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Themenheft: Ecological Archives

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“Naturgeil”: Homo-Eco-Erotic Utopianism in Hitler Youth Film Propaganda and ‘Boy Scout’ Porn

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Abstract: An avid attachment to the earth was fundamental to the *Blut und Boden* ideology of National Socialism, and the oddly environmentalist strand of this political philosophy is nowhere more evident than in the numerous Hitler Youth propaganda films produced by the Third Reich. In more recent decades, a popular trend of bareback ‘boy scout’ erotica has emerged in the European-American — and particularly the German — market for gay video pornography. Filmed almost exclusively outdoors and bearing titles such as *Bare Scouts*, *Fucking Scouts*, *Jungs unter sich spielen Pfadfinder* and, most tellingly perhaps, *Jungs unter sich sind naturgeil*, these films explicitly attempt to link the ‘natural’ and healthy appearance of their actors to their idyllic surroundings. If one can truly speak of ecofascism or of an ecofascist mentality beyond the historical specificity of the Nazi era, one might begin with an examination of its unconscious drives — specifically of its sexuality. Putting these already disturbing filmic archives into an even more discomfiting constellation will afford the unexpected and unwelcome insight that it might be precisely a barely disavowed homo-eco-erotic imaginary that constitutes the necessary precondition for channeling this libidinal investment in national landscapes into a justification for militaristic expansionism.

Keywords: queer ecology, Hitler Youth, boy scouts, scouting, pornography, film propaganda, pornotopia

An avid and, as I hope to demonstrate, even *erotic* attachment to the earth was fundamental to the *Blut und Boden* ideology of National Socialism.¹ The notion of a wholesome *Heimat* associated with recognizably ‘German’ landscapes — from the panoramas of a Luis Trenker *Bergfilm* to the vistas of Hitler’s chalet at Berchtesgaden² — was essential not only to the construction of a nation-

al(ist) sense of self established in contradistinction to the supposedly decadent metropolitan sensibilities of the Weimar Republic; it also provided affective justification for the pursuit of *Lebensraum* (a term itself borrowed from ecological theory) and the consequent occupation, dubbed resettlement, of eastern territories (Brüggemeier et al. 12). This aspect of German fascism is perhaps particularly evident in the organization of the *Hitlerjugend*, which was formed through the confluence of a number of preexisting *Pfadfinder* associations, such as the youth hiking group, *Der Wandervogel*—whence the Nazis took their salute “Heil!”—and the *Bund der Artamanen*—a small, ultranationalist organization devoted to the concept of *Blut und Boden*, who aimed (albeit ultimately unsuccessfully) at bringing city boys into a life of agricultural labor and who believed they could reunite with their ancient Teutonic roots by communing with the ethereal spirits of nature.

What unified various scouting groups under the later umbrella of the Hitler Youth, in the words of Jean-Denis-Lepage, was their stance “against blind industrialization, material consumerism and soulless society” and their emphasis on “the need to return to nature, to a simpler and healthier life” (16). Already, a 1903 report to the *Kulturministerium* of Steglitz justifying the foundation of the *Wandervogel* club lists among its central goals “den Sinn für die Natur zu wecken, zur Kenntnis unserer deutschen Heimat anzuleiten, [...] kameradschaftlichen Geist zu pflegen, allen den Schädigungen des Leibes und der Seele entgegenzuwirken, die zumal in und um unseren Großstädten die Jugend bedrohen” (quoted in Giesecke 18).³ In 1911, an influential decree issued by the Prussian government on the subject of *Jugendpflege* summarized the goal of youth hiking excursions in similarly resonant language: “Diese sollen vor allem [...] einen frischen, fröhlichen Sinn wecken, Freude an der Natur, an der Heimat und an der Kameradschaft gewähren” (qtd. in Giesecke 64). It is this tacit association between *Heimat*, male bonding and *Freude an der Natur*—what I will theorize to be a homo-eco-erotic impulse—that concerns us here.

Yet, despite this call for a return to the earth, National Socialism’s relation to the natural world is anything but uncomplicated. There was a great deal of scholarly interest and significant debate, in the first decade of the present century, surrounding the apparent political affinities between fascism and the coeval conservation movement,⁴ but it is worth bearing in mind the inherent tension between a desire for conservationism and the military industrialism, *Rassenhygiene*, and desire for expansion equally central to the Nazi party’s goals.⁵ Joachim Wolschke-Kulmahn has demonstrated, for example, how National Socialist landscape planning for the annexed eastern territories reposed on a “a particularly aggressive definition of ‘living space,’ in which conquering other countries and exploiting their populations was an integral part of landscape care” (248). He continues:

Conceptions of an 'ideal' environment are connected not only to the spatial environment itself—that is, to the natural and built landscape—but also to specific notions of what constitutes an 'ideal' human being in an 'ideal' human society. During World War I, for instance, the Second Reich made plans to colonize the conquered portions of Polish-speaking Europe with German settlers. In what can be viewed as a dress rehearsal for a later era, many urban planners and landscape architects in Germany planned for the permanent occupation of conquered territories without feeling any need to take existing social and spatial structures into consideration (244).

If we similarly consider Weimar-era German scouting groups as an inadvertent dress rehearsal for later conquest, the deep-rooted eugenic aspect to these blond bodies in virgin landscapes comes into relief. It is thus tempting to conclude with the editors of one volume on Nazi environmentalism, that, "[i]nasmuch as [the Nazis] thought about Germany's forests at all, they thought in terms of propaganda: it provided an opportunity to meld the Romantic 'love of the woods' to Nazi thinking" (Brüggemeier et al. 9). But we must be equally cautious not to dismiss this discomfiting convergence as mere propaganda; there are, after all, undeniable and deeply troubling ideological inheritances of such Romantic *Naturliebe* in Nazi discourses on purity, conservation, even eugenics—in essence, what Walter Benjamin famously identifies as fascism's aestheticization of politics.

Here I will examine how such aestheticization extends to and capitalizes on the sexualization of what Susan Sontag, in her influential essay on "Fascinating Fascism," reveals to be a "utopian aesthetics (physical perfection; identity of a biological given) impl[ying] an ideal eroticism" (93). Like its ambivalent environmentalism, the homosocial, even homoerotic, aspect of the Hitler Youth, specifically, is an inheritance from the scouting groups out of which it grew. From the very beginning, soupçons of homosexuality preoccupied the fundamentally male-oriented German outdoor youth movements. As early as 1914, a Catholic politician had denounced the *Wandervogeljugend* as "a club of homosexuals" and a den of free love (qtd. in Lepage 14). Two years earlier still, in what remains one of the touchstone studies of this and other German youth movements of the era, Hans Blüher had famously declared the *Wandervogelbewegung* to be explicable *only* as a fundamentally erotic phenomenon. And this is not to mention similarities and associations between the *Wandervogel* and Adolf Brandt's explicitly homosexual *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*, including the eroticized images of athletic young men frolicking outdoors in various states of undress in its flagship publication: *Der Eigene* (subtitled *Ein Blatt für männliche Kultur*). While Blüher's book develops and even celebrates a model of 'inversion' that he is careful to distinguish from contemporaneous definitions of homosexuality or pederasty,⁶ cultural historian Jost Hermand gives an extremely disquieting account, in

his memoirs of life in the Hitler Youth cadets, of how sadomasochistic sexual practices ranging from mutual masturbation to ritualized rape were commonly employed among the Hitler Youth themselves as a means of reinforcing hierarchical power structures (55–56; also cited by Heinemann 31).

Sontag is certainly right to read fascism's idealized eroticism as "sexuality converted into the magnetism of leaders and the joy of followers. The fascist ideal is to transform sexual energy into a 'spiritual' force, for the benefit of the community" (93). But, immediately directing her attention to the gender(ed) implications of this sublimation, she strangely ends up eliding the erotic from the communal (she will connect it, instead, exclusively to sadomasochism): "The erotic (that is, women) is always presented as a temptation, with the most admirable response being a heroic repression of the sexual impulse" (93). My contention, by contrast, is that fascist sexual desire is neither denied nor repressed—at least not in this sense—but instead seeks *gratification* in the homo-eco-erotic utopia, which is to say that the reason fascism turns us on is not reducible to the erotic allure of sadomasochistic subjugation, as Sontag would have it, but finds (additional) satisfaction in a sentiment of homosocial (*homo* here in the strict sense of *same*, including but not limited to same-sex) community and sense of place.

My own analysis of this phenomenon will emerge from an examination of Hitler Youth propaganda films beside a peculiar trend in all-male moving image pornography (dating back to the early 1970s at the least) that features actors wearing boy scout uniforms. Putting these already disturbing filmic archives into an even more disconcerting constellation, my aim is less to imply a fascist sensibility or aesthetic in gay pornography than it is to demonstrate that the filmic representations of the Hitler Youth and particularly of their natural surroundings were already in their own way pornographic; my goal is not so much to contend that there is something inherently fascist about a love of nature as it is to argue that there is something inherently pornographic about the way in which it was mobilized by fascism.

Expanding Queer Ecological Archives

Indeed, if one can truly speak of eco-fascism or of an eco-fascist mentality beyond the historical specificity of the Nazi era, one might begin with an examination of its unconscious, of its underlying drives—to wit: of its sexuality. As Dagmar Herzog reminds us in her introduction to a special journal issue on the sexualities of fascism, in addition to the more frequently acknowledged repressive aspects of fascist sexuality, "the Nazis also used sexuality to consolidate their appeal—and that they did so in many different ways. [...] We

simply cannot understand why Nazism was attractive to so many people if we focus only on its sexually repressive aspects" (6; also qtd. by Halberstam 154). We must therefore remain sensitive to what such potentially offensive or off-putting genres as propaganda (or pornography) can reveal to us with regard to the cultural-historical background of which they are symptomatic and, more troublingly, about the historical constitution of our own ecologically minded episteme as well — affirming but also complicating recent calls for queer ecology.

As Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson define it in their oft-cited volume on the subject:

The task of a queer ecology is to probe the intersections of sex and nature with an eye to developing a sexual politics that more clearly includes considerations of the natural world and its biosocial constitution, and an environmental politics that demonstrates an understanding of the ways in which sexual relations organize and influence both the material world of nature and our perceptions, experiences, and constitutions of that world (5).⁷

Excavating the libidinal investment underlying far-right environmentalism and its propagandistic deployment will require us, then, to take a sober and potentially unsettling look not only into the darker moments and movements of the German environmentalist tradition but, indeed, into what informs erotic, ecological, and utopian imaginaries in general. Resisting what Jack Halberstam describes as a temptation to "represent gay and lesbian history as a repressed archive" and a "tendency to select from historical archives only the narratives that please," my intervention is of a piece with recent approaches in queer studies that recognize, as Halberstam does, paraphrasing Leo Bersani, "the erotic [as] an equal opportunity archive: it borrows just as easily, possibly more easily from politically problematic imagery than from politically palatable material" (149, 148). An examination of the convergence between fascist propaganda and gay pornography will put pressure precisely on some of the least palatable, if most morbidly intriguing, aspects of this archive.

There is, in fact, a pronounced literary and filmic legacy to this tradition extending beyond either genre. Kadji Amin has demonstrated, for instance, how, in Vincent Lapie's 1946 novel *Saint-Florent-la-Vie*, the protagonist's

total corruption into pederasty precedes his no less dramatic rehabilitation through participation in a Boy Scout troop for inmates. [...] For if, in *Saint-Florent*, pederasty is bad for the vitality of the race, it nevertheless carries within it a crucial positive value, that of an affective attachment to male hierarchies, presented as the structural basis not only of scouting, but also of healthy male homosociality within the modern nation. (Amin 53)

Amin's larger purpose for evoking scouting is to demonstrate that "European modernity is [...] pederastic — that is, structured by the masculinist inequalities of normalized hierarchies between men, men and boys, and between boys, hierarchies that are never far from overt sexualization" (56). An honest examination of early scouting as an example of what Amin calls modern pederasty (by which he designates such disavowed modes of attachment deemed archaic by contemporary queer identity formations) thus responds to his call for attachment genealogies and the work of deidealization seeking to excavate neglected and often unwelcome queer histories and archives.

The archive in question here could be expanded to include a whole host of filmic intertexts too numerous to list exhaustively: Volker Schlöndorff's cinematic adaptation of Michel Tournier's *Le Roi des aulnes* (*The Erl-King*, 1970), *The Ogre* (1996)—which explicitly links forestry to what the misguided protagonist sees as the protection of beautiful Aryan boys — and, in a much different idiom, Dennis Gansel's *Napola – Elite für den Führer* both restage scenes from Alfred Weidenmann's Hitler Youth films nearly shot for shot. The opening montage of Sam Peckinpah's *Cross of Iron* (1977) draws on these same images as well as on clips from the short propaganda film I will be reading most closely here. Rosa von Praunheim's documentary *Männer, Helden, schwule Nazis* (2005) might fit into this constellation. Or, on this note, Kenneth Anger's *Ich will!* (2008) consists entirely of Hitler Youth footage mined from historical archives. As Anger describes the project to *Artforum*:

My film is a poetic, ironic reverie on the Hitler Youth in which I make a parallel with the Wandervogel movement that preceded it. *Ich Will!* is deliberately not a documentary but a visual poem, for which I conducted research for ten years in the historical archives of Europe and North America, ultimately choosing footage shot between 1933 and 1938. I built up my assemblage from various Hitler Youth propaganda films and amateur shorts, additionally taking several sequences from the propaganda feature *Hitlerjunge Quex* (*Hitler Youth Quex*, 1933), notably the rally around the flag observed by Quex through the trees. There were a multitude of cameras rolling in Nazi Germany, filming just about everything, and often the people behind the cameras didn't quite know what they were filming. A poignant moment in *Ich Will!* is when a Hitler Youth glances at the camera and we are uncertain what constitutes the history. It seems as if the Nazis left the footage in by mistake. But I think it could be revealing of a secret love of some kind. (qtd. in Gronlund n. pag.)

The same interview also announces a sequel titled *Und Du?* to debut on the vernal equinox in 2009. The troubling erotic appeal of the Hitler Youth clearly still remains in force today.

More pointedly: in recent decades, a popular trend of bareback 'boy scout' and outdoor erotica has established itself as a dominant genre in the European-American – and, it appears, particularly the German – market for gay video pornography. Filmed almost exclusively outdoors and bearing titles such as *Boy Scouts*, *Gay Scouts*, *Bare Scouts*, *Fucking Scouts*, *Shameless Scouts* (and the sequel of the same title), *Jungs unter sich... spielen Pfadfinder* and, most tellingly perhaps, *Jungs unter sich... sind naturgeil*, these films – all released after 2005, to give only the most recent sampling – explicitly attempt to link the so-called natural and healthy appearance of their actors to the idyllic (or at the very least outdoor) surroundings in which the sex scenes take place. Tino Media, the Berlin-based production company responsible for the low-budget *Jungs unter sich* series, claims that their models have “eine frische und natürliche Ausstrahlung” with special emphasis put on a “sportliches, natürliches Aussehen” – an assertion recalling not only turn-of-the-century scouting charters nearly verbatim but also echoing the sentiment of the second of the ten *Gesundheitspflichtgebote* of the Hitler Youth: “Du mußt dich stets sauber halten und deinen Körper pflegen und üben. Licht, Luft und Wasser helfen Dir dabei.”⁸

The *loci classici* of this pornographic archive are two films by director Jean-Daniel Cadinot, rather universally considered France's foremost gay porn auteur,⁹ whose earliest releases include *Scouts* (1981) and *Scouts 2: Le Jeu de pistes* (translated into English as *Hot on the Trail*, 1984; the tagline for the rerelease reads: “...you're invited to get back to nature with a troop of young men who learn how to use what nature gave them!”), featuring a young protagonist with hair conspicuously dyed blond as if to emphasize the stereotypically Aryan aspect of his appearance.¹⁰



Comparison of “Hitlerjugend in den Bergen” and Cadinot’s *Scouts 2: Jeu de pistes*

Rolf Hammerschmidt, almost certainly Germany's most prolific gay porn director and producer, similarly launched his career with the explicitly eco-dystopian two-part *Boytropolis* in the early 1990s and made a now lesser-known film called *Hot Scout* around that same time. In fact, a keyword search of the information archived at gayeroticvideoindex.com turns up just shy of twenty feature-length 'boy scout' titles since the turn of the century.¹¹ When taken in tandem with this unmistakable prevalence of scouting imagery dating back as far as the genesis of mainstream moving image pornography (the period from roughly 1969 to 1984 has often been theorized as the genre's 'golden age'), the undeniably homoerotic element of scouting culture exploited by Hitlerjugend film propaganda invites us, perhaps, to examine the latter archive through the scholarly apparatus developed to discuss the former—to read HJ film as (if it were) pornography, or, at the very least, as pornographic.

Eco-Pornotopias

Here, then, I will interrogate the perplexing subliminal connection between homoeroticism and an enthusiasm for the outdoors, both in Nazi film propaganda and in certain strains of gay pornography, arguing that both genres eroticize nature with utopian aims. The utopian stakes of pornography, generally, and all-male pornography, specifically, are well documented. Already in 1989, Linda Williams applied Richard Dyer's categories of utopianism in the movie musical to the analysis of pornography, examining "utopian 'numbers' [sex scenes] that represent solutions to narrative problems" (*Hard Core* 270). A few years later, Dyer himself noted how "the effective multiplication of sex acts through elaborate narrativity [in gay porn] is an analogue for a (utopian) model of a gay sexual lifestyle that combines basic romanticism with an easy acceptance of promiscuity" (130). Along these lines, Steven Marcus has coined the term "pornotopia" to describe the immediate availability of sex in pornography: quotidian occurrences like a pizza delivery provide an instant and uncomplicated occasion for intercourse. Or, in the case of 'boy scout' porn, camping, hiking, and swimming are typical pretexts.

More acutely, Rich Cante and Angelo Restivo have argued that gay pornography, inasmuch as it stages non-normative sexual practices, is always situated in relation to an imagined public gaze and that it therefore occupies public space even when the scenario is private—in short: that by projecting spaces where gay sex can appear normal and *natural*, "all-male pornography is utopian in a strictly spatial sense. That is, it is utopian in its own uniquely troubling way" (153). What is specific to homosexual pornography, according to this argument, "inherent in both its aesthetic terms and its sociocultural functions, is the ne-

cessity of a passage through an imagined public gaze where what is at stake in the encounter is precisely one's position within the greater *socius*, something never at stake in the same way in heterosexual porn" (152). In the genre of 'boy scout' porn, it is, without a doubt, the fetish object of the scouting uniform itself — icon of a strictly codified, quasi-militaristic camaraderie — that implicitly legitimizes and 'naturalizes' homosexual behavior, becoming the quilting point stitching together the public and the private in order that an ecological pornography might come into being. As Sontag notes in her essay on the fascination of fascism: "There is a general fantasy about uniforms. They suggest community, order, identity (through ranks, badges, medals, things which declare who the wearer is and what he has done: his worth is recognized), competence, legitimate authority, the legitimate exercise of violence" (99). Bearing in mind this passage *through* the social to the sexual, reading pornography beside propaganda allows us to begin to unlock the association between the (homo)erotic and the national-environmental imaginary — and to explore the implications of this unexpected coupling.

In the case of the pornography in question, these films are utopian in the sense that they envision a world in which the allegedly obscene act of gay sex has become what Williams might call an *on/scene* norm — with gay sex acts both liberating and occupying open, *outdoor* public spaces. In the oftentimes borderline homoerotic Hitler Youth films, the objectified young boys constitute only part of the erotic charge: equally important, perhaps, is the way that distinctly 'German' natural surroundings are represented and politicized as a setting for these homosocial utopian relations. As Williams defines it in her pioneering study *Hard Core*, "[t]he term on/scenity marks both the controversy and scandal of sexual representation *and* the fact that its details have become unprecedentedly available to the public at large. On/scenity is the flashpoint where conventions of public and private, lustful and lascivious, prurient and ordinary collide, public discussion is produced and old-fashioned obscenity [...] is no longer possible" (*Hard Core* 282). Putting it more succinctly in the introduction to a later edited collection on porn studies, Williams redefines the term as "the gesture by which a culture brings on to its public arena the very organs, acts, bodies, and pleasures that have heretofore been designated ob/scene and kept literally off-scene" ("Porn Studies" 3). In short, the on/scene is a testing ground for the making-public of what had before been tacit (and tacitly dismissed as potentially perverse). The evident homoeroticism of certain Hitler Youth films and the homosocial tradition they are part of, then, might similarly be seen as an expression of an unspoken homosocial desire underlying the fascist public arena.

Cases Study: “Hitlerjugend in den Bergen” (1932)

Film propaganda was one of Hitler’s and Goebbels’s chief instruments of influence and manipulation over the German public — who proved an enthusiastic audience, indeed. To recall Eric Rentschler’s pithy formulation: “If the Nazis were movie mad, then the Third Reich was movie made” (*Ministry* 1). And here again, the Hitler Youth warrants particular mention. As David Welch notes in his book on *Nazi Propaganda*, “[o]ne explanation for th[e] undoubted success [of the Hitler Youth] was the Nazis’ remarkable ability to stimulate the imagination of an alienated youth with the promise of a romantic Utopia” (72). Film was a key source of this stimulation. In 1934 Goebbels inaugurated mandatory Hitler Youth film screenings, called *Jugendfilmstunden*, which in the 1942 season alone attracted more than eleven million viewers (*Ministry* 262). And even before the Nazis seized power, the organization had begun to produce its own films with HJ boys as actors. By the end of the war they had put out more than a dozen shorts as well as the seven full-length montage films that made up Alfred Weidenmann’s *Junges Europa* series, produced between 1942 and 1944.

It makes sense that golden-age gay pornography, especially, would draw on this tradition. In an epilogue to the expanded edition of *Hard Core*, Williams revisits the issue of the on/scene with regard to gay pornography in particular:

Gay male pornography emerges on/scene as a popular genre in public theaters at the same time [as the classical era of seventies pornography] and in some of the same spirit of on/scenity as straight porno. But because it was exhibited in the context of emerging gay subcultures rather than in general theaters, it was somewhat more tentatively on/scene. On the one hand, its exhibition in public theaters in gay communities partly continued the underground, semi-illicit tradition of the stag film in the sense of appealing to a more specialized, single gender audience rather than a general adult public. On the other hand, it cautiously extended itself into a more public sphere (297).

Chronologically connecting such tentative on/scenity directly to the historical advent of the genre of moving image ‘boy scout’ porn, Williams perhaps reveals both it and its antecedent in the Hitler Youth films from which it largely borrows its imagery and aesthetics to be moments of emerging public expression of male same-sex desire. After all, Hitler Youth film propaganda similarly depicts a same-sex subculture, extending it (though in this case more enthusiastically, with an exemplary character) into the larger national community — it is pornographic, in this sense, precisely by dint of its utopianism. But if the utopian element of outdoor gay pornography is the way in which it takes normally non-normative private sex acts for granted and projects them into a self-consciously public

space, the political propaganda under examination here redeploys this underlying erotic drive in the service of its own troubling utopic vision.

Christian Delage has argued that an exaltation of nature plays a predominant role in the ideological and thematic *entirety* of Nazi film propaganda (33, 135–51). But while work has been done on representations of nature in other aspects of this archive—in Nazi documentaries,¹² the *Kulturfilm*¹³ and the *Bergfilm*¹⁴—I am unaware of any study treating the role of the outdoor environment in the dozen feature-length youth films endorsed by the National Socialist regime or the films produced by the Hitler Youth and disseminated to the same during the *Jugendfilmstunden*. It is the very first Hitler Youth film—a 1932 production called “Hitlerjugend in den Bergen”—that I propose to analyze here. Written and directed by Stuart Josef Lutz, apparently under the supervision of Leni Riefenstahl’s chief professional rival, Arnold Raether,¹⁵ we can situate “Hitlerjugend in den Bergen” somewhere between the three other genres I have just listed: in its style it straddles the border between *Kulturfilm* and propaganda documentary, and both Gilbert Guillard and Rolf Seubert have described it as an ideologically inflected inheritance of the Weimar-era *Bergfilm*. As its title would imply, the twenty-minute film chronicles (or stages, rather) an overnight camping excursion of a Hitler Youth group. “Hitlerjugend in den Bergen” was billed as a triumph of propaganda: a film that excited extraordinary enthusiasm, particularly among young people.¹⁶ I would like to suggest that part of this enthusiasm issues from an erotic charge transferred between the young boys and their Arcadian surroundings—the construction of an all-male homosocial utopia in a self-consciously ‘German’ outdoor setting.

Take, for instance, a central sequence from “Hitlerjugend in den Bergen” depicting scouts at play in a little lake framed by trees before cutting to a *plan américain* of a boy with a whistle, leaning in a relaxed posture with his hands at his hips. Probably the most markedly blond boy in the entire film, a reverse eye-line match establishes him as a spectator, and perhaps as a model for our own spectatorship: his posture suggests a relaxed voyeurism and, if watched closely, he appears to wet his lips with his tongue while observing the younger boys in the water. The soundtrack, which was only added later, is a kind of slop sync (common in low budget pornography, incidentally): while individual sounds match up to what is being visually portrayed onscreen, the general ambient yelling continues at the same volume throughout the sequence. The effect that this has is to render the entirety of this outdoor space as a single, unified location, which an intertitle (“Werdet zu Männern, die Deutschland verlangt”) manifestly designates as a space of *socialization*: these secluded natural surroundings become the arena in which boys become men, boy scouts become soldiers, and where a hidden homoeroticism is metamorphosed into targeted aggression.

This spatial conflation might be compared to the collapse between the political and the private that Lauren Berlant has described as public intimacy — through which mechanism the hegemony of implicitly heterosexual national culture governs ostensibly private sexual practice. In their landmark essay on “Sex in Public,” Berlant and Michael Warner assert that “official national culture [...] depends on a notion of privacy to cloak its sexualization of national membership” (547; also qtd. in Cante and Restivo 147). Adapting Oscar Wilde’s famous dictum on homosexual desire, they describe “national heterosexuality” as “something that cannot speak its name, though its signature is everywhere” (Berlant and Warner 549). And yet, in his work on the stubbornly popular mental association between fascism and homosexuality, Andrew Hewitt builds on Ernst Bloch’s notion of the unspeakability of fascism to contend that this trope of unrepresentability is precisely what links the two: “If homosexuality dare not speak its own name, it will nevertheless serve as the ‘name’ of something else that cannot be spoken — fascism. [...] The allegorical press-ganging of homosexuality as a vehicle for articulating a historically resistant fascism relies on the fact that neither homosexuality nor fascism speaks in its own name” (9). This unrepresentable aspect of fascism is what Antonios Vadolas describes as its perversity: “The ‘perverse’ side of fascism may reflect nothing but the part of it that eludes representation, the part that, up to today, retains the fascist mystery” (11). As Vadolas notes, “The question regarding fascism’s ideological foundation still troubles political theorists” (9). It might just be possible, then, if profoundly discomfiting, that the unanticipated intersection between the pornographic and propagandistic archives I am mining here hints at what Berlant and Warner once declared to be impossible, namely: a tacit, socially constitutive *homonormativity* — an unspoken assumption of same-sex desire as the sine qua non conditioning and structuring a certain national, public space. As Berlant and Warner see it, “Heteronormativity is thus a concept distinct from heterosexuality. One of the most conspicuous differences is that it has no parallel, unlike heterosexuality, which organizes homosexuality as its opposite. Because homosexuality can never have the invisible, tacit, society-founding rightness that heterosexuality has, it would not be possible to speak of ‘homonormativity’ in the same sense” (548, note 3). To my mind, however, the latent but insistent homoeroticism of the Hitler Youth may well testify, pace Berlant and Warner, to precisely such a tacit, society-founding power.

A defining generic characteristic of ‘boy scout’ pornography — common to both narrativized feature-length films and those that merely present a series of loosely connected sexual vignettes — is how wilderness settings participate in both the aesthetics and the erotics of the sexual numbers in order to bring them on/scene: secluded campgrounds and pristine forests offer heterotopic

privacy for otherwise illicit sex acts and these films frequently portray voyeurs or copulating pairs concealing themselves behind trees or bushes, with the natural surroundings at times even obstructing the camera's view of the bodies ostensibly on display. Similarly, throughout the sequence from "Hitlerjugend in den Bergen" under discussion the youthful bodies are aesthetically aligned with the natural backdrop: boys playing tug of war matched perfectly against the mountain horizon behind them as others are tossed up by their companions as if above the mountaintops. As another set of young voyeurs with a flag observe the action from above, these activities take on an undeniable homoerotic charge: the boys wrestle, ride on each other's backs, slap each other's asses in a spanking game called *Schinkenkloppen*, and are filmed playing leapfrog from an angle that in pornography would clearly connote sodomy, alternating between long shots and close-ups as porn does between full-body views and 'meat shots' (close-ups of penile penetration).



Homoerotic games in "Hitlerjugend in den Bergen"

Throughout the sequence, the games become increasingly belligerent and increasingly recognizable for what they are: namely, war games. This will be confirmed by the following sequence, in which these more playful activities are replaced by grueling military drills.

A concluding cut back to the blond with whom the sequence began—as he snaps to attention in a more upright posture—seems to imply that this is *his* overview, but again the eye-line match betrays that he is watching the bathers, who grumble plaintively as he orders them out of the water with the blow of a whistle. I would like to propose that the whistle here is a sublimated echo of the wetting of his lips before, transforming sexualized voyeurism into an authoritative act of surveillance. This feeling is later heightened by the dissolve for which this film is best known: a still image of Hitler's countenance superimposed over the faces of the sleeping young boys—meant to establish the *Führer* as their protector, but inevitably suggesting an unnerving aspect of sexualized observation as well.

The film concludes with an orgiastic action sequence: three of the young scouts climbing a treacherous mountain at dawn to claim it with a Nazi flag, then saluting toward Potsdam where we see Hitler's followers marching through the streets. Given the preceding investigation, it becomes difficult to overlook the erotic nature of the supple cinematography and suggestive editing of this sequence. A series of ascending tilts caresses the boys' bodies, pressed flat against the rocks, as the montage fetishistically dissects them into their constituent parts: hands, feet, limbs, torsos, faces, asses. That the flagpole passed from hand to hand has a phallic quality seems too obvious to be worth mentioning and the ejaculatory way in which it ultimately unfurls, with the boys arms erect in a protracted *Hitlergruß*, when analyzed from a pornographic angle, reads almost like a sick in-joke or self-parody.¹⁷



Fetish shots in the final sequence of "Hitlerjugend in den Bergen"

An enthusiasm for the outdoors has been definitively politicized, in part because this Bavarian wilderness has provided the space in which latent homoeroticism can be harnessed for ends both propagandistic and militaristic. The variety of (re)socialization that will later play a role in all-male moving image pornography has been preemptively coopted in this earlier film as a means of encouraging militarism among these boys becoming the men "die Deutschland verlangt," as the earlier intertitle had put it. The utopian thrust of comparable 'boy scout' porn — the occupation of nature as a space for non-normative sexual practices to be normalized — has been refigured as armed conquest (one might choose to call it ecological rape), and the Bavarian Alps have been utopically rendered as the ideal space for these war preparations to be staged.

Conclusion

What is particularly toxic about this admixture is that the potentially progressive aspect of all-male pornography and the potentially environmentalist facets of fascist ideology in fact contaminate each other. That Nazi propaganda would

mobilize either an underlying homoeroticism *or* an ecological sentiment for militaristic purposes is unsurprising. The unexpected and unwelcome insight afforded by the constellation I have mapped is that it might be precisely an unspoken and not even entirely disavowed homo-eco-erotic imaginary – the homo-eco-erotic as assumed *norm* – that constitutes the necessary precondition for channeling this libidinal investment in 'national' landscapes into a justification for *Landnahme*. Adapting Benjamin's oft-cited pronouncement, we might conclude that if fascism sexualizes politics and, for that matter, *ecology*, we must respond by politicizing sex through a frank and potentially unflattering excavation of our own erotic and ecological archives.

Notes

Figures 3 and 4 are screenshots taken from David Korn-Brozoza's television documentary *Jeunesses hitlériennes: l'endoctrinement d'une nation*, which first aired on France 2 on 23 September 2019. Figures 5 and 6 are screenshots taken from the opening montage of Sam Peckinpah's *Cross of Iron* (1977).

- 1 Until recently, in fact, the European far right has been rather more ecologically minded than one might expect. Heike Graf and Steffen Werther have, for instance, insightfully examined the imagery and narratives underlying neo-Nazi environmentalism with specific attention paid to the media of the NPD. The climate change skepticism of the recently established electoral breakthrough AfD constitutes a relative anomaly in this respect. One might rightly speak, in this context, of a 'Trumpification' of the far right – although, as Milo Yiannopoulos's brand of political discourse and Lucian Wintrich's "Twinks4Trump" photo series make evident, the new right has hardly been similarly purged of its homosocial, homosexual or homoerotic elements.
- 2 See, for instance, Brett Ashley Kaplan on the landscape of the Obersalzberg. Rob van der Laarse has argued for landscape painting as a key site of a Nazi "'nationalization of nature' that confronts us with the uncomfortable possibility that Nazism still 'speaks' to present generations" (345).
- 3 In the early pages of his study of the *Wandervogel*, Giesecke identifies the "Judenfrage" and homosexuality as the two central political concerns troubling youth movements like the *Wandervogel* (25–27).
- 4 For a good summary of this debate, see Frank Uekötter.
- 5 Uekötter, surveying the scholarship on the subject, concludes that "[t]here were not just affinities but also significant divergences between conservation sentiments and Nazi ideology, both in their conceptions of nature and in their political styles. The conservation movement had traditionally

shown a strong distaste of the hustle and bustle of party politics, and had in fact never sided with any one political party before 1933. At the same time, any discussion of the topic needs to take account of the fact that Nazi Germany was by no means the only totalitarian society with a conservation movement" (267–68).

- 6 As Julius H. Schoeps summarizes: "Wenn Blüher über Erotik in der Jugendbewegung spricht, über das Verhältnis männlicher Jugend zu älteren und verehrten Männern, so unterscheidet er zwischen den erotischen Triebkräften und den sexuellen Betätigungen, zwischen einer geistig-erotischen und einer sinnlich-sexuellen Haltung. Ihm geht es nicht [...] um das Problem der Homosexualität bzw. der Päderastie im Sinne medizinischer oder strafrechtlicher Abnormitäten, sondern um eine spezifische Ausformung der Geistigkeit, einer Geistigkeit, die sich [...] am griechischen eros paidikos orientiert, der im dorischen Sparta und Theben ein Mitträger des politischen Lebens war" (140).
- 7 Perhaps problematically, in their "Genealogy of Queer Ecologies," Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, alluding to Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), touch on the depiction of male homosexuality as anything *but* queer – a representation reaffirming virile masculinity and portraying "sex [that] unfolds almost *naturally* as part of a deepening, homosocial intimacy that would be as welcome in a camp full of Boy Scouts as it would in a group of urban gay men: indeed, possibly *more* welcome" (2). And while critical of this trope, the authors at once seem at pains to recognize it as the heritage of an historically queer tradition and also to see it as exemplary in its subversive qualities. Nicole Seymour – who notes that "'Natural' has actually become a dirty word in queer theory, [...] though one it seems unable to do without" (2) – takes a dimmer view of the film.
- 8 Quoted in Buddrus 921, note 86.
- 9 The production company responsible for marketing the pornographic work of Sebastian Bleisch compares him directly to Cadinot and describes the appeal of his films with attention to both nation ("*deutscher Originalton*") and nature ("*natürliche Jungs*"): "*Ein kometenhaftes Coming Out erlebten seit 1991 die Gay Videos von Sebastian Bleisch. Der Newcomer aus der ehemaligen DDR, Schriftsteller im Hauptberuf, hat mit seinen Boy-Filmen neue Maßstäbe gesetzt. Sein Erfolgsrezept: hübsche, natürliche Jungs, eine echte Handlung und deutscher Originalton*" (qtd. in Goyke and Schmidt 29; original emphasis). Bleisch appears to have filmed at least one relevant picture, *Die Pfadfinderschlacht*, during his years as a pornographer in the early 1990s. At the time of his arrest in 1996, for the employment of actors between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, Bleisch had apparently gained access to the overgrown

- military compound where he was filming by pretending to make a movie about neo-Nazis (Goyke and Schmidt 10, 75).
- 10 The same actor, Pascal Duvet, appears prominently in at least one other Cadinot feature, *Classe de neige* (*Ski Fever*, 1985), as a bookish brat with glasses and discernably darker hair.
 - 11 The list of pertinent films would include, without any aspiration to comprehensiveness, *Be a Good Scout* (1971), *Scout's Honor* (1977), *Boy Scout* (1981), *Scouts* (1981), *Scouts 2: Le Jeu de pistes* (1984), *Hot Scout* (exact year of release unknown), *Scouts on Patrol* (2002), *Scouts on Patrol Again* (2002), *Scouting for Wood* (2004), *Bare Scouts* (2006), *Scout's Honor* (2006), *Boy Scouts* (2007), *Fucking Scouts* (2007), *Jungs unter sich... spielen Pfadfinder!* (2007), *Gay Scouts* (2009), *Shameless Scouts* (2009) and *Shameless Scouts 2* (2010), *Secrets of Scouts* (2010), *Scouting for Boys* (2011), *Bare Scouts* (2012), *Raw Scouts* (2012), *Raw Scouts 2* (2014), *Scouts* (2015), *Scouting for Daddy* (2015) and yet another *Raw Scouts* (2016).
 - 12 For instance, by Delage himself.
 - 13 See Wilke's treatment of *Ewiger Wald*.
 - 14 See Rentschler's article on the *Bergfilm*.
 - 15 See Rother 33–34.
 - 16 Cited in Rother 34. The attempt at indoctrination was, in fact, so transparent, that authorities in Bavaria (where schoolchildren were at the time still forbidden from taking part in political organizations and events) raised an objection with the Film Review Office, that the film was clearly aimed at encouraging enrollment in the Hitler Youth. For further discussion, see Hanna-Daoud 239–43.
 - 17 Or a parody by exaggeration, perhaps, of what had been latent in the *Bergfilm*. As Sontag has it: "Mountain climbing in [Arnold] Fanck's films was a visually irresistible metaphor for unlimited aspiration toward the high mystic goal, both beautiful and terrifying, which was later to become concrete in Führer-worship." With Riefensthal, then, these aspects had come squarely to the surface, emphasizing and allegorizing "the dark themes of longing, purity, and death that Fanck had treated rather scoutishly" (76–77).

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