

The Representation of a Society in Distress: Hugo Bettauer's novel *The Joyless Street* through its Filmic Adaptation

Published as a serial-novel (feuilleton) in 1923, Hugo Bettauer's crime novel The Joyless Street, was adapted for the cinema in 1925 by Georg Wilhelm Pabst, a major figure of the German New Objectivity artistic movement. The novel attempts to shed light on the deplorable living conditions of the Viennese population wrecked by the socio-economic consequences of the Great War while showing that crime was the "means" justified by the "end". Subjected to censorship, its filmic adaptation allows us to explore and to study the various visions of the inter-war Viennese society through the prism of literature and cinema. This paper is an attempt to demonstrate how these adaptations aimed to manipulate not only the German and Austrian, but also the international public opinion about the dreadful situation in Vienna during the interwar period. It will also focus on the importance of "mass literature" as a form of "mass" and "social media" combining fiction and reality. With reference to great number of film critics published in newspaper during its projection, not only in Austria and in Germany, but also in the United States, it will be shown why the short version of the movie released to the public, despite its enormous success, only served publicity purposes. Finally, it will also be shown how via his novels, Hugo Bettauer has become a pioneer of the social crime novel, in addition to him being a spokesperson for women's rights.

Keywords: Hugo Bettauer, G. W. Pabst, The Joyless Street, censorship, crime novel

Introduction

In the history of international cinema, the term "New Objectivity" is directly linked to the name Georg Wilhelm Pabst¹ (1885-1967), one of the most representative directors of films internationally acknowledged as masterpieces of the Seventh Art. Ever since the emergence of the cinema was considered the newest and most modern form of artistic expression. German and Austrian directors rapidly made their way through the European borders and their movies soon travelled overseas. However, the artistic value of a film was highly contested, as "cinema became an object of discussion" since this "new medium gained power, it threatened literature's monopoly and destabilized the contemporary cultural system."² Unlike the majority of highly educated or socially and financially privileged bourgeois, who saw in "going to the movies" yet another way of enjoying night life just like going to the theatre, the opera or to a cabaret, the educated middle class questioned the worthiness of the cinema for two very specific reasons. As the most representative artistic form of Modernism, the film not only called into question all conservative

¹The Joyless Street (1925), *Secrets of a Soul* (1926)

² KAES, Anton, (1987). *The Debate about Cinema: Charting a Controversy (1909-1929)*, in: *New German Critique*, No. 40, Special Issue on Weimar Film Theory (Winter, 1987), pp. 7-33, DOI: 10.2307/488130, URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/488130>.

forms of art of Classicism, but it also became a form of art accessible to the masses. This second reason turned out to be the critical threat for the Austrian traditionalistic government as well as for the Catholic Church.³

During the second half of the 19th century, Vienna was being transformed to a metropolis, following the example of London and Paris. The urban transformations of the European capitals have been the subject of numerous sociological, psychological and architectural studies and theories and their influence has been reflected not only in the classical forms of art such as painting, literature or poetry, but also in the new ones, like cinema or photography. Slowly but steadily, thanks to new sciences like psychoanalysis and criminology, along with the industrial and commercial development emerging from the migratory flux towards the city, the capital of the Habsburg Monarchy came to be the cradle of cultural exchanges. The “*Wiener Moderne*”⁴ was henceforth a movement in itself, closer to Charles Baudelaire’s definition of Modernism as “the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable”.⁵ As never before, the city of Vienna, with its extremely significant geopolitical position at that time, was to become the arena of all ideological struggles between the proponents of modernism and those who wished to maintain the classical culture. The disastrous consequences of World War I, brought enormous changes to the lives of all citizens, especially in the metropolises and the post-war period was particularly difficult for the Austrians. For the “winners” of the “Great War” the reconstruction began almost immediately, but for the “losers” the living conditions are extremely rough. Thousands of Austrian soldiers have died or have returned home handicapped and dismembered. For some of those men, the government provides a small pension, but the majority is confronted with unemployment, extreme poverty and homelessness. Moreover, the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy causes the loss of employment for a huge number of civil servants, public employees and government officials formerly working for the Crown Court and the Imperial and Royal Ministries (*k.u.k. Ministerium*) or the army (*k.u.k. Armee*). The traditionally male role of the “family provider” changes radically, generating social disorder and confusion.⁶ The rate of suicide, alcoholism and criminality increases in a spectacular way. Viennese housewives, daughters of once wealthy families, young girls from

³ It should be noted that Austria’s Federal Chancellor during the 1920s Ignaz Seipel (1876-1932) was not only a politician of the Christian Social Party but also a prelate of the Catholic Church.

⁴ For further analytical studies on the Viennese Modern Age (*Wiener Moderne*), see Schorske, Carl E., *Fin de siècle Vienna* (New York: A. Knopf, 1961), Frisby, David, *Fragments of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1986) and Le Rider, Jacques, *Modernité Viennoise et Crises de l’Identité* (Paris: PUF, 1990) Lorenz, Dagmar, *Wiener Moderne* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007).

⁵ Doane, Mary-Anne, (2002). *The Emergence of Cinematic Life*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, p. 168.

⁶ Soden, Kristine v., (1987). *Von Kopf bis Fuß auf Ehe eingestellt? Über die ‚freie Liebe‘ der Zwanziger Jahre und was aus ihr heute geworden ist*. In Siegfried Rudolf Dunde (ed.): *Geschlechterneid – Geschlechterfreundschaft. Distanz und wiedergefundene Nähe*. Frankfurt am Main, pp. 258-261 and Bartosch, Julie. (2010). *Frauen in Metropolen. Panorama eines Sujets in Romanen zwischen 1918 und 1933*. Master’s Thesis, University of Vienna.

homes with modest incomes must now work in order to provide for their crippled fathers or widowed mothers and orphan brothers and sisters. The “New Type of Woman” (*Neue Frauentypus*) is born in 1918. At the time, she was described as an emancipated, self-confident, sexually liberated woman, with a tomboy-haircut⁷, dressed in a modern fashionable way and, above all, defending her rights to equality with men. However,

“[I]n reality these women comprised only a small minority of the female population; yet there was a general belief that a “new woman,” an emancipated woman had come into being. The nature and value of women's emancipation became a hotly debated issue, and many writers took part in the debate during the fifteen years after World War I by creating a personal vision of emancipated women in their works.”⁸

On the other hand, many “new types of men” also made their appearance in this new post-war society.⁹ In the Viennese salons, restaurants and theaters, newly rich businessmen, ambitious stockbrokers, unscrupulous speculators, bankers and war profiteers replace the ancient high society. For most of them, really attracted to, Vienna turned to an easy prey. Women were exploited by men (employers, colleagues, traders), being victims of moral or sexual harassment in order to keep their jobs and salaries, that would ensure the survival of the whole family. They were also exploited by other women (madams and brothel-keepers) as victims of “girl trafficking”. They were even exploited by their own families, as victims of moral and physical abuse and manipulation. In a word, the *objectification* of the New Woman emerged as a new social reality. The lack of shelter and food during the inflationary period (*Inflationszeit*) in Austria, led many girls to solicitation and prostitution. New laws had been added to the Austrian penal code punishing these girls with imprisonment so as to reestablish the social and moral order.¹⁰ The Christian Democrat government, who expressively opposed to both Vienna’s Social Democrat mayors Jakob Reumann¹¹ and his successor Karl Seitz¹², had a vision of women as objects of lust and vice, not only in real life but also in the arts¹³. Thus, sexual enlightenment (*sexuelle Aufklärung*) was definitely

⁷ About fashion see King, Lynda J., (1988). *Best-sellers by Design: Vicki Baum and the House of Ullstein*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press.

⁸ King, Lynda J., (1981). Probable or Possible? The Issue of Women's Emancipation in German Literature of the 1920s. In *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 2. pp. 138-153. DOI= 10.2307/1347803. Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1347803>

⁹ On the new type of man, see Kernjak, Katja, (2010). *Der Prostitutionsdiskurs als Spiegel einer verunsicherten Gesellschaft. Ein Versuch*. Dipl. Thesis, University of Klagenfurt. On masculine prostitution see Helmut Bettauer, Auch Männer sind käuflich, in: Bettauers Wochenschrift, 1926/35

¹⁰ See Irène Cagneau, (2008). *Discours sur la sexualité à Vienne et à Berlin (1900-1914) : une analyse comparative*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Paris 3.

¹¹ Jakob Reumann (1853-1925) was the first socialist Mayor of Vienna from 1919 to 1923.

¹² Karl Seitz (1869-1950) was Mayor of Vienna from 1923 to 1934.

¹³ See newspaper’s articles for example in *Reichspost*, 22.03.1924, p. 8-9 on debates on “moral issues” between Social Democrats and Christian Democrats.

considered a social taboo. On the contrary, feminine sexuality is brilliantly represented in all forms of art and especially in painting, literature and cinema. The Austrian Hugo Bettauer (1872-1925) played an extremely significant role in this war-torn Viennese society. As a journalist, Bettauer wrote about the Viennese's everyday-life problems in his articles. In his two weeklies¹⁴, *He and She: A Weekly for Lifestyle and Erotica* (*Er und Sie: Wochenschrift für Lebenskultur und Erotik*)¹⁵ and *Bettauers Weekly: Everyday Life's Problems* (*Bettauers Wochenschrift: Probleme des Lebens*)¹⁶, he openly promoted sex education and encouraged adult readers to ask questions and have open discussions about sexuality, thereby gaining an unusual audience considering the mores at that time. Among other topics, Bettauer emphasized on the lack of shelters for the homeless, the need for housing, the impoverishment due to inflation of many social milieus, racial discrimination, Austria's struggle to socially rebuild itself and the efforts of the lower social classes to survive. He was preoccupied by all these important matters, along with the defense of women's rights to equality, vote and premarital relationships, in addition to decriminalization and depenalization of abortion and homosexual relationships, which remained at the center of his attention. In 1994, the American Professor Beth S. Noveck, in her Ph.D. thesis on Hugo Bettauer, states:

"The upheaval of traditional values and gender roles precipitated the explosion of a sexual revolution which had been fomenting since the onset of modernity in the nineteenth century. It is said that the leader of this revolution was Maximilian Hugo Bettauer, born in Baden bei Wien on August 18, 1872."¹⁷

For the Austrian society, any deviation from the principles of the old monarchy was condemnable: adultery was considered a crime, the illegitimate child underprivileged and its mother had no rights, girls who gave themselves to a man outside marriage were socially rejected and prostitutes were outlawed, without rights and sent to prison, while there was no punishment for men who solicited them.

¹⁴ All references on Hugo Bettauer's weeklies are the result of personal research at the Austrian National Library (ÖNB) in Vienna.

¹⁵ From 14.02.1924 until 13.03.1924 Hugo Bettauer and his associate Rudolf Olden published five numbers of the weekly. Accused of pornography, procurement of women and affront to public decency, the weekly was forbidden to underaged readers and not to be shown or advertised in public places. Its enormous success incited the government's wrath, its publishers were brought to justice and even though, they won the case, the weekly was eventually shut down.

¹⁶ Right after the disappearance of *He and She*, Bettauer started publishing *Bettauer's Weekly*. After his death, his son Helmut took over its direction, but has been defrauded from his associate Emanuel Liechtenstein who abruptly left Vienna leaving Helmut and the weekly enormously indebted. Despite all the efforts the latter made, even by publishing his father's older novels, until then completely unknown to the Viennese public, *Bettauer's Weekly* went bankrupt and was definitively shut down in 1927.

¹⁷ Noveck, Beth Simone, (1994). *Maximilian Hugo Bettauer: Sexuality, Politics and the Political Culture of the First Republic in Austria*, Doctoral dissertation, University of Innsbruck, p. 1.

Bettauer was being called “the confessor” and “the savior of the populace”.¹⁸ His altruistic activities, for instance giving out his own money to people in need together with his pieces of advice given through his weekly, fired up strong reactions from his opponents. The pro-government press openly characterized him as a threat to the Viennese ethical and moral society, encouraging people to teach this “immoral pornographer” and “sexual pervert” a lesson. The anti-Semitic press publicly referred to him as a “Jewish pig”¹⁹ and he received daily threatening letters against his life.²⁰ In 1925, Hugo Bettauer’s assassin Otto Rothstock, a 21-year old, dental technician and former member of the Nazi party (NSDAP), defended himself by claiming that he was continuing God’s will to save the human kind and that by his act “he rid the Viennese society of a ‘depraver’ of the Austrian youth”.²¹

Rothstock shot Bettauer five times. His first shots were on Bettauer’s hands “so that he couldn’t write any more”. After the shooting he didn’t flee the crime scene but waited peacefully for the police to come and arrest him. In the Court he declared:

“Two thousand years ago the Son of God came to this world to fight against the Jewish writers and scholars. I came to carry on that fight. What I did was not to commit a treacherous murder, but only to sound the alarm, by which the peoples are to be called upon against the vermin that have a corrosive effect like hydrochloric acid on iron. Hugo Bettauer was also such vermin, who despised everything called German and Christian, and so he was struck by the wrath of God.”²²

Defended by the antisemitic chairman of the German National Socialist Workers' Party of Austria (*DNAP*) the lawyer Walter Riehl, and instructed on what he should say, even though found guilty, Rothstock was sentenced for insanity to only 18 months in a psychiatric facility. Only a few weeks before the crime, Rothstock annulled his membership Party so that the murder would not be linked to it. Nevertheless, after his release from prison, Rothstock moved to Germany where, with the party’s financial aid and support, he opened a cabinet in Hannover where he lived and worked as a dentist from then on, until his death in May 1990.²³ According to Bettauer’s associate Rudolf Olden, journalist, writer and co-founder of *Er und Sie*, the murder of Hugo Bettauer was a political act: “[...] Bettauer, who was murdered as an enemy of

¹⁸ Hall, Murray G., (1978). *Der Fall Bettauer*, Wien, Löcker, p. 81

¹⁹ Even though Hugo Bettauer was converted to Protestantism at the age of 18, in order to serve the Imperial Army, he was constantly insulted about his Jewish origins from anti-Semites who referring to him as “the Jew Bettauer”. See in particular the Anti-Semitic newspapers *Kikeriki*, *Freiheit*, *Arbeiter-Presse* etc. and Hall, Murray G., (1978). *Der Fall Bettauer*, pp. 168-169

²⁰ Hall, Murray G., (1978). *Der Fall Bettauer*, p. 78

²¹ *Reichspost*, 05.10.1925, Nr. 273, p.2

²² *Reichspost*, 05.10.1925, Nr. 273, p.2

²³ <http://www.murrayhall.com/>, accessed: 30.03.2020

the state, had no close connection to politics. Nevertheless, his murder was the first political assassination in Austria. »²⁴

As an author, Bettauer was extremely prolific. Within a few years (from 1919 until his death in 1925) he wrote over fifteen novels, a theater play and numerous short stories. In addition to owning a newspaper, he collaborated with various others and was also chief editor of the daily paper, *Der Tag* (*The Day*), in which he published not only his serialized novels daily, but also a *feuilleton* once a week.²⁵

Bettauer attempted to start his career as an author in 1906, writing a very short and completely unknown story for the Sunday edition of the *Der Deutsche Correspondent*, Maryland's most prominent German-language daily, entitled *The Murderer's Blindfold* (*Die Augenbinde des Mörders*).²⁶ At that time, he was living in Phoenicia, New York, with his second wife Helene and their son Reginald Parker.

During that time, Hugo Bettauer worked as a press correspondent for many Austrian newspapers and as journalist mainly for the *New Yorker Morgen-Journal* belonging to William Randolph Hearst. It is argued that he wrote throughout 1907 five serialized novels for the *Morgen-Journal's* Sunday edition²⁷ but only four of them are, in fact, to be found.²⁸

The details about Bettauer's personal and professional life between his repatriation in Austria around 1910 and the end of World War I are almost entirely unknown. To the best of our knowledge, he continued to collaborate with most of the German-language newspapers he worked for, as a war correspondent, along with many Viennese ones, like the *Neue Freie Presse* (*New Free Press*) and the *Die Zeit* (*The Time*). After the end of the war, Bettauer started collaborating with reviews like *Reise und Sport* (*Journey and Sport*), writing articles about the night life in Vienna, about holiday destinations or about fashion. As said above, he also worked as *feuilletonist*, columnist and editor for *Der Morgen* (*The Morning*) and *Der Tag* and *Die Börse* (*The Bourse*).

²⁴ SCHMIDT-DENGLER, Wendelin, (2002). *Ohne Nostalgie: zur österreichischen Literatur der Zwischenkriegszeit*, Wien, Böhlau, p. 55

²⁵ Under the title *The Novella of the Week* (*Die Novelle der Woche*) Bettauer wrote a short fictional story, treating in a humorous but highly sarcastic way the indifference of the government about every matter he was concerned with notably the social and financial misery Viennese men, women and children were confronted to. His last *feuilleton* appeared a week before the shooting.

²⁶ *Der Deutsche Correspondent*, 04.03.1906, p. 6, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045081/1906-03-04/ed-1/seq-6/>, accessed : 01.04.2020

²⁷ Bettauer's New-Yorker crime novels (*New Yorker Kriminalromane*) were republished in 1925 and 1926, either as serials in Bettauer's Weekly or as a present to every new subscriber to the paper. Because of the fact that these four novels were completely unknown to the public, offering the books could be a very good marketing strategy.

²⁸ All numbers of the *Morgen-Journal* previous to 1911 were destroyed in an office fire. There is, therefore, no trace whatsoever about the fifth novel from which only the title is quoted in Bettauer's Weekly. See: Conolly-Smith, Peter, (2010). *Translating America. An Ethnic Press and Popular Culture. 1890-1920*, Washington, Smithsonian Books, p. 78

1 *Die freudlose Gasse. Ein Wiener Roman aus unseren Tagen (The Joyless*
 2 *Street. A Viennese Novel from nowadays)* started as a serialized novel from
 3 October 18 to December 16, 1923 in *Der Tag*, one of the most popular and
 4 best-selling daily newspapers in Vienna. Just a few days before it was
 5 published, Bettauer presented and advertised it to the newspaper readers:

6
 7 “In a few days, next Thursday, the "Der Tag" will begin with the
 8 publication of my new novel. The interest in it is very high. [...] I do not
 9 know whether my new novel is good, it is certainly exciting as well as
 10 interesting from a subject matter point of view. Perhaps, I have even
 11 managed to give a real portrayal of the mores, seen through sharp glasses.
 12 [...] The novel takes place nowadays, and its most important events either
 13 take place in the "joyless street" or are closely related to it. There is a lot to
 14 be said about this cheerless alley. I call it *Melchiorgasse* so that I won't
 15 harm many nice people, but I have a very specific, really existing one in
 16 mind. It is one of those bleak alleys so typical of today's Vienna. [...] An
 17 alley, such as those which embody the whole development of Vienna, is
 18 the one I call *Melchiorgasse*. It is located in one of the city districts
 19 between Wieden and Alserstraße and climbs upwards from the
 20 Lastenstraße. It is damned with the curse of always being the center of a
 21 criminal affair. Many murders have been committed in it; it is haunted
 22 from the nocturnal patrols of the vice police, couplers and pimps, shysters,
 23 dubious midwives, photographers looking for "models", doubtful
 24 landladies do their business in this alley. Anyone who flicks through the
 25 police journals will always come across my sorrowful alley. Sometimes it
 26 is about a mysterious robbery, others about a homicide, then again about
 27 some counterfeiting shop, about some den, and so on. [...] My novel plays,
 28 as I said, in this alley, that I cannot call anything but joyless. It starts with
 29 a murder but doesn't pretend to be a crime novel with a super-smart
 30 detective and a betraying shirt-button.²⁹ The plot often moves away from
 31 the joyless street, but always comes back to it. And it portrays the people,
 32 the mores, the highs and lows of today's Vienna.”³⁰

33 Bettauer's serialized novel (*Feuilletonroman*) became an enormous
 34 success. Due to his experience as a reporter, he chose the crime genre so that
 35 he could send social messages to his readers through his characters and his
 36 narrators. Crime novels and love stories have always been the most popular
 37 kind of reading. Right from the beginning of the serialized novels in the
 38 newspapers, crime novels were addressed to male and love stories to female
 39 readers. The Sunday newspaper was preciously cut in pieces and women made
 40 it a “hobby” to sew the *feuilleton* and to exchange their “home-made” books

²⁹ Probably referring to William, Henry Wills' *The Modern Science of Thief-Taking*, Household Words, Volume I, Magazine No.16, 13 July 1850, p.: 368-372, https://www.djo.org.uk/media/downloads/articles/217_The%20Modern%20Science%20of%20Thief-Taking.pdf

³⁰ *Der Tag*, October 14, 1923, p. 5

1 with those of other women.³¹ In an innovative manner, Bettauer's novel
 2 focused on two principal lines of narration that could interest both men and
 3 women: the murder of a rich young woman of the high Viennese society and a
 4 love story between a young girl and the smart journalist investigating the
 5 crime. Both those two narrative lines were illustrated with elements of the
 6 social novel in order to convey his social messages such as homelessness,
 7 hunger, sexual exploitation, inflation, or blackmail.

8 In a suspicious, if not hostile, to the new type of woman social
 9 environment, he took up an extremely perilous challenge: He put his feminist
 10 ideas into the mouth of his principal male character representing a type of
 11 honest, respected, socially recognized and highly appreciated man.³² The
 12 beginning of the new woman's evolution and emancipation actually depended
 13 on an equally new type of man, sensitive to her needs. In a way, it was, or had
 14 to be, the modern man who would create the modern woman. Secondly, he put
 15 the female characters into the center of the reader's attention. Whether she was
 16 the assassin, a key witness or the spokesperson of the author's ideas, the female
 17 character and her image were of particular interest. Whatever the reasons for
 18 committing a crime, such as prostitution or murder, women were without doubt
 19 the real victims of a male dominant society. By portraying the new woman, he
 20 also intended to familiarize the female readers with the principal concepts of
 21 emerging sciences, such as sexology, psychoanalysis or criminology writing
 22 about the scientific researches of Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Sigmund Freud or
 23 Hans Gross.³³

24 As already mentioned, in the European metropolises of the interwar period,
 25 the position of women within the society changed radically. The end of the
 26 World War I was not only the end of a painful time for the population, it also
 27 featured the beginning of a new social reality marked by insurmountable
 28 difficulties for surviving. As a result, women began to claim their place in
 29 society and to ask themselves questions about their personal, professional and
 30 family life. A new female figure appeared, causing an enormous shock in the
 31 society of the time because the new woman started reversing traditional roles,
 32 while new laws gave women rights regarding gender equality. However, the
 33 image of the "emancipated woman" still remained a "revolutionary" image, not
 34 positively seen, left outside the norms and the standards of the patriarchal
 35 family model of the Catholic Church. The *holy family's* (*heilige Familie*)

³¹ On the Feuilleton see Thiesse, Anne-Marie, (1984). *Le Roman du Quotidien : Lecteurs et Lectures Populaires à la Belle Époque*, Paris, Le Chemin Vert, p. 24.

³² See Bettauer, Hugo, *Die freudlose Gasse*, (1980), Wien, Hannibal, pp. 153-154 and pp. 288-290. At first Otto Demel does not acknowledge the responsibility of men. However, he changes his mind and wants to save Grete from her dreadful lot by taking her away from the Joyless street.

³³ About Hugo Bettauer's newspaper articles see: Mc EWEN, Britta, (2012). *Sexual knowledge. Feeling, fact and social reform in Vienna, 1900-1934*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn Books and Hacker, Melanie, (2009). *Er und Sie. Wochenschrift für Lebenskultur und Erotik. Hugo Bettauers Zeitschrift und die Sexualmoral der 1920er Jahre*, Saarbrücken, VDM.

1 principle and priority kept being the virtue, the purity and the public image of
2 the wife, of the mother and especially of the daughter.

3 Vienna became a "crime scene" (*Tatort*) in 1856 after the publication
4 Adolf Bäuerle's novel *Zahlheim. Ein Wiener Kriminalroman*. From then on,
5 many Austrian novelists put the Empire's capital at the center of police
6 investigations. One of the best known was Auguste Groner whose crime novels
7 published in 1907 made her the first German-speaking, female author of
8 Detective-Novels with the same hero as the main character.³⁴ It should be
9 noted that Groner published her books under several male pseudonyms. This
10 choice was due to the fact that the readers of the time, being predominantly
11 male, preferred authors, heroes and stories told from a male point of view.
12 Thus, the book was well received from the public and the success of the author
13 was assured, thanks to the reader's "identification" with the main character.
14 However, it is not until the 1970s, that crime novels written by and for women
15 have become a means of expression for the feminist movement.³⁵ In many of
16 his novels Bettauer evoked the efforts of the Austrian government and church
17 to strengthened the laws so as to protect women and young girls from the
18 "antireligious, indecent literature from which women and girls were seduced
19 and corrupted".³⁶ In 1924, right after the release of the novel he wrote in his
20 weekly that:

21
22 "the condition of women hadn't change for the better but for the worst. She
23 would renounce her eroticism, would be seen only as a child-bearer and had the
24 right to drink or smoke only within the limits men would draw for her. [...]. In
25 other words, the woman had become a workhorse, just like the man and had still
26 not conquered her sexual freedom."³⁷
27

28 Because of him being brought to justice and accused of pornography, he
29 stated in Court his will to be more considerate of young readers when editing
30 the weekly and to eradicate everything written in words or shown in pictures
31 "that could somehow unfavorably influence the imagination of young people."
32 ³⁸ Nevertheless, he continued to use his novels to talk about all the taboo
33 subjects of the Viennese society. since they constituted for him a larger space
34 of freedom of expression and in which he "imposed" female characters as
35 being of great importance.

36 Prostitution as a "professional activity" was one of the major themes in
37 Bettauer's novels, like any other exploitation of human beings. The cruelty of

³⁴ HUSEK, Margaretha, (2013). Maria Kouba, eine Wiener Chefkommissarin. Studien zu den Kriminalromanen Sabina Nabers, Master's Thesis, University of Vienna, p. 25-26.

³⁵ HUSEK, Margaretha, (2013). Maria Kouba, p. 29

³⁶ BETTAUER, Hugo, (1980) Das entfesselte Wien, Wien, Hannibal, p. 85.

³⁷ BETTAUER, Hugo, Die Erotische Revolution, in: Er und Sie. Wochenschrift für Lebenskultur und Erotik, Nr.1, 14.02.1924, p. 1

³⁸ HALL, Murray G., Der Fall Bettauer, Wien, Locker, 1978, p. 46

society is illustrated by two important female characters: *Marie Lechner*³⁹ who, transformed from *Egon Striner's* "Sweet Viennese Girl"⁴⁰ (*Süßes Wiener Mädel*) to "high-class prostitute" (*Edel-Dirne*) in *Madam Greifer's* brothel, searched for penitence by confessing her crime to a priest before confessing it in court and sacrificed herself to save the man she loved. Sick from tuberculosis she dies as a martyr in the prison hospital guilty of crime but victim of the society. Julie Bartosch talks about various but quite distinct forms of prostitution: the habitual professional form (*Marie Lechner*), the prostitution as a last solution for escaping from misery and precariousness (*Grete and Else Rumfort*) and the prostitution as a vehicle for social climbing and prestige (*Lia Leid*).⁴¹ Many of Bettauer's female and male characters can serve as examples for this categorization. The "new woman" became the spokesperson for the women's revendications but also the object of great hostility. The Viennese feminist Rosa Mayreder wrote that this masculine "hostility" towards women had its origins in the feminization of culture and the intellectualization of modernity. This feminization provoked a crisis to men's masculinity as a result of their inability to re-establish the male order of the past.⁴²

To maintain the distinction between the author and his narrator is very complicated in Bettauer's work of fiction, mostly because of his realistic topics, his writing style and many of his main male characters inspired from people he knew or even from himself. This is the principal reason for which his stories were interesting, moving and intriguing for the readers.

The Joyless Street was published in print only a month after its last sequel and became an immediate success. In an interview given during the reconstitution of the film, Mark Sorkin⁴³ explained how he discovered the book. According to Sorkin, a Russian friend talked to him about the novel and lent it to him to read. Sorkin read the novel without stopping and at the end of day he called Pabst and recommended the book as excellent movie material.⁴⁴ He described how Pabst, also fascinated by the book, decided to do an "inflation-time movie" (*Inflationfilm*). The great Austrian director thought that the original crime investigation was not worth to be emphasized in the film. It was of greater importance to show the miserable life conditions in Vienna and the despair that led to crime. This was the primary reason why, even though, there are two murders committed in the film,⁴⁵ Otto Demel, the journalist

³⁹ In Bettauer's novels, the name Marie appeared frequently. This choice of name is probably no coincidence. It could be referred to Virgin Mary while at the same time it was given to a prostitute.

⁴⁰ In his book *Krise der Jugend*, 1931), Ernst Fischer, describes the "Sweet Viennese girl" "the prostitute's step-sister". See: Kernjak, Katja, (2010). *Der Prostitutionsdiskurs als Spiegel einer verunsicherten Gesellschaft. Ein Versuch.* Dipl. Thesis, University of Klagenfurt, p. 17

⁴¹ BARTOSCH, Julie. (2010). *Frauen in Metropolen. Panorama eines Sujets in Romanen zwischen 1918 und 1933*, Unpublished MPhil. University of Vienna, p. 79-88

⁴² LE RIDER, Jacques, *Modernité Viennoise et Crises de l'Identité*, p.187

⁴³ Mark Sorkin (1902-1986) was G. W. Pabst's film editor and a longtime close associate.

⁴⁴ *Die freudlose Gasse* (1925). Directed by G. W. Pabst. Memories of assistant director Mark Sorkin, disc 2. Germany: Filmmuseum 48, Film und Kunst GmbH, 2015. [DVD]

⁴⁵ Unlike the book, where only one murder is committed and a real investigation is being followed, in the film there are two victims, both of whom are murdered by prostitutes.

investigator and main character of the novel, does not appear in the movie. Instead of him, it is the American Lieutenant Davy who saves the beautiful young heroine, Grete Rumfort,⁴⁶ from the claws of Madam Greifer.⁴⁷ For Pabst, to show why a crime was committed was more important than the crime itself. This is also why we don't have to search for the second killer. The murder is committed by a young prostitute, who kills the butcher of the Melchior street, who wouldn't give her meat to feed her starving baby if she didn't sleep with him. The desperate mother kills the monster with his own butcher knife.

The well-known German author and film critic Willi Haas (1891-1973) wrote the scenario for G.W. Pabst's film. He recounts:

"One day in 1924, director G. W. Pabst called me. He wanted me to read the novel *The Joyless Street* from the Viennese Hugo Bettauer. He thought it was "good material" for a film. I read the book. It was a deplorable detective novel, a suspense-story about the inflationary period in Vienna. I immediately understood what excited Pabst with his infallible flair for the modern: it was the cynic social image of inflation, of bankruptcy, of long-lasting established circles of civil servants and academics, of corruption and moral decay as we had also known them in Berlin. We immediately agreed that the film should focus on the "social" perspective and that the crime should stay in the background. Only the title should remain as it was, because Pabst found it "attractive".⁴⁸

G.W. Pabst was Austrian but cosmopolitan and therefore not nationalist as his fellow filmmakers, like Fritz Lang. Educated in Vienna, an intellectual metropole, influenced by psychoanalysis, a left-wing supporter and cultivated, Pabst denounced the rigid discipline and the hypocrisy of the Germanic leadership. Therefore, his work would "only find an echo among the marginalized".⁴⁹ Especially during the Nazi-period, even if "[...] Himmler and Goebbels offered him to lead German cinema and make propaganda films, he refused and was reduced to half-silence, strenuously shooting historical unimportant films."⁵⁰ The unconventional spirit of Pabst seized clearly the understanding of what was happening during this horrible time and managed to capture it with his camera in the most brilliant way. The poet, journalist, and co-founder of surrealism Philippe Soupault, wrote about *The Joyless Street*:

"This film, which became famous in Germany and abroad, depicted Vienna during the inflationary period and put special emphasis on the pauperizing of the

⁴⁶ Just like with the name Marie, Bettauer frequently uses the name Grete for many of his heroines who represent the eternal innocence and purity, in reference to Goethe's Gretchen in *Faust*.

⁴⁷ « greifen » meaning « to grip » in the German language.

⁴⁸ Hall, Murray G., Hugo Bettauer, (1999). In F. Bono, P. Caneppele, G. Krenn eds., *Elektrische Schatten: Beiträge zur österreichischen Stummfilmgeschichte* Wien, Filmarchiv Austria, pp. 149-168., here p. 159

⁴⁹ Borde Raymond, (1980) *L'Avant-Scène*. In *Connaissance du Cinéma*, Special issue Pabst., p. 4.

⁵⁰ Borde Raymond, p. 7

1 middle class. The direct realism Pabst used to portray this decline shocked his
 2 contemporaries. Pabst was the first and only one to denounce social inequality,
 3 the futility and horror of war, the exploitation of women and the hypocrisy of a
 4 tyrannical society.”⁵¹

5
 6 The reconstruction of *The Joyless Street* was carried out thanks to Willi
 7 Haas’s handwritten script along with the comparison of five different versions
 8 of the film. The text was also modified because of the deletion of scenes due to
 9 censorship. The editing vigorously altered the film, which, at some point,
 10 became incomprehensible.⁵² From *The Joyless Street* there are absolutely no
 11 copies of the original film left. Censorship in all the countries in which it was
 12 shown has systematically destroyed it. The final version is the result of a
 13 systematic reconstitution of several copies intended for foreign audiences. Of
 14 the current version of 3,738 m about 600 m are missing, which corresponds to
 15 half an hour of film. From the approximately two hundred intertitles, only five
 16 are remaining of the original version. The rest were taken from the script or
 17 translated from the foreign versions. Of course, the characters are not the same
 18 as those in the novel and the importance of the roles differs. For example, in
 19 the English version, which was released late because the projection of the film
 20 was forbidden to the general public, the character of *Egon Stirner*, a young,
 21 ambitious social-climber who uses women to make a fortune and has parallel
 22 affairs with three different girls, had been considerably reduced to a man in
 23 love with only one woman. On the contrary, in the French version, all of the
 24 scenes with *Egon Stirner* are maintained, because his amorality is not likely to
 25 shock the French public, even though the film was shortened by many
 26 hundreds of meters and most importantly all the scenes of the street itself were
 27 left out.

28 In the Russian version, instead of *Marie Lechner*, the murderer turns out to
 29 be *Geiringer*, the “butcher-tyrant” of *Melchior Street*. In the original version of
 30 the film, the character of Geiringer, not figuring in the novel, brilliantly
 31 interpreted by the famous German actor Werner Krauss forces young women
 32 to have sex with him in exchange for meat. His excellent relations with his
 33 neighbor Madam Greifer symbolically show the proximity of post-war
 34 profiteers’ mentality: “trading” human flesh for animal meat.⁵³ Moreover, the
 35 character of US Army’s lieutenant Davy was changed into a doctor for anti-
 36 American propaganda reasons. The biggest changes the film was submitted to
 37 were those of the American version. Only one hour of the film remained after
 38 censorship. Almost all scenes with Asta Nielsen⁵⁴ disappeared in order to give
 39 the starring role to the young Greta Garbo, for whom this first leading role of
 40 *Grete* opened the road for an international career in the United States. It should

⁵¹ Soupault, Philippe, (1980). La Rue Sans Joie. In *Connaissance du Cinéma*, Special issue Pabst, p.10

⁵² Gaborit Françoise, (1980). De l’opportunité d’une reconstitution de film, In *Connaissance du Cinéma*, Special issue Pabst., p. 1

⁵³ Aubry Yves, Petat Jacques, (1980). La Rue Sans Joie, in : *Connaissance du Cinéma*, special issue Pabst, p.10

⁵⁴ <https://wfpp.columbia.edu/pioneer/asta-nielsen-2/>, accessed: 19.04.20

be noted that the names of Asta Nielsen and Werner Krauss did not appear in the film promotion in the newspapers. The starring actors cited were “the incomparable” Greta Garbo and the also Swedish Einar Hansen (or Hanson) who impersonated the American lieutenant and who also left Europe to start his career with a promising Paramount Pictures contract.

For the conservative American mentality, *Streets of Sorrow*⁵⁵ was also a provocative movie “FOR MEN ONLY”. Only in a few cities, women could watch the film but separated from men. The movie theaters organized sessions for men during which the film was projected including “special reels only for men”. These reels were the same as in Austria and Germany. Scenes showing nudity, uncovered female body parts, such as legs and especially the shocking scenes of Else’s rape and the violent murder of the butcher were cut. The advertising film taglines in the newspapers show how the story was interpreted in an exceptionally evocative way. In many newspapers *Grete* is described like a young girl who is tempted because of her desire for luxury and not because of her need to provide for herself and her family. In some others the tagline was literally a moral message sent to women:

“A daring expose of dangers to which girls are subjected. What price virtue? What price womanhood?”⁵⁶

“A modern girl’s fight against poverty and sin.”⁵⁷

“She starved rather than lose the only thing that makes a woman worthwhile – Her Virtue!”⁵⁸

Obviously, the film was also only for adults and not allowed to minors. While in many movie theaters, in different cities, the film was interrupted during its projection⁵⁹, in others, special committees were established in order to decide whether the film was appropriate for the mores of society and sometimes speeches or debates from specialists followed its projection:

“Chief of police Hunnicutt, C. J. Cottingham and Rev. Ashley, comprising a censorship committee to review the motion picture “*Streets of Sorrow*”, featuring Greta Garbo and Einar Hansen, unanimously voted in favor of allowing the feature picture and its special reels for men and women to be shown at the Olympic Theatre Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. However, on account of the delicate nature of the special reels, the committee requested that the audiences be separated, men one day and women another. It was also requested that none under eighteen years of age be admitted unless accompanied by parents. Noblesville may consider itself fortunate in being able to see the special reels which were barred in Chicago. Dr. M. Sayle Taylor’s amazing demonstration of sex truths is given at each performance as an added attraction.”⁶⁰

⁵⁵ *Streets of Sorrow* was the American title of the movie.

⁵⁶ The Indianapolis Times, December 03, 1927, p. 7

⁵⁷ The Star Press, June 09, 1928, p. 9

⁵⁸ New Britain Herald, September 14, 1928, p. 19

⁵⁹ The Times, January 19, 1928, p. 1

⁶⁰ The Noblesville Ledger, February 25, 1928, p. 2

The only time the movie was shown without any modifications was at its premiere in Berlin on May 15, 1925. Even though the Berliner public was much less conservative than the Viennese one, the government decided to forbid its viewing until all scenes offending the morals had been cut off. It was changed to an uninteresting mediocre love story showing how needy were the Viennese people (and particularly women) and how important was the American financial support⁶¹ to Austria. But the most important thing was what it was not to be shown: that Vienna could also be a scene of crime! However, Vienna was, in fact, regularly a crime scene. Regardless the excellent results of the Viennese police, its investigators and its forensic methods of crime analysis,⁶² the newspaper's *faits divers*-pages were filled with murder cases and financial crime scandals among many other *sensational* or lurid articles.

For many literary critics, in the past and nowadays, Bettauer was not a very talented writer and his books were of insignificant literary value (especially in comparison with his contemporaries like A. Schnitzler, R. Musil, S. Zweig but also with other detective novel writers like B. Grollier or A. Groner). According to interwar German-language literature specialist M. G. Hall, Bettauer's work "was classified 'trivial literature', which upright Germanists would not concern themselves with. One looked (still) down on those who dealt with supposedly 'inferior' literature. That should change, [...]"⁶³

It is, however, a fact that all his best-selling novels were adapted to a movie and that the public waited impatiently for every new book or *feuilleton*. For Bettauer, "enlightening" the ordinary, everyday people was of extreme importance. Little by little, he committed himself to a mission, which became the "Bettauerian cause" and consisted in informing and instructing Viennese adolescents and young adults about their sexuality, their health and their well-being by giving them advice on hygiene, prevention and safety. This "cause" was misinterpreted by the Christian Social government and his fierce opponents systematically accused him of pornography and indecency. Not only men, but also women organized meetings and gave speeches about the moral

⁶¹ Hugo Bettauer was the "press representative" for the "American Relief Committee for Sufferers in Austria" and tried to collect funds for the reconstruction aid. See: Hacker, Melanie, p. 17.

⁶² The researches of Austrian Hans Groß (1847-1915), considered as the "founding father" criminal profiling contributed not only to the development of scientific criminology but he is also the inventor of methods used even nowadays such as a suitcase carrying the instruments for the crime scene analysis and the verification of fingerprints. It is worth noting that policemen from Europe and the USA came to Vienna for the purpose to assist to his lectures about criminal law and forensic criminology.

⁶³ Hall, Murray G., Text über Bettauers " Erotische Revolution " in Theorie und Praxis, anlässlich der Verleihung des Preises für Publizistik der Stadt Wien am 21. November 2018, <http://www.murrayhall.com>, accessed: 09.01.2020

decadence sexual enlightenment engendered. “Black-Yellow Austria”⁶⁴ was radically opposed to “Red Vienna’s” mores:

“**Against Bettauer and similar charlatans:** The Federation of German Women's Associations in Austria held a meeting in the main hall of the German Schools Association against dilettantism and vulgarity in word and image under the chairmanship of Mrs. Elvira Rott. Congratulatory letters were received from Federal President Hainisch, Vice-Chancellor Frank and Police President Schrober.”⁶⁵

Bettauer’s opponents in politics and in press displayed polemical or even hateful rhetoric, encouraging Viennese readers to exclude him from the journalistic landscape. The *Reichspost*, the press organ of the Christian Social Government, asked the question directly: “How long will this man be allowed to haunt the Viennese press?”⁶⁶

Although his actions were of general interest, and were very much appreciated by the suffering population, they were also strongly criticized and were disapproved even by Social Democrats who “[...] could not abandon the morality preached by the Church” even though they “rejected its hegemony”. After all, “in the area of values, the Social Democrats were no more liberal than the fervent center-right”.⁶⁷ Because of the fact that he emphasized in the moral responsibility of the state, it was evident that “[...] even the Social Democrats, with whom Bettauer was most closely allied, quickly abandoned the pursuit of his murder in 1925.”⁶⁸ As a finding of fact, “that his writings had such impact was because and not in spite of the fact that they were *Trivialliteratur*.”⁶⁹

Concerning Hugo Bettauer’s work it is important to take Wolfgang Langenbucher’s conception of entertainment literature *Unterhaltungsliteratur* under consideration:

“Wolfgang Langenbucher has suggested that entertainment novels are closer to journalism than any other form. The authors of these books are not second-rate artists, rather they fall into a completely different category of writer. They are reporters who use the novel format as a means to an end. The worth specifically of the entertainment novel lies in its contextualization and time-content. These novels are paradoxically both novels of their time and timeless, dealing with universal plots and values. They are to be understood as political literature of the everyday. Such works are often only indirectly political but nonetheless so, as

⁶⁴ Riedler-Lindthaler, Maria-Ute, (2006). „Er spinnt das Garn, in das ihm das Leben läuft...“: Typen, Milieus und soziales Leben in den Wiener Romanen Hugo Bettauers. Dipl. Thesis, University of Graz, p. 18.

⁶⁵ Reichspost, May 17, 1924, p. 5

⁶⁶ Reichspost, July 5, 1927, p. 8

⁶⁷ Noveck, Beth Simone, p. 10.

⁶⁸ Noveck, Beth Simone, p. 12.

⁶⁹ Noveck, Beth Simone, p. 18.

1 their authors are critics and opinion shapers. The commercial success of a novel
2 is in itself a testament to its having fulfilled a certain agenda. »⁷⁰
3

4 All Bettauer's emblematic female figures in both New Yorker and
5 Viennese societies show how much he was affected by the sexual exploitation
6 of women and sensitive to the feminine condition in general. He considered
7 state, law and society as hypocritical and unprotective towards women. Many
8 of those figures, like *Grete Rumfort*, are described as “angels”⁷¹ fighting
9 against the misery that will lead them to decadence and destruction. These girls
10 manage to escape from the “fossilization” of Viennese society’s ethics imposed
11 to them. From this society-model “in crisis” derives a family-model in crisis
12 and vice-versa.⁷²

13 At the end of the novel, the brave *Grete*, outraged by the judgmental words
14 of her savior, expresses her indignation about the social injustice towards
15 young women and speaks on their behalf. Through the fervent plea of his
16 heroine, Bettauer passes a social message on the emancipation of women.⁷³
17 *Grete* feels insulted, deeply hurt and shocked by *Otto*'s words. Suddenly, she is
18 confronted with masculine mentality that considered women as “bad” and
19 “depraved”. Her beloved is not very different from other men. He blames the
20 “fault” on the woman who prostitutes herself without questioning the
21 wickedness, the cruelty and exploitation of men. *Grete* is determined to defend
22 all the girls who do the “necessary” to help their families without taking
23 consequences under consideration. Her firm tone and overwhelming arguments
24 compel *Otto*, to admit the “responsibility” of men and society, to express his
25 regrets and his wish to keep her away from this abominable street and this
26 dreadful life.⁷⁴ The manipulator *Egon Stirner*'s monologue at the end of the
27 novel also shows the “naivety” of the Sweet Viennese Girls, who are
28 transformed by the ambitions of immoral men and unconsciousness into a
29 “human wrecks”.⁷⁵
30
31

32 Conclusion

33
34 In September 1924, a few months before Bettauer's assassination, Ernst
35 Ely, editor of *Die Stunde* (for whom Bettauer continued to write, despite the
36 publication of *Bettauers Weekly*) wrote after Bettauer's acquittal:
37

⁷⁰ Noveck, Beth Simone, p. 21-22

⁷¹ In the cabaret live-show in Pabst's film the girls are symbolically dressed as half-naked angels.

⁷² Kugler, Stefani, Sälzer, Anna-Lena, (2013). *Die andere Familie: Repräsentationskritische Analysen von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, Band 18, Frankfurt/M, P. Lang, p. 24.

⁷³ Bettauer, Hugo, (1980). *Die freudlose Gasse*, (Gesammelte Werke, Band 3). Salzburg, Hannibal Verlag., p. 288-289

⁷⁴ Bettauer, Hugo, p. 290.

⁷⁵ Bettauer, Hugo, p. 282.

1 “The Bettauer man has a great need for communication and the writer Bettauer
 2 satisfies this need. That is why the two get along so well. [...] The best-selling
 3 novels that made him known are not the result of any particular intuition or
 4 brilliant representation, but the result of his great quality as a humanist. He writes
 5 as his readers would write, if they could write; he thinks as the little people would
 6 think if they knew how to think; he is so free inside as his followers would be, if
 7 they had fought for that freedom as he did. And he deals with the question of
 8 sexuality only because it poisons or liberates the souls of those to whom he talks
 9 about it.”⁷⁶

10
 11 The *Joyless Street* played in Vienna’s movie-theaters six months after its
 12 premiere in Berlin. Its success was immediate despite the “cutting”. G. W.
 13 Pabst had definitely become the *New Objectivity*’s most prominent
 14 representative. The newspapers were not only praising Pabst’s masterpiece and
 15 the outstanding performances of his actors, but also the late writer of the novel:

16
 17 “Hugo Bettauer, whose life was actually nothing different from a beautiful and an
 18 eventful film with a tragic ending, was deprived from watching the filmic
 19 adaptation of his famous novel. Today’s premiere of his “*Joyless Street*” is an
 20 special event for Vienna, because Bettauer was a Viennese, and because the plot
 21 of the film takes place in Vienna: In those days, shortly after the end of the war
 22 and the establishment of peace, when middle class mothers usually lacked milk
 23 for their little ones, but well-fed *cocottes* ate *scheidelkrupfen* with whipped
 24 cream; when awarded men stood in line for bread, while yesterday’s war
 25 profiteers, with still black fingernails, were driving their own cars in their own
 26 villas, which they snatched up overnight; in those days when so many coffee
 27 houses turned into bank premises, so many beggars into millionaires and so many
 28 pre-war wealthy citizens into beggars. The film, directed by the German director
 29 J. Pabst [sic], has the breath of real poetry, despite the crass reality and unbridled
 30 ruthlessness that replenishes it [...]”⁷⁷

31
 32 In 1928, the screenwriter Willy Haas had published in his magazine *Die*
 33 *literarische Welt* (*The Literary World*) an ardent discourse against censorship:

34
 35 “About three years ago, I wrote a film about inflation, *The Joyless Street* [...]. The
 36 film caused quite a stir simply because I tried to tell the truth about all the terrible
 37 things I had seen. Now it’s playing again and I watched it again. I didn’t recognize
 38 it. The censors have now cut it up with a courage I never thought possible. [...] But,
 39 dear Censors, you can cut up anything you want, we can’t prevent it. But, if
 40 you think that these things will be forgotten, you are mistaken. They will not be
 41 forgotten as long as we can live and speak, as long as we can guide a pen to write,
 42 as long as the historical document that we have written we continue to write it
 43 and we will rewrite it relentlessly.”⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Ely, Ernst, *Der Mensch Bettauer*, in: *Die Stunde*, September 19, 1924, p. 3

⁷⁷ *Die Stunde*, November 9, 1925 Seite 9.

⁷⁸ Haas, Willy, *Die literarische Welt*, 1928/Nr. 25, p. 4

The movie continued to play in European and American movie-theaters. It lasted only an hour and the only story left to see was the love story of Grete and Lt. Davy. Equally disappointed G. W. Pabst declared in 1929:

“It is not surprising that the personalities of my characters have been completely changed... I should have less desired giving the tape of the film as I had made it to the professionals, so that they could judge for themselves. They didn’t want it. All these efforts for nothing. They only know how to wield the scissors... When will we be free of this scourge?”⁷⁹

More than fifty years later, in 1977, Bettauer’s assassin Otto Rothstock declared in a television interview: “The motive was the over-excitement that drove young people to have abnormal sex, through pornography of the worst kind, which also led to contempt for the female sex. Myself – I can positively say this – I already knew all those pornographic magazines.”⁸⁰

Bettauer’s detective and crime novels have often been described as *romans à clef* (*Schlüsselromane*), as *novels of manners* (*Sittenromane*), as entertainment novels or as *easy-reads* (*Unterhaltungsromane*). Despite their content, which refers to the gap between social classes, the injustices, and social ills, like drugs and disease, they have been neither analyzed nor studied or classified as “social crime novels” to date. Whether it is question about rich, mature women, young girls issued from good families, “*femmes fatales*”, professionally active, hard-working girls, “sweet Viennese girls” or prostitutes, Bettauer’s feminine figures represent “the voice” of every woman in interwar Vienna. Whether they are “bad” or “good” girls, they all fight against male omnipotence social *a priori* becoming active and committed members of the society. Even if they play a man’s role, it is the men’s world they live in, that turns them into “monsters”.

Bettauer should be considered as an author portraying events of everyday life in any society in political, economic or moral crisis whatever the period or the metropole. In addition, despite the *Happy End* in most of his novels, his own murder, and the subsequent acquittal of his assassin, have given the brilliant example for a bureaucratic, biased and corrupt judicial and social system.

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⁷⁹ G. W. Pabst, *Pour Vous Magazine*, 02.05.1929

⁸⁰ Interview of Peter Huemer with Hugo Bettauer’s assassin Otto Rothstock, for the television show *Teleobjektiv* for the German channel ORF, February 23, 1977

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