The Politics of Blood-brotherhood in German Literature and Culture

RESEARCH TOPIC
“Blood-brotherhood” (Blutsbrüderschaft) = the fraternity between two heroic individuals, usually men, and often former enemies. They usually injure each other (‘blood’) to become ‘brothers.’

RESEARCH QUESTION
Given the Nazis’ idealization of blood ties and genetics, what happened to “blood-brotherhood” in Hitler’s Germany (1933-1945)?

OUTLOOK
⇒ Developing a concept of “blood-brotherhood” before and after Nazi Germany as an ideologically subversive rather than affirmative concept.
⇒ Interpreting it in selected classics of modern German literature.
⇒ Identifying and assessing potential “exceptions.”
⇒ No study of modern blood-brotherhood exists yet, although it is one of the emotionally most charged and prevalent concepts in the German culture.

RESEARCH RESULTS
With one exception,* I found NO reference to “blood-brotherhood” in military magazines, editorial correspondence, or Joseph Goebbels’ speeches from the heyday of the Third Reich.

As this propaganda calls for the mass-fraternization of the people (“das Volk”) as a genetic collective, it appears to exclude fraternal binaries.

*Exception: The propaganda film Blood-Brotherhood [Blutsbrüderschaft] (1941), banned by the Allies after 1945; available only archivally. Goebbels disapproved of it, however, because it presented the two blood-brothers as World War I veterans rather than members of the “Sturmabteilung” (SA), Hitler’s military police. It did also not tie the male bond directly to the fascist collective. (Söhnker, Hans. … und kein Tag zuviel. Frankfurt a. M: Ullstein, 1974. 145)

RESEARCH LOCATIONS
German National Archives, Berlin; Media Library of the Konrad-Wolf University for Film and Television, Potsdam.

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