CINEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN FRANCE AND GERMANY, 1918-1933

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the cinematic representations of women in the inter-war period in France and Germany. By investigating five films produced during the period from 1918 to 1933, this work analyses the portrayal of women in two societies facing great upheaval. I examine the representations of women in the films through analysis of the presentation of gender, female sexuality and pronatalism, patriarchy and the dichotomised portrayal of women through the *Neue Frau* and *la femme au foyer* and class. Furthermore, I examine the similarities and differences in female portrayal which can be found between the two countries. The five films to be examined are *La souriante Madame Beudet* (1922), *La fille de l'eau* (1924), *Fanny* (1932), *Die Büchse der Pandora* (1929) and *Der blaue Engel* (1930).

INTRODUCTION.

In this thesis I will be examining the representations of women in French and German cinema during the years 1918-1933. This was a period marked by great change after four years of devastating warfare, but this change was both lauded and feared in equal measure. This was particularly the case regarding the situation of women who were having to adapt to life after the war where they had experienced much freedom and had seen their roles develop so much. In the first chapter, I will examine the historical context of the changes in economic, social and political terms for women during the inter-war period. Such an investigation is important as an understanding of women's wartime activities enables a comparison of their changing role in the inter-war period, especially when considering themes such as pronatalism, domesticity and images of the *Neue Frau*. To aid my investigation into the changing roles of women, I have chosen to look at cinema as it gives the viewer information about contemporary mores and values within a culture through its visual representations. Peter Miles and Malcolm Smith argue that "[i]t is not so much that literature and cinema may be used as historical evidence as such, nor that historical evidence may be used to elucidate a novel or film, but that text and history must be seen in tandem."[1] I have chosen a comparative angle to explore the themes of the films, as examining how representations differed or were similar will shed light on the differing paths of the nations both during and after the war.

I will be analysing five films across the period. The second chapter will look at representations of women in French cinema through three films. The first is a short silent film, entitled *La souriante Madame Beudet*. Directed by Germaine Dulac in 1922, the film is the story of a bored, bourgeois housewife trapped in a loveless marriage to her boorish husband. This film was selected because of the perspective offered at this time by a female director on

1 Peter Miles and Malcolm Smith, *Cinema, Literature and Society: Elite and Mass Culture in Interwar Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 4.

the role of a woman in a traditional relationship in contemporary French society. The second film is an early Jean Renoir film from 1924 called *La fille de l'eau*. This is another silent film but unlike *La souriante Madame Beudet* it is a full-length feature film. The film follows the story of an orphan girl through various crises before the film's eventual happy resolution. This film was chosen for the way in which the life of the heroine is dictated by the dominating males around her. Finally, I will look at *Fanny*, a film based on Marcel Pagnol's stage play of the same name and directed by Marc Allégret in 1932. Here we follow Fanny, pregnant and abandoned by her lover, as she seeks to marry in order to give her child a better life. This film was chosen for its perspectives on pronatalism and the woman's role as a mother. These three films together address key ideas about the role of women, especially within a domestic familial context, and highlight themes of control and morality.

The third chapter investigates the representations of women in German cinema by looking at two feature length films, *Die Büchse der Pandora* and *Der blaue Engel*. *Die Büchse der Pandora*, directed by G. W. Pabst in 1929, is a silent film starring Louise Brooks and follows Lulu, a high-class prostitute, and the devastation that ensues for the people who form attachments with her. This film was chosen because of the way in which it portrays the *Neue Frau* as a threat to society. Secondly, I will look at *Der blaue Engel*, a sound film appearing a year later in 1930, directed by Josef von Sternberg. Here the story is concerned with the demise of a schoolteacher after he falls in love with and marries a nightclub singer. The underlying theme of a shift in power in a relationship between a man and a woman was one of the key reasons for its inclusion in my thesis and both films address the themes of control and social order. The dichotomised portayal of women in the German films highlights the situation of women in Weimar society, where contemporary debates regarding modernism and change were reflected in the changing position of women. The new rights of women in terms of suffrage and equality led to debate about the role of women and their deviation from

‘traditional’ motherly roles. Marsha Meskimmon argues that “[f]rom the prostitute to the mother and the *neue Frau*, nearly every aspect of the regulation of public and private life was figured in terms of ‘woman’ and the gendered limits of acceptable and deviant behaviour.”[2]

The films to be discussed all highlight different aspects of contemporary female representation within the cultures and societies from which they originate. The films themselves encompass a range of cinematic genres and theoretical approaches, from an overtly melodramatic film to a critical feminist approach. This demonstrates the range of responses to the changing role of women in society. The tropes of social change and modernity in face of a latent conservatism are portrayed in these films and reflect debates at the time regarding what a woman’s role should be. As Joan Wallach Scott writes “[h]istorians need instead to examine the ways in which gendered identities are substantively constructed and relate their findings to a range of activities, social organizations, and historically specific cultural representations.”[3] Examining films produced in this period enables me to contextualise my findings in relation to the cultural sphere prevalent at the time. Cinema, at this time, was a relatively new medium which was becoming increasingly popular amongst all classes and is an excellent source of contemporary beliefs and fears. The questions I shall consider are the following: how did women’s roles change during the wartime period and how did they develop afterwards, in the inter-war years? What economic and social aspects affected women’s roles and how were these changes portrayed in contemporary film? Finally, what were the differences, if any, between the changing roles in France and those in Germany?

2 Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren’t Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1999), p. 6.

3 Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 44.

CONTEXTUALISING FEMALE CINEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS.

When examining women's roles in society in the years 1918-1933 of the inter-war period, it is first necessary to contextualise these years against those of the First World War. It can be argued that in some cases the war symbolised a deep and fundamental shift in attitudes towards women. Yet there are also instances where there was either no change in attitude or where changes were simply symptomatic of the needs and demands of the war economy. I shall begin this contextualisation by looking at political, economic and social conditions for women during the war before assessing their situation in France and Germany during the inter-war years.

Women played an important role both at home and on the front lines during the war. Whether it was making armaments in factories or caring for sick soldiers as nurses in military hospitals, they played a pivotal role in the war effort. The period was characterised by the entry of women into what were traditionally perceived as 'male' jobs. In France, the entry of women into the job market was not a new thing. Indeed, in the pre-war period, "plus d'une femme sur deux travaillent dans les secteurs traditionnels de la couture à domicile ou de la domesticité. Une sur quatre est ouvrière à l'usine et une sur douze employeé de bureau."[4] Françoise Thébaud notes that women represented just over a third of the working population, which equated to 7,200,000 women.[5] Yet what was different was that women were now able to enter different industries – metallurgy was one such industry where employers initially had reservations about hiring women owing to what was perceived as their 'natural meekness' but as the needs of the war economy became more urgent, in particular after the Battle of Verdun, industrialists became more open to the idea of employing women. Becker writes that "17 731

4 Michelle Zancarini-Fourel, 'Travailler pour la patrie?' in *1914-1918: combats de femmes*, ed. Évelyne Morin-Rotureau (Paris: Editions Autrement, 2004), pp. 32-46 (pp. 32-33).

5 Françoise Thébaud, 'La guerre, et après?' in *1914-1918: combats de femmes*, ed. Évelyne Morin-Rotureau (Paris: Editions Autrement, 2004), pp. 185-199 (p. 189).

femmes étaient employées dans les usines métallurgiques avant la guerre, elles étaient 104 641 en juillet 1916, 132 012 en janvier 1918, soit une augmentation de 75%."[6]

In Germany, too, the working woman was not a new phenomenon. Richard Wall argues that "four in ten of all the women employed in war industries in Bavaria in 1917 had had previous experience of factory work."[7] Women had been working in factories and in agriculture before the war. Indeed, Germany had one of the highest levels of female participation in the workforce and as LeGates comments, "[t]he percentage of women entering the paid labor force for the first time during the war was small in comparison to women who transferred from other sectors into war industries."[8] In a similar way to France, the employment figures are not so much marked by an increase in the number of females employed, as in the distribution of the labour itself.

The reasons for female wartime employment are manifold. As Margaret Darrow comments, "[i]n many people's minds, women's role in the wartime labor market was not primarily an economic issue, but a moral one."[9] However, when one considers that families had lost a male wage and that the *allocations militaires* given by the French government were often insufficient for families to live on, financial necessity may well have been a greater motivation. This is a notion shared by Ute Frevert with regard to German women's labour during the war.[10] In short, women had to work in order for their families to survive.

Yet it was not only in traditionally 'male' industries where women could now find jobs. Nursing was an area of employment the lay community could become involved with for the first time, as previously this work had been done by nuns. This work, whilst being new on

6 Jean-Jacques Becker, *Les français dans la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 1980), p. 26.
7 Richard Wall, 'English and German families and the First World War, 1914-18' in *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914-1918*, ed. Richard Wall and Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 43-106 (p. 59).
8 Marlene LeGates, *In Their Time: A History of Feminism in Western Society* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 289.
9 Margaret H. Darrow, *French Women and the First World War: War Stories of the Home Front* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), p. 170.
10 Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (Oxford: Berg, 1990), pp. 152-153.

the one hand, still maintained the gender hierarchy of pre-war society – female nurses were still subservient to the male doctors. Furthermore, it was felt that nursing "drew on [women's] allegedly natural capabilities for caring and nurturing."[11] The contemporary stereotypical belief, widespread amongst both males and females, that nursing drew on female natural competencies, can account to some degree for the popularity of nursing in this period in both France and Germany. Regina Schulte comments that some 92,000 women were employed during the course of the war as nurses and assistant nurses by the Imperial Commissar and Military Inspector for Voluntary Nursing, a figure which corresponds to two-fifths of all medical personnel.[12]

However, employment was not the only area where there were changes for women. The political situation of women was also the subject of debate. During the war itself, it can be argued that there were few fundamental changes for women, owing to the fact that both countries were engaged in total war and foreign policy took precedence over domestic issues. In short, winning the war was more important than giving women rights. Women in France did get some rights in the pre-war period through the modernisation of the Napoleonic code. Rochefort writes that there was "le droit pour les femmes mariées de toucher leur salaire"[13] from 1907 "ainsi que l'électorat et l'éligibilité aux elections prud'homales."[14] Finally, in 1913, women were given the right to paid maternity leave, a move which can be seen retrospectively as the beginning of a wave of pronatalist legislation that continued in the inter-war period. In terms of suffrage, it had been hoped by feminist leaders that war activity would enhance the case for female suffrage. However, during the period itself, discussion was not centred on giving women the vote as their right, but instead on offering suffrage as a way

11 Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University Of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. 37.

12 Regina Schulte, 'The sick warrior's sister: nursing during the First World War' in *Gender Relations in German History*, ed. Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 121-142 (p. 123).

13 Florence Rochefort, 'Les féministes en guerre' in *1914-1918: combats de femmes*, ed. Évelyne Morin-Rotureau (Paris: Editions Autrement, 2004), pp. 17-31 (p. 17).

14 Ibid, p. 17.

compensating women for the loss of loved ones. The idea of 'suffrage for the dead' was first mooted in 1916 as a way of compensating wives for the deaths of their husbands and there was a similar idea with the familial vote.[15] When women in Britain and Germany got the vote in 1918, it came as a disappointment when French women did not. Grayzel writes that "Senator Anton Gourju, noted that in 1921, 138 million women had political rights and that he was 'ashamed to say that not one was French!'".[16]

Yet political discussions were not simply restricted to the sphere of suffrage. At this time, there was great emphasis on reproduction. In France, the declining birth rate had been of some concern even before the war began. With the unification of Germany in 1871, France was highly worried by its more populous neighbour. In France, the pronatalist faction was very strong.[17] Indeed, the *nataliste* argument was used against hiring women in certain war industries, such as metallurgy, though employers eventually had no choice but to hire women owing to the needs of the war economy. Reform that was undertaken at this time was predominantly concerned with improving the conditions of mothers. One of the laws passed in the wartime period in France allowed women to breastfeed at work. In Germany, maternity benefit was introduced for soldiers' wives and there was an increase in childcare provision for working mothers.[18] Indeed, it would seem that even at periods of national crisis, the repopulation of the nation was never far from the governments' minds. Coupled with the high death tolls suffered on both sides, this was a theme which was to dominate the inter-war period.

After the war ended, both France and Germany were marked by their desire to return to 'normalcy'. In essence, this meant a return to the pre-war state and more specifically, the gender roles of before the war. Opinions are divided as to whether 'normalcy' was truly

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15 Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p. 215.
16 Ibid, p. 222.
17 Marie-Monique Huss, 'Pronatalism in the Inter-War Period in France' in *Journal of Contemporary History,* 25 (1990), 39-68, (p. 42).
18 Ute Frevert, *Women in German History*, pp. 158-59.

desired by both men and women. LeGates argues that both sexes wanted a return to ‘normalcy’ which was “understood as traditional gender roles and the security of a familiar domesticity.”[19] It would seem that this familiar security was essential to society after four years of upheaval and uncertainty. Conversely, Cooper writes that “‘normalcy’ itself had become contested territory” and that “the fundamental illogic of sex-role inequalities became permanently exposed.”[20] It is beyond doubt that the war had exposed women to new freedoms and responsibilities which they were loath to relinquish after the war had ended.

However, there was to be no continuation of the status that women and women’s work had enjoyed during the war. Patterns of female employment were forced to change. The high level of women working in ‘male’ industries was unsustainable and women were expected to renounce their new jobs for the returning soldiers. Thébaud remarks that “[u]ne circulaire du 13 novembre 1918 invite les ouvrières des usines de guerre d’État à partir avant le 5 décembre avec une prime.”[21] The inference here is that the stability of the nation and portraying the idea that nothing had changed to the returning soldiers was of the utmost importance. Kedward writes that “[l]etters home written by soldiers during the war reveal an idealized attitude to women and family which gave a strong impetus to the continuation of traditional gender relations once the war was over. The ‘return to normalcy’ had a heavily gendered meaning.”[22] Consequently, the level of women in employment initially fell owing to the returning war veterans, but as families’ financial needs increased, women returned to work. France had a high rate of female participation in employment when compared to other countries, such as Britain. Between 1906 and 1946, women constituted 36.6% to 37.9% of the active population.[23] What is more, the number of single women in employment was very high and

19 Marlene LeGates, *In Their Time*, p. 288.
20 Sandi E. Cooper, ‘Women in War and Peace, 1914-1945’ in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, 3rd edn, ed. Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard and Merry E. Wiesner (Boston, MA: Houghton Miffin Company, 1998), pp. 439-460, (pp. 439-40).
21 Françoise Thébaud, ‘La guerre, et après?’, p. 190.
22 Rod Kedward, *La vie en bleu* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), p. 94.
23 Anne-Marie Sohn, ‘Entre deux guerres: Les rôles féminins en France et en Angleterre’ in *Histoire des femmes en occident – Tome 5: Le XXe siècle*, ed. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (Paris: Plon, 1992), pp.

Sohn writes that "la moitié des salariées sont mariées en 1920 et 55% en 1936."[24] In Britain, the number of married women in employment was much lower at 14% to 16%.[25]

In Germany, there were also initial difficulties for women in employment as war veterans returned and "[t]he demobilization decrees aimed to return veterans to their jobs as quickly as possible and called for the immediate dismissal of women whose male family members could now earn a living."[26] Yet as in France, this was only a temporary drop and by 1925 there were 1.7 million more women in full-time employment than there had been in 1907.[27] However there were changes in the kind of employment undertaken by women; there were more working class women doing clerical work or becoming shop assistants.[28] Furthermore, there was an increase in urban migration; in 1910, 21.3% of people lived in towns with a population of more than 100,000 and this figure increased to over 30% by 1933.[29] According to the law at this time, women were equal to men as had been codified under Article 109 of the Constitution which read "[a]lle Deutschen sind vor dem Gesetze gleich. Männer und Frauen haben grundsätzlich dieselben staatsbürgerlichen Rechte und Pflichten."[30] Yet whilst men and women had *basically* the same rights, there was a lack of implementation of this principle and inequalities still remained. As LeGates correctly states, the 1895 law confirming the dependency of married women was still in force.[31] This would seem to imply that giving women full rights was not a priority for the government at this time. German women faced a further difficulty in employment as a result of their marital status. In 1925, almost 29% of married women had full-time jobs.[32] Yet as inflation cast its ever-

91-113, (p. 95).

24 Anne-Marie Sohn, 'Entre deux guerres', p. 95.

25 Ibid, p. 95.

26 Kathleen Canning, 'Gender and the Politics of Class Formation: Rethinking German Labor History' in *Society, Culture and the State in Germany, 1870-1930*, ed. Geoff Eley (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1999) pp. 105-142 (p. 138).

27 Ute Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 176.

28 Ibid, p. 181.

29 Ibid, p. 176.

30 Deutsches Historisches Museum, *Verfassung: Deutsches Reich, 11.8.1919*, <http://www.dhm.de/lemo/html/dokumente/verfassung/index.html>, [accessed 13/05/2008].

31 Marlene LeGates, *In Their Time*, p. 292.

32 Ute Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 193.

increasing shadow over German society, the government passed the Law on the Legal Position of Female Public Servants in 1932 which permitted – and indeed, called for – the "dismissal of married female government employees with some other means of support, presumably their husbands."[33] The inference here was that not only were women subservient to men but also that women should be reliant upon their husbands. Also, at a time where the pronatalist faction was steadily gaining in support, it would seem that the government was forcing women out of the 'male' public sphere and into their own 'female' domestic sphere. Furthermore, as von Ankum argues, this attitude "also stresses the essentialist approach of Weimar gender politics in the interest of nationalist politics that assigned priority to women's 'natural' roles as mothers over the female individual's autonomy."[34]

Pronatalism became an important feature of inter-war society in both France and Germany. The First World War had meant a heavy human loss for both countries. Richard Wall and Jay Winter write that, "[o]ver 16 million men were killed or died on active service in the German armed forces. In aggregate, this total exceeds that for France (1.3 million) but because of her larger population, Germany's losses as a proportion of men in uniform (15.4 per cent) or of men aged 15-49 (12.5 per cent) were slightly lower than those of France, which lost nearly 17 per cent of those who served and over 13 per cent of her male population of military age."[35] The casualties amassed on both sides were undoubtedly significant, yet France had had concerns about its falling birth rates for many decades and the war losses served to exacerbate an already problematic situation.

In France, the pronatalist movement was both vocal and strong and attracted support from across the political spectrum.[36] The first example of pronatalist legislation in France during this period was in 1920. Previously, contraception had been tolerated by French society

33 Marlene LeGates, *In Their Time*, p. 310.

34 Katharina von Ankum, 'Introduction' in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Germany*, ed. Katharina von Ankum (London: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 1-11, (p. 4).

35 Jay Winter, 'Some paradoxes of the First World War' ed. Richard Wall and Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 9-42, (p. 27).

36 Marie-Monique Huss, 'Pronatalism in the Inter-War Period in France', p. 42.

but a law passed in July 1920 made the giving of information about, and use of, contraception illegal. Indeed, conviction could lead to a period of up to six months in prison or a heavy fine of between 100 and 5000 francs.[37] Furthermore, abortion became subject to harsher punishments under the law of 1923. Cooper writes that "[s]tiff prison terms and fines criminalized abortion and birth control education. Medals for motherhood – gold for women bearing ten children, silver and bronze for lesser breeders – were coupled with campaigns to remind French women that 'maternity is the patriotism of women'."[38] As James McMillan aptly comments, "[p]recisely because the war had exacerbated the demographic crisis, the maternal role assumed even more importance."[39] At the same time, there were initiatives by the government to promote motherhood. The *Fête des mères*, established in 1920, was "the first official state recognition of the job of motherhood."[40] These initiatives sought to reinforce the idea of motherhood as a career and medals and *Fête des mères* were the ways in which 'achievements' were celebrated. Maternity was indeed to be the new patriotism of women and essentially, "[l]'idéal de la femme au foyer est d'abord celui de la mère au foyer."[41] Alongside these government measures there was the *Alliance nationale contre la dépopulation*, a pronatalist group which enjoyed a great deal of support in this period, its aim being "to promote awareness of the demographic decline and action to redress it."[42] Huss continues to note that even though its membership levels may only have reached 35,000, its influence was far more widespread and "some of its posters, for example, had a circulation of two million."[43] Furthermore the Catholic Church attempted to encourage women towards motherhood with the Papal Encyclical of 1930 entitled *Casti connubi* which proclaimed that all sexual relations

37 Melanie Latham, *Regulating Reproduction: A Century of Conflict in Britain and France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 27.
38 Sandi E. Cooper, 'Women in War and Peace, 1914-1945', p. 448.
39 James McMillan, 'The Great War and Gender Relations: the Case of French Women and the First World War Revisited' in *Evidence History and the Great War: Historians and the Impact of 1914-18*, ed. Gail Braybon (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), pp. 135-153, (p. 150).
40 Marie-Monique Huss, 'Pronatalism in the Inter-War Period in France', p. 43.
41 Anne-Marie Sohn, 'Entre deux guerres', p. 102.
42 Marie-Monique Huss, 'Pronatalism in the Inter-War Period in France', p. 43.
43 Ibid, p. 43.

should take place within marriage and should be for purposes of procreation only. Methods of birth control were rejected by it too. Women were perceived as susceptible to the ideas of the Catholic Church and indeed, this was a key argument in France against giving women the vote. Yet at the same time, it was hoped that between the Church's attitudes towards motherhood and government measures already in place, women would be encouraged to stay at home and be mothers. However attempts by both the government and the Church were in vain; the pronatalist legislation did little in reality to increase the birth rate; indeed, by 1930 it was equivalent to the rate in 1914.[44] What is more, the increased severity in punishment for abortion did little to halt the rate at which abortions were carried out. Sohn writes, "[l]a répression de l'avortement est une goutte d'eau par rapport aux avortements réalisés qui ne sauraient être inférieurs à 100 000 par an."[45] What is even more damning about the abortion laws is that even in terms of criminal convictions there was little success for the government, "[l]'avortement, crime jusque-là passible des Assises et bénéficiant, à ce titre, de jurés indulgents qui acquittaient 80% des inculpées, est correctionnalisé par la loi du 23 mars 1923 dans l'espoir que les juges professionnels seraient plus sévères. De fait, entre 1925 et 1935, les acquittements tombent à 19% des affaires."[46] It was hoped that all of the initiatives introduced would reverse the downward trend in the birthrate and cement the position of the family as central to French life. Instead, there was little change in the birth rate, an increase in the divorce rate from 15,000 in 1914 to 25,000 in 1935[47] and attempts at government control of the female body.

Pronatalism was not a specifically French theme; it was prominent in Germany too. The falling birth rate had been closely monitored by authorities since 1910 and, as in France, tough restrictions were placed upon contraception and the penalties for abortion became more

44 Melanie Latham, *Regulating Reproduction*, p. 28.
45 Anne-Marie Sohn, 'Entre deux guerres', p. 107.
46 Anne-Marie Sohn, 'Entre deux guerres', p. 107.
47 Ibid, p. 108.

severe.[48] Here, too, it made little difference to the abortion rates and Frevert comments that an estimated one million abortions took place in 1931 alone, an astonishingly high figure considering it was an illegal practice.[49] What the high level of abortions indicates is that women were willing to take control over their own bodies and were prepared to break the law to do it. Whilst pronatalism and the pronatalist faction did not achieve as high a level of political prominence in Germany as in France, it was still an important social driving force. The pronatalism of the Weimar government coincided with the emergence of the 'Neue Frau'. This new type of woman whose image became prominent in the inter-war period was characterised as much by her outward appearance as by her tenets and values. With her short hair, backless dresses, androgynous features and penchant for smoking and dancing, she was the antithesis of the type of woman the authorities was trying to persuade into motherhood.[50] The government perceived these 'new women' as potential threats, capable of destabilising society and this fear was used as a justification for its policies. Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey write that "the spectre of the 'new woman' [who] threatened to rupture traditional gender roles, legitimated – in the state's view – intervention in the realms of fertility and birth control."[51] Cornelie Usborne argues that the problem for women in this period was that they "were characteristically dichotomized, regarded as both morally superior to men in their maternal nurturing role and morally inferior because they were controlled by a dangerous sexuality needing containment."[52] However the emergence of female sexuality into the public realm should not be considered negatively as it enabled women to define themselves sexually, independent of the desires of men. Women's sexuality had hitherto been constructed in terms

48 Ute Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 159.
49 Ibid, p. 187.
50 Sandi E. Cooper, 'Women in War and Peace, 1914-1945', p. 448.
51 Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey, 'Introduction: gender and gender relations in German History' in *Gender relations in German History*, ed. Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 1-38 (p. 14).
52 Cornelie Usborne, 'Wise women, wise men and abortion in the Weimar Republic: gender, class and medicine' in *Gender relations in German History*, ed. Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 143-176 (p. 164).

of reproduction and with the emergence of the Neue Frau, a new form of female sexuality entered public discourse, which went against dominant government policies and was deemed dangerous to the contemporary social order. Pronatalism was seen as a way to stabilise the country and guarantee its future, but if its female population did not want to be constrained to simply the maternal role then the government felt state intervention was necessary. As in France, the German government was very keen to promote the family and its values. Frevert comments that the gender hierarchy appears to have altered very little; girls were still prepared for motherhood and boys for careers.[53] However, this coincides with what she terms the 'demise' of the family and highlights the increase in divorce, abortion and illegitimate births. Clearly the change in situation of women in wartime Germany had left its mark on its female population and they were no longer willing to accept former constraints.

Socially, as well as politically, women had gained more freedom during this period owing to a change in attitude towards them in the light of their valuable wartime contributions. In addition to changes in the political sphere as women obtained the right to vote, there was a shift in societal mores; for example, women were now regular cinema-goers and, unlike before the war, it was now a pursuit which was socially acceptable for women to follow alone.[54]

Just as the status of women changed and evolved in this period, so did cinema – going to the cinema had "become respectable, which it was not before World War I, as well as popular."[55] Cinema had changed. The more traditional leisure pursuits of theatre and the circus became increasingly marginalised as people went to the cinema more. With the introduction of the six-day week in 1906 and the eight-hour day in 1919, workers had more time for leisure activities and the cinema represented a modern attraction.[56] The first purpose-

53 Ute Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 191.
54 Paul Monaco, *Cinema and Society: France and Germany During the Twenties* (New York, NY: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1976), p. 6.
55 Ibid, p. 5.
56 Elizabeth Ezra, 'The Cinemising Process: Filmgoing in the Silent Era' in *The French Cinema Book*, ed. Michael Temple and Michael Witt (London: British Film Institute, 2007), pp. 74-81 (p. 76).

built cinema in France was in Paris in 1906 and this represented a break from the traditional travelling shows at fairs where cinematic devices had previously been used to attract their audiences.[57] The growth in the number of cinemas continued in both France and Germany, especially in towns where the population was increasing as urban migration continued: "By the end of 1919 there were already 2,836 movie theaters in Germany. In the following year alone some 700 new ones were opened. By 1929, the Reich counted 5,267 cinemas."[58] The cinemas were not just screens in buildings, but were purpose-built buildings, grand in style and often attempting to emulate the grandeur and style of classic Greek and Roman architecture. It must also be remembered that as many of the films in this period were silent, these new cinemas catered for orchestras.

Initially, German cinema was not subject to censorship, according to the freedom of speech laws in the constitution of the new Weimar Republic, but this level of creative freedom soon led to the emergence of a new type of film, the *Aufklärungsfilme*. These films, which, according to Kracauer, "elaborated upon matters of sex life with an undeniable penchant for pornographic excursions", led to a wave of protests across the nation and angered many critics.[59] Indeed the *Lichtbildbühne* film journal initially claimed that it would be the fault of these films if censorship were to be introduced. However, it later changed its opinion and instead claimed that these films "were being made the scapegoat for all the ills of modern society."[60] In May 1920, censorship laws were introduced, but figures suggest that there were very few films banned; in 1925, thirty films were banned but this was out of a total of 2,748 films viewed by the censorship board.[61]

Germany was desperate to improve its image after the war and therefore the Foreign Ministry had some guidelines that films were to follow. Monaco outlines these, as "(1) to

57 Elizabeth Ezra, 'The Cinemising Process', p. 75.
58 Paul Monaco, *Cinema and Society*, p. 20.
59 Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 44.
60 Paul Monaco,*Cinema and Society*, p. 53.
61 Ibid, p. 56.

prevent the showing of German-made films that might offend a particular foreign government, and (2) to ban films that might give a bad impression of the German Republic to foreign regimes."[62] Cinema was seen as a way of developing and nurturing a national identity, both at home and abroad, and protecting and developing its own film industry was of paramount concern. Film could be used as a propaganda tool. Indeed, one of the most important studios in this period was the initially government-owned UFA, though it was privatised in 1921 and was to serve as a producer of many important films in the Weimar period, such as *Metropolis* and *Der blaue Engel*.

The cinema was a popular form of entertainment; in 1930, six million tickets were sold in Germany every week.[63] Whilst films based on plays and novels were common and popular, Weimar films are best known for their Expressionist elements. Anton Kaes writes that "[t]he traumatic experience of the first modern war, which cost the lives of two million young Germans, left its traces on all cultural production; it inscribed itself with special force in Expressionist cinema with its focus on shock, insanity and formal disorientation."[64] Other films in the period concentrated on ordinary people encountering a situation which makes their lives extraordinary. Frevert writes, "[o]n the screen the typist or shop assistant appeared young, pretty, sexy and elegant. She could climb the social ladder in two ways: she was either extremely competent and married to her typewriter, thus winning the love of her boss for her untiring commitment to the firm; or she made up for a lack of mental dexterity with physical attractiveness."[65] The positive representation of these jobs can be argued, in part, to account for the high number of women wanting to work in retail or administration, as there was the chance that it could ultimately represent a new and better life for them. Women were also represented in a different, less idealised way in the wave of *Dirnenfilme* later in the decade.

62 Paul Monaco, *Cinema and Society*, p. 56.
63 Ute Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 181.
64 Anton Kaes, 'Weimar Cinema: The Predicament of Modernity' in *European Cinema*, ed. Elizabeth Ezra, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 59-77 (pp. 61-62).
65 Ute Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 182.

These ‘prostitute films’ portrayed the gritty side of the ‘Golden Twenties’ and highlight well the dichotomy in female representation at this time, with women on the one hand being portrayed as dangerously sexualised beings and on the other as subservient idealised wives and mothers. In both *Die Büchse der Pandora* and *Der blaue Engel* we see evidence of the dichotomised portrayal of women.

France had initially dominated the cinematic world, but as the First World War continued, the US began to dominate. Consequently, by the end of the war, “French cinema, once master of the world, had fallen from a great height.”[66] What is more, French cinema was not just marginalised by productions from America, but also from its neighbour, Germany, a nation “whose film industry before 1914 had been feeble, emerged in the great era of silent film as Europe’s foremost producer of movies.”[67] French cinema was in a difficult phase, having to adapt to no longer being the leader of the cinematic medium.

As in Germany, there were a large number of films produced which were adaptations of novels or plays which, as in their neighbouring country, proved to be very popular. Arguably the audience’s familiarity with the stories could encourage them to go and see the filmic portrayal. Yet amongst the adaptations, one can identify key themes of the time. One of the prominent genres in French cinema in this period was melodrama and its figure of the female criminal in which women were portrayed as dangerous and threatening to society. Callahan argues that one should regard this trend as symptomatic of changes in society; women were now beginning to work more and moving away from their traditional domestic sphere, thus, she argues, “[t]hat women should start to appear as criminals in the films of the period may indeed reflect general anxieties about their changing position and unexplored potential in modern France.”[68] However, as the decade continued, the focus moved away from

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66 Michael Temple and Michael Witt, ‘Introduction: Hello Cinema!’ in *The French Cinema Book*, ed. Michael Temple and Michael Witt (London: British Film Institute, 2007), pp. 9-17 (p. 13).

67 Paul Monaco, *Cinema and Society*, p. 14.

68 Vicki Callahan, ‘Representations 1890-1930: Mutability and Fixity in Early French Cinema’ in *The French Cinema Book*, ed. Michael Temple and Michael Witt (London: British Film Institute, 2007), pp. 65-73 (p. 70)

the dangerous, criminal female and “the attention both culturally and cinematically had shifted towards the family and romance.”[69] This can be seen as reflecting cultural changes within French society where the family was gaining in prominence through government and Church initiatives as well as through the powerful pronatalist movement, and consequently there was increasing pressure on women to stay at home and raise families. Like Germany, France used cinema to improve its image. Crisp writes that “the most common region to appear in thirties films is the Midi, Provence [...] it is characterized by the sun, a more relaxed way and leisurely lifestyle, not to mention an accent and a vocabulary which lend color and humor to any narrative.”[70] Furthermore, this traditional idyll also has a strong belief in family order and this again ties in well with contemporary government policies.

As this discussion has shown, there was a desire in the inter-war period amongst the governments, and arguably sections of the population, to revert to the pre-war situation. However, this meant that women were forced to leave their wartime jobs and abandon freedoms and responsibilities that they had enjoyed during the war. The desire to rebuild the population in both France and Germany led to strict legislation and initiatives to try to encourage women to stay at home and become mothers; this was to be their new patriotic duty. Women who did not want to adhere to this ‘ideal’ were demonised as being selfish and potentially destabilising to society. Cinema at this time echoed fears, desires and values of the nations and appealed to a mass market, on a scale hitherto unknown. The portrayal of women was often dichotomised, particularly in terms of female sexuality with women being depicted as mothers, as lovers, as vamps, as normal, everyday people with the consequences of their actions played out to audiences. In the following chapters I shall illustrate and further explore all these trends and tendencies through discission of *La souriante Madame Beudet*, *La fille de l’eau*, *Fanny*, *Die Büchse der Pandora* and *Der blaue Engel*.

69 Ibid, p. 71.
70 Colin Crisp, *Genre, Myth and Convention in the French Cinema, 1929-1939* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 59.

ON THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN FRENCH CINEMA DURING THE INTER-WAR PERIOD.

In this chapter, I will be examining the representations of women in this period through three French films. I will be looking at the similarities and differences between the films as well as assessing the portrayal of women within the cinematic representation of society. I will look at *La souriante Madame Beudet* from 1922, directed by Germaine Dulac, a film which is often credited as being one of the first feminist films.[71] Secondly, I will be examining *La fille de l'eau*, an early film by Jean Renoir from 1924, starring his first wife, Catherine Hessling, in the lead role. Both of these films form part of the impressionist wave of films in France in the 1920s. The final film I will look at is *Fanny*, which formed the second part of Marcel Pagnol's highly popular and successful *Marseille* trilogy and was directed by Marc Allégret in 1932. Each film offers a different perspective on women's roles in the society of the time.

The directors of these three films are as different as their perspectives on women's lives at this time. Germaine Dulac was a feminist director in the silent period who played a key role in the development of cinema as both a social and artistic medium.[72] Jean Renoir was the affluent son of the painter Auguste Renoir, and was on the verge of becoming one of the great names of French cinema, even to the extent of being hailed "[t]he most influential of all French film directors".[73] Marcel Pagnol, who had already been involved with the theatre, was one of many artists who were moving from their traditional theatrical origins to the more

71 Jean Petrolle and Virginia Wright Wexman, 'Introduction: Experimental Filmmaking and Women's Subjectivity' in *Women and Experimental Filmmaking*, ed. Jean Petrolle and Virginia Wright Wrexham (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp. 1-18, (p. 6).

72 Tami Williams, 'Germaine Dulac and the French Film Industry between the Wars: Modernising the "News-Real"' in *Women in Europe Between the Wars: Politics, Culture and Society*, ed. Angela Kershaw and Angela Kimyongür (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2007) pp. 171-190, (p. 171).

73 Roy Armes, 'Renoir, Jean 1894-1979' in *Makers of Modern Culture: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Justine Wintle (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) p. 440 (p. 440).

profitable sound cinema,[74] whilst Marc Allégret was already establishing for himself a reputation as a "competent and reliable" director, and drew favourable comparisons with his contemporary, the popular director Jacques Feyder.[75]

La souriante Madame Beudet was based on a contemporary play written by André Obey and Denys.[76] When it was released in 1923, there was pressure on women to stay at home and be home-makers for their families and legislation restricting contraception and abortion and the *Fête des mères* had just been introduced. *La souriante Madame Beudet* is often seen as the first feminist film because it focuses on a woman in the home who is unhappy with her domestic lot.

The plot is relatively simple. In the film we see a bourgeois couple who are far from enjoying marital bliss. Madame Beudet is an intelligent woman who is locked in a loveless marriage with her boorish husband who pays scant attention to her feelings or desires. Her husband routinely plays the 'suicide game' in which he puts a gun to his head and pretends to kill himself. One evening, after her husband has gone to the opera, she is left alone in the house and finding her one joy, the piano, locked, Madame Beudet puts real bullets in her husband's gun, with the inference being that the next time he plays his game, he will kill himself. Yet she becomes wracked with guilt and spends a great deal of time in the film attempting to remove the bullets before any harm can be done. However, she does not manage this and when in the final scene he puts the gun to his head, she tries to stop him. Instead he changes his mind and aims the gun at her and it is only the fact that she ducks which prevents her from being killed.

The film is particularly interesting for the way in which it runs entirely counter to contemporary political discourse. The ironic title, as well as the content of the film itself,

74 Dudley Andrew, 'French Cinema in the 1930s' in *European Cinema*, ed. Elizabeth Ezra (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 97-113 (p. 104).
75 Colin Crisp, *Genre, Myth and Convention in the French Cinema, 1929-1939* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 318.
76 Richard Abel, *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915-1929* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 340.

shows that domesticity is not the bliss suggested by government rhetoric. Furthermore, the intertitle reading “Dans les provinces” is sufficiently vague to suggest that this is a story which could be relevant to any middle-class woman, anywhere. In short, this is a story which, potentially, is being played out across the country. Unlike in the other French films I am examining, the female lead is middle-class. The Beudets’ relationship can be seen as representing traditional power structures in a bourgeois marriage. They are evidently a wealthy couple as we see from their elegant home, their possessions, which include a piano, and their disposable income which allows them to engage in ‘high’ cultural activities such as going to the opera and to keep a maid. Yet whilst a higher social standing may buy superficial material happiness, it does not guarantee emotional stability or contentment. Madame Beudet is restricted to remaining at home by her social status whilst her husband is at the theatre; she is effectively a prisoner of her bourgeois marriage. By contrast, her maid experiences more freedom and is arguably happier in her working class relationship.

The relationship between the couple is arguably symptomatic of the time. Monsieur Beudet is the head of the bourgeois household, has a job and is seemingly active in the public, typically ‘male’, sphere. Madame Beudet, by contrast, is a housewife; she stays at home and is restricted to the private, ‘feminine’ sphere. The unhappy relationship between the Beudet couple highlights the theme of love. There is seemingly little friendship or understanding between the couple, let alone any love or affection. The material assets they hold do not bring them true happiness. The lack of love is further shown through the use of the poem *La mort des amants* which is perhaps a direct comment on the Beudets’ relationship and suggests that Monsieur and Madame Beudet once were lovers, and perhaps, happy. As unhappy as their relationship is, it seems likely that Madame Beudet, at least, is a romantic and desires love. This romantic desire sits uneasily with her deep resentment and hatred of her husband and ultimate desire for freedom which is central to the film’s feminist perspective. When her maid

asks permission to go out for the evening with her fiancé, she has a picture in her mind of the couple embracing. Letting her maid go to her lover suggests that Madame Beudet is not against love or disbelieving of it, rather that she wishes to experience it for herself. Naomi Greene observes that "her hatred of her husband is expressed by her vision of him as a bully who crashes through her window and comes menacingly towards her in slow motion, while her longing for love is revealed by how she imagines a couple in love."[77] Abel extends this idea, suggesting that her assent could be "a sign of envy (the maid can escape the house with another) or of disquiet (will the maid's marriage be any better than her own)?"[78]

In terms of female sexuality, we see how Madame Beudet daydreams about the attractive male tennis player, as she imagines him leaving the pages of her magazine and physically removing her ugly husband from her home. This scene firstly shows her desire to escape her mundane, unhappy existence but equally portrays how she is unhappy with her husband on a physical as well as an emotional level. Her husband is fat, balding and ugly, whereas the tennis player is young, athletic and attractive. In short, he is everything her husband is not. Charles Musser argues that the tennis player could also be read as a symbol of the person she wishes to love and have love her.[79] The appearance of, and sequence involving, the tennis player is an example of the avant-garde nature of certain scenes in the film and much like other sequences it is used to great effect to portray the internal conflict and desires of the lead character. The scene with the tennis player puts the viewer inside Madame Beudet's mind and "we do not simply see her husband from her point of view; rather we see her husband through the inner processes and emotional disturbances of her soul."[80] This is an example of female fantasy and Flitterman-Lewis argues that this representation of female fantasy and desire "can be seen as an effort to give the woman both a vision and a voice."[81]

77 Naomi Greene, 'Artaud and Film: A Reconsideration', in *Cinema Journal*, 23 (1984), 28-40, (p. 34).
78 Richard Abel, *French Cinema: The First Wave*, p. 341.
79 Charles Musser, 'The Clash Between Theater and Film: Germaine Dulac, André Bazin and *La Souriante Madame Beudet', New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 5 (2007), 111-134, (p. 120).
80 Ibid, p. 120.
81 Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *To Desire Differently: Feminism and the French Cinema (Expanded Edition)*, (New

Control is also a key theme in *La souriante Madame Beudet*. Control comes in a variety of forms, both concrete and abstract. At this time, the home was typically considered to be the female sphere, an area where the woman was in control, at least superficially, as it would not be unusual for the male head of the household to control the money to be spent upon the household. Yet the French government tried to establish the home as the woman's sphere by its emphasis on the *femme au foyer*. However, as Dulac shows, the woman did not always have control in her own sphere. The vase that is situated on the piano can be read as symbolic of the power struggle which exists between the Beudets. Both Madame and Monsieur Beudet move the vase to their preferred place and this seems to echo the lack of communication between the couple and how bereft their relationship is of understanding and compromise. The differences are further highlighted by the opera scene. As Sandy Flitterman-Lewis writes, "Monsieur Beudet tries to convince his wife to see *Faust*, and she replies with a polite nod of her head. A close-up of Beudet singing (fade to black) is followed by a shot of the opera chorus, while Madame Beudet's close-up (again, a fade to black) leads into a glowering Mephistopheles, large in the foreground, and a resisting Marguerite, arm stretched out to fend off his intrusion."[82] This can be read as an indication of Madame Beudet trying to fend off and escape her grotesque husband.

The approach to contemporary female domesticity in *La souriante Madame Beudet* is in stark contrast to societal mores where there was so much emphasis on the role of the women at home and the positivity of life as a home-maker. Sandy Flitterman-Lewis writes that the film is a story in which "a fairly traditional narrative sequence is amplified by a whole range of suggestive poetic and cinematic techniques to evoke the inner world of its main character."[83] The fact that Dulac was one of very few female directors working at this time

York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 131.

82 Ibid, p. 103.

83 Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, '"Poetry of the unconscious": circuits of desire in two films by Germaine Dulac: *La souriante Madame Beudet* (1923) and *La Coquille et le clergyman* (1927)', in *French Film: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau, (London: Routledge, 1990), 7-24, (p. 7).

must be significant in this regard. The negative portrayal of domestic life can be seen as indicative of the director's own position on the contemporary emphasis on women staying at home. Flitterman-Lewis argues that Dulac "is concerned to articulate what might be a feminine 'imaginary', as she makes the exploration of female subjectivity the very core of her film. For this reason, the fantasy sequences – organized in each instance by a relay of mental associations – are anchored in the particulars of the woman character she creates, a frustrated, imprisoned housewife who longs for some sort of romantic evasion."[84] The ending shows Madame Beudet comforted by her husband who has completely misunderstood her actions as an attempt to kill herself. Furthermore, the resigned expression of Madame Beudet in this scene and the final scene showing the couple walking together down the street symbolise what Flitterman-Lewis calls a 'permanent closure', writing "[t]he film's ending shot depicts M. and Mme Beudet in American-shot, seen from the back, as they continue down the provincial cobblestone street toward the vanishing point of the frame. Mme Beudet's resignation to the suffocating trap of bourgeois marriage is signified by the narrative action: the impossibility of future flights of fantasy is equally emphasized by the symbolic 'closed door' of the back of the head."[85]

La fille de l'eau by Jean Renoir is the second film I will be examining, dating from 1924. Like *La souriante Madame Beudet*, this is a silent film, but in this case it is a full-length film and the story is more developed. As many critics focus their examination of Renoir on his later masterpieces, his early films have not received as much critical attention as they deserve. In comparison to his later films, the story of *La fille de l'eau* could be interpreted as rather contrived and melodramatic. Gudule lives quite happily on a barge with her father and her brutish uncle until one day, her father falls overboard and drowns. Left alone with her uncle Jeff, he becomes violent towards her and drinks both himself and her into destitution

84 Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *To Desire Differently*, p. 102.
85 Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, '"Poetry of the unconscious"', p. 13.

until Gudule manages to escape him. She then befriends a young poacher called 'La Fouine', lives with him and his mother, and seems to be relatively contented until they anger a local farmer who then wreaks his revenge on the poacher by burning down his home. The poacher and his mother manage to escape, but Gudule does not and is alone once more. She runs away from the burning home in fright, and in her distress she falls down a cliffside and goes half mad. Without a home, she lives in the wild but after a heavy rainstorm, she catches a fever. The next morning she is rescued by Georges, the son of the wealthy Raynal family and taken to recuperate where she later does jobs for them around the home. Unfortunately her uncle returns and she is forced to give him money she has been given by the Raynals to pay the saddler. Initially she is scared to tell the truth but Georges eventually finds out and the film concludes with Georges and Jeff fighting, with her uncle ending up in the water. For Gudule there is a happy ending as she and Georges realise their feelings for one another and she joins the Raynal family to start a new life in Algeria, at a time where French colonialism in North Africa was at its apex.

Unlike some of Renoir's later films, such *as La Marseillaise,*[86] *La fille de l'eau* is relatively apolitical in tone, particularly in its depiction of the bourgeois, colonial Raynal family. Yet it highlights some key aspects and ideas relating to women's social roles at this time in its focus on Gudule, the poor girl from the canal barge. As already discussed, women did not get the vote in France after the First World War, unlike their German counterparts. Furthermore, there were no efforts by the French government to codify equality between the sexes as there had been with the German constitution. The lack of equality that French women experienced can be seen reflected in this film as Gudule is constantly dependent on the males in her life to guide her and control the path her life takes. Initially, she is in her father's care but after he dies she is under her uncle's control. After her escape, she puts herself in the hands of 'La Fouine', the poacher and finally, she is looked after by the Raynal family and

86 Martin O'Shaughnessy, *Jean Renoir* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), (p. 34).

predominantly, the son, Georges. The periods of crisis in Gudule's life are characterised by her dependency on men. Indeed when Gudule is most in need, it is always men who come to her rescue; she never manages to escape a situation on her own. When she is about to be attacked by her uncle, it is the male passer-by who inadvertently allows her to escape and later, when she is ill, it is Georges who rescues her both literally and metaphorically in her dreams. Here we are reminded of the dreamed rescue sequence in *La souriante Madame Beudet*. In their fantasies, it is men who help them to escape their predicaments and they do not imagine themselves resolving their unfortunate situations.

Equally of note is the fact that with each encounter with a male, Gudule loses something of herself of either a concrete or abstract nature. On the death of her father, it can be argued that Gudule loses part of her identity. She is no longer the daughter of someone, but is instead an orphan. During her life with her uncle, his drinking means that her home is lost. Her escape leads her to 'La Fouine', yet when he is forced to leave abruptly, her dog goes with him and she is friendless as well as homeless and without family. Finally, even with Georges, she loses her chain, her link to the past, symbolic of her leaving her old way of life and her adoption into the bourgeoisie. As far as Gudule and her property is concerned, nothing is her own. The dispossession that Gudule experiences can be seen as a comment on how women experienced difficulties at this time in owning property, as on their marriage, any property they owned would revert to her husband's possession. We can also see these incidents in the greater context as a comment on patriarchal society for it is the men in her life who ultimately hold control over her as opposed to her having control over her own destiny. Furthermore, it encompasses dispossession of identity as well as material objects. The title of the film itself is non-committally typological: all it says about the heroine is that she is simply 'la fille de l'eau'. Even her identity is essentially controlled by her relationships to the males in her life. Gudule is almost childlike in her behaviour and makes little effort to change her

life; instead she is washed along by her ill fate and the actions of the males in her life. As Alexander Sesonske writes, “the childish heroine moves through the film passive and uncomprehending, almost never taking any part in the initiation or determination of events.”[87] Indeed, Gudule does behave like a child at times and we see her sticking her tongue out as the barge passes by at the beginning of the film and wearing a basket on her head near the end, which seems to suggest that despite the turmoil she has gone through she has not become any more mature for her experiences; she is the same innocent young girl she was at the beginning of the film. Gudule’s innocence is also reflected in her clothing. She wears a virginal white for most of the film and this adds to the image of innocence and naïvety that emanates from her. White is also a colour used in Gudule’s dream sequence when she dreams of Georges rescuing her on a white horse.

The film portrays a certain degree of violence towards Gudule and the level to which she remains calm throughout is somewhat unbelievable. The most significant instance of violence is when Gudule and her uncle Jeff are alone on the boat and he moves to sexually assault her and beats her. The portrayal of violence in a melodrama foregrounds the potential of domestic violence towards women at this time. Yet though she appears frightened by the incident, there is little evidence of reflection about it despite the fact that it must have been traumatic and her inner thoughts are not shown. Female interiority is not represented in the film except in the surreal dream sequence and she appears simply to let life continue to carry her on her journey. Even when she is later involved in the fire, another example of violence where she is initially upset and scared, after her rescue by Georges, she no longer seems distressed by what has happened to her. The motivations behind the characters’ actions are never fully explored and consequently, some of their behaviour can appear ill-matched with what we have seen. We see some flashbacks of the fire after the fire but there is no real

87 Alexander Sesonske, *Jean Renoir: The French Films, 1924-1939*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 11-12.

internal reflection on the events that have happened. Yet these criticisms are not restricted to *La fille de l'eau* but are perhaps symptomatic of the melodramatic film at this time. Indeed, Sesonske comments that "[a]s in many films of the period, the story is melodramatic and hardly credible, making no effort to present either background or motivation for the characters or even any adequately developed setting for its series of events."[88] Whilst I would agree that there is little exploration of the motivation of the characters, his criticism of melodrama is a typical way of consigning it to a 'minor' genre, devoid of any political significance which is untrue. Instead it can be argued that Peter John Dyer better analyses the wider political significance of the film, writing that "Renoir manages to lend the opening scenes considerable authenticity and persuasion, both in his economical portraits of the Raynal family– upstanding, college-boy son, rigidly puritanical mother, anonymous, bourgeois father preoccupied with his new car– and of the village itself, with its big house and courtyard, the surrounding farmland, the trees, rain-clouds, bridle-path, canal and barge."[89] Dyer accurately highlights that despite the melodramatic nature of the film, it can and does still have political significance.

The women in this film fill very traditional roles and this is not simply restricted to Gudule. In the male-dominated society that the film portrays, the women, apart from Gudule, are secondary characters who are subordinate to their male counterparts. We see this with Monsieur and Madame Raynal and also with 'La Fouine' and 'La Roussette', who we assume is his mother. At the beginning of the film, the intertitles explain that "[l]a vie de Madame Raynal était réglée selon deux principes: respecter strictement les convenances et éviter de se trouver sur le passage de l'auto de son mari." Respecting the proprieties of marriage is of the utmost importance to Madame Raynal and it would seem that this is expected. Within the Raynal household, it is the females who organise payment of the merchants and Gudule who

88 Alexander Sesonske, *Jean Renoir*, pp. 10-11.
89 Peter John Dyer, 'Renoir and Realism', *Sight and Sound*, 29 (1960), 130-135 (p. 132).

does the washing-up. Even for 'La Roussette' who lives outdoors, we see that a gender hierarchy is well in place. We are told by the intertitles that "«La Roussette» passait sa vie à éplucher des patates volées et à fumer la pipe." She is still doing the cooking while it is 'La Fouine' who goes out and hunts; traditional gender roles are preserved as 'La Fouine' is the hunter-gatherer while 'La Roussette' stays at home. Furthermore, when key decisions are to be made, such as the decision to flee, it is 'La Fouine' who decides to flee and he who says that there is no time to wait for Gudule. 'La Roussette' simply obeys. When Gudule arrives, she is used as a servant and it would seem that they are trying to emulate the higher classes with their use of the word 'servant'. Gudule herself is a home-maker and we are told from the very beginning that she is a good cook, "Gudule avait le don de réussir un bon ragoût en mélangeant des ingrédients douteux." Yet her activities on the barge are not simply restricted to cooking and we see her give commands to raise the sails when she senses a storm coming. Despite this, she is still under the control of her uncle and when he tells her to bring him drink, she obediently does so. What we see is that despite the differences in class between Gudule, 'La Fouine' and the Raynals, the gender hierarchy remains the same in each family.

In a similar way to *La souriante Madame Beudet*, the location of the story is not specified and indeed, the intertitle tells us that it is "Un canal, quelque part en France." This again gives the impression that this tragic life is a scenario that is being played out across the country, much as the first inter-title in *La souriante Madame Beudet* also suggests. In reality, the film was shot "in Marlotte, in the village cafe, Le Bon Coin, and on Cézanne's property, La Nicotière, where Jean Renoir constructed a village around the existing buildings."[90] The film highlights the traditional gender roles well and shows how women could be seen as simply the chattel of their male counterparts. Unlike Madame Beudet, Gudule generally takes little initiative to change her own situation. Even when she does show initiative, for example, when she runs away from her uncle, it is not motivated by a deeper desire for change, but

90 Alexander Sesonske, *Jean Renoir*, p. 10.

instead by fear. Consequently, Gudule, with her childlike actions, is portrayed as unable to make any decision for herself and thus she is instead blown along by fate and events controlled by men.

The final film I wish to examine is Marcel Pagnol's *Fanny* from 1932. Unlike the other two films I have looked at it is a *film parlant*. The film is the second part of Marcel Pagnol's *Marseille* trilogy, following *Marius*, directed by Alexander Korda in 1931 and preceding *César*, directed by Pagnol himself in 1936. The story picks up exactly where *Marius* finished. Marius has left Marseille for a life on the sea, not realising that his lover, Fanny, is now pregnant with his child. Worrying for her own respectability and that of her unborn child, she enters into a marriage of convenience with the much older, childless Panisse, who is attracted to Fanny and desperate for a child and heir, even one who is not biologically his own. At the end of the film, we see Marius return and upon discovering that Fanny has had his child, demand the return of both him and Fanny, who he perceives as his wife. He is prevented by the intervention of his own father, César, and the film ends with Marius leaving once more.

As with *La souriante Madame Beudet* and *La fille de l'eau*, *Fanny* highlights some of the key ideas of contemporary France regarding women and motherhood. We see how morality plays a key role in the lives of the characters and how love is secondary to propriety. As E. B. Turk writes, "The adaptations of Pagnol's *Marius* (1931) and *Fanny* (1932) depict an abandoned mother-to-be who marries an older man she does not love. Along with other specimens of the genre [melodrama], these films all treat one individual's struggle against middle-class morality, with the latter generally winning out."

Morality is indeed a key theme in the film. Fanny is aware that to be unmarried and pregnant is less than desirable in society and her mother, Norine, explicitly calls it 'a shame' that she has lost her virginity. Indeed, when her mother first finds out that she is pregnant, she

tells her that she is a disgrace, that she wants her to leave and that she is no better than a prostitute. Fanny is also desperate to avoid the stigma of being a single mother and frequently mentions how she wants her child to have a name, in other words, not to be born out of wedlock. To this end, Norine encourages her to marry Panisse and even suggests that she should not tell him of her pregnancy as it may dissuade him from marrying her and thus saving her honour. Yet Fanny does tell him as she adheres to her own moral code, not her mother's, and when she does tell Panisse, he, in the face of a ready-made heir, is indifferent to the fact she is not a virgin. To modern audiences, the marriage between Fanny and Panisse may seem odd, but as Vincendeau notes, "[m]arriages between mature men and much younger women were still widespread in 1930s' France, within a legal system geared towards keeping wealth and property, and hence authority, in the hands of the older generation."[91]

Fanny is often depicted as demure and as a 'typical' woman- for example she faints twice in the film, whenever her emotions overcome her. She goes to church to ask the Virgin Mary for advice and courage as a good Catholic, she is a good wife and a good mother, putting the well-being of her child before her own desires and dreams. Fanny can be seen as the ideal woman for 1930s' France. Her relationship with the various men in her life puts her in a subordinate position to the males in the film and in a similar way to Gudule in *La fille de l'eau*, her path in life is dictated by her interaction with the males around her. Fanny's new role as a mother has been consigned to her through her relationship with Marius and whilst he can avoid fatherhood, she cannot avoid motherhood. Her marriage to Panisse confirms her role as a wife. Vincendeau writes in her essay on the trilogy that, "[w]ithin the terms of the French and especially Catholic culture, the place accorded to her [Fanny] is central (as bearer and educator of the child) but concurrently suppresses her as an individual in her own right."[92]

91 Ginette Vincendeau, 'In the name of the father: Marcel Pagnol's "trilogy": *Marius* (1931), *Fanny* (1932), *César* (1936)', in *French Film: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau (London: Routledge, 1990), 67-82 (p. 77).

92 Ibid, pp. 78-79.

Indeed, we see that patriarchal society in inter-war France holds a dim view of females in general. When Fanny is pregnant, everyone is convinced that she is expecting a boy and when the possibility of it being a girl is mentioned, César says, “Une fille? Mais qu’est ce que tu vas chercher là, espèce de porte-malheur?”: in a patriarchal society the desire is for the first-born child to be a son to continue the family name. Similarly, both César and Panisse promise to leave everything to the baby boy on their deaths, though no reference is made as to whether there would be similar arrangements if it were a girl. The inference here is that females are not as valuable as males and furthermore, reflects back to the ‘unmodernised’ property laws in place at this time. Often they talk about Fanny as if she is simply not in the room, instead referring to her in the third person. And even though the film is called *Fanny* and one might reasonably expect her to feature quite heavily in the film, in reality more screen time is allotted to the male characters and above all, to César. The film is arguably more about the males in her life than Fanny herself.

Fanny’s reproductive function also serves to characterise her identity. What is clear in the film is that the baby is more important for everyone than Fanny herself. Despite the fact that Fanny becomes pregnant out of wedlock, she is treated rather positively and this could perhaps be seen in the light of the falling birth rate in France and is potentially a comment on how keeping a baby conceived in this situation, even in a Catholic country, is not in fact a bad thing. Vincendeau, however, rejects this notion, stating instead that “[t]hough it is tempting to see the emphasis on motherhood in the trilogy - as in all Pagnol’s work - as related to the contemporary concern with low birth rate, it relates more pertinently to the generic structures, and in particular those of melodrama in which the classic opposition between the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ woman is really an expression of the conflict between the woman as mother and the woman as individual subject."[93] “The classic opposition” is also relevant when examining *La fille de l’eau*; Gudule is characterised not by her individuality but instead by her gender-

93 Ginette Vincendeau, ‘In the name of the father’, p. 79.

specific roles such as daughter and niece. Most certainly, the emphasis on women as mothers in *Fanny* can be seen as a comment on their identity as shaped by their reproductive functions as opposed to being individuals in their own right. When reproduction is discussed by Panisse, we see how he comments that he and his now deceased wife had had no luck in conceiving and lays the fault squarely at her feet, never even considering that he could be equally responsible. This seems to imply that all aspects of motherhood, including conception itself, are a woman's responsibility.

Fanny shows a very traditional view of women which highlights contemporary French government ideals regarding women. Fanny accepts her lot as a wife and mother with relatively good grace and sacrifices her dreams of a life with Marius for the good and well-being of her own child. Yet Fanny and indeed, women in general, are accorded comparatively little screen time, and the domination of the male characters on screen can be seen as reflecting the domination of men in real life at this time. It raises contemporary issues of motherhood and the demands of women in the face of a falling birth rate. *Fanny* also demonstrates the traditional power structures within families; the power is with the older generation. We see Norine practically force Fanny to marry Panisse and César exercises physical force on Marius to prevent him from intervening in the lives of Fanny and Panisse at the end of the film. "In the trilogy power is still firmly in the hands of the older generation. In contrast to the overt justification of building up wealth for the sake of the younger generation, as seen in Panisse's dream of bequeathing his business to his heir, characters who do have children, such as Cesar and Honorine, shows absolutely no inclination to relinquish their power to them."[94] As in the other films I have examined, control over an individual is an important factor within the plot development.

The three films I have looked at all portray different types of women, from the unhappy housewife, to the childlike heroine, to the dutiful daughter and mother. Yet all of the

94 Ginette Vincendeau, 'In the name of the father', p. 76.

women seem to be subordinate to their male counterparts and this can be seen as indicative of the wider context at the time. The struggle for control within different relationships we have seen (husband and wife, niece and uncle, daughter and mother among others) was something that women seemed destined to lose, often to the men in their lives. Even when Fanny is coerced into marriage by her mother, she is arguably trying to help her daughter in a patriarchal society, unkind to unmarried mothers. All of the films highlight the difficult situation of women in French society at this time, whether it be through Madame Beudet's attitude, so unlike the female desired by the government, Gudule's innocence or Fanny's selfless nature for the good of her child.

ON THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN GERMAN CINEMA DURING THE INTER-WAR PERIOD

In this chapter I will be examining the representations of women in two German full-length feature films, Pabst's *Die Büchse der Pandora*, based on the stage plays of Frank Wedekind,[95] and von Sternberg's *Der blaue Engel*, which stars Emil Jannings and Marlene Dietrich in one of her most iconic roles. Like *Die Büchse der Pandora*, *Der blaue Engel* is also based on a text, in this case, the novel *Professor Unrat* by Heinrich Mann.[96] By 1929 G. W. Pabst was already an established director and was held to be "one of early film's best and most innovative filmmakers."[97] Likewise, von Sternberg had had some success with his early silent films. *Der blaue Engel* was to be the first of seven collaborations between von Sternberg and Dietrich.

Die Büchse der Pandora is the story of Lulu, a high-class prostitute who, according to Siegfried Kracauer, is "a woman driven by insatiable sex lusts, who destroys all lives around her, and her own."[98] At the beginning, we see her with the meter man, but they are interrupted by Schigolch, an elderly man Lulu appears fond of. It seems that Schigolch is her pimp and quite possibly her father too. Their meeting is interrupted by the arrival of Dr. Schön, one of Lulu's clients, who has arrived to tell her that he is to be married. She tries to dissuade him, but fails. After Schön leaves, we meet Rodrigo, a friend of Schigolch who wishes to involve Lulu in his stage act. In the next part, we meet Alwa, Schön's son who has feelings for Lulu. We also meet Countess Geschwitz for the first time. Schön convinces Alwa to use Lulu in his revue, but warns him against taking their relationship further. At the revue, Lulu is excited until she sees Schön with his fiancée and refuses to go on stage. It is left to Schön to convince

95 Susan McCabe, *Cinematic Modernism: Modernist Poetry and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 162.

96 Karin Verena Gunnemann, *Heinrich Mann's Novels and Essays: The Artist as Political Educator* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2002), p. 26.

97 Sheila Johnson, 'Review: [untitled]' in *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, 45 (1991), 270-271 (p. 270).

98 Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 178.

her into performing and they end up kissing, only to be discovered by Alwa and Schön's fiancée. Lulu looks smug upon their discovery and Schön gloomily agrees to marry her. At their wedding, Alwa finds Lulu alone and falls sobbing into her lap, begging her to leave with him. Schön enters the scene and is suspicious. The atmosphere becomes tense after Alwa has left and there is a struggle between the two resulting in a gun being fired and Schön being killed, though whether it was suicide or murder is unclear. The next act shows Lulu in court where she is accused of and sentenced for Schön's murder. There is chaos in the court and in the resulting mêlée, Lulu escapes, going to Schön's flat. Here, Geschwitz helps Lulu to escape to safety with Alwa by lending her her passport. However, Lulu is recognised on the train by Marquis Casti Piani who demands money from Alwa to stay quiet. Alwa is also persuaded to follow Casti Piani to his gambling ship. Onboard, both Lulu and Alwa are unhappy, with him having to gamble to survive. Lulu is going to be sold to an Egyptian businessman as she and Alwa are not earning enough for their keep. Yet Geschwitz finds them and conspires to help them by giving them money, and Schigolch gives Alwa cards with which to cheat. Unfortunately for the couple, Alwa is discovered and they are forced to flee, again helped by Geschwitz. Alwa, Lulu and Schigolch escape to London where they live in abject poverty and Lulu works as a prostitute once more. Alwa is unhappy, Schigolch is a drunkard. The film ends with Lulu being killed by Jack the Ripper and Alwa joining the Christmas procession alone, thinking Lulu has betrayed their love and not knowing she has been killed.

Sexuality and the *Neue Frau* are social themes which are portrayed in the film. As we examined in the first chapter, the *Neue Frau* both shocked and scared the authorities who felt that women were putting their own sexuality and desire to live independently of a restrictive male-dominated relationship ahead of their duties of marriage and motherhood at a time of national crisis. Lulu epitomises the *Neue Frau* and this is something that Anton Kaes also remarks upon, "[w]ith her short hair, androgynous, athletic build and no-nonsense approach to

love and marriage, Brooks's Lulu embodied the ideal of the New Woman."[99] Perhaps, then, her ultimate demise can be interpreted not so much as a direct result of her actions, but as symptomatic of the desires of sections of society to see an end to the *Neue Frau* and a return to the old order. Indeed, Kaes comments that "the film seems to say that the sexualized woman, unconscious of her own destructive potential, needs to be expunged for society to function."[100]

One way in which the sexuality of the *Neue Frau* is perceived as a threat to the existing social order is through lesbianism, which is presented in *Die Büchse der Pandora* through the relationship between Countess Geschwitz and Lulu. Geschwitz facilitates the presentation of another facet of the *Neue Frau* and can be indicative of the mores of a changing, yet sexually conservative, Weimar society. Indeed, Lulu's sexuality is representative of a central aspect of the *Neue Frau* and a key component of the plot and allows her, whether consciously or not, to manipulate both men and women to help her. With Geschwitz in particular, we see how she lends Lulu her passport so she can escape, gives her money on the gambling ship and even allows herself to be kissed by the odious Rodrigo. In this instance, Lulu appears aware of the hold she exerts over Geschwitz, revealed by her certainty that Geschwitz will help her. Through Lulu, we see that the contemporary portrayal of the *Neue Frau* as a female conscious of her sexuality and the power she is able to exert over others through it.

In the film, Lulu is the centre of all power, sexuality and danger as well as being a valuable commodity for others. Her relationship with Alwa is a chief example of this, where her powerful personality and deep sexuality leads Alwa to become involved in a destructive relationship with her. Even though they do not start having a relationship until after Schön's death, we know that Alwa has long been attracted to her, and it must be remembered that Lulu

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99 Anton Kaes, 'Weimar Cinema: The Predicament of Modernity' in *European Cinema*, ed. Elizabeth Ezra (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 59-77 (p. 70).
100Ibid, p. 70.

is essentially Alwa's stepmother. The quasi-Oedipal nature of their relationship is something commented upon by both Doane and Elsaesser. Yet instead of Alwa murdering his father, the action is done by Lulu. Doane writes, "in a deviation from the standard Oedipal plot, the son is not guilty of the murder of the father; instead, that guilt is displaced onto the mother (Lulu, in her extremely limited maternal aspect)."[101] The maternal relationship between Alwa and Lulu can be seen further when he rests his head on her lap. Doane comments on Kracauer's analysis of this, writing "For Kracauer, the gesture by means of which the German male in the Weimar cinema rests his head upon the lap of a woman constitutes *the* filmic trope of a crisis in masculinity. It is a gesture which signifies immaturity, a desire to return to the maternal womb, resignation, capitulation and inferiority."[102] Indeed, the position of Alwa does suggest he is in supplication to her and later when Schön dies, it is at her feet, which arguably symbolises that the power within their relationship lies with Lulu. Alwa is besotted with Lulu and is attracted to her sexuality. We see this in particular in the scene where he finds Lulu living in the flat where his father died. Initially he finds her behaviour reprehensible and is angry with her, but after she appears from her bath in only a dressing gown, they kiss and his anger appears to dissipate. The décor of the flat is also of note in this scene, as it is foregrounded and we see statues in the room at such an angle it would appear they are trying to escape Lulu and her power, but just like Alwa, they cannot escape her.

We see the character of Lulu as a dichotomy; we see her overt sexuality mixed with hints of a childlike innocence. The 'child-woman' side of Lulu is the other side of Lulu's feminine representation and is different from Lulu as motherly or as a centre of sexual power. It can be argued that even her appearance reflects this dichotomy with her hair - its style being at once very typical of the *Neue Frau* but also typical of the low-maintenance style of a child. Her appearance demonstrates further the internal conflict between the different facets of

101Mary Ann Doane, 'The Erotic Barter: Pandora's Box (1929)' in *The Films of G. W. Pabst: An Extraterritorial Cinema*, ed. Eric Rentschler (London: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 62-79 (p. 70).
102Ibid, p. 74.

Lulu's character. Her behaviour often has childlike qualities to it. At the beginning we see her face is beaming with joy as she sits on Schigolch's lap, a very childlike action. We also see her swinging from a curtain rail in the scene with Alwa and Geschwitz and earlier, she seems very impressed with the strength of Rodrigo. When she is at the revue and Schön attempts to coerce her into performing, her shakes of the head are reminiscent of a child having a tantrum when they are unable to have their own way. Her innocence can also be seen in the scene where Schön dies. The starkest example of this behaviour is after she has fled the court. Dan Callahan writes, "[a]fter her escape, when Lulu goes back to Schön's apartment and relaxes, reading magazines, we find the final proof of her unreflective spirit. She flies around the apartment like a child whose parents have gone away. Lulu is seen as a delightful kid home alone at the scene of the crime."[103] Yet, Lulu also uses her 'child-woman' side to her own advantage; when Schön tries to get her to perform at the revue, she uses her childlike stubbornness to lure him away from his fiancée and when they are caught in a compromising position, he agrees to marry her. She uses her 'child-woman' side to change her social status from prostitute to wife of a respected doctor. Even as a 'child-woman' we can still perceive the deep, powerful, sexual side of her. That Lulu is able to make the transition from prostitute to wife can firstly be seen as representative of just how calculating her nature can be as she marries Schön even though he is reluctant to do so, by using her womanly nature and childlike charm to her own advantage. This is indicative of the perceived power and control that contemporary society believed the *Neue Frau* had over men. Secondly it highlights the supposed dangers of the relative fluidity of the class system in the inter-war period as Lulu is able to broach the class divide with seeming ease. However the relationship's disastrous consequences for both Lulu and Schön is a clear warning against becoming involved with the *Neue Frau*.

However soon after this episode, the childlike, playful side of Lulu's personality is

103Dan Callahan, 'The Martyrdom of Lulu', *Film International*, 2 (2004), 52-57 (p. 56).

submerged in the face of her increasing desperation and destitution. Her hairstyle also mirrors this as it is curled in a more adult style on the gambling ship and at the end it is straight, but lank. We see further evidence of this when the viewer sees Lulu putting make-up on and Schigolch attempts to pull her on to his lap, echoing the first scene, but this time, she refuses. The remaining fragments of childlike innocence that she has are disappearing after the ordeals she has been through. Yet an aspect of her innocent wonderment is still there in the last scene we see; the way she looks at the candle with her eyes intently fixed on it and balances her chin on the table implies a childlike nature is still buried inside Lulu, but hidden because of her situation. These childlike actions suggest an inner vulnerability. She is certainly very trusting, perhaps too trusting and indeed, it is these characteristics which most certainly result in her death.

Lulu's death can be seen as combating the fears of the Weimar Republic regarding the *Neue Frau*. Lulu uses her body to earn and at the beginning she is a high-class prostitute in a comparatively good situation. This is further exacerbated by the fact that her client, Dr. Schön, is of a high social status and well off. This is in stark contrast to Lulu's final client, a seemingly average poor man (who is in fact Jack the Ripper) to whom Lulu offers her services for free. Interestingly this is the first overt example of Lulu sleeping with someone simply because she likes them. The fact that she is then murdered by him could arguably be suggesting that the moment she ceases to ask for money, she drops out of capitalist society and becomes a redundant figure and ultimately pays the price with her death; society no longer has need of her. This is the final, ultimate and deadly transaction and is the culmination of Lulu and her sexuality as an expendable commodity.

At the time of the making of *Die Büchse der Pandora* and indeed, at its release, Germany was in a bad financial situation, struggling with hyper-inflation and the effects of the Wall Street Crash in that year, as well as a population attempting to come to terms with the

loss of the First World War. Finance was so important and it can be argued that the economic preoccupation of the time is reflected in the film; we see this with Lulu using her sexuality as a commodity to be bought and sold. Yet she does not simply allow herself to be seen as a commodity – she almost seems to view herself as an enterprise; she attempts to take control of certain aspects of her life. Thomas Elsaesser writes, "sex and money stand in a much more complex relationship in the film. Lulu appears as a kept woman, but she also gives money – to the meter man and then to Schigolch."[104] This is indeed true; whilst Lulu is a kept woman in that she lives in a nice apartment funded by Schön, she is also self-sufficient enough to give money to Schigolch, though equally there is an expectation that she will give money to him.

Yet whereas money can be seen as giving Lulu a newfound freedom, it also controls and dictates her life in ways she does not know. When they are on the gambling ship, her fate is inherently in the hands of Marquis Casti Piani and revolves around how financially viable she is. We see him easily bargain away her future with an Egyptian businessman, simply because he offers him more money than the police would. This is arguably an example of money taking precedence over morals; Casti Piani should turn Lulu over to the police, after all, she is a fugitive, yet his own selfish desire for money (and perhaps power) leads him to be blinded by his ambition for money to the elimination of right and wrong. Other characters are also aware of the importance of money: Alwa has a gambling problem and resorts to cheating to win some back in order to secure his and Lulu's future and Geschwitz lends Lulu money. Furthermore, as Thomas Elsaesser comments, "Schigolch introduces her to Rodrigo, because 'men like Schon (sic) won't always pay the rent.'"[105]

The notion that the gambling ship can be seen as a symbol for the Weimar Republic is put forward by Elsaesser. He writes, "[i]n a sense, the gambling ship can be seen as a fictional metaphor for the economic chaos of the Weimar Republic, a demonstration of the mechanics

104Thomas Elsaesser, 'Lulu and the Meter Man: Pabst's *Pandora's Box* (1929)' *in German Film and Literature: Adaptations and Transformations*, ed. Eric Rentschler (London: Methuen and Co Ltd, 1986), 40-59 (p. 49).
105Ibid, p. 49.

of inflation, de- and re-evaluation as it inflects and transforms sexual difference, and with it the symbolic position of women within a patriarchal society."[106] Indeed, this metaphor can be taken further by acknowledging that the ship is on water and cannot know what is stirring beneath it as opposed to being on solid ground. The subordination of women is clearly visible; the decisions made about Lulu's future are made by the men in her life and Alwa and Schigolch seek to improve her state too. Yet it is of note that Alwa and Geschwitz help Lulu because they have feelings for her. Mary Ann Doane writes, "[w]hile Geschwitz, Alwa and Schön seem to be under her spell, Schigolch, Rodrigo and Casti-Piani perceive her largely in economic terms."[107] What the film adeptly highlights is how people are as valuable a commodity in a capitalist society as tangible assets.

Control is also a key aspect in the film and we see the meaning attached to it differ greatly. Lulu, unlike many of the women in the French films I have examined, does appear to attempt to take control of her life, albeit with poor results. It can also be argued that Lulu tries to control, or at least dominate, the men in her life for her own sexual gratification. Yet at the same time, various men try to control her for their own purposes, be it financial or sexual. Her life is dictated by the men in it and her fate seems inextricably linked to their actions. In short, the degeneration of both the men and Lulu herself is the combined result of destructive natures and incompatibility in the relationship they have with Lulu. It is difficult to ascribe responsibility for events squarely to Lulu or the men in her life as both play roles. As Doane aptly writes, "[a]ll that happens in the film happens through or around her, although she can in no sense be described as a traditional protagonist."[108] Lulu does not control all events though she is at the centre of them. Her fate is often decided by the men in her life and their attempt to control or harness her sexuality. Her sexuality is a fundamental part of her character and in attempting to change and subvert it for their own purposes, they are attempting to change

106Thomas Elsaesser, 'Lulu and the Meter Man' , p. 49.
107Mary Ann Doane, 'The Erotic Barter', p. 70.
108Ibid, p. 71.

Lulu with bad consequences for both parties. Lulu, for her part, uses men for her own satisfaction and gratification but does not intentionally set out to destroy them. It is the combination of destructive personalities which lead to the characters' ultimate collective demise.

The idea of control can be extended to look at the idea of belonging. Throughout the film, Lulu can be seen as 'belonging' to various men. She belongs to Schigolch, as he is her pimp (and quite possibly her father too), she belongs to Schön first as his mistress and later as a wife. Later, she belongs to Casti Piani and this enables him to barter her future and arguably, she belongs to the law as she is technically a convicted criminal and there is a reward for her capture. None of these men, however, ever fully own Lulu as there is always another person who has 'claims' on her. What is particularly of note is that it is only at the end of the film, when she is desperate, destitute and alone, that she truly belongs simply to herself. By this point, Lulu is independent of men; she is a widow and has ceased to play a role as a 'viable commodity' within society as a prostitute as is evident from the abject poverty she is living in. Lulu is no longer controlling men with her sexuality and instead is solely in control of her own destiny; the decisions she makes about her life are free from the influence of men. Yet it is this new-found freedom to choose which leads to the moment where she is killed. In being able to make her own choices, she has made the wrong decision in trusting Jack the Ripper and perhaps this could be seen as implying that women, particularly a 'child-woman' such as Lulu, 'need' men to be in control of their lives to protect them from their own bad decisions.

Self-control is an important aspect of the film, particularly when looking at Schön's relationship with Lulu. He appears to be unable to control his emotions or desire for sexual gratification when he is around her, despite the fact that he prophesies his death because of her. In the scene where he dies, it is unclear whether it is Lulu or Schön himself who fires the fatal shot. However, in her article on Pabst, Louise Brooks writes that it is Lulu who murders

Schön.[109] Arguably, it is his lack of control which lead him to fulfil his own death prophecies. Elsaesser writes that Schön's death "would represent his struggle, and ultimate failure, to 'possess' Lulu, to fix, limit, and define her […] Schön at the wedding is depicted as a man whose life is suddenly and dramatically getting out of control, and ultimately only a pistol shot can put an end to the chaos."[110] Schön's ultimate fate can perhaps also be seen as a warning against disturbing the social order, which he does by marrying Lulu.

Die Büchse der Pandora is one of the great German films of the period. It highlights well contemporary fears about a supposedly degenerative society and the rise of the *Neue Frau* in what was still an essentially patriarchal, conservative society. In terms of the representation of women, Lulu is portrayed as the quintessential *Neue Frau* embodying different aspects of female sexuality and womanhood. Synonymously, she represents the fears of the Weimar Republic regarding the role of women and her ultimate death can be seen as the defeat of the *Neue Frau*. Yet there are no 'winners' after the defeat of the *Neue Frau*. Those involved with Lulu are also defeated. Schön is killed and Alwa is no longer the care-free youth he once was, but an impoverished man. Essentially, *Der Büchse der Pandora* can be seen as a cautionary tale about becoming involved with the *Neue Frau*.

The second film I will examine is *Der blaue Engel*, starring Emil Jannings and Marlene Dietrich. It is essentially the story of Immanuel Rath and his demise as a result of his relationship with the nightclub singer, Lola Lola. Rath is a pompous, sober teacher whose life is ruled by routine. Yet one day he finds his students passing around postcards showing saucy photos of Lola. He questions one of his pupils and finds out that his classmates are visiting the local nightclub, Der blaue Engel, to see Lola perform. That evening Rath goes to the nightclub with the intention of catching his students. However, the situation goes awry and he finds himself instead in Lola's dressing room. He is instantly attracted to her and when he

109Louise Brooks, 'Pabst and Lulu' in *Sight and Sound*, 34 (1965), 123-127 (p. 126).
110Thomas Elsaesser, 'Lulu and the Meter Man', p. 53.

returns the following night to return an item of clothing he mistakenly took, they spend the night together and soon afterwards, he proposes and they marry. However their initial happiness does not last and Rath, having lost both his position at the school and the love of his wife, is reduced to performing on stage as a clown in his hometown. It is during his 'homecoming' performance at Der blaue Engel that he sees Lola cheating on him with another man, which sends him quite literally mad. Rath attempts to kill Lola by strangling her, before fleeing the nightclub and returning to the school where he used to teach. In the final scene, we find him dead in his former classroom.

Sexuality, arguably, is the key theme in this film as it is the combination of Lola's sexuality and Rath's sexual repression which together create the catalyst for the film's story. Lola can be seen as representing the new sexualised woman of the Weimar Republic and in a similar way to Lulu in *Der Büchse der Pandora*, she uses her body as an economic asset, by selling saucy postcards of herself to earn some money. On stage, Lola wears revealing costumes and can be seen as representing the ideal fantasy of the men in her audience. The lascivious glances from the audiences are mirrored in the camerawork, where there are close-ups of her legs and face, though these shots are limited. Furthermore, it is of note that we see Lola as a visual ideal on a poster with her name on it, striking a seductive pose, and on postcards before we see her in person. As Elizabeth Bronfen comments, "the heroine is introduced as an image, some twenty minutes before her body will actually be shown, even while she is contained from the start by two signifiers – one pointing to the economic gain to be had from the display of valuable merchandise, the other pointing to the symbolic value attached to a name."[111] The confidence which Lola appears to exude both on and off stage appears to reflect her ease with her sexuality in contrast to Rath who is tongue-tied when he meets her, the awakening of his hitherto dormant sexuality leading him to be awkward in her

111 Elisabeth Bronfen, 'Seductive Departures of Marlene Dietrich: Exile and Stardom in "The Blue Angel"' in *New German Critique*, 89 (2003), 9-31 (p. 14).

presence. His discomfort is also shown in his second encounter with Lola when he returns to give her back some underwear he mistakenly took the night before. Again, this is in stark contrast to Lola's confidence who comments when she sees him, "You've come back? They always do."

The film appears to portray Lola's sexuality as the reason for Rath's eventual demise, but it can be argued his own inner sexual repression is just as culpable. His new feelings are so foreign to him that it renders him incapable of rational thought (he impulsively quits his job, for instance) and essentially subservient and subordinate to Lola. Bronfen argues that "Prof. Rath's journey results directly from the fact that the unexpected re-emergence of his sexual drives suddenly rendered strange everything he had held to be familiar – his comfortable apartment and the elderly maid looking after his daily needs, his unquestioned authority in his classroom in his local high school."[112] His repressed sexuality can be seen when we see him looking at and enjoying the postcards he has confiscated from his pupils. However he does this in secret and appears both ashamed and scared of discovery, frequently looking over his shoulder. Elsewhere in his life, such as in his flat or in his classroom, Rath is the ultimate source of control, whereas emotionally he is controlled by Lola; a situation he can essentially not cope with. Lola is seen as creating profound disturbance in Rath's previously staid life which leads to his death.

The motif of control in Rath's life can be seen through the symmetry of the clock chiming. The film begins with chiming, heralding the beginning of the day and we see Rath's rigid, punctual structured day commencing at the same time; his life before Lola runs like clockwork. Yet at the end of the film, we again hear the clock chiming but this time it is the end of the day and can also be read as a death knoll. It shows an unchanging, unconscious world around Rath's changed and unhappy life post-Lola and perhaps shows the ultimate insignificance of man.

112Elisabeth Bronfen, 'Seductive Departures of Marlene Dietrich', p. 12.

There is more inverted symmetry with Lola and Rath regarding the pet bird. At the beginning, we see Rath whistling in the hope that his bird will sing along. However, his bird has died. This is perhaps symbolic of the death of Rath's present life, especially when we see that his new life with Lola is marked by the singing of a bird after they have spent the night together. This metaphor can be further interpreted as symbolising the death of Rath and his kind and the birth of a new kind of social order, as seen with Lola. One can also see a symmetry with the songs Lola sings and in particular, 'Beware of blonde women' as she herself is blonde and the behaviour she is warning against is exactly that which has ensnared Rath to Lola. Her sexuality and self-confidence has led Rath to discover new feelings and his inability to cope with the dominance of his emotions for Lola is an important factor in his death.

The culpability attached to Lola for the demise of Rath can be seen as indicative of contemporary fears about the *Neue Frau*. Richard McCormick writes, "[l]ike many other films made in Germany between 1918 and 1933, *The Blue Angel* must be understood in relation to a historical context defined both by developments in cinematic form and by sexual and social anxieties pervasive in the culture of the Weimar Republic."[113] Patrice Petro also comments that the seemingly threatening changes in the situation of women can explain their negative portrayal at this time, writing "[t]he growing visibility of *women* in Weimar in fact goes a long way to explain the defensive reaction towards *woman* in the discourses of artists and intellectuals: their attempt to distance and thereby master the threat perceived as too close, too present, too overwhelming."[114]

Yet Lola is a complex character who embodies competing representations of femininity and is not simply restricted to her sexualised stage persona. Despite her job and her

113Richard W. McCormick, 'From "Caligari" to Dietrich: Sexual, Social and Cinematic Discourses in Weimar Film', *Signs*, 18 (1993), 640-668, (pp. 640-641).

114Patrice Petro, 'Modernity and Mass Culture in Weimar: Contours of a Discourse on Sexuality in Early Theories of Perception and Representation', *New German Critique*, 40 (1987), 115-146 (p. 141).

confident behaviour, it is evident that Lola holds some traditional contemporary values too. For example, when Rath first enters her dressing room, she appears genuinely shocked that he is in her 'bedroom' and even asks to him observe a sense of propriety, saying that he "should remember to remove his hat." Even though she is mocking him, it is of note that she is aware that such shows of propriety are due to her as a female in Weimar society and Rath appears genuinely flustered at having forgotten social mores. Indeed, Rath and Lola do sometimes fall into contemporary mainstream gender roles. This is most prominent at the beginning of their courtship when they have spent the night together. We see how Lola mothers him when he is getting ready for work, she asks about his snoring and how much sugar he would like in his tea. Lola is appearing not as a vampish stage performer, but as a matronly wife and mother, in short the 'ideal' woman for the time. Anton Kaes writes, "Lola Lola personified not only the vamp, but also a nurturing mother who strokes the beard of the starry-eyed professor and prepares breakfast for him after their first night together. By embodying both paradigms of femininity in the extreme – the mother and the whore – Lola represented a new kind of female figure."[115] Another tender scene is at the wedding reception; here we see Rath making a 'kikiriki' noise, just as a cockerel would do and Lola 'answers' his call with her clucking noises. Yet the tenderness diminishes as the film continues and by the end of the film, Lola's motherly devotion is submerged completely by her vampish persona both on and off stage. Indeed Rath's 'kikiriki' is also an example of the sinister symmetry evident in the film. This is the sound he makes when he is on stage and at his most vulnerable at the end, as well as being the sound he makes at his wedding reception. Whereas earlier in the film, we see Lola clucking as a 'mate' to him in reply, at the end we are confronted with him attempting to strangle his former 'mate' who will not answer his call.

Power relationships between the sexes characterise the interactions between the key protagonists. As in *Die Büchse der Pandora*, self-control is an issue which affects the leading

115Anton Kaes, *Weimar Cinema*, p. 72.

male protagonist. Just as Schön loses his self-control when faced with Lulu, Rath loses his control (and arguably, his self-worth) to Lola. Control, or power, is also important in the relationships the characters have with each other and the way in which they relate to the situation. Again, parallels can be drawn between Rath and Schön as their deaths coincide with their total loss of control of the situation they are in. Control, both of people and situations, is something all of the characters strive for, but it is arguably only Lola who best retains both aspects of control. Even at the beginning of her relationship with Rath, where she may appear subordinate to him by taking on the contemporary female role, there can be no doubt that ultimately the control lies with her. It is she who takes the initiative by asking whether he wants to continue their relationship and implying the possibility of marriage. Indeed, the film ends with her having complete control of him, as his love for her is all-consuming. This is examined further in Gaylyn Studlar's article on visual pleasure, who writes of the Von Sternberg/Dietrich films that "the masochistic male assumes the traits associated with patriarchal society's definition of the female, i.e. submissiveness, passivity, the willing acceptance of pain and the need to use masquerade and deception."[116] Whilst Studlar is not aiming this specifically at *Der blaue Engel*, the comments are still propitious, as Rath does exude the above characteristics until the final scene where he attempts to regain control with disastrous consequences. It is Rath's love and society's unfavourable response to it which leads to his demise; he has lost control of his feelings and thus himself. The fact that this leads to his death is symbolic that self-control is of the utmost importance. This is echoed earlier in the film when Rath's pupils lose all respect for him after he begins a relationship with Lola and their earlier sentiments of fear and covert teasing develop into outright mockery. Furthermore, this can be seen as highlighting the 'danger' of marrying outside one's class and allowing oneself to become engaged with a woman such as Lola. This is also highlighted in

116Gaylyn Studlar, Visual Pleasure and the Masochistic Aesthetic', *Journal of Film and Video,* 37 (1985), 5-26 (p. 13).

Die Büchse der Pandora as we see Schön die as a direct result of his insatiable lust and unwise marriage to Lulu. Kaes writes that *Der blaue Engel* presents, “the professor’s seduction by Lola, his rapid degeneration and pathetic death as the direct result of his deviation from the path of bourgeois order. The film associates this danger zone with sexuality, spectacle and mass culture.”[117] We see this clearly represented in the film with the spectacle being inherent in Lola’s stage performances and later, Rath’s own stage act and the danger of mass culture can be seen with the audience in the club who are so cruel towards Rath when he is on stage.

Social class and the bourgeois order is echoed elsewhere in the film in particular regarding the interplay between Rath, Lola and the manager; when the manager meets Rath for the first time, he is bombastic in nature and his behaviour is somewhat obsequious towards Rath. The manager is delighted to have him in the club and this highlights the social hierarchy of the time. Even at the end, when Rath goes insane, the manager is still kindly to him and there is no anger when he approaches him. Indeed there is a note of pity and almost tenderness. Despite Rath’s fall from grace, he is still, essentially, a man of higher class than the manager. We see markers of class in the way characters interact with each other, through their language and in the jobs that they do. Rath’s higher social standing is indicated by the fact that he is a teacher, which is a trained job. The manager’s behaviour towards Lola, however, is completely different. Far from being kind, he is rude and domineering and sees Lola simply as a money-making tool. Yet Lola is equally uncomplimentary towards him. Rath, by comparison, is highly respectful towards Lola and when a sailor creates trouble in her dressing room, Rath jumps to her defence, claiming that he does so out of a sense of duty. It can be argued that the importance Rath attaches to propriety is part of what Lola finds attractive in him; compared to the other men that surround her, he is the only man who does not seem to want something from her and who genuinely cares for her. Yet in the long-term,

117Anton Kaes, ‘Weimar Cinema’, p. 72.

her free-spirited approach does not fit with Rath's more traditional views. Indeed, it is what he perceives as her immoral behaviour (that is to say, her having an affair) which essentially pushes him into madness. Morality is not a concept simply restricted to Lola and Rath. We see the pupils in Rath's school being put in difficult moral positions; for example, Angst, the star pupil does the 'right thing' by telling Rath that the other boys are visiting a nightclub, but he is not rewarded for his honesty. Predictably, the other boys turn against him, but less predictably, so does Rath. This exchange shows from the outset that morality is a complex and mutable concept. Another example occurs when Angst's book is defaced with an unflattering picture of Rath drawn on it, the culprit, Erztum, manages to get Angst in trouble. Yet Angst in turn feels vindicated, when at the end of the scene, it is Erztum who is in trouble for having brought in the postcards of Lola.

In a similar way to *Die Büchse der Pandora*, *Der blaue Engel* portrays contemporary fears about the *Neue Frau* and the control that sexualised women could have over their male contemporaries. That both films show men of a high social standing falling 'prey' to such women cannot be a simple coincidence. Yet the portrayal of the women is not at all sympathetic; certainly Lulu's end in *Die Büchse der Pandora* is not. Essentially, the narratives portray societies punishing women for their sexuality; Lulu, by her death and Lola, by being wholly blamed for Rath's death. What must be considered is that the men in the films are just as much victims of situations of their own making as they are victims of vampish women, seeking to destroy them and thus meting out their punishments. The insatiable lust of Schön and the repressed sexuality of Rath cannot be discounted as reasons for their eventual downfall. Yet what is most interesting is that neither film portrays its female leads as simply sexualised people. Both Lulu and Lola are complex characters and there are instances where we see a portrayal of traditional gendered ideas and an apparent genuine tenderness between them and some of the men in their lives (Lola and Rath, Lulu and Schigolch, Lulu and Alwa).

With the depiction of their more motherly sides, it can be argued that both films are portraying the contemporary ideal woman. Yet there are only brief moments where this side of the women are shown and instead the emphasis is on depicting the 'dangerous' *Neue Frau*. The films serve as a warning against the *Neue Frau* by presenting her in a full and extreme way and ultimately doing away with her to restore an order which could otherwise be lost and symbolise the end of the bourgeois order and Weimar society as a whole.

CONCLUSIONS

The role of women in France and Germany during the inter-war period underwent a number of dramatic changes in parallel with the societal changes occurring at the time. To conclude, I will examine potential comparisons between the two countries, and assess the similarities and differences that can be seen between the depictions of women on the basis of the films I have studied.

I have looked at five different films, each of which offer differing ideas regarding female representation in this period. However, there are most definitely trends which can be seen within all of the films. In the French films I have looked at, there is great emphasis on women within the domestic sphere. In *La fille de l'eau* we see Gudule at home embarking on generic tasks associated with women, such as making the dinner. In *La souriante Madame Beudet* we see Madame Beudet restricted to her domestic sphere and indeed, for the vast majority of her film, she is in her home. It is only at the end, when she is bolstered by her husband, that she is 'free to leave' and eventually goes outside. This is commented upon by Judith Mayne who also remarks that "she is framed by two men, their exchange occurring across her body. The image 'cites' the conventions of the classical cinema – husband and wife reunited, order restored."[118] In *Fanny*, there is emphasis on the maternal role and we see Fanny give up her own dreams and aspirations for the good of her child and her family. In all of these films, women are the mainstay of the domestic sphere. Even in *La souriante Madame Beudet*, where Madame Beudet is far from happy with her life, we are seeing what would have been life for many women at that time. Furthermore, the fact that most of these women are staying at home ties in with contemporary government initiatives to keep women at home and away from the labour market, with the emphasis being that *la femme au foyer* was the

118Judith Mayne, *The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 195.

new ideal and the new patriotic duty of French women after the First World War. Indeed, even in *La souriante Madame Beudet*, we understand the contemporary ‘model’ woman, as Madame Beudet is the complete antithesis of this ideal, by being unhappy with her lot and shows a desire to kill her husband. What is more, the cinematic conventionality, highlighted by Mayne and which I have already commented on, is evident in all of these films; the power in the marital relationship always ultimately rests with the husband. In all of the French films there is the implication that the domestic sphere is perceived as where the woman should be, but even here, decisions are dominated by their male counterparts. This is particularly the case in *La souriante Madame Beudet* where we see Monsieur Beudet over-ride his wife’s decision on the placing of a vase.

By comparison, the women in the German films are much more in control in the domestic sphere. We see how the women dominate their homes to the ultimate exclusion of men, as is the case with Lulu and Dr. Schön in *Die Büchse der Pandora* and Lola and Rath in *Der blaue Engel.* Whereas the power in the marital relationships rests with the men in the French films we have examined, it is the converse in the German films. It is Lulu and Lola who are in control and are seen as contributing significantly to the ultimate demise of their husbands. By implication, this suggests that it is dangerous to allow the power to be diverted from the male within a marriage. Yet although Lola and Lulu often appear to be in control of their own lives, outside of the domestic sphere they are still essentially controlled by the men in their lives as they are seen as valuable commodities; Lulu is the subject of bartering between Casti Piani and the Egyptian businessman and Lola is a source of income for her manager. That neither Lulu or Lola can truly decide their own fates is something which these two women have in common with the women portrayed in the French films. The portrayal of women in the German films, however, is often dichotomised with Lulu and Lola both being seen at one moment as whores and the next moment, as the embodiment of matronly

goodness. This type of female representation is not new and restricted simply to this period, but is significant in that whilst it is prevalent in contemporary German cinema, women in French cinema are generally portrayed as moral and good. The negative depiction of women in the German films could be seen as a comment on the new freedoms accorded to women in the Weimar Republic. Furthermore, we see the negative portrayal of female sexuality through the attitudes shown towards the *Neue Frau* as a dangerous and subversive element. However, despite the negative portrayal of the *Neue Frau* in *Der Büchse der Pandora*, it is Countess Geschwitz who is most positively portrayed. It is she who helps Lulu and even puts herself in danger to do so. Yet unlike Lulu, her sexuality is much less overt, arguably even to the point of being repressed, and it is arguably this which allows her to be portrayed more positively than Lulu. It is not necessarily female sexuality which is portrayed as dangerous, but rather the overt nature of Lulu's particular sexuality. In essence, the French films appear to depict the kind of women that the government wants to have within their society, whereas the German films concentrate on demonising the kind of women the authorities believe exist who are detrimental to society. LeGates substantiates this idea writing that "[e]ven non-Nazis saw the 'new woman' as the symbol of a supposedly immoral and degenerate modern culture that flourished in the newly established Weimar Republic."[119]

Differences in class are also more acutely examined in the German films than in the French. This is most pertinent when we examine the relationships between Rath and Lola, and Schön and Lulu, in comparison to that of Georges and Gudule. Whereas there is a clear indication that Rath and Schön are at least partly to blame for their eventual downfalls by marrying women outside of their class, there is no such social comment in *La fille de l'eau*. On the contrary, the relationship between Georges and Gudule seems normal and has a degree of inevitability to it despite the cross-class nature of their romance. That the two people are of

119Marlene Le Gates, *In Their Time: A History of Feminism in Western Society* (London: Routledge, 2001) p. 291.

such different social standing is never discussed and certainly does not appear as a barrier to their love. However the ease with which they appear to be able to have a relationship despite their class differences is not necessarily indicative of social realities. In the French films the representation of class is less problematised than in the German films. A variety of classes are presented; we see the bourgeoisie in *La souriante Madame Beudet* and the working classes in *Fanny.* However the lack of interaction between the classes in these films is perhaps the reason for the lack of real comment on them. Conversely, class is most certainly an issue when one looks at the marriages in the German films. Indeed, one of the reasons that Rath loses his position is because he becomes involved with Lola, who is of a lower class than himself, which implies the existence of class divisions. Such divisions are evident in the relationship between Schön and Lulu. He is a doctor of a high social standing whereas she is a prostitute from a lower class. The unhappiness in their brief marriage appears to demonstrate that cross-class marriages do not work and indeed, Schön prophesies his own death when he agrees to marry Lulu, another indication that their union is doomed from the start.

However one could also see these interpretations as comments on the love that exists between the couples. Whereas Gudule and Georges appear to share a tender love, the relationships between Schön and Lulu, and Rath and Lola, appear to be based solely on physical attraction and of a sexual nature. One could see the relationships in the German films as marriages of convenience; both parties gain from the relationship. In *Die Büchse der Pandora* Lulu gains status and wealth by marrying Schön, and in return he has a pretty wife who indulges his sexual desire. The situation is very similar when one examines the relationship between Rath and Lola in *Der blaue Engel*. Arguably, the marriage between Panisse and Fanny is one of convenience, as he gains an heir and she ensures a future for her son. Yet in contrast to Lulu and Lola, her motives in marrying are more altruistic; she is not

marrying Panisse for herself, but for her unborn child. What is more, the marriage is a happy one in comparison to the destructive marriages we see portrayed in the German films. Correspondingly, the women who appear happiest in the films are Fanny and Gudule. This would appear to suggest that women who are fulfilling contemporary traditional female roles are the happiest and thus that being a wife and mother (in the case of Fanny) is the route to true happiness. This positive portrayal of married life and motherhood links well with government initiatives to promote the role of the mother and to elevate it within French society. However it must be noted that Madame Beudet appears the unhappiest, despite fulfilling her duty to society by marrying and remaining in the home, and this highlights how domestic reality may not live up to the ideals promoted by the French government. Conceivably this is a comment by Dulac that simply fulfilling the domestic ideal is not enough to achieve true happiness and such representations of unhappy domesticity justify the film's status as the first French feminist film.

In terms of female sexuality, the only hint we have of sexual relations taking place in the French films comes from Fanny, who, after all, is pregnant. However there is fear of widespread stigmatisation for both Fanny and the child as the truth of the baby's parentage is kept a secret from the extended family. Indeed, it is only when Fanny is married and the child is established as Panisse's, that Norine takes joy in her grandson. Essentially, Fanny's extra-marital sexual relationship with Marius is not widely frowned upon by those who know about it, owing to the presence of a child. This is particularly interesting to consider against a backdrop of deep pronatalism in France, where despite the Catholic country's strongly-held social beliefs, Fanny's pregnancy and relationship with Marius are not portrayed in a wholly negative light. By comparison the relationships in which Lola and Lulu are involved are portrayed in a negative manner, despite the fact that they are married. It would seem that as their relationships do not lead to children, there is an implication that their relationships are

restricted to sexual gratification only and that the women are not concerned with their matronly duty of bearing children. The portrayal of Lola and Lulu seems to mirror the fears within Weimar society regarding the *Neue Frau*. LeGates remarks that "[t]he 1920s and 1930s saw a full flowering of the ideology of domesticity."[120] This is most certainly highlighted in the French films through the portrayal of Fanny's pregnancy and the domestic setting of *La souriante Madame* Beudet; and to a lesser extent, through Gudule undertaking a number of domestic chores in *La fille de l'eau*. We also see this through the negative portrayal of Lulu and Lola, who do not embody the domestic ideal.

In summary, there are many similarities and differences, not only between the representations of women in a country-specific context, but also between the films themselves, irrespective of their country of origin. We have seen how the portrayal of women in German cinema is far more dichotomised than in French cinema, with its concentration on the negative portrayal of the *Neue Frau* and of women's sexuality. This does not necessarily reflect deeply-held, negative attitudes towards women themselves within Weimar society, but instead a fear of the *Neue Frau* and of the changing situation whereby women were beginning to experience new rights for the first time. In comparison, the French films appear to superficially concentrate upon the more maternal women and the domestic aspects of the woman's ideal. Both governments were attempting to promote the domestic ideal at this time and one can see evidence of this in the portrayal of women in the films. However there is undermining of this ideal in *La souriante Madame Beudet* as Madame Beudet is unhappy with her life as a dutiful wife and the restrictions placed on her free time and subservience to her husband. Even Fanny, who may superficially appear to be the domestic ideal as she fulfils her 'duty' in bearing a child, is also an example of the subverted ideal as she becomes pregnant out of wedlock by a man, who is not her husband which certainly did not fit the government's view of the ideal woman. *La souriante Madame Beudet* is perhaps closer to the reality of

120Marlene LeGates, p. 290.

French inter-war society but was less successful than films such as *Fanny*, which instead portray a desired reality. However this can also be attributed to the fact that *La souriante Madame Beudet* is an avant-garde, shorter piece and less likely to attract as much attention as a mainstream film, part of a popular trilogy of films with a familiar story. As Dudley Andrew writes, “[f]or the most part, and more than is usual in other countries and other eras, the French cinema of the 1930s comforted a national audience with its familiarity, even when advertising its depiction of ‘real life’.”[121]

The films certainly do offer an insight into contemporary mores, and there are certain similarities which are evident between French and German cinema. We can see that both countries are concerned with the role of women in contemporary society. In the different films we see how the contemporary ideal of women as a dutiful wife and mother is portrayed or rejected in the films whether it be through Fanny’s altruism, Lola’s sexuality or Madame Beudet’s undermining of the wifely role. However there are significant differences between the ways in which the cinematic medium of each country attempts to portray this image. The French films concentrate in the main on showing the positive and negative consequences of domesticated life, in particular where men dominate the home; we see Madame and Monsieur Beudet locked in a domestic struggle for control, Gudule reduced to menial tasks allocated to her by the men in her life and Fanny’s reproductivity leading to her fate being decided by men. Conversely, the German films instead choose to focus on the pitfalls and repercussions of life away from the domestic ideal, where the women are in control and the home becomes a female sexual space which disempowers men and allows women to flourish and dominate. From the films of this period it is evident that women were starting to depart form the previously rigid definitions of their roles in society. Whether films were trying to encourage and retain an acceptance of older societal norms, or attempting to act as a warning of the

121 Dudley Andrew, ‘French Cinema in the 1930s’ in *European Cinema*, ed. Elizabeth Ezra (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 97-113, (p. 109).

consequences of leaving the domesticated life, it cannot be escaped that the cinematic medium of the time in both of these countries provides a valuable insight into the changing role of women during the inter-war period in both French and German societies.

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