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The Cannibal and the Caterpillar: Violence, Pain, and Becoming-Man in Early Twentieth Century Germany

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English abstract: In the wake of Foucauldian thought, the self and its identity are often regarded as the result of disciplinary practices and technologies, inscribing the law into the body which is depicted as a passive, pliable matter. This account echoes the binary divisions between nature/culture, mind/body, and sex/gender. Feminist scholars have repeatedly questioned this Cartesian dichotomy. This essay explores the potential of DeleuzoGuattarian feminist theory to capture the affective momentum of the body as an agent in its own right: its capacity to establish affective, visceral, carnal connections and thereby to transform itself. It focusses on the case of Peter Kürten, a serial sex criminal, and his incarceration in early twentieth-century Germany. Following Elizabeth Grosz's suggestion to imagine body and mind, matter and discourse as locked to each other in a Möbius strip, it argues that even in extreme situations of confinement and discipline, we can detect the interconnectedness of disciplinary power and bodily potentia without presuming one has supremacy over the other.

“And after dwelling on these thoughts every day, I came up with the idea to become a caterpillar and to pupate. I believed that it would entail stripping off my humanity or switching off the ever present consciousness” and with “silk yarn, with a thread, I wrapped my legs and arms, the body, wherever I could.”¹

When in 1909 the wardens of the Münster penitentiary found the twenty-six year old convict Peter Kürten, the narrator of the extract above, in his cell, wrapped in yarn and hidden behind a veil of silk cloth draped around the working table, they tore his cocoon apart. Kürten's working privileges were suspended. He was punished for his misconduct by being wrapped in wet sheets and put into a large sack, which was then

1 “Stenogramme der von Professor Sioli geführten Untersuchungen mit Kürten, Untersuchung am 22.10.1930.” In *Peter Kürten, genannt der Vampir von Düsseldorf*. Edited by Elisabeth Lenk and Katharina Kaefer. Frankfurt a.M.: Eichborn, 1997, 156, 157. All translations are mine (if not indicated otherwise). I would like to thank Tikitu de Jager and Michaela Hampf for kindly reading through and commenting on an earlier version of this essay.

sewn tight, and left in solitary confinement, a common practice to discipline inmates in German penal institutions at that time.²

In his study *Discipline and Punish* Michel Foucault reconstructed the history of the formation of modern subjectivity by focusing on the technologies and practices of corporeal subjection employed in disciplinary institutions such as schools, military academies, and prisons. Starting at the end of the eighteenth century and proceeding at a different pace in each part of Europe, the “gloomy festival of punishment” gave way to a new penal regime. Punishment was no longer intended to inflict suffering as retribution for the crime committed but was a scientific procedure designed to “correct, reclaim, ‘cure’.” Consequently, the position of the body in penal practice changed profoundly. It became an “intermediary,” subjected to a multitude of technologies and practices designed to touch and alter the soul of the offender. Pain also transformed into a tool to achieve this greater moral goal.³ Foucault’s account has been criticized for its Eurocentric perspective and its bold, at times even reckless generalizations.⁴ Yet, the central premise of his work informs scholarly research until today, namely that modern penalty rests upon corporeal, disciplinary technologies of subjection aimed at transforming the criminal’s mind and soul. Moreover, the prison was part of a system of normalization and subjectivation that encompassed the whole society.⁵

Peter Kürten and his transformation into a silkworm might be read as a metaphor of disciplinary subjectivation: A convict, exposed to prison architecture and discipline, medical procedures and discourses, incorporates the oppressive and cruel system of this “total institution.”⁶ He restrains himself, creating a cocoon, his own confinement, in which he develops into a new human being. Eventually, however, Kürten did not transmute into a rehabilitated citizen, the beautiful butterfly, but into a monster. The prison’s brutality and its dehumanizing practices had been inscribed into his body and his emotional/affective structure, resulting in sex crime. He was taken into custody on 24 May 1930 after he had

2 Ibid., 156.

3 Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Books, 1991, 8, 10, 11.

4 Anupama Rao and Steven Pierce. “Discipline and the Other Body. Humanitarianism, Violence, and the Colonial Exception.” In *Discipline and the Other Body: Correction, Corporeality, Colonialism*. Edited by Steven Pierce and Anupama Rao, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, 1-35; Ann L. Stoler. *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996, 19-54.

5 Foucault. *Discipline and Punish*, 298.

6 Erving Goffman. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. London: Penguin Books, 1991, 11.

committed a series of murders between 1929 and 1930. Almost twelve months later, on 22 April 1931, he was found guilty of murder of a total of nine people and of attempted murder in seven cases, often in conjunction with rape or attempted rape.⁷

This interpretation relies on the assumption that the human body is a passive, pliable matter. The self and its identity are regarded as the result of disciplinary practices and technologies, inscribing the law into the body. This model saturates historical, sociological, and criminological studies of Kürten until today. He is described as the embodiment of discipline; a man created from the subjection to power. His body, in turn, is seen as an “amorphous malleable mass, which can be inscribed and formed after the act.” Since both the criminal and his corporeality are the product of subjection, Kürten’s ‘real’ desires cannot be fathomed.⁸ On a general level, this description also echoes the binary division between nature and culture, between mind and body or, one of its many other incarnations, between sex and gender. Feminist scholars have repeatedly questioned this Cartesian dichotomy. One of the cornerstones of this critique is Judith Butler’s challenge to the sex-gender divide. Her famous argument that sex is the effect of discursive practices not its foundation, however, ultimately reiterates the Cartesian split instead of dissolving it. At first glance, this seems to be a contraction in terms. After all, her theory of the performativity of sex seems to dissolve the divide between discourse and materiality in a sophisticated manner. Yet, her argument rests firmly upon the Foucauldian model and thus also upon the distinction between mind (discourse, sign) and body as the effect of signification, while simultaneously rejecting the possibility of a pre-discursive corporeality. The materiality of the body “prior to the sign,” Butler argues in *Bodies that Matter*, is nothing else but the result of the process of signification, “an *effect* of its own procedure” which “claims to discover as that which *precedes* its own action.”⁹ Drawing on Derrida’s notion of the impossibility of conceptualizing radical alterity, she claims that pre-discursive bodily materiality inevitably escapes our grasp. We can merely acknowledge the “materiality of the signifier itself” as well as the “indissolubility of materiality and signification.”¹⁰

7 “Urteil und Urteilsbegründung im Prozess gegen Peter Kürten, 22.4.1931.” HStA Düsseldorf: Rep. 17/ 543, Bl. 8-20 and Bl. 2.

8 Maren Hoffmeister. “Der Körper des Täters in der Deutung des Lustmord.” *Kriminologisches Journal* 35 (2003): 212-223, 220.

9 Judith Butler. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex.”* London: Routledge, 1993, 30 (emphasis in the original).

10 Butler. *Bodies that Matter*, 30. The point of critique summarized here and which has been put forward most eloquently by Abigail Bray and Claire Colebrook (“The Haunted Flesh: Corporeal Feminism and the Politics of (Dis)Embodiment.” *Signs. Journal of*

To unravel the connections between Kürten the alleged cannibal and Kürten the caterpillar, I will think about him and other male sexual killers of the 1920s from another, a DeleuzoGuattarian perspective. Instead of conceptualizing the body of the prisoner as an effect of an extreme form of subjection, i.e. focusing on the restraining effects of power (*potestas*), I would like to explore its productive dimension (*potentia*). To do so, I will follow a twofold strategy: I will examine the practices of normalization and correction applied to *discipline and punish* Peter Kürten (and others) within a larger framework of practices that articulated hegemonic masculinity around 1900. I will hereby concentrate on medico-psychiatric discourses and on the two institutions that according to Foucault were two formative “heterotopies” of modern society, the barracks and the prison.¹¹ In doing so, I am especially interested in the function of violence and pain in the articulation of the male corporeality.¹² I will start by presenting a few thoughts on the theoretical perspective I am about to adopt and the lines of inquiry I am about to pursue.

Infection and Unnatural Participation: the Materiality of Becoming

Inspired by DeleuzoGuattarian theory, a number of feminist scholars have contested Butler’s conclusions.¹³ Although agreeing with a tradi-

Women in Culture and Society 24,1 (1998): 35-67) aims at a conceptual level. It does not posit, as some critics of a new materialist thinking propose, that Butler underestimates or even ignores embodiment (see for example: Sara Ahmed. “Open Forum Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the ‘New Materialism’.” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 15,1 (2008): 23-39, 33).

11 Michel Foucault. *Die Heterotopien/Der utopische Körper: Zwei Radiovorträge*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2005, 11-12, 16-18. See also: Marvin Chlada. *Heterotopie und Erfahrung: Abriss der Heterotopologie nach Michel Foucault*. Aschaffenburg: Alibri, 2005 and Urs Urban. *Der Raum des Anderen und Andere Räume*. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2007.

12 I cannot, however, go into the larger debate about pain, embodiment, and identity. As a starting point see the seminal study by Elaine Scarry. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

13 Rosi Braidotti. *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*. London: Polity Press, 2002, 34-52; Ead. “Affirming the Affirmative: On Nomadic Affectivity.” *rhizomes* 11/12 (2005/06), <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue11/braidotti.html> (21.8. 2013); Elizabeth Grosz. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, 9, 17-19; Bray and Colebrook. *The Haunted Flesh*; Dorothea Olkowski. *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, 40-47; Stevie M. Schmiedel. *Contesting the Oedipal*

tional constructivist feminist analysis on the inherent embodiment of the subject, these theorists insist that the “forces and potentialities” of a body “cannot be reduced to its cultural representations and the norms of gender,” in fact matter can “no longer [be] seen as static and passive, a blank slate written by language and culture, but as energy and movement in variation, as modulation (and not as mould) that produces singularities.”¹⁴

There are a number of significant differences between Butler’s manifestation of “corporeal feminism” and the DeleuzoGuattarian variant.¹⁵ The two most important with regard to the tangle at hand are the concepts of the body, and of the self and its materiality. First, and in contrast to traditional philosophical thinking, DeleuzoGuattarian feminist theory conceptualizes the subject not in terms of stability, identity or authenticity but in terms of connection, potentiality and change. Starting from Deleuze’s and Guattari’s notion of “becoming,” Deleuzian feminists understand the subject as an on-going, open-ended process driven by desire to create affective connections. Rosi Braidotti has coined the term “nomadic subject” to describe this particular notion of “subjectivity as an intensive, multiple and discontinuous process of interrelations.”¹⁶ In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari characterize the subject as an “assemblage” or “multiplicity” which is established by alliances, infections, “unnatural participation” and symbiosis between heterogeneous terms.¹⁷ According to Elisabeth Grosz, it is important to bear in mind that a “multiplicity is not a pluralized notion of identity (identity multiplied by n locations)” but “an ever-changing, nontotalizable collectivity” defined by “its capacity to undergo permutations and transformations, that is, its dimensionality.”¹⁸

Deleuze and Guattari characterize “becoming” as a transformative process of subversive effect, a process that undermines established norms, disrupting existing relationships of power, dissolving fixed iden-

Legacy: Deleuzian vs Psychoanalytic Feminist Critical Theory. Münster: Lit, 2003, 32-33; Claire Colebrook. *Gender.* Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004, 238.

14 Chrysanthi Nigianni and Merl Storr. “Introduction.” In *Deleuze and Queer Theory*. Edited by Chrysanthi Nigianni and Merl Storr. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, 5.

15 Bray and Colebrook. *The Haunted Flesh*, 38.

16 Braidotti. *Metamorphoses*, 69; Ead. *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, 24-26.

17 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Continuum, 2008, 265, 267, 275.

18 Elisabeth Grosz. “A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics.” In *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*. Edited by Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski. London: Routledge, 1994, 187-210, 192.

tities, and converting molar structures into molecular connections.¹⁹ This dimension of becoming, however, will not be the one of major concern to the project I am pursuing here. Instead I will focus on another, equally important dimension of their thoughts on “becoming:” its materiality. And this brings us to the second point of contestation between this radical “new materialism” and the other strands of feminist theory mentioned above.²⁰ Becoming is neither metaphorical nor imaginary but deeply corporeal.²¹ It rests on the body’s capacity to establish affective, visceral, carnal connections and thereby to transform itself. This ability is driven by “a desire that is positive in itself,” not structured by signifiers, signs, or cultural norms but lying “beyond all law, systems and structures.”²² Accordingly, DeleuzoGuattarian theory does not regard the body as “a prediscursive matter that is then organized by representation” but as an agent in its own right.²³

One of the great difficulties in applying DeleuzoGuattarian theory to an analysis of social practices and institutions such as the prison or an articulated identity such as white hegemonic masculinity lies in reconstructing this prediscursive desire, and therefore the materiality of becoming. Just like the silk of Kürten’s cocoon, the law seems to envelop the body entirely and the “task of *retrieving* the prerepresentational [...] body” seems almost impossible.²⁴ But would that retrieval actually be the aim of a feminist, radical material approach? In “The Haunted Flesh: Corporeal Feminism and the Politics of (Dis)Embodiment” Abigail Bray and Claire Colebrook propose to sidestep the representational logic in-

19 Deleuze and Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*, 306, see also 272-273, 320-322.

20 Strictly speaking, the label “new materialism” is, as for instance Sara Ahmed and Nikki Sullivan have demonstrated, a misnomer. The materiality of the body, most of all the female body, has been part of feminist research agendas as far back as first wave feminism (see: Ahmed. *Open Forum Imaginary Prohibitions*; Nikki Sullivan. “The Somatechnics of Perception and the Matter of the Non/Human: A Critical Response to the New Materialism.” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 19,3 (2012): 299-313). What is, however, “new” about the approaches I am referring to here is the reference to the works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and their radical vitalism. This results in a conceptual shift which, especially with regard to the questions of the agency of materiality and the autonomy of affects, creates substantial controversy in recent years as we will see later on. Since this shift is the distinguishing characteristic of this new perspective I will, for practical reasons, refer to it throughout this article alternately as DeleuzoGuattarian, radical feminist materialism or new materialism.

21 Deleuze and Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*, 262.

22 Claire Colebrook. *Understanding Deleuze*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2002, 18.

23 Bray and Colebrook. *The Haunted Flesh*, 36. See also: Christiane König, Massimo Perinelli, and Olaf Stieglitz. “Einleitung Praktiken.” In *What Can a Body Do? Praktiken und Figurationen des Körpers in den Kulturwissenschaften*. Edited by Netzwerk Körper in den Kulturwissenschaften. Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2012, 11-15, 13.

24 Bray and Colebrook. *The Haunted Flesh*, 37 (emphasis in the original).

herent in such an attempt. They encourage us to instead “see the body as the event of expression,” of “becomings, connections, events, and activities” and to map the “series of events and connections that surround that body” which establish the assemblage or multiplicity of the self. In my investigation of the cannibal, the caterpillar and the role violence and pain played in the articulation of white masculinity at the beginning of the twentieth century, I would like to take up their suggestion and “not look within the mind of a subject, nor see its body as a sign”²⁵ but to trace the network of practices that wove masculinity as well as the threads that were simultaneously spun by male bodies. Following feminist DeleuzoGuattarian materialism, I will conceptualize the body “not as an organism or entity in itself, but as a system, or series of open-ended systems, functioning within other huge systems it cannot control, through which it can access and acquire its abilities and capacities.”²⁶

As mentioned above, there are three series I will focus on:²⁷ First, the medico-psychiatric sequence in which male bodies were connected to an apparatus of measurements, comparisons, and evaluations. Here, I will show that each man was located within a continuum of (ab)normality, relying on the notion of a male *anachronistic body*. In a second and third step I will map two institutional assemblages which organized male bodies in a hierarchical order and regulated flows of affects and affections such as pain or sexual desire along lines of power: the prison and the military. The exertion of violence, the infliction as well as the experience of pain (among other affects) were, as I will show, integral parts of both series.²⁸ In conclusion, I will reflect not only on the articulation of masculinities at the turn of the twentieth century but also on the productivity of applying a DeleuzoGuattarian perspective to the analysis of heterosexual, white, hegemonic masculinity. I will also consider the fact that D|G originally developed the concept of “becoming” to conceptualize a subversion of capitalist, phallogocentric society. In a way, this text is a

25 Ibid., 36, 64.

26 Elizabeth Grosz. *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004, 3. See also: Grosz. *Volatile Bodies*, 19-20.

27 Following Bray’s and Colebrook’s argument, I understand “series” as an assemblage of “becomings, connections, events, and activities” in which the multiplicity of a self is established (Bray and Colebrook. *The Haunted Flesh*, 36).

28 Violence is a highly complex phenomenon (see: Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, eds. *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*. Malden: Blackwell, 2007). Within the constraints of my analysis here, I will only refer to acts of corporeal violence, acts that transgress, threaten, and disrupt an individual’s physical integrity.

test case to explore how far a DeleuzoGuattarian string of thinking can be stretched.²⁹

Series 1: Evaluating the Continuum of (Ab)Normality

When Kürten was arrested in 1930, the Weimar Republic had seen several spectacular criminal cases involving alleged cannibalism. Among the most prominent ones were the cases of Carl Großmann in 1921 and Friedrich (Fritz) Haarmann in 1924.³⁰ The public debates about their crimes contributed to a general anxiety about the status of white German masculinity in post-WW1 Germany. Returning soldiers, hurting in both body and mind, arrived home to find traditional gender roles questioned. Their missing limbs and post-traumatic hysterical fits revealed that male bodies, in contrast to contemporary notions of manliness, were vulnerable and frail. Also, German men supposedly failed to protect women and children during the occupation of the Rhineland (1919-1930) against the alleged assaults of the French colonial troops stationed on German soil, the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*. These French-African soldiers were accused of raping German women and children and/or forcing them into prostitution.³¹

These debates were part of what scholars have called a “crisis of masculinity.” Yet, as Jürgen Martschukat and Olaf Stieglitz have demonstrated, these debates were in fact not about endangered manliness in gen-

29 “And while several writers invoke a Deleuzian and/or Foucauldian framework, it is again more in the spirit of seeing where, how far, how fast one can run with their insights rather than a detailed pinning down of the Author, the painful mimicry of the discipline.” Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn. “Introduction.” In *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*. Edited by Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn, London: Routledge, 1995, ix-xv, xii.

30 Eva Bischoff. *Kannibale-Werden: Eine postkoloniale Geschichte deutscher Männlichkeit um 1900*. Bielefeld: transcript, 210-213, 243-249, 257-259. See also: Matthias Blazek. *Carl Grossmann und Friedrich Schumann: Zwei Serienmörder in den zwanziger Jahren*. Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2009; Kathrin Kompisch. “Der Fall Fritz Haarmann (1924).” *Hannoversche Geschichtsblätter* 55/56 (2001/02): 97-116; Hoffmeister. *Der Körper des Täters. On sexual murder at the turn of the twentieth century in general* see: Tanja Hommen. *Sittlichkeitsverbrechen: Sexuelle Gewalt im Kaiserreich*. Geschichte und Geschlechter 28. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1999; Maria Tatar. *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

31 Sandra Maß. “Das Trauma des weißen Mannes: Afrikanische Kolonialsoldaten in propagandistischen Texten, 1914-1923.” *L’Homme*. ZFG 12,1 (2001): 11-33, 23-32. See also: Gisela Lebzelter. “Die ‘Schwarze Schmach’: Vorurteile – Propaganda – Mythos.” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 11,1 (1985): 37-58; Iris Wigger. *Die “Schwarze Schmach am Rhein:” Rassistische Diskriminierung zwischen Geschlecht, Klasse, Nation und Rasse*. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2007, 130-135, 142-143.

eral but instead were processes of re-asserting the dominant status of hegemonic masculinity.³² Also, these concerns about men and their manhood, were nothing new in the 1920s. The 'nature' of masculinity, especially with regard to male bodies, men's affects and sexual urges had been under particular scrutiny since the 1880s. A vital part of these debates was the production of medico-psychiatric knowledge about male corporeality.³³ The cannibal figured prominently in this context: Leading scientific experts theorized that cannibalistic impulses were part of those violent urges that constituted male sexuality. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, for instance, believed that human sexuality was structured by the same visceral instincts as was the case in pre-historical times. His assumptions were widely accepted among medico-psychiatric and criminological experts.³⁴ He stipulated that modern bourgeois morals and norms had evolved from savagery to modernity by an evolutionary process during which the male sex drive had been increasingly restrained, in other words, 'civilized.'³⁵ Yet these impulses did not disappear, but constituted the foundation of male sexual desire for every man even in modern times. In reference to Anne McClintock's reflections on the conflation of time and space in colonial discourse, I have suggested to think of this male corporeality as an *anachronistic body*.³⁶

32 Jürgen Martschukat and Olaf Stieglitz. *"Es ist ein Junge!": Einführung in die Geschichte der Männlichkeiten in der Neuzeit*. Tübingen: diskord, 2005, 82-83.

33 It was, however, not the only dimension of this debate nor did it establish a homogeneous field of knowledge. Activists and scientists alike engaged in exploring, proposing, and living diverging concepts of masculinity and male sexual desire. See for instance the work of Magnus Hirschfeld, sexologist and outspoken advocate of the concept of a "third gender." Manfred Herzer. *Magnus Hirschfeld: Leben und Werk eines jüdischen, schwulen und sozialistischen Sexologen*. Hamburg: Männerschwarm, 2001; Wolfgang Till. "Über die Konstruktion männlicher Homosexualität zwischen Normalität und Pathologie, zwischen Männlichkeit und Weiblichkeit." In *Körper – Geschlecht – Geschichte: Historische und aktuelle Debatten in der Medizin*. Edited by Elisabeth Mixa, Innsbruck: Studien-Verlag, 1996, 132-146; James D. Steakley. *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*. New York: Arno Press, 1975. My argument here follows one particular strand of medico-psychiatric and criminological knowledge which was taken up and woven into the forensic arguments by police officers, prosecutors, experts, judges, and the accused men themselves in the criminal cases I am looking at.

34 See for instance: Havelock Ellis. "Love and Pain [1903]." In *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. Vol. 1. Honolulu, Hawaii: University Press of Hawaii, 2001, 57-69. Ellis assumed that earlier stages of this development could be discovered by studying 'primitive' societies in the colonies.

35 Richard von Krafft-Ebing. *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Forensic Study*. New York: Arkade Publishing, 1998, 1-5, 56.

36 Bischoff, Kannibale-Werden, 204.

Yet, following Krafft-Ebing, what had been a necessity on earlier stages of the evolutionary development of human civilization, and was still part of a healthy and normal male sex drive, could also be a threat. If moral inhibitions were suspended or a man's ability to control his urges was impaired, his violent impulses would take over and he would kill the object of his sexual desires. Those individuals most likely to give in to these urges were men whose willpower and nervous system was deteriorated due to a form of neurasthenia, or degenerative neurological weakness, induced by alcoholism, frequent masturbation or inherited from their parents.³⁷ This condition, often called "*Entartung*," also amplified a man's sex drive.³⁸ Individuals who were of such 'tainted' neurological condition were considered to be psychopaths, unable to adjust to the challenges of normal life and prone to criminal behavior, because they presumably lacked the necessary willpower to withstand the seductions of delinquency.³⁹ Thus, psychopathy was thought to result in homosexuality or in "sadism," an emotional connection between the experience of sexual arousal and observing or inflicting pain and cruelties on other beings, humans and animals alike.⁴⁰ According to Krafft-Ebing, it was in these pathological cases of sadism in which an otherwise 'natural' aggressiveness culminated in monstrously excessive acts of cruelty, murder, and even cannibalism: the killer craved the flesh and blood of his victims and devoured part of their bodies.⁴¹

The concept of *Entartung* was informed by the notion of the "born criminal," introduced by Cesare Lombroso in his study *L'huomo delinquente* in which he promoted the idea of a hereditary predisposition to sexual deviancy and criminality.⁴² A born criminal, he stipulated, was an "atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of

37 Richard von Krafft-Ebing. *Nervosität und neurasthenische Zustände*. Wien: Hölder, 1900, 4-8.

38 Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 32-36.

39 Karl Birnbaum. *Die krankhafte Willensschwäche und ihre Erscheinungsformen: Eine psychopathologische Studie für Ärzte, Pädagogen und gebildete Laien*. Wiesbaden: Bergmann, 1911, 56. Today, the forensic concept of psychopathy describes a very different pathology, the so-called "Anti-Social Personality Disorder" (ASPD). See: Charles van Onselen. *The Fox and the Flies: The Secret Life of a Grotesque Master Criminal*. New York: Walker, 2007, 425-427.

40 Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 53.

41 Ibid., 58-65.

42 Richard F. Wetzell. "The Medicalization of Criminal Law Reform in Imperial Germany." In *Institutions of Confinement: Hospitals, Asylums, and Prisons in Western Europe and North America, 1500-1950*. Edited by Norbert Finzsch and Robert Jütte, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 275-283, 279.

primitive humanity and the inferior animals.”⁴³ And although the majority of the German medico-psychiatric profession never supported Lombroso’s theories completely, instead stressing the interdependence of hereditary factors and external influences such as familial and social environment, education, individual conduct, and unhealthy influences on the embryo,⁴⁴ they adopted a number of his basic racist premises. Most notable was the assumption that ‘degenerates’ and ‘savages’ shared basic corporeal characteristics, such as overwhelming beast-like instincts and the insensibility to pain.⁴⁵ Also, experts assumed that hereditary neuropathic or psychopathic dispositions ran particularly often in families of the so-called lower classes.⁴⁶ Criminality was regarded as the result of a hereditary legacy, or genealogy of crime, the felon’s body as palimpsest of corporeal degenerative marks.⁴⁷ Medico-psychiatric technologies to determine *Entartung* accordingly concentrated on detecting and deciphering these signs.

To trace these degenerative characteristics in a criminal, forensic experts charted an individual’s genealogy or systematically inquired about a criminal’s family background and socialization. Kürten, for instance, was extensively questioned about his upbringing, and psychiatric experts evaluating his mental condition reconstructed his family tree, indicating possible degenerative traits of his ancestors which he might have inherited.⁴⁸ Haarmann was forced to undress and have a photograph taken of his naked figure to permanently expose his body to the eyes of

43 Cesare Lombroso. “The Criminal.” In *The Criminal Anthropological Writings of Cesare Lombroso: Published in the English Language Periodical Literature During the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries*. Edited by David M. Horton and Katherine E. Rich, Lewiston: Edwin Millen Press, 2004, 343-349, 345.

44 Karl Birnbaum. “Entartung.” In *Handwörterbuch der medizinischen Psychologie*. Edited by Karl Birnbaum, Leipzig: Thieme, 1930. 116-120. For a concise account of the scientific debate on “degeneration” in Germany, see: Richard F. Wetzell. *Inventing the Criminal: A History of German Criminology, 1880-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000, 63-68.

45 Lombroso, *The Criminal*, 345.

46 Birnbaum. *Die krankhafte Willensschwäche*, 56. See also: Cornelia Brink. “‘Nicht mehr normal und noch nicht geisteskrank...’ Über psychopathologische Grenzfälle im Kaiserreich.” *WerkstattGeschichte* 33 (2002): 22-44, 39-40.

47 Albert von Schrenck-Notzing, “Beiträge zur forensischen Beurtheilung von Sittlichkeitsvergehen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Pathogenese psychosexueller Anomalien [Part 1].” *Archiv für Kriminologie* 1,1 (1898): 5-25, 17 and Karl Birnbaum. *Über psychopathische Persönlichkeiten: Eine psychopathologische Studie*. Wiesbaden: Bergmann, 1909, 75.

48 “Ärztliches Gutachten in der Strafsache gegen den Arbeiter Peter Kürten, Prof. N. Sioli, 14.11.1930.” HStA Düsseldorf: Rep. 17/ 728, Bl. 44-45.

forensic experts searching for marks.⁴⁹ All delinquents in question were subjected to a series of psychiatric interviews designed to determine their mental state. Yet detecting psychopathic dispositions often proved to be extremely challenging, as experts had to admit. Individual bodies proved to be illegible as they did not bear the signs the experts were looking for.⁵⁰ Equally frustrating was the quest to determine the frequency of the occurrence of degenerative traits within the population as a whole. Some scholars estimated that up to ten percent of the total population might suffer from a psychopathic predisposition.⁵¹ Yet, since psychopathy could also manifest itself in ‘untainted’ individuals under the influence of alcohol, extreme strain to the nerves, or during biological crises such as adolescence, an even higher number of unknown cases were thought possible. With regard to sadism, Krafft-Ebing explicitly emphasized that it was often impossible to distinguish between “original and acquired cases of sadism.”⁵² Some authors warned their readers of the “physiologically inherent violence and lust” characterizing every “act of cohabitation,” which might render any man into a sadist and sex killer.⁵³ The cannibal, according to this model, was present in every man, regardless of skin color or upbringing.

Thus, instead of establishing a clear-cut binary distinction between normality and deviancy, between white or non-European, proletarian or bourgeois bodies, medico-psychiatric scholars outlined a continuum of male (ab)normality. Every individual was to be located on this scale according to his situation in life, his social background, and his biological heritage. Moreover, with violent, even sadistic impulses being an integral part of every man’s *anachronistic body*, manly self-control and restraint became a crucial every-day practice. The willpower necessary to successfully exercise this form of self-governance was believed to be the prerogative of white, healthy, bourgeois men; in other words: to be the distinctive feature of hegemonic masculinity.⁵⁴ Considering these findings, it becomes evident that the debates about sex criminals such as Kürten were connected to a larger network of discursive practices and technologies determining the location of each individual man’s location

49 Reprinted in: Christine Pozsár and Michael Farin, eds. *Die Haarmann-Protokolle*. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1996, 462. See also: Hoffmeister. *Der Körper des Täters*, 214.

50 Hoffmeister. *Der Körper des Täters*, 215.

51 Birnbaum. *Über psychopathische Persönlichkeiten*, 75.

52 Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 57.

53 Erich Wulffen. *Der Sexualverbrecher: Ein Handbuch für Juristen, Polizei- und Verwaltungsbeamte, Mediziner und Pädagogen*. Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1928, 458.

54 This form of intersection of race and gender has been discussed first with regard to white masculinity in the United States by Richard Dyer (*White*. London: Routledge, 1997, 14-15, 27-28).

within this continuum of (ab)normality. These practices established a two-way connection. On the one hand, the medical exams criminals were subjected to, the photographs taken, the interviews conducted with them were part of an assemblage that connected healthy and criminal, white and non-European bodies alike and were part of the technologies of normalization, discipline and self-governance that encompassed the whole society. The circuits of production of medico-psychiatric knowledge, on the other hand, relied on the criminal's bodies, difficult to decipher as they were.⁵⁵ They were quite literally the material academic careers were whittled from: Karl Berg, for instance, the first forensic expert to examine Kürten in 1930/31, gained international reputation by publishing on this case.⁵⁶

Series 2: Chains of Command and the Regulation of Violence

The tendency to exert physical violence was, as I have demonstrated in my brief sketch of criminological and medico-psychiatric literature, regarded as the evolutionary legacy of every male body. Accordingly, forensic and medical experts considered self-restraint and control of (sexual) urges the central characteristics of every healthy, white, and bourgeois man. Yet the ability and willingness to kill, to maim, or to brutalize another human being was nevertheless highly valued in men as soldiers. Or, to paraphrase Kurt Tucholsky's famous observation on war: murder, strictly forbidden by the rule of law, was obligatory only half an hour's

55 On the intertwined circuits of forensic examinations and the production of psychiatric and criminological knowledge see: Silviana Galassi. *Kriminologie im Deutschen Kaiserreich: Geschichte einer gebrochenen Verwissenschaftlichung*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004, 424.

56 Karl Berg. *Der Sadist: Gerichtsärztliches und Kriminalpsychologisches zu den Taten des Düsseldorfer Mörders Peter Kürten*. Edited by Michael Farin, München: belleville, 2004, 69-192 (first published as "Der Sadist," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für die gerichtliche Medizin* 17,4-5 (1931): 247-347). His report was translated into English within a year and published as an independent study entitled *The Sadist* (London: Acorn Press, 1938) and has been reprinted several times since. The forensic examinations of Kürten, Haarmann, and Großmann relied on the same technologies that were applied in the production of the colonial Other. See: Andrew Zimmerman. *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, 7, 157-171; Id. "Adventures in the Skin Trade. German Anthropology and Colonial Corporeality." In *Wordly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire*. Edited by Matti Bunzl and Glenn Penny, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003, 156-178, 156-157, 172. See also: Wulf D. Hund. "Die Körper der Bilder der Rassen. Wissenschaftliche Leichenschändung und rassistische Entfremdung." In *Entfremdete Körper: Rassismus als Leichenschändung*. Edited by Wulf D. Hund, Bielefeld: transcript, 2009, 13-79.

drive away from home, namely in the trenches and the combat zones of WW1.⁵⁷ This simultaneity, however, is paradoxical only at first glance. A closer look at the German “school of masculinity,” the compulsory military service, reveals a complex system designed to regulate and legitimize the exertion of violence.⁵⁸

Military discipline was designed to convey central bourgeois qualities: punctuality, cleanliness and obedience. Moreover, the recruits’ training was supposed to instill masculine virtues such as strength of will and self-restraint, transforming them into austere and resilient individuals who were law-abiding and patriotic citizens, loyal to the crown.⁵⁹ In conjunction with these highly valued masculine traits, recruits also learned that violence was part and parcel of hegemonic masculinity. Essential elements of this learning process were corporeal practices, subjecting the bodies of young conscripts to pain and humiliation. Older and more experienced soldiers, on the one hand, and noble-born officers on the other employed corporeal punishments to establish and uphold a social and military hierarchy.⁶⁰ As such, inflicting suffering among the recruits was the prerogative of an elevated status in the chain of command; a chain which connected male bodies logistically and socially by words but also by the regulated flow of affects and affections: fear, anxiety, and pain.⁶¹ Additionally, sexual pleasures could circulate within this system as the military provided a social space in which young men could acquire sexual knowledge: for instance by sharing pornographic literature or having sexual encounters with both women and men alike. It is, however, important to keep in mind that all of these experiences occurred within an explicitly misogynic framework and not all of them were voluntary. Devaluating femininity was the operating principle of these connections and established homo-social male bonds within the armed forces (“*Männerbund*”) as well as the superiority of a martial masculinity within the larger system of masculinities.⁶² One of many examples of

57 Kurt Tucholsky. “Der bewachte Kriegsschauplatz,” In Kurt Tucholsky. *Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 9, Edited by Mary Gerold-Tucholsky and Fritz J. Raddatz, Reinbek: Rowohlt, 253-254 (first published in: *Die Weltbühne* 31 (4 August 1931), 191).

58 Ute Frevert. *Die kasernierte Nation: Militärdienst und Zivilgesellschaft in Deutschland*. München: Beck, 2001, 228-245.

59 Ibid., 272, 275.

60 The Social Democratic Party repeatedly scandalized the maltreatment of young men, especially of proletarian background. See: Ibid., 228-245, 266-271.

61 Ibid., 266-271. As demonstrated by Klaus Theweleit these practices were an integral part of the destruction of the individual’s body boundaries and the creation of the collective male military body. Klaus Theweleit. *Männerphantasien: Bd. 2: Männerkörper*. Frankfurt a.M.: Stroemfeld, 1986, 165-204.

62 Frevert. *Die kasernierte Nation*, 234-237; Alon Rachamimov. “The Disruptive Comforts of Drag: (Trans)Gender Performances among Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914-

these practices were the communal celebrations during which conscripts would take their farewell from their loved ones, i.e. their mothers, sisters, brides, and wives, before entering the exclusively male world of the military. Often enough, these festivities went hand in hand with ritualized sexual violence against women.⁶³

Realizing full martial masculinity culminated in achieving the privilege and the obligation to carry a saber, on becoming an officer. Technologically speaking a long outdated piece of equipment by the beginning of the twentieth century, it was nevertheless seen as the metal embodiment of a man's honor and status. Painfully won by subjection to the military regime of violence and suffering, it indicated the carrier's success in mastering discomfort and distress. Its possession granted access to elevated social circles as well as to another ritualized application of violence among men: the duel. Formerly a practice among noble-born males only, dueling became part of bourgeois habitus in the course of the last third of the nineteenth century when ambitious middle-class men strove to emulate the life-style of the nobility and military service made sabers available to them, too.⁶⁴

If we keep these findings in mind, we see that a male 'natural' violent predisposition was well accepted as part of masculinity as long as it was exercised within the limits of social norms and mores.⁶⁵ It was scandalized only if men started inflicting pain and suffering outside of conventional regulations and contexts. Consequently, one of the principal explanations for the perceived increase of male sex crime after the end of WW1 problematized men's ability to self-control: they were considered to be unable to send the "predator" back to sleep after waking it in the heat of battle.⁶⁶ By employing this explanation, sexualized violence was depicted as an exception, obscuring the constitutive role it played in the construction of hegemonic masculinity in the first place.

1920." *American Historical Review* 111,1 (2006): 362-382; R. Connell. *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995, 76.

63 Frevert. *Die kasernierte Nation*, 243-245, 229-232.

64 Ute Frevert. *Ehrenmänner: Das Duell in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*. München: dtv, 1995, 146-162, 296-315.

65 See also: Angus McLaren. *The Trials of Masculinity: Policing Sexual Boundaries*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, 9.

66 Kankleit. "Heldentum und Verbrechen." *Monatsschrift für Kriminalpsychologie und Strafrechtsreform* 16 (1925): 193-201, 194.

Series 3: Chains of Restraint and the Imperative of Pain

None of the sex criminals whose cases were discussed in the 1920s, however, had served in the armed forces during the war; a fact that must have repelled their contemporaries especially since, after the more pacifist sentiments of the first years of the Weimar Republic, public celebrations of soldiers and positive references to the ideal of martial masculinity became more common during the second half of the 1920s.⁶⁷ According to Großmann's bill of indictment, he was discharged dishonorably in 1887 because of a conviction for a so-called "*Sittlichkeitsverbrechen*," a crime against mores and morals, and his police record lists a conviction for sexual assault (§ 176) in 1887, indicting him to 15 months imprisonment, twelve of which he had to serve in a penitentiary.⁶⁸ Haarmann started his military training, but was discharged in 1902 because he was considered unfit for service after a nervous breakdown during a marching exercise.⁶⁹ Kürten, drafted in 1904, deserted and was caught and subsequently imprisoned for seven years (1905-12).⁷⁰ In contrast to him, Großmann and Haarmann nevertheless tried to connect their biographies to the socially appreciated hegemonic model of masculinity. Großmann claimed that he was drafted and completed his basic training between 1886 and 1887 and Haarmann insisted that he enjoyed his training despite his health problems.⁷¹ Thus, apart from the connections created|closed for them by penal and other 'total institutions,' these men also actively chose to establish this connection, however fragile such a link might have been in the light of their individual biographies. This again demonstrates how influential the notion of martial masculinity was in German society at this point in time.

67 René Schilling. "*Kriegshelden:*" *Deutungsmuster heroischer Männlichkeit in Deutschland, 1813-1945*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002, 290, 292-314; Bernd Ulrich and Benjamin Ziemann. "Einleitung." In *Krieg im Frieden: Die umkämpfte Erinnerung an den Ersten Weltkrieg*. Edited by Bernd Ulrich and Benjamin Ziemann, Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1997, 7-23, 9-13.

68 "Anklageschrift gegen Carl Großmann, 6.6.1922." LAB: A Rep. 358-01/ 1522, Bd. 8, Bll. 120-132, Bl. 120.

69 "Urteil und Urteilsbegründung im Prozess gegen Friedrich Haarmann und Hans Grans, 19.12.1924." NHStA Hann. 173 Acc. 30/87, Nr. 80, Bll. 107-155, Bll. 107-108.

70 "Urteil und Urteilsbegründung im Prozess gegen Peter Kürten, 22.4.1931." HStA Düsseldorf: Rep. 17/ 543, Bll. 8-20 and Bl. 13.

71 "Protokoll der Vernehmung von Carl Großmann, 24.8.1921." LAB: A Rep. 358-01/ 1522, Bd. 1, Bll. 31-38, Bl. 32; "Vernehmungen (Protokolle) Haarmann durch Ernst Schultze in Hannover, 26.7.-9.8.1924." NHStA Hann. 155 Göttingen/ 864a, Bll. 676-734, Bll. 679, 682; "Vernehmungen (Protokolle) Haarmann durch Ernst Schultze in der Niedersächsischen Heil- und Pflegeanstalt zu Göttingen, 18.8.-25.9.1924." NHStA Hann. 155 Göttingen/ 864a, Bll. 298-586, Bll. 304-305, 499, 505, 515.

Instead of undergoing the military drill and of being integrated into the hierarchical system of martial masculinity, all sex criminals in question were connected to another series of disciplinary measures, namely the prison.⁷² They were repeat offenders who had come into conflict with the law regularly since adolescence. Großmann had been penalized several times before his arrest in 1921, for offences such as begging, disturbing the peace, damage to property, assault as well as sexual assault, and bestiality.⁷³ All in all, Großmann had been incarcerated for 23 years of his life before he was put to what turned out to be his final trial.⁷⁴ He was 19 years of age when he first went to jail, in 1882. In a very similar manner, Haarmann had been imprisoned repeatedly before his last conviction. Between 1905 and 1922 he received a number of sentences, each lasting several months, for theft, damage to property, fraud, begging, and assault.⁷⁵ He had also been confined to several institutions as an adolescent. In 1896, after being discharged from a pre-military school in Neubreisach at the age of 16, he was sent to a psychiatric clinic in Hildesheim for observation because of a pending prosecution for sexual assault on three children. Although the charges were dropped, he was held in psychiatric hospitals in Hannover, Hildesheim, and Langenhagen. He escaped in 1897.⁷⁶ He received his first prison sentence eight years later, in 1905. Kürten had a similar criminal record. He was first penalized in 1899, at the age of 15, for vagrancy. Two years later, after stealing two bicycles and being considered a repeat offender because of his earlier convictions, he was detained for 24 months. He was subjected to severe disciplinary measures such as bodily restraint during this first longer sentence.⁷⁷ In his interviews with the medico-psychiatric experts evaluating his mental condition in 1930/31, Kürten gave detailed descriptions of the conditions of his imprisonment, providing us with the opportunity to catch a more detailed picture of the relationship between

72 Goffman. *Asylums*, 11.

73 His latest prison sentence lasted fifteen years and was meted out in 1899 for raping and killing a ten year old girl. "Anklageschrift gegen Carl Großmann, 6.6.1922." LAB: A Rep. 358-01/ 1522, Bd. 8, Bll. 120-132, Bl. 120.

74 "Gutachten Strauch über Carl Großmann, 26.4.1922." LAB: A Rep. 358-01/ 1522, Bd. 4, Bll. 210-245, Bl. 224.

75 "Urteil und Urteilsbegründung im Prozess gegen Friedrich Haarmann und Hans Grans, 19.12.1924." NHStA Hann. 173 Acc. 30/87, Nr. 80, Bll. 107-155, Bll. 110-112.

76 Ibid., Bl. 108. Whenever questioned about this time later on in his life, Haarmann described his experiences in these institutes as traumatizing and emphasized that he was willing to do everything to prevent being returned into the custody of any psychiatric institution.

77 "Urteil und Urteilsbegründung im Prozess gegen Peter Kürten, 22.4.1931." HStA Düsseldorf: Rep. 17/ 543, Bll. 8-20; Bll. 8-11.

penal discipline, violence, and the articulation of masculinity. I will therefore focus on his reports to map these connections.

Kürten had been convicted not only of desertion, as already mentioned above, but also of theft, embezzlement, marriage fraud, and sexual assault. He spent almost the complete time period between 1899 and 1921 in jail (21 years and nine months). He was incarcerated in a penitentiary ("*Zuchthaus*") designed for 'hardened' criminals, in which inmates were forced into hard labor and subjected to a tighter disciplinary regime, for several years during this time. He received the first seven years of this aggravated form of penance in 1905 as punishment for his desertion and was incarcerated in the penitentiary in Münster. The second penitentiary sentence was pronounced as a reprimand for his participation in a prison revolt in 1913, effectively prolonging and aggravating his initial sentence for another two years. Kürten described the circumstances he and the other inmates were subjected to during this second period, in the penitentiaries at Siegen, Rheinbach and Brzeg (in German Brieg, close to Wrocław/Breslau). According to his account, conditions worsened during the war. Prison cells were overcrowded and nutrition insufficient, especially in Brzeg. The corpses of inmates who had died of hunger and exhaustion were hidden by their fellow prisoners in order to claim their rations and distribute their food among those who were still alive. He sketched a grim picture of a community in which only the strong survived and the dead sustained the living. The situation, he reported, was gravest in the institution's hospital:

"up to fifteen, twenty [of us] were packed together, and sometimes, when some [men] had died, two, three, also four, we just covered them up, so you could not see it easily. The warden only came to the door, and then we got food for the others, too; those who were still able to stand upright received the food: 'How many men?' – 'Eighteen men, sir.' Well, all [food] received, including for those who were already dead."⁷⁸

During his imprisonment, Kürten was subjected to several forms of disciplinary measure such as full body-restraint by chains, solitary confinement, or detention in a black cell; often these were applied in combination with each other. It was during this time that Kürten transformed into a caterpillar. Medical and psychiatric experts examining him in the context of his last trial in 1930/31 identified this behavior as a mental condition, the so-called "prison psychosis."⁷⁹ None of the psychiatrists, however, was surprised that he was not submitted to medico-

78 "Stenogramme der von Professor Sioli geführten Untersuchungen mit Kürten, Untersuchung am 7.10.1930." In Peter Kürten. Edited by Lenk and Kaever, 103-114, 111.

79 Ibid., 105 (Düsseldorf-Derendorf), 107-108 (Anrath), 109 (Münster), 110-111 (Brzeg).

psychiatric care after this incident. They regarded his actions as “nothing extraordinary for a person of psychopathic predisposition,” and an attempt to “escape reality of imprisonment [...] without any significance in terms of a permanent pathological disturbance or characteristic of personality or of behavior outside of prison.”⁸⁰ Since Kürten claimed that the suffering and trauma he experienced during his incarceration triggered his crimes and twisted his sexuality into a sadistic form, the prosecution in 1930/31 tried to establish the accuracy of his descriptions.⁸¹ All civil servants, wardens and medical personnel questioned in this context, however, namely *Strafanstaltsinspektor* Schneider, *Hauptwachtmeister* Tetzlaff as well as the physician Dr. Rixen, decried Kürten’s accounts as lies and false accusations.⁸²

Regardless of the accuracy of his descriptions or their status as representative experiences of inmates of German prisons and penitentiaries at the beginning of the twentieth century, we can nevertheless recognize a number of elements as significant to the assemblage established and into which Kürten, Großmann, and Haarmann were integrated. First, all three perpetrators were institutionalized for a long period of their life, starting at an early age. Secondly, in contrast to service in the military, penal sentences explicitly excluded men from participating in those practices and rituals that were crucial to the articulation of hegemonic masculinity.⁸³ Third, the prison excluded men from exercising socially accepted forms of violence.

Fourth, and most importantly with regard to the topic at hand, pain and violence played a crucial role within the “society of captives.”⁸⁴ As sociological studies have demonstrated, the “principal axis” around which all masculinities are organized, is the hierarchical “structure of gender relations as a whole.”⁸⁵ As such, devaluating femininity is a cen-

80 “Ärztliches Gutachten in der Strafsache gegen Peter Kürten, Dr. M. Raether, 2.1.1931.” HStA Düsseldorf Rep. 17/ 731, Bl. 260; “Ärztliches Gutachten in der Strafsache gegen den Arbeiter Peter Kürten, Prof. N. Sioli, 14.11.1930.” HStA Düsseldorf: Rep. 17/ 728, Bl. 253; Berg, *Der Sadist*, 140.

81 List of Kürten’s statements regarding his treatment in prison by compiled by prosecutor Jansen, dated 15.11.1930, HStA Düsseldorf: Rep. 17/ 541, Bll. 201-207.

82 “Brief Dr. med. Peter Rixen an Oberstaatsanwaltschaft Düsseldorf, 26.6.1930.” HStA Düsseldorf: Rep. 17/ 541, Bl. 88; “Aussagen Dr. Peter Rixen, 17.3.1931.” Ibid., Bl. 96; “Aussage Strafanstaltsinspektor Michael Schneider, 17.3.1931.” Ibid., Bll. 95-96; “Aussage Hauptwachtmeister Erich Tetzlaff, 17.3.1931.” Ibid., Bl. 95.

83 Their attempts to appropriate the values and esteem of martial masculinity for themselves were unsuccessful as we have seen in Großmann’s and Haarmann’s cases.

84 Mechthild Bereswill. “‘The Society of Captives’ – Formierungen von Männlichkeit im Gefängnis. Aktuelle Bezüge zur Gefängnisforschung von Gresham M. Sykes.” *Kriminologisches Journal* 36,2 (2004): 92-108.

85 R. Connell. *The Men and the Boys*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000, 31.

tral part of establishing a social, hierarchical order amongst men in society in general. Closed, all-male systems, however, like penal institutions preclude the possibility of referring back to a femininity coupled to a female body. Instead, “the everyday strategies of subjection, of establishing boundaries, and of creating a sense of protection” connect male bodies only, relying on corporeal violence in general and on enforced male-to-male sex practices in particular in order to establish social hierarchy. Yet the “hypermasculinity” articulated in this manner nevertheless refers back to the traditional ideal of martial masculinity, emphasizing physical strength and virility.⁸⁶ Both masculinities were firmly knotted together.

Unfortunately, we lack similar analyses of the historical situation in penal institutions around 1900, but statements made by (ex)convicts in the context of the criminal cases at hand indicate that inflicting pain, transgressing the physical boundaries of others, and demonstrating that other males were sexually available were all included in the set of strategies and practices which established a hierarchical order amongst the prisoners. Kürten, for instance, was reported to grab other men’s crotches and brag about his violent and sadistic heterosexual practices in front of other inmates.⁸⁷ Considering the age Kürten entered penal institutions as well as the length of his respective incarcerations, opportunities for sexual encounters outside of prison must have been rare for him. During adolescence he would also have been especially vulnerable to sexual assault from other inmates due to his physical inferiority. Thus, emphasizing his heterosexuality in the context of an all-male social environment while touching another man’s penis, an act clearly coded as homosexual behavior, fulfilled another purpose than merely relaying information. It shows that, although male bodies were connected in an af-

86 Aptly demonstrated by Mechthild Bereswill in her studies on male-to-male sexualized violence in prisons. See: Ead. “‘Die Schmerzen des Freiheitsentzugs’ – Gefängniserfahrungen und Überlebensstrategien männlicher Jugendlicher und Heranwachsender.” In *Forschungsthema Strafvollzug*. Edited by Mechthild Bereswill and Werner Greve, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001, 253-285; Ead. *Society of Captives*; Ead. “Männlichkeit und Gewalt. Empirische Einsichten und theoretische Reflexionen über Gewalt zwischen Männern im Gefängnis.” *Feministische Studien* 24,2 (2006): 242-255, 253 (quote). On the exertion of violence to articulate masculinities as well as to establish hierarchies in all male groups in general see: Michael Meuser. “Gewalt, hegemoniale Männlichkeit und ‘doing masculinity’.” *Kriminologisches Journal*, Beiheft 7 (1999): 49-65; Id. “Gewalt als Modus von Distinktion und Vergemeinschaftung. Zur ordnungsbildenden Funktion männlicher Gewalt.” In *Geschlecht - Gewalt - Gesellschaft*. Edited by Siegfried Lamnek and Manuela Boatca, Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2003, 37-54; Gerlinda Smaus. “Die Mann-von-Mann-Vergewaltigung als Mittel zur Herstellung von Ordnungen.” In *Ibid.*, 100-122.

87 “Aussage Wilhelm Hofer, 27.5.1960.” HStA Düsseldorf: Rep. 17/ 531, Bll. 5-6, Bl. 5.

fective and perhaps even erotic way, homosexuality was nevertheless strongly ostracized by the prisoners. It also demonstrates that, in conjunction to the findings of sociological studies among inmates today,⁸⁸ female bodies and female femininity outside of the institution were an important point of reference for the practices and acts employed by the convicts.

The Cannibal and the Caterpillar: The Violence and Pain of Becoming-Man

The sequences of technologies and practices I have described above bear a number of similarities. They are also interconnected. All three of them rely on the human body as their material resource. The first, the medico-psychiatric complex, established the *anachronistic body* by measuring, comparing and evaluating male anatomies. It also located each individual man within a continuum of male (ab)normality ranging from the healthy, white, bourgeois man to the degenerative, criminal felon or the colonial 'savage,' based on the assumption that all of them shared an inherent corporeal inclination to violence. Although white men were supposed to be capable of exercising a sufficient level of self-control to prevent outbursts of their impulses on their own, a whole apparatus was installed to monitor and regulate male bodies and their urges.

Apart from the medico-psychiatric complex, this apparatus also included compulsory military training. Here the recruits not only appropriated behavioral traits that were considered fitting for a citizen, for instance obedience, loyalty to the crown, punctuality, or cleanliness. The young men also experienced that the exertion of violence according to circumstance was socially accepted, even highly valued in terms of the construction of martial masculinity. The other component of the apparatus to monitor and regulate male bodies was the prison. As a "total institution,"⁸⁹ the barracks as an assemblage of bodies, architecture, and disciplinary rules bore a number of important similarities to the prison. Both rested on the human body's affective capacity to experience pain, fear, anxiety, or sexual arousal. They aimed at dismantling individual identities, but for prisoners, no inclusion into the valorized model of martial masculinity beckoned as a reward for enduring drill and discipline. Both structures relied on the distinction between bodies open and

88 Bereswill. *Männlichkeit und Gewalt*, 249-250.

89 Goffman. *Asylums*, 11.

available to the infliction of pain and those who were not. The prerogative to issue corporeal punishment, initially reserved to officers and wardens, was appropriated by recruits and convicts alike to establish a hierarchical order amongst themselves. When Kürten transformed himself into a caterpillar during his incarceration in Münster, by wrapping an additional layer of skin/cloth around his otherwise vulnerable and open body, he established secure corporeal boundaries. He took control of the flows of affects going through him, connecting him to his fellow inmates, the wardens, the institution, and cut them off. Becoming a caterpillar, then, could be regarded as a means to exit the assemblage through which he was articulated as an embodied subject.

From a DeleuzoGuattarian perspective, this act is particularly interesting. As mentioned at the very beginning of my analysis, Deleuze and Guattari consider becoming to be an inherently material process. Resting on the capacity to establish affective and material connections, it simultaneously has the potential to dissolve molar, segmented structures created through knowledge/power such as gendered subjectivities.⁹⁰ Beginning with “subtracting the unique from the multiplicity” (n-1) which is then to be continued in a new rhizomatic mesh, a new multiplicity.⁹¹ As such, becoming drives the Wankel engine of deterritorialization and territorialization.⁹² In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari discuss two lines of becoming, becoming-woman and becoming-animal, describing both as privileged points of departure for the destabilization of existing power structures.⁹³

This privilege has been questioned by several scholars. Rosi Braidotti, for instance, claims that the DeleuzoGuattarian concept of becoming disregards the different subject positions from which men and women embark on such a route. She argues that “the process of becoming, far from being the dissolution of all identities in a flux [...] may itself be sex-specific, sexually differentiated, and, consequently, take different forms according to different gendered positions.”⁹⁴ Paul Patton points out that, if we take Deleuze’s and Guattari’s own assertion that becoming “has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination” seriously, “it makes no sense to regard becoming-woman as a necessary stage in a broader process of abolition of molar subjectivity or human

90 Deleuze and Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*, 306.

91 Schmiedel. *Contesting the Oedipal Legacy*, 36.

92 König, Perinelli, Stieglitz. *Einleitung Praktiken*, 13-14.

93 Deleuze and Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*, 306, see also 272-273.

94 Braidotti. *Nomadic Subjects*, 259.

liberation.”⁹⁵ Norbert Finzsch recently demonstrated that, if considered in the larger network of Deleuze’s oeuvre, especially with regard to his clarifications on the topic of homosexuality, a much broader concept of becoming emerges which emphasizes the movement of deterritorialization, regardless of its starting point.⁹⁶

From a historian’s point of view, this issue has to be considered carefully. And there are three aspects I would like to discuss in further detail as they highlight how historical analyses can enrich feminist theory on the one hand and how DeleuzoGuattarian pursuits can deepen our historical understanding on the other. First: as my short sketch of the medico-psychiatric assemblage and the male *anachronistic body* has demonstrated, manliness was articulated through a multiplicity of practices and technologies wrought by power|knowledge. Contemporary discourses described white, healthy, bourgeois men as capable of denying their physicality and of controlling their bodies, but simultaneously conceptualized every male body as inherently violent, savage, in socio-political terms as minor; not only men who could have been categorized to represent non-hegemonic masculinities such as colonized men or criminals, to speak in Cornell’s terms, but every single man. Men were, in this regard, as much embodied subjects as women. Hence, Braidotti’s figuration of the ‘nomadic subject’ can be fruitfully applied to the analysis of the socio-historical location of these masculinities, allowing us to systematically reflect on the how the strings of power (*potestas*) and potential (*potentia*) were spun together and in order to “identify possible sites and strategies of resistance.”⁹⁷ Considering these findings and taking up Braidotti’s call to recognize different starting points of lines of becoming, a historically specific form of becoming-man is not only conceivable, but would have to be put into the larger context of DeleuzoGuattarian thinking on becoming-minor.⁹⁸ This conclusion stands in apparent contradiction to the majority of Deleuzian scholarship, which stresses their open rejection of the notion of becoming-man: “man is the molar entity par excellence.”⁹⁹ If, however, we understand ‘man’ in terms of a socially and historically located subjectivity, articulated in a web of “productive relations of power, knowledge, and desire,” as

95 Deleuze and Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*, 323; Paul Patton. *Deleuze and the Political*. London: Routledge, 2000, 82.

96 Norbert Finzsch. “Becoming Gay: Deleuze, Feminismus und Queer Theory.” *Invertito. Jahrbuch für die Geschichte der Homosexualitäten* 12 (2010): 104-124, 120-123.

97 Braidotti. *Nomadic Subjects*, 18, 10.

98 Just as Finzsch argues to consider the potential of “becoming-gay” (Finzsch. *Becoming Gay*, 123).

99 Deleuze and Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*, 320-322, quote 322.

demonstrated above, this refusal may not be productive but in fact be analytically constrictive.¹⁰⁰

Secondly, mapping three distinct yet interconnected sequences that generated male corporealities at the beginning of the twentieth century from a materialist perspective demonstrated that the notion of the human body as text|matter, to be inscribed (by civilisatory or social processes) and to be deciphered (by experts), was part of those discursive practices that constituted masculinities around 1900. It would therefore seem prudent to explore alternative explanatory models such as new materialism further, as it allows us to unfold and reflect on these continuities and interconnections rather than operating on the same basic assumptions.

Thirdly, my map rendered visible the central role not only violence but also bodily affects such as fear, pain, or arousal played in the assemblages in question. DeleuzoGuattarian scholars, most prominently Brian Massumi, argue that studying affects provides critical analysis with a privileged access point when we are interested in finding out more about pre-discursive bodies. Their argument rests on a distinction between affect and emotion. An “affect,” to quote Massumi,

“is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is. Formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions of actual connection or blockage, are the capture and closure of affect. Emotion is the intensest (most contracted) expression of that capture and of the fact that something has always and again escaped.”¹⁰¹

His position, just as the position of other advocates of the “new materialism” or a radical “ontological turn,” which supports the existence of a pre-discursive body|matter, is highly contested among feminist and cultural studies scholarship alike. Sara Ahmed, one of the most outspoken critics of Massumi’s position, argues that his “distinction between affect and emotion under-describes the work of emotions” and insists that they “involve forms of intensity, bodily orientation and direction that are not simply about ‘subjective content’ or qualification of intensity.” They are not simply “‘after-thoughts’, but shape how bodies are moved by the world they inhabit.”¹⁰² Instead of assuming the autonomy of af-

100 Braidotti. *Nomadic Subjects*, 17.

101 Brian Massumi. “The Autonomy of Affect.” In *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*. Edited by Paul Patton, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, 217-239, 228. See also: Id. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002, 23-45.

102 Sara Ahmed. “Creating Disturbance. Feminism, Happiness and Affective Differences.” In *Working with Affect in Feminist Readings: Disturbing Differences*. Edited

fects, Ahmed recommends to begin “with the messiness of the experiential, the unfolding of bodies into worlds.” According to her understanding, this messiness or “stickiness” is the defining characteristic of affects.¹⁰³

To conclude: It cannot be the task of the article at hand to solve this dispute. My analysis does, however, provide a historical case study provoking questions that might stimulate the ongoing debate. As my investigation of Kürten’s accounts of his prison experiences has demonstrated, our knowledge of the human body is mediated through language. Kürten was a particularly unreliable informant. He testified as an embodied subject, with a vested, even strategic interest. But are not all accounts of bodily experiences always also narrations of the self? If this is an irreducible process, we might want to turn this to our advantage, as constructivist feminism does, and explore this narration and its location in the network of power|knowledge. Such an analysis would not be interested in authenticity but in location. It would also accept that bodies may be irretrievably lost in a web of language, discourse and power. Yet, as my sketchy maps of three of the assemblages that constituted masculinities at the beginning of the twentieth century has shown, a DeleuzoGuattarian perspective can be very productive for historical analysis. To conceptualize the body as “continually becoming” provided the possibility to reconstruct the male *anachronistic body* and to expose similarities between the medico-psychiatric notion of the human body as text|matter and recent constructivist approaches.¹⁰⁴

What lines of (historical) inquiry would open up if we conceptualized affects as autonomous, pre-discursive entities? And how to reconcile this perspective with the discursive condition of the human body with which we as historians are confronted with in our sources? In her study on *Volatile Bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz envisions the relationship between mind and body in analogy to the Möbius strip, a mathematical object which has only one surface and only one boundary. Following the band one arrives back at the starting point, yet on the opposite side of its surface. A Möbius band therefore connects different|same points at any one time and has always simultaneously an inside|outside surface. According to Grosz, the strip has the “advantage of showing that there can be a relation between two ‘things’ – mind and body – which presumes neither their identity nor their radical disjunction.”¹⁰⁵ Moreover, it also

by Marianne Liljeström and Susanna Paasonen, Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2010, 31-44, 32.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 32-33.

¹⁰⁴ Schmiedel. *Contesting the Oedipal Legacy*, 34.

¹⁰⁵ Grosz. *Volatile Bodies*, 209.

“shows that while there are disparate ‘things’ being related, they have the capacity to twist one into the other.”¹⁰⁶ Imagining autonomous affects and qualified emotions, body and mind, matter and discourse as locked to each other in a Möbius strip, I would like to argue, provides us with an opportunity to analyze their interconnectedness while bypassing the questions of supremacy of one over the other.¹⁰⁷ Or to come back to my initial question about the relationship between the cannibal and the caterpillar: according to this mode of thinking, they are two discrete yet connected points on the band (embodiments), each located within a historically distinct assemblage of power|knowledge. Each is constituted by an equally distinct relationship between emotions and affects, between congealing territorializing discourses, practices and technologies and transformative lines of flight.

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106 Ibid., 209-210. The model is not, as Grosz points out, “well suited for representing modes of becoming, modes of transformation.” Ibid., 210.

107 Making a similar argument, Clare Hemmings proposes to think about self-reflexive “affective cycles” in which an “ongoing, incrementally altering chain – body-affect-emotion-affect-body – [is] doubling back upon the body and influencing the individual’s capacity to act in the world.” Clare Hemmings. “Invoking Affect. Cultural Theory and the Ontological Turn.” *Cultural Studies* 19,5 (2005): 548-567, 564.

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