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Mackie's gang "case" their situation: their leader and his pal, the Police Commissioner, are in fear of Peachum's threat to stage a beggars' demonstration on Coronation Day.

offered by the prime evolution of German politics as symbolized by Caligari and practised by Hitler, who organized the political discontent of the Germans into a formidable national instrument. Hitler's counterpart in *The Three Penny Opera* is neither its "romantic" hero, Mackie Messer, head of a criminal gang, nor Tiger Brown, the corrupt Police Commissioner, but a true "underground" hero, Peachum, King of the Beggars. Peachum is the father of Polly, whom Mackie decides to marry after falling in love with her and repudiating his low-life love, Jenny. So it is the romantic passion, à la Wagner, that creates the film's intrigue and precipitates its plot. Bitterly opposing his daughter's marriage, Peachum threatens to mar the impending Coronation of the Queen by a beggars' demonstration unless Tiger Brown scuttles Polly's marriage by sending Mackie to the gallows. But Tiger is loyal to Mackie, his pal, and the pair are wedded in a majestic warehouse where the gang stores all their loot.

German talent for extravagant fantasy emerges in this wedding sequence—one thinks of von Stroheim's passion for wedding parties, also derived, one suspects, from Wagner's illicit "divine marriages." All the surface amusement is threaded systematically with the sinister, and we see the German flair for decking out crime with spectacle and fantasy as something both stifling and

breath-giving. The "underground" is indeed a powerful chthonic force, quite capable of fusing heroic romance with grimy revolution. Fearing a catastrophe on Coronation Day, Tiger Brown orders Mackie's arrest and the gangster is trapped in his hangout, a brothel, by the jealous Jenny, though later, through Jenny's change of heart, he escapes from prison and rejoins his wife.

Brecht strengthened the work's social criticism by having Polly forthwith open a bank, arguing that enterprise within the law pays better than Mackie's illegal activities. While the bank prospers, Peachum sanctions and then forbids the beggars' demonstration, which then operates on its own impetus. We witness one of those alternately electric and lava-like social eruptions so graphically put forward in *Metropolis* but here suggestively realistic; like others, Peachum is ruined by the very underground power he had controlled and set in motion. The sets of the film by Andrei Andreiev are styled to carry out the authors' moral message as fashioned in bizarre, improbable, latently symbolist mould. Illusive labyrinths, seemingly commonplace, have thick shadows cast on the crystalline highlights of their walls. Basically in the Expressionist manner, more extremely



Brooding jealousy in a brothel: Lotte Lenya's inimitable characterization of Jenny, Mackie's regular girl, who first betrays him then effects his escape from prison; her songs give voice to a brutal cynicism, oddly caressive.