

CABARET AND ANTIFASCIST AESTHETICS

Steven Belletto

When Bob Fosse's *Cabaret* debuted in 1972, critics and casual viewers alike noted that it was far from a conventional film musical. "After 'Cabaret,'" wrote Pauline Kael in the *New Yorker*, "it should be a while before performers once again climb hills singing or a chorus breaks into song on a hayride."¹ One of the film's most striking features is indeed that all the music is diegetic—no one sings while taking a stroll in the rain, no one soliloquizes in rhyme. The musical numbers take place on stage in the Kit Kat Klub, which is itself located in a specific time and place (Berlin, 1931).² Ambient music comes from phonographs or radios; and, in one important instance, a Hitler Youth stirs a beer-garden crowd with a propagandistic song. This directorial choice thus draws attention to the musical numbers *as* musical numbers in a way absent from conventional film musicals, which depend on the audience's willingness to overlook, say, why a gang member would sing his way through a street fight.³ In *Cabaret*, by contrast, the songs announce themselves as aesthetic entities removed from—yet explicable by—daily life. As such, they demand attention as aesthetic objects. These musical numbers are not only commentaries on the lives of the various characters, but also have a significant relationship to the film's other abiding interest: the rise of fascism in the waning years of the Weimar Republic. By concentrating attention on the aggressively stylized realm of the Kit Kat Klub, *Cabaret* thematizes its own aesthetic position and poses questions about how the Klub's prevailing aesthetic—embodied, I will argue, by Joel Grey's Emcee—relates to the ascendancy of fascism that unfolds as the songs are performed on stage. Ultimately, *Cabaret* offers an especially canny example of antifascist aesthetics, a complicated phenomenon rooted not in Sally's famous songs about sex and decadence, but in the Emcee's numbers, which are characterized by ambiguity, irony, and uneasiness.

As is well known, the kernel of the story told in *Cabaret* is Christopher Isherwood's short stories of the 1930s, particularly "Sally Bowles," in

which he described the character that would appear in all the subsequent adaptations and reinventions: a play (1952), a film (1955), a Broadway musical (1966), and finally Fosse's film.⁴ Were one inclined to compare the stage and screen versions of *Cabaret*, one could argue that the most seemingly perfunctory change is also the most profound—the punch line of the soft-shoe number “If You Could See Her.” In that song, the Emcee croons what first seems a hackneyed paean to his beloved, who turns out to be a gorilla in a pink tutu and hat. As the Kit Kat Klub's audience is shown either guffawing or looking on with bemused skepticism, the Emcee catalogs the gorilla's refinement—“she's clever, she's smart, she reads music. She doesn't smoke or drink gin”—and appeals for “eine bisschen Verstandnis,” a little understanding. At the end of the number, the Emcee holds hat in hand and addresses directly the Kit Kat Klub audience: “Meine Damen und Herren, Mesdames et Messieurs, Ladies and Gentleman / Is it a crime to fall in love? / Can we ever choose where the heart leads us?” This address is crosscut with faces of audience members who are plainly taking the Emcee seriously—until he delivers the final line. In the Broadway show, the Emcee concludes the song with “If you could see her through my eyes / She wouldn't be meeskite at all.” In the film, Fosse returns the line to the version originally written by lyricist Fred Ebb (but revised for Broadway): “If you could see her through my eyes,” sings the Emcee, “She wouldn't look Jewish at all.”⁵

This difference is significant because it signals how the film stages an aesthetic response to fascist ideology and its attendant politics. In the “meeskite” version of the song, the gorilla *is* meeskite (ugly), a state of being that explains why the love affair would need justification in the first place. (In the context of the stage musical, the word recalls the grocer Schultz's song based on the Yiddish word, a connection that would have linked the gorilla and Jewishness.) In the “Jewish” version, the Emcee raises questions of perception, for the gorilla only *looks* Jewish and, as he sings the line, the emphasis is as much on “look” as it is on “Jewish.” If the audience could only “see” her differently, the gorilla might not appear subhuman. When the song ends, the Emcee cackles and dances offstage amid laughter from the Klub audience, and the film audience is left wondering whether the song is endorsing a version of fascist aesthetics or mounting a critique of such aesthetics. To read the Emcee straight is to see him pandering to the changing tastes of the Kit Kat Klub audience—tastes dictated, as we will see, by Nazi politics and aesthetics. In this reading, the Emcee's appeal for a little understanding is predicated on the reasonableness of a ridiculous assumption—that a human could fall in love with costumed animal. The final line, then, implies that if a human-gorilla love

affair is admittedly absurd, then so too is it absurd to assume Jewish people are human enough to love and be loved. From another perspective, however, the Emcee's song lampoons the view that Jewish people are subhuman others; in this reading, the song is as subtle as it is damning: while the Kit Kat Klub audience may briefly entertain the Emcee's suggestion that Weimar sophisticates ought to tolerate a human-gorilla relationship, this notion may ultimately be safely rejected as absurd. But with the final line, the whole song is recontextualized and the gorilla becomes a visual metaphor for the ways in which Jewish people were being perceived in Berlin in 1931. Thus what is absurd is not the human-gorilla affair, but the fascist logic that figures Jews as radically inassimilable and therefore disposable.

The Emcee's position is actually complex enough that it has not been immediately clear even to the film's most thoughtful viewers. Many people have shared the reactions of the first reviewers, who see this and other songs as evidence that we are meant to forge a link between the Emcee and Nazi ideology—whether we see him as a symbol of Nazism or as the avatar of the decadence that allowed Nazism to foment. Stephen Farber's *New York Times* review argued, for example, that, with the Emcee, *Cabaret* “implies a simple causal relationship between decadence and totalitarianism”;⁶ Pauline Kael called him “the pure-tin evil heart of the period.”⁷ For Robert Osborne, writing in 1973, the Emcee embodied “the decadence and decay which helped the Nazi menace gain momentum while no one bothered to be concerned.”⁸ More recent viewers have confirmed this initial reading; writing a review of Sam Mendes's 1998 Broadway revival, for instance, Michiko Kakutani of the *New York Times* called the Emcee in Fosse's film a “straightforward symbol of Nazism.”⁹

For these commentators at least, the Emcee is best understood in his relationship to something called Nazism. But what exactly is this something? The different articulations of what the Emcee is supposed to stand for—“totalitarianism,” a “pure-tin evil heart,” “the Nazi menace”—suggest that Nazism is not being conceptualized merely as a historically specific political and cultural phenomenon. As these variations suggest, *Cabaret's* critics have in fact confirmed Foucault's sense that fascism functions as a “floating signifier.”¹⁰ In other words, Nazism, as the most historically visible instantiation of fascism, is invoked as a fuzzy concept that can stand for all manner of evil and reprehensible things—a “pure-tin evil heart.” As Laura Frost has reminded us, there is a critical tendency to assume an “all too common conflation of fascism with any form of oppression.”¹¹ Rey Chow has likewise argued that fascism has become a “banal” and “empty” term “onto which we project all the unpleasant realities from which we want to distance ourselves. This is why fascism is associated alternately with colonialism,

authoritarianism, mysticism, socialism, banality, and so forth.”¹² This is all to recognize that if we understand fascism (as made visible by Nazism) as a “floating signifier” or “empty term” it is important to be clear about what exactly it signifies in a given context or instance of cultural expression.

In *Cabaret*, fascism means social control, which is manifest specifically in aggressive anti-Semitism and the curtailing of free speech and political dissent. Here’s how this idea of fascism is introduced: early in the film, an innocuous-looking Brownshirt enters the Kit Kat Klub to collect donations. He smiles at the mud-wrestling match on stage (which I discuss later), and, as he moves through the audience, the camera lingers on his armband, the symbol of fascism that will dominate the Klub’s audience at the end of the film. When the club owner sees the Brownshirt, he throws him out into the street, an act that is later answered when two Brownshirts are shown beating the owner in an alley. The idea of fascism this Brownshirt represents is that dissent or difference must be quashed through violence. But, as his good-natured smile suggests, such a quashing of dissent always comes from a friendly face. This is important for understanding how the film conceptualizes fascism’s relationship to aesthetics because it implies that fascist aesthetics mask a dissonance between image and content, between surface and depth. One function of fascist aesthetics is to make the reprehensible palatable: as the film progresses, Nazi brutality is exposed as such, but it is significant that it must be exposed in the first place—fascist aesthetics are appealing at first blush, but the film shows how this appeal is itself a source of danger.

The most disturbing example of how the film treats fascist aesthetics is the scene at a guesthouse as the main characters, Sally Bowles and Brian Roberts—the bisexual British doctoral student who has taken up with Sally—travel through the German countryside with the wealthy Baron Max von Heune. As Sally sleeps off a hangover in the car, Brian and Max have a drink in the bucolic beer garden of the guesthouse. The camera shoots the faces of the typical-looking German crowd laughing over drinks and chess matches. As the band dies down, a young man who could be the poster boy for Aryan good looks begins to sing. Again, *Cabaret* is not a musical in which people break into song unremarked, so the crowd takes notice. At first, the shot is tight on his face, and the singing is crosscut with faces from the crowd reacting with interest. His song begins as a romantic idyll:

The sun on the meadow is summery warm.
 The stag in the forest runs free.
 But gather together to greet the storm.
 Tomorrow belongs to me.

As he sings, the crowd grows more and more interested, and there is soon a dissonance between the beauty of the song's lyrics and melody and what we see on screen: the camera pans down from the boy's face to reveal first a neckerchief, then a uniform, and then the Nazi armband that was first introduced with the Brownshirt in the Kit Kat Klub. With the revelation that the sweet singer is a Hitler Youth, the scene turns chilling; we watch as the song is revealed to be an instance of fascist aesthetics—it turns out that, whatever beauty it may possess, the song's real function is to consolidate the crowd and marshal them into one uniform voice.¹³ The boy continues to sing:

The branch of the linden is leafy and green,
 The Rhine gives its gold to the sea.
 But somewhere a glory awaits unseen.
 Tomorrow belongs to me.

The babe in his cradle is closing his eyes
 The blossom embraces the bee.
 "But soon," says a whisper,
 "Arise, arise,
 Tomorrow belongs to me."

Oh, Fatherland, Fatherland, show us the sign
 Your children have waited to see.
 The morning will come when the world is mine
 Tomorrow belongs to me!

As the boy moves into the final verses, which are more explicit about the song's subtext, his facial expressions grow more forceful and his singing more strident. This is fascist aesthetics in action; the song subsumes not merely the lone voice of the Hitler Youth, but soon the voice of the crowd itself: one by one, the citizens in the beer garden are shown standing and singing along with the repeated final verse, ready to be counted as one. Shot with angles meant to evoke *Triumph of the Will* (1935), everyone in the beer garden, except for Brian and Max (and an old-timer who shakes his head and waves off the gathering mass), joins in so the song ends in a triumphant chorus that portends Germany's fascist future.

This scene demonstrates a signal feature of fascist aesthetics identified by contemporary theorists: that fascist art, such as it is, absorbs difference by encouraging the fantasy that the individual can achieve complete identification with the collective. Borrowing from Lacanian theory and its most



Figure 1. Fascist aesthetics in action: the camera pans slowly down to reveal that the singer of a beautiful song is a Hitler Youth; as his song grows more forceful, onlookers join in until finally the crowd is singing as one voice. The consolidation of voices is registered visually in the bottom right frame, in which all the singers stand as one. Courtesy of ABC Pictures/Allied Artists.

influential interpretations—most notably by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who are again reread by Slavoj Žižek—recent accounts of fascist aesthetics emphasize how, as a master signifier, fascism “quilts” together what may otherwise be beyond its purview. Writing on fascism and music, for example, Peter Tregear discusses the conceptual power of “what Lacan famously called *le point de capiton*; fascism, if you like, ‘sews up’ or ‘quilts’ the heterogeneous material of everyday political life into a unified ideological field, and by this means the political realm is able to be presented as a space in which the otherwise absurd notion of a ‘sublime’ union between the individual and the community is made possible.”¹⁴ The beer-garden scene in *Cabaret* illustrates how fascist aesthetics seek to “quilt” “heterogeneous material” (the varied faces of everyday Germans) into a “unified ideological field” (the fascist notion that, if the constituent parts of a collective become one, tomorrow will belong to the one). In the beer garden, the aesthetic space becomes a political space not only in the moment when the camera pans down to the Nazi armband, but in the moment

when the crowd begins to join in as one voice, and the fantasy of “sublime” identification of the individual with the community is enacted. Fascist aesthetics in *Cabaret* are thus intimately linked to fascist brutality: they are a means of control and consolidation, of closing down difference by subsuming it.¹⁵

With these conceptions of fascism and fascist aesthetics in mind, we can begin to see how the film invites us to wonder whether the Kit Kat Klub offers another face of fascism, or whether it generates a critique of fascist aesthetics. I have described the ways in which some viewers consider the Emcee an avatar of Nazism, and yet what is unsettling about him is palpably (and importantly) different from what is unsettling about the Hitler Youth. Whereas the Hitler Youth stands for aggressive unity and a vision so certain that even the future is mapped, the Emcee’s appropriation of different voices and aesthetic strategies disconcerts as it frustrates the explanatory power of fascist hegemony. Returning once again to the “If You Could See Her” number, for example, we notice that the song is characterized not by a sinister message concealed beneath an attractive veneer, but by an ambiguity and irony that resist easy interpretation. Mitchell Morris has registered the difficulty of pinning down the Emcee’s position:

We must wonder whether the parody exists in order to enable the impassioned speech on behalf of tolerance in the song’s middle sections, or whether it is the plea for tolerance itself that is being mocked. In the end, we are likely to read the Emcee as a Mephistophelean figure, a spirit of negation, not least because the film constantly sets out to link him with the aestheticized politics of the Nazis, which look as fake as the shoddy trappings of the Kit Kat Klub.¹⁶

By foregrounding the Emcee’s ambiguity, Morris is less willing than others to see him as a straightforward symbol of anything—yet still he concurs that the film links the Emcee to the “aestheticized politics of the Nazis.” But it is the very ambiguity that Morris notices—the fact that he must linger on the “whether”—that sets the Emcee’s aesthetics apart from fascist aesthetics. The Emcee’s ambiguity is actually the source of his most powerful political commentary, for as fascist aesthetics seek to subsume ambiguity and difference under the sign of a stridently political message, the Emcee’s songs operate through various registers of irony that always invite viewers to ask “whether” he means this or that. If the audience is indeed left to wonder, as Morris does, what exactly to make of the Emcee, then this confusion, rooted as it is in ambiguity and irony, is how the film generates its

antifascist critique and how it suggests the poverty of a fascist aesthetic that would seek to quilt heterogeneity into what Tregear calls a “unified ideological field.”¹⁷

It is clear from the film’s opening shots that one way to take the Kit Kat Klub is as an aesthetic space removed from the political scene—“Outside it is windy,” says the Emcee famously, “but in here it is so hot. Leave your troubles outside.” In the stage version, Sally says that “the Kit Kat Klub is the most unpolitical place in Berlin.” But to read the Kit Kat Klub as “unpolitical” is to make a profound mistake; Sally’s remark is actually indicative of her willful blindness to the suffering caused by Nazi politics. Nevertheless, the film’s invitation to understand the Kit Kat Klub as an aggressively aesthetic space has led many viewers and critics to read it as exempt from or unconcerned with politics. In its disregard for anything but beauty and fun, the argument goes, the Kit Kat Klub reproduces the decadent logic of fascism. As Mizejewski has written, for example, in the film “a historical cause-and-effect argument is suggested: the moral looseness of Weimar Berlin, in particular the sexual and bisexual play in Berlin nightlife, has made possible the tolerance of Nazism.”¹⁸ This art-for-art’s-sake aesthetic of “moral looseness” is embodied by the most well-known musical number of both the stage and screen versions: Sally’s “(Life is a) Cabaret,” in which she explains how she came to embrace her inner hedonist. Sally’s argument for sex and liquor is born not of an oppositional stance to the real world of war and politics, but of an indifference to it. As I will explain later, Sally demonstrates this indifference numerous times, yet because the film ends with life itself being touted as a cabaret, viewers have assumed that the apolitical Kit Kat Klub exists only to be colonized by fascism, as indicated by the parting shot of an audience bristling with Nazi armbands.

The problem with this reading is that in the Kit Kat Klub there are conflicting aesthetics: Sally’s songs are indeed about hedonism and her own love life, but the Emcee’s songs, while putatively about hedonism or love, evince also a very strong awareness of the political context in which they are sung. The Emcee’s characteristics—ambiguity and irony—are not decadent ends in and of themselves, but rather constitute a response and counteraesthetic to the fascist aesthetic that gains increasing prominence as the film unfolds.

By noticing the Emcee’s ambiguity and irony, the Kit Kat Klub can be understood as the aesthetic descendant of the real-life Weimar “Kabarett mit K” that used these characteristics to generate political critique. In his work on Weimar cabaret, Peter Jelavich begins by noting that “the German language now differentiates *Cabaret* and *Kabarett*. The words were used

interchangeably through the Weimar era, but since the 1950s, *Cabaret* has referred to a strip show, while *Kabarett* is reserved for social criticism or political satire.¹⁹ Jelavich's point is that while people today may tend to think of cabaret only in terms of the sex and decadence represented in *Cabaret* by Sally Bowles, Weimar *Kabarett* functioned in a spirit of critical engagement that, I am suggesting, is embodied by the Emcee. Through a series of detailed readings of songs and other performances, Jelavich shows how the Weimar cabaret "satirists of the late twenties asked whether Germany really was a republic, since the conservative, antidemocratic forces remained influential,"²⁰ a critical stance that included "swipes at the Nazis' anti-Semitic rhetoric."²¹

With this context in mind, we can begin to see that the Emcee operates in much the same vein as the socially engaged cabaret performers in Weimar Berlin, however sleazy other aspects of the Kit Kat Klub may be. The social engagement of cabaret often took a form that would seem familiar to viewers of Fosse's film; according to Alan Lareau, "Disconcerting ambiguity, irony, playful quoting and daring questioning—these make up the essential gesture of cabaret . . . The best cabaret is a double-edged knife of amusement and resistance, of mockery and melancholy."²² Although the Kit Kat Klub is not as self-consciously literary or overtly political as a real-life *Kabarett*, all the characteristics of the "double-edged knife of amusement and resistance" are certainly in evidence in the Emcee's songs.²³ The film is powerful partly because it is possible to be so easily duped by the Emcee, to mistake the ambiguity for disengagement, or to miss the irony altogether. Yet, that it is relatively easy to be duped by the film—to assume that the Emcee is merely a decadent instantiation of Nazism—is part of the film's antifascist aesthetic of ambiguity and evasion.

One significant source of confusion regarding the Emcee's position is the tendency to associate the audience in the Kit Kat Klub with the audience of *Cabaret*. Productions from 1966 on have actually encouraged viewers to imagine themselves in the audience of the Kit Kat Klub; in the original Broadway production, set designer Boris Aronson propped an enormous mirror on stage so Manhattan theatergoers would see themselves as reflections of audience members in Weimar Berlin. Fosse's film likewise opens with a distorted mirror that gives way to a view of the audience—which seems to extend the space of the Kit Kat Klub to those viewing the film itself. But this association should not mean that we ought to conflate the two audiences, because the film audience is privileged in seeing the world beyond the cabaret. For our purposes, those moments when onstage numbers are crosscut with instances of fascist brutality, or are framed by a demonstration of the stakes of the Nazi rise to power, are important for

understanding the Kit Kat Klub's aesthetic statements in their particularized political context. If Sally's hedonism seems doubly damning as the film lingers on undeniable examples of violence, then the Emcee's irony and allusions to Nazism must also be read in this context.

The Emcee's use of fascist aesthetics, in contrast to the Hitler Youth's, breaks down ideological unity and promotes discomfort and ambiguity. To see exactly how this works, it is useful to think of the Emcee's numbers as examples of what Theodor Adorno calls "committed art." Writing in 1962 with the Weimar theater of Brecht and others in mind, Adorno argued against Jean-Paul Sartre's theories of politically engaged art in *What Is Literature?*

Commitment should be distinguished from tendentiousness, or advocacy of a particular partisan position. Committed art in the strict sense is not intended to lead to specific measures, legislative acts, or institutional arrangements, as in older ideological pieces directed against syphilis, the duel, the abortion laws, or the reform schools. . . . The very thing that gives committed art an artistic advantage over the tendentious piece . . . makes the content to which the author is committed ambiguous.²⁴

Adorno's thoughts about committed art help us see how the Emcee's tactics can be viewed as broadly political and specifically antifascist. In his conception, irony and ambiguity are political commitments in and of themselves, and when set in the context of the fascist rise to power, they become markers of antifascism—the counteraesthetic to the Hitler Youth who absorbs the crowd into an ideology through an aesthetic. Thus, when critics note the particular ways in which the Emcee is disconcerting, they are drawing attention to the very hallmarks of an antifascist aesthetic, which is able to operate as such partly by inducing a sense of discomfort through ambiguity and irony.

Throughout the film, the cross-dressing, multilingual Emcee dons numerous costumes and performs in a variety of musical genres—along the way, he also appropriates the visible signs of fascism (goose-stepping, a Hitler mustache), which is one reason why critics have assumed he represents a version of fascism. What is actually going on with such appropriations is a complex play of signs that challenges the ways the Nazis exploited and circulated these very signs. In the "Tiller Girls" dance number, for example, the Emcee is dressed in drag as one of the cabaret girls, and in the opening shots it is impossible to distinguish him from the other dancers.

The Emcee is lost among the girls until he turns around to reveal himself beneath the wig and hose, thus challenging the audience's assumptions and expectations about a number that seemed only conventional entertainment. But there is another, more consequential surprise to come as the Emcee extends his challenge of gender norms to the norms of fascist pageantry itself: the girls, following his lead, turn their hats around and remove the frills so the hats look like helmets; the dancing canes stand in for rifles; and the troupe goose-steps off the stage. As is the case with the "If You Could See Her" number, we are presented an interpretive conundrum: are we meant to read the Emcee as fascist, or is the conversion from Tiller Girl to storm trooper a way to have fun with fascism? Although the Emcee's intentions are ambiguous enough to remain obscure, once again the issue of perception is foregrounded: what looks like a Tiller Girl costume from one perspective can look from another like a storm trooper uniform. And the mere association of a dancing girl with a goose-stepping soldier of course implies that fascist pageantry is itself absurd. By divorcing the goose-stepping from its context of rallies or street parades—a context becoming normative by 1931—fascist aesthetics are thrust into a space of uncertainty and unfamiliarity so that it seems far from normal to be marching around in unison.²⁵

But the film is not content to characterize fascism as merely absurd, and the "Tiller Girls" number is crosscut with an example of anti-Semitic brutality, the underside to the aesthetics represented by helmets and mock rifles. The film's subplot concerns the romance of Natalia Landauer, a wealthy Jewish department-store heiress, and Fritz Wendel, a down-on-his-luck businessman. Fritz is a Jew passing as a Gentile because, as he says, "To be a Jew in Germany. Only a fool is this, I think." As he falls in love with Natalia, Fritz finds himself in a bind because she doesn't know that he, too, is Jewish; she asks, "Don't you see what is happening in Germany today? I am a Jew. You are not." When Fritz finally reveals his Jewishness, they are able to get married. But, before this can happen, the film offers its conception of "what is happening in Germany." As the Emcee goose-steps in drag, the number is crosscut with a much darker scene: two young men scrambling through the courtyard of Natalia's house. They drop the body of Natalia's murdered dog on her doorstep, where they have written "Juden" in ugly yellow letters. As Natalia opens the door, they chant "Juden, Juden!" and the viewer senses that this chanting is the "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" song stripped of any beauty. The obvious artificiality of the "Tiller Girls" number thus encourages the film audience to recognize the artificiality of Nazi pageantry, the dangers of which are exposed as the chanting thugs lay bare the sentiments underpinning the aesthetics of goose-stepping.

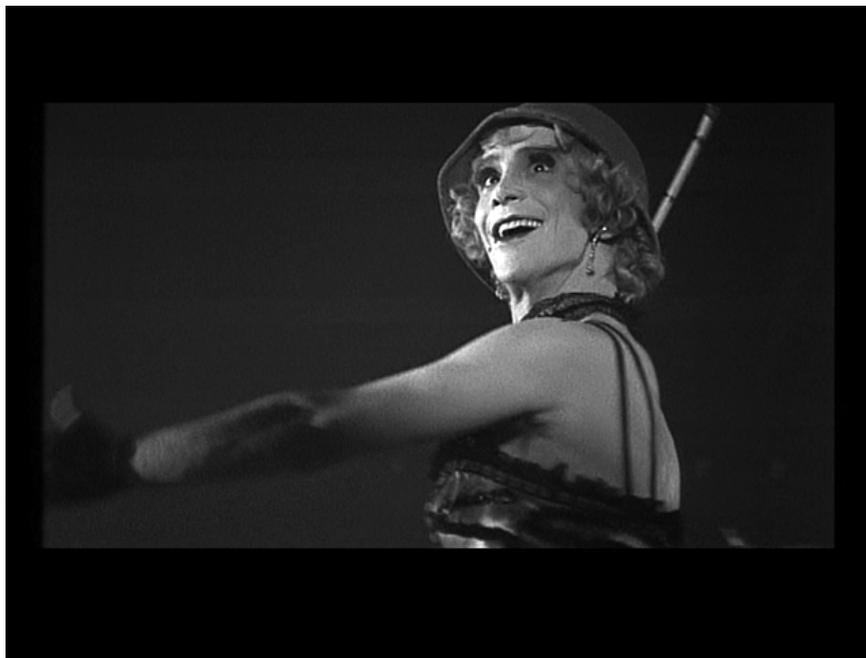


Figure 2. *The Emcee* parodies a goose-stepping Nazi in an onstage number crosscut with the murder of Natalia's dog, a concrete example of anti-Semitic brutality. Courtesy of ABC Pictures/Allied Artists.

If the "Tiller Girls" number tackles the aesthetics of Nazi choreography, another, earlier scene tackles the Nazi interest in athletic prowess and the ideal human form.²⁶ The most well-known example of this interest is Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* (1938), a film about the 1936 Olympic Games held in Berlin. *Olympia* is ostensibly only about sports, but most theorists have understood it as displaying fascist aesthetics not only because it was made under the aegis of the Nazi party but also because of the particular ways in which the film was shot.²⁷ Although it would be anachronistic for anyone living in 1931 to comment specifically on *Olympia*, I think that *Cabaret* does register an awareness of how German fascism fetishized ideal Aryan bodies. In her speculative articulation of Riefenstahl's fascist aesthetics, Susan Sontag writes that "they endorse two seemingly opposite states, egomania and servitude. The relations of domination and enslavement take the form of a characteristic pageantry: the massing of groups of people; the turning of people into things; the multiplication or replication of things; the grouping of people/things around an all-powerful, hypnotic leader-figure or force."²⁸

The Emcee toys with this sense that the body is something to be manipulated and objectified when he presides over a mud-wrestling match on stage between two women introduced in the film's opening number as the Huber Sisters. Rather than drawing on the idealized (mostly male) bodies over which Riefenstahl's film lingers, the Emcee uses heavier women—"pour le sport," as he says. Whether or not the Huber Sisters are an oblique reference to Edwin Huber, the famed German decathlete known also for his appearance in *Olympia*, these women clearly represent a challenge to the Nazi interest in idealized human forms; as the camera focuses on their girth, the Emcee specifies their weight as 72 kilos.²⁹ When the bell rings, the Huber Sisters have at it while the Emcee eggs them on and sprays them with seltzer water. The audience laughs at the spectacle, and only Brian is shown looking uncomfortable about this local example of how people are turned into things. Meanwhile, the Brownshirt works his way through the audience until the club owner finally throws him out in the action that will lead to his beating.

To suggest that, as a version of fascist aesthetics, the mud-wrestling match, too, has a sinister underside, the Emcee parodies Hitler directly: at the end of the match, he drags his finger through the mud and then touches his upper lip to create a Hitlerian mustache. The scene ends with the Emcee throwing a zany, Chaplinesque Nazi salute. With this salute, the film audience is encouraged to reread the scene as a parody of fascist aesthetics: the mud-wrestling match can appear to be harmless fun, but the critique is that in the context of the ever-present Nazi politics—as represented by the Brownshirt—such fun can also be made to carry ideological weight. According to the logic of fascist aesthetics, a wrestling match ought never be only a wrestling match, but must also serve to illustrate the ideals upon which the Third Reich was founded.

The next time we see the Emcee, he is on stage performing the "Slaphappy" number, for which he is dressed in lederhosen, pronounced makeup, and a wide hat stuck with a feather. There is no singing in this number either; it is instead an elaborate dance in which he beats a rhythm on the thighs and buttocks of two female dancers. The Emcee's lederhosen and feathered hat evoke a romantic German past—something akin to an American president who consciously dons a cowboy hat. Following as it does from the Emcee's more explicit mustache reference, the costume alludes to the fact that Hitler was able to develop a cult of personality in part by having himself photographed in similar outfits to suggest a connection between the man and the mythic German past. The Emcee's stylized slapping of the women on stage is crosscut with the club owner's beating. As the pace of the crosscutting quickens, the Kit Kat Klub audience seems to



Figure 3. Fascism is dirty: the Emcee parodies fascist aesthetics and politics by using mud from the debased wrestling match to create a Hitler mustache. Courtesy of ABC Pictures/Allied Artists.

laugh not only at the rhythmic slapping, but also at the beating delivered by the Brownshirts. The “Slaphappy” number is an example of stylized violence crosscut with actual violence, so the critique concerns the ways in which style can mask violence. The Emcee’s various appropriations of fascist pageantry are introduced to suggest how fascist aesthetics encourage people to view violence as a ritual. The Emcee’s numbers reproduce this ritual to mock it through ironic distance. Such distance is evident when, as the “Slaphappy” number concludes, the Emcee stands in mock triumph over one of the fallen women and flaps his arms as he crows a victory. This happens as the Brownshirts leave the club owner bleeding in the alley and the audience roars in delight. For the Kit Kat Klub audience, the Emcee’s action could be read as a playful endorsement of Nazi brutality, but, once again, for the film audience, the act ought to be read as parody.³⁰ Fascist politics are dirty, and the stylized “sport” of mud wrestling and the ritualized slapping, however playful-seeming, are examples of how the film draws attention to the simultaneous appeal and danger of fascist aesthetics. Whereas fascist aesthetics foreground style over substance, in the Kit Kat Klub the Emcee’s style becomes the substance, and this transformation has a point: to demonstrate the uses to which such style might be put, an awareness that the comforting unity of fascist aesthetics seeks to cover.

The Emcee’s antifascist aesthetics are brought into sharper focus by their opposition to Sally’s “unpolitical” aesthetics. The film offers three principal

aesthetic models: the Nazi regime's fascist aesthetics, as evidenced by the "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" scene; the Emcee's antifascist aesthetics, as evidenced by numbers like "If You Could See Her"; and Sally's aesthetics, as evidenced by numbers like "(Life is a) Cabaret." Sally's songs, which can be understood as examples of what she calls "divine decadence," essentially concern herself and her pursuit of pleasure. Within the Kit Kat Klub, then, the contrast between the two main performers is worth thinking about. Despite her constant claims to the contrary, Sally is among the least worldly—and is certainly the least politically aware—characters in the film. The opening scene, when she first meets Brian, characterizes her as an aspiring starlet both earnest and naive who does not understand the culture in which she is living. In marked contrast to the Emcee, who opens his number with salutations in three languages, mixing French, German, and English as he welcomes the audience to the Kit Kat Klub, Sally musters only broken German; when Brian remarks on her American accent, her worldly swagger is momentarily deflated: "Oh, God," she says. "How depressing. You're meant to think I'm an international woman of mystery. I've been working on it like mad." This moment introduces Sally's struggle with the German language as a source of comedy with serious undercurrents: she is linguistically disengaged from German culture and thus never understands how the fascists are beginning to consolidate power.

The film in fact offers constant visual reminders of this consolidation—reminders that Sally habitually misses. For example, political posters are pasted up all over Berlin; as Brian and Sally walk the city, these posters are ubiquitous, but Sally never acknowledges or even notices them. In the scene just before the club owner's beating, Sally tries to get Brian to loosen up and stop being "so British" by daring him to scream as the passing elevated car drowns out the sound. "You'll feel terrific afterward," she says. Sally is framed screaming as she stands with her back to a political poster (which she ignores completely); this shot is the segue into the beating scene, which is then crosscut with the Emcee's "Slaphappy" number. The implication is that, in Sally's world, such moments of violence do not exist because they are drowned out by her own cries of pleasure and self-involvement. As Sally talks about herself on another of these walks ("I am a most strange and extraordinary person," she says), a man scoots by on a trike festooned with swastikas; Brian does a double take, as does the audience, but Sally keeps talking without breaking stride. Sally's obliviousness is emphasized in another scene as Max, Brian, and Sally drive slowly through the streets in Max's limousine, and they see what appears to have been a Communist rally busted up by the Nazis.³¹ Posters prominently

displaying the hammer and sickle are torn, and police stand around a corpse lying in the street. Blood runs through the channels in the cobblestone. Max dismisses the scene: “The Nazis are just a gang of stupid hooligans, but they do serve a purpose. Let them get rid of the Communists. Later we’ll be able to control them.” Brian tries to engage Max in a political discussion by asking “Who’s we?” Max responds, “Why, Germany, of course.” Sally interrupts: “Hey, Max, can we go to the Bristol Bar?” Max agrees, Sally remarks that she wants to show off her new coat, and Brian says, “I think I could use a drink too.” Brian’s remark stems from his disgust with the violence he has just witnessed and is an ironic commentary on Sally’s almost willful blindness to what is going on around her.

Cabaret’s final number, in which Sally sings about life being a cabaret, also ironizes her aesthetics; as she argues that “life is a cabaret, old chum,” she does so clinging to the desperate hope of becoming a famous actress regardless of the political situation. In the end, Sally is still consigned to relative oblivion (whereas both Brian and Max have fled Germany), but the film encourages viewers to see her as an unknowing extension of the Kit Kat Klub’s aesthetic, which posits a better way of conceptualizing reality. Sally’s wide-eyed zest for life, which in context underscores the moments of brutality she has missed, taken together with the Emcee’s playful appropriation of fascist signs and pageantry, which the film audience is not supposed to miss, demonstrate the stakes of adhering to something like the Hitler Youth’s aesthetic, however inviting it may seem.

Despite Sally’s general indifference to what is happening around her, other characters discuss the fascist rise to power, while others still directly experience its consequences—not only Natalia and the club owner, but Brian himself, who gets worked over by the Nazis when he tells a Brown-shirt, “Your paper and your party are pure crap.” In addition to these moments of violence, *Cabaret* also offers examples of how fascist ideology was promulgated, an understanding of which is useful in reading the Emcee’s numbers for their antifascism. A good example of how the film analyzes fascist versions of reality comes as Fritz accompanies Brian to the boardinghouse for some English lessons. As they move through the common area, they hear Herr Ludwig—already identified as a trafficker in pornography—discussing what he takes to be reality with Fräulein Kost:

Herr Ludwig: I assure you, they are all in it together.

Fräulein Kost: If all the Jews are bankers, then how can they be Communists, too?

Herr Ludwig: Subtle, very subtle, Fräulein Kost. If they can’t destroy us one way, they try the other.

Brian: You don't really believe that, do you?

Fräulein Mayr: But you read it every day in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.

Brian: That ridiculous Nazi tripe!

Herr Ludwig: It is an established fact, Herr Roberts, that there exists a well-organized international conspiracy of Jewish bankers and Communists.

Brian: It's also an established fact, Herr Ludwig, that there exists another well-organized group of which you're obviously a member. The International Conspiracy of Horses' Asses.

Dramatized here is critique of how fascism works: the state fabricates a truth; this truth is repeated so many times that it becomes an "established fact." In this scene, only Brian recognizes that the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the official Nazi daily newspaper, could be responsible for disseminating lies rather than "established facts." In this sense, then, the *Völkischer Beobachter* represents another version of the "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" song: both function to disseminate an ideology without seeming to do so, and both could therefore be seen as examples of politicized aesthetics.

This discussion of the "established fact" of an international Jewish banking conspiracy comes immediately before the Emcee sings the "If You Could See Her" number with which I opened this essay. If we return to the song, we can understand it in light of the politics of aesthetics that the film explores. Given the various discussions and demonstrations of how aesthetics can not only contain ideology but can actually be a highly effective vehicle for it, the Emcee's irony is palpable, and, for all its ambiguity, it becomes the most truly committed number in *Cabaret*. The song is an indictment of the hypocritical Kit Kat Klub audience, who willingly laugh at the equation of a gussied-up gorilla with Jewishness, but who would also probably blanch at the murder of a dog or a person. Yet, such actions, argues the film through the Emcee, are made palatable by the aesthetics I have been discussing. Thus, even if the Emcee's subversion fails diegetically because the Kit Kat Klub audience misses the irony, it ought to succeed for the film's viewers, who are aware of the specific contexts in which the Emcee must be read.

As I have already described, however, not much of the film audience has recognized the Emcee's subversive critique as such. I think this may be because if the film offers a critique of fascist aesthetics, it also challenges viewers to rethink what beauty itself can mean—and, as I have been arguing, it is in this rethinking that political work can lie. After all,



Figure 4. By suggesting that the gorilla wouldn't "look" Jewish from another perspective, the Emcee lampoons the ways that fascist aesthetics claim to be independent of perspectival shifts. Courtesy of ABC Pictures/Allied Artists.

at its most basic level, aesthetics concern notions of beauty. With this in mind, I would suggest that *Cabaret* offers viewers alternative visions of what can count as beautiful—alternatives that, given the fascist context I have described, have obvious political ramifications. Before the Emcee begins to sing “If You Could See Her,” for example, the gorilla stands on a scale, the needle comically spins around and around, and the Emcee makes a one-word comment: “Schön.” If the song’s final line asks us to recontextualize the song’s content, then this first word invites us to see a critique of beauty itself. The concept of beauty is in fact explicitly introduced in the opening of the film as the Emcee welcomes both audiences to the Kit Kat Klub: “In here,” he says, “life is beautiful. The girls are beautiful. Even the orchestra is beautiful.” The repetition alone suggests that beauty will be an important—and contested—concept, and I hope my discussion of the film’s various aesthetic modes has indicated why this should be.

At the end of the film, the Emcee again repeats the line, but with an important difference. Here’s how the scene has been described by one critic: “[The Emcee] makes his final appearance, as in the film’s opening, repeating

his claim that ‘here life is beautiful.’ Fosse gives us another glimpse of the grotesque, beefy, all-female band, but not to reinforce a satiric point—that would be excessive in this context; the real point is that the blatant lies about beauty piously pronounced by the Master of Ceremonies are primarily an attack on the grossness of the customers’ lives.”³² Although the women in the band are heavier than the dancers, and the camera does linger on their sweaty flesh as their music becomes discordant, I think that the rest of the film, especially the moments I have discussed, cautions us against so quickly dismissing them as not beautiful. Why, we might wonder, must these women necessarily be defined primarily as “grotesque”? If they are so, then it is only because the film links the “grossness of the customers’ lives” with the aesthetic assumptions of the film audience—that, for instance, “beefy” women are less beautiful than slender ones. The film implies that the women are certainly ugly if we assume an Aryan model of beauty as represented by the Hitler Youth in the beer garden, but it also suggests how fascism has colonized such perceptions of beauty. If the beefy, sweating orchestra player is not beautiful, she is not so according to a certain aesthetic logic—the film suggests that what counts as beautiful is a matter of perspective, something that fascist aesthetics would deny. The Emcee’s ambiguity and irony make it difficult to tell whether he really takes the gorilla or orchestra as *schön*—but the point is that they *could* be. *Cabaret*’s prevailing aesthetic thus makes things appear natural from one perspective, only to challenge this perspective through radical recontextualization, a technique that amounts to a critique of the aesthetic logic that fascism both depends on and masks.

Despite the ways that the film has been understood by a variety of critics, it rejects the logic of fascist certainty by staging various numbers committed to irony and ambiguity. As an interpretation of the late Weimar Kabarett from which it takes its inspiration, *Cabaret* both confirms the sense of those cultural historians who see political critique at work in these venues and suggests that aesthetic form itself can erode fascist fantasies. Antifascist aesthetics encourage rethinking of the ways that reality is organized and so themselves may be messy and—as many respondents to *Cabaret*’s Emcee attest—unsettling. But the feeling of uneasiness that such aesthetics can induce is a symptom of their larger challenge to the inviting face of fascism. Commitment to an antifascist aesthetic is thus a commitment of refusal: it is both a repudiation and evasion of aesthetics that absorb and obscure the complexities and contradictions of reality in the name of an aggressively unified political vision.

NOTES

1. Pauline Kael, "Grinning (Review of *Cabaret*)," *New Yorker*, 19 February 1972, 84, 86–88, quotation on 84.
2. *Cabaret*, dir. Bob Fosse, perf. Joel Grey and Liza Minnelli (ABC Pictures/Allied Artists, 1972).
3. For a discussion of film musical conventions, see Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); and Timothy Scheurer, "The Aesthetics of Form and Convention in the Movie Musical," in *Movies as Artifacts: Cultural Criticism of Popular Film*, ed. Michael T. Marsden and John G. Nachbar (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1982), 114–28.
4. The story "Sally Bowles" appears in *Goodbye to Berlin* (1935; collected in *Berlin Stories* [New York: New Directions, 1954]). In 1952, John van Druten adapted some characters and elements of the stories into a play, *I Am a Camera* (1952), which was then made into a 1955 film of the same name starring Julie Harris as Sally Bowles and Laurence Harvey as Christopher Isherwood. In 1966, van Druten's *I Am a Camera* was itself adapted by Harold Prince as the Broadway musical *Cabaret*. In 1972, the stage musical was adapted, again with considerable changes, and made into the film *Cabaret*, with a screenplay by Jay Allen and directed by Bob Fosse. The music and lyrics were written by John Kander and Fred Ebb, respectively. The most sustained comparison of each version is Linda Mizejewski's *Divine Decadence: Fascism, Female Spectacle, and the Making of Sally Bowles* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). Mizejewski's book is essential reading for anyone thinking about *Cabaret*; she focuses her analysis on the changing treatment of the Sally Bowles character, and how such changes relate to the cultural concerns of the particular moment in which each version was produced. For another discussion of *Cabaret*'s treatment of sexualized politics, see Andrea Slane, *A Not So Foreign Affair: Fascism, Sexuality, and the Cultural Rhetoric of American Democracy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 258–62. Other useful comparisons include Joe Blades, "The Evolution of *Cabaret*," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (1973): 22–638; and Randy Clark, "Bending the Genre: The Stage and Screen Versions of *Cabaret*," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1991): 51–59.
5. This change from the original "Jewish" to "meeskite" in the Broadway version was a source of controversy. In early productions, the "Jewish" line was used for pointed effect; as Fred Ebb remarked, the song "got an amazing reaction from the audience, because they did laugh, and then they kind of realized what they were laughing at, and they would stop laughing" (quoted in Mizejewski, *Divine Decadence*, 177). For more on the controversy over the line in the Broadway show, see Mizejewski, 174–80.
6. Stephen Farber, "'Cabaret' May Shock Kansas . . .," *New York Times*, 20 February 1972, D1, D3, quotation on D3.
7. Kael, "Grinning," 86.
8. Quoted in Arlene Rodda, "*Cabaret*: Utilizing the Film Medium to Create a Unique Adaptation," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1994): 36–41, quotation on 38.
9. Michiko Kakutani, "Culture Zone; Window on the World," *New York Times*, 26 April 1998.
10. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 139.

11. Laura Frost, *Sex Drives: Fantasies of Fascism in Literary Modernism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 8.
12. Rey Chow, "The Fascist Longings in Our Midst," in *Linked Histories: Postcolonial Studies in a Globalized World*, ed. Wendy Faith and Pamela McCallum (Calgary, Canada: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 21–43, quotation on 24.
13. Mitchell Morris points out that the boy's voice is "obviously dubbed" and he is "framed to look natural in the most artificial way" ("*Cabaret*, America's Weimar, and Mythologies of the Gay Subject," *American Music* 22, no. 1 [2004]: 145–157, quotation on 154). For a discussion of the role of nature in Nazi aesthetics, see Eda Sagarra: "To the German is attributed a love of the land, a feeling for nature, which no other people is seen to possess in like degree. This, matched with his 'superior culture,' will enable the German peasant to revitalize his race and secure the heritage of the German people" ("*Blut und Boden: Fiction and the Tradition of Popular Reading Culture in Germany*," in *The Burden of German History*, ed. Michael Laffan [London: Methuen, 1988], 31–47, quotation on 31–32).
14. Peter Tregear, "Sounding Fascism: T. W. Adorno and the Political Susceptibility of Music," *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, special issue on "Fascist Aesthetics," 42 (1999): 36–48, quotation on 39. For a comprehensive discussion of the sense of "sublime" that Tregear is using, see Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 194ff.; see also Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1992). For theories of fascist aesthetics that take examples of Nazi cinema in order to read fascism as a particularly visual phenomenon, see Eric Rentschler, *The Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and Its Afterlife* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); and Linda Schulte-Sasse, *Entertaining the Third Reich: Illusions of Wholeness in Nazi Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996). In analyzing what was "going on" in Nazi cinema, Schulte-Sasse, too, draws on Žižek to help her conceptualize "'politics' itself in terms of fantasies we expect to find in movies" (6). For a discussion of fascist aesthetics that proceeds from Walter Benjamin's idea that fascism "is that final state of capitalism in which the political itself becomes a commodity," see Lutz P. Koepnick, "Fascist Aesthetics Revisited," *Modernism/Modernity* 6, no. 1 (1999): 51–73, quotation on 61; see also Carsten Strathausen, "Nazi Aesthetics," *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, special issue on "Fascist Aesthetics," 42, no. 1 (1999): 5–19.
15. For Slavoj Žižek's own take on the beer-garden scene in *Cabaret*, see his *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999), 139. See also the brief discussion of *Cabaret* in the course of theorizing fascist aesthetics in Italian art films in Kriss Ravetto, *The Unmasking of Fascist Aesthetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 91–96.
16. Morris, "*Cabaret*, America's Weimar," 153.
17. For a cautionary note against using a "modernist model" to read *Cabaret*, see Mizejewski, *Divine Decadence*, 223–24.
18. Mizejewski, *Divine Decadence*, 4–5.
19. Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1.
20. *Ibid.*, 194.
21. *Ibid.*, 200.
22. Alan Lareau, "The Blonde Lady Sings: Women in Weimar Cabaret," in *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*, ed. Christiane Schönfeld and

- Carmel Finnan (Würzburg, Germany: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 191–217, quotation on 210.
23. For an overview of Weimar cabaret and its political elements, see Alan Lareau, *The Wild Stage: Literary Cabarets of the Weimar Republic* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1995), and Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, 118–227; see also Lisa Appignanei, *The Cabaret* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 187–203. For more on the general relationship between art and politics in the Republic, see John Willet, *Art and Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety, 1917–1933* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).
 24. Theodor Adorno, “Commitment,” in *Notes to Literature*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 2:76–94, quotation on 79.
 25. This particular conversion of lockstepped dancing girls into lockstepped soldiers had a real-life counterpart in those numbers when the actual Tiller Girls would perform with hats and rifles (Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, 181, 189–90).
 26. On the connection between the idealization of certain types of bodies and the promulgation of Nazi ideology, see Peter Labanyi, “Images of Fascism: Visualization and Aestheticization in the Third Reich,” in *The Burden of German History*, ed. Michael Laffan (London: Methuen, 1988), 151–77. He writes, “This static quality of the art of the Third Reich reveals that its prime function was to make manifest the existence of an established and stable system, a regime that had attained maturity. . . . Nazi sculpture fabricated a vision of the race of supermen that would one day spring from the Reich’s purified blood” (158–60).
 27. See Richard D. Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 257–73.
 28. Susan Sontag, “Fascinating Fascism,” in *A Susan Sontag Reader*, intro. Elizabeth Hardwick (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982), 305–25, quotation on 316. For a critique of Sontag, see Michael Mackenzie, “From Athens to Berlin: The 1936 Olympics and Leni Riefenstahl’s *Olympia*,” *Critical Inquiry* 29, no. 2 (2003): 302–36.
 29. See Mackenzie, “From Athens to Berlin.”
 30. With respect to both the mud-wrestling match and the “Slaphappy” number, one could also note that the Emcee is playing on the Kit Kat Klub audience’s own perverse appetite for violence. Such a recognition on the Emcee’s part also has clear precedence in real-life Weimar Kabarett. Erich Kästner, a well-known lyricist of the late Weimar, remarked on what Jelavich calls the “indestructible instincts of aggression”: “Here the public satisfies an instinct that is stimulated elsewhere by executions, insane asylums, and bullfights. Since the combats of the Roman gladiators with slaves and Christians, nothing has changed. . . . The arena has become a cabaret” (original ellipsis; quoted in Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, 197–98).
 31. This reading makes sense given the change in the radio broadcasts over the course of the film. The radio is often playing in Sally and Brian’s boardinghouse; in the beginning of the film, we hear snatches of a recipe, but in later scenes the radio is dominated by news of the increasing clashes between Communists and Nazis all over the city.
 32. Stanley Solomon, *Beyond Formula: American Film Genres* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 110.