Nazi officers that “each one has his one decent Jew. Of course, the others are swine, but this one, he is a first-rate Jew.”²⁷¹ Himmler warned that this personal relationship must not stop the men from eradicating the Jewish race. Hugo Landgraf had his “decent Jew” in Marjorie Rosenfeld.

It is unclear whether Marjorie knew that her lover became a high-ranking Nazi. She never told her children about her relationship with him and rarely even spoke about her time in Berlin. Soon after she returned to Los Angeles, she married Alfred Levi, a German-Jewish lawyer, journalist, and music critic whom she had met at a masquerade ball in Berlin in March 1931. Marjorie’s resume states: “1932-1933: Political unrest caused return to United States before completion of doctoral thesis.” Although Marjorie never finished her PhD in Berlin, she practiced in Los Angeles as a child psychotherapist from 1933-1959. She moved to Stamford, Connecticut in 1959 where she continued her practice until the early 1980s. Marjorie and Alfred had three daughters, and eventually six grandchildren who ultimately discovered her treasure trove of letters. It was their discovery that served as the basis for this paper.⁶⁷

Marjorie did not only fall in love with a future Nazi official while she was in Berlin. She fell in love with the ideology of Weimar, the vibrant and radically open culture

of avant-garde art and unconstrained sexual norms. She thought that she had arrived in the Garden of Eden, but perhaps the sweetness of the apple clouded her judgment. Of course, she had no reason to imagine the unimaginable. Hitler destroyed her fairytale of freedom. Psychoanalysis would be pushed out of Berlin, beginning with the burning of Freud’s books in 1933. By March 1938, Freud himself escaped Nazi persecution and fled to the United Kingdom. Policies around birth control became severe in 1933 and Germany became one of the hardest countries in the world to obtain an abortion. The Weimar Republic that Marjorie knew disappeared like a phantom in the night, leaving behind unthinkable violence and black nothingness. Hitler destroyed the unbridled freedom that Marjorie experienced in Berlin — the intellectual exploration of psychoanalysis, the sexual liberation, and her power as a Jewish foreign woman. Marjorie had described Berlin culture “as indefinable as God.” It would quickly become as elusive as a dream.⁶⁸ ◆

66 The killing and indefinite detainment of propaganda leaders in a converted Nazi concentration camp was a Soviet secret. The story of Special Camp No. 6 was unknown until the 1990s and remains largely undiscussed besides for German academic publications. Weigelt, *Umschulungslager Existieren Nicht: Zur Geschichte des sowjetischen Speziallagers Nr. 6 in Jamlitz 1945-1947*, 73; Heinrich Himmler, “Evacuation of the Jews,” speech given before senior SS officers in Poznań, October 4, 1943, in *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1981), Document no. 161, 344-345.

67 Alfred was the antithesis of Hugo. He was short, self-deprecating, and extremely intellectual. He loved music, food, and cigars. He had grown up in a middle-class Jewish family in Mannheim and moved to Berlin for law school in 1929, the same year that Marjorie moved from the United States. By 1931 he worked for a legal office that defended Jews against growing violence and discrimination. As a journalist who had heavily critiqued the Nazi Regime, he faced an arrest in spring 1933. He would have been in one of the first groups of dissidents rounded up and detained by the Nazi party. Instead, he successfully escaped to Los Angeles where he married his new Jewish wife. Like so many Jewish immigrants who fled to the United States after facing persecution, he had to abandon his promising future in Berlin. His training in German law offered him few opportunities in Los Angeles, where he became a host of a classical music program on KFAC radio. Marjorie R. Leonard, *Curriculum Vitae*, 1978;

68 Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*, 470, 501; Dagmar Herzog, *Unlearning Eugenics: Sexuality, Reproduction and Disability in Post-Nazi Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2018), 19-22; Marjorie to Peggy, May 18, 1930.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Archival

- Hugo Landgraf correspondence, 1929-1945, private collection.
- Marjorie Rosenfeld correspondence, 1929-1932, private collection.
- Marjorie Rosenfeld correspondence, 1932-1992, private collection.
- Marjorie Rosenfeld diary, 1929-1932, private collection.

Published

- “GERMANS SLAIN OVER POLITICS: Seventeen Dead Reported in Week-end Clashes Disputes Over Reparations Settlement Stir Turmoil Reichswehr Called to Aid of Police in Silesia.” *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 1932.
- Goebbels, Joseph. “German Women.” Speech delivered at the opening of a women’s exhibition in Berlin, March 18, 1933.
- Goebbels, Joseph. *Michael: Ein deutsches Schicksal in Tagebuchblättern*. Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Frz. Eher Nachf., 1929.
- Himmler, Heinrich. “Evacuation of the Jews.” Speech delivered before senior SS officers in Poznań, October 4, 1943. In *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1981.
- “Hitlerites in Riots, Stone Jewish Shops As Reichstag Opens.” *The New York Times*, October 14, 1930.
- Julius, Curtius. “Bruening Removal Seen As Curb for Hitlerism: Curtius Declares Von Hindenburg’s Action Averted Potential Civil Conflict.” *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 1932.
- Landgraf, Hugo. *Kampf um Danzig: mit Mikrophon und Stahlhelm an der Danziger Front*. Dresden: E. F. Thienemann, 1940.
- Landauer, Rom. *Seven*, 1936.

Malthus, Thomas. *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. London: J. Johnson, 1798.

“Nazis Kill Two More in Reich.” *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1932.

Panama Pacific Line. *Pamphlet for Proposed sailings, rates of passage, Panama-Pacific line: New York and San Francisco through the Panama Canal*. California: Panama Pacific Line, 1915.

“REDS BATTLE POLICE IN UNION SQUARE: SCORES INJURED, LEADERS ARE SEIZED; TWO DEAD, MANY HURT IN CLASHES ABROAD.” *The New York Times*, March 7, 1930.

Spree, Reinhard. “Der Geburtenrückgang in Deutschland vor 1939.” *Demographische Informationen*, 1984.

Stöcker. *Weltbühne*, 1928, 1933 (I, I).

“Storm Troops’ Protests Rise: Lifting Ban on Hitler Force Assailed by States Baden Wins Exception on Militant Groups Local Rules Also Control Display of Uniforms.” *Los Angeles Times*, June 17, 1932.

“Strike! Demonstrate Today!” *The Daily Worker*, March 6, 1930.

“Three Dead and Many Wounded in German Riots.” *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1932.

“Three More Die Rioting in Germany: Forty-two Persons Hurt When Communists and Hitlerites Battles.” *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1932.

Zuckmayer, C. *Als Wär’s ein Stück von mir*, 1966. Reprinted as *A Part of Myself*, trans. R. and C. Winston in 1970.

Secondary Sources

Barber, William J. *From New Era to New Deal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Boehnke, Jörn, and Victor Gay. “The Missing Men: World War I and Female Labor Force Participation.” *Journal of Human Resources* 57, no. 4 (2022): 1209-1241.

Childers, Thomas. *The Nazi Voter: The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany, 1919-1933*. North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983.

- Cohen, Glenn, Eli Y. Adashi, and Mary Ziegler. "The New Threat to Abortion Access in the United States—The Comstock Act." *JAMA* 330, no. 5 (2023): 405–406.
- David, Henry P., Jochen Fleischhacker, and Charlotte Hohn. "Abortion and Eugenics in Nazi Germany." *Population and Development Review* 14, no. 1 (1988): 87.
- Doheny, Kathleen. "Updating Birth Control: Choosing the Method That Best Suits Your Health and Lifestyle." *Los Angeles Times*, March 14, 1989.
- Fritzsche, Peter. *Germans into Nazis*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Gasché, Rodolphe. "European Memories: Jan Patočka and Jacques Derrida on Responsibility." *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 293.
- Gay, Peter. *Freud: A Life for Our Time*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1988.
- Gay, Peter. *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud, Education of the Senses*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Gay, Peter. *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.
- Grossmann, Atina. *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920–1950*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Hanebrink, Paul. *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018.
- Herzog, Dagmar. *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Herzog, Dagmar. *Unlearning Eugenics: Sexuality, Reproduction and Disability in Post-Nazi Europe*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2018.
- Hetzl, Robert L. *German Monetary History in the First Half of the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Heynen, Robert. *Degeneration and Revolution: Radical Cultural Politics and the Body in Weimar Germany*. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- James, Harold. *The German Slump: Politics and Economics 1924–1936*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.
- Japenga, Ann. "Birth Control Method in a Cap." *Los Angeles Times*, May 8, 1980.
- Jones, Ernest. *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*. New York: Basic Books, 1953.
- Jonge, A. de. *The Weimar Chronicle*, 1978.
- Kaes, Anton, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- Kennedy, Hubert C. "Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (1919–1933)." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 1 (2002): 122.
- Larson, Erik. *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2011.
- Lewin, Miriam. "The Impact of Kurt Lewin's Life on the Place of Social Issues in His Work." *Journal of Social Issues* 48 (1992): 15–29.
- Marhoefer, Laurie. "Degeneration, Sexual Freedom, and the Politics of the Weimar Republic, 1918–1933." *German Studies Review* 34, no. 3 (2011): 532.
- Marhoefer, Laurie. *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015.
- Melching, Willem. "'A New Morality': Left-Wing Intellectuals on Sexuality in Weimar Germany." *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, no. 1 (1990): 81.
- Morris, Charles R. *A Rabble of Dead Money: The Great Crash and the Global Depression: 1929–1939*. New York: Public Affairs, 2017.
- Mosse, George L. *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life in the Third Reich*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003.
- Parachini, Allan. "Cervical Cap Gets Final Federal OK." *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1988.
- Reuth, Ralf Georg. *Goebbels*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993.
- Rowe, Dorothy. *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003.
- Sutton, Katie. *Sex between Body and Mind: Psychoanalysis and Sexology in the German-speaking World, 1890s–1930*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2019.

- Usborne, Cornelia. *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2011.
- Usborne, Cornelia. *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany*. London: Macmillan Press, 1992.
- Weigelt, Andreas. *Umschulungslager Existieren Nicht: Zur Geschichte des sowjetischen Speziallagers Nr. 6 in Jamlitz 1945-1947*. Berlin: Brandenburgische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung im Ministerium für Bildung Jugend und Sport, 2001.
- Weitz, Eric D. *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Woycke, James. *Birth Control in Germany 1871-1933*. London: Routledge, 1988.

Bibliographical Essay

Three years ago, Ben Rubin, the grandson of Marjorie Rosenfeld, discovered a dusty box of letters in his aunt's second floor bedroom. Hundreds of old letters were stuffed in these boxes, along with Marjorie's leather-bound diary, and a collection of tattered and discolored photographs. Marjorie preserved letters she had sent while she was abroad, sometimes keeping the carbon copy of her typewritten letter and other times the original copy she'd retrieved upon her return to the United States. She also had kept hundreds of letters that she had received from her family, friends, and her lover while abroad. Although the Rosenfeld family had known that Marjorie had studied in Berlin, she had never shared the extent of her experience abroad nor of her relationship with her lover Hugo Landgraf. Enthralled by the discovery of his grandmother's secret adventure, in 2021, Ben began researching parts of her story.

Ben's investigation led him to the Institut für Ausländer where he unearthed Hugo's true identity as a high-ranking Nazi propagandist and author of a 1940 Nazi wartime book. Once he had confirmed Hugo's identity, Ben discovered more information on the end of his life in a book by the historian Andreas Weigelt titled *There are no Rehabilitation Camps: On the History of the Soviet Special Camp No. 6 in Jamlitz 1945-1947 (Umschulungslager Existieren Nicht: Zur Geschichte des sowjetischen Speziallagers Nr. 6 in Jamlitz 1945-1947)*. Weigelt documents the atrocities committed at the

NKVD Special Camp No. 6, tracing this site of violence, from the Nazi's massacre of roughly 10,000 Jews, to the concentration camp's transformation into a Soviet death ground for imprisoned Nazis. The book revealed that Hugo was captured and imprisoned by the Soviets until dying from starvation.

Seeking deeper insights into his grandmother's lover, Ben got in touch with Patrizia Ehrenfried-Fischer, Hugo's granddaughter who is a self-identifying communist. Ben visited Patricia in Vienna, where she discussed everything she knew about her grandfather's life, despite never meeting him. Ben sat in the quiet confines of her kitchen in Vienna, photocopying hundreds of Hugo's letters and papers. The layers of this story were recovered with the multinational and multigenerational collaboration of Hugo Landgraf's family. This project would not have been possible without Ben Rubin's initial discovery and tireless dedication to discovering the truth behind his grandmother's story. I cannot thank him enough for allowing me the privilege of working with these documents and granting me access to Marjorie Rosenfeld's life.

A predominant part of my primary source research included transcribing Marjorie's letters and diary entries. I read approximately 1,500 pages worth of diary entries and letters spanning from 1929 to 1932 prior to composing this essay. The vastness and richness of the content posed a considerable challenge in determining which quotes to prioritize for the paper. This shortened version of Marjorie's story was the result of a struggle to select the most evocative parts of her story. Marjorie wrote her letters by hand up until March 8, 1930, when she purchased a typewriter. The handwriting posed a significant challenge given the difficulty of reading old script. Luckily, after the typewriter arrived, she typed a majority of her letters, which reduced the labor intensity of reading all of her conversations. Her diary, however, was all handwritten. Hugo wrote to Marjorie in German, posing another challenge to my research as I do not speak or read German. Transkribus and Arbeiterwohlfahrt Ortsverein Konstanz organization, a non-profit organization with volunteers who help translate and transcribe old German handwritten documents, led me to Roswitha Schweichel. Roswitha is a 75-year-old German woman who selflessly transcribed and translated all of my German primary source

material for this project. Over the course of the year, we became penpals after she too became invested in Marjorie's story. I had the opportunity to meet the wonderful Roswitha in person in Berlin in February. Our friendship marks another incredible offshoot of this essay.

I had initially outlined the entire essay thematically, structured around psychoanalysis, contraception, abortion, Weimar culture, Jewish history, the Great Depression, and Berlin politics. Yet, with the help of my advisor Professor Shore, I realized that Marjorie's story cannot be neatly divided into thematic sections. The stakes change as time moves and her sense of endless joy in 1929 is far different than the same joy experienced in 1932. Ultimately, this led me to a mostly chronological essay. I purposefully delayed sharing whether Marjorie would safely return to the United States and what would become of Hugo Landgraf. In a similar vein, I did not feel the need to share the atrocities that would follow Marjorie's departure from Berlin. I wanted to leave the reader with the echo of the party.



Of course, I would have loved the opportunity to meet Marjorie Rosenfeld before she passed away at age 86 on January 7, 1992, and to speak with her about her time in Berlin. I would have asked her details I will never know — such as why she tore up a letter Hugo sent, only to tape it back together? Did she ever look into what happened to him? In place of asking Marjorie herself, I have had the opportunity to speak with two of her wonderful daughters, Eleanor Rubin and Joanne Leonard. Marjorie's daughters were instrumental to my research, helping me fill in the gaps on later parts of Marjorie's life. Joanne also helped me cross-reference Marjorie's abortion, sharing how her mother had opened up about her abortion later in her life. I extend my infinite gratitude to the entire Rubin family for trusting me with this special project and allowing me to work with such precious materials. I hope that I have done the spunky, smart, charismatic Marjorie Rosenfeld justice.

When I first started this project, I could not stop asking myself how Marjorie could be so naive as to ignore her mother's letters about the worsening political situation in Germany. I found myself questioning how she could be romantically involved with someone who clearly saw her Jewish identity as a marker of

barbarity. In contrast, as I continued doing research, I grew amazed at how prescient Peggy and Con were. In June 1932, when Con wrote: "where there is so much smoke there must be some fire" he was not just perceptive, but prophetic.

There exists a vast collection of essays, books, movies, and historical research dedicated to the Weimar Republic. Certain books, such as *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* by Eric D. Weitz and *Weimar Culture* by Peter Gay were invaluable in providing a comprehensive understanding of the Weimar Republic and the implications of its social history. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* encompasses one of the most extensive cultural, political, and social histories of the period. *Sex after Fascism* by Dagmar Herzog and *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany* by Cornelia Osborne served as extremely helpful resources for my focus on sexual politics. Certain movies, such as *Cabaret* and *Metropolis* helped me commune with the moment that Marjorie had been living within. Of course, studying this time period also means reading about the horrors that followed. *Germans into Nazis* by Peter Fritzsche and Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* illuminated how Germans were radicalized to commit atrocities. I took a junior seminar course in the Spring of 2022, Nazi Germany, taught by Professor Jennifer Allen, which offered a helpful historical understanding of the ascent and decline of National Socialism from the early twentieth century through the decades after the end of WWII. We read eleven books about Nazi Germany, including Charles S. Maier's *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* and Ian Kershaw's *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*. In addition to secondary source literature, I dedicated a lot of research to newspaper articles published in the United States to get a sense of the international perception of Berlin at the time, specifically around the final weeks when Peggy begged Marjorie to come home. I focused on the *Los Angeles Times*, as I wanted to envision some of the headlines that Peggy was reading before writing to her daughter.

I would argue that the greatest weakness of this paper is also its greatest strength. I focus on one



person's story, limiting the scope of the history and therefore, the breadth of any discovery. But, by illuminating one American Jewish woman's experience, I was able to properly enter Weimar and get a sense for the leaves on the trees, the palpable excitement of costume balls, the visible poverty, and the feeling in the streets. The story reveals the thin line in Germany between the casual antisemitism of a polyamorous lover and his future as a spokesperson for Jewish extermination and conservative values.

My essay marks the first time that Marjorie's story has been shared. Getting to work with this private collection of intimate letters was an incredibly special intellectual, academic, and personal endeavor. It was also never lost on me that my research had a meta quality to it — as one young, Jewish woman writing a thesis about another young Jewish woman writing her own. I felt her anxiety, her joy, and her excitement at being in a new country with limitless possibilities. And with hindsight, of course, I cringed as she reassured her family that there was nothing to worry about in Berlin. I tried suspending any judgment in my own retelling of her story, as it is impossible to predict the unimaginable. I credit my advisor Professor Marci Shore for reminding me with each meeting to immerse myself in Weimar and bracket the horrific history that would follow — because that is all that Marjorie, and the world, knew at that moment.