

Friends with Benefits: Friendship and Queer Temporality in Klaus Mann's *Der fromme Tanz* (1926) and Siegfried Kracauer's *Georg* (1934)

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In 1969, American gay author and critic Edmund White observed that gay men were increasingly turning to friendship as a source of stability in a rapidly changing world. These are

long-lasting friendships that provide the continuity and warmth that all human beings seem to need. Since friendships are not based on the highly explosive and whimsical appeal of sex, but rather on more enduring affinities [. . .], friendships seem destined to become the mainstay of lonely humanity should the marital bonds of the Age of the Pill break down. (White 19)

For these men, friendship generates temporalities of duration—"long-lasting," "enduring," promising "continuity"—as alternatives to the "explosive" brevity of sexual encounters as well as conventional relationships like marriage, seen as increasingly unstable. White values friendship because it points beyond troublesomely fleeting and imperfect connections based on volatile passions, positing it as the site for evoking and enacting forms of time that would persist and thereby give meaning to one's life, and which arose specifically from the amity between queer individuals.¹ Amidst the upheaval of the postwar sexual revolution, queerness not only challenged how people related to each other and themselves as sexual beings. It also heralded new ways of conceiving of and anchoring oneself within time.

This investment in queer friendship as a site of temporal constancy is not, however, solely the innovation of postwar America. Nearly a half century prior, queer authors and philosophers in Weimar Germany were already probing the potential of queer friendship to cultivate analogous forms and functions of time. I turn to Klaus Mann's *Der fromme Tanz* (1926) and Siegfried Kracauer's *Georg* (1934/1973) to argue that queer friendship can evoke temporalities of continuity, non-fragmentation, and coherency imbued with a robust sense of tradition that incorporates historical European models of friend-

ship. These novels portray two different models of queer friendship as hybrid solutions of romantic, erotic, and friendly affects and desires. From these unique combinations their relationships emerge as sites of and tools for engendering new temporalities and temporal lifeworlds around an enduring present. In doing so, I demonstrate how Mann and Kracauer each view friendship's temporal creativity and embrace of the present as a pathway to "recreat[e] the social" itself, "not in the name of the future" but to enable the conditions of possibility for queerness to assume a meaning-bestowing and life-defining function in the here and now, a possibility, they show us, that is ultimately fragile and far from guaranteed in its realization (Freeman, "Theorizing" 188). This approach is particularly promising within the current state of queer scholarship about time, which has tended to overlook friendship in favor of romantic-sexual relationships and their associated temporalities of disruption and discontinuity. To foreground friendship, then, is to state that there is more to queer time than current theoretical debates would suggest; to do so is to enrich our understanding of the ways in which queer people shape, relate to, and inhabit time.

Queer Friendship and Temporality: A Theoretical and Historical Overview

In recent scholarly works on queer temporality by Lee Edelman, Elizabeth Freeman, Jack Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, friendship has been overshadowed by more straightforwardly romantic and sexual arrangements, from the quick fuck with an anonymous partner to lifelong monogamous coupling. Edelman, in his highly influential study, militates against what he calls "reproductive futurism," a temporal-ideological order that renders "unthinkable" social forms and relationships outside of heteronormative familial structures (Edelman 2). Through the biological succession of generations, Edelman argues, this order posits the future as the only permissible temporal goal and political value to the detriment of those (e.g., queers) who are excluded by their desire for non-reproductive practices and relationships. In this conception, queerness rebukes the reproductive drive. Writing a few years after the highpoint of the AIDS epidemic, Edelman riffs on the potential lethality of queer male orgasm to "cut the thread of futurity" and its accordant relationships (Edelman 4). Grounded in Lacanian theory and drawing on Leo Bersani's earlier work on gay male desire and the death drive, Edelman's identification of queerness with the disruptive powers of sexual jouissance has influenced scholars to focus on the most intense expressions of queer eros as "one of the most anti-normative forces under the sun" (Ruti 23). Freeman argues against what she terms "chrononormativity," or "the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity," be it capitalist accumulation or biological reproduction (Freeman, *Time Binds* 3). Frag-

mented and interruptive, queer temporalities are “points of resistance to this temporal order” and propose “other possibilities for living” in time, such as amidst the isolated remnants of lingering pasts (Freeman, *Time Binds* xxii, 8–9). Halberstam similarly conceives of queer time as the “perverse turn away” from the dominant social narrative that maps out a unilinear path from childhood to marriage to childrearing and, finally, to death (Halberstam, “Theorizing” 182). Halberstam roots queer time in the “immaturity” of adolescence, a moment of emotional and sexual fluidity that refuses to “grow up” and adopt the temporal consistency of “repro-time” in order to open up “new life narratives and alternative relations to time” (Halberstam, *Queer Time and Place* 1–2, 5). While Muñoz conversely reclaims the future for queers, going so far as to contend that queerness itself is an item of futurity “not yet here,” through his readings of texts about anonymous public sex by John Giorno and others, for example, his analysis aligns itself with the vivacity of erotic consummation rather than the seemingly more muted desires, emotions, and acts of friendship (Muñoz 1, 35–48).

To be sure, this scholarship has raised important questions about forms of queer temporality beyond assimilationism and reformism, while also elucidating the role negative affects, such as abjectness and shame, play in queer time. It has shed indispensable light on the ways in which, for many queer people, time is experienced as disrupted, non-linear, and incoherent, and I in no way wish to discard the significance of these scholars’ insights. My pointing out that their studies relegate friendship to a minor role is only to remind us that there is more to learn when it comes to queerness and time. Although the focus on an explosive eros as central to queer temporality need not exclude other relationships like friendship, which can and often does include sexual elements, this prioritization of queer sex can end up neglecting other, less straightforwardly sexual kinds of relationships not inherently defined by the presence of sex—like friendship—and the other species of temporalities they evoke. As a result, concepts, practices, and experiences of queer temporality that are not primarily sexual in origin and thereby not understood to be interruptive, non-linear, or incoherent remain underexplored.

Indeed, the queer friendships in Mann’s and Kracauer’s novels draw on a long tradition of European philosophical engagement with friendship, in which it has often been seen as a relationship between two male individuals through which one can understand the self and organize society. Yet as historians Andreas Kraß and Alan Bray have documented, the substance and form of male friendship are unstable mixtures of centuries-old constants and fluid novelties, shaped by each historical moment’s opinions about acceptable forms of emotional and physical intimacy between men (Kraß 25; Bray 2). For the Greeks, proper friendship, as opposed to pederastic-pedagogical relationships between an older man and a teenage boy, was between two free male citizens of equivalent rank and age. From Aristotle onward, friendship

was placed opposite sex or romance, valorized for its perceived stability and duration. Unlike eros, which can be consummated, friendship was idealized as endless and non-teleological. Drawn to the good mirrored in each friend, two men entered in harmonious relationships based on an “entire agreement of inclinations, pursuits, and sentiments” with a “second self” (Cicero 11–17, 36).

This idea of friendship mutated throughout subsequent centuries. For Michel de Montaigne, it is the “correspondence” of “manners . . . and inclinations” between two men, an affection of “general and universal fire” in which their souls “mingle and melt into one piece” (Montaigne 267–71). Although careful to distance himself from the “Grecian license, justly abhorred,” that is, sex between men and the extension of the homosocial into the homosexual, Montaigne’s friendship is tinged with homoeroticism: it “seizes” the friend’s “whole will,” and he “plunge[s]” and “lose[s]” himself in the other, “giv[ing] himself so entirely to his friend” (Montaigne 269–76). We see in this text from the French Renaissance an increasing emotional intensity as well as anxiety around male intimacy. Indeed, due to epochal shifts in ideas about gender and sexuality, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the notion of friendship was increasingly problematized and debated within “a range of erotic, sexual, and platonic possibilities” (Nardi 31). In a dual movement, friendship was extended to relations between men and women—in the form of companionate marriage, it could happily integrate sexuality—whereas male friendship was more tightly delineated vis-à-vis the homosexual specter, a “Störproblem” or “heimliche Hypothek” haunting male same-sex relationships (Luhmann 104, 147).

This tension within male friendships also registers itself in its ambiguous semantics. Take, for example, “Freund.” Most commonly referring to a platonic friend, it can also denote relationships marked by romance and/or eros, from a sexual partner to an intense brotherly connection or a conventional romantic coupling. I use the term “friend” to refer to a relationship that is not singularly romance or sex or platonic friendship but rather a hybrid that can incorporate all three in myriad combinations. Queer friendship’s blurred lines are its conceptual strength, capturing a range of same-sex relationships outside a heteronormative dichotomy of friend-lover. The relatively unstable state and semantic expansiveness in which friendship finds itself during the twentieth century allow Mann and Kracauer to explore the forms and boundaries of queer relationality. These two authors do not exclude or sublimate queerness but rather embrace it as integral to and opportune for friendship. Anticipating more contemporary theorists, they exhibit the importance of these hybrid friendships for queer men as sites of non-biological belonging as well as occasions for revolutionary worldmaking by rethinking the basic terms of identity, sociality, and time (Nardi 23; Rumens 18, 40; Foucault 308–12). Inverting the classical (and heteronormative) antagonism of friend-

ship versus eros as well as unsettling a contemporary theoretical fixation on queer time's eroto-disruptive powers, Mann and Kracauer each reveal unexplored vistas onto the possibilities and pitfalls of queer temporality and relationality.

Klaus Mann's Queer Literary Lineage

Published by Gebrüder Enoch Verlag when he was 19 in 1926, Mann's debut novel *Der fromme Tanz* portrays the young artist Andreas Magnus as he flees the stifling home of his father for Berlin, endeavoring in *Bildungsroman* fashion to ascertain the meaning of his life within society. A double of the author, Andreas works as a *chanteur* in a louche cabaret and samples the electric bounty of Weimar Berlin, finding a home in the city's demimonde. The reader is introduced to his ragtag group of openly queer artist friends, with whom he explores the queer underworld and its bars, clubs, and parties. The novel explores different types of friendships, foremost among them his troubled relationship with the ostensibly heterosexual Niels, a seductive catchall for Mann's most treasured attributes in his male characters—childlike, naïve, mirthful, and recklessly energetic—and his more abstract affiliations with a number of queer authors he encounters through their literary works.

Written as a third-person narrative, the novel bears the mark of a confused yet earnest first publication by a writer finding his voice. Formally, it is marked by the eclectic fruits of the author's precocious reading, mixing the Symbolist penchant of Stefan George and Paul Verlaine for erotic mysticism—he repeatedly compares Andreas's affection for Niels to the Catholic devotion of Mary, for example—with aestheticism's glee in inverting conventional morality. Drawn in different aesthetic directions, it performs an unwieldy balance between what scholars have identified as its modernist influences, such as the works of André Gide, Jean Cocteau, and his father Thomas, and a more melodramatic, popular style: characters feel strongly and abruptly swing from ecstasy to deep despair (Kroll 25–8; Amthor & von der Lühle 7; Chamberlin 615–16). The stilted prose and sentimentality of the novel, as well as its open celebration of queerness, have been responsible for the novel's meager reception. With the exception of the 1920s homosexual press, which lauded the book for sensitizing the public to same-sex desire, both its contemporaneous reviewers and modern scholarship have not taken the historically unprecedented exploration of queerness in the novel seriously (Huneke 86–100). Lost here is the potential for *Der fromme Tanz* to serve as a site of vernacular theorization about queer friendship and temporality, a text which asks many of the same questions—How do male same-sex sexuality and desire shape temporality? What forms of relationality can queer temporality conduce?—as more sophisticated theoretical texts, but which offers strikingly different answers by way of discourses and techniques unique to literary fiction.

The organizing principle of the novel is Andreas's friendships. As his friendship with Niels, who throughout the story leads Andreas on and yet deflects his advances toward a more erotically-hued relationship, grows increasingly frustrating, Andreas undergoes a change of heart as he realizes that traditional relationship models will not suffice here. He pivots to the possibility of a different kind of friendship, a queer friendship, that can integrate and hold his desires more capaciously and flexibly, one whose love, echoing classical notions of friendship, is "die ganze Schöpfung in einem Körper wieder[zuerkennen]" (Mann, *Fromme* 180). If he finds a way to love someone, "dem man alles gab, ohne ihn zu besitzen, dem man helfend treu blieb bis zum Tod," then he can unlock this "Geheimnis," the "süße Lied" of friendship (Mann, *Fromme* 182, 141). With this change of direction, he forsakes traditionally romantic partnership for friendly devotion, rejecting the appeal of eternal possession for a "letzte, geheimnisvollste Stunde," a temporal plane which he believes can be produced by moments of most intense connection between friends and within which he may find the "große Lösung" of life (Mann, *Fromme* 182). By reimagining his relation to others through friendship, Andreas will be able to access an alternative temporality that holds the promise of a solution, that is, the manifest meaning of his existence. In Mann's text, the potential for conceiving novel forms of temporality rests upon queer friendship.

To reach this potential, Andreas develops a Platonic model of friendship that is heavily influenced by Socrates and Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, a text Mann read devotedly and a privileged point of origin for much Western queer male explorations of desire (Mann, *Briefe* 257). Of note here is that German-speaking intellectuals of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in particular frequently turned to Plato, who, next to Oscar Wilde, was the second-most cited figure in their literature (Zynda 9; Keilson-Lauritz 277–90). While this speech has traditionally been read in terms of romantic love, I leverage the ambiguity of "Freund" to view it also as a discourse on friendship between men as a hybrid relationship combining the romantic, the erotic, and the friendly and as generative of new temporalities.

In facing the past in order to reformulate his present, Mann, like the discussants in the *Symposium*, considers the nature of the affection between friends. Socrates explains that friendship arises from the love for "what is beautiful" in the other person (Plato 49). By searching for and basking in its presence in the friend, one acts in "harmony with the divine," whose ideal Forms—wisdom, beauty, virtue—are embodied in his profane splendor (Plato 53). Desire for the beauty of the other is not one of lack seeking fulfillment but rather of positive recognition of the divine on earth; it covets not fleshy beauty per se—it is not solely erotic arousal—but rather the access this beauty provides to the godly Forms. It is what Mann calls the "Verleibung des Gottes" and the "Vergottung des Leibes," a reciprocal process most intensely

experienced in friendship, and which can “verändern” each friend in his fundamental relation to time (Mann, “Heute” 190). To desire a man and enter into friendship with him is to guide oneself toward a different sense of time, encountering what is divinely eternal in the bodies of mortals; it blurs what is enduring with what is transient. The boundaries of the fleeting lived moments of the present are rendered tenuous and permeable—the present can include that which lasts without, however, becoming immortalized itself. The present loosens up, dynamically moldable to the desires of men. In this light, friendship can constitute its own temporal realm that intermingles multiple planes of time. By loving the friend, one probes the temporal substrate and structure of life against these flashes of divine recognition in the friend.

Similar to contemporaries like the masculinists Adolf Brand or Hans Blüher, who posited same-sex friendship as a key “ontological category to ruminations of self and society,” Mann—to starkly different political ends—relies on antiquity to think through modern issues of queer relationality and its temporal creativity (Evans 375). Andreas departs from Plato, however, by imagining friendship as a relationship not with actual bodies but as a spiritual-cultural connection finding beauty in the texts of his queer literary predecessors. The temporal elasticity of the ancient model allows him to stretch friendship across time to include those not spatially present or residing in the same era but who endure into his present due to the beauty of their work. Rather than a nostalgic “*Rückentwicklung zum Goldenen Zeitalter*,” Andreas’s turn to past icons of queer literature and models of queer life is a “*Hinaufentwicklung*,” drawing a line of affinity from the ancient Greeks to modern Germany and picking up the threads of an older tradition to further develop (Mann, “Zukunft” 316–17). He does so by reading and citing past authors, incorporating them into his life as intergenerational contemporaries and present interlocutors, i.e., as friends. By sparking spiritual friendships with these historical figures within his readerly here and now, Andreas operates trans-temporally, making the case for the past as integral to and inseparable from his modernity. He conjures an expansive present, a genealogy of and through friendship that moves synchronically rather than diachronically, connecting this band of friends within a boundless duration of the now.

Whom and how does Andreas read? The texts are authored by men who would have been known to contemporary readers as either openly queer or at least suspiciously homoerotic: Walt Whitman, Stefan George, Herman Bang, Paul Verlaine, and Oscar Wilde. Harkening back to the intensely affective language of friendship in Montaigne, they are “*Dichter, die Andreas am meisten liebte*,” the men “*mit denen er sich am innigsten verbunden fühlte*” (Mann, *Fromme* 174). Their relationships spanning decades of historical time, Andreas learns from each friend’s works key lessons about queer friendship that inform his present. Andreas is enraptured by Whitman’s “*ekstatischen Prosagesängen*” about the “*Leib, den elektrischen*,” finding an ex-

pression for the significance of his own love for the beauty of the male body as the spark of a knowledge-generating process (Mann, *Fromme* 170). George, with his “aristokratisch erlesenen Kreise” and “wundersamstes Liebeslied,” offers Andreas a model of aesthetic transcendence at the altar of male beauty into the highest realms of cultural fertility, suggesting a notion of friendship as the site for social and aesthetic inspiration (Mann, *Fromme* 171). Similarly, Andreas finds in Verlaine and Wilde redemption for his previous suffering in loving the unattainable Niels, learning to reinterpret his affection as not a failed or sterile love but rather as a fecund feeling which, via these authors, inspires wisdom. Bang teaches Andreas that he must “den geliebten Körper lieben mit der hoffnungslos-inbrünstigen Liebe,” a reminder of friendship’s hybrid, non-possessive love that at times may overlap with but ultimately diverges from that of romantic or sexual union (Mann, *Fromme* 173). His reading refashions male friendship within an explicitly queer context that embraces the productivity of same-sex desires. He delineates modes of friendship that are constituted in the suspension between different historical eras and views himself as an heir to their legacies. In his reading, Andreas interlaces threads of the queer past to weave his present; these bygone friends operate as active spirits in his self-understanding as a queerly temporal subject.

For a text written during what is commonly understood to be the high-point of modernism—and especially of queer modernists like Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, and Gertrude Stein—Mann stands out with his fusty, nineteenth-century literary touchpoints. This did not go unnoticed by his critics. The publisher Samuel Fischer considered Mann’s earlier works like *Der fromme Tanz* to be out of time in content and form, while the Marxist critic Erich Mühsam disparaged the novel’s cultural-literary tastes as anti-modern (Kroll 28–29). Having forgone the radical energies of “die gärende, flutende, grundstürzende Gegenwart,” Mann represented a “stagnierende Greisentum,” an unnaturally etiolated “Rudiment erledigter Kultur” who “hineinschnarcht” into the future (Ford 120). But what Mann’s critics miss is that the modernity of his novel does not lie in its aesthetic attributes—in this regard, Fischer and Mühsam are not wrong—but in its entanglement of time and same-sex friendship, its interest in probing queerness as the birthplace of new temporalities. Rather than signaling contemporaneity through a cutting-edge style, Mann develops an idiosyncratic “Richtung,” what he defines as a temporal direction vis-à-vis his place in cultural history between an older generation of literary touchstones, a mutable present, and an unknown future (Mann, “Nachwort” 119). In turning to authors of previous centuries, Mann shows how the past resonates as modern, for the influence of predecessors is inescapable. In a rebuttal of his critics, he remarks that despite immense changes since World War I, past cultures “bestimmen die Landschaft unseres geistigen Lebensraumes, ob wir darüber Bescheid wissen oder nicht” (Mann, “Woher” 324).

Queerness contains alternative temporalities of modernity stretching back into the past century and even into Greek antiquity.

Andreas's notion of friendship establishes virtual connections to unite individuals, dead or alive, in the form of their aesthetic expression. In orchestrating Andreas's "personal life as literary and cultural history," the novel participates in what Christopher Nealon has called "affect-genealogy," a trans-temporal form of belonging between those who "cannot see one another but feel nonetheless the uniting bond of their emotion" (Chamberlin 615; Nealon 10). The affect here is the kinship of friendship, which queers genealogy in that it is not interested in biological ancestors and flattens out genealogical connections across a synchronic plane of present time. In what Aleida Assmann has termed "the present as contemporaneity," the past is presented as co-existent with the present through the former's writing being read (Assmann 49). Through the bonds of friendship, Andreas "synchronizes" figures and discourses of the past with his present, creating a "dialogic" present comprised of the crisscrossing desires and emotions between queer men made temporal coequals through reading (Assmann 49–50). Moreover, in being read, Mann and his interlocuters are themselves brought into the present of the novel's own reader, generating together a continuum of same-sex contact. Klaus and Andreas create partners out of their predecessors, shaping a "legacy of values and references [. . .] that can be claimed" across time and situate themselves in it as its latest guarantors (Assmann 50).² Mann's literary companions serve as steppingstones to future queer imaginaries and practices: to "weitergehen" from "da, wo er [the author] aufhörte, immer zu ihm zurückschauend, immer hängend an ihm," he re-interprets and thereby reshapes them (Mann, "Fragment" 68). Indeed, this temporality suggests an ability to self-replicate. If the temporality instantiated by Andreas is facilitated by him, the individual reader, then it can be taken up and actualized by other readers in a similar fashion, including readers of Andreas's story. Drawing from his example, the reader can simultaneously inhabit multiple presents at once—his own and the present of those who read before him—in an interconnected web that links all involved. As I read, interpret, and then write about Andreas, inserting myself into this line of interlocuters, the novel secures its own reproduction in the minds of this article's readers, propagating its thinking about queerness, friendship, and time into the future, perhaps infinitely.

For all of his originality, however, Mann does not give much to excite current queer theoretical-political sensibilities. It is tempting to dismiss his ideas as naive, amateurish, elitist, and epigonal, and they are unquestioningly male, bourgeois, and European. That being said, I am less interested in the political value of the kind of queerness that Mann espouses and more interested in the structures and avenues of thinking it offers for queer temporality. Mann challenges us to consider queer timelines of the *longue durée* of century-old discourses and traditions that persist across historical disruptions and

transformations. The past can be a rich resource with which to acquire a sense of meaning for one's sexuality and to ground oneself in a community greater than one's singular life. Continuity can of course stifle, but it can also galvanize in unpredictable ways. We should treat with seriousness the appeal of continuity and the pleasure of being part of a tradition for queers and be cognizant that the heroic-ecstatic postures of queer rupture in much of current queer thought can be as liberating to some as it is damaging to others. Mann raises the point that not all that is queer must be or is antinormative or deconstructive—as political actors, queers inevitably break with certain norms and validate others. For those excluded from positions of power, the desire to “construct meaningful wholes,” for “unity . . . order, and meaning,” does not necessarily make one a handmaiden of oppression or a quisling of normativity (Glavey 750–51). By turning to the German context and its idiosyncratic reimaginings of queer temporality, *Der fromme Tanz* offers us a starting point to reconsider some of the key shibboleths of queer studies and to birth new forms of queer life.

Siegfried Kracauer and the Timelessness of Queer Sexual Friendships

If Mann's queer friendship proceeds imaginatively with long-dead figures, Siegfried Kracauer's *Georg* explores the potential for cultivating a queer present through the very real bonds between two young men. Partially published in 1929 in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Georg* was finished during its author's Parisian exile in 1934. It remained unpublished until 1973. Set between 1920 and 1928, *Georg* takes its cue from Kracauer's intellectual trajectory and journalistic career. It follows the titular protagonist, a twenty-something tutor and journalist, on his quest to find transcendental meaning within mercurial Weimar society through his homoerotic friendship with his pupil Fred. As their relationship breaks down, the novel depicts Georg's frantic flirtation with a cacophony of ideologies from Catholicism to Marxism, all of which ultimately fail to adequately replace Georg and Fred's relationship as a point of stability. An ironic take on the *Bildungsroman*, *Georg* asks if the individual is to find his bedrock of orientation in himself or in his relations with others—and if a successful search is even possible under modernity.

Scholars such as Dirk Oschmann and Gerhard Richter have argued that the central problem in *Georg* is the relationship, and its meaning, between self and other, and in particular that of friendship (Oschmann 259–60; Richter 233).³ Although Richter has shown that friendship as a concept and practice animates much of Kracauer's thought, little scholarly attention has been given to this topic in either his theoretical or fictional work. An exception is Johannes von Moltke's review of Kracauer's correspondence with Theodor Adorno. Foregrounding Kracauer's homosexuality and strong erotic yearnings for Adorno, he queries the importance of friendship in the former's thought

through his deep connection with the latter. He persuasively makes the case that Kracauer's love for Adorno "undoubtedly [. . .] affected their writing" and thinking, and that the queerness of their friendship should also influence how we read and understand their work (von Moltke 685). Although he makes explicit connections between these letters and their fictionalization in *Georg*, von Moltke's focus stays with the correspondence, employing the novel to elucidate Adorno's complicated relationship with Kracauer during the post-war years. In giving only secondary attention to the novel, his treatment of friendship in Kracauer's work remains incomplete. Moreover, like Oschmann and Richter, von Moltke does not explicate Kracauer's deep interest in friendship as a specifically temporal phenomenon. As such, scholars have often left the novel's core components—friendship, time, queerness—understudied or outright ignored.⁴

I advance this scholarship by writing from within the queerness at the heart of the novel, arguing that Georg and Fred's queer bond is indispensable to Kracauer's thinking about friendship, and that for Kracauer friendship is an eminently temporal relationship. By analyzing the novel's presentation of friendship as the total union of two male individuals, a timeless presence is evoked, a plane of continuous time that obviates traditional temporal markers between past, present, and future. Although this temporality promises to serve as the source of total, stabilizing meaning for Georg and a home for his relationship with Fred, this notion of friendship ultimately appears to be an impossible task, foundering upon the ineluctable illegibility and unknowability of the self and other. Out of this ostensible failure, Kracauer considers an idea of queer temporality as the product of incomplete relations and suggestive of an ethics of temporality—a way of conceiving and living within time to structure one's actions, beliefs, emotions, and overall interiority in pursuit of a certain kind of good life—that not only tolerates but thrives on difference and inconclusiveness.

The novel begins by establishing Georg as a character of uncertainty and insecurity, a weak personality with no convictions. At a salon of the leftist bourgeoisie dedicated to the topic of revolution, for example, Georg remains unsure as to whether he agrees with the guests' political statements about war and violence. He "folgte äußerlich ihrem Beispiel," meekly nodding when deemed appropriate (Kracauer, *Georg* 8). Comparing his situation to sitting "in einem Kahn [. . .], der steuerlos hin und her getrieben wurde," he is lost, not knowing what he believes or where he belongs (Kracauer, *Georg* 10–11). An unmoored subject, he is the "Held" whom Kracauer describes as "das problematische Individuum," who "die zum Chaos zerfallene Welt auf der Suche nach dem Sinn durchstreift" (Kracauer, "Lukács" 284). Georg attempts to capture this meaning in his relationship with his pupil Fred. The medium by which such meaning can be generated in the friends' "Freundschaft," as Georg repeatedly calls it, is physical sexuality, which, rather than a distraction

from or perversion of a “purer” friendship, serves as a path to intense explorations of relationality and time (Kracauer, *Georg* 93). The boy fills Georg with “eine[r] wunderbare[n] Wärme,” his “Knabenfigur war eine Verlockung” that sparks the prickling of desire (Kracauer, *Georg* 22). As they flirt with each other, Georg’s attraction grows, and they spend their time playing erotic games with their “vier Hosenbeine, die sich rund und groß wölbten,” suggesting male arousal as they lay “eng vereint” (Kracauer, *Georg* 25). Fred’s “Hüftengegend [...] dehnte sich vor Georg,” the boy’s erection, that “Schwellen” in his “schlanken Knabenumriss,” “erregte” Georg, and his desire leaves him “fiebernd” as they love each other “von Gesicht zu Gesicht [...] und nicht nur die Hüften” (Kracauer, *Georg* 52). In comparison to Andreas’s virtual friendship in *Der fromme Tanz*, this friendship thrives in the physicality of two bodies, in a shared present arising from their sexual union. Time is entangled with sexuality, an effect of their sexual friendship.

When together, they seek to seal themselves off from the outside world, rechristening the space in which they meet as a “Schlupfwinkel für Verfolgte” (Kracauer, *Georg* 25). Against the interference of outsiders, they are “verbündet[e]” outlaws, seeking refuge in a hideout in which “er und Fred ganz allein aufeinander angewiesen waren” (23–24). These invocations of isolated communion assert their friendship as a social unit unto itself, usurping the role of external society and partaking in a heroic ideal of male friendship, from Gilgamesh and Enkidu onward, that releases the friends from the tedious banality of everyday life. In its intensity of both erotic and spiritual connection, Georg believes that it is in Fred “in dem er die Welt besaß” (Kracauer, *Georg* 197). Encompassing “die ganze Seele des Menschen,” both the self and the other are simultaneously housed in each other within their friendship, constructing a “Heimat” that relieves them of their existential “Obdachlosigkeit” (Kracauer, “Freundschaft” 40–41, 54).

Georg and Fred’s spatial isolation serves to detach them from the movement of external time and to instantiate their own temporal realm of a timeless, enduring, and sprawling present. When they are together, they “gossen die letzten Tage aus und schütteten ihre Inhalte solange durcheinander, bis aus den zwei Leben ein einziges wurde” (Kracauer, *Georg* 52). Time undergoes a change of state. Each temporal unit of the discrete day transforms into a fluid feeding into one temporal pond in and of the present, liquifying in the process any solid demarcations between the past and the future. Here, I read “Leben” to mean more than its conventional usage as the totality of one’s experiences, memories, interests, and sensations, namely, as the trajectory of one’s time of being alive. Like for Montaigne, here, under the heat of intense friendship, the skeletal support that time provides to one’s life, its linear progression, melts down to release and reassemble their temporal and subjective constituents as a single alloy. As such, queer friendship functions as a relation that paradoxically dissolves relations of time to create a unified

temporal state, a bathing pool of time for two in which past, present, and future—and the elements of two individuals attached to each realm—interperse and blend, akin to the ecstatic exchange of bodily fluids during sex. Fred and Georg “sehen sich an,”

[i]hre Gesichte wachsen unaufhaltsam, sind groß wie der Himmel, verschwinden eins in dem andern. “Sieh, Georg, ich weiß nicht, was es ist, ich bin ja noch so jung . . .” “Nichts ist – “ “Ich möchte mein ganzes Leben mit dir zusammen bleiben, Georg”. Immer wieder küssen sie sich. So komisch mit den rasierten Wangen. Sie reden in einem fort, ernst, dummes Zeug, durcheinander (Kracauer, *Georg* 30).

Time changes gears. The narrative, hitherto told in the preterite tense, ideal to denote a break in time and to mark its passage, switches to the present tense. Using the latter conjures a sense that nothing is changing, a uniform standard being, no before and no after. It is a world in which all is in its correct place, where everything and everyone belongs. The time of friendship shows itself not as a series of disconnected dots or repetitive moments but rather as timeless, enduring, perhaps even as eternal. Presentness-as-eternity: it is this temporality that arises from their friendship. As Kracauer himself celebrates in a letter to Adorno, friendship has an “ewige Dauer,” it is “immer Gegenwart, lebendige Gegenwart” (Adorno and Kracauer 9). The descriptor “lebendig” is important, for it is not a timeless present because it is dead, a sickly pool devoid of movement. Rather, the present of friendship is vibrant and animated, in which “die Liebe waltet”; amidst the effervescent passions of erotic friendship, the friends enter into an intercourse of two souls to find “Existenz, Einfachheit, Halt und Bedeutung” (Adorno and Kracauer 10). In this sense, we see similarities to modernist notions of the present as a “full time,” which, for intellectuals like Viktor Shlovsky, Virginia Woolf, and Walter Benjamin, entailed moments in which the passage of time is halted, the present is prolonged, and time is lived emphatically. This temporality will bring coherence, a “Zusammenhang,” to the “mannigfachen Inhalte der Seele”; it “füllt so das Spaltengewirr aus, das sich in jedem Menschen findet,” creating that order and meaning that Georg acutely misses (Kracauer, “Freundschaft” 46). It is through the framework of queer friendship that queer time promises to redeem Georg’s anomie.

For all of its potential to restore order, imbue meaning, and convey coherence, Georg’s friendship and its concomitant temporality are not as tidy as at first appearance. In Kracauer’s writing on friendship, varied metaphors compete to best capture the mechanisms of this union. In Georg’s own language, he “verschmolz mit Fred,” achieving a “Subjekt-Objekt-Verschmelzung” (Kracauer, *Georg* 28; Oschmann 37). Alongside the coalescing of souls, he also describes it as a “Begriffenwerden” by the friend, of being taken inside the other as an “Aufgehobensein in einer fremden Seele” (Kra-

cauer, *Georg* 28). Alternately, Kracauer views friendship as a relationship in which “er [the friend] gehört mir zu eigen und mein Einfluss erstreckt sich bis zu den Wurzeln seines Daseins” (Kracauer, “Freundschaft” 54). These varied (and erotically charged) models are indicative of an ambiguity in how Kracauer speaks about friendship: are they mingling liquids, intertwined roots, or spiritual vessels filled with friends’ souls? Whereas the idea of friendship as intertwined roots preserves a degree of distinction between friends, if the self is to be “aufgehoben” into the other, then it would seem to obviate any distinction between these two entities. Similar questions arise for friendship’s temporality. How will its eternal present arise? Will it collapse the walls between past, present, and future but leave these realms more or less intact? Will the present engulf the other two, or will they flow into each other and gradually form something new? These processes are not reducible to each other; each raises questions about remnants, of how total the integration of distinct temporal realms is to be. And then there is the quite practical issue of the novel’s narration: after Georg’s union with Fred, the novel is still narrated primarily in the epic past with a conventional forward-moving plot development. It is amidst this confusion that the limitations of Georg’s friendship become visible.

This uncertainty results from the unruly mix of friendly, erotic, and romantic feelings in Georg’s affection for Fred, at times contradictory components that Kracauer struggled to reconcile within friendship. Although part of the promise of queer friendship, the inclusion of erotic and romantic elements disrupts Georg and Fred’s relationship, for romantic love and friendship have for Kracauer two divergent ways of relating to the other and thus to time. In his essay “Über die Freundschaft” (1918), Kracauer differentiates friendship from romantic love based on their connective tissue, the former a “Verbindung” of two individuals who remain autonomous in contradistinction to the latter’s “Verschmelzung” (Kracauer, “Freundschaft” 40–43). As in the novel, Kracauer wavers as to what exactly friendship entails and how it is unique in its passions. He admits that lovers are also friends, that the “Liebesbedürfnis begreift schließlich von selber die Freundschaft in sich,” and he vacillates in describing friendship as both a process of “vereinter Entwicklung [...] freier, unabhängiger Menschen” and the will “zur Einheit zu verschmelzen” (Kracauer, “Freundschaft” 50, 58). Accordingly, these two models generate two divergent temporalities. As analyzed above, friendship, on the one hand, breaks down the unity of the self and of time, for it invites the total unity of two beings within a diffuse present. On the other hand, friendship can also be seen as the connection of relatively autonomous individuals and the “gradual unfolding of one’s being-together in time,” in which separate realms of time emerge, simultaneously and side-by-side, yes, but individually distinct (Richter 237). It is the latter that Kracauer circles around, calling this process of friendly coexistence a “Beisichselbstverweilen” (Kracauer, “Freund-

schaft” 44). Under this evocative term, friendship brings two individuals and the temporal worlds they inhabit closer together, but it prompts a pensive introspection conducted by their proximity instead of a total habitation of the other; in propelling each toward the other, friendship turns one inward, preserving difference between friends. Unlike what Georg attempts with Fred, time does not blend into an unbounded pool. It is a different kind of present, where one’s own temporality, while morphing under the influence of the friend’s temporal presence, remains distinct. One can describe it as a change-in-place, a present that continually alters by lingering next to the friend without, however, fading into the past. In trying to balance the contradictory impulses of full temporal fusion and a more tenuous connection, Kracauer stumbles upon a temporality inexorably accompanied by alterity. Through it, one acknowledges and accepts the insurmountable difference between friends. This temporal subject is confronted by the otherness at the heart of his relations, neither utterly whole nor unified nor accessible.

With the realization that the friend remains in the final instance non-identical, Georg and Fred’s relationship founders. While Georg refuses to accept this recognition and pushes for that “Verschmelzung” with Fred, the latter seeks a more conventional friendship. Georg “liebte ihn so,” but Fred “blieb aus,” pulling back from his intimacy in order “endlich einmal frei zu leben” (Kracauer, *Georg* 34, 128). As Fred matures and pursues women, his scorned partner realizes, “[d]ass es mit dem täglichen Zusammensein einmal ein Ende haben werde” (Kracauer, *Georg* 30). Yet rather than reading this outcome as a failure of queer friendship, I view it as distinguishing Kracauer’s project. In openly allowing for the queerness of male friendship and exploring its temporal constituents and consequences, *Georg* insists on a temporal ethics that acknowledges friendship’s complexity and contradictoriness, that friends, however close or parallel, still live in ultimately distinct times. This its redemptive promise, as its incompleteness challenges us to consider friendship and its species of time “as a site of relation that is constituted not by an essential roundedness or closed set of presuppositions, but rather by the very movements through which it defies or exceeds comprehension” (Richter 241). *Georg* offers a way of relating to and inhabiting time that doubles as a lesson in tolerating difference both between the self and other and within oneself. It is a relation that molds us as temporal subjects who can live with and benefit from the clarity of the recognition that totality and sameness constitute an ever-receding horizon.

While Mann approaches friendship and time through the sameness between queer men, what holds Kracauer’s friends together is their experience of the differences that structure their lives. Although these novels are distinct in tone, complexity, and vision—and, while diegetically both are set in mid-1920s Germany, Kracauer composed *Georg* as a precarious middle-aged exile fleeing Nazi Germany, whereas Mann, at the exuberant cusp of adulthood, is

writing with idealism and a certain naivety within the unprecedented vibrancy and relative social tolerance of Weimar Berlin—reading them side-by-side reveals shared theoretical implications for the study of queerness and time. Together, these novels demonstrate that a concern for alterity, incompleteness, and incoherency need not necessarily result in correlate temporalities of disruption and discontinuity. Mann’s search for common points of touch between himself and his literary predecessors is contingent on these friends’ temporal difference; that they each speak from singular historical contexts is the very condition of possibility for their coming together. And Kracauer’s pivoting around the inexorable distinctions between friends resides at the heart of his timeless present that can provide a shared home of stable meaning to our adjacent yet individual existences. In other words, they teach us that queerness-as-difference and queerness-as-sameness are not so far apart in either substance or significance as one may assume. As such, both novels anticipate Foucault’s description of friendship, in an interview nearly half a century later, as a “way of life,” a relationship that prompts us to ask, “[w]hat relations, through homosexuality, can be established, invented, multiplied, and modulated?” (Foucault 308). These novels suggest that friendship should be understood as a network of unpredictably and infinitely creative routes of relation, and that their unique temporalities encapsulate the potential to create new, “polymorphic, varied, and individually modulated” modes of ethical self- and worldmaking (Foucault 308). To be the subject of queer friendship and its temporalities is to reside within the endless becoming of possibility and to begin to make the possibility habitable reality.

Yet they remain exactly that: possibilities. For Mann’s and Kracauer’s novels are as much about the potential of queer relationships as they are about the ineluctable negotiation with (hetero)normative conventions surrounding friendship and time. The frustrations and dead-ends encountered by these authors’ protagonists in their pursuit to live out alternative relationships and temporalities point to the enduring obduracy of these conventions and the need to directly engage with the ways they may obstruct queer worldbuilding; they are not rendered innocuous simply because queer alternatives exist. Their lingering suggests that queer friendship by itself is, perhaps, not enough. As more recent films and novels about queer friendship such as *Pride* (2014), *Tangerine* (2015), and *The House of Impossible Beauties* (2018) propose, without a corresponding consciousness of sociopolitical change, if not a vision for all-out liberation, within a heteronormative world that devalues alternative forms of friendship and elevates more traditional romantic pairings within a relational-temporal hierarchy, attempts to transform the connections between queers may not succeed. The political insights and actions of friends in this latest generation of queer culture remind us that a meaningful shift in the external conditions of possibility for queer friendship must be undertaken for us to redeem its promise as an organizing principle for future ways of

queer life—a future which, as demonstrated by these more recent works’ profound historical awareness, must build upon the efforts of those who came before us. By drawing on voices like those of Mann and Kracauer submerged in the past, we encounter the persistence of the questions we continue to ask about and the abiding hope we place in friendship, and we watch how the idiosyncrasy of their answers collide with the realities of both their and our own worlds. In attending to the successes and vexations of their projects, we stand to rethink the contours of both German and queer studies and thereby reap the rewards of this rich heritage to inform our present endeavors to continuously reimagine queerness. The promise of our futures resides in this heritage, for within its unexcavated past we find its undetonated potential, which, with the right attention and approach, are waiting to explode our present.

¹“Queer” is used here as an umbrella term to include a range of non-heterosexual erotic, romantic, and friendly desires between individuals of the same sex. Although this term is not the self-attribution of the men under study here, I find it appropriate for these novels, as both do not themselves employ any identitarian labels, such as the more historically fitting “homosexual.” “Queer” respects this reticence by encapsulating all forms of non-heterosexuality; it acknowledges the fact that sexual terminology, especially in the early twentieth century, has always undergone negotiation and change. Of course, I am aware of the conceptual and historical incongruity of using anachronistic terms like “queer.” When possible, I also use “homosexual” and “gay men,” respectively, to describe those who did use these words; they operate as equivalent to “queer” in their emphasis on same-sex desires, affects, and acts. In this regard, I operate similarly to Christoph Lorey and John L. Plews’s co-edited volume *Queering the Canon: Defying Sights in German Literature and Culture* (Columbia: Camden House, 1998), in which they and their contributors use “queer” to talk about nineteenth and early-twentieth century authors and intellectuals, including Klaus Mann.

²For a study of early twentieth-century efforts at establishing a homosexual canon, see Keilson-Lauritz, *Geschichte*.

³Friendship is also a theme in Kracauer’s other fictional works, such as his first novel *Ginster* (1928) as well as in his few *Erzählungen*, such as “Das Fest im Frühling” (1907), “Die Gnade” (1913), and “Der Gast” (1926).

⁴Michael Winkler’s and Dirk Niefanger’s now dated articles on Kracauer’s fiction reduce *Georg*’s queerness to a few throw-away lines, as just one minor variety of “outsiderness” common to the author’s works. See Winkler, “Über Siegfried Kracauer’s Roman *Ginster*, mit einer Coda zu *Georg*,” *Siegfried Kracauer: Neue Interpretationen*, eds. Michael Kessler et al. (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Colloquium, 1990), 297–306, and Niefanger, “Transparenz und Maske: Außenseiterkonzeptionen in Siegfried Kracauer’s erzählender Prosa,” in *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 38 (1994), 253–282.

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