

*Danger at the Newsstand: Homosexuality, Youth, and Mass Culture in the Weimar Republic*

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## Abstract

This dissertation explores the entangled histories of youth and homosexuality in the Weimar Republic. It illustrates the tension between freedom and oppression that characterized this period: the protection of youth justified the repression of homosexuality. In order address these issues, this dissertation moves beyond histories of sexuality that have heavily relied on scientific discourse and places greater emphasis on the production of sexuality and sexual norms through mass culture and its control. Using archival material, congressional records, scientific and legal literature, pamphlets, homosexual magazines, novels, and film, this dissertation shows that the relationship between youthful sexuality, youth protection, and homosexuality can help us understand the homophobia that ensued from the homosexual's visibility during the Weimar Republic. The dissertation begins by showing the central role that adolescence played in theories of sexuality. Psychiatrists and psychologists described adolescence as a period of sexual indeterminacy when youths could be seduced into homosexuality. For them, securing heterosexuality implied containing homosexual contagion. This belief gained more currency after the First World War, when conservative politicians, clergymen, teachers, and members of morality organizations claimed that youths were in a troubling state of moral waywardness. Their anxieties about national decline led to the belief that only normative heterosexuality could guarantee Germany's survival. This study juxtaposes popular culture with the homosexual because both threatened the adolescent's appropriate sexual development, and because homosexuality found mass appeal through the spread of popular homosexual publications. Legislative measures against popular culture succeeded in redrawing the boundaries of sexual orientation as well as those between youths and adults. As a result, homosexuality was tolerated, but it had to be hidden from public sight. Finally, this dissertation shows that the discourse

surrounding adolescence created avenues of resistance against the repression of homosexuality. The protection of youth became a slogan to claim respectability in the homosexual movement's campaign to decriminalize same-sex acts. Homosexual leaders claimed to be protecting adolescents and contributing to national regeneration. Ultimately, a respectable homosexual could not exist because the German nation was grounded in normative gender and sexuality. Adolescence was the arena in which these crucial norms were reinforced.

Dedicated to Vance L. Byrd

## Acknowledgments

Every dissertation takes time, effort, and momentary moments of despair. Writing mine has not been any different. I would not have been able to complete this work without the intellectual and emotional support that Mary Louise Roberts has offered me over the years. She believed in me since the beginning and has encouraged me to continue working despite my occasional doubts and frustration about this dissertation or academia. She made me trust the potential of this project even when I had lost faith in it. Thanks to her I am proud of it as I write these words. The entire process has been intellectually transformative. How to think, read, write, teach, and feel like a historian can be taught. Lou has done precisely that. Granted, it often requires someone's reading multiple dreadful drafts, sitting through some awkward discussion sections, and anxious phone calls. I am forever in her debt.

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I started thinking about the history of homosexuality and the Weimar Republic in 2009, when I was an undergraduate at the University of Iowa. I decided to write an honors thesis under the supervision of Elizabeth Heineman. I could have not guessed what a good choice I had made! That dilettante piece of writing became the kernel of this dissertation. And I am privileged to

have had her accompany me until that early project flourished. I look forward to being her colleague for many years to come.

Writing a dissertation also takes financial and logistic support. I am proud to have been the recipient of a George L. Mosse Distinguished Fellowship in LGBT History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The work of George Mosse has been very influential and formative for me. We even share a parallel life event, fifty-odd years apart: we both cried miserably the day we first arrived in Iowa City (I will not go into the reason...). Of course, that was before we both realized how good that place would be for us. I followed in his footsteps to Madison, too! This fellowship allowed me to be focused and efficient. It will be a privilege and an honor to be part of a growing intellectual community associated with the memory of this great historian as I continue my professional career. John Tortorice has been truly supportive over the years and has become a dear friend. Leslie Abadie was there to answer every administrative question I ever had. She runs the department! I am also thankful to have received the support of a Council for European Studies Pre-Dissertation Fellowship and a Central European History Society Research Grant that allowed me to complete the final stages of research in Germany. The librarians and staff members at the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek in Leipzig, where I conducted most of my research, were welcoming and warm. It is such a wonderful place to work in.

Graduate school is more than just school. I have made good friends in Madison, too. I have learned immensely from the long walks and conversations with Ingrid Ramírez Bolívar, who has taught me that pleasure may be the best (the only?) outlook on life and work. I have also benefitted from the insight of her son, Isaac. Youths have the most charming minds. It has been a delight to see him grown from a child into a young adult. Valeria Navarro Rosenblatt has been a

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Finally, I would like to thank the form of support that often seems the most thankless and invisible, but that is the most important in the long run because it stems from true love. My partner, Vance Byrd, has seen me grow since we came to the United States. He has made incredible sacrifices for me, and this does not even count reading through virtually every single piece of writing I have produced over the last eight years. I am so grateful to have him by my side every day. All the successes—and all the failures—of this work are his as much as mine.

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## Introduction:

### *Danger at the Newsstand: Homosexuality, Youth, and Mass Culture in the Weimar Republic*

“The mass production of sexuality automatically brings about its repression.”<sup>1</sup>

“No discourse has been available to discuss the histories of intergenerational sexuality. The phrase itself resounds with pathological overtones that frighten and instill fear—this apart from implied scandal and abuse.”<sup>2</sup>

“The rights of young people are specifically critical. The acceptance of children as dependents, as belonging to parents, is so deeply ingrained that we can scarcely imagine what it would mean to treat them as autonomous human beings particularly in the realm of sexual expression and choice. Yet until that happens, gay liberation will remain out of reach.”<sup>3</sup>

On May 24 1919, the film *Anders als die Andern* (*Different from the Others*) had its opening night at Berlin’s Apollo-Theater.<sup>4</sup> The Austrian director Richard Oswald had collaborated with Germany’s most famous sexologist, Magnus Hirschfeld, to produce the last installment of his so-called “social-hygienic films” (*sozialhygienische Filmwerke*), a genre that

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<sup>1</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 94-136: 112.

<sup>2</sup> George Rousseau, “Introduction,” *Children and Sexuality: From the Greeks to the Great War*, ed. George Rousseau (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1-38: 3.

<sup>3</sup> John D’ Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 13.

<sup>4</sup> James D. Steakley, “*Anders als die Andern*”: *ein Film und seine Geschichte* (Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2007), 9. For different interpretations of the film see: Richard Dyer, *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film* (London: Routledge, 1990), 7-36; Jürgen Kasten and Arnim Loacker, eds. *Richard Oswald: Kino zwischen Spektakel, Aufklärung und Unterhaltung* (Wien: verlag filmarchiv austria, 2005); James D. Steakley, “Cinema and Censorship in the Weimar Republic: The Case of *Anders als die Andern*,” *Film History* 11, no. 2, *Émigré Filmmakers and Filmmaking* (1999): 181-203; Wolfgang Theis, “*Anders als die Andern*. Geschichte eines Filmskandals,” *Eldorado: Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin 1850-1950. Geschichte, Alltag und Kultur*, ed. Michael Bollé (Berlin: Fröhlich & Kaufmann, 1984), 28-30; Siegbert S. Praver, *Between Two Worlds: The Jewish Presence in German and Austrian Film, 1910-1933* (New York: Berghahn, 2005), 72-81.

Oswald had developed before the First World War with films that addressed the problems of alcoholism, venereal disease, and prostitution.<sup>5</sup> Oswald and Hirschfeld did not skimp on stars for this venture. They hired Conrad Veidt, Reinhold Schünzel, and Anita Berber, all well-known actors at the time. Magnus Hirschfeld, in what could be considered an act of vanity, played himself. Despite its “educational” intentions, the film filled theaters. Viewers were likely attracted to the scandalous dimensions of the film. This was the first time German moviegoers had the opportunity to watch a feature film about homosexuality. This was the first time, too, that Magnus Hirschfeld had chosen mass culture as a strategy to promote the agenda of the homosexual rights movement. The film had been possible because the National Assembly had recently eliminated all forms of censorship. Hirschfeld and Oswald took advantage of this freedom to present to the public the tragic life that homosexuals had to lead due to the injustices caused by Paragraph 175—the law that criminalized male, same-sex acts in Germany since 1871.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jürgen Kasten, “Dramatische Instinkte und das Spektakel der Aufklärung,” *Richard Oswald*, 15-140.

<sup>6</sup> Male homosexuality had not been prosecuted in all German states during the nineteenth century. After the German Empire’s reunification in 1871, however, Wilhelm I’s administration consistently enforced sodomy laws in the entire Reich under Paragraph 175. From the 1860s, pioneers such as the forensic pathologists Johann L. Casper and the lawyer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs developed new views on homosexuality that aimed to legitimize decriminalization campaigns. Ulrichs, for example, did not believe that homosexuality was a choice or a vice, but rather “as a congenital anomaly,” a view that Hirschfeld would share later. This “anomaly” was not contagious and could not be cured. Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Carl von Westphal followed suit and, like Ulrichs, rejected the criminalization of same-sex acts. Ulrichs had demanded the end of punishment in the 1860s, right before Paragraph 175 became official for the entire Reich but was largely ignored in his pursuit. It was not until 1897 that the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee sent a request to the authorities with 6,000 signatures, including those by Krafft-Ebing (Steakley, 8). The seeming contradiction that female same-sex acts were not punished, while male, same-sex acts were, was pointed out during the legal reform debates in 1929. There had been in fact an attempt to criminalize female homosexuality in 1909. The argument for this change had been a perverse sense of gender equality. The proponents of the criminalization of

Whereas the filmic representation of homosexuality was new, the homosexual emancipation struggle was over twenty years old. In 1897, Magnus Hirschfeld had founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee (*Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee*), an organization that used the language of medicine to advocate the decriminalization of homosexuality. Until 1919, the Committee had produced a vast amount of scientific literature on homosexuality, distributed pamphlets and surveys, and sent informational brochures to members of the German parliament, hoping to change their opinion on the law. These materials corroborated that homosexuals constituted a “third sex” and that homosexuality was an inborn condition caused by physiological and psychological gender inversion.<sup>7</sup> The educational activities of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee had been crucial to the development of homosexual identity and politics during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Democracy offered the best conditions for the culmination of the Committee’s hard work: freedom of the press and assembly and a sympathetic majority in parliament that showed interest in the organization’s goals signaled that the end was in sight. *Different from the Others* could have been the culmination of twenty years of work—a new era for homosexual rights. The outcome, however, was much

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female, same-sex acts argued that if women were demanding equality in other arenas—including more sexual freedom—female homosexuality should be punished like male homosexuality was, as the Austrian Criminal Code did. Robert M. Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 3-41; Tracie Matysik, “In the Name of the Law: The ‘Female Homosexual’ and the Criminal Code in Fin de Siècle Germany,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 13, no. 1 (2004): 26-48; James D. Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany* (New York: Arno Press, 1975); Hans-Georg Stümke, *Homosexuelle in Deutschland: Eine politische Geschichte* (München: C.H. Beck, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 160-186; Ralf Dose, *Magnus Hirschfeld. Deutscher—Jude—Weltbürger* (Berlin, Centrum Judaicum, 2005); Manfred Herzer, ed. *100 Jahre Schwulenbewegung: Dokumentation einer Vortragsreihe in der Akademie der Künste* (Berlin: Rosa Winkel, 1998); Manfred Herzer, *Magnus Hirschfeld. Leben und Werk eines jüdischen, schwulen und sozialistischen Sexologen* (Hamburg: MännerschwarmSkript, 2001); Elke-Vera Kotowski and Julius Schoeps, eds. *Magnus Hirschfeld: Ein Leben im Spannungsfeld vom Wissenschaft, Politik und Gesellschaft* (Berlin: BeBra Wissenschaft, 2004); Charlotte Wolff, *Magnus Hirschfeld: A Portrait of a Pioneer in Sexology* (London: Quartet Books, 1986).

different. The film was censored soon after it was shown. The homosexual and mass culture made a troublesome marriage.

Historians have been moved by the fact that this is the first film in history that represents homosexuals explicitly and sympathetically. The film's rarity has made it something that we should cherish for its existence but whose original content and intent we can decipher only with difficulty. Despite the quality of the cast, the story, and the cinematography, film scholar Richard Dyer claims that the film ought to be considered as an exceptional "museum piece, touching, moving, and testimony to the role of film in gay struggle, but needing an act of imagination to see beyond its fragments."<sup>8</sup> We should make this effort if we want to understand this film in its historical context.

The film has been left to us as a reconstruction of fragments that makes its analysis difficult. The existing footage was taken from another educational film produced and commissioned by Hirschfeld in 1927 and titled *Laws of Love. From the Files of a Sexologist* (*Gesetze der Liebe. Aus der Mappe eines Sexualforschers*).<sup>9</sup> One of the film's sections dedicated to homosexuality, "Scorned while Innocent: The Tragedy of a Homosexual" ("*Schuldlos geächtet! Tragödie eines Homosexuellen*"), combines the stories of homosexual blackmail, suicide, and the scientific theories used to advocate the decriminalization of male homosexuality. The choices for the plot are representative of the period: blackmail and suicide had been the most common arguments that Hirschfeld and his collaborators had made to highlight the injustices caused by Paragraph 175. The film chronicles the life of Paul Körner (Conrad Veidt) from his school years to his suicide. His struggle with homosexuality begins in early youth. He is expelled

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Dyer, *Now You See It*, 10, 46.

<sup>9</sup> Steakley, "*Anders als die Andern*," 5.

from school for “persuading” a classmate to engage in same-sex acts. During his university years, Körner’s classmates press him to visit a brothel with them. Körner is disgusted by the attention he receives from the women there, a scene that highlights both his higher moral standing and his homosexuality. As a way to overcompensate for his deviance (or perhaps to sublimate his sexual desire), Körner decides to dedicate his life to music and becomes an acclaimed violin virtuoso. His success overshadows his sexual secret: “No one of the thousands who celebrated the genial artist suspected that he suffered of unhappy inclinations scorned by society.”<sup>10</sup> Körner, however, struggles with his sexuality and wants to find a solution for his condition. He visits a hypnotist to no avail. Finally, Magnus Hirschfeld counsels him. The doctor tells him and the audience that homosexuality is natural and that homosexuals can “offer valuable work to society.”

The story does not have a happy end. One of Körner’s conquests in a homosexual ball, Franz Bollek (Reinhold Schünzel), takes advantage of the social prejudice against homosexuality and starts to blackmail the celebrity. After much pressure and expense, Körner decides to press charges against his tormentor. He wants to put an end to a situation that is making him lose his nerves. The blackmailer is condemned and sent to prison. But Paul cannot escape the hand of the law either. He has also committed a crime under Paragraph 175. The publicity about this blackmail case and the charges pressed against him damage the reputation of the esteemed artist. The loss of respect Körner experiences after his homosexuality has been made public prompts him to commit suicide. His death should be testimony to the lethal power of social prejudice against homosexuality. The film ends with Hirschfeld giving a lecture. “Ladies and gentlemen!

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<sup>10</sup> “Keiner der Tausende, die den genialen Künstler feierten, ahnte, daß dieser unter unglücklichen, von der Gesellschaft mit Ächtung bestrafte Neigungen litt.” All intertitles are excerpted from *Anders als die Andern*, directed by Richard Oswald (1919; München: Edition Filmmuseum, 2006), DVD.

Please make sure that soon there will be the day when such tragedies are impossible because science has triumphed over prejudice, right over wrong, and human kindness over hate.” A round of applause suggests that this view enjoys the audience’s support on and off the screen.

While the story is straightforward, the film is not easy to watch. James Steakley argues that viewers nowadays may be distracted by the style and aesthetic conventions of expressionist cinema. “More importantly,” he continues, “today’s viewers are likely to be discomfited by the film’s unblushing portrayal of a limp-wristed, aesthetically refined homosexual,” even though such a portrayal was met with no objection at the time.<sup>11</sup> The main character’s effeminacy, it seems, should be disturbing for us. Richard Dyer has also interpreted the film within the duality of “male-inbetweenism” and “male-identified” conceptions of homosexuality, paradigms that contemporary sectors of the homosexual movement represented. Whereas Hirschfeld and the Scientific Humanitarian Committee supported the idea of a gender ambiguous “third sex,” Adolf Brand, the leader of the Community of the Special (*Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*), celebrated the hyper-masculine homosexual and extolled the virtues of classical pederasty, romantic friendships, and chivalric love.<sup>12</sup>

Dyer contends that the film fails to portray either position completely and the “ideal male homo-erotic master-pupil relationship” structures the film instead.<sup>13</sup> However, he chooses not to pursue this line of inquiry into the role of the erotic and pedagogical relationship between an adult man and a youth in the film. More recently, in study about male prostitution during the

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<sup>11</sup> Steakley, “Cinema and Censorship:” 181.

<sup>12</sup> Marita Keilson-Lauritz and Rolf E. Lang, eds. *Emanzipation hinter der Weltstadt: Adolf Brand und die Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*. Berlin: Miggel-Verlag Rolf F. Lang, 2000; Harry Oosterhuis, ed., *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany* (New York: Haworth Press, 1991).

<sup>13</sup> Dyer, *Now You See It*, 17-24.

German Empire and the Weimar Republic, Martin Lücke has argued that the blackmailer in the film stands for the figure of the male prostitute and that everything that is “morally condemnable about prostitution” is represented in a “desexualized” relationship between the teacher and the student. Whereas Lücke successfully shows how the male prostitute was portrayed as “deviant” and as a “parasite” by the homosexual movement at the time, he downplays the pederastic relationship in the film.<sup>14</sup> Not even the most sympathetic critics want to face up to the thorny issue of intergenerational love. They are well aware that the homosexual and the pederast had been often mistaken for each other in the popular imagination. The widespread social scorn for the love between an adult man and a youth has earned the homosexual a bad reputation. In fact, the image of the homosexual as the predator of youths has justified homophobia until recent times.<sup>15</sup>

In what follows, it will be argued that examining this intergenerational relationship and the outrage it caused is precisely what can help us understand this film *and* its historical context. The relationship between the violinist Körner and his pupil Kurt Sivers structured the film, its reception, and its fate. This fictional man-youth relationship and the anxiety it caused among contemporary audiences stands for the fate of the homosexual and the homosexual movement during the Weimar Republic. The other topics in the film—blackmail and suicide—became outdated during this period. Even Hirschfeld recognized that by 1922 the issue of blackmail was not that relevant anymore and that the law was being applied more loosely than ever before.<sup>16</sup> In

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<sup>14</sup> Martin Lücke, *Männlichkeit in Unordnung: Homosexualität und männliche Prostitution in Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2008), 236, 243.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Hubbard and Beert Verstraete, eds. *Censoring Sex Research: The Debate over Male Intergenerational Relations* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Steakley, “Cinema and Censorship:” 186.

contrast, the fear of the homosexual predator, his presence in mass culture, and the protection of youth against his threat became dominant discourses during that time.

*Danger at the Newsstand: Homosexuality, Youth, and Mass Culture in the Weimar Republic* explores the entangled histories of youth and homosexuality in the Weimar Republic.<sup>17</sup> Using archival material, congressional records, scientific and legal literature, pamphlets, homosexual magazines, novels, and film, this dissertation shows that the relationship between youthful sexuality, youth protection, and homosexuality can help us understand the homophobia that ensued from the homosexual's visibility during the Weimar Republic. This study illustrates the tension between freedom and repression that characterized the Weimar Republic: the protection of youth justified the repression of homosexuality. In order address these issues, this

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<sup>17</sup> "Age" has been used as a "category of desire" in the history of male homosexuality. "Youth," as David M. Pomfret suggests, should also be a category of historical analysis that in our case can pave the way for radical reinterpretations of the homosexual movement and the production of homosexuality identity in Germany during the 1920s. Barry Adam, "Age Preference among Gay and Bisexual Men," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 6, no. 3 (2000): 413-434: 432; Barry Adam, "Age, Structure, and Sexuality," *Journal of Homosexuality* 11, nos. 3-4 (1985): 19-33; David M. Pomfret, "'A Muse for the Masses': Gender, Age, and Nation in France, Fin de Siècle," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 5 (December 2004): 1439-1474; The literature on classical pederasty is extensive. For an overview, see: David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays of Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990). I will be using "adolescence" and "youth" interchangeable throughout this dissertation. According to Patricia Meyer Spacks, "adolescence designates the time of life when the individual has developed full sexual capacity but has not yet assumed a full adult role in society. I emphasize sexuality because real and imagined sexual energy, crucial in the mythology of the teen-age years, accounts for much of the imaginative power implicit in the idea of adolescence" (7). Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Adolescent Idea: Myths of Youth and the Adult Imagination* (New York: Basic Books, 1981). For the profound transformations regarding childhood and adolescence in Europe since the late eighteenth century, see: Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. Robert Baldick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973); Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979); John R. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770-Present* (New York: Academic Press, 1981); Michael Mitterauer, *A History of Youth*, trans. Graeme Dunphy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Prehistory of Youth Culture, 1875-1945* (New York: Penguin, 2008); Peter N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2006); J. Robert Wegs, *Growing Up Working Class: Continuity and Change Among Viennese Youth, 1890-1938* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989).



dissertation moves beyond histories of sexuality that have heavily relied on scientific discourse.<sup>18</sup> Instead, it places greater emphasis on the production of sexuality and sexual norms through mass culture and its control.<sup>19</sup>

*A History from Fragments: Youth and Homosexuality during the Weimar Republic*

We can start to reconstruct the entangled histories of youth and homosexuality from the fragments of *Different from the Others*. The disappearance of the original reel made alternative interpretations of the film difficult until 2006, when the Filmmuseum München restored and reconstructed the film in its original version. This fifty-minute feature uses the footage from the 1927 abridged version but follows the original script and editing. Blackmail, suicide, and Hirschfeld's single-man crusade against Paragraph 175 still constitute the main plot line in this version. However, instead of focusing on the figure of the blackmailer Franz Bollek (fig. 1), the film directs our attention to another character that had completely disappeared by 1927: Körner's young disciple Kurt Sivers (fig. 2). The prominence of this character in the original film (and its

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<sup>18</sup> Jens Dobler, "Zum Verhältnis der Sexualwissenschaft und der homosexuellen Emanzipationsbewegung zur Polizei in Berlin," *Verqueere Wissenschaft? Zum Verhältnis von Sexualwissenschaft und Sexualreformbewegung in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Ursula Ferdinand, Andreas Pretzel, and Andreas Seck (Münster: Lit. 1998), 239-46; Manfred Herzer, ed. *Schriften zur Homosexualitätsforschung* (Berlin: Rosa Winkel, 2000); Joachim Hohmann, *Sexualforschung und -aufklärung in der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin: Foerster, 1985); Florian Mildener, "...in der Richtung der Homosexualität verdorben:" *Psychiater, Kriminalpsychologen und Gerichtsmediziner über männliche Homosexualität 1850-1970* (Hamburg: MännerschwarmSkript, 2002); Vernon A. Rosario, ed. *Science and Homosexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Volkmar Sigusch, ed. *Geschichte der Sexualwissenschaft* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Scott Spector, "Introduction," *After the History of Sexuality: German Genealogies with and Beyond Foucault*, ed. Scott Spector, Helmut Puff, and Dagmar Herzog (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 7.

removal from it in 1927) calls attention to the role of youth in the history of homosexuality during this period.



Fig. 1: Paul Körner threatens his blackmailer, Franz Bollek.

Credit: *Anders als die Andern*, directed by Richard Oswald (1919; München: Edition Filmmuseum, 2006), DVD.



Fig. 2: Paul Körner holds the hand of his pupil, Kurt Sivers.

The 1919 version begins with Paul Körner reading the newspaper, a comment on the relevance of mass media for the homosexual movement that will be the basis of this study. Headlines about unexplained suicides foreshadow the violinist's fate. Could blackmail explain these strange deaths? "The sword of Damocles of Paragraph 175 made life impossible for these unfortunates," the intertitle clarifies.<sup>20</sup> In a vision (a scene of which only a still remains), Körner sees a procession of eminent figures from the past—Tchaikovsky, Oscar Wilde, Frederick II of Prussia, Leonardo da Vinci, and Ludwig II of Bavaria among them—and a hand-drawn sword of Damocles falling upon their heads, a symbol of the precarious lives these successful men must

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<sup>20</sup> "Diesen Bedauernswerten machte das Damoklesschwert des §175 das Leben unmöglich. Im Geiste sieht er einen endlosen Zug diese Unglücklichen aus allen Zeiten und Ländern an sich vorüberziehen."

lead due to the relentless social prejudice against homosexuality. Why should these men's sexuality be at odds with their talent and their service to society?

Paul Körner's valuable contribution to the world is music. His brilliance as a violinist attracts a young man, Kurt Sivers (Fritz Schulz), whose "most burning desire" would be fulfilled if Körner accepted to be his mentor and teacher.<sup>21</sup> Whether this "desire" goes beyond their mutual passion for music is never explicitly represented in the film. Nevertheless, the most alert contemporary viewers—and certainly homosexual ones—would have not missed that Körner and Sivers were more than just master and pupil. We see in a shot reverse shot how Körner stares at Sivers's young face while the lad is playing violin. Their glances, handshakes, and embraces last a second too long. Their relationship is deeper than mere infatuation for each other. The youth is devastated when he learns his teacher is being blackmailed. Is it because he just learned that the person whom he admires is a homosexual? Or because he has realized that he may not be the only one to receive his attention?

Even though Sivers pursues his mentor, an act that we would interpret as a sign of his sexual agency, he becomes a liability for Körner. His youth is compromising. "Handsome boy!" exclaims the blackmailer Franz Bollek (Reinhold Schünzel) when he finds the couple strolling arm in arm in the park. Bollek knows that such a relationship would be scorned if it became known. This knowledge becomes profitable for the blackmailer. "It will be beneficial for you and for the young man with whom I saw you if you compensate me."<sup>22</sup> The violinist is led to despair through a spiral of blackmail.

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<sup>21</sup> "Mein sehnlichster Wunsch ginge in Erfüllung, wenn Sie mein Lehrer sein wollten!"

<sup>22</sup> "Es wird für Dich und den jungen Mann, in dessen Gesellschaft ich Dich traf, von Vorteil sein, wenn Du mich entschädigst."

The rest of the film develops like the 1927 version: Bollek's blackmail leads to Körner's misery, social ostracism, and suicide. But the film is not over there. Kurt Sievers still has a final function in the film. In Magnus Hirschfeld's last appearance, the doctor discourages the young man from committing suicide like his mentor. (Sivers's hopelessness is not only the manifestation of his grief for the lost musician; it is also a subtle confirmation of his same-sex attraction.) Hirschfeld encourages the youth to carry on the work of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee. He should make sure that social prejudice finally ends through the teaching of the scientific truth about homosexuality. Thus Hirschfeld puts the future of the homosexual movement in youth's hand. The main question was: how would the movement go about its role?

No matter how ambiguous this master-pupil relationship may have appeared on the screen, it touched a nerve when the film was first screened. For many viewers—and for some prominent doctors, as we will soon see—Körner was the perfect example of the homosexual seducer preying upon a vulnerable youth. Even Sivers's parents recognize this threat in the film: “Kurt is infatuated with this violinist,” they complain while discussing that they should forbid their son from associating with him because their relationship has become “more intimate” than it should be.<sup>23</sup> Already during his youth, Paul Körner is referred to as the “instigator” (*Anstifter*), the fomenter of homosexuality. The actor Conrad Veidt, who played the violinist, was “considered at the time attractive and seductive” while maintaining a “sinister” look.<sup>24</sup> It is not too implausible that contemporary audiences felt both an irresistible attraction and a profound aversion to the actor and, by extension, to the homosexual he represented on the screen.

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<sup>23</sup> “Inzwischen ist das Verhältnis zwischen Paul Körner und Kurt Sivers immer inniger geworden.”

<sup>24</sup> Dyer, *Now You See It*, 14.

Although the film was meant to be a plea for homosexual liberation, it was not successful in challenging common views on homosexuality as deviant, immoral, and predatory. This was the case because pederasty and homosexuality were two erotic inclinations that could not be easily differentiated from each other in the popular imagination. For many contemporaries, the homosexual was a heartless predator, the cunning seducer of innocent youths. The portrayal of the love between an adult man and a male youth was even more scandalous than the representation of homosexuality on the screen. It ultimately led to the film's censorship and to the elimination of this plot line in the 1927 repurposing of the footage. The phobia about the homosexual seducer warranted legislative measures to prevent him from attacking again. At the same time, the confusion between pederasty and homosexuality led to tectonic shifts in the understanding and the experience of male homosexuality during this period.

### *From Mass Culture to Moral Panic*

Film appeared to be an excellent medium to challenge the social prejudice against homosexuality in 1919. It was modern and accessible; it could become a useful way to educate the masses on the topic of homosexuality, to make homosexuals more sympathetic to the larger public, and to make the plea about decriminalization more relatable. Film indeed could become the perfect venue to spread the Committee's ideas among sectors of the population less familiar with the scientific literature on homosexuality. Hirschfeld, however, seems to have been ambivalent about engaging the masses in the quest for homosexual liberation. As James Steakley has argued, he was "ill-prepared for the frontal onslaught of modernity" and disliked that popular culture had taken over the place of elite culture after the war.<sup>25</sup> Given such objections, it is ironic

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<sup>25</sup> Steakley, 184

that Hirschfeld would have collaborated with a film director known for his scandalous films and for making “commercial products” that aimed to please the audiences unabashedly.<sup>26</sup> It was perhaps the disappointment with the results of this strategy—the film’s censorship—that made him question the usefulness of mass culture for homosexual liberation, a position that made him less relevant as the decade unfolded. Another mass cultural medium flourished in the homosexual movement because of film censorship: magazines.

Hirschfeld was not the only leader of the homosexual movement during the 1920s. Friedrich Radszuweit and his League for Human Rights (*Bund für Menschenrecht*) became direct competition for him. Under the leadership of Radszuweit, a plain and self-made man from East Prussia, the League gained prominence as the first homosexual mass organization. The League grew in numbers precisely due to its publication of popular homosexual magazines. With a combination of stories, opinion articles, news, and advertisements, the League made the demands for the decriminalization of homosexuality more accessible to those who may have been less willing or able to grab a scientific journal that addressed the topic of homosexuality. The League for Human Rights’ media presence contributed to the mass spread of a form of homosexuality that encouraged respectability, productivity, *and* the protection of youth.

The leaders of the homosexual movement would learn very early that making homosexuality accessible to the masses came with more disadvantages than benefits. It all began as soon as it started. Instead of becoming a sympathetic portrayal of homosexuality, *Different from the Others* became an early example and a warning of all what could go wrong when using mass culture to advocate homosexual rights. The film exacerbated common fears about the power of mass culture to pervert young viewers. Conservative sectors worried about the effects

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<sup>26</sup> Jürgen Kasten, “Vorwort,” *Richard Oswald*, 13.

of this and similar “educational films” (*Aufklärungsfilme*) and pressured the government to such an extent that film censorship was reinstated in the Republic.<sup>27</sup> This form of censorship anticipated the great lengths conservative legislators would go to protect youths against homosexuality and other sexual threats. As we will see in Chapter 5, the protection of youth was used to justify a 1927 law that limited the impact of homosexual publications. The League for Human Rights made the homosexual visible with its publications. Youth protection measures aimed to make homosexuality invisible and unthreatening again.

To make a stronger case for the significance of youth, we can look at two contemporary evaluations of the film that became crucial for its fate and that of the homosexual

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<sup>27</sup> Nothing illustrates better the Weimar Republic’s ambivalent relationship with censorship than film censorship. The Weimar Republic’s National Assembly did not hesitate to draft a special constitutional amendment allowing for the censorship of film. Film censorship was instituted as soon as the medium had come to life. As soon as 1906, film censorship had been practiced in Berlin, even though the 1874 Press Law had eliminated censorship per se. The medium’s ability to reach the masses and its recently discovered propagandistic power were considered too great to be left unrestrained. Up to this point, film had been censored based on matters of taste. During the First World War, however, measures concerning youths were strengthened. Film was considered harmful and threatening, capable of galvanizing “the masses.” Cinema’s pedagogical values were acknowledged and contested, regardless of whether they portrayed patriotism or dealt with sexual education. Article 118 of the Constitution eliminated censorship in general, but left the door open to film censorship. As a result, the Reichstag was able to pass the Film Law (*Lichtspielgesetz*) in 1920. The law, an instance of full censorship, aimed to guarantee state security by hindering the screening of films that could damage Germany’s image at home and abroad and by maintaining public order. Nevertheless, the law often ended up censoring films considered morally unsuitable for youths. Even though Germany had a rather lenient censorship record during the Republic (it regularly showed Soviet films, such as Sergei Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin*, although not without controversy), youth-protection regulations were harshly enforced. Twenty-five to thirty per cent of films for youthful audiences were censored in some form or another. As a comparison, only five to eight per cent were censored in France. See: Sabine Lenk, “Censoring Films in Düsseldorf during the First World War,” *Film History* 22, no. 4 (2010): 426-39; Wolfgang Mühl-Beninghaus, “German Film Censorship during World War I,” *Film History* 9 (1997): 71-76; Gary D. Stark, “Cinema, Society, and the State: Policing the Film Industry in Imperial Germany,” *Essays on Culture and Society in Modern Germany*, eds. David B. King, et al. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1982), 122-166; Corey Ross, *Media and the Making of Modern Germany: Mass Communications, Society, and Politics from the Empire to the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). 203; James D. Steakley, “Cinema and Censorship.”

movement during the Weimar Republic. The psychiatrist Albert Moll thought that the relationship between Körner and Sivers was perhaps less harmless than it appeared to be.

“It is shown in a homosexual film how a homosexual musician teaches a young man and instructs him to be an artist. It is not shown, however, what both do during breaks und during the time when they are together but music is not being played. Neither the film nor the champions of ideal homosexuality show us the mutual onanism, the coitus inter femora, [and] the so-common introduction of the member in the mouth.”<sup>28</sup>

The possibility that something may be going on outside of the film frame was enough to justify the film’s censorship. Such an opinion made sense because the fears of homosexual seduction were not based on any hard evidence or proof.<sup>29</sup> On the contrary, homophobia was grounded in speculation, fantasy, and irrational fear. We can take Moll’s opinion as the words of a moralist doctor with a dirty mind. But Moll, as we will see in Chapter 1, was one of the most respected

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<sup>28</sup> Cited in Manfred Herzer, *Magnus Hirschfeld*, 139.

<sup>29</sup> “Seduction” here does not refer to Sigmund Freud’s seduction theory and its relationship to sexual trauma. Freud introduced sexual trauma in his essay on “The Aetiology of Hysteria” (1896). Here he argued that hysterical symptoms could be traced back to early-childhood sexual abuse. Freud would replace that theory with the Oedipal complex, one that substituted *real* abuse (or seduction) with fantasy. Freud, however, never quite abandoned the idea of “seduction” (*Verführung*) and of sexual trauma in the etiology of neurosis (including homosexuality). Although many of his contemporaries rejected Freud’s belief in child and youthful sexual agency, they did agree that youths could be “seduced” into homosexuality. In this dissertation I will be using “seduction” in a sense that stresses the general medical agreement on the acquired nature of homosexuality and the possibility of its transmission to youths due to their sexual ambiguity and vulnerability. For an overview of the debates on Freud’s “seduction theory,” see: Lawrence Birken, “From Seduction Theory to Oedipus Complex: A Historical Analysis,” *New German Critique* no. 43, Special Issue on Austria (Winter, 1988): 83-96; Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen and Douglas Brick, “Neurotica: Freud and the Seduction Theory,” *October* 76 (Spring, 1996): 15-43; Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: Norton, 1988), 90-96; John E. Toews, “Historicizing Psychoanalysis: Freud in His Time and for Our Time,” *The Journal of Modern History* 63, no. 3 (Sep. 1991): 504-545; Hall Triplett, “The Misnomer of Freud’s ‘Seduction Theory,’” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65, no. 4 (Oct., 2004): 647-665.



experts on adolescent sexuality and homosexuality. We must take his claim seriously because it informed the way contemporaries thought about homosexuality and its relationship to youth. Whereas historians have focused on Hirschfeld, in part because he was sympathetic towards homosexuals and supported decriminalization, we have paid less attention to other doctors who shared opinions about homosexuality that we would call homophobic today.

The famous psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin's report on *Different from the Others* was the last straw in a series of opinions that led to the film's censorship. Although Kraepelin respected Hirschfeld as a doctor, he was of a completely different opinion on the topic of homosexuality. Contrary to the sexologist's theories of inborn homosexuality, Kraepelin supported a contrasting view that sought its cause in degeneration, "psychopathic personality," and "moral insanity."<sup>30</sup> In his report on the film and in other articles he warned against the "systematic perverting of youths" (*planmäßige Pervertierung der Jugend*) and against "mental mass infection" (*psychische Masseninfektion*) that homosexual "propaganda" (the homosexual movement's literature), the youth movement, and psychoanalysis were causing.<sup>31</sup> Homosexual seduction was the worst of all threats to youths.

Youths' susceptibility to homosexual seduction was explained in scientific terms. After the First World War, psychiatry and psychology "tended to present social and moral judgments as scientific claims in order to legitimize the ideas of the conservative state."<sup>32</sup> Enjoying the unprecedented legitimacy that their involvement in the war efforts had granted them, these

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<sup>30</sup> Matthias M. Weber and Wolfgang Burgmair, "Anders als die Andern' Kraepelins Gutachten über Hirschfelds Aufklärungsfilm: Ein Beitrag zur Psychiatriegeschichte der Weimarer Republik," *Sudhoffs Archiv* 81, no. 1 (1997): 1-20: 3-4.

<sup>31</sup> Weber and Burgmair: 4-5.

<sup>32</sup> Weber and Burgmair: 19.

professionals validated homophobic claims on scientific grounds. Morality became a fruitful ground to justify hygienic theories, to enforce social disciplining, and to encourage scientific rationalization.<sup>33</sup> Psychiatrists and psychologists, however, did not necessarily operate according to “rational” rules. Their homophobia stemmed from an irrational fear of national annihilation.

The “discovery” of youthful sexuality became even more problematic once its fluidity was confirmed around the turn of the twentieth century. Sigmund Freud concluded in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) that perversion was “an original and universal disposition” of human sexuality and “that under the influence of seduction children can become polymorphously perverse, and can be led into all possible kinds of sexual irregularities.”<sup>34</sup> Youth and its sexual malleability had the potential to undermine society. In order to guarantee social stability, youths had to be given a sense of “shame, disgust, and morality” that would put them on the right path towards bourgeois sexual respectability.<sup>35</sup> Youths’ sexuality had to be monitored and protected, lest they be seduced by the homosexual’s powerful and subversive appeal.

Debates about youthful sexuality became “indicators of anxieties about the continuity of a dominant social, political and cultural order and about ‘upholding’ standing social practices.”<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the anxieties about “youth waywardness” and homosexual seduction during the Weimar Republic were very productive in enforcing social norms. The work of psychiatrists and

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<sup>33</sup> Lutz Raphael, “Die Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen als methodische und konzeptionelle Herausforderung für eine Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (1996): 165-93.

<sup>34</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 57.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Todd R. Ramlow, “Bad Boys: Abstractions of Difference and the Politics of Youth ‘Deviance’,” *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 9, no. 1-2 (2003): 107-132: 113-4.

psychologists ensured that homosexuality and adolescence were “kept distinct and at a safe epistemological distance.”<sup>37</sup> The fear of “mass suggestion” through mass culture and the homosexual transformed the adolescent into a vulnerable subject and did not leave any room for their sexual agency.<sup>38</sup> Youth became instead a category where the “desires, fantasies, and interests of the adult world” could be inscribed.<sup>39</sup> The belief that youths were the most vulnerable victims of a “homosexual wave” after the war justified youth protection measures that sought to repress homosexuality.

Historians have examined the connection between youth in homosexuality in the context of the German youth movement and in contemporary theorizations of the *Männerbund*.<sup>40</sup> We have paid less attention to how the appropriate sexual development of German youths became a matter of public interest because it had critical implications for the future of a nation in disorder after the war, when conservative politicians, clergymen, teachers, and members of morality organizations claimed that youths were in a troubling state of moral waywardness. The Weimar

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<sup>37</sup> Steven Angelides, “Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse, and the Erasure of Child Sexuality,” *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 10, no. 2 (2004): 141-77: 142.

<sup>38</sup> R. Danielle Egan and Gail L. Hawkes, “Imperiled and Perilous: Exploring the History of Childhood Sexuality,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 21, no. 4 (2008): 355-367.

<sup>39</sup> Henry A. Giroux, “Teenage Sexuality, Body Politics, and the Pedagogy of Display,” *Youth Culture: Identity in a Postmodern World*, ed. Jonathon S. Epstein (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998), 24-55: 24.

<sup>40</sup> Claudia Bruns, *Politik des Eros: der Männerbund in Wissenschaft, Politik und Jugendkultur (1880-1934)* (Köln: Böhlau, 2008); Ulfried Geuter, *Homosexualität in der deutschen Jugendbewegung: Jugendfreundschaft und Sexualität im Diskurs von Jugendbewegung, Psychoanalyse und Jugendpsychologie am Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994).

Republic was a post-traumatic society;<sup>41</sup> its culture shaped by the memory of mass warfare and brutalization.<sup>42</sup> Two million German men never came back from the war; millions more suffered physical disability and psychological damage.<sup>43</sup> The state went to great lengths to “fix” these maimed bodies through welfare, medicine, and technology.<sup>44</sup> German society also needed the restoration of lost moral and cultural values. Losing the war meant that the whole nation was at risk of succumbing to the degeneration it had eagerly sought to dodge.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Jeffrey C. Alexander, “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma,” *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1-30; Neil J. Smelser, “Psychological and Cultural Trauma,” *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 30-59.

<sup>42</sup> Bernd Hüppauf, ed. *War, Violence and the Modern Condition* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997); Anton Kaes, *Shell-Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>43</sup> Whereas war had been productive for bourgeois masculine values in the nineteenth century, contemporaries felt that the First World War had been a terrible blow to both masculinity and what was left of bourgeois culture. Modern notions of gender difference and masculinity in Germany were linked to the modernizing impact of war since the Napoleonic wars, when bourgeois gender notions were linked to the values of manliness, valor, and national identity. Karen Hagemann, “Of ‘Manly Valor’ and ‘German Honor’: Nation, War, and Masculinity in the Age of Prussian Uprising against Napoleon,” *Central European History* 30, no. 2 (1997): 187-200. For the impact of the First World War on gender, in Germany see: Ute Daniel, *The War from Within: German Working-Class Women in the First World War* (Oxford: Berg, 1997); Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>44</sup> Michael Geyer, “Ein Vorbote des Wohlfahrtsstaates: Die Kriegsoferversorgung in Frankreich, Deutschland und Großbritannien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 9 (1983): 230-277; Sabine Kienitz, “Body Damage: War Disability and Constructions of Masculinity in Weimar Germany,” *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany*, eds. Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schuler-Springorum (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 181-204.

<sup>45</sup> George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the History of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 60-62; Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 42 ff.

In this context, youth became a metonym for the future of the German nation and contemporary concerns about the loss of tradition.<sup>46</sup> The war had been a war fought in terms of a German *Kultur* versus a “Western” *Zivilisation* that represented materialism and decadence. This battle continued to be fought at the home front after 1918. Not only the defenders of the status quo, but also those who believed in the Republic and its democratic future, worried about the dangers of urbanization, modern life, capitalism, and modern mass culture, which in their opinion, were leading to nervous diseases; the disintegration of the traditional family; the loss of religious values; gender disruption; and the eroticization of everyday life. Mass warfare was followed by an explosion in mass culture. Whereas the former had destroyed men’s bodies and minds at the front, the latter had the potential to do the same at home. Just as the war had decimated thousands of young lives, the young were the most likely casualties of these modern mass phenomena. The enemies were similar: mass culture, capitalism, rationalism, decadence, hedonism, *and* homosexuality.

The future of the German nation required the appropriate development of youths. The emphasis on youth “mirrored the deep insecurity of society and the political system to find an appropriate relationship to the younger generation.”<sup>47</sup> The state attempted to regulate this relationship “the physical and the moral health of the future adult population” through youth welfare and education,<sup>48</sup> measures that implied the invasion of the private sphere by the state and

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<sup>46</sup> Frank Trommler, “Mission ohne Ziel: über den Kult der Jugend im modernen Deutschland,” *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit.* *Der Mythos Jugend*, ed. Thomas Koebner, Rolf-Peter Janz, and Frank Trommler (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1985), 17.

<sup>47</sup> Hans Mommsen, “Generationskonflikt und Jugendrevolte in der Weimarer Republik,” *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit*,” 62.

<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Harvey, *Youth and the Welfare State in Weimar Germany* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 48. See also: David F. Crew, *Germans on Welfare: From Weimar to Hitler* (New York:

the church.<sup>49</sup> These anxieties about national decline strengthened the belief that only normative heterosexuality could guarantee Germany's survival. How could the nation's fundamental institution—the family—be safe if youths had access to titillating readings about premarital sex, and, worst of all, homosexuality? Homosexuality was associated with immorality, indulgence, egoism, crisis, and death. Youth, in contrast, represented potential normative time and reproduction.<sup>50</sup> The future of the nation was contingent on the appropriate upbringing of the nation's young, even on the protection of the unborn.<sup>51</sup>

Chapter 1, “Weimar’s ‘Inversion-Wave’: Youthful Sexuality and the Origin of Homophobia,” contends that youthful sexuality had been central to the development of theories that aimed to explain male homosexuality since the 1890s. Research showed that youths are sexually ambiguous and that part of “normal” development consists in growing out of same-sex attraction, a process that culminates with the onset of adulthood. Such theories suggested that

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Oxford University Press, 1998); Edward Ross Dickinson, *The Politics of German Child Welfare from the Empire to the Federal Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996); Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Grenzen der Sozialdisziplinierung: Aufstieg und Krise der deutschen Jugendfürsorge von 1878 bis 1932* (Köln: Bund-Verlag, 1986); Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Jugend zwischen Krieg und Krise: Lebenswelten von Arbeiterjungen in der Weimarer Republik* (Köln: Bund-Verlag, 1987); Peter D. Stachura, *The Weimar Republic and the Younger Proletariat: An Economic and Social Analysis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989); Young-Sun Hong, *Welfare, Modernity, and the Weimar State 1919-1933* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>49</sup> Harvey 12-16.

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 3-4.

<sup>51</sup> Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Annette F. Timm, *The Politics of Fertility in Twentieth-Century Berlin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Cornelia Osborne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Cornelia Osborne, *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007).

same-sex attraction during youth could be “fixed” as the result of seduction. The popularity of these theories during the 1920s challenged Hirschfeld’s belief that homosexuality was inborn. Fear of seduction justified the belief in an “inversion wave” after the First World War. Homosexuality appeared to have become ubiquitous at the time and repression seemed an apt response to this threat to the nation’s young.

Mass culture made the homosexual highly visible during the Weimar Republic. Chapter 2, “From Mass Culture to a Mass Movement: The League for Human Rights and Homosexual Visibility,” juxtaposes mass culture with the homosexual because both threatened the appropriate sexual development of youths, and because homosexuality found mass appeal through the spread of popular homosexual publications. As Larry P. Gross has argued, “the most effective form of resistance to the hegemony of the mainstream is to speak for oneself, to create narratives and image that counter the accepted, oppressive, or inaccurate ones.”<sup>52</sup> “Typically,” Gross continues, “the first alternative channels to appear are those with low entry barriers, minimal technological needs, and relatively low operating costs.” Following Gross’s argument, this chapter contends that not enough attention has been paid to the role of mass culture in the “emergence of a self-conscious community” in Germany during this period. The League for Human Rights used popular magazines to attract new members, to entertain its readers, and to educate and empower them. These publications enforced a model of homosexual identity that stressed productivity and respectability, values that would lead to the decriminalization of male, same-sex acts under Paragraph 175.

This chapter also shows how embracing these principles could be counterproductive. Invoking liberal rights and bourgeois values in the quest for sexual freedom had its dangers and

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<sup>52</sup> Larry P. Gross, *Up from Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men, and the Media in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 19.

limitations.<sup>53</sup> This chapter focuses on the assimilationist practices of the League for Human Rights and their exclusionary effects. Whereas the visibility that the homosexual movement achieved during the Weimar Republic would not have been possible without the democratic guarantees and rights that this liberal state offered, these same rights and liberties could be used to justify the repression of homosexuality.

Chapter 3, “The Allure of Mass Culture, or the Homosexual Lies in Wait at the Kiosk” situates the publications of the League for Human Rights in their larger media landscape. The magazines that the League published were part of what contemporaries called “trash and smut literature” (*Schmutz- und Schundliteratur*). This chapter examines the main characteristics of these mass cultural products and their antihegemonic potential. What made these publications so trashy, so appealing to youths, and so threatening? While mass culture contributed to the production of a homosexual subjectivity and to the growth of the movement, it perpetuated the belief in homosexual seduction. The presence of homosexual publications in the newsstands multiplied the homosexual threat and the danger of seduction. The media representation of homosexuality multiplied the threat: the movement’s press was as dangerous as the homosexual himself.

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<sup>53</sup> This chapter shows that “homoliberalism” has a longer history outside of the United States. The concept in its contemporary usage “refer[s] to the economic, political, and social enfranchisement of certain normative-leaning, straight-acting homosexuals at the expense of other, inassimilable sexual minorities. A coercive and oppressive form of political optimism that tethers individual fortune and social progress to the workings of the nation-state” (Warner, xi). Homoliberalism, like “homonormativity” refers to a “privatized, depoliticized . . . culture anchored in domesticity and consumption . . . that does not contest dominant heteronormative forms but upholds and sustains them” (Warner, xi). Sara Warner, *Acts of Gaiety: LGBT Performance and the Politics of Pleasure* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013). See also: Lisa Duggan, “The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism,” *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, ed. Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 175-194.



Chapter 4, “The Making of a Moral Panic: Schundliteratur and the Protection of Youth,” shows how the unfounded fears of mass culture’s negative effects on youth galvanized a conservative social movement made up of teachers, pedagogues, religious leaders, and morality campaigners. Worried that Schundliteratur was the clearest symptom of Germany’s moral decay, these moral entrepreneurs demanded official measures to protect youths against its harmful effects. Upset because their voices were not being heard, they took the protection of youth in their hands and did not hesitate to curtail the freedom of other in the process. These moral entrepreneurs backed their moral crusade with the findings of youth psychology (*Jugendpsychologie*) that legitimized the effects that mass culture could have on the appropriate psychological and sexual development of youths.

Moral panics are commonly followed by a legislative response. Chapter 5, “Under the Counter, Into the Closet: The Law for the Protection of Youth Against Harmful Literature and the Institutionalization of Homophobia,” shows that legal measures against mass culture and its alleged harm to youth were also measures against the spread of homosexuality. Since the constitution did not allow for censorship (but included special measures for the protection of youth), legislators were left with one option: to remove from sale every publication deemed dangerous for the appropriate physical, psychological, and moral development of Germany’s youths. Homosexual publications—and the homosexual—would be tolerated but hidden from public sight. As a consequence, the law succeeded in decreasing homosexual visibility, which was crucial to the movement’s growth and political significance. The Law for the Protection of Youth against Harmful Literature, although mild in appearance, provided the legal and bureaucratic apparatus for the institutionalization of homophobia.

Chapter 6, “Standing on the Side of Youth: Adolescence and the Decriminalization of Homosexuality,” explores how youth opened new avenues of resistance against the repression of homosexuality. The protection of youth became a slogan to claim respectability in the League for Human Rights’ campaign to decriminalize same-sex acts. There had been many attempts to reform the German Criminal Code (*Reichsstrafgesetzbuch*) since the 1890s, but every single strategy aimed to abolishing Paragraph 175 had failed because homosexuality continued to be objectionable despite some sympathetic medical theories. When debating the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1929, legislators were confronted with the issue of youth protection. What if youths could be indeed “seduced” into homosexuality? Legislators came to a compromise: they decriminalized same-sex acts between adult men *but* increased the age of consent for male, same-sex acts.

The League for Human Rights celebrated this decision as its own success, for it had been advocating similar measures throughout since 1923. Friedrich Radszuweit had made the discourse on youth protection its own. He stressed that homosexuals had the obligation to protect youths and to contribute to national regeneration and reminded his readers that the League condemned and excluded pederasts. The League promoted a form of homosexuality that only involved consenting adults and sex in private. Respectability required privacy and invisibility, which Radszuweit was willing to compromise in exchange for decriminalization. Neither invisibility, nor claiming to contribute to the protection of youths, would lead to homosexual liberation. Despite the League’s emphasis on youth protection, the link between homosexuality and the seduction of youths did not disappear.

Finally, *Danger at the Newsstand: Homosexuality, Youth, and Mass Culture in the Weimar Republic* aims to break the “selective memory” that characterizes LGBT history in

general and in the Weimar Republic in particular.<sup>54</sup> The entangled histories of youth and homosexuality during this period can help us learn from past mistakes and reflect on the limitations of single-goal strategies. While this story recognizes the possibilities of liberal rights for sexual freedom during this period, it is also a cautionary tale about the limitations of this approach. The production of modern notions of male homosexual identity (a process that the League for Human Rights enabled with its vibrant press) reproduced other discourses, in this case that of youth protection, which was at odds with the goals the movement hoped to achieve. Suppressing the homosexual threat to youths implied limiting the freedom of others, erasing and limiting sexual agency, and buying into the values of nationalism, respectability, productivity, and privacy. The League for Human Rights investment in mass culture and such values is an early example of how homosexual politics could be complicit with the normative “promise of happiness.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Sara Warner, *Acts of Gaiety*, 4.

<sup>55</sup> Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

## Chapter 1:

### Weimar's 'Inversion-Wave': Youthful Sexuality and the Origin of Homophobia

Writing in 1920, the psychologist William Stern (1871-1938) argued that the First World War and the 1918 Revolution had “accelerated the physiological and psychological conditions for a sudden, almost epidemic spread of inversion” in Germany.<sup>56</sup> Stern was not alone in believing this: many German psychiatrists, psychologists, and pedagogues were certain that “inversion,” as homosexuality was often called at the time, was on the rise after the war, especially among male youths. This conviction did not diminish during the Weimar Republic. In a 1929 article, the child psychiatrist Werner Villinger (1887-1961), who years later would be involved in the Nazi euthanasia program, also contended that homosexuality among young people had indeed increased during the Republic. “What are the reasons for such a strange phenomenon?” he wondered.<sup>57</sup>

To explain the “extraordinary increase in homosexuality” after the First World War, Villinger and many of his colleagues turned to readily available theories of adolescent sexuality

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<sup>56</sup> William Stern, “Die ‘Inversions’-Welle. Ein zeitgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur Jugendpsychologie,” *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Psychologie und experimentelle Pädagogik* 21 (1920): 160-170: 162.

<sup>57</sup> Werner Villinger, “Zur Frage der Homosexualität Jugendlicher,” *Mitteilungen der Forensisch-psychologischen Gesellschaft zu Hamburg*, Jahrgang 1928/29, Nr. 4. Werner Villinger became the first director of the children’s ward at the University of Tübingen’s mental hospital in 1920. This was the second clinic of its kind and mirrored the children’s mental hospital in Frankfurt am Main, which the psychiatrist Max Isserlin directed. Villinger was also the lead psychiatrist at the Hamburg’s youth welfare office from 1926 to 1933. He became a more relevant psychiatrist during the Third Reich. He was the main editor of the professional journal *Zeitschrift für Kinderpsychologie* from 1936 to 1944 and was an assessor (*Gutachter*) for the Nazi euthanasia program *Aktion T4*. Villinger continued working as a psychiatrist in the Federal Republic of Germany after the Second World War. See: Rolf Castell, “Einleitung,” *Hundert Jahre Kinder- und Jugendpsychiatrie. Biographien und Autobiographien*, ed. Rolf Castell (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2008), 9-14; Reinhart Lempp, “Mein Weg in der Kinderpsychiatrie,” in *Hundert Jahre Kinder- und Jugendpsychologie*, 119-207: 124.

that had been in the making since the 1890s. Like many other doctors had argued before, Villinger admitted that “same-sex eroticism” is a normal phenomenon that takes place between the ages of twelve to twenty and affects youths in great variation, duration, and strength. Villinger, however, differentiated between adolescent “same-sex eroticism,” which he considered innocent and harmless, and “real” homosexuality, which was deviant and pathological. He recommended doctors wait until the “apparent real homosexual” turns twenty-five before making a definitive diagnosis, for homosexuality, as a defining aspect of a pathological individual, could only exist in adults. Villinger’s beliefs were not extraordinary. They were shared by a large number of psychiatrists and psychologists during the Weimar Republic and had an enormous impact for the understanding of homosexuality in the 1920s and the following decades. His arguments about adolescent sexuality and homosexuality illustrate how, as adolescent “same-sex eroticism” was deemed unimportant, the contours of the adult “real” homosexual were being defined during the 1920s.

Was homosexuality indeed on the rise in Germany after the First World War? Villinger was confident that “real” homosexuality was not increasing. He believed this was the case for a transitory youthful “same-sex eroticism” caused by mass suggestion and seduction. According to Villinger, several factors contributed to this phenomenon: the overvaluation of sexuality in modern society; the spread of psychoanalysis, homosexual propaganda, and other “suggestive” literature; the homoerotic currents in the youth movement and in modern pedagogy; and the excessive freedom that youths enjoyed during and after the war. Like other psychiatrists during the 1920s, Villinger believed that the increase in adolescent homosexuality was an effect of modern cultural phenomena and represented a threat to the future of the nation. The repression of “real” homosexuals seemed to be an apt solution for this problem.

Why did many psychiatrists, psychologists, and pedagogues believe that Germany was experiencing an “Inversion-Wave”? How did they come to argue that the adolescent’s normal sexual development could be compromised by the popularization of psychoanalysis and modern mass culture? The purpose of this chapter is not to prove whether Weimar’s “homosexual wave” was real or imaginary. Instead, it will attempt to answer these questions by examining which cultural anxieties prompted these experts to believe in a “homosexual wave” during the Weimar Republic. Much of this belief in an increase in homosexuality had to do with an existential anxiety about the future of the nation in Germany’s postwar society. Responding to this anxiety, psychiatrists and psychologists developed scientific theories that interpreted male youths as sexually ambiguous beings and, therefore, susceptible to homosexual seduction. To understand such claims, we need to put their theories in the context of contemporary debates concerning whether homosexuality was natural or acquired.

The study of adolescence and homosexuality is hardly a new topic.<sup>58</sup> Historians have examined their connection in the German youth movement and the writings of Hans Blüher, who popularized psychoanalysis (and scandalized virtually everyone) in Germany during the 1910s.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ulfried Geuter, *Homosexualität in der deutschen Jugendbewegung: Jugendfreundschaft und Sexualität im Diskurs von Jugendbewegung, Psychoanalyse und Jugendpsychologie am Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994). The work of Hans Blüher has been examined in the context of the youth movement and of anti-modernism and völkisch nationalism in the work of George L. Mosse, Fritz Stern, and Walter Laqueur. (George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of the German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1964), 171-189 and 204-217; Walter Z. Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 1962); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 176-180.) See also: Elizabeth Heineman, “Gender Identity and the Wandervogel Movement” *German Studies Review* 12, no. 2 (May, 1989): 249-270.

<sup>59</sup> Hans Blüher, *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen: Ein Beitrag zur Erkenntnis der sexuellen Inversion* (Tempelhof-Berlin: Wiese, 1912) and Hans Blüher *Die Rolle der Erotik in der Männlichen Gesellschaft. Eine Theorie der menschlichen Staatsbildung nach*

Accordingly, much consideration has been given to Sigmund Freud and his writings on childhood sexuality and his speculations on the etiology of homosexuality.<sup>60</sup> Freud may have shocked his contemporaries at the turn of the century, but the sexual ambiguity of children and youths that he promoted in the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) had been argued before it became axiomatic by the 1920s.<sup>61</sup> Although many psychiatrists and psychologists shared some of Freud's ideas (if not his methods), the popularization of psychoanalysis and its views on sexuality struck a nerve among professionals during the 1920s. Many psychiatrists and psychologists thought that psychoanalysis' fixation with sexuality had the power to veer unsettled adolescents from their appropriate sexual development. They came to think of

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*Wesen und Wert* (Jena: Diederichs, 1924). For a superb intellectual biography of Blüher, see: Claudia Bruns, *Politik des Eros: der Männerbund in Wissenschaft, Politik und Jugendkultur (1880-1934)* (Köln: Böhlau, 2008).

<sup>60</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, translated and edited by James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2000). I will not be debating whether Freud was good or bad for homosexuals, or whether he contributed to the production of the homo-heterosexual binary or fought against this distinction by stressing that everyone is in essence polymorphously perverse. I will not show mastery of psychoanalysis and of Freud's views on homosexuality. Freud's thought was not static and I will not pretend that it was. That being said, the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* represent his clearest (and most cherished) views on sexuality and sexual development. See: Henry Abelove, "Freud, Male Homosexuality, and the Americans" in the *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, eds. Henry Abelove, Michele A. Barale, and D. Halperin (London: Routledge, 1993), 381-93; Arnold I. Davidson, "How to do the History of Psychoanalysis: A Reading of Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*," *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 39-64; Tim Dean and Christopher Lane, eds. *Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life of Our Time* (New York: Norton, 1988); Kenneth, Lewes, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Male Homosexuality* (New York: New American Library, 1988).

<sup>61</sup> Anthony D. Kauders argues that psychoanalysis experienced a brief period of prosperity during the middle years of the Weimar Republic, once the condemnation of psychoanalysis' unscientific methods and its focus on sexuality had faded away and criticism moved towards psychoanalysis' treatment of the unconscious and its rationalism. See: Anthony D. Kauders, "The Crisis of the Psyche and the Future of Germany: The Encounter with Freud in the Weimar Republic," *Central European History* 46 (2013): 325-345. See also: Anthony D. Kauders, *Der Freud Komplex: eine Geschichte der Psychoanalyse in Deutschland* (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2014), 23-115.

psychoanalysis as a “seducer” not unlike the homosexual, for psychoanalysis made youthful sexuality conscious and, therefore, possible and even desirable. Male youths had to be protected from their influence lest they turn homosexual themselves.

The belief that youths could be seduced into homosexuality can be explained with contemporary scientific terms and theories, but it can only be understood in its cultural context. Psychologists and psychiatrists were inclined to believe that homosexuality was the result of an acquired trait that could be explained through a set of environmental factors. It could be the result of some individual’s enticement to engage in same-sex acts, or of reading texts that trivialized and even celebrated homosexuality, such as those present in the homosexual movement’s “propaganda.” That youths were considered so vulnerable to environmental influences, however, was the result of a generalized anxiety about contemporary youths’ unbecoming behavior and what this implied for the future of the German nation in the aftermath of the First World War. Amidst this social and cultural climate, the confluence of old and new theories about adolescent sexuality and homosexuality justified the fear that “real” homosexuals represented the greatest threat to youths and, by extension, to the future of the nation. Psychiatrists and psychologists made it their mission to guarantee the appropriate sexual development of adolescents. Their mission involved identifying the symptoms and eradicating the homosexual threat.

### *Adolescence and Homosexuality in Theories of Sexuality*

Historians of sexuality have not paid enough attention to how theories of adolescent sexuality and homosexuality were carefully produced along parallel epistemological lines and in



opposition to each other.<sup>62</sup> The history of sexuality suffers without the study of these complex intersections. Certainly, the interest in the sexuality of youths takes into consideration some uncomfortable issues around the turn of the twentieth century. Male youths (these scientists paid attention to boys for the most part), so it seemed, were sexually ambiguous. This was the case for both their morphology and psychology. Their sexual ambiguity and the process of appropriate sexual development into heterosexuality required that doctors explore the etiology of homosexuality, since same-sex acts during youth were far from uncommon. Sexologists debated whether homosexuality was inborn—the manifestations of some inherent, natural trait or deviance—or acquired, the result of moral turpitude. Their consensus on explanations that prioritized its acquired character raised questions about youths' susceptibility to homosexual seduction.

Psychoanalysis, personified in the figure of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), prompted a wide discussion in professional circles (and, to a certain degree, in the larger society) about child

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<sup>62</sup> Overall, I suggest that the ongoing discussion of same-sex sexuality in theories of adolescent sexual development as well as the discussion of adolescence in theories of homosexuality justified the protection of youth from homosexual “seduction.” Historians who study adolescence and homosexuality have ignored their intricate histories and have tended to naturalize these subjectivities instead of examining how they (and understandings of them) developed alongside. For example, Jennifer V. Evans, in her study on male youth prostitution in post-World War II Berlin focuses on the regulation of sexuality, but not necessarily on how homosexuality and adolescence continue to be produced as subjectivities through the laws and the criminal and sexological theories she analyzes. Jennifer V. Evans, “Bahnhof Boys: Policing Male Prostitution in Post-Nazi Berlin,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 4 (Oct., 2003): 605-636. The discursive relationship between adolescence and homosexuality has received some attention by U.S. historians. They focus on how this relationship can shed light on the history of normativity, deviance, and citizenship. See: Todd R. Ramlow, “Bad Boys: Abstractions of Difference and the Politics of Youth ‘Deviance’,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 9, no. 1-2 (2003): 107-132. Dom Romesburg, “The Tightrope of Normalcy: Homosexuality, Developmental Citizenship, and American Adolescence, 1890-1940,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 21, no. 4 (December 2008): 417-442. These historians have overlooked how these discourses prompted homosexuals to disavow any erotic interest in youths and were therefore agents in producing a form of homosexual identity that involved only consenting adults, as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

and adolescent sexuality during the first and second decades of the twentieth century. After being initially ignored, the discussion about adolescent sexuality became commonplace a few years after the publication of Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* in 1905. The first reactions about psychoanalysis' effects on youths started to appear in scientific journals in the 1910s.<sup>63</sup> Despite the agitation that Freud's work caused, he did not "discover" childhood sexuality, and he never claimed to do have done so. Childhood sexuality had been part of cultural representations in literature and art for centuries.<sup>64</sup> Other psychologists had explored this area before him.<sup>65</sup> We should regard Freud as an influential voice in a constellation of psychiatrists and psychologists who shared an interest in adolescence and sexuality. Their research on adolescent sexuality contributed to modern theories of homosexuality.

Freud was not alone either in locating the genesis of homosexuality in some event that had taken place during childhood or adolescence either. Physicians, such as Max Dessoir, Albert Moll, and Magnus Hirschfeld, demonstrated in their scientific papers that to understand adolescent sexuality one had to understand homosexuality and vice versa. After hours of observation and consultation with patients, and after painstaking research on the biological, historical, and sociological aspects of homosexuality, these doctors agreed that sexual

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<sup>63</sup> William Stern, "Die Anwendung der Psychoanalyse auf Kindheit und Jugend. Ein Protest," *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie und psychologische Sammelforschung* 8 (1914): 71-91 and "Warnung vor der Übergriffen der Jugend-Psychoanalyse," *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie und psychologische Sammelforschung* 8 (1914): 378.

<sup>64</sup> Albert Moll, *The Sexual Life of the Child*, trans. Eden Paul (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929) (1908), 8-13. See also: Lutz D. H. Sauerteig, "Loss of Innocence: Albert Moll, Sigmund Freud and the Invention of Childhood Sexuality Around 1900," *Medical History* 56, no. 2 (2012): 156-183.

<sup>65</sup> The psychologist Henry Maudsley had addressed the topic as soon as 1867. Freud diligently cited the work of Bernard Perez (1886), Karl Groos (1899), Sanford Bell (1902), and Havelock Ellis (1903), all of whom had dealt with child sexuality in some way or another.

ambiguity—which they described either as the remains of atavistic bisexuality—was a common trait during adolescence. That they agreed on this issue did not mean that they were of the same mind on everything else. Dessoir, Freud, and Moll believed that sexual ambiguity during adolescence proved that homosexuality was an acquired trait. In contrast, Hirschfeld used the peculiarities of adolescent sexuality to argue that homosexuality was natural and that it existed from birth.

The physician, philosopher, and aesthetician Max Dessoir (1867-1947) provided one of the most impactful theories of sexual development at the turn of the twentieth century. Dessoir taught at Berlin University and was best known later in life for his work on aesthetics, art history, and parapsychology.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, his essay “On the Psychology of Sexual Life,” published in 1894, influenced every German and Austrian scientist—including Sigmund Freud—who engaged in the topic of adolescent sexuality until the 1920s. This brief article combined Dessoir’s eclectic interests, as it was as much a medical as a philosophical essay. Almost a decade before Freud’s concept of “polymorphous perversity,” he contended that sexuality was undifferentiated during puberty and that heterosexuality was the result of the “specialization” of the sexual instinct during adolescence.<sup>67</sup> Dessoir argued that same-sex sexual acts were common, transitory experiments during adolescence that the biological and psychological traces of a primordial universal human bisexuality could explain. Such acts were the result of incomplete bodies searching for fulfillment in other bodies; the sex of that body was irrelevant at this point.

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<sup>66</sup> “Dessoir, Max,” *Philosophen-Lexikon: Handwörterbuch der Philosophie nach Personen*, Werner Ziegenfuss, ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1949), 232-236;

<sup>67</sup> Max Dessoir, “Zur Psychologie der Vita sexualis,” *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie* 50 (1894): 941-975.

“Sexual undifferentiation” (*undifferenziertes Geschlechtsgefühl*), to use Dessoir’s term, had important implications for explaining the etiology of homosexuality. First, he insisted that it should not be mistaken for “larval homosexuality” because it was rather part of the natural development of sexuality into normal heterosexuality.<sup>68</sup> Growing up implied becoming aware of the cultural and social inhibitions against homosexuality. In a minority of cases, a combination of social and constitutional traits, such as some forms of inherited degeneration, could lead to a form of arrested development. Most crucially, Dessoir explained that during the period of “sexual undifferentiation” the adolescent could also be struck by a “same-sex impression” that could result in the fixation of homosexuality as the final adult outcome. These “impressions,” as other doctors argued at the time, were not necessarily the result of a youth’s contact with an adult homosexual, inappropriate literature could also lead to the same effect.<sup>69</sup> It followed that homosexuals were either men (Dessoir did not write about women) who had not overcome their own adolescence and its respective period of “sexual undifferentiation,” or whose sexuality had been “fixed” into homosexuality after a same-sex contact. This belief in homosexuality as an acquired trait would become very influential in the years to come when scientists would engage with Dessoir’s superficial ideas on bisexuality, sexual trauma, and suggestion.

Dessoir influenced Freud and his ideas on sexual development at large, but Freud became the most famous name associated with the belief in sexual ambiguity during childhood and youth. Freud considered homosexuality a form of neurosis. Like for many other neuroses, psychoanalysis sought to find the origins of homosexuality in repressed sexual memories and

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<sup>68</sup> Dessoir, 942-946.

<sup>69</sup> A. Cramer, “Die conträre Sexualempfindung in ihre Beziehungen zum §175 des Strafgesetzbuches,” *Berliner klinische Wochenschrift* 34, Nr. 43 (25. Oktober 1897): 934-6 and Nr. 44 (1. November 1897): 962-5: 964.

traumas. Psychoanalysis moved the attention from the body, where doctors had sought for explanations for mental illness (and for homosexuality), to the psyche.<sup>70</sup> Looking into the depths of the human psyche, Freud claimed to have found proof in his analyses that everyone, even if unconsciously, has had libidinal attachment to both sexes, something that a former and now repressed bisexuality (or to use Dessoir's term, "sexual undifferentiation") could help explain.

In the *Three Essays* Freud paid especial attention to the relationship between child and youthful sexuality and the so-called "sexual aberrations." Whereas Freud began his treatise with an essay on "The Sexual Aberrations," the second and third essays were dedicated to "Infantile Sexuality" and the "Transformation of Puberty" respectively. The order of the essays was important: beginning with the sexual aberrations and ending with puberty was a strategy to highlight the relationship between psychological development and sexuality, as well as a way to blur the distinctions between normal and pathological sexuality. Freud's circular narrative troubled the typical linear narrative of sexual development; it stressed the possibility of the permanence of the polymorphous perversity of the child in adult life. Nonetheless, Freud maintained that heterosexuality is the only appropriate adult outcome—not because heterosexuality is natural, but because it is socially and culturally sound.

Freud was not different from most scientists of his time inasmuch as he saw homosexuality as a form of atavism or of arrested development; heterosexuality, by this scheme, was the culmination of evolution into civilization. He had trained in neurology and was well acquainted with the scientific views of his time. He incorporated the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin (1809-1882), Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829), as well as Ernst Haeckel's

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<sup>70</sup> Arnold I. Davidson, "Closing Up the Corpses: Diseases of Sexuality and the Emergence of the Psychiatric Style of Reasoning," *Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis*, eds. Tim Dean and Christopher Lane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 59-90 and Arnold I. Davidson, "Sex and the Emergence of Sexuality," *Critical Inquiry* 14.1 (1987): 16-48.

(1834-1919) recapitulation theory. Accordingly, Freud came to view ontogenesis—the physical and psychological development from birth to adulthood—as a repetition of a larger process of phylogenesis, or of a species’ evolution. According to evolutionary theories, a person relived through embryonic, childhood, and adolescence the entirety of human natural history from an original bisexual whole to evolved sexual dimorphism.<sup>71</sup> In light of this view, vestiges of that original bisexuality were still visible during adolescence. It followed that same-sex attraction was linked to the primitive in “man.”

The sexual ambiguity of children and youths explained the manifestations of sexual aberrations during this period of life. It was here that Freud located the origin of neuroses. He did not describe children as possessing a blank body in sexual terms—biology and evolution were inscribed in their bodies—but as sexually ambiguous territory in which normal or pathological (neurotic) sexuality could develop out of the child’s and the youth’s natural desire. Freud explained normal sexual development using the idea of a “period of latency” during which the child would build the “barriers against sexuality”; when it would learn to sublimate aspects of its sexuality into socially sanctioned occupations. Heterosexuality, however, did not develop without problems. On the contrary, attaining heterosexuality, he argued, “is not accomplished

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<sup>71</sup> The American psychologists G. Stanley Hall had popularized at the turn of the century. G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence; its psychology and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion, and education* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1904). See also: Romesburg, “The Tightrope of Normalcy”: 422-430. Other psychoanalysts close to Freud, such as Ernest Jones, expanded on these ideas. Ernest Jones, “Einige Probleme des jugendlichen Alters,” *Imago* 9, no.2 (1923): 145-168.

without a certain amount of fumbling.”<sup>72</sup> Same-sex attraction and sexual experimentation, for Freud as for Dessoir, were part of growing up.

Freud’s version of psychoanalysis received its harshest attack from the medical community. One of his first critics was Albert Moll (1862-1939), a well-known Berlin neurologist who in 1891 had published *The Contrary Sexual Feeling (Die konträre Sexualempfindung)*, a book that became the standard text on the topic for over two decades.<sup>73</sup> Moll’s distaste for psychoanalysis should not be understood in personal terms. Like Freud, he had been born to Jewish parents (although he had converted to Protestantism). Both had had direct contact with the neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot in Paris; and both had been keen supporters of hypnosis and suggestion.<sup>74</sup> In 1908, three years after Freud’s *Three Essays*, Moll also contended that sexuality was linked to both biological and social needs and that heterosexuality was the result of development. Despite their comparable backgrounds and their similar training, Moll dismissed Freud’s ideas about childhood sexual agency. In contrast to Freud, Moll strongly argued that not everything we observe in the child should be explained in sexual terms. Thumb sucking, to mention one of Freud’s most ridiculed examples, was a relatively harmless activity that only the most perverse mind would link to a sexual act. Nevertheless, Moll’s rejection of Freud’s “pansexualismus” (a term that Freud’s critics used to

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<sup>72</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Lecture XXI: The Development of the Libido and the Sexual Organizations,” *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 404.

<sup>73</sup> In 1912, Moll also published the *Handbook of Sexology (Handbuch für Sexualwissenschaften)*, which was usually used during court rulings regarding Paragraph 175. Matthew Conn, “Sexual Science and Sexual Forensics in 1920s Germany: Albert Moll as (S)expert,” *Medical History* 56, no. 2 (2012): 201-216: 209.

<sup>74</sup> Goerke, Heinz, “Moll, Albert“, in: *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 17 (1994), 733, stable URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118813935.html>.

deride his seeing sex everywhere) does not mean that he was a prude or a hypocrite. He discussed several aspects of sexuality that was offensive to bourgeois decorum. Although he drew a line regarding children, youthful sexuality was one of the topics he did not hesitate to discuss.

Like every other physician who dared to explore adolescent sexuality, Moll had to come to terms with same-sex acts during youth, which he treated as an observable fact. At the same time, he denied such acts were “sexual” at all. Moll argued that “friendships between boys or between girls are formed during the period in which the sexual impulse is still undifferentiated, or after its differentiation has occurred [...] must not be identified with sexual feelings.”<sup>75</sup> Whereas Moll could not dismiss childhood and adolescent sexuality, he did belittle its significance. Moll’s refusal of child and adolescent sexuality contributed to the epistemological division between a sexually innocent child and a pathological homosexual adult.

Only occasionally did youthful homosexuality fail to disappear. In such rare cases, the adolescent’s innocuous *perversity* turned into a *perversion*. The psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902) had differentiated *perversion* from *perversity* in his famous work *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886) where he described homosexuality as a disease and, therefore, as a perversion. In contrast, he thought that same-sex acts were a form of perversity, something that should concern those invested in morality and law and not doctors.<sup>76</sup> For Moll, in contrast, the potential perversity of adolescent same-sex acts was different from the adult homosexual perversion. He based this distinction on the impossibility of consummation during adolescence—

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<sup>75</sup> Moll, *The Sexual Life of the Child*, 139.

<sup>76</sup> Arnold I. Davidson, “Closing Up the Corpses,” 82; Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: A Medico-Forensic Study*, translated by Harry E. Wedeck (New York: G. P. Putnam’s & Sons, 1965) (1886), 247ff.



a belief that reflects how Moll's judgment was clouded by morality. Moll divided sexuality in two phases that he called "contractation" and "detumescence." "Contractation" (which we can define roughly as sexual attraction) was the first stage of sexual desire that excluded intercourse. Adult sexuality, in contrast, required "detumescence" (the fulfillment of the sexual act, including seminal discharge). It followed that child and adolescent sexuality, like same-sex acts, were relegated to the realm of "contractation" and remained immature forms of sexuality. Returning to the ideas that Max Dessoir had introduced a decade before him, Moll contended that "some young boys and some young girls tend to stumble during this period" and that "it is the role of a good doctor to prevent that fatal consequences results from this."<sup>77</sup> The undifferentiated stage could begin at different ages, but it was common that the "'perverse' sentiments of childhood [...] disappear spontaneously," usually after the twentieth birthday.<sup>78</sup> Hence doctors only had to prevent youths from "stumbling" for too long in order to prevent their adult homosexuality.

Moll, even more so than Freud, stood at the center of an intellectual shift in the scientific understanding of homosexuality. Some contemporary doctors, most notably Magnus Hirschfeld, argued that homosexuality was a natural and stable sexual inclination that occurred at all times in history and among all species. Proof of its natural, inborn character was that it could be traced to a patient's earliest memories.<sup>79</sup> Moll, however, doubted such memories.<sup>80</sup> Memory was a peculiar skill: one could choose what to remember and what to ignore. Moll insinuated that adult

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<sup>77</sup> Albert Moll, *Ein Leben als Arzt der Seele. Erinnerungen* (Dresden: Reißner, 1936), 152.

<sup>78</sup> Moll, *The Sexual Life of the Child*, 62.

<sup>79</sup> Even before Hirschfeld and Freud, Krafft-Ebing had based his ideas about sexuality on his patients' early-life memories. Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 162.

<sup>80</sup> Moll, *The Sexual Life of the Child*, 24.

“homosexuals” had chosen to forget any heterosexual memories from their past. Here he reversed the argument put forward by some psychoanalysts that heterosexuals had actually repressed their homosexual past.<sup>81</sup> Moll was still in the vanguard of German sexology during the Weimar Republic. He organized the First International Congress for Sexual Research that took place in Berlin in 1926. Even well into the 1930s he continued to argue that any explanation for homosexuality could only be found in the psyche and that psychoanalysis had just taken the wrong approach: to over-sexualize the child.<sup>82</sup> Despite their differences, Moll and Freud did agree on a key issue: they continued to reject the existence of inborn homosexuality, even though scientific experiments were providing substantial evidence to the contrary in the 1920s.

Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935), in contrast, championed the idea of inborn homosexuality, an idea that the endocrinological research conducted by Eugen Steinach seemed to corroborate.<sup>83</sup> Hirschfeld was a prominent Berlin doctor and sexologist who had been advocating the decriminalization of homosexuality since 1897, when he co-founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee (*Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee*), an organization of left-leaning and pro-feminist doctors and intellectuals who advocated sexual reform, including the decriminalization of homosexuality and the legalization of abortion. Hirschfeld had supported decriminalization of homosexuality on the grounds that it was inborn and natural. According to this view, homosexuals could not be guilty of a crime, since they were not

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<sup>81</sup> Wilhelm Stekel, *Onanie und Homosexualität (Die homosexuelle Parapathie) in Störung des Trieb- und Affektlebens II* (Berlin: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1923), 7.

<sup>82</sup> Albert Moll, *Ein Leben als Arzt der Seele*, 147, 150.

<sup>83</sup> Havelock Ellis was developing similar ideas in England. See: Havelock Ellis, *Sexual Inversion* (New York: Arno Press, 1975) (1901).

responsible for their desire, which was a reflection of their biology.<sup>84</sup>

Hirschfeld was not oblivious to the ideas of his predecessors and contemporaries. He argued that homosexuality represented an “intermediate sexual stage” (*sexuelle Zwischenstufe*), an idea that he had taken and developed Krafft-Ebing’s view of homosexuality as a form of sexual inversion. He was familiar with the work of Albert Moll and had dabbled in psychoanalysis from 1908 until 1911, once it became clear to him that the psychological explanation of homosexuality that psychoanalysis supported was incompatible with his theories of inborn homosexuality.<sup>85</sup> Like his predecessors, Hirschfeld also relied on notions of childhood and adolescent sexuality in order to structure his theory of inborn homosexuality. He hoped that, as scientists learned more about the inborn character of homosexuality, it would be possible to diagnose it earlier in a person’s lifespan. Early diagnosis would do away with the belief that homosexuality was a form perversion—it would turn homosexuality into a form of perversity at most. To support his theory, he relied on his patients’ testimonies, who claimed to have discovered their desire for persons of their same sex very early in their childhood, and who had been perceived by others as possessing traits of the opposite sex: homosexual girls had most likely been tomboys just as homosexual boys had grown up showing effeminate traits.

Hirschfeld continued to pay a lot of attention to the physical development of adolescents, since abnormal sexual development, such as the underdevelopment of the breasts in girls, or the

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<sup>84</sup> For Hirschfeld’s biography, see: Ralf Dose, *Magnus Hirschfeld. Deutscher – Jude – Weltbürger* (Tetz: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2005) and, especially, Manfred Herzer, *Magnus Hirschfeld. Leben und Werk eines jüdischen, schwulen und sozialistischen Sexologen* (Hamburg: MännerschwarmSkript, 2001).

<sup>85</sup> Claudia Bruns, “Kontroversen zwischen Freud, Blüher und Hirschfeld. Zur Pathologisierung und Rassierung des effeminierten Homosexuellen,” in *Dämonen, Vamps und Hysterikerinnen. Geschlechter- und Rassenfigurationen in Wissen, Medien und Alltag um 1900*, ed. Ulrike Auga (Bielefeld: Transkript 2011), 161-184: 164-166.

lack of a deep voice in boys, for example, were proof of their intermediate sexual stage. Even though Hirschfeld was certain that homosexuality could be observed at an early age, he admitted that “sexual undifferentiation” during adolescence existed. Instead of using this concept to argue that homosexuality can be acquired through seduction, bad influences, or suggestion, he used that indeterminacy to corroborate his theory of inborn homosexuality. “Sexual undifferentiation” did not disprove that homosexuality was inborn only because most adolescents would develop into heterosexual adults; homosexual adults had been homosexual children and youths.<sup>86</sup>

Hirschfeld looked for a biological explanation for homosexuality. However, he did not ignore psychological factors. In his view, it was important that doctors pay attention to a person’s entire personality in order to diagnose homosexuality at an early age, since homosexuality should be understood both in its physical and psychological dimensions.<sup>87</sup> It was not the soul that had an influence in the body, as Freud would have it, but the other way around: differences in personality and character were manifestations of the biological sexual intermediacy of homosexuals.<sup>88</sup> Hirschfeld thus added a new dimension to Krafft-Ebing’s division between perversity and perversion. Homosexuality should not be assessed on “perverse acts” alone (such as same-sex acts during youth), but on “perverse feelings” (*Empfindungen*), that is, on a psychological disposition towards homosexuality in which gender characteristics—the way homosexuals act and think of themselves, as well as how they are perceived by others—do not necessarily match the sex they were assigned at birth. In this way Hirschfeld compromised between a biological and a psychological explanation for homosexuality.

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<sup>86</sup> Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001) (1914), 121.

<sup>87</sup> Hirschfeld, *Homosexualität*, 48.

<sup>88</sup> Hirschfeld, *Homosexualität*, 51.

Still other physicians did not want to give up their search for a theory of inborn homosexuality and kept looking for it within the material boundaries of the body. At the same time as Freud was venturing into the invisible secrets of the psyche, “modern science made the invisible visible.”<sup>89</sup> The invisible here were hormones and endocrinology, the branch of physiology concerned with their study, appeared to usher in the next frontier in sexology.<sup>90</sup> During the 1920s physicians turned to the biochemical processes caused by hormones, a concept that had been coined in 1905 by the physiologist Ernest H. Starling at University College London. Hormone research continued to raise questions about the physiological and psychological basis of sexual difference and sexuality.<sup>91</sup> Sex hormones offered a chemical explanation for masculinity and femininity. However, instead of providing a definitive answer on the biochemical explanation for sexual difference, this innovative research on hormones led scientists to believe that sex was less stable than they would like to admit. Whereas hormone research simply corroborated traditional notions of masculinity and femininity at the beginning, by the 1930s researchers had come to agree that male and female hormones were not mutually exclusive: organisms were both male and female, at least at the hormonal level.<sup>92</sup>

Given the role that adolescence has played in theories of sexuality up to this point, it should not surprise us that homosexuality and adolescence intersected again in the study of sex

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<sup>89</sup> Nelly Oudshoorn, *Beyond the Natural Body: An Archaeology of Sex Hormones* (London: Routledge, 1994), 4.

<sup>90</sup> Freud, like Hirschfeld, also thought that endocrinological research would corroborate his theory. In a footnote added in 1920 to the *Three Essays* he stated: “Fliess has rightly insisted that these experimental findings do not invalidate the theory of the general bisexual disposition of the higher animals. On the contrary, it seems to me probable that further research of a similar kind will produce a direct confirmation of this presumption of bisexuality” (Freud, *Three Essays*, 13).

<sup>91</sup> Oudshoorn 17.

<sup>92</sup> Oudshoorn, 28.

hormones. Puberty played a central role in the development of hormonal sexual differentiation. The Austrian physiologist Eugen Steinach (1861-1944), a professor of medicine at the University of Vienna, was one of the leading endocrinologists who turned to hormones to explain sexual differentiation. His discovery of the “sexual specificity of hormones” was an important contribution to the biochemical explanation of sexuality.<sup>93</sup> Hormones seemed to have answered whether sexual differentiation started in the genes or whether it was a product of a physiological process in the embryo. Steinach’s research showed that sexual differentiation was a gradual process that continued after embryonic life, when the gonads and hormones would continue producing the characteristics of masculinity and femininity and would thus shape sexual behavior. This process, he believed, peaked during adolescence, when the “puberty glands” (*Pubertätsdrüse*), as Steinach called the cells that produce testosterone or estrogen, started to secrete the hormones that accelerate sexual differentiation.

Hormones also offered an explanation for inborn homosexuality and showed a direct correlation between physiological events taking place during adolescence and homosexuality. The biological explanation of homosexuality could be found in the malfunction of a gland that should be activated at some point during adolescence.<sup>94</sup> Homosexuality could be located in the

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<sup>93</sup> The *Pubertätsdrüse* is the group interstitial cells in the testis (also known as Leydig cells) that produce testosterone. Eugen Steinach, “Künstliche und natürliche Zwitterdrüsen und ihre analogen Wirkungen. Drei Mitteilungen,” *Archiv für Entwicklungsmechanik der Organismen* 46 (1920): 12-28: 13; E. Steinach und R. Lichternstern, “Umstimmung der Homosexualität durch Austausch der Pubertätsdrüsen,” *Münchener Medizinische Wochenschrift* Nr. 6 (1918): 145-148; and E. Steinach, “Histologische Beschaffenheit der Keimdrüse bei homosexuellen Männern,” *Archiv für Entwicklungsmechanik der Organismen* 46 (1920): 29-35. See also: Chandak Sengootpa, “Glandular Politics: Experimental Biology, Clinical Medicine, and Homosexual Emancipation in Fin-de-Siècle Central Europe,” *Isis* 89, no. 3 (September 1998): 445-473.

<sup>94</sup> Other scientists took on unraveling the “puberty glands.” Alexander Lipschütz’s main thesis, for instance, (like Steinach’s) is that the “formation of the human organism in morphological,

ambisexuality (*Zwitterigkeit*) of the puberty glands.<sup>95</sup> Homosexual men, then, “[would] suffer the loss of the internal-secretory masculine element of this gland during puberty, while the feminine elements [were] ‘activated’” instead.<sup>96</sup> As a consequence, Steinach argued, the erotic life of a homosexual man would be physiologically “feminine.”

Researchers believed that hormones also had a direct effect on an individual’s psyche. Alexander Lipschütz, who had conducted research with Steinach in Vienna and published a study on the topic in 1919, argued that once people were convinced that even the psychological sexual characteristics depend on the secretions of hormones they would agree that homosexuality represents “a mis-development of the puberty glands.”<sup>97</sup> This theory supported the ideas Hirschfeld had proposed: homosexuality was biological in origin and represented a form of physiological, albeit invisible and, as a result, psychological hermaphroditism. Furthermore, the discovery of these glands offered a new possibility to treat homosexuality. Doctors would one day remove the “flawed” glands of homosexual men and transplant in them “healthy” ones. Adolescence turned into a phase in which biology became destiny. During this period the “puberty glands” determined proper development into adult, “normal” heterosexual men and

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physiological and psychical correlation depends on the existence of the gonads.” Alexander Lipschütz, *Die Pubertätsdrüse und Ihre Wirkungen* (Bern: Ernst Bircher Verlag, 1919), 19.

<sup>95</sup> Steinach, “Zwitterdrüsen,” 28. In “Histologische Beschaffenheit” Steinach describes some experiments he conducted on homosexual men whose testicles had been extirpated due to tuberculosis. He compared these testes to those of “healthy” men (healthy here implied both free of tuberculosis and of homosexuality). Steinach claimed to have found unmistakable signs of degeneration” and atrophy in the extirpated testes. In any case, although Steinach believed that he had found a biological explanation for homosexuality, he still admitted that perhaps “every puberty gland has a degree of bisexuality.” In this case, heterosexuality would be contingent on the inhibition or deactivation of the “puberty gland cells” of the other sex present in an individual.

<sup>96</sup> Steinach, “Zwitterdrüsen,” 25-26.

<sup>97</sup> Lipschütz, 342.

women. Research on hormones seemed to have provided proof for the biological explanation for homosexuality. Even if it was not necessarily inborn, homosexuality was now understood as the biological result of a hormonal mis-development that had taken place during youth.

Steinach's research offered much support for Hirschfeld's theories. Still questions remained unanswered: How could one explain that homosexuality exists despite repression? That it is consistent and cannot be changed? Or that it can be found at all times and in all places?<sup>98</sup> Hirschfeld's arguments and the hard evidence that Steinach seemed to have provided to support them were not convincing enough. They could not do away with cultural and social understandings of homosexuality as an acquired disposition and as a form of degeneration. They could not change that most psychiatrists and psychologists continued to believe that youths, due to their inherent sexual ambiguity, could be "seduced" into homosexuality, be it through direct contact with a homosexual or by reading about homosexuality. Despite Hirschfeld's and Steinach's renown during the Weimar Republic, the tensions in the psychological literature between inborn and acquired homosexuality would reach unprecedented significance after the First World War. Theories of acquired homosexuality supported that the adolescent's ambiguous sexuality could be fixed into homosexuality as a result of seduction. Given the unprecedented increase in homosexuality that had occurred in the aftermath of mass warfare, experts turned to mass culture as the principal agent of contagion.

*From Mass Warfare to Mass Culture: Youth and Homosexuality during the Weimar Republic*

Theories of sexuality were not only devised with the evidence gathered during consultation hour—the *Sprechstunde*—or in the laboratory. They did not originate in a social and

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<sup>98</sup> Hirschfeld, *Homosexualität*, 315-22.



cultural vacuum. Sexuality is historically and culturally specific, and so are theories of sexuality. Physicians, psychologists, or psychiatrists were not only concerned with esoteric intellectual questions about youthful sexuality and its significance for the etiology of homosexuality. Their theories had much to do with the historical, social, and political realities that surrounded them. This was particularly true after the First World War, when many psychiatrists and psychologists firmly believed that youth had never been more sexually vulnerable.

Theories of acquired homosexuality became dominant after the war because psychiatrists and psychologists participated in a pessimistic mood that projected onto youth the failures of the past and the possibilities for national regeneration. Bringing up healthy heterosexual youths was necessary to guarantee the future of the nation and to offset the immense loss in human lives and the terrible damage to masculinity that the war had caused. The apparent increase in homosexuality these doctors claimed to observe epitomized the moral crisis they perceived to be prevalent in the postwar order. This crisis and the anxiety about the proper upbringing of German youths had other potential (and more material) origins, such as the war and postwar period's economic hardship and the social challenges this presented. However, the "crisis" of German youth, could be much more easily explained through a facile moral dichotomy: perverse homosexual men were the seducers of vulnerable youths. Psychiatrist and psychologist were not immune to these social anxieties. Their theories would prove very productive for moral conservatives.

Many psychologists and psychiatrists were certain that the war had brought to the forefront drives and desires that civilization seemed to have previously subdued. Hirschfeld, conveying some of the thoughts that Freud had expressed during the war, asserted that "the war affords tremendous opportunities to pull off these shackles [of society] temporarily and, at least

in anticipation, to indulge in infinite erotic desires.”<sup>99</sup> The extraordinary conditions of war had led to an increase in masturbation, promiscuity, adultery, prostitution, and venereal disease. In particular, many thought that the war had brought about a surge in homosexuality among soldiers and volunteers, and even among the women who had been left behind at home. William Stern (1871-1938), a professor at the University of Hamburg and one Germany’s most prominent psychologists, was one of the promoters of the belief in a homosexual epidemic. He was particularly concerned with the biopolitical consequences of the spread of homosexuality.<sup>100</sup> In his 1920 article “The ‘Inversion-Wave.’ A Contemporary Contribution to Youth Psychology,” Stern identified the origins of this “homosexual wave” in the pre-war youth movement, in the war, and in the social upheaval of Germany’s postwar society. The war, he argued, had created the conditions for the spread of homosexuality. In part, this was the case because the military had created the possibility for plentiful male, same-sex interactions.

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<sup>99</sup> Magnus Hirschfeld, *The Sexual History of the World War* (New York: The Panurge Press, 1934) (Magnus Hirschfeld und Andreas Gaspar, eds. *Sittengeschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Hanau: Müller & Kiepenheuer, 1978) (1929)), 29.

<sup>100</sup> William Stern, “Die ‘Inversions’-Welle: Ein zeitgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur Jugendpsychologie,” *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Psychologie und Jugendkunde* 21 (1920): 160-170. William Stern taught at Breslau and in Hamburg after the war. He contributed to psychotechnics, forensic psychology, intelligence testing, as well as child and adolescent psychology. He was the authority on applied psychology in Germany and became the first German forensic psychiatrist. He edited with Otto Lipmann the *Journal of Applied Psychology* (*Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie*), which during the 1920s became increasingly a venue for research in the psychology of youth. In 1935 Stern finally fled Germany due to the restrictions of the Reich’s Citizenship Law. He died in 1938 in Durham, North Carolina, where he had been teaching at Duke University. James T. Lamiell, *William Stern (1871-1938): a Brief Introduction to his Life and Work* (Lengerich: Pabst Science Publ., 2010); Helmut Moser, “Zur Entwicklung der akademischen Psychologie in Hamburg bis 1945. Eine Kontrast-Skizze als Würdigung des vergessenen Erbes von William Stern,” *Hochschultag im ‘Dritten Reich’: Die Hamburger Universität 1933-1945, Teil II: Philosophische Fakultät, Rechts- und Staatswissenschaftliche Fakultät*, eds. Eckart Krause, Ludwig Huber, Holger Fischer (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1991), 483-518.

The First World War was unlike any other prior war. It was fought in muddy, slimy, and cold trenches where death was always lying in wait.<sup>101</sup> The trenches were extraordinary in other terms. This was also a homosocial world of comradeship and mutual support where deep bonds were built.<sup>102</sup> They were “no place for sexual life, at least not for normal one,” Magnus Hirschfeld argued in his *Sexual History of the World War* (1929).<sup>103</sup> In this unusual setting, Hirschfeld continued, men were deprived of contact with women and sought for alternative forms of sexual release: soldiers turned to masturbation, to pornography, and, when possible, to prostitution—sexual outlets with dismal repercussions for the soldiers’ physical and psychological well-being. And some soldiers turned, of course, to homosexuality. However, Hirschfeld warned against jumping to false conclusions: the war had not led to an increase in homosexuality; at most, it had facilitated “pseudo-homosexual” acts. Only those who were constitutionally homosexual *before* the war would continue to be so *after* it.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 5.

<sup>102</sup> Thomas Kühne, “‘...aus diesem Krieg werden nicht nur harte Männer heimkehren.’ Kriegskameradschaft und Männlichkeit im 20. Jahrhundert,” *Männergeschichte—Geschlechtergeschichte: Männlichkeit im Wandel der Moderne*, ed. Thomas Kühne (Frankfurt: Campus, 1996), 174-192. The German military leaders had in mind the manly, heterosexual warrior who would sacrifice his life for the nation. But this was far from reality. Homosexual soldiers also used their participation in the war to reclaim their masculinity and to demand their full integration into the nation. Homosexual soldiers wanted to be “good comrades” like the rest. See: Jason Crouthamel, “Love in the Trenches: German Soldiers’ Conceptions of Sexual Deviance and Hegemonic Masculinity in the First World War,” *Gender and the First World War*, eds. Christa Hämmerle, Oswald Überegger and Birgitta Bader-Zaar (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 52-71; Jason Crouthamel, “Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma: Soldiers and Sexual Disorder in World War I and Weimar Germany” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 1 (Jan., 2008): 60-84.

<sup>103</sup> Hirschfeld, *Sexual History*, 70.

<sup>104</sup> Hirschfeld, *Sexual History*, 125-135.

William Stern was of a different opinion. Convinced of adolescence's period of sexual undifferentiation, he believed that the soldiers who had fought at the front were so young that "their sexuality was not clearly fixed and therefore they were less able to resist pure homosexual stimulation in the trenches."<sup>105</sup> In sum, these soldiers had been seduced to engage in same-sex acts. He did accept that after the war most men would return and continue their heterosexual lives—they would grow up, or rather grow out of homosexuality. But it could not be denied that the war had left a more permanent mark on some men: "the withdrawal from contact with women ha[d] resulted in an erotic inhibition and atrophy that [could] not be overcome easily upon their return." In Stern's view, these men's inherent capacity for heterosexuality had been obstructed. The solution to this problem was to re-activate this function, "to accustom these men to being in contact with women," to make heterosexuality possible for them again. Mass inversion after the war, then, was primarily the result of male insecurity. Helping young men to reclaim their confidence and to improve the relationship between the sexes was the only way to undo its power, since Stern believed that the rapidly changing relationship between men and women was responsible for a surge in male homosexuality. Youths were most affected by these untoward developments.

Homosexuality was counterproductive to Germany's biopolitical project after the war. The interest in reproduction and in the proper upbringing of adolescent boys had much to do with the loss in life and the social disruption that the war had brought about. The Austrian psychoanalyst Wilhelm Stekel argued that hygiene was now a form of religion that required that

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<sup>105</sup> Stern, "Die 'Inversions'-Welle," 164.

“every single spermatozoid [be] put at the service of the nation.”<sup>106</sup> The perceived spread of homosexuality thus contributed to narratives of national decline. Fertility had become an important topic after the war, and this trend did not help challenge the social and legal condemnation of homosexuality.<sup>107</sup>

Theories of acquired homosexuality gained relevance in this context of national decline and reproduction. “Mass suggestion” and “seduction” worked well with the theories that stressed social influences (*Lebens- und Milieueinflüsse*) in the sexual development of the child and the adolescent—theories that were gaining popularity during the 1920s. These theories were part of larger trends in psychology and psychiatry, disciplines that were then paying more attention to social and cultural factors in order to explain both individual and social problems. Psychologists and psychiatrists followed in the footsteps of criminologists and changed their focus from the physiological to the social sources of mental disease. This shift was deeply related to the physical, psychological, and moral devastation that the First World War had brought about and the impact it had had on German youths.

Contemporary commentators, criminologists, welfare providers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and pedagogues contended that children and adolescents were in state of moral and sexual waywardness (*Verwahrlosung*). They claimed that youth criminality had doubled during the war and had continued to increase during the early years of the Republic. Statistics showed that adolescents had committed 100,000 crimes (about a third of all crimes) between 1917 and 1918—crimes which included robbery, assault, and, occasionally, murder. Youths had also committed many more sexual crimes than ever before, including those that would fall under

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<sup>106</sup> Stekel, *Onanie und Homosexualität (Die homosexuelle Parapathie)*. In: *Störung des Trieb- und Affektlebens II* (Berlin: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1923) (1917), 106.

<sup>107</sup> Wilhelm Stekel, *Onanie und Homosexualität*, 562.

Paragraph 175, Germany's sodomy law. The criminologist Ernst Roesner, in an entry on "Youth Criminality" for a 1933 criminology handbook, contended that youthful criminality during and immediately after the war had been most often the result of psychopathic, degenerative traits. But in a move that exemplifies the turn toward external factors that took place during the previous decade, he stressed that the environment had exacerbated these defects and contributed to criminality among youths who were otherwise healthy.<sup>108</sup> During the war most crimes could be traced back to economic hardship. In the postwar years, juvenile delinquency was the result of a broken family (young criminals were illegitimate children or had been raised without a father); of homelessness; of bad company at home or at work; *and* of seduction.<sup>109</sup> Adult homosexual men, coworkers, or other street children and youths were not the only sources of sexual danger. Mass culture, and the vibrant homosexual press that had emerged after the war were considered pivotal criminogenic factors as well.<sup>110</sup>

In Germany's postwar context mass culture came to substitute mass warfare (*Massenvernichtungskrieg*) as the locus of young men's physical and psychological demise. Whereas war had commonly been recognized as the arena where "men" are made, the First World War had proven that war could also destroy men physically and psychologically. Weimar psychiatrists and psychologists agreed that modern mass warfare had had a tremendous effect on men's sexuality. On the one hand, war had brutalized them. On the other hand, the homosocial environment at the front had made them turn often to homosexuality. Now that the war was over,

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<sup>108</sup> Ernst Roesner, "Kriminalität im Jugendalter," *Handwörterbuch der Kriminologie und der anderen strafrechtlichen Hilfswissenschaften*, eds. Alexander Elster und Heinrich Lingemann (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1933), 840-857.

<sup>109</sup> Dr. Heinrich Többen, "Verwahrlosung," *Handwörterbuch der Kriminologie*, 968-72.

<sup>110</sup> Dr. Wilhelm Kesseböhmer, "Schund- und Schmutzschriften, unzüchtige Schriften und Bilder," *Handwörterbuch der Kriminologie*, 511-6.

other mass phenomena (*Massenercheinungen*) had the potential to disrupt sexual morality. Just as psychiatrists were concerned that working-class soldiers were more likely to engage in homosexual and violent sexual acts due to their more “simple” psychological structure, they were more likely to be influenced by the sexual allure of mass culture. In the eyes of contemporary critics, working-class male youths were its most likely victims. Their sexual misdevelopment was more plausible now that homosexuality was widely accepted as an acquired trait.

The destructive power of mass culture was felt more deeply in a society that thought of itself as weakened following the war. Iwan Bloch, a Berlin dermatologist, who worked closely with Magnus Hirschfeld and the neurologists Albert Eulenburg promoting the scientific and anthropological study of sexuality,<sup>111</sup> had argued in 1906 that “a properly functioning soul,” would be able to withstand the sexual temptations of modern life. Homosexuals were already a threat to the national community in 1906, but this was a threat that could be easily contained then because the “soul,” or so Bloch believed, was strong.<sup>112</sup> The situation was different in 1919, when German bodies and souls had been weakened, wounded, and maimed by a long war of attrition at the front and by the penuries that mobilization and sanctions have caused at home. Commentators considered that modern life, with its abundance of movie theaters, music halls, and popular literature—with nudity, eroticism, brutality, and homosexuality as their corollary—were a threat that many were too weak to resist. Youths were especially vulnerable to these enticing entertainments that threatened particularly youths due to their sexual ambiguity and the

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<sup>111</sup> In fact, Bloch coined the term “sexology” (*Sexualwissenschaft*) in 1906. Erwin J. Haberle, “The Jewish Contribution to the Development of Sexology,” *The Journal of Sex Research* 18, no. 4 (November, 1982): 305-323: 307.

<sup>112</sup> Cited in Jason Crouthamel, “Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma”: 64.

facility with which they could be persuaded into doing things they would not do otherwise. William Stern believed that the best way to combat the spread of homosexuality after the war was to foster heterosexuality, but this healing process was not that simple because those who “preach” about inversion, “[held] these problematic natures in their present condition.”<sup>113</sup> He believed in a form of “mass-suggestion” that had taken place during the war to which youths had been particularly susceptible: this “mass suggestion” was the result of homosexual mass culture.

Other psychiatrists, psychologists, and pedagogues were not immune to this mood. The idea of a rapid spread of homosexuality through mass entertainments and the popularization of psychoanalysis became widely accepted during the Weimar Republic and would shape not only how psychiatrists would think of homosexuality during the 1920s, but also their thoughts on adolescent sexuality in general. Adolescents, when in contact with adult homosexuals or with homosexual mass culture, could be seduced into homosexuality. The need for the protection of youth that the discourse on national regeneration included would justify measures to contain the spread of homosexuality.

### *The Protection of Youth and the Origins of Homophobia*

For the upholders of traditional morals, the postwar “crisis” warranted official measures to protect of youths. These measures and their justification turned out be an arena for the production of homophobia. Psychiatrists and psychologists were not immune to these trends, if only because they wanted their work to be relevant to contemporary discussions. Homosexuality endangered the postwar project of national regeneration because it threatened marriage, which was considered the foundation of the state. In that vein, the ostensible “homosexual wave”

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<sup>113</sup> Stern, “Die ‘Inversions’-Welle,” 165.



contributed to the narrative of national decline. It was within this context of normative sexuality and reproduction that the protection of youth and homosexuality became deeply linked during the Weimar Republic. Psychiatrists and psychologists envisioned different causes and solutions to contain the spread of homosexuality. These went from the particular, such as suppressing psychoanalytic thought, to more general measures against mass culture and the spread of homosexual movement's "propaganda." Their reactions show how theories of acquired homosexuality had taken root during the 1920s: homosexuality was the result of seduction; youths were its most likely victims.

The fear of a possible homosexual "epidemic" demanded official response. In 1921, the Bavarian State Ministry of Education (*Staatsministerium für Unterricht und Kultus*) organized a series of lectures about the protection of youth against the "intrusion of homosexual ambitions" in Germany. The speakers were the nationally and internationally renowned psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin, the child psychiatrist Max Isserlin, and the local pedagogue Hans Loewe.<sup>114</sup> They were asked to address three relevant topics: the causes and origins of homosexuality; the particular threat that homosexuality presents for adolescents; and the measures that the government should take to prevent this threat. Their ideas did not stay in Munich, where they would only have reached a limited amount of doctors, teachers, pedagogues, and a few socially engaged citizens. Their speeches were published in the *Journal for Pedagogical Psychology and Youth Studies* (*Zeitschrift für pädagogische Psychologie und Jugendkunde*) and received the national and international attention that the journal editors—the pedagogue Otto Scheibner and (who else?) the psychologist William Stern—believed this problem deserved.

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<sup>114</sup> Wolfgang Burgmair, Eric J. Engstrom, and Matthias M. Weber, eds. *Kraepelin in München. Teil 3. 1921-1926* (Munich: Belleville, 2013), 143.

Emil Kraepelin (1856-1926) delivered the first of these three speeches. Kraepelin, a professor at the University of Munich, was the most famous German psychiatrist at the time, or as Freud used to call him, the “highest pontifex” (*Oberpapst*) of German psychiatry.<sup>115</sup> In 1921, in the final stage of his career, Kraepelin did not enjoy the same fame he had enjoyed before the war. Still, he was very influential among conservative sectors. His ideas resonated with conservative morality campaigners who did not hesitate to use the authority of his scientific opinions to support their moral arguments. Kraepelin’s positive reception by Weimar-era conservative elites had much to do with their agreement with his political position during the war. The psychiatrist had advocated the radicalization of foreign policy and aggression as well as defended territorial expansion and the importance of land for the survival of the German spirit (*Geist*). Kraepelin had also been an unquenchable supporter of eugenics and of campaigns against venereal disease, prostitution, and alcoholism.<sup>116</sup> It is not surprising that he was also active in campaigns against homosexuality. In fact, he supported and disseminated the changing views on sexuality during the 1920s, when sexuality became one of the leading interests of the state: “The dangers of this unhealthy development threaten first and foremost our precious national treasure (*Volksgut*), our youth!” he exclaimed. Because youths are more likely to be seduced and because their sexuality is still “undeveloped and fluctuating,” he added,

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<sup>115</sup> Burgmair, Engstrom, and Weber, eds., *Kraepelin in München. Teil 1. 1903-1914* (Munich: Belleville, 2006), 59.

<sup>116</sup> Burgmair, Engstrom, and Weber, eds., *Kraepelin in München. Teil 2. 1914-1921* (Munich: Belleville, 2009), 19, 24.

“precocious, intellectually alert, dreamy (*schwärmerisch*) and artistic children are particularly favored and endangered.”<sup>117</sup> The state could prevent this threat with the support of experts.

Kraepelin made the link between youth, sexuality, and the future of the nation explicit in an article published in 1918 and in his Munich speech, which was published in 1922.<sup>118</sup>

Although he wanted to discredit Freud’s theory of sexuality, Kraepelin ended up underscoring that the period in life that really mattered most for sexual development was adolescence. He rehearsed the arguments that psychiatrists and psychologists had made before him. For example, Kraepelin agreed with Dessoir that the sexual “aim” in the child and the adolescent was undifferentiated. The instincts for nourishment, sleep, or defense exist since birth, but the reproductive instinct (*Fortpflanzungstrieb*), he argued, does not develop “until a certain maturation of personality” has taken place.<sup>119</sup> “The instinct of copulation (*Begattungstrieb*),” he continued, “does not reach its goal for a long time, not because its direction is indeterminate, but because of impediments [such as] education, morality and the segregation of the sexes.”<sup>120</sup>

Kraepelin acknowledged that bisexuality (*Doppelgeschlechtlichkeit*) during adolescence could take place and that copulation (or “detumescence,” to use Moll’s term) normally did not take place until adulthood. All these natural developments had some embarrassing consequences for

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<sup>117</sup> Emil Kraepelin, “Wesen und Ursachen der Homosexualität,” *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Psychologie und Jugendkunde* 23 (1922): 51-56: 55.

<sup>118</sup> Emil Kraepelin, “Geschlechtliche Verirrungen und Volksvermehrung,” *Münchener medizinische Wochenschrift* 65, no. 5 (29. Januar 1918): 118-120.

<sup>119</sup> Kraepelin, “Wesen und Ursachen der Homosexualität,” 51.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

adolescent boys, who would experience disorienting nightly emissions and engage in surreptitious masturbation.<sup>121</sup>

The awakening of sexuality could be premature either as a consequence of some constitutional defect (some inherited psychopathology), but, most likely, because of social influences. Kraepelin did not accept that homosexuality was congenital and, contrary to some psychoanalytic theories, he also dismissed that it was the result of psychological misdevelopment or trauma. In contrast, he argued that homosexuality was acquired. Certain social factors contributed to men's engaging in same-sex acts. These factors included fear of contagion with venereal disease; the shock caused by unwanted pregnancies (he did not consider it a bit ironic that men should worry so much about pregnancies); and excessive masturbation. All of these factors could deaden a man's ability to be aroused by a woman and early sexual disappointment or failure to perform the sexual act could lead to "animosity towards women and towards a decided diversion of the sexual aim to members of the same sex, be it in the form of masturbation or same-sex relationships."<sup>122</sup> Women, it seemed, could traumatize a young man and turn him to homosexuality. He used the example of men who had their first sexual encounter with a prostitute, an experience that had most likely brought about "disgust" of women and led them towards same-sex acts.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Adolescent sexuality only showed one sign of *perversion* in addition to its natural *perversity*: masturbation. Doctors described masturbation as a gateway to homosexuality. Auguste Forel, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Iwan Bloch, Hermann Rohleder, and Emil Kraepelin, all of them eminent psychiatrists of the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Europe, referred to masturbation as a vice, something that has to be fought against because it has a negative influence on the "normal" psychological development. See: Sterling Fishman, "The History of Childhood Sexuality," *Journal of Contemporary History* 17, no. 2 (April 1982): 269-283.

<sup>122</sup> Kraepelin, "Wesen und Ursachen der Homosexualität," 51.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

Lurid readings and alcohol consumption could eventually be fatal for youths, but “seduction” was a far more common danger for adolescents. In the worst cases, youths could fall prey of pitiless seducers and acquire their vice.<sup>124</sup> Homosexuals, he argued, had been very successful in “educating” youths who were now “unpleasantly familiar with different forms of sexual aberration.”<sup>125</sup> The mis-development of their sexual drive could be prevented not only by avoiding masturbation, but also by controlling what youths should read; by prohibiting the consumption of alcohol; and by putting an end to the spread of homosexual “propaganda,” by which he meant both medical and popular writings on the topic, which, in Kraepelin’s view, were ubiquitous at the time. Thus homosexuality could be “bred” (*gezüchtet*): sexually precocious youths could introduce innocent children to masturbation and, even worse, mutual masturbation, which was considered the number-one gateway to homosexuality.<sup>126</sup> Nonetheless, Kraepelin considered masturbation and same-sex acts during youth “a relatively harmless interlude” that could be easily overcome.<sup>127</sup>

Whereas Kraepelin had elaborated on the etiology of homosexuality and its relationship to adolescence, the Jewish neurologist and psychiatrist Max Isserlin (1879-1941), an adjunct Professor (*außerordentlicher Professor*) at the University of Munich who had founded the first

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<sup>124</sup> Kraepelin, “Wesen und Ursachen der Homosexualität,” 53.

<sup>125</sup> Kraepelin, however, considered that homosexuality was less of a threat for girls. Girls could still procreate and, besides, they could not get into legal trouble, since female same-sex acts were not included under Paragraph 175. Kraepelin encouraged those working around youths—teachers, doctors, and youth leaders—to fight “the spread off homosexuality [...] with all possible means.” “Wesen und Ursachen,” 55.

<sup>126</sup> Still during the 1920s, many doctors agreed drew a direct line between youthful excessive masturbation and later homosexuality. Hermann Rohleder, “Die Masturbation,” *Die Erziehung und die sexuelle Frage. Ein Lehr- und Handbuch der Sexualpädagogik*, ed. Erich Stern (Berlin: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1927), 284-287.

<sup>127</sup> Kraepelin, “Wesen und Ursachen,” 52.

child psychiatry ward in Germany in 1904, explored how the popularization of psychoanalysis contributed to the spread of homosexuality among adolescents and linked the spread of homosexuality to the damage that psychoanalysis had caused, not necessarily to the scientific community, but to a lay public that could be easily seduced with its sexual tales.<sup>128</sup> Isserlin considered psychoanalysis to be unscientific, subjective, and devoid of empirical value.<sup>129</sup> “Freudian theory’s teachings on child sexuality and pansexualism,” he wrote, “are the product of fantasy.” Who could anyone, he wondered, “interpret a pencil, machines, [or] a landscape such as a winding road, as male or female genitalia?”<sup>130</sup> The *reductio ad absurdum* of psychoanalysis was a common way to discredit psychoanalysis by making a mockery of it. Isserlin rejected Freud’s explanation that sexual perversions were the result of a defective “turning off the child’s polymorphous perversity” and the subsequent mis-development of the “normal” sex drive.

The damage of psychoanalysis had been most manifest in the effects of Hans Blüher’s popularization of Freud’s concepts among a generation of German youths since the 1910s. Blüher had scandalized contemporary society with his analysis of same-sex eroticism and bonding in the youth movement. He not only argued that homosexuality was widespread in the youth movement, he also wanted to bring to public attention that male same-sex erotic bonds are

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<sup>128</sup> Isserlin (together with the psychiatrists Arthur Kronfeld, Hermann Oppenheim, and Gustav Aschaffenburg as well as the psychologist William Stern) had been one of the harsher critics of psychoanalysis since the early 1910s. For the most part, their criticism was based on scientific reasons alone: they critiqued psychoanalysis’s treatment of “subjectivity,” evidence, and truth, and its scientific reproducibility. Anthony D. Kauders, *Der Freud Komplex*, 37-40.

<sup>129</sup> Max Isserlin, “Neuere Anschauungen über das Wesen sexueller Anomalien und ihre Bedeutung im Aufbau der Kultur,” *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Psychologie und Jugendkunde* 23 (1922): 324-342: 327.

<sup>130</sup> Isserlin, 333, 334.

a constitutive element of all social relations among boys and adult men.<sup>131</sup> Blüher developed these ideas to make a sociological argument—a theory of state formation in which erotic bonds between men and even full-fledged homosexuality were central. For him the state was composed of a series of male communities, the *Männerbund*, and only the “invert,” the *real* homosexual, could be a true leader able to dedicate his life to the state. Only the homosexual was socially, intellectually, and aesthetically equipped to lead the people.<sup>132</sup> As a result, women, marriage, and reproduction played only a secondary role in this concept of the state.

Isserlin complained that Blüher’s glorification of homosexuality and Freud’s “rationalization of the unconscious” showed a penchant for explaining everything with sexuality.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, Isserlin believed that Blüher and psychoanalysis were part of a larger conspiracy that aimed to “pervert” youths. Like many other psychiatrists, he believed that “youths are easily influenced (*bestimmbar*) in their sexual ambitions [and] that homosexual inclinations develop according to activity and instruction.”<sup>134</sup> It followed that Blüher was instructing youths to embrace homosexuality and that psychoanalysis participated in the “systematic perverting of youths.” For that reason he encouraged parents and teachers to fight against the spread of psychoanalysis in schools, even though there were few pedagogues in the 1920s who applied psychoanalysis to their work, most notably the Swiss Lutheran minister Oskar Pfister.<sup>135</sup> The government, likewise, had the responsibility to eliminate “homosexual

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<sup>131</sup> Geuter, 18.

<sup>132</sup> Bruns, *Politik des Eros*, 193, 336.

<sup>133</sup> Isserlin, 325-6.

<sup>134</sup> Isserlin, 336.

<sup>135</sup> Oskar Pfister, *Was bietet die Psychanalyse dem Erzieher?* (Leipzig-Berlin, Julius Klinkhardt, 1917).

propaganda” and homosexual films, as well as to prevent and punish with prison sentences homosexuals teachers who came in contact with children and adolescents.<sup>136</sup> Psychoanalysis and its teachings were capable of upsetting the proper sexual development of youths. Isserlin likened psychoanalysis to the homosexual seducer with the power to awaken in the adolescent a fledging sexuality that should stay dormant. Both could seduce adolescents into same-sex acts by making them aware of their sexuality’s indetermination. And just as homosexuality was spreading, so was a dangerous body of not only psychoanalysts, but also of teachers, clergymen, and, worst of all, women who practiced as lay analysts.<sup>137</sup>

Despite this gloomy picture, Isserlin ended his essay with soothing and reaffirming words that should ease the homosexual panic he had helped create. One should not worry too much about adolescent sexual “lapses” (*Entgleisungen*): same-sex acts during adolescence “[did] not necessarily lead to a negative prognosis.” Adolescents who have been seduced into homosexuality could be “liberated” from it with the help of appropriate doctors and educators. Nonetheless, the time frame for “healing” was limited because homosexuality could “turn into a fixed sexuality once [the adolescent] enters adulthood.”<sup>138</sup>

Homosexuals who extolled the virtues of intergenerational same-sex relationships were even more dangerous than psychoanalysts. Isserlin considered that the philosophical ideas that convinced pederasts defended were just a justification for sex with minors. According to Isserlin, pederasts, such as Adolf Brand and those in the Community of the Special (*Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*), believed that sexual development followed “inescapable laws” and that sex at a young

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<sup>136</sup> Isserlin, 341-2.

<sup>137</sup> This point had been raised by William Stern in “Die Anwendung der Psychoanalyse,” 77-79.

<sup>138</sup> Isserlin, 342.



age was beneficial for the youth. “This position may be very favorable for homosexual theoreticians, but is nevertheless wrong,” he declared sententiously. Experience had shown “that homosexual inclinations arise from [coming into contact with] such activity and guidance (*Betätigung und Anleitung*), [and] that ...[homosexuality] can be very contagious during youth. ...It is an immovable fact that one can infect youths and make them homosexuals for life.”<sup>139</sup> Isserlin stressed that homosexual men took advantage of youthful innocence for their own sexual pleasure. This came at a significant cost for the youth and his appropriate sexual development, and, more importantly, for the state and the family, “the site where human sexual relationships take its most refined form.”<sup>140</sup> The homosexual “seducer” was the worst threat to youths and to the state. He was spreading a highly contagious disease that needed to be contained and youths were the population at risk.

Drawing from previous theories, Kraepelin and Isserlin argued that adolescents’ inherent sexual undifferentiation made them vulnerable to a homosexual threat or “contagion.” The psychologist and pedagogue Eduard Spranger (1882-1963) was not immune to this trend and represents the impact of these discussions on the field of psychology. Furthermore, the popularity of his 1922 book *Psychology of Youth (Psychologie des Jugendalters)* brought the idea of homosexual seduction directly to the mainstream.<sup>141</sup> His work drew from myriad theories about adolescent sexuality available at the time. More importantly, that Spranger felt compelled

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<sup>139</sup> Max Isserlin, “Die planmäßige Pervertierung unserer Jugend,” *Hochland* 18 (1920): 174-186: 183.

<sup>140</sup> Max Isserlin, “Die planmäßige Pervertierung unserer Jugend:” 184.

<sup>141</sup> Spranger’s *Psychology of Adolescence* reached the tenth edition (41,000 copies) three years after its publication in 1925. The book had 29 editions until 1979, with a total print run of 125,000. Despite his ambiguous role during the National Socialist regime, his ideas continued to be accepted in the 1960s and 1970s, mostly among pedagogues. See: Andreas Flitner, “Theories of Adolescence,” *Paedagogica Europaea* 2 (1966): 226-232.

to address the topic of homosexuality at all underscores how the study of adolescence and homosexuality had become deeply connected during the early 1920s.<sup>142</sup> In *Psychology of Youth*, Spranger eliminated the possibility for an adolescent form of homosexuality and naturalized heterosexuality as the outcome of appropriate psychological development: whereas youths could never be homosexuals, they could be seduced into homosexuality. In addition, Spranger's work exemplifies how older theories of adolescent sexuality and acquired homosexuality had become hegemonic during that decade.

Spranger, like most youth psychologists during the 1920s, agreed that we have a tendency to forget most of what happens during our childhood and youth. While Hirschfeld had argued that one could prove the inborn character of homosexuality by relying on the childhood memories of his patients, Spranger was sure that people "forget puberty like no other period in life."<sup>143</sup> This lack of memory (or the repression of this memory, as Freud would put it) made the study of adolescent psychology, and by extension of youthful sexuality, difficult. Like many other German interwar psychologists, such as Charlotte Bühler or Walter Hoffmann, Spranger used this supposed lack of memory to create a set of narratives about adolescence that mirrored their desired development of society.<sup>144</sup> Like his colleagues, Spranger envisioned adolescence as a period of transition, but rejected it involved physical transformations alone.<sup>145</sup> Instead,

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<sup>142</sup> For a synopsis of Spranger's work and influence see: Benjamin Ortmeyer, *Eduard Spranger und die NS-Zeit. Forschungsbericht* (Frankfurt am Main: Johan Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, 2008).

<sup>143</sup> Eduard Spranger, *Psychologie des Jugendalters* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1925), 2.

<sup>144</sup> Charlotte Bühler, *Das Seelenleben des Jugendlichen. Versuch einer Analyse und Theorie der psychischen Pubertät* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1922) and Walter Hoffmann, *Die Reifezeit: Grundfragen der Jugendpsychologie und Sozialpädie Reifez* (Dritte, neubearbeitete und erweiterte Auflage) (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1930) (1922).

<sup>145</sup> Spranger, 106-107.

adolescence was a distinct psychological phase that takes places between childhood and adulthood—between the undeveloped psychological structure of the child and the fully developed adult psyche. According to this narrative, children and youths embody the “primitive” in all of us. Society and education transform this primitive child into a civilized adult. In this sense, Spranger’s psychology was not much different from Freud’s.

The novelty in Spranger’s thought on youth was that his decision to historicize the psyche. He operated from the assumption that the adolescent psyche is always contingent on the spirit of the time (*Zeitgeist*)—that is culturally and socially specific. In 1925, the *Zeitgeist* required that he pay attention to adolescent sexuality. Instead of accepting the popular theories about adolescent sexuality that circulated at the time—theories that stressed the adolescent’s sexual ambiguity in physiological terms—he chose to separate psychological and physiological categories. He did so by distinguishing between the concepts of love and eroticism (*Liebe und Eros*). Spranger’s held that *Eros* and *Liebe* are qualities that share some obvious traits but “belong to different layers of the soul.”<sup>146</sup> To put matters in a nutshell, Spranger argued that *Liebe* (that is, sexuality) is physiological and that *Eros* is predominantly a psychological trait: a form of love that is aesthetic in nature. This erotic connection implies “becoming one with another soul,” an act that is mediated through the body, which, in Spranger’s opinion, is just a vessel for spiritual love.<sup>147</sup> Adolescents, for example, could feel an abstract, ideal, and aesthetic attraction to the person they idealize (teachers, mentors, youth leaders, and so on). This did not mean that they desired them sexually, since sexuality and eroticism are two different qualities during adolescence and belong to two different psychological sides: “sensual-sexual side” and an

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<sup>146</sup> Spranger, 81.

<sup>147</sup> Spranger, 82.

“ideal-theoretical side”<sup>148</sup> Crucially, he argued that these two sides hardly interact and cannot exist alongside each other during adolescence. They are important for development, since reaching adulthood implies the confluence of eroticism and sexuality: the “blossoming summit of life,” the communion of body and soul with another person.<sup>149</sup> By which he meant, of course, a person of the opposite sex.

Homosexuality had so much become the topic of the *Zeitgeist* that Spranger could not avoid addressing it either. He agreed that eroticism had always played a role in the social formation of adolescent friendships and that sexual undifferentiation could explain that fact. Yet he located adolescent same-sex relationships in the realm of eroticism and, as such, rejected same-sex sexuality as a fact of youth. With that move, he erased all traces of the sexual ambiguity that psychiatrists and sexologists had identified as a characteristic of this period. Youths may feel attracted to the vitality of each other’s body, to the “aesthetic” force they emanate. But this attraction is not sexual in nature, but erotic. “One cannot deny, that from here on there is only a blurry border to homosexual intercourse,” Spranger admitted.<sup>150</sup> Crossing that blurry border was the result of some mis-development, of an event that had hindered a youth’s appropriate psychological growth. Homosexuality was certainly sexuality, but involved no *Eros*. This un-erotic form of sexuality could never result in intellectual and spiritual communion and it could not lead to procreation, which were in his opinion the prerequisites for mature sexuality.

Spranger was not that original in his search for the source of a homosexual “epidemic.” Homosexuality could be caused by external influences: it could be fixed through the “excessive

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<sup>148</sup> Spranger, 128.

<sup>149</sup> Spranger, 135.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

nourishment of fantasy” with erotic material, through “precocious homosexual activity,” and, of course, through the popularization of psychoanalysis. The spread of homosexuality among youths should be explained as a symptom of the troubling postwar times. Modern life, alcohol, movies, variétés, trashy literature (*Schund*), and the lack of religious sensibility had brought about the “sexual misery of youth.”<sup>151</sup> These phenomena stimulated sexuality, but hindered eroticism. And homosexuality was the utmost form of sexuality. As a consequence of this emphasis on only one side of the equation, the confluence of both sexuality and eroticism in marriage was threatened. Its corollaries, the family and the state, were threatened, as well.

Preventing the spread of homosexuality among youths demanded more than just creating a cordon sanitaire around psychoanalysis or around Hans Blüher; it required more than rejecting modern life; and it implied more than controlling what youths were able to watch and read. It entailed a return to traditional mores and values. According to Hans Loewe, a pedagogue who trained teachers at the Technical University of Munich and was active in Kraepelin’s circle, the best preventive measure entailed increasing the trust between teacher and students, between parents and their children, and between the sexes. Parents, he complained, had been neglecting their children for too long. Loewe blamed industrialization and urban life as the source of all evils and demanded a “rebirth of the home” which he expressed in the völkisch terms of *Bodenreform* and in the rather socialist-sounding demand for “humane salaries and working conditions that would allow that even the simplest *Volksgenosse* can spend time with his family.”<sup>152</sup> If a broken family indicated a broken nation, saving the family implied saving the

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<sup>151</sup> Spranger, 137.

<sup>152</sup> Hans Loewe, “Allgemeine Richtlinien zur erziehlichen Beeinflussung der von der homosexuellen Infektion bedrohten Jugend,” *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Psychologie und Jugendkunde* 23 (1922): 421-429: 426. See also: Hans Loewe, “Die Gefährdung der

nation. Reaffirming men's role in the family—whose power felt under attack by women's newly acquired rights—was essential to this process: matriarchy and, even worse, a “male state” in Bühler's terms, essentially a homosexual state, would lead to the crumbling of society.

An intact family was key to the appropriate reproduction of the nation's citizenship and its values. Parental neglect could have dreadful effects on the sexual development of children. “A child who has adequate support from his father and mothers,” Loewe claimed, “does not look for homosexual gratification with his comrades. [...] Boys who take a walk with their fathers on Sunday and who listen to their mother's storytelling in the quiet hours are immune to sexual aberrations.” Nevertheless, Loewe lamented, “how many millions [of children] are out there who have no home that could protect them from the dangers of homosexual infection?”<sup>153</sup> In addition to improving familial relationships, the relationship between the sexes should be strengthened and based on trust, as well. Boys and girls should show “reciprocal respect and admiration,” and should be made aware that only the union of “man and woman and not man and man or woman and woman” was an option. He blamed women for the perceived frailty of heterosexuality among young men. The modern woman was pushing “delicate male youths,” those most likely to suffer the psychological effects of modern life, away from heterosexuality. Young female students, in particular, with their confidence and their choices in dress, were making boys amenable to homosexual enticement. The war had worsened a process he believed had begun with industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of mass culture. Now that men were thought of being weaker and that women had entered the labor force in larger numbers and had even gained the right to vote, conservative commentators such as Loewe perceived them as a

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Jugendbewegung durch Blühers Deutung des Wandervogelproblems,” *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Psychologie und Jugendkunde* 23 (1922): 342-356.

<sup>153</sup> Loewe, 426.

threat to men and the status quo. What would happen if men could no longer be men? Would they turn to other men?

### Conclusion

Loewe worried that modern civilization no longer knew sexes and that it would cease to distinguish between men and women.<sup>154</sup> His anxiety reflected something that research on sexuality had been showing for a long time: sexual differentiation developed from a rather ambiguous sexuality, a relic of a bisexual biological past that was still visible during adolescence, before the onset of adult heterosexuality. This process seemed to have been disrupted in the postwar years. In fact, it seemed that the process had been reversed or arrested. Psychiatrists, psychologists, and pedagogues argued that the situation after the war was unfavorable to the appropriate sexual development of adolescents. Youths were surrounded by social and cultural agents of “seduction”—psychoanalysis, homosexuals, and their “propaganda”—influences capable of fixing adolescent “same-sex eroticism” into “real” homosexuality. These phenomena familiarized youths with a part of their sexuality that they should repress if they wanted to become productive members of society and ensure the future of the nation. The more psychiatrists and psychologists investigated adolescent sexuality, the more they learned about homosexuality and its possible causes. They realized how difficult it was to define heterosexuality in absolute terms.

These experts linked the spread of homosexuality and its threat to youths to the contemporary social and political instability caused by the First World War. The anxieties and

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<sup>154</sup> For the perceived effects of the First World War on gender roles in France, see: Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

fears about the future of the nation that the postwar order had brought about justified their work. The threat of the homosexual seducer to a vulnerable youth had at its root the anxiety about a masculinity that had burst asunder during the war. This belief was also backed on scientific theories about homosexuality and adolescent sexual development that dated back to the turn of the century. Youths embodied the sexual ambiguity that threatened the stability of adult sexual and gender roles. Psychiatrists were so obsessed with the adolescent's sexual ambiguity because it highlighted that heterosexuality could not be taken for granted.

The view of homosexuality as an “acquired” disorder, that is, as the consequence not necessarily of degeneracy but of cultural and environmental influences, predominated after the war in professional circles and in mainstream discourse. This view would inform common views on homosexuality and would even shape the National Socialist approach on homosexuality and the possibilities for its eradication. The threat of homosexuality became a moral panic that took away the attention from other issues that demanded radical responses: social and gender equality, educational reform, or the decriminalization of homosexuality. As a moral panic, the dichotomy between the homosexual “seducer” and the “vulnerable” youth could be politicized. This moral panic would have a tremendous impact on discourses on youth protection *and* on the politics of the homosexual movement during the 1920s and the early 1930s.

While youth psychiatrists, psychologists, and a motley crew of moral crusaders disagreed on the details, one thing seemed clear to them: homosexuality was on the rise during the Weimar Republic. It was their mission to reverse that trend. Adolescence proved a productive discursive ground on which adolescence, heterosexuality, and homosexuality could be naturalized, secured, and contained. But before we move on to explore their responses to this threat, we should assess



how homosexuality became “ubiquitous” during the 1920s. To do that, we need to look into homosexual mass culture.

## Chapter 2:

### From Mass Culture to a Mass Movement: The League for Human Rights and Homosexual Visibility

Christmas 1924 was nearing and the homosexual movement seemed more divided than ever before. “It is unfortunate, that six years after the Revolution we are still fighting against this special law.” Friedrich Radszuweit, the leader of the League for Human Rights (*Bund für Menschenrecht*), Germany’s first mass homosexual organization, worried about the best juncture for the homosexual movement’s success. In his opinion, Paragraph 175, the law that punished male same-sex acts could have been abolished in 1919 if the movement’s leaders had tried to pressure the national assembly. “Why don’t we have equality six years after the revolution? Why do the masses consider us sick people, fools, drunkards, [and] seducers of youths? Why doesn’t a larger part of the *Volk* take the research of San.-Rat Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld seriously?” wondered an angry Radszuweit.<sup>155</sup> Had the approach of the homosexual movement, twenty-seven years into its history, failed? He believed so. A battle may have been lost, but not the war.

The theories that Hirschfeld and his Scientific Humanitarian Committee (*Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee*) had advocated—theories that supported the inborn character of homosexuality—had not been effective in achieving homosexual emancipation. The first article Hirschfeld signed for the League of Human Right’s prime journal, the *Journal of Human Rights (Blätter für Menschenrecht)*, was not printed just as an empty display of allegiance to and respect for the early pioneer. Radszuweit and the League thought highly of Hirschfeld and his scientific ideas. But the League’s publication of this article aimed to underscore the strategic differences that both organizations had. Hirschfeld was convinced that

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<sup>155</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Ein offenes Wort zur Reichstagswahl,” *Die Insel* 2, Nr. 5 (5. Dezember 1924).

science offered the best arguments for abolishing Paragraph 175. The Scientific Humanitarian Committee's motto *Per scientiam ad justitiam* (through science to justice) summarized this political strategy: only scientific evidence could end the deep-seated prejudice against homosexuality.<sup>156</sup> As a matter of fact, scientific evidence had convinced numerous intellectuals to support decriminalization before the First World War. Why should this program not work thereafter? First of all, Hirschfeld underestimated that his scientific theories were far from hegemonic after the war.<sup>157</sup> Radszuweit, aware that influential doctors such as Emil Kraepelin or Albert Moll disagreed with Hirschfeld on the etiology of homosexuality, sought a different approach for the decriminalization of same-sex acts in the League for Human Rights. What was the best way to fight for homosexual rights during the Weimar Republic?

Prejudice against homosexuals did not disappear after the First World War. But the situation in the mid 1920s was much different from that in 1914 or, for that matter, in 1900. The Weimar Republic offered new opportunities to abolish Paragraph 175 and eliminate the inequalities it created for homosexual men. Germany welcomed a democratic and constitutional framework that the homosexual movement could use to its advantage. Censorship had been abolished and freedom of assembly was guaranteed by a constitution that stressed all citizens were equal.<sup>158</sup> These rights made possible the development of a reinvigorated homosexual movement that would make the language of liberal rights its own and the press its tool for

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<sup>156</sup> "Einige sittliche Forderungen" (entnommen aus dem Werk "Die Kenntnis der homosexuellen Natur" von Sanitätsrat Dr. M. Hirschfeld, Berlin), *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 1, Nr. 2 (1. März 1923). The article was an excerpt from his 1907 book *The Cognizance of the Homosexual Nature (Die Kenntnis der homosexuellen Natur)*. Despite their differences, the Scientific Humanitarian Committee and the League for Human Rights collaborated closely until 1926.

<sup>157</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>158</sup> Articles 109, 118, and 123. *Die Verfassung des Deutschen Reichs vom 11. August 1919* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1964), 36-40.

activism. Whereas the early homosexual movement had fought to gain acceptance by claiming that homosexuality was inborn, the League for Human Rights used the language of individual rights and respectability to eliminate social prejudice. More importantly, it used mass culture to spread these ideas.

The Weimar Republic presented the conditions for the emergence of a truly mass homosexual movement. The League for Human Rights, as the heir of that first wave of activists, was dealing with a new social, political, and economic conjuncture: the masses, the language of rights, and the savvy use of mass culture to fund the movement gained a new dimension during this decade. Friedrich Radszuweit's success in attracting thousands of members to his organization resided in his ability to merge bourgeois and mass values. From the bourgeoisie he adopted respectability, which he considered essential to achieve full civil rights. He acknowledged that in order to gain the favor of the political right and center, the movement had to embrace key values of respectability since the German Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party already supported the abolition of Paragraph 175. The League reminded readers that homosexuals were responsible for their own fate: how they conducted themselves in public and for whom they chose to vote mattered for their liberation. This change in strategy reflected how the movement not only respected, but also invoked the values that the constitution defended. The League's "politics of respectability" required that homosexuals keep their (sexual) lives private, be productive members of society, gain the support of their families, conform to gender norms, reject male prostitution and, most crucially for us, ensure the protection of youth.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> We will discuss the League for Human Rights' rejection of male prostitution and pederasty in Chapter 6.

Historians have traced the existence of a homosexual subculture to the nineteenth century, particularly in Berlin.<sup>160</sup> Robert Beachy has documented the rich homosexual life in Wilhelmine Germany, a milieu that contemporaries such as Magnus Hirschfeld and Albert Moll chronicled.<sup>161</sup> Beachy describes this period as surprisingly lenient towards homosexuals. Berlin's police department tolerated homosexual gatherings in the many bars, theaters, and in the cruising and prostitution areas around parks or public restrooms that dotted the city. Urban anonymity provided a certain degree of safety: bars, inns, and hotels became common spaces for same-sex encounters. The so-called *Klappen* (tearooms), public baths, parks, and train stations were not only meeting points for hustlers, but also for male, same-sex contacts. A place for casual meetings during the Wilhelmine period, the Gay Alley (*Schwuler Weg*) in the Tiergarten Park, went back to 1840 and remained an important cruising location for men who wanted to have sex with men well into the Weimar Republic.<sup>162</sup>

Homosexual life not only took place in public restrooms and parks. Beachy describes the lavish homosexual and transvestite balls in fin-de-siècle Berlin and wonders how they could have been so popular if they were not advertised. He hypothesizes that it was perhaps because Berlin's nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century subculture was one of elites and "insiders" who

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<sup>160</sup> Like Judith Halberstam, I understand subculture, as "transient, extrafamilial, and oppositional modes of affiliation" (154) that are based on collectivity and not necessarily on membership, as the League for Human Rights and the Scientific Humanitarian Committee beforehand were. In that sense, subculture does not demand the ideological and normative work that defined these political organizations. See: Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 152-187.

<sup>161</sup> Magnus Hirschfeld, *Berlins Drittes Geschlecht* (Berlin: Rosa Winkel, 1991) (1904); Albert Moll, *Die Conträre Sexualempfindung: mit Benutzung amtlichen Materials* (Berlin: H. Kornfeld, 1891).

<sup>162</sup> Wolfgang Theis and Andreas Sterwiller, "Alltag im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik," in *Eldorado: Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin 1850-1950. Geschichte, Alltag und Kultur*, ed. Michael Bollé (Berlin: Fröhlich & Kaufmann, 1984), 48.

were as much protected as contained by the police. It was well known, for instance, that homosexual actors, directors, and intellectuals met in various theaters.<sup>163</sup> The police's "passive enforcement" of Paragraph 175, Beachy argues, provided a venue for "visibility and definition to what had been formerly been a shadowy, indistinct group of sexual minorities."<sup>164</sup>

We know about (and have romanticized) public urinals, theaters, and dance halls as spaces of erotic exchanges and as the spatial markers of a homosexual subculture, even though we only have scattered evidence of what happened in such spaces. We should not exaggerate, however, how visible this subculture was: most people, including most men who desired other men never participated in it. We should also not overplay the extent to which this subculture was tolerated. The Berlin Police Department continued condoning homosexual gatherings in the 1920s (although it would become increasingly repressive by the end of the decade). Police tolerance did not necessarily result in increased homosexual visibility because it implied that such gatherings "take place in strict closed circles" so that they would not cause "commotion and offense" among heterosexuals.<sup>165</sup> The official demand for secrecy accentuated the anxieties about the spread of homosexuality during the 1920s—the fear for a possible "inversion wave." The fact that homosexuals had made use of public spaces since the nineteenth century does not necessarily explain how and why homosexuality became visible to the point it seemed ubiquitous

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<sup>163</sup> Theis and Sterwiller, 50.

<sup>164</sup> Robert Beachy, "To Police and Protect: The Surveillance of Homosexuality in Imperial Berlin," *After the History of Sexuality: German Genealogies with and beyond Foucault*, eds. Scott Spector, Helmut Puff, and Dagmar Herzog (New York: Berghahn, Books, 2012), 109-123. Here: 114, 120; Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York: Knopf, 2014), 42-84.

<sup>165</sup> Paul Weber, "Wie Berlins Moral gehoben werden soll!" *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 10, Nr. 41 (13. Oktober 1932).

in the 1920s. The intersection between homosexuality and mass culture can show us this process.<sup>166</sup>

Homosexual visibility increased during the Weimar Republic as a consequence of the relaxation of censorship. The possibility of a free press fostered the creation of new organizations that pluralized views on homosexuality and contrasted the views of their predecessors.<sup>167</sup> Since the end of the nineteenth century, the elites had had access to information regarding homosexuality and had been able to organize in private groups and circles. Magnus Hirschfeld and Adolf Brand had published scientific journals and literary magazines, but they were not accessible to most people. These organizations attracted men from professional and aristocratic circles; their concerns were scientific, philosophical, and arcane. With the advent of the Weimar Republic, Associations of Friends (*Freundschaftsverbände*) were founded in several German cities. These groups probably came to life inspired by the contemporary explosion of

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<sup>166</sup> Weimar's homosexual movement left a large archive of material sources that have only recently been appropriately examined. This chapter seeks to contribute to a growing body of scholarship that is shedding light on the homosexual movement through the analysis of its periodicals. Stefan Micheler has examined the homosexual press in order to figure out how homosexuals (he prefers the term *gleichgeschlechtlich begehrende Männer*) conceived of themselves and of others. Micheler has paid particular attention to the journal *Friendship* (*Die Freundschaft*), which was not one of the League for Human Rights' publications. Heike Schader and Marti M. Lybeck have studied the lesbian press during the Weimar Republic, but also in terms of lesbian self-fashioning, rather than in political terms. See: Marti M. Lybeck, "Emancipation and Desire in Weimar Berlin's Female Homosexual Public Sphere," *Desiring Emancipation: New Women and Homosexuality in Germany, 1890 - 1933* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 151-188; Stefan Micheler, *Selbstbilder und Fremdbilder der "Anderen": eine Geschichte Männer begehrender Männer in der Weimarer Republik und der NS-Zeit* (Konstanz: UVK-Verlag, 2005); Stefan Micheler, "Zeitschriften und Verbände gleichgeschlechtlich begehrender Menschen in der Weimarer Republik. Ansätze einer Organisationsgeschichte," *Invertito* 10 (2008): 10- 56; and Heike Schader, *Virile, Vamps und wilde Veilchen: Sexualität, Begehrend und Erotik in den Zeitschriften homosexueller Frauen im Berlin der 1920er Jahre* (Königstein/Taunus: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 2004).

<sup>167</sup> Micheler, *Selbstbilder*, 47-49. Hans-Georg Stümke, *Homosexuelle in Deutschland: Eine politische Geschichte* (München: C.H. Beck, 1989), 54.

councils (*Räte*) and the long-lasting tradition of civic associations (*Vereine*) in Germany. What made them different is that they published popular magazines and supported bars and clubs (*Freundschaftslokale*) in major cities like Berlin or Hamburg that catered to homosexuals. As Stefan Micheler asserts, these new associations made possible “greater homosexual social networks and the expansion of the homosexual movement,” but he concludes that these associations, and in particular the League for Human Rights, only aimed to organize the leisure time of its members.<sup>168</sup> The demand for entertainment, it seems, overshadowed the movement’s politics.

We need to take the leisure that League for Human Rights promoted seriously if we mean to find political and historical significance behind it. The publications of the League for Human Rights are excellent sources (and often our only sources) for studying the history of homosexual politics during the Weimar Republic. Their periodicity can help us trace how the politics of the movement changed as the decade unfolded. The League’s magazines kept members informed about the latest news and events. They provided updates on the organization’s latest position on the decriminalization of male, same-sex acts. If the League’s goals were indeed political, why did Radszuweit choose to sponsor homosexual balls and bars or to publish magazines whose content was less sophisticated than their predecessors? In this chapter, we will see that the League for Human Rights’ commitment to mass culture reflected a conscious political decision. Mass culture contributed to the production of homosexual identity and politics. I will use the term “mass culture” because I want to highlight the relationship between the masses, politics, and capitalist forms of production and consumption that characterize this period as well as the League for Human Rights’ strategy. Furthermore, Radszuweit was certain that the financial

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<sup>168</sup> Micheler, *Selbstbilder*, 82-85.



viability of the movement was key to its growth and success. The League for Human Rights wanted to make the homosexual *and* the homosexual movement visible. Homosexual visibility should lead to the decriminalization of male, same-sex acts, to equal rights, and to the end of social prejudice against homosexuality.<sup>169</sup>

It is the consequence of the enduring prejudice against certain archives that a popular leader has fallen into oblivion. Given the paucity of the queer archive, we should take the sources available to us seriously because they portray a complex truth about a set of discourses, politics, and practices that ought to be analyzed in their own right. By dismissing the complex relationship between the movement and mass culture we have left an important chapter in the history of homosexuality in Germany unexamined.

Contemporaries thought that the press was often a source of misinformation and that the press offered agitation or distraction. Nonetheless, the demand for information surged during the 1920s. The historian Gideon Reuveni suggests that “[t]he dwindling demand for reading material of a high intellectual caliber, the growing demand for popular reading material, and above all the tendency toward the commercialization of culture were considered the distinctive characteristics of this process of proletarianization.”<sup>170</sup> The same belief in “proletarianization” or in the “democratization of culture” has led historians to ignore many popular sources and to equate lack of quality with lack of significance. Whereas the “democratization of culture” is not an unproblematic concept, it is an apt one to describe the growth of the League’s press. Radszuweit

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<sup>169</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Die Moral im anderen Lager,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 2, Nr. 28 (22. August 1924).

<sup>170</sup> Gideon Reuveni, *Reading Germany, Literature and Consumer Culture in Germany before 1933* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 40.

wanted to make the League for Human Rights' politics accessible to everyone, since he was convinced that a large following would lead to the movement's success.

The League needed as many members as possible to be politically significant and attracted them as readers first. As Clemens Zimmermann argues, magazines were “a medium of modernity” that constantly changed its layout and contents in order to attract new readers.<sup>171</sup> This form of media production and consumption was central to the movement's growth. Money was necessary to fund the magazines and Radszuweit chose to lead the movement like a business, despite his opponents' dismay. The League was able to change the layout and the content of its publications regularly, a flexibility that reflects the organization's tendency to adapt its views according to changing political moods.<sup>172</sup> These publications promoted identity and community. Readers could purchase magazines that connected them with each other through the act of reading and in real life, for example by pointing them in the direction where they could meet like-minded people. These magazines sold identification models: they encouraged rules of conduct, political ideas, and provided a public forum for readers to respond to and shape the League's decisions. In sum, the relationship between the League's magazines and their readers shaped what it meant to be a homosexual in Germany during the Weimar Republic.

The League for Human Rights' use of the press was crucial for its mass appeal, but it brought about a fundamental contradiction. How could the League reconcile the bad reputation of homosexuality and the respectability it advocated? Publishing light literature or sponsoring

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<sup>171</sup> Clemens Zimmermann, “Die Zeitschrift - Medium der Moderne: Publikumszeitschriften im 20. Jahrhundert,” *Die Zeitschrift—Medium der Moderne. Deutschland und Frankreich im Vergleich*, eds. Clemens Zimmermann and Manfred Schmeling (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2006), 15-42: 20.

<sup>172</sup> This adaptability was the most striking in the League's position on the protection of youth, which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

homosexual gatherings was necessary for the League's popularity. But the League needed to maintain a balance between pleasure and respectable topics. The League's mission worked against itself: the coupling of mass culture and homosexuality did not result in radical mass politics. Whereas the League sought freedom and equality, it created new forms of repression for its members. The League for Human Rights stands for the "politics of respectability."<sup>173</sup> The organization worked to trade negative stereotypes for a new homosexual that was a virtuous, productive member of society. The "respectable" homosexual was a liberal subject whose individual rights could no longer be denied. The leaders of this new movement were not immune to contradictions and failure. The homosexual mass movement aligned itself with liberal rights and was contingent on the market and profit for its existence. This combination increased the visibility of homosexuals and homosexuality in public and complicated the division between personal and collective gain. The homosexual visibility that the press helped attain became a double-edged sword. What made homosexuals visible would make them hide again.

### *Friedrich Radszuweit and the First Homosexual Mass Organization*

Friedrich Radszuweit (1876-1932) has remained a little studied leader of the homosexual movement. Instead of interpreting the League for Human Rights, its publications, and its leader within their historical context, historians have dismissed all three so as to not have to reconcile Radszuweit's seemingly contradictory character and style. Was he a tasteless, megalomaniac,

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<sup>173</sup> This fight was not unique to the homosexual movement. As the historian George Mosse argues, "the feminist movement was taking much the same posture as other 'outsiders' such as lesbians and homosexuals." "The transition from the advocacy of women's rights to a crusade against all forms of vice," he continues, "helped reconcile the feminist movement with both respectability and nationalism. Once again the outsiders were co-opted, lending new strength to the dominant norms." George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985): 110-111.

and pseudo-fascist man who only cared about profit and his own fame, as historians have portrayed him?<sup>174</sup> Radszuweit's biography can help us shed light onto his politics and why the other leaders of the movement received him negatively. Radszuweit was born on April 15, 1876 in Klein-Stobingen, a small village near Insterburg, in the distant province of East Prussia. The son of farmers, he spent some years after school tending to the family's small estate. After completing his military service in Schleswig-Holstein in 1898, he returned to East Prussia and worked as a salesman in Königsberg. In 1901 he moved to Berlin where he founded a women's garment company and a retail store.<sup>175</sup> His relatively humble origins, his plain speech, and his entrepreneurial success would define his political persona and his leadership style in the future.

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<sup>174</sup> Given Radszuweit's omnipresence in the League's publications we may conclude that he was a self-centered, megalomaniac man. One of the League's publications, *The Journal of Friendship*, (*Das Freundschaftsblatt*) started an opinion poll in an article titled "Who is the most popular personality in our movement?" Unsurprisingly, Radszuweit was chosen "democratically" as the "most popular personality." 3069 people participated in the poll. 1557 people voted Radszuweit. Hirschfeld came in close with 1491 votes. Although we must take this survey with a grain of salt, the popularity of the magazines must have matched the popularity of their publisher, which was comparable to that of Hirschfeld. "Das Ergebnis unserer Rundfrage: Die populärste Persönlichkeit ist Friedrich Radszuweit!" *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 4, Nr. 13 (26. März 1926). Robert Beachy, "The German Invention of Homosexuality," *The Journal of Modern History* 83, no. 4 (2010): 801-38; Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller, *Homosexualitäten in der Weimarer Republik 1919 - 1933* (Hamburg: MännerschwarmSkript-Verlag, 2000); Martin Lücke, *Männlichkeit in Unordnung: Homosexualität und männliche Prostitution in Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2008), 233-280; Micheler, *Selbstbilder und Fremdbilder*; Michael Bollé, ed. *Eldorado*; Steakley, *Homosexual Emancipation*; Stümke, *Homosexuelle in Deutschland*. As a further matter, a misreading of the sources that aligns the League for Human Rights with Ernst Röhm and National Socialism explains why the League has been neglected from historical research until recently. The reasons for (or the discomfort that led to) that neglect deserve attention in their own right. See: Manfred Herzer, "Communists, Social Democrats, and the Homosexual Movement in the Weimar Republic," *Journal of Homosexuality* 29, Nr. 2-3 (1995): 197-226; Burkhard Jellonek and Rüdiger Lautman, *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle: verdrängt und ungesühnt* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002).

<sup>175</sup> "Zum 50. Geburtstag Friedrich Radszuweits", *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 4, Nr. 16 (1926): 1-2; and "Friedrich Radszuweit, sein Leben und Wirken für die Befreiung der homosexuellen Menschen," *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 10, Nr. 4-5 (1932): 8.

During the first turbulent years of the new Republic, Radszuweit joined the Club of Friends and Girlfriends (*Klub der Freunde und Freundinnen*) in Berlin, an association of homosexual men and women that organized social gatherings and parties, and became its president in 1921. Up to that point Radszuweit had not been interested in politics, it was not until January 1922, after hearing a lecture by Magnus Hirschfeld, that he officially joined the German Association for Friendship (*Deutscher Freundschafts-Verband*), the first popular homosexual rights organization to appear after the war. He soon became a member of the executive board. After a stormy 1922 federal meeting in Hamburg, part of the Association for Friendship split into the newly formed League for Human Rights (*Bund für Menschenrecht*). Radszuweit became the organization's leader and immediately put his business skills to the service of the movement. He published the *Journal of Human Rights* (*Blätter für Menschenrecht*), the group's official newsletter, and established the Orplid-Verlag-AG, a public limited company that could not survive the inflation. He founded his own publishing company, the Radszuweit-Verlag, to replace this failed venture.<sup>176</sup> Magazines ought to make homosexuality visible, something Radszuweit hoped would lead to the elimination of prejudice.<sup>177</sup>

Radszuweit was aware that he needed a vibrant popular press that catered to homosexuals' need for entertainment. However, he tried to reconcile such ordinary needs with

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<sup>176</sup> Paul Weber, "Vorwort," *Zum 10-jährigen Bestehen des "Bund für Menschenrecht, E.V. Sitz Berlin, 1919-1929, Menschenrecht* 7, Nr. 10 (October 1929). Radszuweit even considered producing films (something that Magnus Hirschfeld had already done as we saw in the introduction). This was an ambitious dream that Weimar's unstable economy impeded. Friedrich Radszuweit, "Nachdenkliches über Vorgefallenes in unserer Bewegung," *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 2, Nr. 35 (10. Oktober 1924).

<sup>177</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit died in 1932, aged 56, after a long battle with cancer. The man who shaped Weimar's mass homosexual movement in the 1920s could not see the end of prejudice nor foresee the movement's sudden end.

serious political ideas. When Radszuweit was elected president of the German Association for Friendship in 1923, the first item on the agenda was changing the organization's name.<sup>178</sup> The previous name, Association for Friendship, suggested entertainment and nightlife, an image that did not suit the ideal of respectability that he had envisioned for the homosexual movement. The new name, League for Human Rights, distanced the new organization from the "science" the Scientific Humanitarian Committee supported by introducing the language of "rights." The League's name evoked the seriousness of liberal ideas, while keeping the casual style needed to attract new members who may care less about politics.

That the League for Human Rights relied on mass culture to shape its politics was just a reflection of the times. Staring around the turn of the century, more and more people started to read newspapers and magazines to be informed about politics, crime, and trends.<sup>179</sup> During Weimar Republic mass culture experienced an explosion that has been commonly explained through the need for entertainment that followed the First World War.<sup>180</sup> The rise of mass culture was also linked to the development of a capitalist model during the Republic. After the war, Germany was soon plagued by economic hardship, hyperinflation, unemployment, and, especially, social and political polarization. In 1924 the Dawes Plan revitalized the weak economy of the Weimar Republic. This plan fostered a consumer-oriented economy, exports,

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<sup>178</sup> "Einig und fest auf dem Bundestag!" *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 1, Nr. 5 (15. April 1923).

<sup>179</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 51-86.

<sup>180</sup> Michael Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt: Revolution, Inflation und Moderne: München, 1914-1924* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 266; Thomas W. Kniesche and Stephen Brockman, eds. *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic* (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1994); Walter Laqueur, *Weimar: A Cultural History* (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1974), 224-253. Jost Hermand und Frank Trommler, *Die Kultur der Weimarer Republik* (München: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1978), 69-92.

industrialization, and urbanization based on the American capitalist model.<sup>181</sup> The city became the center of this new economic model; individuality and anonymity shaped the lives of its inhabitants. In order to fulfill the desires of the new city dwellers, new kinds of leisure activities and entertainments emerged: sports, radio, cinema, newspapers, and records became central elements of the Weimar Republic. In the midst of these changes, mass media acquired great power and was able to determine the needs of a generation that wanted to be informed about the latest developments and trends.<sup>182</sup>

Friedrich Radszuweit founded the League for Human Rights in this context of polarized politics, increased demand for entertainment, and the commercialization of culture. The League certainly cared about its members' need for leisure and the magazines provided abundant information about the goings-on in town. Having fun, however, needed not be disreputable. In his 1931 *Tourist Guide Through Vice-ridden Berlin (Führer durch das "lasterhafte" Berlin)*, a description of Berlin's most "depraved" locales, Curt Moreck described the city's homosexual scene in detail and pointed out that, despite what readers may expect, homosexual bars and clubs were decent. In homosexual clubs, "everything happens moderately, in a well-tempered

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<sup>181</sup> Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 129-168; Theo Balderston, *Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Gerald D. Feldman, *The Great Disorder: Politics, Economics and Society in the Germany Inflation, 1914-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). For "Americanization," "rationalization" and "taylorization" see: Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>182</sup> Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 207-296; Corey Ross, *Media and the Making of Modern Germany: Mass Communications, Society, and Politics from the Empire to the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1993) and *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Radio, Film, and the Death of Weimar Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and 'New Objectivity'* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Janet Ward, *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

atmosphere, a mix between bourgeois [correctness] and ominousness,” he stated.<sup>183</sup> The presence of bourgeois respectability in homosexual venues seemed to surprise the observer who did not completely let go the tension between decorum and impropriety that he believed characterized such places. In spite of that, his description reflected for the most part the homosexual “respectability” that the League for Human defended. The magazines the League published did much more than promote nightclubs and enjoyment. They helped produce a homosexual subjectivity and promoted a mass movement for those who did not or could not venture into the public but wanted to be part of it through the act of reading in the privacy of their homes. Reading contributed to the creation of a community, fostered a sense of belonging, and became a forum for discussing the movement’s politics even for those who lived away from large urban centers or chose to keep their sexual orientation secret. The amalgamation of politics and entertainment, however, made these magazines suspicious in the eyes of contemporaries, as we will see in the following chapters.

Radszuweit was not only “leader” of the homosexual movement, but was the only one who believed that the movement’s demands would be met. Max Danielsen, the leader of the Association for Friendship and editor of the competing journal *Friendship (Die Freundschaft)* considered that the early dreams of a united homosexual mass movement had burst. Danielsen claimed that homosexuals did not have the “ethical preconditions” necessary for the “struggle for

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<sup>183</sup> Curt Moreck, *Führer durch das “lasterhafte” Berlin* (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1996) (1931), 133.



freedom.”<sup>184</sup> Radszuweit, who avoided the language of “ethics” and “idealism,” perhaps because these were the values of the elite, considered that magazines would make building a mass movement possible. Indeed, the League owed its success to its efforts to appeal to broader audience (even if it did not include everyone). Whereas the Scientific Humanitarian Committee and the Community of the Special appealed to a limited audience of bourgeois and educated men, the League sought to attract everyone who identified as “*anders als die Andern*” (different from the others). Sexual orientation was the common denominator; otherwise, it was open to class difference, “racial difference” (by which the organization meant Jews), as well as political and religious affiliations (liberals and conservatives, Protestants and Catholics).<sup>185</sup>

Radszuweit was not the first publisher of homosexual magazines. The magazine *Friendship (Die Freundschaft)* was the official publication of the Association for Friendship, of which Danielsen was the president. *Friendship* started as a weekly in 1919 and preceded Radszuweit’s *Journal of Human Rights* by four years. Although it would be published until 1933, its dominance was short lived. Radszuweit would soon take over both the movement and the market. Following organizational disputes, *Friendship* faced direct competition from the League’s *Journal of Human Rights (Blätter für Menschenrecht)* and, starting in 1925 from the more informal *Journal of Friendship (Das Freundschaftsblatt)*. The League’s publications were available in more places and had more readers. Unlike *Friendship*, which after 1927 could only be purchased by subscription, Radszuweit’s magazines could be bought in street kiosks and were accessible to everyone who wished to purchase one. They were available in gay and lesbian cafes

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<sup>184</sup> “Der D.F.V. Kritik und weiterer Ausbau” (Auszug aus dem Vortrag, gehalten von M. H. Danielsen auf dem Verbandstage zu Hamburg, Ostern 1922), *Die Freundschaft* 4, Nr. 16 (22. April 1922): 1-2.

<sup>185</sup> “Bund für Menschenrecht, E.V.,” Sitz Berlin. Zwecke des Bundes,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 1, Nr. 8 (1. Juni 1923).

and in the association's clubs. And like most publications during that period, they had more readers than buyers: the magazines could be found in clubs and cafés and people passed them along to their friends and acquaintances.<sup>186</sup>

Yet the main difference was in content. The League's magazines did not focus on scientific debates, like Hirschfeld's, nor artistic and literary texts based on classical homoeroticism and pederasty, as Brand's did, nor made such topics more approachable, as *Friendship* did. Instead, the League's magazines focused on the latest news, scandals, and debates on homosexual issues as well as informational and literary articles for a less educated audience. Radszuweit acknowledged that gay men and lesbians were not so different than the "others," that is, heterosexuals. Homosexual men and women wanted to be informed, up-to-date, and part of mainstream culture. They wanted information to be accessible. Meeting those needs required money and entrepreneurship.

### *The Importance of (Pink) Money*

The League for Human Rights needed the press to keep up with the news and changing trends that affected the community and to reach as many readers as possible. For that reason, Radszuweit adopted the methods of mass culture—capitalist forms of production, distribution, and consumption—in the movement's publications.<sup>187</sup> He considered that to achieve

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<sup>186</sup> "175 außer Kraft gesetzt!!!" *Die Insel* 3, Nr. 9 (27. Februar 1925).

<sup>187</sup> The histories of capitalist production and homosexuality are interconnected and intricate. The historian John D'Emilio described how the desire for profit ultimately enabled the emergence of gay identity. The free labor system enabled gay men and women to create communities and to organize politically. As single men and women moved to cities seeking employment, they found and created spaces where they could live out their sexual desires. Homosexuality, however, was caught in a conflict: whereas the relations of capital had given rise to the possibility of "gay identity," capitalism excluded gay people because they did not fit into its logics of

decriminalization and to end prejudice the movement had to be led like a business. The League's reliance on consumer culture resulted in ambivalent politics. On the one hand, the League for Human Rights' magazines contributed to the proliferation of homosexual identity, to the formation of communities, and to the popularization of homosexual politics. On the other hand, the organization's desire for adapting existing structures of production and consumption, and its demand for respectability, produced exclusions and enabled mechanisms that imperiled the organization's existence in the long term.

Money was necessary for financing the League's plans. Working for the League was voluntary, but publishing several magazines did not come for free. Membership fees only covered the organization's basic expenses. For that reason, the League for Human Rights developed a funding model that was contingent on sales. By relying on its members' support and on the sale of magazines, the League secured economic independence and autonomy. This approach was disputed. Radszuweit's opponents argued that his capitalist pretensions and his penchant for mixing entertainment and politics would neither lead to the decriminalization of male same-sex acts nor eliminate prejudice against homosexuals. At most, the popularity of these publications would enrich its publisher.

The League advocated a form of consumer culture based on sexual orientation that anticipates what historians have come to call "pink money." According Justin Bengry, historians

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(re)production. D'Emilio wanted to draw some "political lessons" from this contradiction: gay people should reject the structures of capitalism that exclude them. This was, in his opinion, an achievable goal, since gay people are particularly well equipped to envision radical alternatives beyond capitalism and the bourgeois family. With this contradiction in mind, we can complicate the relationship between capitalism and homosexuality by exploring how Weimar's homosexuals participated in its structures, not only as wage earners, but also as consumers. In the case of the League for Human Rights, embracing capitalism enabled both the conditions for the visibility of homosexual identity as well as the possibility for its repression. See: John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity", *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 3-16.

maintain that “the purchasing power of gay men and lesbians only emerged from the 1970s and the era of gay liberation.” Whereas theorists in the 1990s welcomed terms such as “pink dollar” or “pink economy” to explore queer consumerism, Bengry suggests that queer consumerism has a longer history. He situates it in British gay men’s consumption of magazines such as *Men Only* since the mid-1930s. Although these fashion magazines targeted a male heterosexual audience and its images were often titillating for heterosexual men, they left room for ambiguity in its articles and, especially, in its cartoons, which kept a potential queer reader in mind.<sup>188</sup> We should situate the history of a homosexual consumer and of pink money even earlier and in more explicit forms. Already in the mid-1920s, Radszuweit advocated that homosexuals buy products geared specifically for them and, more importantly, that they spend their money in businesses *for* homosexuals and *by* homosexuals.

Money should preferably stay in homosexual-owned businesses because they were more likely to provide what homosexuals most needed and deserved. The League advised readers to “only visit the locals advertised in our pages.”<sup>189</sup> Only homosexual business owners worked with the wellbeing of their customers in mind, unlike the establishments managed by scrupulous, greedy heterosexual men who only wanted homosexuals’ money and the expense of their respectability and reputation. Such were the “sites of depravation” (*Lasterstätte*) and “coke dens” (*Kokshöhle*) that the sensationalist press loved to abhor, the police department raided, tourist

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<sup>188</sup> Just like these magazines reached a male heterosexual consumer and helped construct notions of masculinity in the interwar period in Britain, the League’s magazines helped produce a homosexual consumer and notions of homosexuality in 1920s Germany. Justin Bengry, “Courting the Pink Pound: *Men Only* and the Queer Consumer, 1935-39,” *History Workshop* 68 (2009): 123-148:144; Jill Greenfield, Sean O’Connell, and Chris Reid, “Fashioning Masculinity: *Men Only*, Consumption, and the Development of Marketing in the 1930s,” *Twentieth Century British History* 10, no. 4 (1999): 457-476.

<sup>189</sup> “Leser und Leserinnen des Freundschaftsblattes besuchen nur die in unserm Blatt empfohlenen Lokale,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 3, Nr. 9 (1925).

guides celebrated, and Berlin's intellectuals and artists frequented.<sup>190</sup> Avoiding disreputable bars would prevent that heterosexuals treat homosexuals as “fairground attractions” (*Schauobjekte*).<sup>191</sup> The League endorsed bars that were owned and frequented by “respectable” homosexuals and that promoted a “respectable” behavior and clientele.<sup>192</sup> In case of doubt, homosexuals should check in the League's publications, since the places advertised in their pages were allegedly “irreproachable.”

That these magazines—and by extension the entire movement—should be run like business was not Radszuweit's original idea, he did take it to another level. Already in 1920, the editors of *Friendship* lamented that whereas the Scientific Humanitarian Committee and the Community of the Special had published scientific and literary magazines since the turn of the century, the “homosexual masses” did not have theirs. They hoped that their magazine would be one day so widespread like “the weekly *Daheim* is for families,” a popular *Illustrierte*.<sup>193</sup> It should become a respectable publication for the masses, except that this time the masses would be gay. The magazine had been created in 1919 as a forum for the open exchange of ideas and for the advertisement of bars that catered to homosexuals.

The editors of *Friendship* wanted more than just fulfill the “desire for entertainment” that had conquered “the masses of inverts” after the fall of the German Empire.<sup>194</sup> Whereas the magazine advertised community events, it also provided a public forum for the movement and

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<sup>190</sup> Moreck *Führer durch das 'lasterhafte' Berlin*, 134ff.; Eugen Szatmari, *Das Buch von Berlin* (München: R. Piper & Co., 1927), 143-146.

<sup>191</sup> R. “Homosexuelle als Schauobjekte,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 4, Nr. 15 (9. April 1926).

<sup>192</sup> X. “Das perverse Berlin,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 5, Nr. 10 (11. März 1927).

<sup>193</sup> “Unsere Presse,” *Die Freundschaft* 1, Nr. 16 (1920).

<sup>194</sup> S. “Raus aus dem Ballsaal! — auf den Sportplatz!” *Die Freundschaft* 2, Nr. 25 (1920).

the recruitment of new members. *Friendship* helped foster a movement that continued to pay attention to the class differences among homosexuals while stressing their “commonalities,” using sexual orientation as the main marker of difference. The magazines should become a “world parliament” for all homosexuals and call for the respect of “those who feel like them” (*Gefühlsgenossen*) and of “humanity as a whole.”<sup>195</sup> This was a calculated political and economic program: homosexuals were a potentially large minority that deserved an independent press in order to express their political grievances, which were conceived in universal terms. Homosexuals were also a considerably large minority of consumers. Their combined economic power was a sign of their potential political strength. They were potentially part of a market of up to two million people—the number of homosexuals living in Germany that Hirschfeld had estimated.<sup>196</sup>

*Friendship*, however, lacked the capital necessary to fulfill these lofty aspirations. The magazine had started with the capital from “a group of scientists and philanthropists” but this support was not enough to keep a weekly afloat. They needed more advertisement revenue and more businessmen to invest in it. Realizing that they lacked the experience to run a magazine efficiently, the editors decided to put *Friendship* in the hands of a “competent businessman,” the experienced publisher Karl Schulz.<sup>197</sup> Max Danielsen, the magazine’s editor-in-chief, stressed that despite the changes in leadership, the magazine *Friendship* would not change in orientation; its economic needs would not compromise its politics. Danielsen asked for the readers’ loyalty during such difficult financial times, thus creating a personal relationship with the consumer

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<sup>195</sup> Giovanni Nemo, “Zusammenschluß,” *Die Freundschaft* 2, Nr. 27 (1920).

<sup>196</sup> “Homosexuelle sind Staatsbürger zweiter Klasse, *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 3, Nr. 8 (August 1925).

<sup>197</sup> “Die Zukunft der ‘Freundschaft’,” *Die Freundschaft* 3, Nr. 24 (1921).

based on mutual trust. He reminded the readers that profit would be used to achieve the organization's main goals: all revenue would go directly to the Association for Friendship and it would not enrich individuals (Schulz or Danielsen), but rather bring advantage to the movement as a whole.<sup>198</sup>

The magazine could not survive the inflation year 1923 and the rising printing and salary costs.<sup>199</sup> Even worse were the continuous accusations of indecency that the publishers had to confront.<sup>200</sup> Officials claimed that the magazine's portrayal of "homosexual life" (*Lebensbilder*) could scandalize the general public and seduce youths into homosexuality. Since the constitution had abolished censorship, public prosecutors relied on a turn-of-the-century anti-pornography law (the so-called "Lex Heinze")<sup>201</sup> to ban the magazine time after time. The alleged inclusion of "indecent" personal advertisements justified such decisions.<sup>202</sup> Official pressure was so great that publication had to be halted until 1924. By that time, many of *Friendship's* readers had found a new magazine to read: Radszuweit's *Journal of Human Rights*.

*Friendship* had failed to become a mass homosexual publication and the League for Human Rights learned from its mistakes. The League needed a strong organization and media presence to increase its "propaganda" efforts: a platform from which the League could spread its

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<sup>198</sup> Max H. Danielsen, "Interessante Entwicklungerscheinungen unserer Bewegung," *Die Freundschaft* 3, Nr. 31 (6-12. August 1921).

<sup>199</sup> In 1927 and after the magazine had been included in the Schundschriften-List, *Die Freundschaft* became available only on subscription. *Die Freundschaft* 10, Nr. 7 (Juli 1928). *Back cover*: "Die Freundschaft" erscheint ab 1. August nicht mehr öffentlich."

<sup>200</sup> Max H. Danielsen, "Der 2tägige Prozeß gegen die 'Freundschaft'," *Die Freundschaft* 3, Nr. 26 (2. – 8. Juli 1921).

<sup>201</sup> In 1926 the government would pass a law that aimed to protect youths against "harmful" literature. We will explore how the government got there and why homosexual publications were particular targets of this law in Chapter 5.

<sup>202</sup> "Letztes Wort an unsere Leser!" *Die Freundschaft* 5, Nr. 6 (10. Februar 1923).

message of homosexual respectability and equal rights. Radszuweit was ready to address these prerequisites. With the support of a financially healthy publishing enterprise, the League for Human Rights brought together leisure, education, and politics. In addition to organizing public events and lectures, the League turned to more commercial products, including popular music and accessible and educational books about homosexuality.<sup>203</sup> Radszuweit focused on expanding its portfolio with more commercial magazines that would include advertisements for bars and dance halls, printed personal ads, light articles, and stories to keep the readers connected and amused.

Organizing balls and advertising bars and cafés would surely entice more people to join the League. Yet Radszuweit recognized that building a mass organization was not an easy matter: it needed money as much as it needed structure; and it needed to stress the commonalities between homosexual men as much as their differences. Whereas the existing local groups were necessary for building up the movement from an existing organized community, the press was essential for its ideological unity and growth. The League’s leaders considered that integrating the homosexual “social clubs, dance halls, as well as savings and lottery clubs” that had mushroomed after the November Revolution under the organization’s umbrella was a necessary step for the League’s growth.<sup>204</sup> The desires of and the possibilities for homosexuals in Berlin, Leipzig, or Breslau, however, were not the same. Radszuweit recognized that a centralized organization could never be successful because most people felt more comfortable in their local communities and maintaining their customs, and because those outside of Berlin did not like

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<sup>203</sup> Ralf Jörg Raber, “‘Wir ... sind, wie wir sind!’ Homosexualität auf Schallplatte 1900–1936.” *Invertito* 5 (2003): 39-66: 64.

<sup>204</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Vor der Entscheidung,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 1, Nr. 4 (1. April 1923).



being dictated what to do by those in the capital. For that reason, the League grew out of different local groups that enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy in their programming and in their strategies in order to recruit new members.

Radszuweit was certain that a movement composed of multiple and semi-independent units had to be led like a business to succeed. The League needed a strong director, a centralized board, statutes, and members' fees, and, more importantly, an official newspaper to represent the organization's position, the *Journal of Human Rights*. The *Journal of Human Rights* never matched the quality of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee's *Newsletter* or of its *Yearbook*.<sup>205</sup> It published fewer scientific texts (mostly because its readers were not interested in them); its articles were considerably shorter; and it combined serious and trivial topics—politics and entertainment. Aware that the League may be losing the more educated segment of the movement, the *Journal's* editor sought to satisfy these readers through a series of changes in the magazine. In 1925 all advertisements and personal ads as well as all references to nightlife were removed from the magazine.<sup>206</sup> Thus, the League transformed the *Journal of Human Rights* into an official gazette that every member received. Radszuweit did so because he could afford to. He could publish a “serious” magazine such as the *Journal* because he had enough venues to publish lighter pieces and to print ads.<sup>207</sup> He still needed to sell the League's other magazines for the organization to thrive and grow. Now that the *Journal* did not depend on advertisement revenue for this publication, he could shape it according to his personal political view.

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<sup>205</sup> *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-Humanitären Komitees* (Hamburg: Bell, 1926-1933); *Jarbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen: unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität* (Leipzig: Max-Spohr-Verlag, 1899-1923).

<sup>206</sup> These changes occurred in February 1925. *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 3, Nr. 2 (Feb. 1925).

<sup>207</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Nachdenkliches über Vorgefallenes in unserer Bewegung,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 2, Nr. 35 (10. Oktober 1924).

Radszuweit's business model seemed to work. Over the first few months the *Journal of Human Rights* grew in pages, in supplements, and in personal advertisements. Soon, the League would publish four magazines with additional sections. The literary supplement *The Island of Solitaries* (*Die Insel der Einsamen*) hit the press in December 1923, only six months after the League had been founded. In February 1924 the *Journal* became a biweekly magazine. The lesbian magazine *Girlfriend* (*Die Freundin*) appeared in August 1924 and combined the "frivolous" pursuits of consumption, romance, and fashion,<sup>208</sup> (this time their object of women's desire was other women) and politics. The magazine was led by a woman (even if under Radszuweit's supervision) and many of the articles contested traditional gender roles and demanded sexual autonomy for women. Finally, the League published the *Journal of Friendship* (*Das Freundschaftsblatt*), a spin-off of *The Island*, which appeared for the first time in the summer of 1925 and would be available in the kiosk every single week until March 1933.<sup>209</sup> By

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<sup>208</sup> Alys Eve Weinbaum, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Y. Dong, and Tani E. Barlow, "The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device: Collaboration, Connective Comparison, Multidirectional Citation," *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 1-24: 9-10.

<sup>209</sup> The Radszuweit-Verlag published the following magazines: *Blätter für Menschenrecht* (*Journal of Human Rights*) was published as a biweekly magazine from February 1923 to February 1924; weekly until November 1924; and monthly until February/March 1933. Due to its inclusion in Schundliteratur list, the *Journal* was renamed *Menschenrecht* (*Human Rights*) from July 1928 to September 1929. *Die Insel der Einsamen* (*The Island of Solitaries*) was first published in 1923 as a literary *Sonderbeilage* (special supplement) to the *Journal* and became an independent magazine in 1925, when it was renamed *Das Freundschaftsblatt* (*The Journal of Friendship*). From 1926 to 1933 the Radszuweit-Verlag also published *Die Insel: das Magazin der Einsamen* (*The Island: Magazine for Solitaries*) as an independent literary magazine. From 1923 to 1925, the *Berlin Inseratenblatt* (*Berlin's Advertisement Magazine*), a free supplement to the *Journal*, contained ads and personals. From 1925, these sections were included due to economy in the *Das Freundschaftsblatt* and *Die Freundin*. The lesbian magazine *Die Freundin: Wochenchrift für ideale Frauenfreundschaft* (*The Girlfriend: Weekly for ideal Women's Friendship*) was published from 1924 to 1933. From 1928 to 1929 it appeared as *Ledige Frauen* (*Single Women*). Initially a supplement of *Die Freundin*, the League published from 1928 to 1929 the short-lived *Das dritte Geschlecht* (*The Third Sex*), which focused on transvestites. The

1926 the Radszuweit-Verlag had grown tremendously: all the magazines combined had a total circulation of 5,140,000 copies, a considerable success for a small press run by an openly gay man.<sup>210</sup>

Radszuweit liked to fashion himself as “the only publisher of its kind.”<sup>211</sup> This statement was deliberately ambiguous. Although he was not the only publisher of homosexual magazines, he was indeed the only openly gay publisher. This claim was part of his advertising strategy. In order to discredit his competitor Karl Schulz, Radszuweit never stopped stressing that *Friendship* was published by a heterosexual man who was enriching himself at the expense of homosexuals. *Friendship*, he argued, portrayed a sordid world of homosexuals, blackmailers, and youth seducers that only mirrored—instead of dispelled—society’s prejudice against homosexuality. Karl Schultz was a “parasite” and the real “cancer” of the movement, a man who was misusing the movement’s resources and strengths.<sup>212</sup> Only homosexuals, it seemed, should speak for themselves. They alone knew about their needs, their tribulations, and what was best for them.

The League’s publications succeeded at something at which their predecessors had failed. Magazines could reach thousands of readers in every corner of the country and potentially of the

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publication of this particular magazine is indicative of how homosexuality as a category was shedding away effeminacy, gender ambiguity and transsexuality during this period. Although he was never recognized as a talented writer, his two novels enjoyed considerable success: *Paul Titzki’s Life Path (Paul Titzkis Lebensweg)* (1924), the adaptation of the diaries of Paul Titzki, a friend whom he had met during the war, and *Men for Sale (Männer zu Verkaufen)* (1930), a novel about male prostitution and blackmailing, which used realism to convey his views on homosexuality and influence public opinion.

<sup>210</sup> “Auszug aus dem Geschäftsbericht des Bundes für Menschenrecht, E.V. für die Zeit vom 1. Januar bis 31. Dezember 1926,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 5, Nr. 3 (März 1927): 16-17. Here 9-19.

<sup>211</sup> “Wichtig ist,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 10, Nr. 1 (Januar 1932): 10-11.

<sup>212</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Der Krebschaden in der homosexuellen Bewegung!” *Die Insel* 2, Nr. 6 (12. Dezember 1924).

world (there were in fact subscribers in faraway countries such as Argentina or the United States). *The Special*, the literary magazine that the Community of the Special published, had only a few hundred subscribers and the Scientific Humanitarian Committee's *Newsletter* was sent only to its affiliated members. Danielsen's *Friendship* had admittedly been a trailblazer, but it had never reached the masses: "A magazine that no more than 100 people read," Radszuweit claimed, "cannot pretend to be 'our movement.'"<sup>213</sup> More than hundred people read *Friendship*, but hardly *all* homosexuals in the country. The Association for Friendship had only 400 members in Berlin by 1923 and not more than a couple of thousand members in the entire country.<sup>214</sup> Where were the two million homosexual men and women hiding? If the League wanted to lead the movement and make a difference it needed to reach every single homosexual in the Germany.

As the League's number of publications and their visibility in the kiosks increased, so did its membership. In April 1923 the League for Human Rights had only 2,780 members. One year later it had 12,013.<sup>215</sup> It would continue to grow exponentially. According to a self-report, the organization had 100,000 members by the end of 1924, a figure that the organization most likely had exaggerated. Stagnation followed due to pressure from local authorities. Police departments in some cities "bullied" local groups and threatened them with taking away licenses to organize public events and even with removing the magazines from public sale. They justified these

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<sup>213</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit "'Die Freundschaft.' Zur Aufklärung für unsere Mitglieder und Freunde," *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 1, Nr. 7 (15. Mai 1923); F. Radszuweit, "Die Freundschaft," *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 1, Nr. 21 (15. Dezember 1923).

<sup>214</sup> Gerd Sand, "Propaganda," *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 1, Nr. 21 (15. Dezember 1923).

<sup>215</sup> Niels Lermann, "Die Organisation der 12.000," *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 2, Nr. 11 (25. April 1924).

threats with people's fear of "the spread of homosexuality on the entire population."<sup>216</sup> As a consequence of this backlash, the League had only 30,000 members in 1925, a figure that seems much more realistic. The League would continue to grow until 1927, when it reached a plateau of 65,000 members, a number that would remain constant until the end of the decade,<sup>217</sup> when the economic crisis and political instability would affect the recruitment of new members and the retention of old ones. Membership losses could also be explained by the organization's successes: many homosexuals overestimated their freedom and wrongly believed that there was no longer a need for an organization.

Even though he was not the first to envision the movement and its press as a profit-g geared business, once Radszuweit's publications started to lead the market, his competitors forgot that they had once shared the same aspirations. Benedict Friedlaender (1866-1908), the cofounder of the Community of the Special (*Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*), had complained that doctors had been the first people to make a profit out of homosexuality.<sup>218</sup> Radszuweit, it seemed, was not any better than them. For his opponents, the commercial success of these publications and the League's exponential growth revealed the publisher's true intentions. What could such a banal movement and such an avaricious leader ever achieve?

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<sup>216</sup> Paul Weber, "Verleumder am Werk," *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 10, Nr. 25 (23. Juni 1932).

<sup>217</sup> There are not exact data about membership numbers; the information we have was probably exaggerated for propagandistic ends. In 1925, and prompted by the protests of conservative groups, the police closed several *Ortsgruppen* (regional groups). This caused the worst decline in membership. The organization complained that its members had forgotten that the real goal was not socializing, but fighting for the abolition of § 175. Thus, by the end of 1925 the members who really cared about the organization's political goals rejoined the League. In 1927 some cities regained their regional groups (Köln, Chemnitz, Düsseldorf, Magdeburg, Stettin, and Liegnitz). Friedrich Radszuweit, "Unsere Bewegung: Rückblick und Ausblick," *Menschenrecht* 7, Nr. 1 (Januar 1929).

<sup>218</sup> Cited in Harry Oosterhuis, ed., *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany* (New York: Haworth Press, 1991), 73.

Radszuweit's rivals accused him of being greedy and of transforming the homosexual movement into a vulgar affair. Adolf Brand, the frontman of the Community of the Special, was aware of the difficulties facing the movement during the 1920s, but he was not willing to accept its proletarianization to save it. His deep-seated dislike for Radszuweit became a matter of public debate in the homosexual movement. Brand felt contempt for what Radszuweit embodied: a self-made man from humble origins who had been able to climb the economic ladder. He described Radszuweit as a man from the provinces who was only known for making money from disreputable bars and dance halls. According to Brand, Radszuweit was famous for hosting so-called *Puppenbälle*, the lavish balls that Berlin's effeminate homosexual men and cross-dressers frequented. How could such a lowlife be the leader of the entire movement that regarded itself as respectable? The League's leader, Brand argued, lacked the "idealism" necessary to lead the movement to success. By idealism, Brand implied an elitist worldview that included the veneration of intergenerational relationships, which Radszuweit rejected. In order to further discredit him, Brand resorted to a series of insults that resonated with his contemporaries: he was a *Schieber*, a profiteer who had illicitly enriched himself during the war and the early years of the Republic with shabby businesses. Even worse, Brand accused him of "stabbing" the movement in the back. He had betrayed the entire movement, just as Social Democrats (with whom Radszuweit openly sympathized and Brand loathed) had done during the war. He was a treasonous socialist, a pragmatic and greedy person, a threat and an embarrassment for the movement.<sup>219</sup>

Radszuweit, who was probably accustomed to prejudice against his class background, did not blink an eye. He seemed unaffected by the accusations of profiteering and hosting

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<sup>219</sup> Adolf Brand, "Der neue Aktions-Ausschuß," *Die Gemeinschaft der Eigenen. Ein Nachrichten- und Werbeblatt* Nr. 2/3 (1924): 28-31.

disreputable events. While Brand lamented his lack of “idealism,” Radszuweit justified that pragmatism was the only strategy that could bring success to the movement. Ideals, he argued in a response to Brand’s tirade, were useless without “healthy materialism.” “There is no one in a company who just works for idealism” and the movement was no different.<sup>220</sup> His business experience had taught him that much. Idealism was for those who never have to worry about money. Action was needed to improve the situation of the disenfranchised. Achieving even the smallest of demands demanded a realist approach and money, which Radszuweit collected by selling magazines.

Nearing his death in 1932 and reminiscing about his competitors’ criticism in the early years of the League, Radszuweit maintained that his entrepreneurship alone had saved the movement. He was proud of having built the publishing house, the magazines, and the entire movement from the bottom up without any external financial help. “I risked then my own capital and of course wanted to make some money with this company,” he remembered with pleasure. “I told myself that as a businessman I would not start a company which will would give me no earnings for my work and no interest for my investment.” That he had run the movement like a business should be understandable for his followers and readers, “with what money should I pay my employees or for rent if the publishing house is not a business?”<sup>221</sup> He reminded the readers, perhaps in attempt to regain the esteem that he may have lost as the movement—and the country—entered its worst crisis, that the League owed its success to his entrepreneurial and managerial skills.

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<sup>220</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Der Krebschaden in der homosexuellen Bewegung,” *Die Insel* 2, Nr. 2 (9. Januar 1925).

<sup>221</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Spitzeltum,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 10, Nr. 3 (21. Januar 1932).

Activism, Visibility, and Coming Out

In 1928 Paul Weber, the League for Human Rights' secretary, explained the organization's success in organizing the leisure time of its members. "The greatest accomplishment," Weber stated, "is that homosexual men have created meeting points not only in Germany, but in the entire world."<sup>222</sup> The League's magazines had ended the solitude that characterized homosexual men and women not only in urban centers and rural areas. The League had established a complex network of clubs, representatives, and newspapers that facilitated friendship, the exchange of ideas, and the growth of a political movement. The spectacular financial success of the League's publications had helped achieved such visibility and growth.

Radszuweit was all about business, but he was not interested in profit for profit's sake. Its benefits were used to foster the movement's growth and to help its members. The League was central to the community's life: it kept its members informed; it spread propaganda in an effort to gain public awareness and acceptance; it lobbied the parliament; and it provided its members and other people in the community with legal and economic support. It motivated its members and readers to support certain political parties and to embrace the same visibility that the magazines had achieved. Finally, it encouraged them to come out (*sich bekennen*), a personal *and* political act that could end all prejudice against homosexuality.

The League shaped its members' electoral decisions. In the pages of the *Journal of Human Rights*, *Journal of Friendship*, and even *Girlfriend*, the League had an ongoing conversation with their readers about which parties supported the movement's plea. The leadership was aware that members were by no means homogeneous: although most members supported the Social Democratic and Communist Parties, they had different socioeconomic

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<sup>222</sup> Paul Weber, "Was leistet der Bund für Menschenrecht für die Homosexuellen?" *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 6, December (1928): 6.



backgrounds and different political affiliations or inclinations. This political diversity required flexibility, which Radszuweit masked under political “neutrality.”<sup>223</sup> Nevertheless, Radszuweit repeatedly reminded his readers that only the Social Democratic, the Communist, the Democratic Party, and a single member of the German People’s Party, the law professor Wilhelm Kahl, supported decriminalization.<sup>224</sup> These facts should make readers reconsider their vote, if they had ever thought of voting for another party.

Most of the League’s revenue was spent in social and political activism. Organizing balls and selling magazines was a way to fund more serious programming and to assist members in need. The League sent pamphlets and propaganda to Reichstag members, ministers, and judges, and even to President Hindenburg.<sup>225</sup> In 1924, it sent over 200,000 brochures to members of all parties; it organized sixteen public lectures and eleven symposia.<sup>226</sup> It dealt directly with police departments in cities such as Düsseldorf, where the repression of homosexual publications, organizations, and clubs seemed to be particularly strong.<sup>227</sup> Furthermore, the League conducted “humanitarian work” by supporting of homosexuals in economic need and by offering legal advice to its members. This service was included to all members as part of their monthly fee and

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<sup>223</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Homosexuelle—Reichstagswahl Politische Parteien!” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 6, Nr. 10 (7. Mai 1928).

<sup>224</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Unser Schicksalstag der 14. September,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 8, Nr. 9 (September 1930).

<sup>225</sup> The League for Human Rights did so for the first time in 1924: “Aufruf an Alle,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 2, Nr. 7 (28. März 1924); “Eingabe des BfM, EV an den Reichspräsidenten von Hindenburg (27. August 1926),” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 4, Nr. 48 (26. November 1926).

<sup>226</sup> “Auszug aus dem Geschäftsbericht des “BfM” EV, Sitz Berlin für das Geschäftsjahr 1925,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 3, Nr. 4 (April 1925).

<sup>227</sup> “Tätigkeitsbericht des Bundes für Menschenrecht E.V. Sitz Berlin für die Zeit vom 1. Januar bis 31. Dezember 1925,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 4, Nr. 4 (April 1926).

included legal advice and representation in labor disputes, blackmail, and criminal trials due to Paragraph 175.<sup>228</sup>

The League's visibility encouraged its members to promote the organization and recruit new members. Whereas many homosexual men and women joined freely, the League's leaders were aware that some worried about their public image and preferred keeping a low profile. A series of articles outlined how people could join the organization and spread its message. In order to attract the most hesitant, the League suggested that members send the names of their timid acquaintances, so that they would be sent free informational materials that may convince them to join.<sup>229</sup> This "recruiting" prospect included the *Journal of Human Rights* and it was sent in a sealed envelope to avoid the neighbors' suspicion (visibility was reserved for those who chose to let themselves be seen). In addition, members were urged to "leave behind the *Journal* in a discreet manner, for example in the streetcar, the train, or in frequented places such as theaters, cafés, and pubs."<sup>230</sup> Hopefully, people regardless of their sexual orientation would grab a copy and learn about the inequalities that homosexual suffer and change their position on the issue. If it worked out, the League could gain a new member and Radszuweit a new customer.

Propaganda and visibility were necessary to achieve the political goals of the movement, two aspects that the press facilitated. But the League's members had to be proactive themselves if they wanted to be accepted. They had to "come out." The best ways to do so were debated in

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<sup>228</sup> The Legal Department (*Rechtsschutzabteilung*) was created in 1926 and the League claimed to be the only organization that was able to offer such a service due to its large membership. "Rückblick und Ausblick," *Menschenrecht* 7, Nr. 1 (1929): 2.

<sup>229</sup> "Wie kann man am unauffälligsten Mitglieder für den Bund für Menschenrecht werben?" *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 5, Nr. 8 (1927): 25.

<sup>230</sup> "Welche art von Propaganda ist am wirksamsten um die Öffentlichkeit auf das Unrecht des bestehenden § 175 und des neuen § 267 hinzuweisen?" *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 5, Nr. 9 (1927): 16.

the magazines' pages. Johannes Wagner, writing in the *Journal of Human Rights* pointed out a conundrum: "before we as homosexuals (*Homoeroten*) can come into the world and be able to carry out really successful work, we must enjoy equality and respect. Everything we want to achieve will be premature without this premise."<sup>231</sup> How could homosexuals be respected and enjoy equality if homosexuality was not part of the larger conversation about rights? The magazines had provided a public forum to discuss homosexual inequality. Their presence in kiosks had made homosexuality highly visible to the world. Still many readers could not help but wonder how and when their own visibility would take place. Many homosexual men read the magazines and participated in the League's social gatherings but were not out to family, friends, or colleagues. How could homosexuality be out, but not the homosexual?

Acknowledging one's homosexuality to family and friends was a lot harder than purchasing a magazine or than leaving a magazine behind in the streetcar. K. Kronenber, a reader of the *Journal of Human Rights* argued that

It may seem difficult for many to pronounce openly: Yes, I am a homosexual.

Nevertheless, this step is necessary in order to achieve our goals. One does not need to walk down the street with a sign on the back saying 'I am a homosexual,' but there are surely many opportunities in your circle of friends, acquaintances, and coworkers to raise the question: 'What do you want from homosexuals (*Homoeroten*)? Are they worse people than you? Aren't they condemned to live they way they do due to their peculiar nature?'<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Johannes Wagner, "Mitarbeit" (Meinungsaustausch), *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 1, Nr. 12 (28. Juli 1923).

<sup>232</sup> K. K. Kroneberg, "Bekennnismut," *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 1, Nr. 14 (1. September 1923).

Kronberg appealed to the need to teach people about the nature of homosexuality and the lives homosexuals led as a consequence. Teaching heterosexuals about the science behind homosexuality as well as about homosexual respectability was a central part of the journal's educational project. The League's leadership was certain that family ties and friendship would prevail over prejudice if one chose to come out.

Coming out implied accepting who one "really" was. This search for a distinct sexual sensibility located in the body and the soul could be traced to the writings of Carl Westphal and to the tradition of confession that the patient testimonies in Krafft-Ebing's writings illuminated.<sup>233</sup> It could also be traced to the self-recognition that many felt after reading such statements. In the 1920s, however, "*sich bekennen*" not only implied an internal recognition, now it involved sharing that inner "truth" with the outer world. Coming out to family, friends, and coworkers became a political act that could lead to acceptance and equality. Not everyone should come out, though: only those who lived a respectable life and avoided unwholesome entertainment venues should do so. These respectable homosexuals should "do right and not shy away from anyone."<sup>234</sup> Only they should feel pride and be confident that their respectability would overshadow their abjection. This strategy should work, at least at home.

For the League, the family was the center of the homosexual's life. This regard for familial support was a fundamental aspect of the "politics of respectability," since the League wanted homosexuals to fit within the existing social structures. The family was understood as a safe space in which enduring, shared love would prevent disappointment and disgust. Once every

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<sup>233</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1978), 43; Arnold Davidson, "Sex and the Emergence of Sexuality," *Critical Inquiry* 14, no. 1 (Autumn, 1987): 16–48.

<sup>234</sup> K. Kroneberg, "Bekennnismut."

family had dealt internally with homosexuality (and no family was untouched by it, the readers were reminded) acceptance and tolerance would no longer be denied.<sup>235</sup> Coming out implied a process of self-acceptance *and* social acceptance. It required individual agency, even if the process was described, mediated, and encouraged in the press by the coming out of others and the stories of their success. Erwin Weiß, in an article about the importance of educating people about homosexuality, encouraged readers to “recognize their obligations:” to educate the masses about homosexuality and to come out to parents and siblings. Weiß admitted that heterosexual friends and relatives may not immediately understand, but homosexuals should rely on science and refer to the lives of famous homosexuals to make the case about their right to exist.<sup>236</sup> Christmas was a good moment to come out, since this was a time for love and understanding, values that the Church failed to uphold with respect to homosexuals.<sup>237</sup> In the end, homosexuals needed heterosexuals’ support. Reaching a critical mass and increasing the number of supporters would improve the chances of abolishing Paragraph 175.<sup>238</sup>

Coming out to the world was complicated. One feared being rejected by family members or losing one’s job. The magazines and the organization offered a substitute for those who were not willing or not able to do so. They could help homosexuals who were not out feel part of the

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<sup>235</sup> Erwin Weiß, “Homoeroten! Erkennt Eure Pflicht!” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 2, Nr. 18 (13. Juni 1924).

<sup>236</sup> Erwin Weiß, “Homoeroten!”

<sup>237</sup> F. Radszuweit, “Weihnachtswünsche der Verfemten,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 5, Nr. 51 (23. Dezember 1927) and Gerd Sand, “Der Weihnachtsbaum als Sinnbild des Homoeroten,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 6, Nr. 50 (14. Dezember 1928); Friedrich Radszuweit, “Weihnachtsgedanken,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 8, Nr. 52 (29. Dezember 1930).

<sup>238</sup> Erwin Weiß, “Homoeroten!”

movement, as Bernhard Lübecker, a reader from Hamburg, argued.<sup>239</sup> And they convinced indecisive readers who may to attend the events the League organized and connect with others. Magazines also connected readers virtually through the act of reading. It was a way to “flee” from an intolerant world and to feel understood and loved, even if in solitude. Arthur S. wrote in a letter to the editor that “he awaited Wednesdays with longing.” This was the day when he could purchase his magazine, which was “the only gleam of hope in my eternal everyday life.” Arthur S., however, complained that he felt excluded from the movement because he sensed that the League did not support those who would not come out and engage politically. What about those who feared rejection?<sup>240</sup> Reading the magazine, for Arthur S., was the only possibility of being “out.” In this sense, even the act of purchasing a magazine was a brave political act for many and oftentimes the only possibility for homosexual men to come to terms with their sexuality.

The visibility of homosexuality came with some trade-offs. Part of being visible implied suffering more repression from the outside. Visibility made it easier for the police to locate and placate homosexuals and their publications. This seems to have been most deeply felt in Catholic parts of the country, such as the Rhineland and Westphalia. The police department in Düsseldorf, for example, started arresting people in homosexual bars and clubs in 1925. Similar measures reached Berlin that year, as well. In the capital, where the police department had notoriously condoned homosexual gatherings before, the authorities would not allow for the extension of the closing time for the gatherings organized by the League.<sup>241</sup> In Chemnitz, an industrial city in

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<sup>239</sup> Bernhard Lübecker (Hamburg), “Unsere Bewegung,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 1, Nr. 12 (28. Juli 1923).

<sup>240</sup> Arthur S., “Leserbrief,” *Menschenrecht* 7, Nr. 10 (October 1929).

<sup>241</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Vizepolizeipräsident Dr. Friedensburg gegen die Homosexuellen!” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 3, Nr. 5 (1925).

Saxony, the police department had forbidden that known homosexual men live together or that they linger on streets, parks, squares, or public restrooms.<sup>242</sup> Once the Law for the Protection of Youth against Harmful Literature was passed in 1926, police departments and grassroots organizations would start policing the public sale of homosexual and other “morally questionable” magazines.<sup>243</sup> Repression would continue to increase subtly and insidiously. This repression aimed to reduce the visibility of homosexuality. It is significant that it affected the homosexual press first.

### *The Politics of Respectability*

The increase in homosexuality’s visibility led to repression from the outside. It also produced repression within the movement. The visibility that the League of Human Rights had achieved with the use of mass culture was contingent on normative values that had to be maintained.<sup>244</sup> The homosexual movement fostered democratic values, but it did so by enforcing a normative identity: homosexuals, for example, should not challenge gender norms; they should live productive lives; they should experience their sexuality only in private; and they should disavow their erotic interest for adolescents to the point that homosexuality should only involve consenting adults.

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<sup>242</sup> “Die Polizei Verbietet,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 5, Nr. 40 (7. Oktober 1927).

<sup>243</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Die Hamburger Polizei verbietet den Verkauf der Insel!” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 3, Nr. 4 (1925).

<sup>244</sup> For the relationship between mass culture and the production of normative values, see Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 206-207.

Radszuweit's first article, published in the pages of *Friendship* in 1922, set the tone of his political agenda for the years to come. In "An Open Letter of all German Men and Women," he demonstrated his ability to appeal to a general public with a colloquial tone. "Indeed, there is, four years into the Republic, a repressed minority" (*eine unterdrückte Minderheit*) that is treated with prejudice, he argued. This minority was based around a shared sexual orientation, but besides that, homosexuals were a diverse group of people. Homosexuals are not the "criminals, treasonous people, or individuals that one should eradicate from the root, but rather respectable men from all classes. The simple worker, craftsman, salaried employee, business man and civil servant is part of this minority just as the splurging war profiteer or the academic are."<sup>245</sup> The diversity of homosexuals—their *difference*—made this a movement that crossed over all classes and that mattered to all parties.

The League used the language of liberal rights to demand the decriminalization of male same-sex acts. This strategy meant a radical break from its predecessors. Whereas the League and the Scientific Humanitarian Committee had collaborated at the beginning, the League moved away from the language of science to embrace the language of rights. The early collaboration between the League and Hirschfeld's organization was one of need—the League was desperate for support—but not one of ideological agreement. In his 1922 article, even before the League had been established, Radszuweit had argued that scientific arguments, be them Hirschfeld's "sexual intermediates" or Steinach's "puberty glands," were important but would not get homosexuals very far. A successful organization had to educate the public about such facts—and homosexuals had to be active and politically mature. They had to organize as liberal subjects

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<sup>245</sup> F. Radszuweit, "Offener Brief an alle deutschen Männer und Frauen," *Die Freundschaft* 4, Nr. 40 (7. Oktober 1922).



with the “incontestable right to live according to one’s feeling provided a third person is not hurt.”<sup>246</sup>

Why did the League and Radszuweit move from the language of science that had been in use since the turn of the century to that of “rights,” a move that was evident in the organization’s name, the League for Human Rights? 1922 was not 1897. Germans lived in democracy now and had ratified a constitution that guaranteed equality. With the new political regime, the politics of the homosexual movement changed, as well. The League’s understanding of rights was liberal in the sense that it advocated personal inalienable rights, such as freedom to live one’s life according to its nature and fullest potential, provided others are not harmed, and the right to privacy. Accordingly, the League supported the liberal tenets of “equality, integration, individual self worth, and self determination.”<sup>247</sup> Human rights were in the name but rarely in the politics of the organization.<sup>248</sup> Most likely, the concept of human rights gave the organization an

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Julie Mertus, “The Rejection of Human Rights Framing: The Case of LGBT Advocacy in the US,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (Nov., 2007): 1036-1064: 1052. The history of sexual orientation rights as human rights is recent. It was not until 1992 that the first openly homosexual person spoke in a human rights forum. His intervention was received with hostility and disgust. Gradually, gay and lesbian organizations became part of human rights meetings, such as the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights. That same year, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) received consultative status within the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) (Sanders, 1996). From this moment on, although slowly, sexual orientation rights have become part of the general human rights agenda. See also Douglas Sanders, “Getting Lesbian and Gay Issues on the International Human Rights Agenda,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 18 (1996, February): 67-106; Jaya Sharma, “The Language of Rights,” *Development with a Body: Sexuality, Human Rights and Development*, eds. Andrea Cornwall, Sonia Corrêa, and Susie Jolly (London: Zed Books, 2008); Robert Wintemute, *Sexual Orientation and Human Rights: The United States Constitution, the European Convention, and the Canadian Charter* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

<sup>248</sup> Besides his familiarity with social democratic politics, it is unclear why Radszuweit and his colleagues chose League for Human Rights as the new name. It is very likely that they took the idea from the German League for Human Rights (*Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte*) the name

apparent “moral high ground” that could be linked to other contemporary issues. Choosing that name could eventually introduce homosexual rights in the political vocabulary of the time. However, both “human rights” and “homosexuality” were still undefined and malleable concepts. Part of the role of the League was making homosexuality and homosexual rights concrete and, as a consequence, restrictive and detrimental to many.<sup>249</sup>

The *Journal of Human Rights* outlined how homosexuals should behave in the 1924 article “Our Relationship to the Others.”<sup>250</sup> “Who are the ‘others’ and who are ‘we’?” the article’s anonymous author (most likely Radszuweit himself) wondered. The “others” were the heterosexual majority, “we” represented the homosexual minority, but according to the author, both groups shared the same “ethical qualifications” and should be treated equally. Being a minority entailed difficulties. Majorities have power and impose their will. In order to be accepted as a minority, homosexuals needed to assimilate and be “normal.”<sup>251</sup> “Normal” homosexuals were good, healthy, German workers, civil servants, or businessmen who just

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that the League New Fatherland (*Bund Neues Vaterland*) had adopted in 1922. This organization had been founded as a politically neutral pacifist organization in 1913 in an attempt to arrest the spread of chauvinism in both Germany and France. The Liga’s liberal values and work on legal reform, particularly on the abolition of the death penalty, may have prompted Radszuweit to choose a similar name. See: Richard Evans, *Rituals of Retribution: Capital Punishment in Germany, 1600-1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 513-515; *40 Jahre Kampf um Menschen Rechte, 1913-1953* (Berlin-Halensee: Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte, 1953).

<sup>249</sup> However, as Julie Mertus argues, homosexuality and human rights have made a bad couple historically. The language of human rights could prove “restrictive and even detrimental when identity is the central organizing factor” (Mertus, 1038).

<sup>250</sup> F. “Unser Verhältnis zu den Andern,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 1, Nr. 24 (1. Februar 1924).

<sup>251</sup> Radszuweit would later compare homosexuals to Jews, who as a minority had also fought for equal rights but that, in his opinion, did not seem to unanimously support equal rights for homosexuals. Friedrich Radszuweit, “Ist das Richtig?” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 6, Nr. 28 (13. Juli 1928).

happened to love those of their same sex.<sup>252</sup> The “other” referred to homosexuals could not be assimilated, those who had not abandoned the “decadent manners of a dandy” or the effeminate demeanor of the “queen” (*Tante*), or those who engaged in male prostitution and corrupted youths. Such abject behavior not only hurt each individual, but also “damaged the entire movement.”<sup>253</sup> Such behaviors were loathly for heterosexuals and despicable for respectable homosexuals.<sup>254</sup> “Normal” homosexuals should conform to gender norms and control their impulses and sexual drive; they should be restrained and tamed. Within the “politics of respectability” that the League supported, being *out* entailed being unnoticeable. Sexuality and its manifestations ought to remain strictly private, invisible affairs.

The fact that the League supported liberal rights highlights the need for creating a discourse around homosexuality in which value and productivity predominated. According to this view, homosexuals contributed to the betterment of society: they served in the military, excelled in the arts, and contributed to Germany’s rich intellectual life, or so maintained Gerd Vrone in an article for the *Journal of Friendship*. If homosexuals wanted to claim respectability and assert their role as productive members of society, he continued, they needed to overcome a critical issue. While heterosexuals could legitimize their existence through reproduction, homosexual men could not. For that reason, they should be more ambitious at work and focus on

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<sup>252</sup> Marti M. Lybeck argues that many working-class women affiliated with the League for Human Rights “may have been resistant to bourgeois discipline.” While we cannot doubt that this was the case for some, many working-class homosexuals may have accommodated to respectability, as well. Respectability could pay off, in personal and political terms. Lybeck, 176.

<sup>253</sup> Paul Weber, “Warum muß der Paragraph 175 verschärft werden?” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 2, Nr. 31 (12. September 1924). See also: Friedrich Radszuweit, “Die Sünden der Homosexuellen,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 4, Nr. 30 (23. Juli 1926).

<sup>254</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Umschau,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 9, Nr. 5 (Mai 1931).

their “personal improvement as humans” (*Vervollkommung als Menschen*).<sup>255</sup> The good intentions of that model were undeniable: it sought acceptance, equality, and visibility. But this model also demanded the exclusion and invisibility of those not willing to “conform” or of those not able to do so. This position may have been pragmatic if we keep in mind the League’s ambitious, yet limited, demand for rights. It was a conformist, assimilationist, and repressive position nonetheless. The failure to assimilate, the League warned, would result in homosexuals being thrown together in the same bag as criminals and outcasts. The “politics of respectability,” in contrast, proposed that homosexuals had the power to end prejudice once and for all. Homosexuals were responsible for being “respectable.” The respectable, adult homosexual who enjoyed his love life in private was the only possible model if the decriminalization of male same-sex acts should ever be accomplished. “Respectability” could offer freedom for some, but it also brought repression to many.

### Conclusion

We should be cautious about celebrating the visibility that the League for Human Rights achieved without taking into account how it participated in the existing economic and social structures.<sup>256</sup> Historians have recognized the potentialities of mass culture for producing subaltern identities and for creating room for agency and contestation. Freedom of the press allowed opinions to be aired publicly, yet this does not mean that these voices were necessarily heard. In particular, the homosexual press received pressure from a society obsessed with

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<sup>255</sup> Gerd Vrone, “Die anderen—und die ‘anders als die andern’,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 5, Nr. 23 (10. Juni 1927).

<sup>256</sup> Miriam Hansen, “Early Silent Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?” *New German Critique* no. 29, *The Origins of Mass Culture: The Case of Imperial Germany (1871-1918)* (Spring-Summer 1983): 147-184.

silencing it. Most crucially, it also exerted repression onto itself: the magazines that helped constitute a homosexual mass movement during the Weimar Republic also applied control on its members by promoting the “politics of respectability.” The homosexual press aimed to be part of mainstream society. For that reason it treated politics, science, or the law, topics that were part of the bourgeois press. In its publications, the League for Human Rights promoted a very limiting model of what it meant to be a homosexual. In the end, the League’s mission would work against itself. The homosexual public culture that the magazines helped created was both radical and conservative, revolutionary and reactionary.

That the homosexual gained visibility in the 1920s does not mean that he had been invisible before. This chapter did not aim to contribute to what George Chauncey has called the “*myth of invisibility*,” the belief that “even if a gay world existed [in this case in early-twentieth century New York], it was kept invisible and thus remained difficult for isolated gay men to find.”<sup>257</sup> Indeed, the homosexual had been a fixture in the streets of New York or of Berlin during in the early twentieth century and men who desired other men were able to find each other in the streets, in bars, or in balls regardless of the League’s publications. It may be true, as well, that “gay life was more integrated into the everyday life of the city,” certainly more so than after the Second World War.<sup>258</sup> Nevertheless, homosexual visibility during the Weimar Republic was not the result of homosexual men’s walking down the streets of the metropolis or of the relative degree of police tolerance homosexuality received. This was a different kind of visibility, one that was the result of the homosexual’s prominent media presence.

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<sup>257</sup> George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay World 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 3.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*

The presence of homosexuality in the newsstands increased public awareness. People may have not seen a “homosexual” in the flesh before, so to speak, but they could find him in the kiosk. Potentially, everyone could have the homosexual in sight—everywhere. This presence was particularly dangerous for youths, who were constitutionally and psychologically susceptible to the homosexual’s cunning seduction. As a consequence, the availability and accessibility of homosexual publications reinforced prejudices against homosexuality that were justified within the heightened contemporary anxiety about youth endangerment and protection. These prejudices led ultimately to the homophobia and repressive measures against homosexuality. Homosexual visibility, for example, is central to understanding how the Law for the Protection of Youth Against Harmful Literature (Chapter 5) would try to make homosexuality invisible again. Homosexuality’s presence in the media and the success of the League for Human Rights’ publications made homosexuality noticeable and ubiquitous. It was this visibility that made homosexuality a threat. What was so threatening to youths in the homosexual movement’s press? To answer that question, let’s look at the kiosk.

### Chapter 3:

#### The Allure of Mass Culture, or the Homosexual Lies in Wait at the Kiosk

On December 15, 1923, only ten months after it had started publishing the *Journal of Human Rights (Blätter für Menschenrecht)*, the League for Human Rights launched a literary section called *The Island of Solitaries (Die Insel der Einsamen)*. This supplement was Radszuweit's first attempt to expand his publishing enterprise and to bring variety to the League's publications. Within a month *The Island of Solitaries* went from a short section to a full-fledged magazine. What could be a better way to attract new members and to compliment the League's political and educational content than telling stories? Rudolf Reichert, the supplement's editor, opened the first issue with a story he had written with Heinz Stratz. Echoing the supplement's title, the story was called "The Island of the Solitary."

The narrative is set in a fantastic world. The main character Sirius is the only inhabitant of a secluded island. Sirius can occasionally hear the chants of sirens, but they do not allure him. Like Odysseus, he is able to withstand their tune, but in this case he need not be chained to a mast at all, for he is not attracted to them. Instead, Sirius diverts himself with those who are not of his kind and occupies his time learning about myriad things. He plays with panthers and owls, searches the "secrets of being," and studies the stars. Despite his overwhelming solitude, Sirius thinks he is happy. "He saw thirty summers and winters come and go and never felt the desire to move away [from the island] ... He knew nothing about the people on the other side of the bluish mountains, he did not feel any desire to meet them, did not miss them."<sup>259</sup>

One night, and for an unknown reason, Sirius's curiosity is awakened. Unexpectedly, he wants to know what exists outside this remote location. "Did he feel the desire for someone like

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<sup>259</sup> "Die Insel des Einsamen" Eine Märchenfolge von Heinz Stratz und Rudolf Reichert," *Die Insel der Einsamen* 1, Nr. 1 (15. Dezember 1923).

him, with whom he could talk, reflect, and dream?” Sirius hesitates to make the first move, but Dynas, his pet panther (and perhaps the embodiment of his desire) takes the first step and jumps over the body of water that isolates them. Sirius follows him. On the other side of the sea, a naked figure welcomes him. His name is Adrast, “a lean ephebe,” a youth with a “body that should have been chiseled in marble, half-opened mouth and ivory-colored teeth, and reed green hair.” This fantastic apparition arouses Sirius’s interest and desire. “Who are you? How did you know how to interpret what I was not able to utter?” Sirius inquires. The youth tells him that he comes from a land where those like him are scorned and condemned and has come to “ward off [Sirius’s] solitude” once and for all. Adrast wants to bring to him “the happiness he deserves.”

Tales about princes and captives, emperors and dancers follow their encounter at the beginning of this frame narrative. Perhaps the authors wanted to convey an atmosphere similar to that of *One Thousand and One Nights*: mysterious and fantastic, romantic and erotic. Readers should consider “The Island of the Solitary” as a compilation of stories that could stand for a homosexual treasure trove that had been finally discovered; its stories collected and recorded. At the end of the collection, published over five months, Reichert reflected on the narrative arch and what “The Island of the Solitary” had achieved. Whereas the first part of the plot took place in the world of “fairy tales,” it had gradually transitioned to the world of “reality.”<sup>260</sup>

The story can be interpreted as a metaphor for the rapid expansion of homosexual visibility that we discussed in the previous chapter. Certainly, Sirius’s isolation and unnamed longing for companionship and happiness must have resonated with the supplement’s readers. Until that moment the homosexual had inhabited a spectral life—one marked by the desire to

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<sup>260</sup> “Die Insel des Einsamen (Schluß),” *Die Insel der Einsamen* 1, Nr. 5 (15. April 1924).



discover that he was not alone.<sup>261</sup> The “island,” that of the magazine’s title and of the story, was a reminder of past solitude and the celebration of a newly established community. The League for Human Rights wanted to satisfy the readers’ desire for identification, community, and history. Soon, the supplement’s title would become just *The Island*. The previous title implied that homosexuals had lived cloistered from each other and from everyone else for too long. In contrast, the new name highlighted how the movement and its magazines had ended this isolation.<sup>262</sup> With the publication and public sale of magazines, the League had succeeded in increasing the awareness of homosexuality among the masses. It had also succeeded in bringing the homosexual to “come out” (*sich bekennen*) and homosexuals together, or so the publishers maintained.

Mass culture owed its rapid spread and popularity to technologies such as the rotary printing press, cinema, and more recently, radio transmission.<sup>263</sup> Furthermore, scholars have abundantly described the emergence of mass culture<sup>264</sup> in the context of Weimar’s new

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<sup>261</sup> For the “spectral metaphor,” see: Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 28-65.

<sup>262</sup> Rudolf Reichert, “Auf ein Wort!” *Die Insel* 1, Nr. 6 (15. Mai 1924).

<sup>263</sup> Konrad H. Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 291-2.

<sup>264</sup> Mass culture is a loaded term that will be intentionally kept open in this chapter. Broadly understood, it will refer to culture as a commercial product that ought to be distinguished from high- and popular culture (*Volkskultur*) as well as worker’s culture, even though the borders between all these cultural forms are blurry. For the study of popular culture and workers’ culture in Germany since the turn of the twentieth century: W. L. Guttsman, *Workers’ Culture in Weimar Germany: Between Tradition and Containment* (New York: Berg, 1990) and Kaspar Maase, “Einleitung: Schund und Schönheit. Ordnungen des Vergnügens um 1900,” *Schund und Schönheit: Populäre Kultur um 1900*, ed. Kaspar Maase und Wolfgang Kaschuba (Köln: Böhlau, 2001), 9-28. For the debates on “mass culture,” see: Susan Buck-Morss, “Benjamin’s Passagen-Werk: Redeeming Mass Culture for the Revolution,” *New German Critique* no. 29 (Spring-Summer, 1983): 211-240; Nicholas Hewitt, “Introduction: Popular Culture and Mass Culture,” *Contemporary European History* 8, no. 3, Theme Issue: European Popular Culture, 1945-1960

democracy, changing labor practices and regulations that led to more leisure time, and the period's mood of "cultural experimentation."<sup>265</sup> However, for many cultural conservatives it did not make any difference which forms of mass culture—including the homosexual movement's press—successfully achieved their intended goals: to entertain, to inform, and to empower people. Instead, they focused on mass culture's potential to provide identification models for those in non-hegemonic positions, such as women, youths, and, in our case, same-sex desiring men.<sup>266</sup> In order to dismiss the significance of mass culture, critics argued that it lacked artistic

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(Nov., 1999): 351-358; Peter U. Hohendahl, "Introduction," *New German Critique*, no. 29, *The Origins of Mass Culture: The Case of Imperial Germany (1871-1918)* (Spring- Summer, 1983): 3-7; Martin Jay, "Mass Culture and Aesthetic Redemption: The Debate between Max Horkheimer and Siegfried Kracauer," *On Max Horkheimer: New Perspectives*, eds. Seyla Benhabib, Wolfgang Bonß, and John McCole (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 364-386; Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 164-77; Cory Ross, "Cinema, Radio, and 'Mass Culture' in the Weimar Republic: Between Shared Experience and Social Division," *Weimar Culture Revisited*, ed. John Alexander Williams (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 23-48; Adelheid von Saldern, "Massenfreizeitkultur im Visier: Ein Beitrag zu den Deutungs- und Einwirkungsversuchen während der Weimarer Republik," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 33 (1993): 21-58.

<sup>265</sup> Ross, "Cinema, Radio, and 'Mass Culture' in the Weimar Republic," 23.

<sup>266</sup> Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer saw in the "culture industry" the antidemocratic tendencies that had led to the disintegration of the bourgeois public sphere and enabled the rise of fascism. Unlike this traditional analysis of mass culture put forward by the Frankfurt School, I highlight mass culture's emancipating potential and its role in the process of the formation of modern subjectivities, including class, gender, sexuality, or national identity. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry," *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, ed and Edmund Jephcott (Palo Alto, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2002). For alternative evaluations of "mass culture" see: Katharina von Ankum, *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and "New Objectivity"* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989); Eve Rosenhaft, "Lesewut, Kinosucht, Radiotismus: Zur (geschlechter)politischen Relevanz neuer Massenmedien in den 1920er Jahren," in *Amerikanisierung: Traum und Alptraum in Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts*, eds. Alf Lütke, Inge Marbolek, Adelheid von Saldern (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996), 119-43; Corey Ross, *Media and the Making of Modern Germany: Mass Communications, Society, and Politics from the Empire*

and intellectual qualities: these were mechanically produced commodities that aimed to enrich its producers. Friedrich Radszuweit's peers in the homosexual rights movement had not spared him from such criticism either.

Indeed, not everyone welcomed the world of homosexual "reality" that *The Island* had brought about or the democratic values the homosexual press advocated. Critics of mass culture claimed that its spread had grown out of control after the war. In that sense, the expansion of mass culture paralleled Weimar's "homosexual wave," the belief that homosexuality was spreading unstoppably after the First World War, especially among male youths. The moral entrepreneur Hermann Popert estimated that the number of questionable books in circulation was "a little bit over two billion."<sup>267</sup> The social hygienist Hans Harmsen was convinced that the number of books that could harm youths was actually much higher, closer to three billion.<sup>268</sup> The precipitous spread of mass culture and its corollary, homosexuality, required action.

Conservative politicians, teachers, social workers, psychologists, youth leaders, clergymen, and members of morality organizations decided to keep an eye on many of these new media because they feared that they damaged the moral upbringing of youths and threatened German and Christian sensibilities.<sup>269</sup> Their extraordinary amounts of resistance ought to be

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*to the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Vibeke Rützou Petersen, *Women and Modernity in Weimar Germany: Reality and its Representation in Popular Fiction* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001); Adelheid von Saldern, "The Hidden History of Mass Culture," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 37 (Spring, 1990): 32-40.

<sup>267</sup> Hermann Popert, *Hamburg und der Schundkampf I (Schmutz- und Schundliteratur)* (Hamburg: Deutscher-Dichter-Gedächtnis-Stiftung, 1927), 5.

<sup>268</sup> Hans Harmsen, "Der gegenwärtige Stand der Bekämpfung der Schundliteratur," *Ethik: Sexual- und Gesellschafts-Ethik* 2, no. 5 (August 1926): 79-82.

<sup>269</sup> Fabian Baar, "Literatur und Literaturbetrieb im dritten Jahrzehnt," *Kulturgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Die Kultur der 20er Jahre*, ed. Werner Faulstich (Paderborn: Fink, 2008), 161-174:169.

understood within a generalized “crisis” of German *Kultur* that emerged after the First World War, when Christian conservatives and an impoverished intellectual bourgeoisie (*Bildungsbürgertum*) felt that mass culture threatened their values, their taste, and their livelihood. For the most part, they worried that mass culture would devalue bourgeois taste. But their worries went far beyond aesthetic considerations. They feared the class leveling potential that the “democratization” of culture implied.<sup>270</sup>

Mass culture reflected a series of class, gender, and sexual anxieties characteristic of the time. The critics of detective, adventure, and romance stories—and gay and lesbian magazines believed that these publications portrayed the sick, the dirty, the foreign, and corrupted morality. Yet mass culture’s inherent anti-hegemonic potential—the impossibility to predict how readers would react to it—which caused the most anxiety. More than anything else, mass culture was threatening because it appealed to a “mass” commonly understood in feminized terms. “Fear of the masses,” Andreas Huyssen argues, was “also a fear of woman, a fear of nature out of control, fear of the unconscious, of sexuality, of the loss of identity and stable ego boundaries in the mass.”<sup>271</sup> This fear of boundlessness was also a fear of the homosexual. In addition to feminizing, mass culture could be homosexualizing.<sup>272</sup> As part of a larger landscape of mass

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<sup>270</sup> Gideon Reuveni, *Reading Germany, Literature and Consumer Culture in Germany before 1933* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 263-5.

<sup>271</sup> Andreas Huyssen, “Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism’s Other,” *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 52.

<sup>272</sup> I do not use “homosexualization” in Dennis Altman’s sense, by which he meant U.S. mainstream’s “adoption of styles and fashions associated with an increasingly visible and assertive minority” of homosexuals (xiii). Instead, I used this concept in the more literal and essential sense that homosexual mass culture could actually turn readers—especially youths—into homosexuals. Dennis Altman, *The Homosexualization of America, The Americanization of the Homosexual* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980).

culture, the movement's press had the power to unsettle the boundaries of sexuality. The homosexual press, the information it distributed, and the models of identification it offered showed how the boundaries of sexuality, like the boundaries of the masses, were unstable, fluid, and, like youthful sexuality, often undifferentiated. In the eyes of moral entrepreneurs, youths were the members of society most vulnerable and susceptible to suffer this instability.

In this and the following two chapters we will explore how youth and homosexuality crossed paths in the attack against mass culture that Weimar conservatives launched. It is significant that in "The Island of the Solitary," a youth, a "lean ephebe," had made the homosexual's coming *out* and *together* possible. The figure of Adrast—and of all youth by extension—is central to understanding the development of homosexual identity during the 1920s and the movement's ambivalent position on youth. Moral entrepreneurs worried about German youth's state of sexual waywardness. They increasingly identified the homosexual as an unscrupulous seducer of innocent youths. In *The Island's* story, however, Stratz and Reichert reversed these claims about homosexual seduction. Here, Adrast embodies the youthful sexual agency that physiologists and psychologists were working hard to deny. The ambivalence with which the homosexual press treated youths as sexual agents and objects of desire was troubling and would have important consequences for the development of the homosexual movement. In a time when pederasty (sexual desire involving an adult man and a youth) and homosexuality (same-sex attraction in general) were concomitant categories, moral entrepreneurs came to fear that the homosexual press, as mass culture's personification of the homosexual, had the power to turn youths into homosexuals. The homosexual press became the seducer of youth, as well.

Weimar Culture — Mass Culture

A 1919 article in the *Pomeranian Daily Mail* (*Pommeranische Tagespost*), a newspaper in the more conservative Prussian province of Pomerania,<sup>273</sup> complained about the November Revolution's effects on Germany's culture. Before the war, the author claimed, writers were refined and reserved.

Now everything is different! An association can rapidly find money and space. They rent a few machines and after a few days the country is filled with obscure pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, brochures and things like that, all of which more or less claim to have something new to say even though in reality they only express extravagant age-old and worn-out truths, banalities, absurdities and crazy stuff, but especially much which is lustful and disreputable.<sup>274</sup>

Even before freedom of the press had been codified in the constitution, the chaotic situation in the immediacy after the war had led to the “the pollution of the Volk.”<sup>275</sup> Adults, and especially youths, had to be protected from the mass spread of such “crazy stuff.” The article described Germans as uneducated children unable to handle the unsorted information that was being indiscriminately fed to them. The League for Human Rights' publications had come into existence precisely in this context: taking advantage of the loosening of censorship, people had been able to get together, gather some money, and find some empty space in order to spread their

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<sup>273</sup> Shelley Baranowski, *The Sanctity of Rural Life: Nobility, Protestantism, and Nazism in Weimar Prussia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 23.

<sup>274</sup> “Revolution und Schundliteratur” *Pommeranische Tagespost* 23. Februar 1929. BArch R/8034/II/6965, p. 154.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*

ideas. And the League was certainly contributing to the distribution of “lustful and disreputable” materials—to “the pollution of the Volk.”

Despite the anxiety they seemed to have caused, we know relatively little about the “banalities, absurdities and crazy stuff” or about the “lustful and disreputable” publications that proliferated in the aftermath of the November Revolution. Historians, art historians, literary scholars, and cultural critics have praised the glories of “Weimar Culture” and its realization of “modernity.” They have paid attention to a reductive cultural canon that includes established authors, programmatic theatre, rationalist architecture and design, revues and cabaret, and, most of all, film.<sup>276</sup> In contrast, our knowledge of improvised cultural forms and even of those forms that most distinctly reflect their conditions as commodities is relatively meager.

The study of homosexual mass culture has been neglected, as well. Even queer scholars share an aesthetic bias. Although referring to a different national context, the following example is illustrative. In her extraordinary work on the erasure of lesbians in literature, history, and criticism Terry Castle mentions the numerous responses that Radclyffe Hall’s 1928 novel *The Well of Loneliness* received at the time of publication. Many of the reactions to the text, it turns out, came in the form of cheap pulp fiction. However, Castle chooses to ignore these sources by arguing that “only by looking at rather more ambitious and self-conscious literary works ... can we fully appreciate the way in which the apparitional lesbian is ‘brought back to life’—imbued

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<sup>276</sup> For the “canon,” see: Walter Nutz, “Massenliteratur,” *Deutsche Literatur: Eine Sozialgeschichte. Band 9 1918-1945: Weimarer Republik — Drittes Reich: Avantgardismus, Parteilichkeit, Exil*, eds. Alexander von Bormann und Horst Albert Glaser (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1989), 200-221. For popular/mass literature during the period see: Günter Kosch, *Der Kolportageroman Bibliographie 1850 bis 1960* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993); Todd Herzog, *Crime Stories: Criminalistic Fantasy and the Culture of Crisis in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn, 2009).

with breadth, heft, and charisma—in the later twentieth-century imagination.”<sup>277</sup> We may miss a large piece of the history of sexual identity formation by not looking at pulp fiction.<sup>278</sup> At least in the 1920s, gay men and lesbians shed away their spectral life not in the pages of high literature, but exposing themselves in those of mass culture.

In order to understand how the homosexual press became such a great threat to youths, we need to situate it in its appropriate mass-cultural context and of what contemporaries called *Schmutz- und Schundliteratur*.<sup>279</sup> Literally “filth and trash literature,” this pejorative term was used to describe forms of mass culture that had emerged during the last decades of the nineteenth century but proliferated in Germany in the post-World-War-I era. We should think of *Schundliteratur* as a flexible category that, broadly understood, could have included many classics in world literature, from the *Amadis de Gaula*, to Cervante’s *Quixote*, to Schiller’s *The Robbers*, but that during the Weimar Republic most commonly referred to cheap, commercial adventure and romance stories, sensationalist newspapers, sex reform and erotic magazines, and the homosexual press. The sentimentality, double-entendre, and turgidity of “The Island of the Solitary” and other stories published in the League’s magazines characterize this genre. As mass-

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<sup>277</sup> Castle, 55.

<sup>278</sup> There are a few studies that pay attention to lesbian “mass” fiction during the Weimar Republic. See: Heike Schader, *Virile, Vamps und wilde Veilchen: Sexualität, Begehrend und Erotik in den Zeitschriften homosexueller Frauen im Berlin der 1920er Jahre* (Königstein/Taunus: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 2004); Claudia Schoppmann, “Ein Lesbenroman aus der Weimarer Zeit: Der Skorpion.” *Eldorado. Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin 1850-1950. Geschichte, Alltag und Kultur*, ed. Michael Bolé (Berlin: Fröhlich und Kaufmann, 1984), 197-199; Claudia Schoppmann, *Der Skorpion. Frauenliebe in der Weimarer Republik* (Hamburg: Frühlingserwachen, 1992). Male, same-sex stories in the homosexual press have to be examined still.

<sup>279</sup> I will refer to it thereafter as *Schundliteratur*. The concept “*Schundliteratur*” maintains the original imprecision. Its foreignness in English gives it a halo of indeterminacy, a vagueness that the concept had in its common contemporary usage.



produced culture, these publications did not fit the definition of “art” and its lofty aesthetic ideals. These were industrial products that speculated with the readers’ most primitive and instinctual desires, or so their critics contended.<sup>280</sup> That these “products” lacked aesthetic sophistication, does not mean that they lacked impact and significance.

Why was Schundliteratur so dangerous and threatening to hegemonic culture in general and to heterosexuality in particular? Scholars have argued that those who loathed mass culture actually disliked the “universal desires this style fostered” because it “created the conditions for a mass existence beyond class, gender, and regional (confessional and ethnic) divisions.”<sup>281</sup> We should be careful about understanding mass culture, or modernity for that case, in homogenizing terms. In contrast, we need to complicate the tension between sameness and difference that mass culture brought about. The producers of mass culture may have assumed a universal subject. That being said, mass culture did not lead to the decrease, but rather to the proliferation and the production of segmented publics and subjectivities. The makers of mass culture were well aware of the different constituencies they wanted to appeal, their preferences, and their needs.<sup>282</sup> While they traded with identification models, this does not mean that readers could not adopt, adapt, contest, repurpose, and challenge them.

Contemporary studies, for example, showed how women’s reading interests differed from that of men. Women preferred fiction and biographies because these genres, according to this research, fostered identification. Literary scholar Kerstin Barndt argues that women’s literature

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<sup>280</sup> Karin Littau, *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies, and Bibliomania* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), especially Chapter 3: “The Physiology of Consumption.” See also: Rudolf Schenda, *Die Lesestoffe der kleinen Leute: Studien zur populären Literatur im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H. Beck, 1976).

<sup>281</sup> Jaraus and Geyer, 291, 287.

<sup>282</sup> Corey Ross, “Cinema, Radio, and “Mass Culture” in the Weimar Republic,” 42-3.

was not attached to a universal and ahistorical understanding of femininity; it showed the contested and fragmented nature of womanhood.<sup>283</sup> These different genres as well as their style, subject matters, or marketing strategies contributed to a sustained production of gender and sexual difference, as well. Books “became a privilege medium for the articulation of a gender self ... [,] fueling women’s power to insert their voices into the cacophony of the public sphere in the late Weimar Republic.”<sup>284</sup> The homosexual press was part of this “cacophony” insofar as it became the locus for the articulation and contestation of sexual norms.

Different media outlets, genres, and styles contributed to the production of segmented publics. However, the borders between them were very permeable. Birte Tost conjectures that it is very likely that youths read something other than the books included in contemporary youth literature catalogues, which moral entrepreneurs compiled and which scholars have used later to define the genre. These lists, she argues, represent what adults prescribed and not necessarily what youths enjoyed. What if youths were no different from adults and followed “the trends and the needs of the consumer”?<sup>285</sup> How could one control what youths were reading and the effects it could have on them? The issue with the homosexual press and the backlash against it was not that “real” homosexuals were reading these magazines, but that youths *might* to do so. We should take this conjecture seriously, for had youths not been reading something else than what

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<sup>283</sup> Kerstin Barndt, “Mothers, Citizens, and Consumers: Female Readers in Weimar Germany,” *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s*, eds. Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 95-115: 103.

<sup>284</sup> Barndt, 112.

<sup>285</sup> Birte Tost, ‘*Moderne*’ und ‘*Modernisierung*’ in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der Weimarer Republik (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2005), 41. See also: Norbert Hopster, ed. *Die Kinder- und Jugendliteratur in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2012).

they “should,” moral entrepreneurs would not have needed to control what they were reading. What if youths were not vulnerable and innocent, but rather active in their desire, literary and otherwise?

Youths were described as vulnerable readers and consumers and the makers of Schundliteratur as taking advantage of that. Youths had become habitual readers by the 1920s, even though that process had already started in the previous decades. By 1891, compulsory education had been expanded until the age of fourteen and more provisions for rest and leisure had come to fill the time youths previously dedicated to work.<sup>286</sup> The promotion of health and an understanding that children and youths were more vulnerable to the realities of modern life justified protective legislation. One of such realities was mass culture and consumption.<sup>287</sup> Youths were avid consumers during the Weimar Republic and Schundliteratur was one of the few products they could afford.<sup>288</sup> Conservative commentators had been complaining since the turn of the century that youths who lacked money for their school supplies were spending their money buying *Schundhefte*, the colorfully wrapped detective and romance stories that filled street kiosks and peddlers’ carts. Producers and sellers had apparently become very clever at making a profit out of youths’ debility for thrilling mass culture. Even before the First World War, a shop in Munich had started to give young buyers credit for their old issues in exchange for new ones. As a result, “a dirty stream coming out of these stores could be traced to the

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<sup>286</sup> Michael Mitterauer, *A History of Youth*, trans. Graeme Dunphy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 70-1.

<sup>287</sup> Alon Confino and Rudy Koshar, “Régimes of Consumer Culture: New Narratives in Twentieth-Century German History,” *German History* 19, no. 2 (2001): 135- 161:136.

<sup>288</sup> Martyn Lyons, “New Readers in the Nineteenth Century: Women, Children, Workers,” *A History of Reading in the West*, eds. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 313-344.

schools in the same street.”<sup>289</sup> Other publishers would offer prizes to those who would guess who the story’s killer or thief was. Soap companies collaborated with publishers and awarded prizes to buyers, an interesting marketing strategy, given the common association of Schundliteratur with filthiness.<sup>290</sup>

Schundliteratur was so successful as a product, its critics contended, because it preyed on youths’ psychological and sexual vulnerability.<sup>291</sup> Allured by the colorful covers of cheap literature, youths were perceived as getting out of control—especially sexual control. Whether youths were really devouring homosexual magazines or not is irrelevant. It matters that Germany’s moral entrepreneurs believed that they were—or that they potentially could be—reading them. They believed in the corrosive effects of these media on their impressionable minds *and* indeterminate sexuality. What made the homosexual press, as part of Schundliteratur, so seductive and so dangerous?

*Places of Encounter: The Homosexual at the Kiosk*

Schundliteratur encompassed a vast number of texts that appealed to youths, regardless of class and gender. Its narratives included adventure and eroticism, crime and sex. In addition to their alleged lack of aesthetic quality and questionable topics, homosexual periodicals were part of Schundliteratur inasmuch as they shared similar forms of production and distribution and a

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<sup>289</sup> Karl Brunner, *Unser Volk in Gefahr! Ein Kampftruf gegen die Schundliteratur* (Pforzheim: Volkstümliche Bücherei, 1910), 15-16.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> The historian Kaspar Maase has shown how the development of mass culture gave rise to debates about the endangerment of youths. Kaspar Maase, *Die Kinder der Massenkultur: Kontroversen um Schmutz und Schund seit dem Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2012), 13. Masse’s book stops in the Weimar Republic, even though the debates intensified after the war. For a more detailed analysis of this perceived psychological debility, see Chapter 4.

liking for shock value. By examining some representative examples from the homosexual press that were included in official discussions about the value of these Schundliteratur and their potential harm to youths (a topic that would be fully considered in Chapter 5), we can tease out why the homosexual movement's press, and the League for Human Rights' publications in particular, came to represent a threat to the proper moral and sexual upbringing of German youths.

Mass culture's danger—like the homosexual's—resided in magnitude and its omnipresence.<sup>292</sup> Germany enjoyed a vibrant press culture during the Weimar Republic, despite the common paper shortages, currency devaluation, and continuing loss of purchasing power. More than 3,700 newspaper and 7,000 magazines were published during this period. Berlin alone had more than 120 newspapers in 1925, which street vendors distributed in every corner of the city.<sup>293</sup> In the city and its suburbs' 1,250 men and 970 women sold newspapers every day. This was a substantial amount for a city with a population of just over two million people.<sup>294</sup> Similarly, Schundliteratur reached everyone, everywhere: it was available for purchase at countless street kiosks, in train stations and stationery stores, and it was brought directly to home by hundreds of peddlers.

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<sup>292</sup> Even though cinema had become a very popular medium, reading was still the most common leisure activity during the Weimar Republic. Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Jugend zwischen Krieg und Krise. Lebenswelten von Arbeiterjungen in der Weimarer Republik* (Köln: Bund-Verlag, 1987), 218. Lynn Abrams, "From Control to Commercialization: the Triumph of Mass Entertainment in Germany 1900-1925?" *German History* 8, no. 3 (1990): 278-293: 281.

<sup>293</sup> Hans-Dieter Kübler, "Wirtschaftskrisen und kulturelle Prosperität. Die Presse von 1920 bis 1930," *Die Kultur der 20er Jahre*, ed. Werner Faulstich (Paderborn: Fink, 2008), 97-122: 120.

<sup>294</sup> Otto Nahnsen, *Der Straßenhandel mit Zeitungen und Druckschriften in Berlin* (Essen: Verlag der Wirtschaftlichen Nachrichten aus dem Ruhrbezirk, 1922), 45, 59.

The market was saturated with light fiction (*Unterhaltungsliteratur*). Peddlers carried tons of serialized romance stories that reiterated the tensions of love across class and rank, such as the erotically charged novels by Alexander Schmitz, Leo Schidrowitz, or E. Blum, which often relied on the trope of the fallen girl, but also stressed that men were truly responsible for her fate.<sup>295</sup> Booksellers stocked their stores with countless stories that depicted contemporary topics and contrasted the moral righteousness of the poor versus the hypocrisy of war profiteers and impoverished aristocrats trying to keep appearances. Some of the texts that received the most attention by moral entrepreneurs portrayed a world where class and other forms of difference could be breached. Hans Possendorff's *Max the Climber (Klettermaxe)* (1927) featured morally questionable Jews, a wealthy African-American heiress, and a writer of detective stories turned jewelry thief, all set in Berlin's seedy underworld. The story included fantastic robberies, exotic dances, and erotically charged scenes—all wrapped in a colorful cover.<sup>296</sup>

If romance and contemporary topics were best sellers, Weimar readers, young and old were all about the thrill. Whereas Karl May's westerns continued to be popular, detective stories set in a cosmopolitan milieu, gained popularity during the Republic, especially among the young. The books featuring *Frank Allan, the Avenger of the Dispossessed (Frank Allan. Der Rächer der*

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<sup>295</sup> All the titles under consideration, including those taken from the homosexual press, were officially included in the Schundliteratur list (see Chapter 5). W. v. Althern, *Anitas Traum* (Berlin: Verlag moderner Lektüre, 1921); E. Blum, *Der Hund und die Liebe: Sexual-Psychologischer Roman* (Wien: E.B. Seps-Verlag, 1923); Fritz Gitta, *Rolf und die Gouvernante* (Dresden: Gerthau Verlag, 1932) and *Der Sonderbare Turnlehrer. Erotische Novellen* (Dresden: Gerthau-Verlag, 1932); Herrmann von Kronach, *Ohne Ring und Myrte, der Roman einer Verführte* (Leipzig: Hausfreund-Verlag, 1910, 1925-1930) (100 Lieferungen); Josef Kunz, *Lore, die Geschichte eines Berliner Mädels* (Atzgersdorf bei Wien: Regina Verlag, 1930); Alexander Schmitz, *Die tollsten Liebesgeschichten der Weltliteratur* (Wien: Schmitz-Verlag, 1928).

<sup>296</sup> Hans Possendorff (Hans Mahner-Mons), '*Klettermaxe*' *Eine Berliner Kriminalgeschichte zwischen Kurfürstendamm und Scheunenviertel. Mit Zeichnungen von C. W. Boheme* (Verlag der Münchener Illustrierten. München: Knorr & Hirt, 1927).

*Enterbten*) had reached over five hundred issues by the end of the decade. Published in small format, they could easily fit in a reader's pocket, which made them perfect to read on the move and to hide from parents and teachers. This and similar stories sought to entertain unapologetically; they never aspired to be considered "art." For that reason their authors and publishers did not hesitate to rely on questionable topics to increase the thrill. Frank Allan's stories were often about prostitution and white slavery, topic common in all *Schundhefte* and the sensationalist press. Furthermore, this series epitomized the proletarianization of cultural production that conservatives despised. Issues did not include pseudonyms or omit the author's name. Like Frank Allan's recognizable outline, they promoted a brand with distinctive logos and styles.

The kiosk was an important center for the distribution of Schundliteratur. It was also a potential place for the encounter between youths and immorality. The journalist Käthe Wittkower, writing for the *Welt-Spiegel*, an illustrated supplement for the liberal *Berliner Tageblatt*, alerted parents to the dangers of the city. For many working-class youths, the author argued, the source of problem could be found in the monstrous conditions at home, the main source of physical and moral infection.<sup>297</sup> But the city's streets were a bad influence for everyone, regardless of class. Bourgeois parents may delay the conversation about "the creation of life" until their offspring is mature enough to understand this matter rationally. According to Wittkower, however, such caution was futile because youths were learning abominable ideas about love and sex elsewhere. The city streets made all youths sexually precocious. They could walk in front of movie theaters and their "alluring placards" or encounter incessant temptations

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<sup>297</sup> Heinrich Benfer, *Kampf dem schlechten durch das gute Buch* (Dortmund: Ruhfus, 1926), 28; Wilhelm Rischbieter, *Wohnungsverhältnisse von 100 Kleinwohnungen Minderbemittelter in älteren Flachbauten Dessaus* (Dessau: Martin Salzmann, 1925).

on their way to school: the prostitute, the “old man” preying on innocent children, and, ultimately, the kiosk, whose display included more immoralities “than ten forbidden books.”<sup>298</sup>

The newspaper kiosk, Wittkower contended, was poisoning the souls of Germany’s youths.



Image 1: “Soul Poisoning at the Newsstand, “the *Welt-Spiegel* sought to warn parents of their children’s sexual corruption.

*Der Welt-Spiegel*, Nr. 24 (10 June 1928).

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<sup>298</sup> Käthe Wittkower, “Wie sagt es die Grossstadt deinem Kinde?” *Der Welt-Spiegel*, Nr. 24 (10. Juni 1928): 5.



The images that accompanied the article illustrated these different scenes of contamination. Radszuweit commented on Wittkower's article and its images in one of his weekly editorials. The League's magazine *Girlfriend* (*Die Freundin*) could be seen in one of the images included in the article (Image 1). *Girlfriend* was displayed near other marriage reform magazines, such as the popular *Marriage* (*Die Ehe*). All of them displayed nude women on their covers. In the image, a grinning youth in school uniform gazes at the magazines' covers. Why was the *Berliner Tageblatt*, a newspaper that had done so much for the rights of Jews, not doing the same for the rights of homosexuals? Radszuweit wondered. The image, in his opinion, was a *Photomontage*, a collage that showed a constellation of magazines that did not belong together, but have been rather assembled to produce a desired effect. Why couldn't Wittkower realize that *Girlfriend*, and for that case, all of the League's publications, did not belong among these immoral magazines? Did she and the editors at the newspaper not understand that the League's publications advocated homosexual rights and acceptance and that they were not sexual in nature?<sup>299</sup> Why couldn't Wittkower see that homosexual press was serious and respectable?

While Radszuweit should have been pleased about the image in the *Welt-Spiegel* article because it indicated that his magazines had made it to the center of the public sphere, he was not interested in convincing readers about the benefits of free love or naturism, as the other magazine were. He was interested in persuading them that homosexuality was respectable and had to be accepted. Homosexuality may have been visible and recognized, but the association of the League's magazines with other forms of sexualized mass culture undermined this argument. These publications, despite his efforts, continued to offend adult audiences who masked their

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<sup>299</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, "Ist das Richtig," *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 6, Nr. 28 (13. Juli 1928).

distaste and judgment under worries about the appropriate moral and sexual development of youths.

Put into perspective, the homosexual press occupied a small space in a large media landscape, but it was a noticeable one. The League's publications were just but a small part of the many other publications that were considered sexual. Magazines such as *Asa*, *Mara*, or *Figaro* were probably appealing to a younger readership due to their generous inclusion of nudes (*Aktbilder*) and for their risqué cartoons and short stories. *Virgin Soil for Love and Marriage* (*Neuland der Liebe und Ehe*) was a sex and marriage reform magazine that supported alternative lifestyles outside of marriage and recommended premarital sex, topics that inflamed moral entrepreneurs who were obsessed with abstinence.<sup>300</sup> Readers were drawn to these magazines' beauty and fashion tips, film and theater reviews, to their contacts and sex-advice sections, and of course, to their titillating covers. Like popular love stories, such magazines portrayed a world where happiness was a goal that could be achieved through love and companionship, mutual understanding and respect, and sexual fulfillment. Like the detective, romance stories, and marriage reform magazines, the homosexual press certainly did not offer radical alternatives, but at least non-heterosexual models of how to lead productive, fulfilling, and happy lives.

Radszuweit's attempt to promote and celebrate homosexual respectability only brought more scrutiny to the pages of the homosexual press. Homosexual visibility did not do away with abjection. The degeneracy and criminality that had been used to describe homosexuals was ascribed to the magazines instead. The homosexual press was often described as a "recruitment"

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<sup>300</sup> All these issues were included in the Schundliteratur registers that were published after 1927 (See Chapter 5). Ewald Bernhard, "Gedanken zur Sexual- und Ehereform" *Neuland der Liebe und Ehe* 3, Nr. 3 (1928): 358; Sonja Ljubinoff, "Das Erwachen zur Liebe," *Neuland der Liebe und Ehe* 3, Nr. 6 (1928): 458-60.

tool for the movement, a belief that psychologists and psychiatrists promoted.<sup>301</sup> In an article published in the *Journal for Human Rights* titled “Propaganda,” Gerd Sand doubted that the League actively promoted something “that causes so much pain and bitterness.”<sup>302</sup> He stressed that the press did not distribute propaganda about homosexuality, although it did pretend to attract new members to continue its campaign for equality. The fact that homosexuals could successfully organize into a political movement was certainly as threatening as their alleged ability to seduce youths.

The League’s tension between respectability and its need for titillating images and content illustrates the contradiction—and, one could argue, the hypocrisy—inherent to the homosexual press: the League needed to sell sex in order to promote the respectability that it sought. The League’s publications often included pictures of young, naked men on their covers. These images offered the aesthetic values and erotic appeal of beauty and youthfulness. The League’s ambivalent treatment of youth and sex ultimately backfired. What could be considered immoral depended not on the intention of the publisher, but on the viewer’s eyes. For moral entrepreneurs, these publications and the explicit nakedness they portrayed seemed most likely debased. Images young men bathing in a river or sunbathing on a cliff could be interpreted as being explicit. Even though these pictures were clichés, ready-made images that appeared in the different magazines repeatedly as a measure to reduce costs (the League operated on a limited budget), some of these images could be ambiguous for a series of potential young buyers (Image 2). What should young boys make of a magazine that depicted a young boy and his dog or a lad feeding his rabbits, motifs that appeared on the cover of Radszuweit’s journals time and again?

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<sup>301</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>302</sup> Gerd Sand, “Propaganda,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 1, Nr. 21 (15. Dezember 1923).

Such images did little to dispel the belief that homosexuals were keen on desiring *and* seducing young boys.



Image 2: The covers of the League's publications could be explicit and ambiguous, a feature that made these publications the more suspicious for moral conservatives *Menschenrecht* 6, no. 10 (October 1928); *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 8, no. 3 (March 1930).

Part of Radszuweit's commercial success came from his desire to speak to different constituencies within the movement: male homosexuals, lesbians, and transvestites. This explosion in media by and for homosexual men, lesbians, and transvestites was a sign of how mass culture was not homogenizing at all. It rather brought about and secured alternative models of identity. But the anti-hegemonic potential such magazines offered would soon be followed by repression. The more the League's publishing enterprise expanded to accommodate their needs

and desires, the more it produced “questionable” materials. The rapid increase in numbers of magazines only led to the perception that the homosexual and other sexual “deviants” were proliferating, as well.

The publications of the League expanded exponentially during the first few years of its existence to accommodate the needs of its growing audiences and they did so using plain language. *The Island* was the first supplement to become an independent magazine in 1923. The League would soon publish a magazine for lesbians, *Girlfriend (Die Freundin)* in 1924 that would be followed by a supplement, and later an independent magazine, for transvestites.<sup>303</sup> *The Third Sex (Das dritte Geschlecht)* reached the kiosks in the fall of 1928. The articles in the pages underscored the fluidity of gender and its possibilities for agency and variation.<sup>304</sup> The journal’s motto, “Clarity leads to truth!” (*Durch Klarheit zur Wahrheit!*), was a joke on the Scientific Humanitarian Committee’s motto “Science leads to justice” (*Per Scientiam ad Justitiam*).<sup>305</sup> The League wanted to highlight its penchant for education with the message that the “truth” about the “third sex” should be conveyed with the simple terms of mass culture rather than with the arcane language of science. This accessibility made the magazines the more suspicious.

Certainly, the first few issues of *The Third Sex* did not help to reinforce the image of respectability that the League advocated. The magazine relied on sensationalist headlines, such as “Male and Female Prostitution,” “The Nigger (*Neger*) who was a Girl,” or “Moral Misconduct

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<sup>303</sup> “Transvestism” and “transvestite” were the terms used at the time. See: Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Transvestiten. Eine Untersuchung über den erotischen Verkleidungstrieb mit umfangreichem casuisten und historischen Material* (Leipzig: Verlag ‘Freiheit’ F. Spohr, 1925).

<sup>303</sup> *Das dritte Geschlecht* 1, no. 1 (October 1928): 1.

<sup>304</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminist and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 198; Martha Vicinus, *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 176-7.

<sup>305</sup> *Das dritte Geschlecht* 1, no. 1 (October 1928): 1.

in the Police.” It is not surprising that such headlines upset moral conservatives and became counterproductive for the League’s ambitions. These articles played with racial and gender anxieties and directly questioned the moral integrity of state authorities. Whereas shocking and sensationalist headlines could potentially attract more readers and increase the movement’s reach, they most likely reinforced the homosexual press’s status as Schundliteratur by linking it to the many other sensationalist newspapers that populated Germany’s newsstands, such as the *Greater Berlin Newest News (Groß-Berliner Neueste Nachrichten)*. The tabloid press regularly reported on prostitution, venereal disease, and the latest movies and revues. Not uncommon were articles about sex change and “complex metamorphosis operations.”<sup>306</sup> For the average reader—and the average moral entrepreneur—the fantastic stories that sensationalized the lives of transvestites in the tabloid press and those portrayed in the pages of *The Third Sex* bore a resemblance, even though transvestites had a relative amount of power in controlling the narrative in the latter. This slippage in topics and styles contributed to the collapse of all these publications under the rubric of Schundliteratur.

Articles in the homosexual press that poked fun at the seriousness of German *Kultur* or that threatened the proper moral and sexual upbringing of youths inflamed cultural conservatives and morality campaigners. That an article could do both at the same time was even worse. An article about the philosopher Immanuel Kant published in *The Third Sex*, “The Great Kant and his Servant,” discussed one of the major taboo topics about youth and sexuality: masturbation. For a long time, doctors had recognized masturbation as a cause of disease, and mutual masturbation as one of the leading causes of homosexuality. But this practice had also political implications: masturbation was “at the very heart of the struggle between liberal individualism

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<sup>306</sup> “Naturphänomen. Eine Verwandlung von Mann zur Frau,” *Groß-Berliner Neueste Nachrichten* 9, Nr. 16 (1927).

and those who fear[ed] it.”<sup>307</sup> It encapsulated the individual rights that groups such as the League for Human Rights defended: the right to privacy and the right to find pleasure as one pleased, provided no one else was forced or hurt.

The short article pointed out the hypocrisy surrounding the topic of masturbation and by extension of German *Kultur* as a whole. Kant, here depicted as an avid masturbator, had been in fact a detractor of the practice. In his writings he maintained that such an act of “self-defilement” was “contrary to morality in the highest degree.”<sup>308</sup> Despite this condemnation, the article’s anonymous author, most likely a member of the editorial staff, stated that “[t]here was in Kant’s methodically divided life one daily hour in the early evening when he would turn his chair to the open window, relax, and allow himself to be something other than a pounding logical hammer.”<sup>309</sup> Implying that Kant may have desired his male servant and that he would masturbate every day while thinking of him (after dismissing him for not being able to control his own desire) not only damaged the reputation of one of Germany’s greatest philosophers, but also questioned the moral integrity of the nation, metonymically represented as “methodic,” “logical,” and sadistic—a nation willing to repress sexual desire while indulging in it in remorse.

Kant’s masturbating in front of his window, the public display of his sexuality, so to speak, was followed by another article in the same issue dedicated to masturbation and titled “What We Don’t Want to See,” a headline that evoked Wilhelm Stekel’s thoughts on homosexuality. Like Freud, Stekel had argued that people choose to ignore the ambiguity of their

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<sup>307</sup> Thomas W. Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone Book, 2003), 381, 417.

<sup>308</sup> Laqueur, 59.

<sup>309</sup> *Das dritte Geschlecht* 1, no. 3 (1928): 4.

sexual desire and that everyone desires someone of the same sex at some point in life.<sup>310</sup> The article at hand was an excerpt from a book by Anton Mißriegler, a doctor and dilettante psychoanalyst, and described a conversation between an analyst and a young patient who had been scolded by his father for masturbating.<sup>311</sup> The analyst supported the existence of child sexuality and explained the benefits of masturbation to the youth. Mißriegler even claimed that “the coitus is a weak substitute for onanism,” since everyone can enjoy “his adequate sexual object” through its practice. Rather than a filthy and unhealthy vice, masturbation was a democratic act based on the individual freedom to act according to one’s desire and pleasure. Although such advice invoked the individual and sexual rights that the League advocated, it proved detrimental for these very same goals. Public discussions about sexuality were indeed risky. How could the League claim respectability, when it was spreading such contentious advice?

Just as the link between masturbation and homosexuality had a long history, morality crusaders thought that alcohol loosened inhibitions and could lead to male, same-sex acts. Georg Klatt, an advocate of alcohol prohibition in Germany, warned about the negative influences of alcohol on a healthy sexual life. Alcohol, he argued, “lets sexual desire rule uncontrolled.”<sup>312</sup> One such instance took place in a story published in the pages of the *Journal of Friendship* in 1928, just a year after the Reichstag had passed a law to protect youths against the harmful effects of Schundliteratur and when the homosexual press was being placed under scrutiny. Otto

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<sup>310</sup> Stekel, *Onanie und Homosexualität*, 7.

<sup>311</sup> Anton Mißriegler, *Aus der Sprechstunde eines Psychoanalytikers* (Radeburg: Dr. Madaus & Co., 1923).

<sup>312</sup> Georg Klatt, *Geschlechtsleben und Alkohol* (Berlin: Neuland-Verlag, 1929) (Sonderausdruck aus Heft 4, Jahrgang 1928 der *Internationalen Zeitschrift gegen den Alkoholismus*), 8, 11.



Schmieder's "In Wine There is Truth," was a perfect example of Schundliteratur's fondness for affectedness and sentimentality. The story's original title in Latin, "In vino veritas," was perhaps an attempt to make a trivial story sound refined, not an uncommon strategy in light fiction. Yet the title also inverted prohibitionists' arguments about the effects of alcohol. According to Klatt, alcoholism led to a life of lies, abuse, and same-sex acts. For Schmieder, in contrast, wine had the power to bring to light the sexual truth about oneself.

This story is set in a hotel near the Rhine, a geographical area known for its many excellent winemakers. A man, drinking alone, stares at young man in a double date. "Like a complete man, whose love emotions could not be assessed by any member of the vice squad (*Sittenpolizei*), you were seating there with your friend and two young girls." Like in a cinematic eyeline match, we are meant to see and feel like the characters. While the young man dances with a girl, the solitary character "envies the lady." Eventually, the solitary man seizes his chance to ask the lady for a dance. "I danced with her and saw how your eyes inexorably followed me. Were you jealous?" The two men desire each other through their dancing partner. Their crossing gaze elevates the sexual tension in the story. The solitary man senses a sexual power (and a sexual truth) in the young man of which he is unaware or tries to conceal. After the dance, he joins the group at their table while they continue drinking Chateaubriand. Was their choice of a French wine in a Rhine resort already signal their decadence and treasonous character? (The Schundliteratur Vetting Office's members may have certainly thought so.) The tipsy friends soon withdraw to their rooms, but he solitary man and his new acquaintance continue drinking together. After getting him drunk, the older man walks his young acquaintance to his room.

The story could have turned unpleasant at this point. The solitary man, like a predator, has been lying in wait for his vulnerable target. But this is not what happens. While the solitary

man does go into the young man's room, the latter quickly falls asleep beside him and snores "like a young little horse." The solitary man protects and cares for his young, inebriated friend. When both wake up the following morning they kiss. After a second of perplexity, they recognize this must be true love. The story ends with a scene set in the same place three years later. The two men are celebrating their anniversary and drinking the wine that had helped the younger partner learn about his desire and inner sexual truth. "The wine brought truth, life lies," the narrator concludes.<sup>313</sup> There is no going back for this older and this younger man, just like for Sirius and the "lean ephebe" Adrast. These men had finally found in each other the company, love, and the happiness they deserved. This was the positive message that the homosexual press wanted to transmit. But it was one that could be easily misinterpreted. Had the solitary man seduced the young man and abused him? Was the young man living a "lie" after all? Did same-sex intergenerational relationships offer the path towards happiness? Had the older predator turned his victim into a homosexual? Whereas these questions offered no conclusive answers, moral entrepreneurs were certain that they should minimize the risk for homosexual contact and seduction, in both its real and media manifestations.

### Conclusion

Conservative politicians, clergymen, teachers, and members of morality organizations considered that mass culture threatened youths and the foundations of the nation. How could its fundamental institution—the family—be safe if youths had access to titillating reading material about premarital sex, and, worst of all, homosexuality? The movement's "propaganda" was seen as a mechanism to recruit youths into homosexuality. Accordingly, the homosexual was lying in

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<sup>313</sup> Otto Schmieder, "In vino veritas," *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 6, no. 27 (July 6, 1928).

wait for his victim, an innocent, vulnerable youth. A homosexual could be found on every corner, on every path to school, and, especially, at every kiosk.

Homosexuality found mass appeal and visibility through the spread of the League for Human Rights' publications. However, the homosexual press amplified the threat of the homosexual as an agent of seduction. The newsstand became the locus where the homosexual threat to youths would be taken out of proportion and, ultimately, contained. With the support of theories of sexual development, moral entrepreneurs used the alleged sexual vulnerability of youths to police and repress non-normative sexuality. Through that process, youths were robbed their agency and their ability to desire and seduce. Youthful sexual agency was transformed into adult liability. The movement's public presence in the press, however, was crucial for the development of the invisibility that followed and for the development of institutionalized form of homophobia that the protection of youth legitimized. In the next chapter we will explore how moral entrepreneurs carefully produced youthful vulnerability and how a vibrant and effective conservative social movement emerged around the issue of youth protection and Schundliteratur. As we will see in the following chapters, the visibility that the League for Human Rights had made possible and the reactions against it had great impact on the development of the homosexual movement's politics and of homosexual identity during the Weimar Republic.

## Chapter 4:

### The Making of a Moral Panic: Schundliteratur and the Protection of Youth

The Berliner about the bad book:  
 After reading the first page,  
 Your whole face turns red,  
 After the second, you have a fever,  
 After the third, you are dead.<sup>314</sup>

Although this rhyme appears to be satirical, it was not intended to be funny. Its authors were dead serious. These verses encompass the three main concerns with the vague category of Schundliteratur, the different genres of mass culture such as detective and romantic stories, sensationalist newspapers, sex reform magazines, and, of course, the homosexual press, that were introduced in the previous chapter. During the Weimar Republic, moral entrepreneurs believed that such books and magazines violated morals and customs, hence the blushing; that they aroused the sexual instincts, hence the fever; and that they had the power to kill you, possibly of mental breakdown. Granted, these critics did not really believe that reading could kill you (this was reserved only for exceptional cases), but they did believe that it could send youths down the wrong path, especially now that science had demonstrated their moral and sexual vulnerability. Reading had become harmful in the middle of the 1920s. This was especially the case for youths.

This chapter focuses on issues of mass culture and juvenile protection. Whereas historians have paid attention to the expansion of youth welfare during the Weimar Republic, this chapter shows how anxieties surrounding the future of the nation and the appropriate moral and sexual development of youths led to intense scrutiny and constraint of what youths read.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Schundkampf-Pressedienst, 22. April 1926. BArch N/2203/517, p. 40-1.

<sup>315</sup> See Introduction: footnote 48.

Control of mass culture became a productive arena in which normative society could be envisioned and enforced.

While the roots of these discourses on the threat of culture and youth protection can be found in the German Empire, the potential effects of mass culture on youths took on a new dimension during the Weimar Republic, when the battle against Schundliteratur was fought with a fierceness that has not been considered in all its complexity.<sup>316</sup> Fears of youths getting out of control had started in the nineteenth century but intensified during and immediately after the First World War, when juvenile crime and waywardness—phenomena that ran parallel to the “homosexual wave”—appeared to be on the rise. Fears about crime and sexual deviance encouraged social mobilization and legitimized cultural regulation.<sup>317</sup> Moral entrepreneurs believed that mass culture brought youths into a general state of moral and sexual depravation that threatened the social order.<sup>318</sup> Schundliteratur had the potential to lead youths to commit crimes and to act indecently; it threatened to unleash the wildness that parents and educators were supposed to tame during childhood and adolescence. Moral entrepreneurs legitimized their claims with the support of science: youth psychologists attributed the apparent increase in juvenile crime and sexual waywardness to the spread of Schundliteratur.

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<sup>316</sup> Kaspar Maase’s *Die Kinder der Massenkultur* is a comprehensive study of Schundliteratur and youth culture during the German Empire. Maase’s analysis ends before 1918. (K. Maase, *Die Kinder der Massenkultur: Kontroversen um Schmutz und Schund seit dem Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2012).)

<sup>317</sup> Karl-Heinz Behm, *Die Kriminalität der Jugend im Spiegel der Kriminalstatistik, 1914-1939*, Dr. iur. diss. (Heidelberg, 1943); Ernst Roesner, “Kriminalität im Jugendalter,” *Archiv für Strafrecht und Strafprozeß* 68 (1920): 845.

<sup>318</sup> On the effects of mass media on youth, see: Steven Starker, *Evil Influences: Crusades against the Mass Media* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1991).

Reactions against Schundliteratur stemmed from a variety of actors. The members of morality organizations, welfare providers, professional groups, teachers, librarians, petty-bourgeois parents, and youth leaders shared their concern with this form of mass culture. These moral entrepreneurs led awareness campaigns and mobilized the public; they generated activism to the extent that the battle against Schundliteratur became a full-fledged social movement. Those inclined to support “positive measures” believed that society could be improved by promoting appropriate reading materials and by encouraging self-control. But protecting youths often implied controlling and limiting the freedom of others. Examining the writings of conservative pundits in specialized journals, in non-fiction books, and in more or less eloquent published tirades, this chapter traces how the fear of Schundliteratur generated a powerful conservative social movement that would have a tremendous impact not only on the limitation of freedom and democracy during the Weimar Republic, but also on the homosexual movement.

All of those engaged in the battle against Schundliteratur operated under the dynamics of a “moral panic.”<sup>319</sup> They fixated on a set of moral and social anxieties on an easy target, in this case mass culture, and disproportionally exaggerated the threat this represented to youths. This moral panic and the anxiety it created aimed to refine the “normative contours and ‘moral boundaries’ of the society” and to “demonstrate that there are limits to how much diversity can

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<sup>319</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (London: Longman, 1989), 14. I describe the battle against Schundliteratur as an instance of “moral panic.” However, I do not use “moral panic” as a sociological analytical tool because the concept is too vague and flexible and can lead to more than one explanation and solution. Nevertheless, this lack of analytical precision makes it an excellent heuristic device. I draw particularly from the insights of Erich Goode’s and Nachman Ben-Yehuda’s in *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) and Alan Hunt, *Governing Morals: A Social History of Moral Regulation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For a current critical review of this concept, see: Sean P. Hier, ed. *Moral Panics and the Politics of Anxiety* (London: Routledge, 2011). See also: John Alexander Williams, “Ecstasies of the Young: Sexuality, the Youth Movement, and Moral Panic in Germany on the Eve of the First World War,” *Central European History* 34, no. 2 (2001): 163-189.

be tolerated in a society.”<sup>320</sup> The extent of this civil involvement in the regulation of morality shows how the state alone is not responsible for moral regulation; on the contrary, it is people with different interests and goals that make this policing happen.<sup>321</sup> The public involvement in the regulation of morality shows Weimar’s democratic potential: social activism demanded debate and negotiation. It used the press and “expert” opinions to create public opinion, legitimacy, and consensus. At the same time, the success of this social movement underscores how democracy need not be inclusive of or tolerate all views.

The tension between real and imaginary threats was at the center of the moral panic around Schundliteratur. Newspapers were keen to trace loose connections between crimes committed by youths and the cultural products they were consuming. It was not uncommon to read about crimes committed by youths that linked their terrible deeds to the *Schundhefte* lying on their nightstands. Could they (and can we) separate social life from its representations, the real from the imaginary? Historian Edward Ross Dickinson, questioning historical analysis that pays excessive attention to discourse, stresses that similar moral panics and the solutions offered for them were only “imaginary.” Moral entrepreneurs, Dickinson contends, were not “silly, irrational, and irrelevant.”<sup>322</sup> They responded with hostility against changing sexual and gender mores, which they were often successful in thwarting. Nevertheless, we cannot accept Dickinson’s claim that moral entrepreneurs “were losing the struggle against democracy,

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<sup>320</sup> Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics*, 29-30.

<sup>321</sup> Morality—or better *moralization* as a relational sense of wrongness and conduct, and not as an essential set of traits—shows how moral regulation cannot be understood from a top-down perspective. Alan Hunt, *Governing Morals*, 1-27.

<sup>322</sup> Edward Ross Dickinson, “The Men’s Christian Morality Movement in Germany, 1880-1914: Some Reflections on Politics, Sex, and Sexual Politics,” *The Journal of Modern History* 75, no. 1 (March 2003): 59-110: 109.

democratic socialism, the consumer ethic and moral individualism, growing cultural pluralism, and a growing sense that sexuality was a private rather than a political concern.”<sup>323</sup> This chapter will show that they were actually quite adept at winning these battles, precisely because they were not fought on imaginary terms alone and because sexuality had never before been as public and politicized.

We should not put too much weight on the “real” either. This moral panic can be understood in its literal sense as a heightened sense of alarm and anxiety about a real threat. The fear of an unruly youth that could undermine social order was concrete (even if out of proportion), and it was accompanied by a larger existential anxiety about the survival of German *Kultur* and of the German nation at large.<sup>324</sup> Moral panics legitimized official and all-encompassing responses, in this case that of youth and its protection, even though their “facts” or their “truth” could never be determined; they could be manipulated to express a particular ideological end. The point here is not to stress that everything is either a text open to interpretation, or that everything is anchored in the “real” and the social. Rather, it is to show how the campaign against Schundliteratur was constituted through that wobbly tension between real and the imaginary threats. In short, the “unreal” was capable of producing real threats and anxieties, as well.

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> I use the word “panic” in its literal sense, as alarm, anxiety, or fear about a given issue. I will refer to both “fear” and “anxiety” throughout, even though authors differentiate between the two concepts. Fear refers to an immediate, objective threat and anxiety is a more generalized state that does not necessarily need an “object” for it to exist. This distinction draws from Freud’s insight in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). In contrast, the sociologist Frank Furedi suggests that anxiety is “conceptualized as far more destructive condition than fear because it directly touches upon existential security.” See: Joanna Bourke *Fear: A Cultural History* (Emeryville, CA.: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2005), 189-192; and Frank Furedi, “The Objectification of Fear and the Grammar of Morality,” in Sean P. Hier, ed. *Moral Panics and the Politics of Anxiety* (London: Routledge, 2011), 90-103



Erasing the borders between reality and fiction was part of Weimar's intellectual project. In the early post-war years, Weimar artists and intellectuals proposed a new intellectual program in which reality, accuracy, and sobriety predominated. "New Objectivity" (*Neue Sachlichkeit*), as this program came to be known, represented a position towards life that reflected the practical needs of the time in formal and stylistic terms, such as reportage, photography, and real-life verbal expression.<sup>325</sup> "New Objectivity" came to illustrate the ills of the time. What begun as a reaction soon turned into resignation towards modern life and the commercialization of art. Capitalism, objectivity, science, rationalization, secularization, bureaucratization, and mechanization—in sum, Max Weber's description of "modernity"—seemed to epitomize the embracement of modernity and its disenchantment with it during the Weimar Republic.<sup>326</sup>

"New Objectivity" became a term vague enough to encompass progressive intellectuals and reactionary ones. By the end of the decade it was "lending a spurious air of objectivity and factual 'necessity' to the dogmas of reactionary irrationalism."<sup>327</sup> Moral entrepreneurs fighting against Schundliteratur benefitted from this vagueness. Instead of "New Objectivity," which they did not support anyway, they proposed a "New Morality" (*Neue Sittlichkeit*).<sup>328</sup> Kurt Richter, who coined the term, was not talking about rescuing morality from the past, but about constructing a new one for the future, when the feminine and sexuality would not be at the center

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<sup>325</sup> Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 122.

<sup>326</sup> Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Max Webers Diagnose der Moderne* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 64-69.

<sup>327</sup> David R. Midgley, "'Neue Sachlichkeit': The Career of an Idea," *Writing Weimar: Critical Realism in German Literature, 1918-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 14-56: 54.

<sup>328</sup> Kurt Richter, *Der Kampf gegen Schund- und Schmutzschriften in Preußen auf Grund des Gesetzes zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schund- und Schmutzschriften vom 18. Dezember 1926* (Berlin: Decker, 1931), 48.

of society any longer.<sup>329</sup> The proponents of “New Morality” hoped to change modern life by reshaping moral values. Commentators agreed that the past could not be entirely regained. Instead of rescuing it, they wanted to create something radically different from the present. Youth acted as the discursive site where the moral *and* sexual anxieties of futurity were drawn.

*Dangerous Books, Unruly Classes*

The debates about mass culture centered on the proper moral upbringing and education of youths. The prejudice against Schundliteratur reached back to the late nineteenth century, when its threat was less understood in terms of the damage it could cause to the body or the psyche, but in the effects it could have on the unruly classes.<sup>330</sup> This prejudice was linked to the industrialization of cultural production and its effects on the bourgeois author and reader. What was going to happen to the already debased proletarian masses if their intellectual nourishment was spoiled? How would proletarian youths grow up to be morally righteous members of society if they were only exposed to rawness and indecency?

Schundliteratur raised questions about class polarization and equality. On the one hand, there were critics who believed that the debates on Schundliteratur started an important discussion about education reform and class leveling, even if only on very superficial terms. On the other hand, there were those who used the genres that mass culture favored—adventure stories, romance, or sensationalist newspapers—as a motivation for repressive measures and class polarization. The success of Schundliteratur represented a threat to the cultural elite, their

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<sup>329</sup> “Blicke in einen Kiosk,” *Ethik: Sexual- und Gesellschaftsethik*, no. 1 (September 1928): 56-8 and no. 2 (November 1928): 122-5.

<sup>330</sup> Karin Littau, *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies, and Bibliomania* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 20.

taste, and their values. In pure economic terms, Schundliteratur was a winner; its makers knew how to use modern production and distribution techniques. Could it pass muster in terms of artistic quality, and more importantly, in terms of pedagogical value?

Heinrich Wolgast, a teacher and reformist pedagogue became an early spokesperson for the protection of youth against harmful literature. His 1896 book *The Misery of our Youth Literature* shaped the debate during the following decades.<sup>331</sup> Wolgast belonged to a group of pedagogues who adhered to progressive education since the 1890s that aimed to limit the influence of religion on education. They stressed the importance of adapting the school's curriculum to children's needs and based their pedagogical innovation on novel psychological discoveries. In their view, education should be about the child's interests and not about those of the church and the state. Whereas many of his reformist peers contended that education should be about play and movement, Wolgast thought that discipline was necessary for education and used literature as a pedagogical tool.<sup>332</sup>

As the leader of the German Committee for Youth Literature, he had warned as soon as 1892 against the "squalidness" that plagued German books. He was the founder of the Youth Literature Movement (*Jugendschriftenbewegung*) and edited the journal *Youth Literature Guard*

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<sup>331</sup> Heinrich Wolgast, *Das Elend unserer Jugendliteratur, Ein Beitrag zur künstlerischen Erziehung der Jugend* (Leipzig: Wunderlich, 1922) (1896), 27. Kaspar Maase, "Krisenbewußtsein und Reformorientierung. Zum Deutungshorizont der Gegner der modernen Populärkünste 1880-1918," *Schund und Schönheit. Populäre Kultur um 1900*, eds. Kaspar Maase und Wolfgang Kaschuba (Köln: Böhlau, 2001), 290-342.

<sup>332</sup> Marjorie Lamberti, "Radical Schoolteachers and the Origins of the Progressive Education Movement in Germany, 1900-1914," *History of Education Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 22-48; Marjorie Lamberti, "Elementary School Teachers and the Struggle against Social Democracy in Wilhelmine Germany," *History of Education Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 73-97.

(*Jugendschriften-Warte*) for sixteen years.<sup>333</sup> He based his pedagogy on an alleged quote by Theodor Storm: “if you want to write for youths, you should not write for them.”<sup>334</sup> Youth literature should not be a genre of its own, youths should be encouraged to read the classics (Goethe, Schiller, Tieck, Keller, Freytag, and, of course, Storm) because they represented “real art” and because they did not assume that youths, and especially working-class youths, were able to understand their message due to their limited intellectual development and lack of aesthetic appreciation. His literary-aesthetic pedagogy was intended to level class differences and rejected that youths read only “people’s literature” (*Volksliteratur*), that is, uncomplicated literary forms with strong moralizing content tailored specifically to educate the working classes.

*Volksliteratur*, Wolgast contended, actually maintained class divisions because, while the bourgeoisie enjoyed literary “taste,” the proletariat was fed a substandard substitute. The problem with working-class youths, therefore, was not that they were not reading enough; they were rather reading too much of what they should not read.<sup>335</sup> The masses should be able to “consume literature,” instead of overindulging in trash.<sup>336</sup>

Karl Brunner, a secondary-school teacher and *Privatdozent* in Baden, had a different opinion.<sup>337</sup> Instead of helping discipline citizens, education seemed to be creating dissidents that

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<sup>333</sup> Hermann Popert, *Hamburg und der Schundkampf* (Hamburg: Verlag der Deutschen Dichter-Gedächtnis-Stiftung, 1926), 51.

<sup>334</sup> Wolgast, 42.

<sup>335</sup> Wolgast, 38.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>337</sup> For a short bibliography of Karl Brunner, see: Gary D. Stark, *Banned in Berlin: Literary Censorship in Imperial Germany, 1871-1918* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 63.

threatened the social order.<sup>338</sup> He perceived the “populace to be psychologically undeveloped,” hence unable to understand real art. For that reason he supported some forms of popular literature, or “literary black bread,”<sup>339</sup> an adapted literary form fitted for the masses with a strong political and moral message. Brunner and his acolytes played with the prejudices of a respectable bourgeois audience. Proletarian parents were described as irresponsible drunks and “degenerates.” By contrast the bourgeois reader was praised for his good judgment and common sense.<sup>340</sup> The specter of class turmoil often relied on fears of crime and sexual depravity. Brunner capitalized on the power of such fears and he instilled them among conservative bourgeois circles in order to create a form of class cohesion that he thought the proletariat shared in excess. Fear could mobilize the bourgeoisie: “The moral, mental, and physical well-being of your children is at risk!” he exclaimed.<sup>341</sup> Brunner assumed that the language of risk would work with his audience because bourgeois readers were much more invested in the future of their children and their cultural tradition than working-class parents and their children, who were most likely interested in fulfilling more present bodily needs through their reading.

The titles that Brunner listed in his 1910 pamphlet *Our People in Danger!* formed the “canon” of Schundliteratur for years to come. Many detective stories and murder mysteries were among its titles. Brunner was outraged at the untruths that such stories told: detectives who speak all languages and dialects, who are never hurt and never caught. He despised stories about

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<sup>338</sup> Karl Brunner, *Unser Volk in Gefahr!*, 4.

<sup>339</sup> Wilhelm Fronemann, *Das Erbe Wolgasts. Ein Querschnitt durch die heutige Jugendschriftenfrage* (Langensalza: Julius Belz, 1927), 14-5.

<sup>340</sup> Walter Aßmus, *Von schlechten und guten Büchern. Hütet Euch vor der Schundliteratur! Lest gute Bücher!* (Frankfurt a. M.: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Rhein-Mainischen Verbandes für Volksbildung, 1911).

<sup>341</sup> Brunner, *Unser Volk in Gefahr!*, 5.

bandits and thieves and especially stories with risqué themes, such as *Intimate Stories* or *The Prince of the Harem, or the Secret of a White Slaver*.<sup>342</sup> These topics would have been less dangerous if it were not for how rapidly and widely these books were distributed, for the profit they made, and for the new type of consumer they targeted: youth. Brunner was concerned about the democratization of culture and the threat this represented to bourgeois hegemony and to an idealized bourgeois economy. He was also concerned about the irresponsible behavior that mass consumer culture seemed to foster among working-class youths. The First World War offered him an opportunity to develop and apply restrictive measures against the spread of Schundliteratur.

#### *World War I and the Battle against Schundliteratur*

The German pedagogue Heinrich Benfer (1889-1973) lamented the casualties in the “battleground of Schundliteratur” (*Schundfeld*) and compared the effects of reading *Schundhefte* with the devastating losses during the war.<sup>343</sup> It was during the war that the battle against Schundliteratur reached its height as both a cause and a symptom of the demise of civilization. The First World War had proven that reality could be more frightening than fiction. The gaudy scenes depicted in Schundliteratur paled in comparison with the real “action,” “sensations,” “heroism,” and “cruelty” of the war. “1914 came and brought to Europe’s peoples in tangible, bloody reality the grandiose scintillating experiences that the uneducated classes had sought wishfully to fulfill [through their reading],” claimed the prominent anti-Schundliteratur

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<sup>342</sup> Brunner, *Unser Volk in Gefahr!*, 10.

<sup>343</sup> Heinrich Benfer, *Kampf dem schlechten durch das gute Buch* (Dortmund: Ruhfus, 1926), Vorwort zur 1. Auflage (1923).

champion (*Schundkämpfer*) Paul Samuleit.<sup>344</sup> German youths, like most Germans, were ecstatic about the conflict and eager to join the war efforts in whatever function they could fulfill. Even young girls, Samuleit observed with surprise, were “filled with a mood of war.”<sup>345</sup>

The war seemed to bring more disadvantages than advantages to the youths left at home. For Paul Samuleit, the war contributed to the disintegration of the family. Fathers increasingly left for the front, many never to return. “In countless homes not only the father was missing, but soon the mother and the older siblings were gone too,” Samuleit observed. Mothers were now working in the war industry, where other women, girls, and young boys substituted for the missing fathers in the factories. School was often cancelled, since “half the teachers [were] at the front.” Youths may have been welcomed these changes with much excitement at first, but curfews and shortages followed. “Always-hungry youths” suffered the most from the material limitations of the war, Samuleit complained.<sup>346</sup> Lack of parental control led to their prowling, their neglecting school, and to their fooling around. Youths were employed in the war industries were earning money for the first time, which they would then spend “foolishly”<sup>347</sup> This combination of circumstances had brought youths to a terrible state of waywardness. Criminality

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<sup>344</sup> Paul Samuleit, “Aus der Geschichte des Kampfes gegen den Schund” in *Geschichte und Wege der Schundbekämpfung*, eds. Paul Samuleit and Hans Brunckhorst (Berlin: Carl Heymanns Verlag, 1922), 12.

<sup>345</sup> Paul Samuleit, *Wie unsere Jugend den Krieg erlebt* (Berlin: Carl Siegismund, 1917), 5.

<sup>346</sup> Samuleit, *Wie unsere Jugend*, 8-9. See also: Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land: War Pedagogy, Nationalism, and Authority in Germany, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>347</sup> Samuleit, *Wie unsere Jugend*, 15.

was on the rise, according to official reports.<sup>348</sup> The idle, unguarded, and hungry adolescent could succumb to the allure of Schundliteratur.<sup>349</sup>

Schundliteratur, like homosexuality, appeared to have spread rapidly during war. Its proliferation began right after the onset of the war with titles such as *Our Heroes in the World War*, *War Volunteers*, or *Spies*— books that were part of a new genre commonly dubbed “hurrah-patriotism.”<sup>350</sup> According to Samuleit, the problem with these books was that they “distorted and disfigured the formidable events of the war in the form of tasteless adventure and criminality.”<sup>351</sup> War literature fed the “male fantasies of war,” as Andrew Donson argues, but it fed female fantasies (and male fantasies of female fantasies), as well.<sup>352</sup> Not only the patriotic feelings of boys were exploited, the “manufacturers” of such literature recognized that girls could be profitable customers. War-romance novels mushroomed and, according to critics, degraded the gravity of war by transforming it into cheap romance.

The war offered the best conditions to organize a direct attack against Schundliteratur. The war heightened the association of youths with the future of the nation and heightened the link between mass culture and civilizational collapse. The *Generalkommando*, the German army’s administrative authority, authorized special youth protection measures during the war. First and foremost, it appealed to the patriotism of youths themselves and asked that they do not

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<sup>348</sup> Elisabeth Süersen, *Die Stellung der Militär- und Zivilbehörden zur Schundliteratur* (Zentralstelle zur Bekämpfung der Schundliteratur, Berlin: 1917), 9-10.

<sup>349</sup> See Chapters 1 and 3.

<sup>350</sup> Andrew Donson, “Why did German Youth become Fascists? Nationalist Males Born 1900 to 1908 in War and Revolution,” *Social History* 31, no. 3 (2006): 337-358: 346-48; Andrew Donson, “Models for Young Nationalists and Militarists: German Youth Literature in the First World War,” *German Studies Review* 27, no. 3 (2004): 579-598.

<sup>351</sup> Samuleit, *Wie unsere Jugend*, 18.

<sup>352</sup> Donson, “Models”: 589.



misbehave because their fathers would want to find productive and healthy sons upon their return. It was at this moment that the tune “you are the coming generation (*das kommende Geschlecht*) of our German fatherland” started to sound in every mouth.<sup>353</sup> But these measures went well beyond juvenile self-control. The *Generalkommando* demanded that fellow citizens look after children and youths and that civilians police what the young do in parks and other public spaces, such as cinemas. Finally, it introduced measures regulating what youths could do in private, namely reading Schundliteratur.

The teacher Karl Brunner knew how to make the most of this moment. During the war, and using his new position as censor at Berlin’s police headquarters, Brunner was able to turn around Section 56 of the trade regulations (the regulation of peddling) to augment their impact on the distribution of literature, for instance by including the regulation of books in bookstores in addition to itinerant sellers.<sup>354</sup> He was able to set into motion an idea with which he had been toying around for a few years: an index of forbidden literature, the so-called “Berlin List” (*Berliner Liste*), which would have legal effects over the entire Reich. It is at this moment that Schundliteratur came to be understood as texts “offensive to morals and religious sensibilities,” based on the language of the 1851 war censorship regulations.<sup>355</sup> Schundliteratur became a genre apart from pornography, which fell under Section 184 of the penal code, and against which Brunner had directed his aim earlier. War regulations required that Schundliteratur be not displayed or sold publicly. These regulations initiated a trend that would shape the 1926 Law for

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<sup>353</sup> Samuleit, *Wie unsere Jugend*, 23.

<sup>354</sup> Stark, *Banned in Berlin*, 63-4.

<sup>355</sup> Süersen, 8-12.

the Protection of Youth Against Harmful Literature, as we will see in the next chapter. It was in this law that the fight against Schundliteratur *and* against homosexual visibility coalesced.

Not everyone agreed with Brunner's authoritative measures. For those who believed that the battle against *Schund* was actually about defending "real" literature, Brunner's measures seemed disastrous.<sup>356</sup> Teachers with liberal tendencies also opposed the "Berlin List." They claimed that the narrowness of Brunner's approach (he attacked mostly books that harmed religious and moral sensibilities) actually led to the proliferation of other forms of *Schund*, such as adventure, criminal, or romantic stories. Nevertheless, Brunner's measures remained firmly implemented throughout the war. The Weimar Republic would bring important changes regarding freedom of opinion as well as important changes regarding the protection of youth. In light of these changes, Brunner was dismissed from his position in the institution he had helped create to combat the spread of Schundliteratur. He retired to Bavaria to lead a tranquil life. Liberals celebrated these changes and his dismissal.<sup>357</sup> But Brunner's legacy was there to stay. His inquisitorial approach would shape the battle against Schundliteratur during the Weimar Republic. He would be praised for his achievements during the Third Reich.<sup>358</sup>

The battle against Schundliteratur took a more martial form during the war under Brunner's command, but, surprisingly, so did the development of "positive" measures aimed to counter its distribution. Appropriately, this battle against mass culture was fought on the actual

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<sup>356</sup> Samuleit, "Aus der Geschichte des Kampfes gegen den Schund" 14-6; Wilhelm Fronemann, *Das Erbe Wolgasts*, 169.

<sup>357</sup> "Professor Brunner nicht mehr im Amt," *Deutsche Zeitung*, 3. Nov. 1922; "Zur Angelgenheit: Prof. Brunner wird von dessen Rechtbeistand mitgeteilt," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 22. November 1922. BArch R/8034-III/54, p. 136.

<sup>358</sup> "Ein Kämpfer für deutsche Kultur: Reichsminister Dr. Frick beglückwünscht Prof. Karl Brunner," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 11. Juli 1942. BArch R/8034-III/54, p. 135.

battleground. Ludwig Hoppe, a military chaplain in the eastern front, wrote a book while in campaign on the importance of “mobile war libraries” (*fahrbare Kriegs-Büchereien*) for securing a soldier’s mental well-being. Although not every soldier may have access (and time) to speak with a chaplain and to share with him his worries and pains, Hoppe stressed that at least soldiers should have access to literature. Books could act as proxy ministers and counselors during the war. They could be good companions for the soul. In Hoppe’s words “good books” were a soldier’s best friend, who “can offer his services [in the trenches], entertains, inspires, and instructs; [this friend] is always punctual; he is never irritated if you don’t have enough time for him; he is happy if you replace him for another comrade.”<sup>359</sup> The good friend/book would not fail the soldiers, would not die in the trenches, would not be maimed, and would not be affected by poison gas. It would always be available. It would even have an afterlife.

But not all friends are good friends; some of them can be bad company. Just as the German military was concerned with the spread of venereal disease through prostitution,<sup>360</sup> Hoppe’s mobile campaign libraries made sure that only “good friends” were available for the fighting men. The image of soldiers reading at the front reinforced that Germans were civilized people, *Kulturmenschen*, an image that could set against the “barbarian” enemy. “Our ditches and dugouts in the field as well as the wounded at home demand books, since we’re not a nation

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<sup>359</sup> Hoppe’s library plan worked this way: donors (notably mothers) would contribute money to these units. This avoided that they send inappropriate books themselves. Hoppe gathered enough money to build 12 mobile libraries (Model “Niedermayer” at 2,500 RM a piece) that would carry around 1125 books each. He claimed that the first units had been a success and that they expected to build one for each military unit. It is most likely that Hoppe exaggerated the success of the campaign, but this does not take any meaning from it. Ludwig Hoppe, *Geistespflege im Felde und die fahrbaren Kriegs-Büchereien an der Front. Eine brennende Frage und ihre Lösung* (Berlin: Ausschuß für fahrbare Kriegs-Büchereien an der Front, 1916), 2.

<sup>360</sup> Michelle K. Rhoades, “Prostitution and Venereal Disease,” *The Encyclopedia of World War I: A Political, Social, and Military History*, eds. Spencer C. Tucker and Priscilla Mary Roberts (Santa Barbara, CA.: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 946-948.

of illiterates,” wrote Harald Lagerström in an article about war and literature.<sup>361</sup> Hoppe’s mobile libraries fulfilled an important role: they brought a little bit of the comfort of the “home” to the front. A soldier lamented that “Only one thing is missing when I sit in this beautiful library in the evening, my mother. Otherwise it is like at home.”<sup>362</sup> Appropriate books were a top priority to comfort the soldiers and to prevent desertion. They reinforced bourgeois values and were thought capable of curtailing bad company and sexual misconduct even during the crudest moments of war.

One would think that controlling the soldiers’ reading was intended to curb antiwar sentiments and antiwar propaganda. Yet soldiers in the field were able to read about the worsening conditions and shortages at home, something that the military wanted to avoid by all means.<sup>363</sup> Good books were “in the interest of service.”<sup>364</sup> They were supposed to lead to better fighting. Literature should improve the soldiers’ morals and not only their morale. For those reasons, Schundliteratur had no room in the narrow trenches. Despite the sacrifices soldiers were making for the nation, these men were not being treated like men but rather like children, at least as far as reading was involved. Positive measures such as the “mobile war libraries” concealed censorship under a veil of benevolence towards the soldiers. This strategy and its effects would prove fundamental during the Weimar Republic.

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<sup>361</sup> Harald Lagerström, “Eine Giftmischung für unsere tapferen Verwundeten,” *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, 5. Juni 1915. BArch R/8034/II/6965, p. 122.

<sup>362</sup> Hoppe, 18.

<sup>363</sup> Richard Bessel, *Germany After the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 43.

<sup>364</sup> Hoppe, 15-6.

Literature as a Source of “Spiritual Hygiene”

The First World War not only made the battle against Schundliteratur more feasible in institutional terms. It gave it moral legitimization. The future of the nation was compromised by the war’s mortality, a higher incidence of venereal disease, and a perceived falling birth rate. The preoccupation with the adequate upbringing of youths and their protection, the recognition that they composed the human capital of the nation, took off after the war, when failure, uncertainty, and a mood of “crisis” saturated the political atmosphere.

Pessimistic commentators, upset about the changes that the November Revolution had brought about, considered that the war had only accelerated Germany’s downfall, which was often described in cataclysmic and biblical terms. “Germany,” Mary Young-Rißmann stated, “has collapsed like no other people in two thousand years.” She supported a view typical of the members of the White Cross, an evangelical morality group of which she was a member. Rißmann compared the fall of Germany to the ancient fall of Israel: “Germany’s collapse—political, economic, and financial—is deeply connected to its moral decadence,” she declared.<sup>365</sup> For moral crusaders, Germany was in a general state of moral despair. This was a country ripe with prostitution, venereal disease, and youths who compulsively masturbate. Marriage had lost its value and abortion was the order of the day. To increase natality, and at the same time to assure the future of the nation, state policy addressed issues inseparable from the body: maternity, contraception, and abortion.<sup>366</sup> As a liberal reproductive rights movement unfolded, so did the backlash against it.

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<sup>365</sup> “Die Sittlichkeitsfrage und ‘du.’” Vortrag von Frau M. Young-Rißmann gehalten zu Freiburg i. Br. am 30 September 1923 zur Tagung des Weißen Kreuzes. BArch N/2203/519.

<sup>366</sup> See Introduction: footnote 51.

The battle against Schundliteratur, although apparently beyond the realm of reproductive rights, had much to do with the same logic of futurity. The soul of Germany's youth was terribly corrupted. This was an apt metaphor for the perceived decline of the nation. The adequate cultural upbringing of Germany's children and youths was as important as population growth. Youths had to be raised to their maximum physical and spiritual strength: parents and educators had to prevent masturbation and extol the virtues and holiness of marriage.<sup>367</sup> A fundamental part of proper education involved controlling what youths read, for Schundliteratur could contribute to moral and sexual degeneration.<sup>368</sup>

Images of national crisis and downfall intersected with those of wayward youths. A 1921 article in the *Fränkische Kurier* described how youths were afflicted by a moral and psychological epidemic.

We have to go back to the beginning of the 13th century to find a similar phenomenon of psychic mass epidemic in German history. [Back then] thousands of young people, mostly in their puberty, who had gathered together for the so-called "Children's Crusade," knew only of a *raison d'être*: dancing. ...Historians have told us that this affected boys and girls, that the affliction came suddenly, and that they were considered possessed.<sup>369</sup>

This was, in the author's words, "a startling historical analogy" to the contemporary situation. The article pointed out the failure of youths to accomplish their original mission. Instead of joining the Christian crusade, these youths were afflicted with a strange disease (presumably the

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<sup>367</sup> Reißmann, "Die Sittlichkeitsfrage und 'du.'" BArch N/2203/519.

<sup>368</sup> J. Pachali, "Die Mitarbeit der Frau im Kampf gegen Schund und Schmutz," *Ethik: Sexual- und Gesellschafts-Ethik* 3, no. 2 (15. Januar 1927): 26-7.

<sup>369</sup> *Fränkische Kurier*, 16. August 1921 (Morgen-Ausgabe), BArch N/2203/507, p. 78.

neurological disorder Sydenham's chorea, popularly referred to as Saint Vitus Dance). And instead of serving the interests of the nation and of the Church, these youths had danced to exhaustion. The analogy was pertinent. There was indeed a "dance mania" during the Weimar Republic. Commentators considered dance one of the signs of disease and degeneracy during the Republic, a disease that was often linked to sexual depravity and to racial others.<sup>370</sup> Likewise, youths appeared to be possessed by the fantastic characters and stories that Schundliteratur made available to them. Like in the thirteenth century, combating that "disease" was a battle for the survival of Christian values.

If the thirteenth-century enemies had been Muslims fighting for the control of the Holy Land, the current enemies were much closer to home. "Here in western Germany," claimed the pastor Adolf Sellmann, "the French invasion has already done enough damage."<sup>371</sup> Sellmann was patently appalled by the French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 and the racial anxieties that the presence of soldiers from the French colonies was causing. Rape, fraternization, and racial miscegenation were not only a moral outrage. French colonial troops also represented a threat to the racial stock of the nation and to German masculinity.<sup>372</sup> Moreover, the collateral damage of

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<sup>370</sup> Susan Laikin Funkenstein, "Fashionable Dancing: Gender, the Charleston, and German Identity in Otto Dix's 'Metropolis,'" *German Studies Review* 28, no. 1 (2005): 20-44; Karl Toepfer, "Nudity and Modernity in German Dance, 1910-1930," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 3, no. 1 (July 1992): 58-108.

<sup>371</sup> Adolf Sellmann, *Zum Kampf gegen Schmutz und Schund* (Stiftungsverlag in Potsdam, 1927), 3-7.

<sup>372</sup> Christian Koller, "Enemy Images: Race and Gender Stereotypes in the Discussion on Colonial Troops. A Franco-German Comparison," *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany*, eds. Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 139-157; Keith Nelson, "The Black Horror on the Rhine: Race as a Factor in Post-World War I Diplomacy," *Journal of Modern History* 42, no. 4 (December 1970): 606-627; Julia Roos, "Women's Rights, Nationalist Anxiety, and the 'Moral' Agenda in the Early

occupation deteriorated Germany's image abroad. European, and even non-Europeans, Sellmann denounced, had lost respect for Germany.

The "Black Horror on the Rhine" may have been a consequence of Germany's damaged foreign policy at the time, but it was highly productive for domestic affairs. Divergent political groups were able to find common grounds in anti-French nationalist sentiments and racial prejudice, but many felt that they had been left at the occupiers' mercy. If pastors could do little to change Germany's occupation, Sellmann continued, "at least we want to have the possibility of protecting our youth from *Schmutz und Schund*."<sup>373</sup> This was a more manageable moral outrage and threat, or so he thought. Even as Germany was faring better than expected after the war, the general mood was one of pessimism. "There is no doubt," read the 1921 *Fränkische Kurier* article on the "dance craze," "that with the present signs of economic recovery symptoms of moral degeneration have appeared. [...] This pestilence has seized our youths, our pride and hope. Silence is national suicide, active collaboration in their salvation from this swampland is our obligation."<sup>374</sup> The salvation of youth from filth and disease rivaled the salvation of the nation and demanded an active and loud campaign.

Schundliteratur became a moral problem during the Republic.<sup>375</sup> Reinhard Mumm (1873-1932), a protestant pastor from Düsseldorf, and a member of the conservative German National People's Party (*Deutschnationale Volkspartei*), was one of the loudest voices in this campaign.

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Weimar Republic: Revisiting the 'Black Horror' Campaign Against France's African Occupation Troops," *Central European History* 42, no. 3 (2009): 473-508.

<sup>373</sup> Dr. Adolf Sellmann, Westfälischer Volksdienst, Witten an das Sekretariat des Reichstags. 17. Februar 1923. BArch N/2203/519.

<sup>374</sup> *Fränkische Kurier*, 16. August 1921 (Morgen-Ausgabe), BArch N/2203/507, p. 78.

<sup>375</sup> Wolfgang Heine, "Literatur und Schund: Eine Entgegnung," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 25. Februar 1921. BArch R/8034/II/6965, p. 167.



Mumm recognized that the clock could not be set back to prewar times, even though his party did wish for the return of the Kaiser and for religious education in all schools.<sup>376</sup> He did not propose a return to the past: this campaign was about envisioning a new morality for the future. Mumm's political career after the war focused on two pet projects that encompassed his Christian values: education reform and Schundliteratur. He believed that the German people could not be healed from the devastating damage done during the war and the revolution only through economic or social measures. Germany, he argued, "needs the harder and drawn-out work of a recovery of the national soul (*Volksseele*)."<sup>377</sup> He depicted the nation as a harmed body and a diseased soul in need of recovery.

The link between the physical and the spiritual parts of the nation underscored how moral recovery was as important as population growth. These two discourses had many aspects in common. They relied on scientific language to support their assault on contemporary values and reproductive rights. The battle against Schundliteratur, as we will see soon, was also fought with the weapons of science to describe its damage to the psyche and the body; as an explanation for the rise of juvenile delinquency; and as a cause of degeneracy and sexual deviance. Understood in these terms, the fight against Schundliteratur was, as the liberal newspaper *Vossische Zeitung* put it, "spiritual hygiene."<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*, trans. Elborg Forster and Larry Eugene Jones (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 51, 67-9.

<sup>377</sup> Correspondence between the *Reichsbund der Kinderreichen Deutschlands zum Schutze der Familie e.V* and Reinhard Mumm (21.7.1927); and "Kirchliche und kulturelle Fragen" (article manuscript), BArch N/2203/218, p. 35-50.

<sup>378</sup> Dr. Werner Mahrholz, "Geistige Volkshygiene: Die Verschlechterungen des Schund- und Schmutzgesetzes, *Vossische Zeitung*, 24. Juni 1926. BArch R/8034/II/6966, p. 12.

“Spiritual hygiene” implied that youth had to be educated to comply with some core moral values, including decency and sexual abstinence. The ideal of a *Volksgemeinschaft* was only possible under moral purity. “It will be decisive for the future of our Volk whether it is able to eliminate everything that prevents us from becoming a *Volksgemeinschaft* that is consolidated mentally and spiritually,” claimed the pedagogue Heinrich Benfer in a traditional völkisch language.<sup>379</sup> Benfer was referring to the expected enemies of the *Volkskörper*—Jews, capitalism, and parliamentary democracy—and the moral degeneration that they brought about. The tending of youthful souls implied depoliticizing youth and eliminating the “double moral” of the time: the obsession with enjoying life and an appalling lack of piety. For Benfer taking care of the soul was as important as taking care of the body. He was not alone in believing that. Even physiologists alerted the public about the effects of reading on youthful bodies and minds. Emil Abderhalden, a renowned Swiss medical doctor who represented the sex-reform group Ethics Union (*Ethikbund*), warned against the influence of Schund “on the young organism.” “The future of a nation depends on how its youth is educated,” Abderhalden conceded.<sup>380</sup> Reading was one of the most important aspects of an individual’s education.

The link between Schundliteratur and hygiene was also “real.” Mass culture could have discernible health effects. The sociologist and economist Werner Sombart had compared the proliferation of street kiosks to the spread of gonorrhea.<sup>381</sup> Kiosks were public spaces of social exchange and interclass interaction, and bourgeois sensibility regarded street kiosks as filthy

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<sup>379</sup> Heinrich Benfer, *Kampf dem schlechten durch das gute Buch* (Dortmund: Ruhfus, 1926), “Vorwort zur 1. Auflage (1923).” Benfer based his ideas on Arthur Schopenhauer’s *Über Lesen und Bücher* (Leipzig: Insel, 1914).

<sup>380</sup> Emil Abderhalden, “Der Kampf zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schund und Schmutz,” *Ethik: Sexual- und Gesellschafts-Ethik* 3, no. 2 (15. Januar 1927): 27-8.

<sup>381</sup> Cited in Reuveni, 110.

spots, similar to brothels. Kiosks were the spaces from which homosexuality could spread, as well. Schundliteratur was part of that circle of filth and disease. Heinrich Benfer commented with disgust on how pulp novels would pass from family to family and would be touched by countless hands to the extreme that “one should touch them only with pincers.”<sup>382</sup> Hygienic grounds were in fact one of the ways through which municipal governments would attack Schundliteratur. The Youth Support Services office (*Jugendpflege*) began protecting youth against Schundliteratur in 1921 under the guise of a hygiene campaign about used paper. The authorities were concerned with the dubious origin of the paper on which cheap literature was being printed. They also indicated that youths in economic need were trading with used paper, which was considered filthy and damaging for their health. Between 1921 and 1922, Berlin’s police department tracked down all the places where Schundliteratur was being sold. They did this neighborhood by neighborhood, kiosk by kiosk. Addresses and names were recorded in what could be considered a map of circulation and distribution of “filth,” not unlike the regulation of prostitution under *Kasernierung*.<sup>383</sup>

It is ironic that literal concerns with public hygiene in 1921 turned into a discursive fight as the Republic developed. Hygienic concerns reflected the interest of the state in “mapping” the sources of (social) disease as well as its inevitable effects upon youths’ bodies. Anxieties about increasing poverty, destitution, and class shaped a policy that would control the bodies of an apparently unhealthy nation with an uncertain future. Nevertheless, defenders of morality did not consider these measures to be sufficient and demanded that legislators create special laws

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<sup>382</sup> Benfer, *Kampf dem schlechten durch das gute Buch*, 48.

<sup>383</sup> Bezirksamt Neukölln. Der Magistrat. Jugendamt. Abt. Jugendpflege. 17. Nov. 1921. A Pr. Br. Rep. 030 Nr. 16991.

addressing Schundliteratur. Moral entrepreneurs did not want to wait for the Reichstag to consider their demands. They were ready for action.

### Organizing for Action

Motivated by Germany's perceived downfall and the growth of Schundliteratur, moral entrepreneurs put themselves to work. Many of those active in this campaign supported "positive" measures that included the promotion of "good literature." Morality organizations collaborated with local authorities and teachers to press their demands on booksellers. Whereas the booksellers who adhered to these organizations' views were rewarded, those who chose to continue selling Schundliteratur were publicly shamed and boycotted. Book burnings were not uncommon, even though many were skeptical about their usefulness. Even the Communist and Socialist parties wished to do away with Schundliteratur and combined that goal with that of ending capitalism. All in all, moral entrepreneurs used the protection of youth as an excuse to restrict the freedom of others to produce, sell, and consume mass culture freely.

Hermann Popert (1871-1932), a judge in Hamburg, was one of the most important pioneers in the battle against Schundliteratur. He developed a set of institutional and grassroots measures that aimed to eliminate its spread. He owed much of his power as an anti-Schund champion to his former success as the author of *Helmut Harringa* (1910), a book that had been a bestseller among youths and warned against "alcoholism, premarital intercourse, and the contamination of the German race."<sup>384</sup> Many anti-Schund campaigners compared the consumption of trashy books with prostitution, intoxication, and addiction, all of them "immoral

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<sup>384</sup> Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 1962), 44-45. Hermann Popert, *Helmut Harringa: Eine Geschichte aus unserer Zeit* (Dresden: Alexander Köhler, 1911). The novel had 49 editions and a print run of 315,000 copies by 1930.

vices” that awakened “libidinal instincts.”<sup>385</sup> In a book about the campaign against Schundliteratur in Hamburg, Popert likened this form of mass culture to white slavery and drug dealing. Like these “shoddy” businesses, Schundliteratur was only about profit at the expense of morals. This was a business oblivious to the social and moral damage it could cause.

Popert was aware of the difficulties that the battle against Schundliteratur would bring to bear. He recognized that his could not be a crusade against “art and science,” if only because the constitution of the Weimar Republic protected freedom of expression, and because *Schund*, as an aesthetic judgment, was difficult to define. Schundliteratur was indeed a fuzzy concept that required a concrete definition. He came up with one that would remain the most succinct and widely used definition during the Weimar Republic. In a letter sent to the Prussian government, he claimed that this type of publication “is oriented to the mass market, has neither artistic nor scientific value, is immoral and brutalizing in its form or content, is harmful for the mental, moral, and health development [of youths], and overstimulates the imagination.”<sup>386</sup> Popert demanded immediate legal protections, but used his ample experience in Hamburg to act without delay.

Some of the “positive measures” that Popert advocated included the promotion of “good literature.”<sup>387</sup> Teachers’ associations had formed committees whose function was to warn parents of the harm that Schundliteratur could cause to their children. Hamburg’s Youth Literature

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<sup>385</sup> Hermann Popert, *Hamburg und der Schundkampf I (Schmutz- und Schundliteratur)* (Hamburg: Deutscher-Dichter-Gedächtnis-Stiftung, 1927), 5.

<sup>386</sup> Popert’s wordy definition reads: “Schund- und Schmutzschriften sind für Massenverbreitung bestimmte Schriften ohne künstlerischen oder wissenschaftlichen Wert, die nach Form oder Inhalt verrohend oder entsittlichend wirken, oder von denen in schädliche Wirkung auf die sittliche, gesitige oder gesundheitliche Entwicklung oder eine Überreizung der Phantasie zu besorgen ist” (Popert, *Hamburg und der Schundkampf*, 10).

<sup>387</sup> Popert, *Hamburg und der Schundkampf*, 48-49.

Committee (*Jugendschriftenausschuß*),<sup>388</sup> for example, was only one of many similar associations in Germany that combined educational activities and public lectures in workers' clubs.<sup>389</sup> These lectures aimed to educate working-class parents about "visiting bookstores" instead of relying on peddlers, the traditional source for their leisurely reading and the provenance of the major part of Schundliteratur. These efforts were combined with an editorial activity: the Committee published the *Catalogue of Recommendable Juvenile Books (Verzeichnis empfehlenswerter Jugendschriften)* that came out every Christmas, a list of approved topics, authors, and titles.<sup>390</sup> Anti-Schund activists wanted to make sure that every youth would find faultless presents underneath the Christmas tree.

A strong contender in the battle against Schundliteratur at the local level was the youth movement itself.<sup>391</sup> Many youth groups subscribed to a form of activism that showed a tendency

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<sup>388</sup> Hamburg's committee was composed of 30 members (26 men and 4 women). Although most of its members were teachers, it included members of the youth welfare office (*Jugendamt*), of the church, of the juvenile court (*Jugendgericht*), police, and the Association of German booksellers, which highlights how the commercial interests of book publishers and sellers was at stake here, as well. Popert, *Hamburg und der Schundkampf*, (Beilage 16).

<sup>389</sup> The so-called morality associations (*Sittlichkeitsvereine*) brought together groups that condemned the evils of alcoholism, prostitution, white slavery, pornography, and, of course, Schundliteratur. Their diversity and their membership numbers underscore the "mass" character of such organizations. Two million women were members of the Coalition of evangelical Women's Associations. Württemberg's committee on the abatement of moral misery had over half a million members alone. The *Borromäusverein*, affiliated with the Catholic Church, had a similar function. The Protestant Church also sponsored such organizations. Some of them were the *Blaukreuzverbände* and the *Verband zur Bekämpfung der öffentlichen Unsittlichkeit*, a morality association that combatted Schundliteratur, as well as the *Deutsche Frauen- und Mädchenbund für sittliche Reinheit*. See: Adolf Sellmann, "Der Kampf gegen Schmutz und Schund von evangelischer Seite" and W. Ebel, "Die praktische Bekämpfung der Schundliteratur durch den Katholizismus," *Schmutz und Schund als sozialpathologische Erscheinung*, eds. Bruno Jung and Heinrich Weber (Münster i. W.: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1926).

<sup>390</sup> Popert, *Hamburg und der Schundkampf*, 52; Gideon Reuveni, *Reading Germany*, 188-9.

<sup>391</sup> The Youth Literature Committee had their confessional counterpart in the Imperial Federation of Evangelical Boys' Clubs (*Reichsverband der evangelischen Jungmännerverbände*) with its

to interfere with the freedom of sellers and buyers and a penchant for surveillance and compliance. Hamburg's Youth Literature Committee, for example, was divided into twenty-three borough subcommittees charged to "observe the stationery and cigar stores where Schundliteratur is known to be sold and to control its interior as well as its window displays."<sup>392</sup> If Schundliteratur was being sold in a given store, these unofficial vigilantes tried to persuade the seller to stop doing so. If sellers complied, the committee would issue a certificate of approval to be displayed on the store's window and recommended appropriate literature to them. In contrast, those sellers who chose to ignore their recommendations were singled out in the fliers that the Committee would distribute in neighborhoods and portrayed their shops as businesses that did not respect common decency. In their role as assessors of appropriate literature, the members of this group collaborated with the police department and the city senate, thus bridging the gap between grassroots and official enforcement.<sup>393</sup> Surveillance, compliance, and public shaming were the main strategies used to curb the spread of Schundliteratur. Protecting youth warranted violating the freedom of others.

Hamburg's Committee led the battle against Schundliteratur and was used an example to follow across the country. Nevertheless, the measures it supported could not always be considered "positive." This group and those modeled after it in other cities were often involved in more radical actions. Occasionally, they organized book burnings. A case will suffice to

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anti-Schund "action groups" (*Schundkampfgruppen*) and *Der Schundkampf*, the first journal exclusively dedicated to the fight against Schundliteratur. Like other similar groups, including those of the Catholic church, this organization lobbied for legal reform, distributed and recommended "good" books, and collected "dangerous" material in their so-called "poison cabinets" (*Giftschränke*). Adolf Sellmann, "Der Kampf gegen Schmutz und Schund von evangelischer Seite," *Schmutz und Schund als sozialpathologische Erscheinung*, 57.

<sup>392</sup> Popert, 62.

<sup>393</sup> Popert, *Hamburg und der Schundkampf*, 62-5.

illustrate the effect that such spectacles had on the participants. During the second week of December 1921, Berlin celebrated its Youth-Welfare-Week with a series of lectures about youth issues, including welfare and juvenile crime reduction. Whereas these were worthwhile topics of discussion, Schundliteratur ended up receiving the most attention. The burning of 30,000 *Schundhefte* was announced to great fanfare as the culmination of this week of celebration.<sup>394</sup>

The public book burning took place in the middle of the Tempelhof Field (*Tempelhofer Feld*), the parade ground of Berlin's garrison and the location of the future airport. The battle against Schundliteratur had obvious military undertones; celebrating its victories, even if small, required spectacle. Bonfires were ancestral rituals of purification and burning Schundliteratur was unmistakably such an act. An unnamed reporter for Berlin's newspaper *The Day* (*Der Tag*) wrote a compelling account of this event:

Tempelhof Field has turned into a marsh. A storm threatens intermittently. ... The children of Neukölln ... are led by their elders—their teachers and leaders. Although they may sink at every step, they move forward steadfastly. The end is near. A bonfire stands like a dry island in the middle of the marsh. The books to be burned, mostly Nick Carter volumes, are piled on a hay cart. I have not counted them, but there must be thousands of them. A red flag sways in the wind, dragging the boy holding it. ... The flag poisons the mood; it shows that the children for whom we are fighting are chained to the party. The bonfire is set aflame. ... Children cheer, for they are witnessing an extraordinary

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<sup>394</sup> “30.000 Schundbücher in Flammen: Der Scheiterhaufen auf dem Tempelhofer Felde,” *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25. November 1921. BArch R/8034/II/6965, p. 179.



spectacle. What the fire does not destroy flutters for a moment in the air, only to sink into the dirt. Schundliteratur has been destroyed.<sup>395</sup>

The reporter did not skimp on lyricism when describing this event. The dark clouds gathering in the sky were inauspicious reminders that this would not be a pleasant gathering. The politicization of the event brought to light that the young had been assigned a role that did not correlate with their maturity. The presence of the red flag showed that the battle against Schundliteratur was not a Christian one alone, the Communist Party supported the burning. This was also a battle against insensitive capitalism, against the “manufacturers” of Schundliteratur, who were willing to sacrifice the innocence of youths for the sake of profit. The Socialist Party had also recognized the significance of attracting youths to its files and the importance of combating Schundliteratur. Youths were encouraged to participate in Socialist cultural initiatives, such as youth groups and sports clubs, and to enjoy socialist youth literature and film, cultural products that were envisioned outside of mainstream, capitalist culture.<sup>396</sup>

Instead of culture and sports, this time there was fire. The reporter seemed surprised at the joy that the attending youths displayed. The spectacle and the crowd were supposed to create strong bonds among those present. As Gustave Le Bon had argued in the 1890s, individuals in the mass turned into an irrational, suggestible, and potentially violent mob.<sup>397</sup> Ironically, the

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<sup>395</sup> “Schundliteratur auf dem Scheiterhaufen,” *Der Tag*, 19. Dezember 1921. R/8034/II/6965, p. 180.

<sup>396</sup> G. Starke, “Bildungsstreben und Schundkampf der Sozialdemokratie,” *Schmutz und Schund als sozialpathologische Erscheinung*, 67-77; Lynn Abrams, “From Control to Commercialization: 290.

<sup>397</sup> Michael Meyers, “Feminizing Fascist Men: Crowd Psychology, Gender and Sexuality in French Antifascism,” *French Historical Studies* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 109-142; Robert A. Nye, *The Origins of Crowd Psychology: Gustave Le Bon and the Crisis of Mass Democracy in the Third Republic* (London: Sage, 1975).

spectacle at Tempelhof Field elicited in its participants what it was supposed to suppress. Not everyone had to be caught in the dynamics of the crowd. The burning spectacle had unsettled the reporter:

I dabble through the streets of Neukölln. I dare not use the streetcar on my way back home with my dirty shoes and pants. I don't have the feeling that I've been witness to an important feat. ...Our youth will not read again what burned yesterday. But our youth must get used to something better than this, something that supersedes destruction. And this cannot be won with such aggressive displays.<sup>398</sup>

Youths, the article reminded us, should be protected against it, but also against similar displays of terror and destruction. This spectacle sought to materialize a shared emotion in the group, but the effects of the intended emotion could not be calculated in advance. On the one hand, the book burning aimed to ignite an “affective economy” that would stick the group together and create a communal identity around a shared fear.<sup>399</sup> This emotion, in turn, constructed the object to be feared: Schundliteratur.

Not everyone was happy with such radical measures nor needed to condone such violent acts. The author of the article proved how emotions could not be easily controlled. The reporter, for one, felt terribly alienated after the event. The soiled pants were a result of the storm, but his dirtiness was metaphorical. Something that was supposed to be purifying had left him feeling terribly dirty and ashamed. Grete Schemann, from the German Evangelical Union of female Youths (*Evangelischer Verband für die weibliche Jugend Deutschlands*), an organization that included 5,000 local groups and over 185,000 members, also believed that “the looting of shops

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<sup>398</sup> “Schundliteratur auf dem Scheiterhaufen,” BArch R/8034/II/6965, p. 180.

<sup>399</sup> Sara Ahmed, “Affective Economies,” *Social Text* 79, Vol. 22, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 117-139: 119.

[or] the burning of books in public squares” were not really positive measures. In her opinion, the distribution of appropriate literature was still the best weapon against Schundliteratur.<sup>400</sup>

Despite some moderate views, Christian fundamentalism predominated in other organizations. The East-German Youth League (*Ostdeutscher Jünglingsbund*), an umbrella protestant youth group, had a knight with a spear killing a snake as its logo, and figure that relied on the traditional imagery of Saint George, the Roman soldier and martyr, and linked the organization’s core principles: faith and martial discipline. Alternatively, Schundliteratur was depicted as Hydra’s head, a poisonous, ever-multiplying beast, just as Schundliteratur was a product of ceaseless mechanical reproduction.<sup>401</sup> The East-German Youth League fostered anti-Semitism, implying that the majority of the press was controlled by Jews and was, therefore, anti-Christian and anti-German. The organization’s leaders used youths for the sake of values that revealed more about them than about the youths themselves. Elder leaders fashioned themselves as crusaders and reminded youths that they were “not fighting against *Schmutz und Schund* as a hobby or a sport. This is our sacred work for the preservation of our brothers and the salvation of their souls.”<sup>402</sup> If less spectacular, the measures they recommended in the journal *The Schund-Struggle (Der Schundkampf)* were just as fanatical as book burnings. The

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<sup>400</sup> Grete Schemann, “Keine Waffen: Von unserm Kampf gegen Schmutz und Schund,” *Der Schundkampf* 3, no. 10 (Januar 1926): 8-10.

<sup>401</sup> “Unsere neue Siegelmark,” *Der Schundkampf. Nachrichtenblatt der Schundkampfstelle des Ostdeutschen Jünglingsbundes* 2, no. 7/8 (Oktober 1925): 25.

<sup>402</sup> Paul Humburg, “Die Führer des evangelischen Jungmännerwerkes sandten der Reichsschundkampfstelle folgende Leitworte zum Schundkampf,” *Der Schundkampf* 2, no. 7/8 (Oktober 1925): 15.

organization expected that youths would be active in the surveillance of others and that they would start local and neighborhood groups and to distribute the organization's publications.<sup>403</sup>

Youths, however, did not always display the same passion. The organization's leaders were deeply dissatisfied with the commitment that the younger members often showed. Youths did not seem to be entirely dedicated to this battle, especially during the group's annual summer gathering. "Why did the boy scouts (*Pfadfinder*) run to the lake immediately after the church service?" exclaimed a youth leader. "The boy scouts, of all people! I believe that in the future they should be excluded from these meetings. The battle against Schundliteratur is a work of honor and requires more than two hours [of commitment]."<sup>404</sup> The battle against Schundliteratur reflected adult anxieties, rather than the needs and desires of youths. The tactics used to fight against Schundliteratur were obviously not age-appropriate: youths were often distracted from that goal when better possibilities for entertainment arose—they were agents in their own desire. The organization's failure to sustain the motivation of youths highlights how the needs and taste of adults, like their morality, did not match that of youths, which, in addition to swimming, included reading Schundliteratur. Nevertheless, the moral panic surrounding Schundliteratur had been able to mobilize a large contingent of people who could pressure the government and fellow citizens to comply with their views. In case arguments about morality and the salvation of the nation were not enough, moral entrepreneurs had science on their side.

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<sup>403</sup> "10 Gebote zur Schundbekämpfung die jedermann beachten und befolgen sollte," *Der Schundkampf* 2, no. 9 (Dezember 1925): 10; Erich Schulze, "Wie richte ich eine Schriftenniederlage ein? Eine Plauderei," *Der Schundkampf* 2, no. 9 (Dezember 1925): 17-21: 14.

<sup>404</sup> Johannes Theuerklauff, "Kritik nach der Parade," *Der Schundkampf* 3, no. 14 (Januar 1927): 15.

*A Science for Morality: Psychology, Sexuality, and Schundliteratur*

While the methods to combat the spread of Schundliteratur varied, many agreed that something had to be done to protect youths against its harmful effects. During the Weimar Republic, the emergent field of youth psychology would come to support these groups' manifold claims with the language of science and objectivity. Scientific language legitimized the efforts of the state in protecting youths and in enforcing normative sexuality. As the pedagogue Wilhelm Fronemann put it, "the effects of youth literature on the psyche" were what mattered most during the Weimar Republic.<sup>405</sup> Youth was the perfect arena in which to envision theories of normative development in which categories such as class, gender, and sexuality could be made concrete and natural. When considering an apparent rise in criminality, immorality, and homosexuality during the Weimar Republic, youth psychologists considered that mass culture had the ability to seduce youths into committing unlawful and disreputable acts. In fact, mass culture had the potential to arrest their proper sexual development.

Due to a rapid increase in population in the first decades of the twentieth century, youth became a more concrete demographic group as well as a social and a pedagogical problem. The concept of adolescence developed alongside social and demographic changes in Germany beginning in the late nineteenth century. The population of those in the age group between fourteen and twenty-one increased from 7.8 to 9 million between 1910 and 1925.<sup>406</sup> Despite a higher life expectancy, the general mood after the First World War was one of demographic

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<sup>405</sup> Fronemann, 24.

<sup>406</sup> In 1927 Germany had a population of 62.35 million people of whom only 61.9% were adults. Germany had 9.10 million (14.6%) youths in 1927. They lived mostly in Prussia and Bavaria. *Das Junge Deutschland: Ausstellung der deutschen Jugend. Berlin Schloss Bellevue* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1927), 22; Peter Dudek, *Jugend als Objekt der Wissenschaften: Geschichte der Jugendforschung in Deutschland Österreich* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990), 56.

collapse.<sup>407</sup> This feeling contributed to the attention psychologists paid to adolescence and its proper development during this period.

The changes in education that the Weimar Constitution had introduced also reflected the contemporary investment in the physical, psychological, and moral well-being of youths. New policies required that children and youths stay longer at school than before.<sup>408</sup> These reforms implied more time for education, but they also left more time for leisure. Conservative and religious commentators, upset about the exclusion of the Church from educational matters, started to view adolescent forms of leisure (popular literature, cinema, and the youth movement) with suspicion. The demand for books increased during the nineteenth century as a consequence of increasing literacy rates and more developed printing technologies that make books more affordable. As readers and books became greater in number, so did the anxieties surrounding the dangers of reading. By the turn of the twentieth century more people could be allured by the power of the printed word than ever before.<sup>409</sup> It turned out that in addition to women, youths were a vulnerable group.

Youth psychologists, eager for legitimizing their profession in the eyes of state officials, chose to describe adolescence as a “period of crisis” that demanded prompt intervention. These experts considered youth an “unstable [and] problematic period of transition” in which myriad threats converged.<sup>410</sup> Mass culture was one of such threats and youth psychologists transformed

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<sup>407</sup> Bessel, *Germany After the First World War*, 225.

<sup>408</sup> Hans J. Hahn, *Education and Society in Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 55-57.

<sup>409</sup> The literacy rate increased from 25% in 1800 to 90% around 1900. Reuveni, *Reading Germany*, 152.

<sup>410</sup> Ulfried Geuter, *Homosexualität in der deutschen Jugendbewegung: Jugendfreundschaft und Sexualität im Diskurs von Jugendbewegung, Psychoanalyse und Jugendpsychologie am Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), 31-2.

their prejudice against it and their speculations about its effects into a productive area of research. The 1920s and 1930s were an extremely productive time for their discipline.<sup>411</sup> During this period, psychology was still a hybrid discipline with no clear boundaries and most psychologists struggled to find their place in the natural sciences, as psychology still occupied a border between physiology and other disciplines, such as psychiatry, psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, and philosophy.<sup>412</sup> Youth psychologists tried to overcome their disciplinary ambiguity by securing their work's impact on society. They benefitted from the changing mood regarding youth. Whereas the concept of youth had previously been tainted by class prejudice, youth gained a much more inclusive meaning after the war, when youths "ha[d] to be won over for the state and society."<sup>413</sup> Youths represented the possibilities for national regeneration. According to psychological theories, they could be shaped according to normative social and cultural norms.

Youth psychology provided a framework to understand the effects of Schundliteratur on youths. Why did adolescents read what they read? Why did Schundliteratur appear irresistible to them? Did Schundliteratur *really* lead to juvenile delinquency? And did it *really* have the power to seduce them sexually? Fear of the potential harmful effects of reading on the psyche was not new during the Weimar Republic. Similar fears, even if not expressed in psychological terms, had arisen as a response to new literary genres and techniques—journalism, the novel—and as the reading public expanded—women, workers, and now youths. The association of reading with

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<sup>411</sup> For a very concise history of psychology in Germany, see: Ludy. T. Benjamin, *A Brief History of Modern Psychology* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007), 38-44.

<sup>412</sup> Mitchell G. Ash, "Weimar Psychology: Holistic Visions and Trained Intuition," *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, eds. Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013): 35-54: 38.

<sup>413</sup> Dudek, 13-14.

revolt and crime had a long history. It was a common trope in nineteenth-century media depictions of female criminals that they had had a disreputable book by their bedside.<sup>414</sup>

Psychologists put themselves to work on the physiological and, for the most part, on the psychological answers to these questions.<sup>415</sup> They came to agree that it was the flexibility of the youthful psyche—which was strikingly similar to the flexibility of their sexuality—that made them particularly vulnerable to the alluring power of Schundliteratur.

“Youth” was not a new concept during the Weimar Republic. Like the homosexual, “youth” had become a psychological “species” by the late nineteenth century. “Youth” (*Jugend*) came to replace the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century bourgeois concept of the “youngling” (*Jüngling*).<sup>416</sup> Whereas the latter concept referred educated, male youths, *Jugend* represented an unruly mass of young, working-class males. As such, the concept of “youth” evoked the lower classes’ propensity for violence and their inherent deviance.<sup>417</sup> Most youths were part of the growing labor force and psychologists described them as being unstable,

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<sup>414</sup> Lisa Downing, *The Subject of Murder: Gender, Exceptionality, and the Modern Killer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 59.

<sup>415</sup> Charlotte Bühler, *Das Seelenleben des Jugendlichen. Versuch einer Analyse und Theorie der psychischen Pubertät* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1922); Walter Hoffmann, *Die Reifezeit. Grundfragen der Jugendpsychologie und Sozialpädagogik* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1930/1922); Erich Stern, *Jugendpsychologie* (Breslau: Ferdinand Hirt, 1923); Otto Tumlirz, *Die Reifejahre. Erster Teil: Die seelischen Erscheinungen der Reifejahre* (Leipzig: Julius Klinkhardt, 1927); Theodor Ziehen, *Das Seelenleben der Jugendlichen* (Langensalza: Hermann Beyer & Söhne, 1923).

<sup>416</sup> According to Ulfried Geuter, social and artistic trends, such as the youth movement and Jugendstil illustrate how the ideal of youth came to represent social tensions and change in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century. Geuter, 31.

<sup>417</sup> Dudek, 13.



unpredictable, and untamed.<sup>418</sup> Newer was the interest in creating a scientific language to talk about youth's development that determined what the appropriate, that is, "normal" traits for the different stages of growth were. A "normal" youth had to fit within a certain set of parameters: height, weight, hormone secretions, intellectual ability, and, last but not least, literary interests.<sup>419</sup> Not many adolescents were able to fit perfectly into all these traits. Some youths matured earlier, some were taller, some shorter, some heavier, and some loved reading what they were not supposed to read.

Youth was that particular moment of transition in which the child would abandon the world of instincts to welcome the world of reason. During this transformation, youths would discover that they possess their own ego and subjectivity, and that they have to find their role in society. These changes did not happen without its conflicts: this transition proved particularly difficult because youths still lacked the ability to distinguish between fantasy and reality. The psychologist Eduard Spranger argued that "the libidinal psychic structure of children" (*die triebhafte Seelenstruktur des Kindes*), by which he also meant youths (*Jugend*), made them prone

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<sup>418</sup> These psychologists' conclusions must be taken with a grain of salt. Despite their direct allusions to class, most of these psychologists paid little attention to working-class youths. For the most part they drew their insight from a minority of male, upper-class students at urban, secondary schools. There were however a few psychologists who studied proletarian youths, such as the Marxist Otto Rühle and his wife Alice Rühle-Gerstel who applied Alfred Adler's Individual-psychological theories to his examination of proletarian youths, mostly through the concept of "inferiority complex" (*Minderwertigkeitsgefühl*). Otto Rühle *Die Seele des proletarischen Kindes* (Dresden: Verlag am andern Ufer, 1925); Alice Rühle-Gerstel, *Freud und Adler* (Dresden: Verlag Am Anderen Ufer, 1924).

<sup>419</sup> Charlotte Bühler, "Seelische Eigenart der beiden Geschlechter in der Zeit der werdenden Reife" *Das kommende Geschlecht. Zeitschrift für Familienpflege und geschlechtliche Volkserziehung auf biologischer und ethischer Grundlage* 3, no. 4 (May 1925): 14-21; Jürgen W. Harms, "Inkretion und werdende Reife," *Das kommende Geschlecht* 3, no. 4 (May 1925): 5-10.

to “dangerous conflicts.”<sup>420</sup> Adolescents were emotional wrecks, trying to figure out how to behave as adults in a society hostile to them while battling their sexual awakening, which they were urged to repress. Only after this “normal” youth had been constructed that the “deviant” youth could emerge as the most novel psychiatric and psychological category of the early twentieth century, not unlike that of the adult deviant or degenerate of the previous century.<sup>421</sup> Deviant youths embodied anxieties about change: they were the members of society more willing to embrace, and less able to escape, modern life.

Consciousness, subjectivity, reality, and sexuality were deeply related. These tensions—the adolescent’s growing pains—ached to be balanced. Typical mechanisms would be exercise, especially hiking, which would allow youths “to see the world with their own eyes,” instead of through the cloudy lens of trashy literature. Modern life in the city and the factory, however, made the connection with nature, which was considered essential to normal development, less accessible. Literature (adventure and travel novels) acted as modern ersatz for youths who had no other alternatives to relieve their stressed psyches.<sup>422</sup> The teacher and *Schundkämpfer* Willy Gensch argued that the boredom inherent to modern life and its regulated time led working-class youths to seek sensorial overstimulation when they were not at work. Gensch compared this form of compulsive reading to a type of addiction that led to a state of inebriation. Poisons such as alcohol and Schundliteratur appealed to the deepest of instincts: reading *Schundhefte*, youths

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<sup>420</sup> Eduard Spranger, *Psychologie des Jugendalters* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1925), 160.

<sup>421</sup> Richard Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal: A History of German Criminology, 1880-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>422</sup> Fronemann, 36.

allowed their “atavistic” selves to transpire.<sup>423</sup> Schundliteratur awakened the instincts that civilization was supposed to tame in them. It turned youth into primitive beings: vagrant, cruel, licentious, and in the worst cases, homosexual.

If working-class youths were the ideal readers of Schundliteratur, they were more likely to suffer its effects. Psychologists feared that youths would fill their empty lives—shadowed by broken families, economic misery, parental alcoholism, and abuse—with fantastic stories that they would try to replicate in reality. The adolescent’s psychological inability to distinguish between reality and fiction made this all the worse. Even though some psychologists and pedagogues were critical of theories that made working-class youths more vulnerable to fantasy, for the most part they argued that proletarian youths were more susceptible to confusing reality and fiction,<sup>424</sup> just as they were more susceptible to sexual confusion. If youths are vulnerable to the damaging effects of this literature, the psychologist Hubert Jung argued, “this is especially the case among proletarian youths, since their reality-bound imagination is afflicted by their strong impressions.”<sup>425</sup> Stories about youths who had fled from home or committed robberies after reading *Schmutz und Schund* were regular fixtures in Weimar’s daily newspapers.<sup>426</sup> These stories commonly portrayed adolescents’ lack of productivity, their loss of respect for parents

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<sup>423</sup> Willy Gensch, “Was liest unsere Jugend? Ergebnisse einer Umfrage,” *Was liest unsere Jugend? Ergebnisse von Feststellungen an Schulen aller Gattungen und Erziehungsanstalten sowie bei Jugendorganisationen und Jugendlichen*, eds. Erna Barschak, Willy Gensch, Alexander Schneider, Hertha Siemering (Berlin: R. v. Decker, 1930), 56.

<sup>424</sup> Hubert Jung, *Das Phantasieleben der männlichen werktätigen Jugend: Ein Beitrag zur Psychologie und Pädagogik der Reifezeit* (München: Helios Verlag, 1930), 91. See also: Hans Heinrich Busse, *Das literarische Verständnis der werktätigen Jugend zwischen 14 und 18. Eine entwicklungs- und sozialpsychologische Studie* (Leipzig: Barth, 1923); Fritz Giese, *Das freie literarische Schaffen bei Kindern und Jugendliche* (Leipzig: Barth, 1928).

<sup>425</sup> Jung, 106.

<sup>426</sup> BArch N/2203/517, p. 251-252.

and superiors, and their penchant for aimless wandering. It stressed the links between idleness and moral failing.

Psychologists agreed that Schundliteratur had dire effects on morality and crime.<sup>427</sup> Much research had been done to trace the link between mass culture and crime. Actual evidence for this link had not been found, but this mattered little. The factuality of such theories was just as irrelevant as the truth concerning the rise in juvenile crime. Mass culture had become an easy scapegoat for all kinds of social change and anxiety that were much more difficult to pin down. More interesting than the evidence were the explanations that researchers gave of such claims.

The causes and the effects of Schundliteratur were complicated. They lay on the complex balance between constitution and social environment (*Anlage* and *Milieu*), a discussion that mirrored the competing theories on inborn and acquired homosexuality that were being discussed during the same period. The jurist and criminalist Albert Hellwig (1880-1950) was an expert on both Schundliteratur and juvenile crime.<sup>428</sup> The data he collected could never support the claim that youth criminality was inherently related to reading *Schund*. It meant little that convicted juvenile delinquents confessed that they had read Nick-Carter stories, or that they had inspired them. One could not blame the publishers of such literature for these crimes just as one could not “make chocolate or cigarette companies responsible for the petty theft that some youths would

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<sup>427</sup> Paul Regner, “Das Problem der Schundliteratur,” *Jugendwohl* 16, no. 1 (Januar-Februar 1927): 6.

<sup>428</sup> Hellwig conducted research on the topic for over twenty years. I have examined the writings that directly address juvenile crime and Schundliteratur. Albert Hellwig, *Jugendschutz gegen Schundliteratur. Gesetz zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schund- und Schmutzschriften vom 18. Dezember 1926. Ausführlich erläutert, mit einer eingehenden Einführung in die gesetzgeberischen Probleme der Schundliteraturbekämpfung versehen, unter Abdruck der Ausführungsbestimmungen und Beifügung eines Sachverzeichnisses* (Berlin: Georg Stilke, 1927), 58; Albert Hellwig, “Zur Psychologie der Schundliteratur” (1919) *Büchereifragen*, ed. Erwin Ackerknecht (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1926), 143-8.

commit to purchase those products” Hellwig claimed<sup>429</sup> Whether youths were biologically and psychologically “normal” was less crucial to understand the causes of juvenile crime than a youth’s upbringing, social background, or history of abuse.<sup>430</sup> Hellwig, like many criminalists at the time, was leaning more toward theories that paid more attention to social setting than the earlier ideas, such as Cesare Lombroso’s, that found the cause for criminality always in biological factors, theories in which the criminal was always born a criminal.<sup>431</sup> Even though criminologists were still more inclined to take into account biological factors, such as congenital psychopathy, they were starting to agree that social conditions played a key role in the psychological development of youth.<sup>432</sup> Youths were physically and psychologically vulnerable and easily suggestible. The “unhealthy stimulation of the imagination” could lead to ethical misconceptions, provocation, or imitation.<sup>433</sup> Under this light, Schundliteratur was just one of the many factors that could influence the appropriate development of youths.

Schundliteratur had not only the potential to lead youths to commit crimes; it could also affect their appropriate sexual development. Not all adolescents were potential criminals, but most of them were becoming sexual beings. Moral entrepreneurs worried about Schundliteratur due to mass culture’s alleged power to undermine sexual self-control. Schundliteratur could

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<sup>429</sup> Hellwig, *Jugendschutz*, 60.

<sup>430</sup> Hellwig, *Jugendschutz*, 72.

<sup>431</sup> According to Richard Wetzell, “Lombroso concluded that the criminal was ‘an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals.’” Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal*, 39.

<sup>432</sup> Adalbert Gregor und Else Voigtländer, *Die Verwahrlosung, ihre klinisch-psychologische Bewertung und ihre Bekämpfung* (Berlin: Karger, 1928); Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal*, 168-174.

<sup>433</sup> Hellwig, *Jugendschutz*, 74.

“transform the reader into a cue ball of his erotic yearning.”<sup>434</sup> Youths, according to the Swiss librarian and *Schundkämpfer* Albert Müller, were “hungry for excitement” (*Reizhungrig*) and Schundliteratur was the best nourishment for their sexual appetite.<sup>435</sup> He believed it to be “a crime against morality and a pacesetter of prostitution.”<sup>436</sup> The effects of this writings upon sexuality worried him as much as crime did.

Schundliteratur had the power to appeal to the most fundamental urges present during adolescence, such as the desire for adventure, but psychologists and pedagogues agreed that only one instinct seized the totality of the youthful psyche: the sexual instinct.<sup>437</sup> It followed that if the “sexual instinct” was somewhat the strongest, especially during youth, Schundliteratur must affect it. For the pedagogue Wilhelm Fronemann civilization demanded “the rationalization of instincts.” He thought that teachers ought to “direct [the sexual instinct] to a healthy path,” which, of course, implied monogamous heterosexuality.<sup>438</sup> Nevertheless, Fronemann accepted that the sexual instinct was untamed at first and that sublimation—which he described as the development of aesthetic appreciation or the so-called “beauty instinct”—was necessary for the existence of civilization. Literature played a key role in forming that instinct and securing it. Schundliteratur diverted attention from the education of the senses. Since it was unaesthetic, it had to be somehow sexual. As such, it threatened the development of proper sexuality and civilization.

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<sup>434</sup> Benfer, *Kampf dem schlechten durch das gute Buch*, 10.

<sup>435</sup> Albert Müller, *Jugend und Schmutzliteratur* (Separatausdruck aus “Monatrosen” Nr. 12, August, 1930), 2.

<sup>436</sup> Albert Müller, *Die Schmutzliteratur und ihre Bekämpfung* (Separatausdruck aus “Vaterland” 1930, Nr. 44 u. 50), 3.

<sup>437</sup> Fronemann, 147.

<sup>438</sup> Fronemann, 16-7.

Schundliteratur represented a sexual threat to youths. As the decade unfolded moral entrepreneurs increasingly turned their attention from juvenile crime to juvenile sex. Around 1928, the *Borromäusverein*, an organization responsible for making sure German media complied with Catholic tenets, started to focus more and more on the “downright sexual Schundliteratur that represents a danger for the destiny of our nation in its blunt perversity.”<sup>439</sup> The so-called “*Ehe-Schriften*,” magazines on companionate marriage and sexual reform as well as magazines on naturism, sports, fashion, and homosexuality, Dr. Calmes argued, were obsessed with displaying the naked body and printing questionable personal ads, which made these publications particularly dangerous. “Girls between 17 and 21, and from so-called better classes, prefer [reading] homosexual and lesbian magazines.”<sup>440</sup> And these publications had become popular even in the country. Defying class expectations, sexual fantasies were not more common among proletarian youths, despite the researchers’ efforts to ignore overt sexual instances when analyzing bourgeois adolescents.<sup>441</sup>

For the moral entrepreneur Erich Zacharias, sexuality was omnipresent in modern life. Youths could find sex in the classroom through sexual education as well as in literature, art, theater, and cinema. All this was made worse by working-class youth’s social milieu:

“The monstrous housing shortage allows the child to witness its parent’s intimate life...; the path to school leads to bookstores that display magazines with sexual contents in shameless business interests; advertisements for movies and theater plays are often

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<sup>439</sup> “Rundschau: Sonderberatung des Borromäusvereins über Schundkampf,” *Volkswohl* 17, no. 5 (Sept-Oktober, 1928): 232-3. See also: Friedrich Radszuweit, “Für Anstand und Sitte,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 8. Jg. Nr. 7 (Juli 1930).

<sup>440</sup> Ibid.

<sup>441</sup> Jung, 35-8.

designed to arouse adolescents sexually. At school the sexual question is discussed more than ever before...; [Finally] when the child returns home he finds no supervision because the mother is forced to go to work.”<sup>442</sup>

As if this was not enough, Zacharias thought of youthful masturbation as an epidemic comparable to venereal disease and described sex reformers Magnus Hirschfeld as the “corrupter of German children’s souls.” This was a society in which “boys are seduced by other boys, or by homosexual men,” (of which he estimated there were over ten thousand in Hamburg alone), and, of course, by the magazines that “promote homosexuality.”<sup>443</sup>

Modern life’s disruption of traditional family structures and the commercialization of sex could lead the downfall of civilization. Moral entrepreneurs demanded rapid action. Zacharias envisioned a few measures to curb these trends: youths needed sexual education, but not too early, otherwise their proper sexual development could be compromised; they needed more psychological counseling, that is, the state’s stronger role in their psychological development; the housing shortage had to be solved once and for all, so children and youths could grow up in a healthy environment; and, finally, Germany needed a law against Schundliteratur.<sup>444</sup> Sexual “perversion” had become not only ubiquitous and accessible to youths. It had become a quite successful product. Psychologists agreed that the overstimulation of the sexual instinct would result in its malfunction. Moral entrepreneurs, prompted by the links between Schundliteratur and deviant sexuality, protested that the government must do something to contain its calamitous influence on Germany’s youth.

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<sup>442</sup> Erich Zacharias, *Die sexuelle Gefährdung unserer Jugend* (Halle-Saale: Buchdruckerei des Waisenhauses, 1929), 3.

<sup>443</sup> Zacharias, 22.

<sup>444</sup> Zacharias, 25-32.



### Conclusion

The anxieties surrounding Schundliteratur went beyond class tensions and juvenile crime: sexual anxiety lay at its core. Schundliteratur, like the homosexual, acted as a “seducer” that could threaten the gender and sexual foundations of the nation. The psychological and sexual fluidity of adolescence represented a vulnerability that had the potential to undermine society. For that reason, myriad organizations dedicated to youth welfare together with the morality crusaders demanded that the Interior Ministry do something to protect youths against the harm that Schundliteratur—as a catch-all-phrase for different form of mass culture—was causing to them.<sup>445</sup> Their cries would be eventually heard.

Before we explore those reactions we should consider three important elements that will help us understand—and reinterpret—the legislative response against Schundliteratur. First, the anxiety surrounding Schundliteratur was not about bourgeois literary taste or about proper education. Rather, this moral panic encompassed a series of anxieties about social change, class tensions, a perceived rise in juvenile delinquency, and about gender and sexual roles. Second, Schundliteratur produced so much sexual anxiety because psychologists and psychiatrists had been describing adolescence as a psychologically critical age of transition, and, more importantly, as a period of “sexual undifferentiation” and vulnerability. Finally, these anxieties centered on youths because they embodied the future of the nation. Teachers, youth leaders, conservative commentators, and psychologists contributed to the construction of youths as innocent and vulnerable members of society that had to be protected against all possible threats. No one could deny that youths ought to be protected and because the future of the nation was contingent on a heterosexual logic that demanded the enforcement of normative sexual norms.

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<sup>445</sup> “Rundschau: Film und Jugendgefährdung,” *Volkswohl* 17, no. 3 (Mai-Juni 1928): 131.

Once the sexual ambiguity and vulnerability of youth had been discovered and acknowledged, it could by no means be left unrestrained. Regulating the access of youths to mass culture and, in particular, to the homosexual press, could perhaps achieve that end. It would eventually succeed in containing the “homosexual wave,” as well.

## Chapter 5:

### **Under the Counter, Into the Closet: The Law for the Protection of Youth Against Harmful Literature and the Institutionalization of Homophobia**

On July 27, 1932, Berlin police officers paid a visit to the kiosk of Fräulein Inge Pfeiffer in the Meyerheimstraße 12, located in the working-class district of Prenzlauer Tor. The only wrong that Pfeiffer had done was selling naturist magazines such as *Die neue Zeit*, *Figaro*, or *Licht-Land*, and several magazines about homosexuality. Teachers, pedagogues, and the members of morality organizations believed, like many conservative legislators, that these popular publications could harm public morals, especially those of youth. According to normal procedure, the police would request Fräulein Pfeiffer to hide such magazines under the counter if they had been included in the official Schundliteratur list. On September 7th of the same year, the police visited another kiosk at the busy central corner of Behrenstraße and Friedrichstraße. The police officer found questionable magazines there, as well. But this time everything was fine: “the naked body could not be seen”<sup>446</sup> Youth-endangering magazines had been hidden under the counter, just like it was required.

Such visits had indeed become common since the enactment of the 1926 Law for the Protection of Youth against Harmful Literature.<sup>447</sup> The fight against Schundliteratur had started earlier at the grassroots level. Self-help groups, which included religious, women’s, teacher’s and youth associations that advocated morality (the so-called *Sittlichkeitsvereine*) had been up in arms about the rise of popular literature since the turn of the century. They had organized a crusade against Schundliteratur by publishing lists of forbidden works, by recommending

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<sup>446</sup> Landesarchiv Berlin, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030 Nr. 16964.

<sup>447</sup> The law was called *Gesetz zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schund- und Schmutzschriften*, thereafter Schundliteratur Law.

appropriate ones, by boycotting bookstores, by denouncing sellers, and even by organizing major book burnings.

Despite all these efforts, the official battle against Schundliteratur took place in the German parliament. On December 3, 1926—and after years of debate and lobbying efforts—the Reichstag approved this law intended to end the spread of Schundliteratur once and for all. From now on, and when considered Schundliteratur, serial novels (*Lieferungsromane*), books, sensationalist newspapers, and magazines with more or less overt sexual content had to be removed from public sale in street or train station kiosks, such as that of Fräulein Pfeiffer. The law did not censor, but rather removed these alleged harmful publications from the sight of youths and the larger public.

While they could not forbid such publications, moral entrepreneurs wanted them to be at least invisible. Herman Popert, one of the leaders of the anti-Schund movement, believed that “everything that is visible has to be cleaned, especially window displays, which [...] are the main locations where youths are poisoned with Schundliteratur.”<sup>448</sup> Popert understood that visibility was key to modern consumer culture and that out of sight was hopefully out of mind. The law made Schundliteratur available only to adults over eighteen years of age. Adults interested in publications considered Schundliteratur would have to come out and ask for them, thus putting themselves at the risk of being judged by the seller and the passerby.

No examination of moral panics is complete without a consideration of legislation and law enforcement. If the previous chapter showed how the moral panic around Schundliteratur was created, this chapter looks at how moral entrepreneurs used it to advance their political goals. The social movement against Schundliteratur that had emerged in the years before the

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<sup>448</sup> Hermann M. Popert, *Hamburg und der Schundkampf* (Hamburg: Verlag der Deutschen Dichter-Gedächtnis-Stiftung, 1926), 30.

Weimar Republic and gained strength during that decade made the passage of legislative measures possible. This chapter moves from the earlier moral panic to moral regulation—to the state’s official response. The moral panic about youths and mass culture was politically fruitful because it capitalized on a universalized understanding of youths as vulnerable members of society.<sup>449</sup> Moral panics could be solved with different responses. They could be conservative and authoritarian (in terms of morality campaigns and legislation); liberal (in terms of social reform); and radical (in terms of radical change in social and moral values).<sup>450</sup> In this particular case, conservative measures dominated social intervention in the lives of youths. Moral entrepreneurs acted in the name of social welfare and the protection of society’s “vulnerable” members (women, the uneducated, the poor, children, and, in these particular case, youths)—those who were allegedly not able to make decisions on their own due to their ignorance, immaturity, or instability.<sup>451</sup> The adolescent’s susceptibility to homosexual seduction also justified protective measures, including the Schundliteratur law. Ultimately, both the political left and right agreed that something had to be done in order to protect youth from the social and moral decay they perceived as inherent of the Republic, even though they may have disagreed on the causes of and the solutions for such a problem.

A nation such as Germany during the Weimar Republic, struggling with the right balance of freedom and repression, devised repressive mechanisms while maintaining the appearance of democracy. The initial opposition to this law was grounded in the belief that it was contrary to

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<sup>449</sup> Moral panics thus put forward an “ideological agenda.” Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 82.

<sup>450</sup> Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*, 14.

<sup>451</sup> Gary D. Stark, *Banned in Berlin: Literary Censorship in Imperial Germany 1871-1918* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), xii.

freedom and to democratic ideals. Intellectuals, writers, and artists found this law to be the expression of a paternalistic state that wanted to dictate what people should create and read. They were concerned with maintaining their position in a rapidly changing publishing market and tried to distance true “literature” from mass-produced writings. Furthermore, they were prejudiced against the working class and were not immune to homophobia. To appease and to protect the bourgeois creative class, legislators envisioned a law that ensured objectivity: the publications to be included in the Schundliteratur list would be discussed by a group of “experts” and would be given unbiased scrutiny. The members of the Vetting Offices thus pretended to ground their decisions with objective evidence and claimed to adhere to the democratic values of freedom of expression.

Scholars have examined the Schundliteratur Law in the particular context of freedom of expression in art and literature.<sup>452</sup> Traditionally, censorship has been explained as an effort to

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<sup>452</sup> The scholarship has paid abundant and well-deserved attention to this aspect of censorship. This chapter, in contrast, extends the reach and significance of censorship beyond the traditional framework of the control of morals, taste, and the freedom of cultural production or beyond Marxist analysis that foregrounds class conflict and material production. See: Kaspar Maase’s *Die Kinder der Massenkultur* is a comprehensive study of Schundliteratur and youth culture during the German Empire. Maase’s analysis ends before 1918, though. (K. Maase, *Die Kinder der Massenkultur: Kontroversen um Schmutz und Schund seit dem Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2012).) For the Weimar Republic: Ute Dettmar, “Der Kampf gegen ‘Schmutz und Schund,’” *Die Kinder- und Jugendliteratur in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik*, Vol. 2, ed. Norbert Hopster (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2012), 565-586; Jens Dobler, “Zensur von Büchern und Zeitschriften mit homosexueller Thematik in der Weimarer Republik,” *Invertito* 2 (2000): 85-104; Georg Jäger, “Der Kampf gegen Schmutz und Schund: die Reaktion der Gebildeten auf die Unterhaltungsindustrie,” *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 31 (1988): 163-192; Klaus Petersen, “The Harmful Publications (Young Persons) Act of 1926. Literary Censorship and the Politics of Morality in the Weimar Republic,” *German Studies Review* 15, no. 3 (1992): 505-23; Klaus Petersen, *Zensur in der Weimarer Republik* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1995); Gideon Reuveni, *Reading Germany: Literature and Consumer Culture Before 1933* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 249-266; Luke Springman, “Poisoned Hearts, Diseased Minds, and American Pimps: The Language of Censorship in the Schund- und Schmutz Debates,” *The German Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (Autumn, 1995): 408-29; Margaret F. Stieg, “The 1926 German

“influence the arts or the media, with the intent of suppressing opinions or information” or as an attempt to shape literary taste and morals in a bourgeois fashion.<sup>453</sup> Aesthetic ideals were at the core of German bourgeois nationalism and the idea of Germany as a *Kultur* nation.<sup>454</sup> In contrast, this chapter will analyze the making of the Schundliteratur Law, its intent, its implementation, and its effects. It will show how the state used youth as a justification for measures aiming to curtail freedom of expression and to uphold morality, even more so than to protect bourgeois taste. Moral panics legitimized the control of mass culture and enforced sexual norms.<sup>455</sup> Moral legislation gave this campaign its institutional contours.

The Schundliteratur law was so productive precisely because it was so vague. According to Luke Springman, it provided an institutional platform “for expressing moral indignation and collective anxieties of conservative, middle-class Germany.”<sup>456</sup> Historians agree that protecting youths from the threat of harmful texts aimed to redress a perceived loss of national identity,

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Law to Protect Youth Against Filth and Dirt: Moral Protectionism in a Democracy,” *Central European History* 23, no. 1 (March 1993): 22-56.

<sup>453</sup> Peter Jelavich, “Paradoxes of Censorship in Modern Germany,” *Enlightenment, Passion, Modernity: Historical Essays in European Thought and Culture*, eds. Mark S. Micale, Robert L. Dietle, and Peter Gay (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000): 266. Pierre Bourdieu has explained how taste functions as a marker of class and how “art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences.” See: Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 7.

<sup>454</sup> Corey Ross, *Media and the Making of Modern Germany: Mass Communications, Society, and Politics from the Empire to the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 54. Censorship contributed to the development and enforcement of norms. Scholars, however, have tended to pay attention to the elite’s perspective to understand these changes. R. J. V. Lenman, like many others, situates these debates within the dichotomy of a progressive avant-garde versus cultural conservatives, which posits the former as a critique of the status quo. The scope of censorship, however, has to be broadened and must include popular cultural forms as well. See: R. J. V. Lenman, “Art, Society, and the Law in Wilhelmine Germany: the Lex Heinze,” *Oxford German Studies* 8 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973): 112-3.

<sup>455</sup> Goode and Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics*, 82.

<sup>456</sup> Springman: 408.

social decay, the crisis of the family and a falling birthrate, the rise in crime and social unrest, as well as the increasing power of mass media and consumerism. However, the effects of the law on the regulation of homosexuality have been left largely unexplored. The proponents of this law aimed to protect “vulnerable” youths from “harmful” literature. Indirectly the law promoted the regulation of sexual behavior. How could the nation’s fundamental institution—the family—be reinforced if youths had access to magazines and books informing them about abortion, companionate marriage, and, worst of all, homosexuality?

The law’s ambiguity allowed turning initial concerns about youths’ protection and their cultural and moral edification into a venue for homophobia. Lawmakers formulated the Schundliteratur Law with the future of the nation in mind.<sup>457</sup> Notions of youth were central to the reproduction of the nation’s citizenry as well as its racial, cultural, social, and economic values. These values were contingent on heterosexuality for their existence. The law was supposed to protect youths from a vaguely defined threat to their bodies and souls. Legislators perceived this threat to come from the social and moral disease that urbanization, industrialization, mass culture, and the post-war “inversion wave” had brought about. Homosexuality had indeed become one of the most visible symptoms of this moral disease and, as a consequence, homosexual publications composed a significant part of all works affected by the law.<sup>458</sup> The law operated within discursive heterosexual assumptions. However, it did not become an avenue for

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<sup>457</sup> After six years of a government formed by a “Great Coalition” composed of Social Democrats, the Catholic Centrum, and the German Democratic Party, SPD, Z, DDP). From January 1925 to June 1929 the government was composed by a coalition between the moderate Centrum and DDP, the more conservative DVP, and the national-conservative, right-wing German National People’s Party (DNVP).

<sup>458</sup> Despite this fact, only Jens Dobler has paid attention to homosexual publications. However, he argues that the Schundliteratur Law did not particularly target homosexual publications. Dobler, “Zensur.”



homophobia until Vetting Offices were charged with the task of evaluating homosexual publications. Examining this law, therefore, allows us to tease out how Weimar state intervention implied the protection of youth but also the repression of homosexuality.<sup>459</sup> The law fostered homosexual invisibility and contributed to the production of the homosexual “closet.”<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> When examining the law’s effects on non-normative gender and sexuality, I follow Eve Sedgwick’s advice that “an understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition.” Thus, I believe that we cannot understand either the history of homosexuality during the Weimar Republic or the Republic itself if we do not examine this dichotomy in a critical way. This implies looking at the locations in which the Weimar Republic appears to be wrestling between freedom and repression. See: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 1.

<sup>460</sup> In this chapter I use “under the counter” and “into the closet” as a rhetorical device. I do this at the risk of sounding ahistorical because I am confident about the analytical power of this concept and of its potential to shed light on larger phenomena about the formation of homosexual subjectivity in the twentieth century beyond this particular historical and geographical context. The word “closet” could be easily substituted by the word “private.” For example, we could argue that the Schundliteratur Law helped produce the notion of homosexual privacy, hence of a restrained homosexual public sphere. The law after all only aimed to keep certain sexual identities and practices private and hence beyond the reach of children and youths. Yet the concept of “the closet” also stresses the damage that this distinction produced. It highlights that the “private” is not always necessarily the result of free choices. The metaphor of “the closet” suggests that privacy can be enforced and demands a certain degree of violence—be it discursive, for example through the erasure of certain practices or ways of beings, or more literal. Ultimately, I argue that “the closet” is grounded in material and institutional realities. “The closet” could not preclude “homosexuality,” understood as a social, political, and cultural identity. Rather, this identity was produced along, within, and against “the closet.” On the one hand, the discourse on youthful vulnerability was used to legitimize the need of “the closet.” On the other hand, the closet allowed for a new narrative of “coming out,” of visibility, dissidence, and resistance. I draw particularly from Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* and from Steven Seidman, *Beyond the Closet: The Transformation of Gay and Lesbian Life* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 25-32. Throughout this chapter I agree with Seidman that “[t]he making of a culture of homosexual pollution is basic to the creation of the closet. Enforcing the exclusion of homosexuals from public life also involves aggressive institutional repressions. Homosexuals are suppressed by means of laws, policing practices, civic disenfranchisement, and harassment and violence. The state has been a driving force in the making of the closet. To the extent that heterosexual privilege is enforced by keeping homosexuals silent and invisible, we can speak of a condition of heterosexual domination” (30). Of course, I am also very aware of the limitations of “the closet” as an epistemology based on the narratives of white European elite men

*Censorship in the Kaiserreich and the Weimar Republic*

The Schundliteratur Law had its predecessors. Before it could be approved in the Reichstag, different legal measures had been used to curb the threat of “harmful” publications to youths. Commercial law had been used as a form of censorship. Article 56 of the Commercial Code (*Gewerbeordnung*) regulated the public sale of printed work and images that could offend religious sensibilities. However, the infamous 1900 *Lex Heinze* (Paragraph 184 of the Criminal Code) was the most controversial censorship law. Named after Gotthilf Heinze, a Berlin pimp, and his scandalous murder trial in the 1880s, this law set the tone for the debates on Schundliteratur. The *Lex Heinze* regulated “immorality” (*Unisttlichkeit*) in the arts and made procuring a criminal offense. As a morality law, it was used to determine whether texts and images were decent or indecent. The law expanded the definition of obscenity to the point that the advertisement and the public display of contraceptives were considered obscene.<sup>461</sup> More important for us, the law contributed to the differentiation between youth and adulthood. It did so by prohibiting the sale of “indecent materials” to people under sixteen years of age and by raising the age of consent for girls from sixteen to eighteen years.<sup>462</sup> Adults were therefore

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(Sedgwick), and of the difficulties it represents for class and race analysis. See: Marlon B. Ross, “Beyond the Closet as a Raceless Paradigm,” *Black Queer Studies*, eds. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 161-89.

<sup>461</sup> Lenman, 87. The supporters of the *Lex Heinze* were avid anti-modernists. Nineteenth-century christian aestheticians, for example, stressed the relationship between aesthetics, ethics, and religion and considered that art “had a moral duty not to depict certain evil realities.” As a result, scholars have examined this law as a threat to the freedom in the arts. They have interiorized the discourse of modernist artists who saw in these legal measures an attack against their freedom to create. See: Gary D. Stark, “Pornography, Society, and the Law in Imperial Germany,” *Central European History* 14, no. 3 (1981): 200-229: 204. Popular literature, magazines, and, needless to say, homosexual publications have not been described in such political and aestheticizing terms and, therefore, had been left unexamined, even though censorship laws commonly targeted popular literature.

<sup>462</sup> Lenman, 110.

defined as those whose sexual intercourse was sanctioned by the state. At the same time, the law implicitly constructed “youth” as a sexually vulnerable category.

For the most part the law was about the censorship of pornography, the most blatant form of immorality. The censorship of pornography was closely related to the expansion of sexual discourse during the Victorian era, a time that can be characterized as highly successful in the production of the public and the private spheres, the medicalization and pathologization of sexual “anomalies,” and the production of the innocent child and youth and the virtuous woman.<sup>463</sup> The fact that pornography and other “immoral” publications were increasingly available and affordable made them especially dangerous. The law was a reaction to the rise in mass consumer culture and the threat it represented to bourgeois cultural hegemony. It was about certain “mechanically reproduced works [that] were banned due their appeal to a certain segment of society who could not interpret them within a longstanding tradition, or were thought likely to produce violence as a reaction to the works.”<sup>464</sup> This was not uniquely a German phenomenon; other western nations were grappling with this problem. In 1910, Germany and fourteen other nations signed an international treaty against pornography. Such “anti-vice” measures resulted in the institutionalization of censorship. In 1910 Germany established the Main Office for the Abatement of Obscene Images and Publications (*Zentralstelle für die Bekämpfung Unzüchtiger*

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<sup>463</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990).

<sup>464</sup> Shayana Kadidal, “Obscenity in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 44, no 2 (Spring 1996): 353-385: 373; and Stark, “Pornography, Society, and the Law in Imperial Germany,” 227.

*Bilder und Schriften*), which would become the model for the Vetting Offices regulating Schundliteratur.<sup>465</sup>

“Anti-vice” measures were closely related to worries about the quality of the nation’s racial stock. The preoccupation with the adequate upbringing of children and youth and their protection, as well as the recognition that they constituted the human capital of the nation, gained much support during and after the First World War. Concerns about the protection of youth from the dangers of mass culture had been discussed since the early days of the Weimar- Republic. This concern was generalized and it would be unfair to assert that only religious conservatives and devout monarchists (the Center Party or the German National People’s Party) were concerned with the situation of children, youth, and the family during the 1920s. On the contrary, every single party recognized that youth and the future of the nation were at stake. Even the feminist and democrat Gertrud Bäumer encouraged women to rediscover their roles as mothers. She was not alone in believing that the family was in crisis.<sup>466</sup>

Censorship could indirectly serve such ends. However, censorship was no longer an option during the Weimar Republic. The Republic promoted liberal democratic values and did not enact many laws aimed at controlling public opinion. Article 118 of the Weimar Constitution gave all Germans freedom of speech in word, print, and image. Workarounds had to be envisioned. These could found in youth protection provisions. According to Article 122 of the Constitution “youth has to be protected from exploitation as well as from moral, spiritual and

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<sup>465</sup> Gary D. Stark, “Pornography, Society, and the Law in Imperial Germany,” 218.

<sup>466</sup> Gertrud Bäumer, *Die Frau in der Krisis der Kultur* (Berlin: F. A. Herbig, 1926).

corporal depravity.”<sup>467</sup> The constitution limited freedom if it involved protecting youths. They embodied the innocence that legitimized action.

The Weimar Constitution protected political and religious freedom, and politicians fought hard to ensure that this happened. In contrast, it left youth protection open to interpretation. Youth itself was a fluid category which the state went to great lengths to define. The Schundliteratur Law was not the first instance of limiting free speech in the name of youth protection during the Weimar Republic—film censorship had been introduced in 1920 with that purpose.<sup>468</sup> Despite this precedent, drafting the law did not prove to be an easy matter. Some liberal critics tried to undermine the law proposal from a legal angle. The legal scholar Paul Posener contended that the law was imprecise in its definition of “youth.” The law mentioned “adolescents,” “youths under eighteen years of age,” “youth in general,” “children,” and “youth.” Who exactly was being protected? Posener believed that this ambiguity was intentional, since the law used “youth” as an excuse to prevent adults from accessing certain information.<sup>469</sup> Karl Schumann, in a 1929 dissertation on the history and the legality of the law, argued that it violated constitutional amendments. In his opinion this law constituted full-scale censorship. As a consequence, the passage of the law would have required changes to the constitution, which required two thirds of all the votes in the Reichstag, something that a divided parliament could

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<sup>467</sup> *Die Verfassung des deutschen Reiches vom 11. August 1919*, ed. Friedrich Giese (Berlin: Heymann, 1919).

<sup>468</sup> On film censorship, see Introduction: footnote 27.

<sup>469</sup> Paul Posener, “Ist ein Gesetz zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schund- und Schmutzliteratur notwendig?” *Gegen den Entwurf des Gesetzes zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schmutz und Schund*. Herausgegeben im Auftrage der Gemeinschaft kultureller Buchhändler zu Berlin von Verlagsbuchhändler Bruno Pukas und Hanns Horst Aris (Berlin, 1926).

have never achieved.<sup>470</sup> Elsa Matz, a nationalist-liberal pedagogue and politician, and Ernst Seeger, the chairman of the film censorship office, declared that the law did not constitute censorship as it did not practice *pre-censorship* (*Vorzensur*), the expurgation of texts before publication, and because the law guaranteed freedom of political and religious expression.<sup>471</sup> The law was interpreted as a measure to deal with the spread of youth waywardness. Schundliteratur was considered to be a key focus of infection. Moral entrepreneurs and conservative politicians were determined to follow through.

### Drafting the Law

Conservative politicians supported the Schundliteratur Law as a measure to foster national regeneration after the war. Nevertheless, irreconcilable political differences clouded the gravity of the war's trauma as moral justification. This law became one more arena on which the right and the left clashed. Due to ideological differences, getting the law to the floor of the Reichstag took time. In 1922 the Catholic Center Party (*Zentrum*) presented a draft bill that was rejected by the parliament. In 1924 the center-right liberal Minister of the Interior, Martin Schiele (German People's Party, *Deutsche Volkspartei*) presented a new draft, this time with the support of several civic, youth, and grassroots organizations. Public support was critical to the advancement of the law and the Reich's Chancellery had recognized since the early years of the Republic that the battle against Schundliteratur had become a "popular movement," especially

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<sup>470</sup> Karl Schumann, *Das Gesetz zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schund- und Schmutzschriften vom 18. 12. 1926. Eine staatsrechtliche Betrachtung*. Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde bei der Juristischen Fakultät der Universität Leipzig (Borna-Leipzig: Universitätsverlag von Robert Noske, 1929), 9.

<sup>471</sup> Cited in Schumann, 13.

among teachers, pastors, educators, and youth welfare providers.<sup>472</sup> The parliament amended the draft bill and sent it back to the Reichstag's Education Committee, whose chairman was the nationalist-conservative representative (and long-time friend and supporter of Karl Brunner) Reinhard Mumm (German National People's Party, *Deutschnationale Volkspartei*).<sup>473</sup> The draft bill was finally put to vote on November 15, 1926, one year after the initial hearing. In less than a month and after six long and exhausting debates in parliament, the bill passed on December 3, 1926.

The debates about the Schundliteratur illustrate the deeply divided political mood of the time. Even though the law was about the protection of youth, a topic that counted virtually with universal support, those on the left argued that discussing the national budget was a more pressing issue than a petty and potentially unconstitutional law. Those in the right argued otherwise: "German reconstruction," Georg Schreiber (Center Party) argued, "will not be achieved with the figures in the national budget. It demands reconstructing bodies and souls and

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<sup>472</sup> In 1925 several morality organizations gathered to create a stronger and unified force under the People's Community for Good Morals (*Volksgemeinschaft für gute Sitte*) with Emil Abderhalden as its president. The organization's mission was the "promotion of a clean public life:" this implied the collection of questionable materials; collaboration with parliament and state offices to ensure this end; and the strengthening of the public's conscience in terms of moral issues. These groups included: *Dt. Sittlichkeitsverein*; *Ev. Volksbildungsausschuss*; *Kirchl. soz. Frauengruppe*; *Ev. Frauenhilfe*; *Ev. Hauptwohlfahrtsamt*; *Ev. Presseverband*. Not present at this meeting, but also included in the group were the *Verein gegen Alkoholismus*; *Kirchl. sozialer Bund*. Other lobbying groups not included in the People's Community for Good Morals were the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksgesundung*; *Zentralbildungsausschuß der kath. Verbände*; *Deutsche Dichter-Gedächtnis-Stiftung*; *Verband Deutscher Evangelischer Lehrer- und Lehrerinnen-Vereine*. Different Protestant groups gathered under the Protestant Central Office Against Schund und Schmutz (*Evangelische Hauptstelle gegen Schund und Schmutz*). See: *Volksgemeinschaft für gute Sitte* (Berlin) an Mumm. *Vertrauliche Besprechung bei D.A.W. Schreiber*. Berlin-Steglitz, 26. Feb. 1925. BArch N/2203/519; BArch R 43 I/248, p. 31-34.

<sup>473</sup> Mumm an Prof. Brunner. 19. November 1921. BArch N/2203/506, p. 94; Bernhard Schulze, *Das Gesetz zur Bewhrung der Jugend vor Schund- und Schmutzschriften* (Rudolfstadt: Verlag Gesundes Leben, 1927), 10-11.

strengthening a moral, noble, and healthy youth.”<sup>474</sup> This language would permeate through the debates and indicates how the Schundliteratur law, as part of a comprehensive effort on the protection of youth, was grounded in the discourse of the First World War “lost generation.”

The preoccupation with youths and their protection had much to do with war trauma. Virtually every family in postwar Germany, including those of members of parliament, had been touched by the loss of someone. “This law,” as the Catholic Center Party’s Helene Weber argued, “is neither ‘right’ nor ‘left’; it is a law of the whole nation.”<sup>475</sup> It was thus in the affective terms of national and moral regeneration that the supporters of the law aimed to find consensus and to legitimize it. Despite the gravity of the war discourse, political differences and the need for securing the Republic’s democratic precepts were enforced led to a less rigorous law than conservative lawmakers would have desired.

In a nation coming out of war and afflicted by crisis, the economic impact of the law for both the government and publishers became a major concern. Allocating enough funds to support its enforcement became one of the earliest problems afflicting the Schundliteratur law. Despite the support of the government over the years, supporting this law was not possible in the Republic’s early years of economic instability. The government had no money to cover the expenses that its enforcement would incur.<sup>476</sup> In October 1923, and despite the economic crisis, the minister of savings (*Sparkommissar*) declared that there were no more financial worries

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<sup>474</sup> Georg Schreiber (Zentrum), *Verhandlungen des deutschen Reichstags* (1924/28). 45. Sitzung. 2 April 1925. P. 1330.

<sup>475</sup> Helene Weber (Zentrum), *Verhandlungen des deutschen Reichstags* (1924/28). 239. Sitzung. 26. November 1926. P. 8225.

<sup>476</sup> Der Reichminister der Finanzen an den Herrn Staatssekretär in der Reichskanzlei, Berlin, den 27. Juli 1923. BArch R 43 I/248, p. 39.



regarding this law proposal.<sup>477</sup> The Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Berlin, Düsseldorf, and other German cities as well as the Capital Market Group of German Booksellers supported the law, since they did not expect any economic impact for the businesses they represented and because those not publishing “immoral” publications should have nothing to be afraid of.<sup>478</sup> In the end, the government received enough support from such interest groups to proceed with the law. Protecting German youths had to be done at any price. Whether this was the best way to do so was another issue.

Whereas the law may have made economic sense to lobbies, those whose livelihood depended on the printed word worried about the economic impact that the law would have on them. They feared that the Schundliteratur Law would hit hard on authors, publishers, and sellers. Reducing the visibility and availability of a book or a magazine would have a negative impact on its sales. Hans Horst Aris, representing a small group of Berlin publishers, argued that the law would put publishers at the mercy of legislators and what he considered to be an “arbitrary process” of evaluation. Why would publishers want to print a book if they were running the risk that it could be included in the Schundliteratur list, something that would considerably diminish the possibilities for profit?<sup>479</sup> The Association of German Book and Magazine Publishers were concerned that the law would disproportionately affect publications

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<sup>477</sup> Der Reichsminister der Finanzen and Herrn Staatssekretär in der Reichskanzlei, Berlin 27. Oktober 1923. BArch R 43 I/248, p. 45.

<sup>478</sup> BArch R/11/380, 172-3; 180-3; Mumm an Herrn Roeder, Vorsitzender des Börsenvereins Deutscher Buchhändler. 23. Juni 1926. BArch N/2203/517, p. 51.

<sup>479</sup> Hans Horst Aris, “Der Gesetzentwurf und der Buchhandel,” *Gegen den Entwurf des Gesetzes zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schmutz und Schund*, eds. Hanns Horst Aris und Bruno Pukas (Berlin: Herausgegeben im Auftrage der Gemeinschaft kultureller Buchhändler zu Berlin, 1926), 3.

for adult audiences and demanded that only those publications that really represented a threat to youths be taken out of circulation.<sup>480</sup>

Artists, writers, and many representatives of the book and art trade opposed the law from the beginning and condemned its attack on intellectual freedom.<sup>481</sup> Albert Einstein, for instance, argued that “[t]here is a certain literature which truly harms youths. But the harm that this law brings about seems to be insufferable. Paternalism has weaknesses; stultification is its premise and its consequence.”<sup>482</sup> Intellectuals recognized that a paternalistic law that restricted their freedom to create and was contrary to the democratic values that the Republic represented. Gerhard Hauptmann, Siegfried Jacobsohn, Thomas Mann, Walter von Molo, or Paul Oestreich, among others, also expressed their voices against the proposal in similar terms. In a letter to Walter von Molo, Hauptmann stated that the law “is the greatest threat to the intellectual freedom that I have experience during my long life. If it is approved, the so-called belles-lettres and their creators will surrender to the capriciousness of literary ignorance.”<sup>483</sup> While these intellectuals still believed that “certain literature” could harm youths, they worried that the law would affect their own creativity and livelihood.

Examining the language used in the parliamentary debates on the Schundliteratur Law shows how both the left and the right understood the proper upbringing of youths as central to the nation’s future. This pessimistic language often referred to crisis and civilizational collapse.

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<sup>480</sup> Central-Verein Deutscher Buch- und Zeitschriftenhändler an den 12. Ausschuß des Reichstags (Ausschuß für Bildungswesen). 7. Februar 1926. BArch N/2203/517, p. 17.

<sup>481</sup> “Der Minister des Innern. Berlin, den 5. November 1926. Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schund- und Schmutzschriften.” BArch R 43 I/248, p. 75; „Der Staatssekretär in der Reichskanzlei an den Herrn Reichminister des Innern. Berlin, den 4. August 1923.” BArch R 43 I/248, p. 42.

<sup>482</sup> Cited in *Gegen den Entwurf des Gesetzes zur Bewahrung der Jugend*, 14.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

This narrative borrowed from the language of hygiene and demanded an intervention in the youths' bodies and souls through the cultural commodities they consumed. In the words of the member of the German Democratic Party Theodor Heuss, the Schundliteratur Law was "social policy for the soul."<sup>484</sup> The right and democratic parties focused on a nationalistic narrative that expressed concern about the survival of German culture and the German nation. Bavaria's Popular Party, the Center Party, the German Democratic Party, and the German National People's Party, the main supporters of the law, claimed that this was a battle to save "morally healthy" youths. Those on the right of the center claimed that they did not support censorship, or as the Center Party representative George Schreiber put it "Metternich's police state," but rather the law would guarantee the continuation of German culture, the moral protection of youth, and the "regeneration of [Germany's] *Volkskörper*."<sup>485</sup>

While youth waywardness was widely accepted as a fact, the belief that this law was the best way to go about it was contested in parliament.<sup>486</sup> The Social Democratic and Communist Parties did not deny that youths were endangered and that something had to be done to protect them from the threats of modern life.<sup>487</sup> They disagreed with the causes and solutions for these problems and worried that any law limiting freedom of expression—even an apparently mild law such as this one—was an attack on democracy and a direct threat to their political ideals. They

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<sup>484</sup> Theodor Heuß (DDP), *Verhandlungen des deutschen Reichstags* (1924/28). 240. Sitzung. 27. November 1926. S. 8234.

<sup>485</sup> Georg Schreiber (Zentrum), *Verhandlungen des deutschen Reichstags* (1924/28). 45. Sitzung. 2. April 1925. P. 1331.

<sup>486</sup> "Herrn Staatssekretär durch Herrn Ministerialdirektor. Berlin, den 15. November 1926. Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schund- und Schmutzschriften." BArch R 43 I/248, p. 102ff. See also: Petersen, *Zensur*, 61; Petersen, "Harmful": 510-11.

<sup>487</sup> *Verhandlungen des deutschen Reichstags* (1924/28). 239. Sitzung. 26. November 1926. P. 8228-8232.

perceived the possibility of censoring newspapers as a desire for censoring the views of the left. The left was successful in preventing the inclusion of newspapers in the law's language. Despite this small victory, members of the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party insisted that the law was censorship, since it was potentially not only protecting youths, but also limiting the access to alternative sources of information.<sup>488</sup> Their dislike for the law, however, did not imply support for Schundliteratur, which they described as a repulsive byproduct of capitalism that disproportionately afflicted the working class.

Even though conservatives stressed that all youths regardless of class were at risk, those on the left turned the debate into a class war. For the left, the law represented conservatives' insistence in enforcing their values and morals.<sup>489</sup> Social democrats and communists as well as other democratic politicians argued that better living and working conditions would curb the expansion of Schundliteratur because socio-economic and structural inequality was the actual cause of youthful criminality and immorality. Sectors of the liberal press, such as the *Berliner Morgenpost*, agreed with the Social Democrats that the best remedies against Schundliteratur were social and that the main source of youth waywardness was economic: youths needed a good home, daycare centers, youth clubs, playgrounds, and work, "so they can earn money and live respectably, and eat respectably, and dress respectably."<sup>490</sup>

In the end, the Reichstag came to a difficult compromise that was unsatisfying for both sides. On December 3, 1926 and without the support from the left, the Schundliteratur bill passed

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<sup>488</sup> Rudolf Bretischeid (SPD), *Verhandlungen des deutschen Reichstags* (1924/28). 245. Sitzung 3. Dezember 1926). P. 8359-8364.

<sup>489</sup> Edwin Hoernle (KPD), *Verhandlungen des deutschen Reichstags* (1924/28). 241. Sitzung 29 November 1926. P. 8272.

<sup>490</sup> "Kampf gegen Schmutz und Schund! Unsere Vorschläge—und die von Herrn Külz," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 26. Nov. 1926. BArch R/8034/II/6966, p. 33.

by 250 votes to 158 and three abstentions.<sup>491</sup> The final version of the law “prohibited the sale or distribution of Schundliteratur included in the official lists to youths under the age of eighteen, and all levels of government [were held] responsible for removing such materials from public institutions such as libraries and schools.”<sup>492</sup> The law defined who was to be considered a youth and who was to be an adult in terms of whom should have public and open access to information. In addition, the law mandated fines or prison terms for sellers and distributors who did not comply with it. Instead of defining what *Schund- und Schmutzliteratur* were, that is, instead of offering objective criteria for the law’s enforcement, legislators created two Vetting Offices (*Prüfstellen*, VO) in Berlin and Munich, and a Chief Vetting Office (*Oberprüfstelle*, CVO) in Leipzig that were responsible for defining *Schmutz und Schund* on a case-by-case basis. These offices would be in charge of determining which publications should be included in the Schundliteratur list, the official register of Schundliteratur that would be used to inform enforcers and sellers about what could no longer be sold publicly. These offices would operate within a complex and long administrative process that would make the systematic enforcement of the law inefficient and difficult.

### Enforcing the Law

Lawmakers, the bureaucrats responsible for enforcing the law, and everyone active in the battle against Schundliteratur doubted its impact.<sup>493</sup> Some issues were believed to contribute to

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<sup>491</sup> Abstimmung, *Verhandlungen des deutschen Reichstags* (1924/28). 245. Sitzung 3. Dezember 1926, p. 8391-8396.

<sup>492</sup> Petersen, “Harmful”: 511.

<sup>493</sup> “Rundschau: Bekämpfung von Schund- und Schmutz,” *Der Schundkampf* 20, no. 6 (Juni 1931): 166.

the law's failure to produce tangible results. First, the law encountered an essential problem of definition. What was *Schundliteratur* after all? Second, the law provided only a vague guideline for enforcement. How would the Vetting Offices in Berlin, Munich, and the Chief Vetting Office in Leipzig have access to the sources that had to be included in the *Schundliteratur* lists? How would the state successfully police the hundreds of kiosks in streets and train stations that may be publicly selling harmful publications? While it is true that contemporaries were skeptical about the law's impact, scholars have therefore underestimated its effects. Law enforcement officers seemed to be overwhelmed with the increasing number of *Schundliteratur* they had to oversee, but morality organizations contributed to their system surveillance and enforcement system. Furthermore, the centralized management of kiosks made reporting uncomplicated. The interaction of official and grassroots systems of surveillance and control guaranteed that the publications that mattered would be removed from public sight.

Defining the concepts *Schmutz und Schund* became a thorny issue. Although these words had been used in Prussian legislation since the 1890s, they had never been clearly described. Cultural conservatives saw *Schmutz und Schund* as a "rival culture" that threatened the social order; working-class women and youths were particularly vulnerable to it. The law thus did not target the literary canon, but "popular literature" a category used "as a comprehensive label for any form of aesthetically worthless or 'depraved' printed material'."<sup>494</sup> The minister of the Interior, the German Democrat Wilhelm Külz, was certain that "every ethically normal person knows whether a publication is trash or smut, and knows also whether it could lead to the

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<sup>494</sup> Petersen, "Harmful": 506.

overexcitement of the youthful imagination and have brutalizing and demoralizing effects.”<sup>495</sup>

Külz’s remarks implied that the immoral character of Schund was obvious to everyone. Yet his allusion to “ethically normal” persons highlighted that these publications represented and attracted deviant ones.

The definition of these concepts, as some members of the Reichstag had expected, took a more consistent form as the law was being enforced. At the beginning, officials could not agree on what constituted trashy or filthy content. Common definitions went from the general (“that which transgresses good morals”) to the convoluted (“[publications], which without any artistic, scientific and pedagogical worth, are designed to harm the moral welfare of youths through the overstimulation of their imagination, the stimulation of their sense for adventure, and the confusion of their notion of right and wrong or moral and immoral”).<sup>496</sup> Other commentators distinguished between an “aesthetic Schundliteratur” characterized by its poor quality, and a more troubling “ethical Schundliteratur” that celebrated crime and sex.

The Chief Vetting Office in Leipzig created a working definition as it reviewed specific cases. It was only when discussing the installments of the serial novel *The Pretty Nurse (Die schöne Krankenschwester)* in 1928 that the board members considered that a dictionary could shed some light on the issue. According to the Grimm’s dictionary, *Schund* meant something “which is flayed, skinned, the waste from skinning, filth, worthless trash.”<sup>497</sup> *Schmutz* was “a

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<sup>495</sup> Prof. Dr. Karl Brunner, “Gegen das Schundliteraturgesetz: Eine Aussprache mit Reichsminister Dr. Külz” *Berliner Tageblatt*, 10. Nov. 1926. BArch N/2203/517, p. 237.

<sup>496</sup> Schumann, 23-4.

<sup>497</sup> Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, “Schund” (Bd. 15, Sp. 2000 bis 20003), accessed February 22, 2014, <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GS19168#XGS19168>

fatty or sticky mass, excrement, filth.”<sup>498</sup> These two concepts described something “worthless” and unclean that could stimulate “sexual lustfulness.”<sup>499</sup> According to the Chief Vetting Office, it did not matter in the end “whether lust [was] excited through the execution of natural intercourse, or masturbation and similar acts between people of the same sex, or through sadistic and masochistic acts.”<sup>500</sup> To excite the readers with any of these things was necessarily dirty.

If the definition of Schundliteratur was inconsistent, to say the least, the enforcement of the law turned out to be difficult. Anti-Schund campaigners protested that nothing was actually happening, even though they had expected that “confiscations would occur at once.” But the Vetting Offices had not met a single time during the eleven months that had passed since the law had been passed and “disgusting” publications were still available everywhere.<sup>501</sup>

Local officials were responsible for the enforcement of the law.<sup>502</sup> Police visits, such as the one to Fräulein Pfeiffer’s kiosk, became more common. Law enforcement officers, however, were not able to keep up with the increasing number of publications included in the Schundliteratur list and with hundreds of sellers who distributed them. Two years after the law’s enactment, only about fifty percent of police stations were receiving the *Deutsches Fahndungsblatt*, the police’s professional journal that contained information on legislation changes, open criminal cases, and the titles of the publications included in the Schundliteratur

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<sup>498</sup> Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, “Schmutz” (Bd. 15, Sp. 1135 bis 1137), accessed February 22, 2014, <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GS14153#XGS1415>

<sup>499</sup> Schumann, 42.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

<sup>501</sup> “Ein Jahr des Gesetzes gegen Schund- und Schmutzschriften,” *Der Schundkampf*, no. 19 (November 1927).

<sup>502</sup> Stieg, 52.



list. As late as April 1928, police stations were not in the possession of the official legal text, even though it had been published in numerous official bulletins, such as the *Reichsanzeiger*, the *Deutsches Kriminalpolizeiblatt*, and in the official publishers' bulletin, the *Buchhändlerbörsenblatt*. Apparently, there was a significant disconnect in respect to what information was being published, where, and when, which affected the adequate enforcement of the law. Consequently, the police were never certain about what exactly was being enforced.<sup>503</sup> By 1930 the Schundliteratur list was so large that police officers argued it had become impossible to monitor the sale of listed materials. This lack of response could be interpreted as a lack of commitment to enforce the law from the police's side. A 1928 internal communication pointed out that "police officers have more important tasks to complete" and that the law's enforcement had become "pointless extra work."<sup>504</sup> Part of the frustration with the law came from the belief that there were not enough police to enforce the law. Their work seemed often pointless because magazines would appear again under different names or be sold publicly again once the ban had expired.

A police subcommittee contended that the enforcement of this law should be left to those who had more at stake, namely the associations for the protection of youth and confessional groups.<sup>505</sup> In order for this law to work, teachers, librarians, and booksellers had to be made aware of the implications of the law and of the publications included in the Schundliteratur

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<sup>503</sup> Letter from Landesgerichtsdirektor Dr. Albert Helwig to the Polizeipräsident, Potsdam, March 31, 1930. Landesarchiv Berlin, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030 Nr. 16988.

<sup>504</sup> Unterausschuß für Revierangelegenheiten. Berlin, den 23. April, 1930. Landesarchiv Berlin, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030 Nr. 16988.

<sup>505</sup> Internal communication of the *Polizeipräsidium*, Berlin, March 3, 1928. Landesarchiv Berlin,, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030 Nr. 16988. See: Reuveni, 249-50.

list.<sup>506</sup> And, as a matter of fact, teachers and social workers collaborated with law enforcement.<sup>507</sup> Different Christian, women's, and youth organizations joined forces with local youth welfare offices in Berlin, Breslau, Hamburg, Lübeck, München, the Rhine Province, Stuttgart and Saxony.<sup>508</sup> In the Rhine province, for example, youth welfare services selected a committee charged to put this law into praxis. This committee established contact with the different police departments, which would be in turn responsible for reporting to youth welfare services any complaints filed in terms of Schundliteratur. This collaboration improved the control of street kiosks, something that was far beyond the youth welfare office's competence. Youth welfare services made sure that all titles included in the Schundliteratur list were advertised in different publications that would be distributed in schools and factories. They were responsible for raising public awareness.<sup>509</sup> Morality organizations encouraged its members to put kiosks, books stores, and lending libraries under surveillance and to report anything suspicious, especially the public sale of erotic publications. In addition to familiarizing their

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<sup>506</sup> A series of books commenting on the law appeared after the law was approved in December 1926. See: Elsa Matz and Ernst Seeger, *Gesetz zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schund- und Schmutzschriften vom 18. Dezember 1926 nebst Ausführungsverordnung vom 23. Dezember 1926* (Berlin: Carl Heymanns Verlag, 1927); Leo Schnitzler, *Die Bekämpfung von Schund und Schmutz. Gesetz zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schund- und Schmutzschriften* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1927).

<sup>507</sup> "Rundschau: Zur Bekämpfung von Schmutz- und Schundliteratur," *Volkswohl* 16., no. 5 (Sept.-Oct.1927): 299-300.

<sup>508</sup> These organizations included: the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksgesundung*, the Catholic *Caritas*, the *Volkswartsbund*, the *Reichsschundkampfstelle der Evangelischen Jungmännerverbände Deutschlands*, the *Evangelische Hauptstelle gegen Schund und Schmutz*, which encompassed women's and youth organizations. These organizations associated in 1929 under the *Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft der Schundkampfzentralen*. See: "Rundschau: Zur Bekämpfung von Schmutz und Schund," *Der Schundkampf* 18, no. 3 (Mai-Juni 1929), 115; "Rundschau: Über den gegenwärtigen Stand der Bekämpfung der Schund- und Schmutzlieratur," *Der Schundkampf* 18, no. 4 (Juli-August 1929), 159-60.

<sup>509</sup> "Rundschau," *Volkswohl* 16, no. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 1927): 399-300.

members with the law, these organizations became the “eyes” of the state and created a seamless net of surveillance between the public and police enforcement.<sup>510</sup>

The enforcement of the law would have been much less effective without citizen engagement. This does not mean that enforcement would have been nonexistent without them. The centralization of kiosks was thus essential for the success of the law. Newspapers sellers could choose to continue selling the publications that had been included in the list, but most kiosk sellers had little power over their shops. In most German cities companies leased all the kiosks from the municipal administration. These companies rented out kiosks to independent tenants. The umbrella company and not the seller, however, kept control of what could be sold in their newsstands. In Leipzig, for example, the city had a contract with the “Firma Heinrich Brandt.” Instead of monitoring every kiosk, municipal authorities communicated directly with the company, which informed every seller about the publications that had to be removed from public sale. The city also demanded that the company conduct regular surveys of what was being sold in the kiosks under its management, information that was sent to the Chief Vetting Office in Leipzig.<sup>511</sup> This model applied to all kiosks located in German train stations, since the German railroad company managed every single one of them.<sup>512</sup> If the records of the police departments give the impression that the law was rarely enforced, the correspondence between city officials

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<sup>510</sup> “Zehn Gebote zur Bekämpfung von Schund und Schmutz hat der Volkswartbund herausgegeben,” *Der Schundkampf*, 21 no. 2 (Februar 1932).

<sup>511</sup> Stadtarchiv Leipzig Stadtpolizeiamt 341, p. 286ff.

<sup>512</sup> The German Railway Company (Reichsbahn) managed around 900 kiosks. The Reichsbahn supported legal measures against Schundliteratur but had been against applying any type of censorship on its own, despite the demands it received from numerous groups. Their rationale, we assume, was that this affected its economic interests. BArch N/2203/519, p.4.

and the companies leasing city kiosks reveals the opposite. The enforcement of the law was not as spotty as its critics wanted it to be.

Despite all this, commentators agreed that the Vetting Offices had achieved little during the first two years since the passing of the law; their decisions had been slow and piecemeal. This did not mean that the law had been a failure. Despite the criticism about the law's lax enforcement, the law seemed to have accomplished something in its first year or so. Based on the Vetting Offices' decisions, publishers slowly understood what the working definition of Schundliteratur was and increasingly complied with that. As a matter of fact, magazines were becoming "cleaner" (*einwandfreier*), especially after one of its issues had been included in the list.<sup>513</sup> By 1933 only a total of 185 books and magazines had been indexed.<sup>514</sup> According to Luke Springman, the law represented more than it had accomplished: it provided an institutional platform "for expressing moral indignation and collective anxieties of conservative, middle-class Germany."<sup>515</sup> The law was also successful in spreading and institutionalizing homophobia.

### *Homosexuality and the Schundliteratur Law*

The law's intent, namely the protection of youth, was evident in its phrasing. Its effects were less explicit. The Schundliteratur Law became a mechanism for state-sanctioned homophobia. The Vetting Offices were against overt sexuality, which they considered dirty and capable of brutalizing innocent youths. No expression of sexuality was more damaging to youths

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<sup>513</sup> Landesrat [Hans] Wingender (Düsseldorf), "Das Schundliteraturgesetz eine Kräftigung des Schundkapitals?" Sonderabdruck aus der Zeitschrift "*Die Wohlfahrtspflege in der Rheinprovinz*", no. 9 (1928), 159-60.

<sup>514</sup> Petersen, "Harmful": 505.

<sup>515</sup> Springman: 408.

than homosexuality, especially now that homosexual publications seem to be ubiquitous in a media landscape already saturated by sex. The Vetting Offices could agree that dime novels were of poor quality and had little real value other than entertaining neglected youths. But they also acknowledged that there was something more radical and threatening about publications that catered to the interests of the “new woman,” or that supported, and even encouraged, masturbation, female sexual pleasure, premarital sex, promiscuity, contraception, and abortion. If this was not enough of a threat to the family, then there were the ubiquitous homosexual magazines.

The law targeted publications with sexual content, but it disproportionately attacked the homosexual movement’s press. Eighteen out of the hundred and eighty-five publications included in the Schundliteratur List were homosexual magazines, about ten per cent of the total. If we consider that hundreds of sensationalist newspapers, detective and serial novels, or erotic magazines were sold in Germany’s newsstands during this period, less than a couple hundred titles seem relatively few. That being said, many of the publications included in the list, such as the marriage reform magazine *Marriage (Die Ehe)* were very popular publications. The law was in this sense a gesture, proof that something was being done to address Germany’s moral decay.

The law represented a direct attack against homosexual publications. It is not insignificant that all homosexual publications were included in the list at some point in time. The members of the Vetting Offices paid excessive attention to homosexual publications because they were familiar with the theories of sexuality popular at the time which supported that homosexuality was an acquired trait. According to these theories, homosexual publications, like the homosexual himself, were potential “seducers” of youths. The vagueness of the law proved

productive to launch an attack against homosexual publications and the visibility and politics they represented.

Homosexual magazines such as *Girlfriend (Die Freundin)*, *The Third Sex (Das dritte Geschlecht)*, and the *Journal for Friendship (Das Freundschaftsblatt)* threatened the gendered foundations of the state and its reproductive future based on compulsory heterosexuality. These publications were political, cultural, and social platforms for lesbians, transvestites, and male homosexuals.<sup>516</sup> The VOs needed some proof that these publications indeed harmed youths in order to remove them from public sight. Although homosexual magazines were suspect a priori, their poor quality was often used to justify the office's decisions to include the list. According to the office's members, the literary texts in *Girlfriend (Die Freundin)* (a popular lesbian magazine published by Friedrich Radszuweit) "were kitsch and lacked individual style and artistic value."<sup>517</sup> Likewise, the articles and short stories were "sentimental and turgid" and included often sexual and perverse content.<sup>518</sup> In practical terms, any indication of sexual "perversity" was enough ground for including a publication in the list.

As manifestations of mass culture, these publications were automatically suspect: they preyed on young individuals who did not know who to control their instincts; how to spend their

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<sup>516</sup> This was not a conservative issue alone, not even social democrats and communists were completely supportive of the homosexual movement. This would become evident some years later during the Ernst Röhm affair. W. Eisler, *Arbeiterparteien und Homosexuellenfrage: zur Sexualpolitik von SPD und KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin: Verlag rosa Winkel, 1980). Eleanor Hancock, "'Only the Real, the True, the Masculine Held Its Value': Ernst Röhm, Masculinity, and Male Homosexuality," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8, no. 4 (1998): 616-41; Manfred Herzer, "Communists, Social Democrats, and the Homosexual Movement in the Weimar Republic." *Journal of Homosexuality* 29, no. 2-3 (1995): 197-226; Stefan Micheler and Patricia Szobar, "Homophobic Propaganda and the Denunciation of Same-Sex Desiring Men under National Socialism," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8, no. 1/2 (2002): 95-130.

<sup>517</sup> Landesarchiv Berlin, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030 Nr. 17110.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid.

money; or, in case of working-class youths, how to use their newly-gained literacy skills for their personal edification. In particular, the CVO claimed that these publications' affordable price and availability facilitated working-class youths' access to them. These magazines were considered harmful given their wide public distribution (over 20,000 copies), their regularity (weekly or monthly), and their affordable prize (around 20 Pfennig). The members of the CVO believed that the homosexual press's marketing and distribution techniques aimed to attract a younger readership—those who were willing to spend a few Pfennig on something “different,” racy, and new.<sup>519</sup> The ideas these publications defended had become literally accessible to youths.

The sexual vulnerability of youths and their sexual indeterminacy, something that doctors and psychologists accepted as axiomatic, made them especially susceptible to “dangerous” texts that could “fix” the sexuality of susceptible youths in the wrong way. *Marriage (Die Ehe)*, *Love and Marriage (Liebe und Ehe)*, and *Ideal Life-Partners (Ideal-Lebensbund)*, popular magazines advocating companionate marriage, free love, contraception, and sexual education, were included in 1928 in the Schundliteratur List. Their content threatened the instability of the institutions that were considered cornerstones of the nation: the family, patriarchy, and heterosexuality. According to Eduard Spranger, who was considered the authority on youth psychology at the time, magazines such as *Die Ehe* treated free love in such a careless way that it could confuse younger readers. In these magazines marriage was only characterized in terms of sexual pleasure; masturbation and abortion were openly discussed; and sexual perversities were described in every issue. Such salacious topics obviously attracted curious and impressible

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<sup>519</sup> Schumann, 53.

young readers. Spranger stressed that youths found themselves in a very dangerous phase of their lives, one in which they were prone to “imitate” whatever they saw.<sup>520</sup>

Anti-Schund campaigners and the members of the VOs actually believed that homosexual publications targeted youths and that they were used as recruiting tools. The VOs identified in the personals section a “sex market” that could seduce youths into immoral and unnatural sexual acts.<sup>521</sup> Even though there were no explicit signs of sex in the advertisements, the examiner conjectured that a code language, understandable only by homosexuals, existed in these pages. For the untrained eyes the ads appeared to be harmless, but upon second inspection they were full of sexual undertones. The VOs held that ads about men looking for same-sex partnerships, women looking for girlfriends, transvestites looking for like-minded individuals to marry, married couples looking for friendship, and ads requesting travel companions, roommates, or gardeners were code words for same-sex sexual encounters and relationships, pederasty, male prostitution, swinging, cuckolding, and a whole range of “perversities.” In the worst case, these ads, combined with nude photographs, could persuade youths to initiate homosexual relationships.<sup>522</sup>

The members of the VO seemed unaware that claiming a “code language” for these magazines implied a contradiction. How could these expressions be harmful to youths if only homosexuals could understand them? A homosexual “code language” implied that there was something different about this language and therefore something different about homosexuality: homosexuals’ inherent abnormality was evident in their use of language. This contradiction,

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<sup>520</sup> Cited in Kurt Richter, *Der Kampf gegen Schund- und Schmutzschriften*, 48-50.

<sup>521</sup> Schumann, 80-1.

<sup>522</sup> “Schund und Schmutzbekämpfung.” Landesarchiv Berlin, A Pr. Br. Rep. 030 Tit. 121 Nr. 17063.



however, concealed a more troubling possibility: the fact that these codes were understandable to everyone and that it could even be enticing for everyone. The VO members' uncertainty reflected the prevalence of theories that described homosexuality as an acquired trait and highlighted the potential universality of same-sex attraction. If the purpose of the magazines was to seduce youths into homosexuality, the language needed to be explicit enough for it to work. The members of the VO saw these magazines as agents of seduction with the power to lure youths into homosexual acts.

Demonstrating that such publications had the power to seduce youths was not that simple. The members of the CVO tried to ground their decisions in objective evidence and worked hard to adhere to the democratic values of freedom of expression. They recognized that if homosexuality was indeed inborn, as doctors claimed, such publications could not pose any danger to youths. But they were aware that this theory was contested. Contrasting theories argued that youths could be seduced into homosexuality through personal articles and ads due to their sexual undifferentiation and vulnerability. The VO also recognized that the intention of these publications was to represent "the interests of predisposed homosexuals and the education of society" as well as to "offer entertainment for homosexuals."<sup>523</sup> Even though they did not agree with this program, part of their democratic commitment and responsibility was to listen to what the publishers of these publications had to say. If the Vetting Office was paternalistic, inasmuch as it tried to decide for the public what was appropriate for them to read, it also offered room for discussion among its members and the publishers. The readers, however, were left without a voice.

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<sup>523</sup> Schumann, 69-71.

The decisions at the VOs were not arbitrary. They were informed by a discourse on homosexuality deeply ingrained in society and the VO members relied on expert knowledge to support their decisions. No matter how much the VOs may have approved of scientific views on inborn homosexuality, they were much less tolerant with it being a political identity. In fact, the members of the VOs believed that the stories in these journals did little to fulfill their alleged social missions: to speak to a community of like-minded or like-natured people (*Artgenossen*) and to enlighten society about sexual matters. Rather, they were platforms for the spread of immoral acts and repugnant stories. Despite the homosexual movement's attempts at asserting their members respectability, homosexuality could not be unconnected from sex. Even though the role of these offices was not to judge the morality of these publications, they corroborated the view that this deviation "translated into a dramatic complication of people's existence" and that contemporary "society disapprove[d] of homosexuals."<sup>524</sup> Even though the tolerance and understanding of homosexuality was growing, it was the VOs' role to perpetuate the disapproval and to justify homophobia.

Doctors were given the task to substantiate the homosexual publications' alleged threat to youths. To recommend the inclusion of homosexual publications in the Schundliteratur List, the Working Group on the Recovery of the Volk (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksgesundheit*), a group lobbying for the elimination of Schundliteratur, requested two expert witness accounts to demonstrate that the homosexual movement's press indeed harmed youths. A high-ranking medical advising official in Berlin (*Geheimer Medizinalrat*) named Dr. Straßmann authored the first report. He denied one of the key arguments that homosexual publishers had made in defense of their freedom to publish their magazines: the fact that very few men and women are

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<sup>524</sup> "Schund und Schmutzbekämpfung." Landesarchiv Berlin, A Pr. Br. Rep 030 Nr. 17063.

homosexual and that therefore they constitute a minority with no real threat to the larger society. Straßmann relied on widely accepted theories that put forward that “the not-yet-differentiated sexual feelings [of youths] could be influenced so that same-sex feelings are stimulated and fixed.”<sup>525</sup> He considered nude photographs, personal ads, and the advertisements of bars and clubs especially dangerous, given that youths have an adventurous nature and would be moved to visit such places. After being in contact with homosexuals (or after falling prey to them), he argued, it was impossible “to get away” from such places and the dangers they represented: substance abuse (especially cocaine) and the temptation to engage in male prostitution. The constant use of sexual “stimulation” made these publications appealing to youths, who would be titillated by the visual appeal of such magazines in street kiosks. According to Dr. Straßmann, homosexual publications were making youths acquainted with homosexuality and all kinds of social evils.<sup>526</sup>

Karl Bonhoeffer, a renowned psychiatrist and the director of the psychiatric clinic in Berlin’s *Charité* hospital wrote a report, as well. As a medical doctor strongly opposed to Freud’s ideas, Bonhoeffer supported the view that homosexuality was certainly caused by a physiological or psychiatric degenerative condition. This did not mean that he rejected the possibility of acquired homosexuality. He admitted that in many cases—perhaps even in most cases—homosexuals showed clear signs of “external influences.” Even for those who could be classified as unmistakably “inborn” homosexuals, it was possible that “suggestion,” be it through reading homosexual publications or through youthful and foolish mutual masturbation with a

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<sup>525</sup> For a more detailed discussion of these theories, see Chapter 1.

<sup>526</sup> “Gutachten über die Schädigung der Jugend durch homosexuelle Schriften,” *Der Schundkampf* 17, no. 24 (September 1928): 8.

same-sex friend, had ultimately lead them to “homosexual confusion and fantasies.”<sup>527</sup>

Bonhoeffer seemed to support the contradictory argument that homosexuality afflicted a minority of people *and* that it was potentially present in everyone. Without clearly stating it, Bonhoeffer signaled that heterosexuality was less stable than it appeared at first sight.

Bonhoeffer argued that magazines such as those published by the League promoted homosexuality. They were examples of “propaganda” and recruiting mechanisms that had contributed to the current increase in homosexuality. He claimed that “psychopaths [had begun] to call themselves homosexuals in great numbers” after reading Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*, which had become a popular (and titillating) book for youths since its publication in 1886. This had also been the effect of Richard Oswald’s 1919 film *Different from the Others* (*Anders als die Andern*), which advocated the decriminalization of homosexuality and showed the fatal effects of blackmail in homosexual men, namely despair and suicide.

Bonhoeffer believed that the increase in self-identifying homosexuals had little to do with these patients’ “discovery of their true sexual orientation.” It could be located in the psyche of the “pubescent or psychopathic youth, in whom the idea of being homosexual [...] had taken root” as a consequence of their contact with explicit and sympathetic media representations of homosexuality. For Bonhoeffer this was not only an issue affecting those youths already “moronic” (*Debilen*) and “weak” (*Haltlosen*)—it unfortunately also affected “more valuable youths.”<sup>528</sup>

Bonhoeffer, like many other prominent psychiatrists at the time, firmly believed that youths could be led into homosexuality after reading homosexual publications. These magazines

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<sup>527</sup> “Gutachten über die Schädigung der Jugend durch homosexuelle Schriften”: 9-10.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid.

offered the wider public the power to name themselves according to a different sexual and gender rubric and provided the language with which homosexual men and women could understand themselves. Just as they created an identity, they also created the possibility for a community of people coming together under its banner. Banning these publications from public sale and distribution was a deliberate attempt to curb that possibility. The state (and the medical profession) wanted to maintain the power to name. To achieve this, it had to control the spread of sexual knowledge.

*Under the Counter, Into the Closet*

The publishers of homosexual magazines did not remain idle while facing the VO's attacks. They did not allow their publications—and their businesses—to be destroyed and silenced without putting up a fight. If, according to Bonhoeffer, their publications were producing homosexuals, the Schundliteratur Law was producing avenues for resistance against homophobia. Although the publishers of these magazines were not always able to prevent the VO's from including their publications in the Schundliteratur List, they were at least able to defend the right of their publications to exist in subtle (and less subtle ways). Nevertheless, the law did encourage self-censorship. Part of the negotiations between homosexual leaders and the VO's revolved around the homosexuals' right to privacy. The homosexual movement found itself in a contradiction: defending the right to live out one's sexuality in private eradicated the political gains that homosexual visibility promised. Demanding the right to privacy, the homosexual movement contributed to building its own closet.

The publications of the League for Human Rights (*Bund für Menschenrecht*), Germany's first mass homosexual organization, were often included in the Schundliteratur list. Friedrich

Radszuweit, the organization's leader, fought for the right of his publications to exist and to be sold publicly. Radszuweit had to make the most of the institutional ban on the public display of homosexual publications and of homosexual visibility in general. He often relied on tropes that played with homosexuality's visibility and invisibility. In September 1928 Radszuweit used the cover of the organization's most popular magazine, *Friendship (Das Freundschaftsblatt)*, to make an overt political statement. The magazine mocked the practices of the Vetting Office by stating on the first page of this issue that the organization's magazines could be sold publicly. Although this message can be interpreted as the publisher's mechanism to inform the sellers that they could take out this magazine from "under the counter" after a year-long ban had expired, this was also an early exercise in performative activism.

This announcement occupied the space that two months earlier had been filled with a nude photograph portraying two young men (Image 1). The absence of explicit same-sex erotic images in the September issue points out to the effects that the law had had on self-censorship. Publishers had decided to sacrifice part of their magazine's visual appeal in order to stay in business (even though visual appeal was an essential part of their business as it was useful for attracting new and curious customers). These imposed restrictions do not indicate defeat alone. Radszuweit used the absence of enticing photographs to highlight the political character of his publication and of the homosexual movement as a whole.

6. Jahrgang - Nummer 27  
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**Das 20 Pfennig**  
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# Freundschaftsblatt

Offizielles Publikationsorgan des „Bundes für Offenheartschaft, e. V.“, Berlin.

Belegpreis monatlich im geschlossenen Brief 1,20 Mark, Ausland 2,30 Mark. — Druckische Inhalt 1.— Mark, Ausland 1,30 Mark.  
 Redaktion: Donnerstag mittig 1 Uhr, für die kommende Woche — Geschäftszeit: 9-6 Uhr  
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 Friedrich Radszweit, Berlin Nr. 181 122

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## Es wird weiter erpreßt!

Vor einiger Zeit erst berichteten wir in den „Blättern für Menschenrecht“ über die ungeheure Zahl der Erpressungen, die noch immer auf Grund des § 175 verübt werden und von denen leider die meisten nicht zur Kenntnis der Öffentlichkeit gelangen. Leider muß man sagen, denn wenn sich das Publikum des öfteren mit diesen Dingen befassen müßte, so würde das Volk, von dem man sagt, sein Empfinden ist gegen die Homosexuellen, sich viel leichter ein richtiges Bild von Wesen, Leben und Leiden, von der Not und den Verfolgungen, denen anständige Homosexuelle ausgesetzt sind, machen können. Trotz der großen Aufklärungsversuche, die seit Jahrzehnten von Wissenschaftlern und vernünftigen Menschen unternommen worden sind, ist der großen Masse doch noch immer vieles unklar, und alle möglichen Vorstellungen verbinden sich mit dem Begriff Homosexualität, meistens jedoch völlig verkehrte. Das liegt in der Hauptsache daran, daß sich die Tageszeitungen, denen allein eine realistische Aufklärung über dieses Gebiet zugehen würde, mit unserem Thema fast gar nicht beschäftigen. Die „Morgenpost“ hat allerdings vor einiger Zeit einen erfreulichen und bemerkenswerten Bericht über eine Versammlung gebracht, in der für die Homosexuellen und gegen den § 175 gesprochen worden war. Jedoch sind das Ansätze, die begründeten, aber nicht von weittragender Bedeutung sind.

Würden nun sämtliche Erpresserfälle (zur Kenntnis des Vorstandes des Bundes für Menschenrecht gelangten 1927 = 1018, 1927 = 982), soweit sie tatsächlich durch den § 175 hervorgerufen sind, in der Tagespresse gebührend erörtert werden, so müßte die große Masse doch einmal richtig werden und sich begedringen mit dem Problem näher beschäftigen. Vor allem müßte sie erfahren, daß sich die Erpresser nicht, wie färrlich immer angenommen wird, aus Homosexuellen, sondern aus rein „normalen“ Kreisen rekrutieren. Allein diese Tatsache würde, sobald sie bekannt wird, sicher wesentlich zur Hebung des Ansehens der Homosexuellen beitragen.

Auch die Umstände, unter denen ein Homosexueller erpreßt wird, werden fast nie erörtert, sonst wüßte man, daß die Erpressen sich „sehr oft mit dem Erpresser in gar keine wahrbare Handlung eingelassen haben. Die Kenntnis der Umstände gegenwärtig dieses Vampyren aus,



Sommerfreuden.

um gegen die schnell eingeschickerten Opfer vorzugehen. Auch harmlose sexuelle Vorgänge, für die das Strafgesetzbuch gar keine Strafen vorsieht, werden zum Vorwand für schwere Erpressungen genommen. Angesehene und durchaus achtbare Menschen verlieren Vermögen, Ansehen, trennen sich mit ihrer Familie und enden, wie das so häufig schon der Fall war, durch Selbstmord.

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## Stresemann

In der vorigen Woche wollte unser Reichsaussenminister in Paris, um den Kelloggpaakt, der zwischensowen den Frieden der Welt garantieren soll, zu unterzeichnen. Nach der amerikanischen Schreibweise ist Reichsaussenminister Stresemann als Vertreter des Deutschen Reiches dazu berufen gewesen, als erster diesen Kriegsverbotspakt zu unterschreiben. Dieser Paakt verlangt von dem Unterschreibern, daß sie sich jedes Angriffes auf eine andere Macht enthalten und sich zum Anstrang zwienger Strafvorkern des internationalen Gesetzes unterwerfen.

Man kann zu der Außenpolitik Stresemanns stehen wie man will, auch der radikale Deutschnationale wird ihm zugestehen müssen, daß er für des deutsche Volk im Ausland Sympathien zu erwecken vermochte, die kein Vorgänger vor ihm erreicht hat. Darum erhebt sich auch jeder, der es mit dem Aufstieg unseres Volkes ernst meint, an, daß Stresemann z. Z. der einzige Mann ist, der berufen ist, unsere Außenpolitik weiterzuführen.

So unendlich nun die Außenpolitik unseres Reiches ist, so unendlich ist die innere Politik. Uns fehlt bisher ein Reichsinnenminister, der zu verstehen hat, die Gegensätze, die innerhalb unseres Volkes besonders auf sozialerethischen Gebiet liegen, zu überbrücken. Hoffentlich gelingt es dem jetzigen Innenminister Stresemann das zu vollbringen, was den Kule und Keudells nicht möglich war. Denn nicht nur von Reichswegen, sondern auch von den einzelnen Länderregierungen ist bisher eine falsche innere Politik getrieben worden. Besonders die Länderregierungen des Deutschen Reiches stützen sich mit aller Macht, im Verein mit den christlichen Sülichkeitsvereinen aller Schattierungen, auf unsere Jugend, um diese von allem fernzuhalten, was nach ihrer Ansicht nicht nur der Seele, sondern auch dem Körper der Jugendlichen schädlich sein könnte. Aus diesem Grunde wurde auch das Reichs-Schund- und Schmutzgesetz geschaffen. Die Jugendämter und die Landeshilfsämter bemühen sich nun, dieses Gesetz in einem Sinne auszuliegen, der nicht nur dem Wortlaut des Gesetzes, sondern auch vor allen Dingen dem Sinn des Gesetzes widerspricht.

Am 28. August hatten wir wieder einmal Gelegenheit, die Anhängungskomitee des Landesjugendamtes der Rheinprovinz sowie des württembergischen Innenministeriums inbezug auf unsere Zeitschriften anhören. Wie

**Nicht verboten**

ist es, die Zeitschriften  
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öffentlich auszuhändigen und zu verkaufen.  
 Zeitschriftenhändler, denen von falsch orientierten Beamten das Gegenteil mitgeteilt wird, werden gebeten, sich sofort mit dem Friedrich Radszweit-Verlag, Berlin S 14, Neue Jakobsstraße 8, Telefon Jannowitz (F. 7.) 4848, in Verbindung zu setzen.

berlin in voriger Woche im „Freundschaftsblatt“ erhalten, hatten diese Stellen im Verein mit dem Preussischen und Bayerischen Ministerium den Antrag gestellt, das „Freundschaftsblatt“ und „Die Insel“ auf die Dauer von 12 Monaten auf die Liste für Schand und Schmutz zu setzen. Die Preussische Berlin behielt jedoch diese weitgehenden Anträge ab und sah sich nur veranlaßt, die Nummern 12, 21 und 27 des „Freundschaftsblattes“ und die Nr. 3 (Märzauflage) der „Insel“ auf die Liste zu setzen. In Nr. 12 des „Freundschaftsblattes“ wurde Anstoß genommen an der Erählung „Depeschenboten“, in Nr. 21 an „Männlicher Spargel ist besser als weiblicher“ (dieser wissenschaftliche Aufsatz war der in Berlin erscheinenden „Welt am Abend“ entnommen). In Nr. 27 wurde die Erählung „In vino veritas“ und in der „Insel“ Nr. 3 die Erählung „Einster Knickerbocker-Memoren“ beanstandet.

Der Vertreter des Jugendamtes der Rheinprovinz bestritt mit aller Entschiedenheit, daß die Homosexualität angehören sei und brachte als Beweis die Gutachten der Professoren Strömman, Zienke, Aschaffenburg und Brunnhöfer bei, die betonen, daß auf Grund klinischer

Image 1: *Das Freundschaftsblatt* in July and September 1928. The effects of the Schundliteratur Law are visible in the space in the absence of images once the magazine had been reviewed for inclusion in the list. *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 6, no. 27 (6. Juli 1928) and *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 6, no. 36 (7. September 1928).

What could blackmail and Stresemann have possibly in common? Blackmail was a touchy subject, one that occupied many pages of the homosexual press and one of the most palpable consequences of homosexuality's illegality. Blackmail was usually described as the reckless extortion of homosexual men by (often) younger men, who were presumably heterosexual male hustlers. This extortion often resulted in the damage to the reputation of the blackmailed man. The homosexual press argued that the criminalization of male same-sex acts promoted this abusive behavior. Blackmail and male prostitution, although often talked about in

exaggerated terms, associated homosexuals and youths in a negative way, a link that warranted the inclusion of homosexual publications in the Schundliteratur list.

Despite not being unusual, blackmail did not define the lives of “closeted” homosexual men, those more likely to be victims of extortion. Homosexual men could still enjoy life, despite illegality, prejudice, and silence. At least, this is what *Friendship* seemed to imply with the juxtaposition of a gloomy topic with a cheerful picture. The July issue captioned the cover’s image with a laconic title: “Summer Delights.” Although the article stressed how Paragraph 175 led to extortion and suicide, this did not preclude that homosexual men could still find pleasure and love in life. If “the closet,” a life of silence and invisibility, could lead to blackmail, the picture implied that openness, the naked truth about who you are, was perhaps the only path to happiness.

The censoring of speech as an identity-producing practice helped construct “the closet.” The Schundliteratur Law can be considered as effective in policing and repressing same-sex sexuality, identities, and culture as the infamous Paragraph 175. The punishment of male, same-sex acts and the blackmail that often ensued from it had not prevented the proliferation of homosexual subjectivities and communities. Indeed, blackmail was complicit in the construction of same-sex as a dangerous and private affair lived in “the closet” rather than as a public and political identity. Nevertheless, it was not the illegality of male same-sex acts alone that resulted in the construction of the homosexual “closet.” Even though female same-sex acts were not criminalized under Paragraph 175, lesbians also experienced repression and silencing as a consequence of their sexual desire and oftentimes of their gender nonconformity. As a matter of fact, the Schundliteratur Law also heavily targeted lesbian magazines. In the end, both Paragraph 175 and the Schundliteratur Law were institutionalized forms of repression that played with and



reproduced existing social prejudices against homosexuality. Whereas the sodomy law required concrete cases, proof, and denunciation to be enforced, and therefore affected individuals, the Schundliteratur Law undermined the homosexual community in broad terms, insofar as it was a generalized act against the possibility of publicly expressing a different way of being in the world as well as an attack against a public platform that could be sued to combat such prejudice.

The strategic use of a political figure aimed to put the homosexual movement at the epicenter of the Republic's political affairs. Whereas the July issue's headline addressed a specific issue concerning the homosexual community (blackmail) the September issue used a one-word, sober headline: "Stresemann." The name of the Republic's well-known foreign minister was used to stress the seriousness of the magazine as a political publication. Radszuweit argued that the VOs "bullying" of homosexual publications actually obstructed national unity. The homosexual movement, he warned, would have to abandon moderate politics and adopt a much more overt and radical agenda in order to continue with its work, since the Schundliteratur Law prevented censoring political ideas. The Law could have the reverse effect than had been intended: instead of appeasing a movement that supported political neutrality, it could produce a radical one.<sup>529</sup>

Despite the power of the law to deaden the voice of the homosexual press, the September issue demonstrates how they could not be easily silenced. Stresemann was a good example of how unity could be achieved through mutual understanding and reconciliation. The article began by praising Stresemann's accomplishments, his ability to negotiate in Europe Germany's uneasy feelings about the Versailles Treaty. Here, Stresemann and Germany's successful foreign policy were celebrated in order to contrast them with the dismal situation in national politics and in the

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<sup>529</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, "Stresemann," *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 6, Nr. 36 (7. September 1928).

homosexual movement. The article criticized the series of measures that the Minister of the Interior, supported by the regional governments, had put out to protect youths, including the Schundliteratur Law. The article denounced the inclusion of the League for Human Rights' publications in the Schundliteratur list and reports on the expert opinions discussed above as examples of unsympathetic science. The language and the image of the homosexual press could be sanitized. Nevertheless, the homosexual press could find ways around the Vetting Office's assumptions in order to continue to spread its political message and to serve the community it was helping create. The "respectable" homosexual, therefore, was contingent on his acceptance as an equal citizen with a public voice.

The situation of the homosexual movement was more unfortunate than it may appear at first sight. *Friendship* continued to be published and so were other homosexual magazines, but they were time and again included in the Schundliteratur list. After the bans expired, they would be sold publicly until they were included in the list again. The fact that a dull box occupies the former place of an erotic photograph in the September issue underscores the power of the law in encouraging self-censorship and highlights that the homosexual movement was undergoing some important changes in its public image. The publishers of homosexual magazines would rely on self-censorship to ensure the survival of their publications, since their economic existence depended on sales and these on the ability of selling the publications publicly.<sup>530</sup> In practical terms, the inefficient process, self-censorship, and the determination to fit into the mainstream, helped publishers keep a low profile and avoid further censorship. This was essential to continue advocating the decriminalization of male, same-sex acts, a feat that seemed finally possible by 1929.

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<sup>530</sup> Dobler, "Zensur": 103. Petersen, "Harmful": 517.

### Conclusion

The Vetting Offices became even more repressive towards the end of the Weimar Republic. Whereas in 1927 their members struggled between allowing for more freedom of expression and the enforcement of the law, as the years passed, they would become less ambiguous in its attack on homosexual texts. This change would have long-lasting effects on the politics of the movement as a whole. Despite its limitations in enforcement, the Schundliteratur had been extremely successful in suppressing texts and images considered inappropriate and in concealing the production of non-normative sexuality. Up to January 1, 1933, only 185 titles had been included in the list. Given the thousands of titles published during the six-year span since the enactment of the law, this was a very low number. The list included twenty-two cases of sensationalist newspapers' "scandalous" reports on crime and court cases; twenty-four serial novels; nineteen sex- and naturist magazines; thirteen moral histories (*Sittengeschichte*); fifty-seven criminal- and love stories; seven travel books; eleven books with undetermined topic or genre; and eight homosexual-themed magazines.<sup>531</sup> In comparison, from 1929 to 1933 *all* of the homosexual movement's popular publications had been included in the list at some time or another.<sup>532</sup>

The Schundliteratur Law was successful in instilling self-censorship and making homosexual publications less visible. "As a result of the prophylactic measures of the

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<sup>531</sup> These included: *Die Freundin*, *Frauenliebe*, *Die Freundschaft*, *Neue Freundschaft*, *Das Freundschaftsblatt*, *Die Insel*, *Das dritte Geschlecht*, and *Garçonne*. Friedrich Radszuweit was the publisher of five of them. *Die Freundin* was the first publication to fall into the law's trap as soon as 1927. By 1933 *The Island (Die Insel)*, *The Friendship Journal (Das Freundschaftsblatt)*, *The Third Sex (Das Dritte Geschlecht)*, and even the *Journal of Human Rights (Blätter für Menschenrecht)* had been included in the Schundliteratur list several times, often for the duration of one year.

<sup>532</sup> "Liste der Schund- und Schmutzschriften (Gesetz vom 18. Dezember 1926)." Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Br. Rep. 030 Nr. 16992.

Schundliteratur Law,” a 1932 report suggested, “the distribution of *Schmutz- und Schundliteratur* ha[d] decreased” considerably. The effects were felt stronger in those publications with dealt explicitly with sexual matters: of the many homosexual, companionate marriage, and naturist magazines that occupied a prominent space in Weimar’s kiosk landscape, “only few [were] left.”<sup>533</sup> Officials agreed that legislation had been successful in preventing the spread of Schundliteratur and, therefore, in protecting youths from harmful texts. Although the homosexual press also found ways to “answer back,”<sup>534</sup> the Schundliteratur Law was successful in “silencing” it. Radszuweit knew that the homosexual movement could not exist without its press.<sup>535</sup> He highlighted that the Schundliteratur Law did not aim to protect youths, but rather to combat “homosexuality as such.”<sup>536</sup> Whereas the law could not do away with homosexuality, it did help create “the closet” as an institutionalized form of homosexual invisibility.

The Weimar Republic represents a crucial moment for the transformation of homosexuality from a category describing illegal same-sex acts to one describing an identity or subjectivity. It is also a crucial moment to understand how as homosexuals were experiencing more freedom and visibility, different forms of repression compelled them to maintain this identity concealed. The illegality of same-sex acts in Germany had led to condemnation and repression. It had helped produce “the closet” as a repressive site, but also as a space of self-

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<sup>533</sup> “Bericht der Reichsregierung über die praktischen Erfahrungen bei Durchführung des Reichsgesetzes zur Bekämpfung von Schund- und Schmutzschriften” (April 29, 1933). Landesarchiv Berlin A Pr. Rep. 030 Nr. 16990.

<sup>534</sup> Gary D. Stark, *Banned in Berlin*, xxiii. I use these words to challenge the belief that censorship affects those “without the power to answer back,” as Stark suggests.

<sup>535</sup> “Geschäftsbericht des Hauptvorstandes des B.f.M., E.V., für das Jahr 1930,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 9, Nr. 4 (April 1931).

<sup>536</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Gefühlsumnebelung,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 9, Nr. 14 (9. April 1931).

protection. The Schundliteratur Law, in turn, gave “the closet” its institutional contours. The metaphor of “the closet” represents the availability of all available sexual knowledge, the desire to share that knowledge, and the obligation to keep it secret from public view. It represents the awareness of an identity, but the impossibility of expressing it publicly. Yet in order to identify with this subjectivity defined around same-sex sexual desire, knowledge of it had to exist beforehand. The “closet” could not exist before homosexuality as an identity and subjectivity; it could not exist before the homosexual was *out* of it.<sup>537</sup> As more knowledge about homosexuality was being produced and as homosexual subjectivity was becoming more concrete, so was its position against heterosexuality. Thus, the homosexual “closet” represents one of democracy’s worst contradictions: that between freedom and toleration and the repression of the right to experience that freedom.

The Schundliteratur Law created a space for the containment of homosexuality that the trope of “under the counter” also illustrates. Putting homosexual publications “under the counter” created a symbolic and material barrier not only between homosexuality and heterosexuality, but also between adults and youths. The law helped constitute youth and homosexuality as separate and cohesive identities easier to identify, police, and regulate. On the one hand, by codifying who should and should not have access to certain information publicly, the law regulated who was to be considered an adult, and therefore capable of judgment, and who was to be considered a youth, and therefore vulnerable. On the other hand, by preventing the public display of homosexual publications, the law secured the borders between heterosexuals and homosexuals. This had important effects for the development of a homosexual

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<sup>537</sup> To use Douglas Crimp’s observation seventy years later, it was only as “queers became more and more visible, [that] more and more of us were getting bashed.” Douglas Crimp, “Right On, Girlfriend!” *Social Text* no. 33 (1992): 2-18: 15.

subjectivity during the 1920s. Ironically, as a homosexual identity was being constructed in more concrete terms, and as it was being politicized, it was also disavowing part of its past. The Schundliteratur Law contributed to the construction of a respectable homosexual whose sexuality should be private and only involve consenting adults. As we will see in the next chapter, the homosexual movement's investment in promoting the contemporary discourse on youth protection led to an attempt to separate homosexuality from pederasty, two erotic practices with a shared a past difficult to shed away.

## Chapter 6:

### Standing on the Side of Youth: Adolescence and the Decriminalization of Homosexuality

The relationship between youth and homosexuality could have ended with an embrace. In 1921, the pedagogue Gustav Wyneken (1875-1964) was accused of having committed obscene acts (*unzüchtige Handlungen*) against two of his pupils at the Wickersdorf Free School Community (*Freie Schulgemeinde Wickersdorf*), a secluded boarding school in the Thuringian Forest. Two youths, ages twelve and a half and seventeen, had revealed that Wyneken had taken their naked bodies into his arms one night. Once one of the students' older brothers learned about this incident, he threatened Wyneken to go public about the matter. Trying to avoid a scandal that could damage the reputation of a school that was already the target of public scrutiny for its radicalism, he chose to resign from his post as school principal. This was not the first time that Wyneken was going to be interrogated by the school board. The ministry of education had already expelled him from Wickersdorf due to his pedagogical ideas from 1910 to 1919.<sup>538</sup> This time his "exile" would not be that long. He was asked to return to the school nine days after his dismissal. Wyneken's colleagues, his students, and their parents did not doubt his innocence—even after he admitted that the embrace with the student had indeed happened. "Both youths had testified that I had loved them very much, and that they had loved me, as well. This was true," Wyneken stated in his exculpatory book *Eros*.<sup>539</sup> For him, and for the youths' parents, this demonstration of affection had nothing to do with a sexual crime. It was an expression of Wyneken's teaching method, his so-called "pedagogical eros."

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<sup>538</sup> Gustav Wyneken, *Eros* (Lauenburg/Elbe: A. Saal, 1921), 29.

<sup>539</sup> Wyneken, *Eros*, 32.

Were these accusations a complete fabrication, the fantasy of two sexually precocious youths? Wyneken had taken the two youths under his wing because they were, in his words, “mentally inferior” (*minderwertig*). He had hoped that their “camaraderie” (a central element of Wyneken’s pedagogy) would help them become better human beings. His statement about the students’ mental capacities aimed to cast doubt on their words, for Wyneken was aware that the testimonies of “inferior” youths (and of all youths for that case) were generally doubted. Psychologists traditionally evaluated “inferior” and “psychopathic” plaintiffs in such similar negatively; courts sided more often than not with teachers.<sup>540</sup> In a court of law, the adolescent remained a contradictory figure: sexless yet full of sexual excess—innocent and guilty.

Wyneken did not expect that a criminal case against him would move forward this time either. But in 1921 the courts and public opinion were changing: a teacher’s statement was no longer blindly believed. This change of heart was in part linked to Germany’s ostensible “inversion wave,” the fear that during the First World War and its aftermath youths had been sexually wayward and easily seduced into homosexuality.<sup>541</sup> The sexual abuse of youths by their teachers was a common instance of seduction and Wyneken’s case contributed to the spread of this moral panic, which, in turn, increased public awareness of homosexuality.

Wyneken’s embrace and the reactions it brought about in the homosexual press represent a turning point in the history of homosexuality in Germany. After this case and the scandal that ensued from it, homosexuality (same-sex activity involving adults) and pederasty (the erotic

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<sup>540</sup> William Stern, “Sittlichkeitsvergehen an Kindern und Jugendlichen” *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Psychologie und Jugendkunde* 27 (1926): 45-51 and 73-80. See also: G. Révész, “Beschuldigung eines Lehrers wegen unzüchtiger Handlung durch seine Schülerinnen,” *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie und psychologische Sammelforschung* 31 (1928): 385-407; Theo Herrle, “Psychologie und Sittlichkeitsvergehen auf der Schule,” *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Psychologie und Jugendkunde* 29 (1928): 433-444.

<sup>541</sup> See: Chapter 1.



relationships between adult men and adolescent boys) became two distinct forms of same-sex desire in the pages of the movement's press. Whereas the former was respected and celebrated, the latter became despised and discouraged in the League for Human Rights' and other publications.<sup>542</sup> Had adult youth leaders such as Wyneken sexually abused the youths they were overseeing under the pretense of education and mentorship? Whereas Wyneken's process confronted the youth movement with the "homosexual question," as Thijs Maasen has argued, the homosexual movement was confronted with the "youth question," as well.<sup>543</sup> This confrontation had significant repercussions for the development of male homosexuality in Germany during the twentieth century.

While historians have paid attention to the debates about the decriminalization of homosexuality during the Weimar Republic, but they have failed to examine the significant role that the protection of youth played in shaping them. Hans-Georg Stümke, for example, has shown how homosexuality was "almost decriminalized" during the Weimar Republic by paying attention to Magnus Hirschfeld's work in the Scientific Humanitarian Committee and the Cartel for the Reform of Sexual Legislation (*Kartell zur Reform des Sexualrechts*) and these organizations' role in the different attempts to decriminalize homosexuality from 1900 to

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<sup>542</sup> The history of classical pederasty need not be repeated here. See: David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990). In this chapter I am referring to "pederasty" (what contemporaries called *Knabenliebe*) the erotic interest (and potential sexual intercourse) between adult males and sexually mature, adolescent boys, a relationship that also involves a degree of pedagogical interest or mentorship. Pederasty should not be confused with pedophilia, which indicates sexual feelings toward children. See: Rüdiger Lautmann, *Die Lust am Kind: Portrait des Pädophilen* (Hamburg: Klein, 1994).

<sup>543</sup> Thijs Maasen, *Pädagogischer Eros. Gustav Wyneken und die Freie Schulgemeinde Wickersdorf* (Berlin: Verlag Rosa Winkel, 1995), 38.

1929.<sup>544</sup> Granted, the Cartel and the Scientific Humanitarian Committees influenced the Reichstag's Legal Committee (*Strafrechtsausschuß*) (a congressional group charged with reforming the German Criminal Code in the 1920s) in their deliberations about abolishing the punishment of male, same-sex acts. Hirschfeld and his peers used biological theories to debunk the idea that homosexuality was acquired, mostly through seduction.<sup>545</sup> Although Hirschfeld may have been the most prominent authority on homosexuality during this period, Stümke, and most recently Robert M. Beachy, have missed that he was by no means the only doctor writing about homosexuality or the only one to whom Legal Committee would listen.<sup>546</sup> In fact, Hirschfeld was being pushed to the margins of the medical profession (and of the homosexual movement) towards the end of the 1920s, not only because of growing anti-Semitism, but also due to the prominence of psychological and environmental theories about the etiology of homosexuality that opposed Hirschfeld's more physiological claims.<sup>547</sup>

Whereas science did play a significant role in the debates about the decriminalization of homosexuality during the Weimar Republic, it did not play a decisive one. The threat of the “seduction” of vulnerable youths shaped the debates instead. Examining the intersection of youth and homosexuality in the debates on the decriminalization allows us to challenge the narrative that locates homophobia in national-socialist discourse alone. This is not the story of

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<sup>544</sup> Hans-Georg Stümke, *Homosexuelle in Deutschland: eine politische Geschichte* (München: C. H. Beck, 1989), 67-68; Manfred Herzer, *Magnus Hirschfeld: Leben und Werk eines jüdischen, schwulen und sozialistischen Sexologen* (Berlin: MännerschwarmSkript, 2001), 86-87.

<sup>545</sup> Stümke, 72.

<sup>546</sup> Robert M. Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014).

<sup>547</sup> Anthony D. Kauders has made a similar argument about psychoanalysis during the Weimar Republic in “The Crisis of the Psyche and the Future of Germany: The Encounter with Freud in the Weimar Republic,” *Central European History* 46 (2013): 325-345.

Hirschfeld's science against the growing anti-democratic, illiberal, and reactionary political and scientific trends of the Weimar Republic.<sup>548</sup> Homophobia was not the domain of the Nazis alone. On the contrary, it had been given scientific legitimacy in countless theories since the mid-nineteenth century, theories that had been used to justify the continuing repression of same-sex desire. Homophobia could be blatant and it could be elusive in its most dangerous form, as in its apparently mild but far-reaching incarnation in the Schundliteratur Law. Exploring the connection between youth, homosexuality, and Paragraph 175 can help us understand how homophobia was both being transformed and transforming homosexuals.

Helmut Puff has encouraged us to “approach the history of (homo)sexuality ‘before homosexuality’.”<sup>549</sup> This appeal requires that we study the history of homosexuality before it became a medico-legal category in the nineteenth century. This chapter will take this question one step further by examining the history of homosexuality in its transitional moment from a medico-legal category to a social one shaped by homosexuals themselves.<sup>550</sup> In fact, homosexuality was a less stable category during the Weimar Republic than we have assumed. Doctors could not agree whether homosexuality was inborn or acquired, and therefore, whether it represented a real threat to the appropriate sexual development of youths. The men active in the

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<sup>548</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>549</sup> Helmut Puff, “After the History of (Male) Homosexuality,” *After the History of Sexuality: German Genealogies with and beyond Foucault*, eds. Scott Spector, Helmut Puff, and Dagmar Herzog (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 18.

<sup>550</sup> Harry Oosterhuis has argued that homosexuals were agents in the production of medical discourse. I would like to move us away from the circumscribed discourse of medicine, one in which the voices of homosexual men were only used to serve the doctor's needs, and focused on a public one instead that took place in the pages of the homosexual press and in which homosexual men actively participated. See: Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Homosexual Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

homosexual movement could not agree whether pederasty was an erotic inclination worthy of respect—one that they should endorse and promote—or politically harmful.<sup>551</sup> This chapter will explore this moment of instability. In particular, it will argue that the attempt to differentiate between pederasty and homosexuality took place at the convergence zone of medico-legal discourse and grassroots activism. Radszuweit and his collaborators did not stand idle when facing the push towards invisibility brought about by the Schundliteratur Law. Instead, they used the homosexual press to challenge the popular view of the homosexual as a predator of youth. To challenge that common perception, the League's publications depicted homosexuals as morally righteous individuals who had the same investment as heterosexuals in protecting youths and securing the future of the nation. This attempt, however, failed. Homosexuality and pederasty remained inextricable from each other in the eyes of Weimar's psychiatrists, legislators, and contemporaries.

The League for Human Rights and its members wanted to play an active role in the protection of youth, given the importance society gave to this discourse at the time. To do so, the League started an internal debate on the need to reject pederasty as a morally harmful form of same-sex desire. In countless articles, Radszuweit and other commentators shunned pederasty. They claimed to be fighting for measures that would protect youths and contribute to national

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<sup>551</sup> Whereas historians have complicated the differences between sex and gender, we still know much less about the history of intergenerational same-sex desire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Halperin has examined the classical dimensions of this phenomenon. David M. Halperin, "How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality," *How to do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 104-137. For an excellent analysis of intergenerational male, same-sex desire in nineteenth-century Iran, see: Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), especially 11-59. We even know little about age preference among homosexual men in the twenty-first century. Barry D. Adam, "Age Preference Among Gay and Bisexual Men," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 6, No. 3 (2000): 413-434.

regeneration. The League organized its own crusade against vice and male prostitution and supported raising the age of consent for male, same-sex acts.<sup>552</sup> In addition, the League distanced itself from older organizations that defended intergenerational same-sex relationships, such as Adolf Brand's Community of the Special (*Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*). By doing that, it attempted to put itself on the side of the youth and to secure the decriminalization of homosexuality.

Radszuweit, the League for Human Rights, and the thousands of members in this group were less interested in defending the innocence of youths than their own innocence. Kevin Ohi has argued that “[q]ueer culture [...] is *erotically* invested in childhood innocence, while straight culture is *morally* invested in it.”<sup>553</sup> Whereas James Kincaid has shown that heterosexual culture is most definitely interested erotically in childhood and youth, this chapter will argue that queer culture has also been morally invested in it.<sup>554</sup> This chapter is not about the moral issues surrounding sexual abuse, but rather the *moral investment* in claiming to protect youths. Those associated with the League of Human Rights chose to condemn pederasty, so that male, same-sex acts between adults could be decriminalized, and in order to be seen as respectable members of society. In the end a respectable homosexual could not exist. The homosexual continued to be seen as a threat to youths and their proper sexual development.

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<sup>552</sup> The idea of consent has not only shaped “modern” homosexual identity, but also the debates on pedophilia since the 1970s. See: Lautmann, *Die Lust am Kind*, 51; and David Finkelhor, *Sexually Victimized Children* (New York: Free Press, 1979).

<sup>553</sup> Kevin Ohi, “Molestation 101: Child Abuse, Homophobia, and *The Boys of St. Vincent*” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 6, No. 2 (2000): 195-248: 198.

<sup>554</sup> James Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000) and George Rousseau, ed. *Children and Sexuality: From the Greeks to the Great War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Wyneken's Embrace and the Growing Gulf Between Pederasty and Homosexuality

Wyneken's embrace started a heated debate in the homosexual press. Whereas some readers of the magazine *Friendship (Die Freundschaft)* came out to defend the man's innocence, others felt that the scandal had shed a negative light on homosexuality. In particular, Wyneken's denial of being a homosexual led to a discussion about the status of pederasty. Was the defense of pederasty damaging the homosexual movement in its path towards decriminalization? Friedrich Radszuweit played a major role in this debate. He completely rejected this erotic inclination and chose instead to heighten the movement's support for the protection of youth. Wyneken's embrace led to the widening gulf between the meaning of pederasty and homosexuality in the homosexual press.

Wyneken had tried to justify his embrace with his idea of a "pedagogical eros" and his personal understanding of youth. In his opinion, adolescence was not a period of transition, but a part of life in its own right that included its own characteristics and "culture," which he called "youth culture" (*Jugendkultur*).<sup>555</sup> The family only fulfilled the purpose of reproduction. Accordingly, youths should leave this unit after the onset of adolescence and continue their development in a community (*Gemeinschaft*) of like-aged boys under the auspices of an adult leader.<sup>556</sup> Wyneken did not deny that there was a certain degree of eroticism between this leader

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<sup>555</sup> Gustav Wyneken, "Was ist Jugendkultur?" *Dokumentation der Jugendbewegung I: Grundschriften der deutschen Jugendbewegung*, ed. Wener Kindt (Düsseldorf: Diederichs, 1963), 116-128.

<sup>556</sup> Wyneken became acquainted with the idea of the "pedagogical eros" in the writings of Hans Blüher. Both were familiar with Erich Bethe's *Doric Pederasty*, which described erotic same-sex relationships as an ancient form of education between adult men and adolescent boys. Erich Bethe, *Die dorische Knabenlieben. Ihre Ethik und ihre Idee* (Berlin: Verlag Rosa Winkel, 1983) [The essay was originally published in 'Rheinisches Museum für Philologie' 62 (1907): 438-475.]

and his disciples. This was a pederastic relationship, but he distanced pederasty from sex and the burden of decadence to which it had been linked. He believed that ancient Greeks were not decadent debauchees. On the contrary, *Paidierastia* (he preferred using the Greek term, probably because it highlighted its elitist character) had been central to Greek culture “during the period of its greatest flourishing and purest development.”<sup>557</sup> Wyneken tried to describe the “pedagogical eros” from the perspective of reform pedagogy and the youth movement, as the “ideal of pure friendship” and as a form of “chaste eros.” This was a “deeply elitist construction of erotic practice,” that it may have been less chaste than it pretended to be.<sup>558</sup> Wyneken tried to distance his “pedagogical eros” (which he continued to describe as an ethical and pedagogical problem) from homosexuality (which he perceived as a medical, psychological, or a legal problem at

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Wyneken had also been influenced by the ideas of Eduard Carpenter and John Addington Symonds. (Symonds would later reject this idea.) For an in-depth exploration of Wyneken’s concept of “pedagogical eros,” see: Thijs Maasen, chapter 3, “Der Pädagogische Eros: Hohes Ideal und alltägliche Wirklichkeit,” especially p. 69-79. The lack of attention that scholars have paid to concept (and this incident) is telling. In his tome on the Free School Community, Dudek only dedicates 10 pages out of 458 pages to the “pedagogical eros.” (“Der pädagogische Eros vor Gericht: Elternreaktionen und die deutsche Öffentlichkeit”, 276-286.) Moreover, he only addresses the unconditional support that Wyneken received from teachers, parents, and the liberal and socialist press. Dudek chooses to silence this uncomfortable chapter in the history of pedagogy—a sign of how dangerous the link between homosexuality was and continued to be. Peter Dudek, *Versuchsacker für eine neue Jugend*. *Die Freie Schulgemeinde Wickersdorf 1906-1945* (Bad Heilbronn: Klinhardt, 2009).

<sup>557</sup> Wyneken, *Eros*, 8.

<sup>558</sup> Wyneken, *Eros*, 154. Josephine Crawley Quinn and Christopher Brooke, “‘Affection in Education’: Edward Carpenter, John Addington Symonds and the Politics of Greek Love,” *Oxford Review of Education* 37, no. 5 (October 2011): 683-698: 687. Wyneken’s private correspondence with his students—particularly with Herbert Knitter, with whom he shared an apartment in Berlin-Neukölln in 1931 (with his parents approval)—shows that his intentions were hardly chaste. Maasen, 112-152.

most). In his published plea for innocence, *Eros*, he declared that it would be “a complete mistake” to use his case to fight for homosexual rights.<sup>559</sup>

Wyneken’s lofty ideals did not convince everyone that he was innocent. He went to court in 1922. There, the forty-four-year-old man admitted that he had spent “nice hours” with the two students. They had “conversed about Greeks and Romans” and “the spirit of that time.” He also recounted the cycling and hiking excursions with other boys and the nights they had shared during trips to Saalburg and Berlin. Wyneken had to confront explicit statements during the trial: he had allegedly kissed the boys on the lips and embraced them while they were naked; mutual masturbation and penetration were hinted at. Yet he was firm in his belief that *eros* was being misunderstood here for sex. He thought of “nakedness as holy.” “Kisses and embraces were for me only the expression of a very sincere and inner relationship and perhaps a new attitude towards the world,” he maintained. The psychiatrist Friedrich Leppmann, acting as an expert witness for the case, corroborated that *some* men had certainly “an erotic inclination for youths” and that these men were certainly “voluptuaries” (*Wollüstlinge*). Nevertheless, “one could not expect this for such a tasteful man like Dr. Wyneken.” Class and education should absolve the man, for deviance, degeneracy, and lack of respectability seemed to be limited to the lower class.<sup>560</sup>

Even though Wyneken claimed that “if Goethe were alive he may have shared my destiny” and that he was indifferent to the court’s decision (he thought his ideals to be too noble to be treated in a human court of law), he was sentenced to one year in prison on charges of

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<sup>559</sup> Wyneken, *Eros*, 24-5.

<sup>560</sup> “Der neue Wynekenprozeß,” *Die Freundschaft* 4, Nr. 42 (21. Oktober 1922).



sexual abuse of minors.<sup>561</sup> Wyneken survived the scandal but he was never able to find his place in society again.<sup>562</sup> The discussions about the differences between pederasty and homosexuality that this embrace had brought about left an indelible mark: from that moment on, homosexuality and pederasty started to be described as distinct sexual practices in the homosexual movement's press.

Few of the leaders in the homosexual movement came to Wyneken's defense. Only Adolf Brand and his Community of the Special (*Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*) championed the right to love adolescents and gave Wyneken unconditional support. Brand and his followers considered same-sex intergenerational relationships to be even superior to those between adults.<sup>563</sup> These group's ideas distanced this form of erotic desire from the medicalized gender-deviant notions of homosexuality that Hirschfeld and the Scientific Humanitarian Committee supported.<sup>564</sup> Hirschfeld's organization did not condemn the man per se, but the choices he had made in his defense. Eugène Wilhelm (aka Numa Praetorius), a lawyer and sexologist from Strasburg who wrote regularly for Hirschfeld's *Yearbook for Sexual Intermediates*,<sup>565</sup> claimed that Wyneken's

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<sup>561</sup> "Der neue Wynekenprozeß," *Die Freundschaft* 4, Nr. 42 (21. Oktober 1922). In 1922, however, the Supreme Court of the German Reich reversed the initial verdict. Wyneken was declared innocent. "Das Urteil gegen Wyneken aufgehoben," *Die Freundschaft* 4, Nr. 11 (18. März 1922).

<sup>562</sup> Wyneken died completely forgotten in 1964. Maassen, 42-43.

<sup>563</sup> Harry Oosterhuis, ed. *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Deutschland: The Youth Movement, the Gay Movement, and Male Bonding before Hitler's Rise* (New York: The Haworth Press, 1991), 86.

<sup>564</sup> Maasen, 183-4.

<sup>565</sup> *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen: unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität*, ed. Magnus Hirschfeld (Leipzig: M. Spohr, 1899-1923).

reliance on *eros* to exonerate himself was a sham, “nothing else than homosexual feeling.”<sup>566</sup>

Wilhelm had hoped that such a prominent figure would have lent respectability to homosexuality. However, he did not seem to be concerned that Wyneken’s erotic inclinations were directed towards youths. For him, the failure to acknowledge his homosexuality had been a wasted opportunity for starting a larger public conversation about homosexuality.

For the most part articles in the homosexual press considered Wynken an innocent man. “No one can believe that this man is guilty!” exclaimed Max Danielsen, the editor of the weekly magazine *Friendship*. For him Wyneken was rather a man ahead of his time, a fighter for freer and healthier love.<sup>567</sup> Many of the magazine’s readers felt that Wyneken had been a victim of bourgeois hypocrisy. Kurt Hiller, a leftist essayist associated with the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, called his conviction an “injustice.” A country keen on absolving murderers had condemned someone for “embrac[ing] a young human being whom he educates and who looks up to him.” However, Hiller’s support came also with criticism: why had he denied that he was a homosexual? Had he missed an opportunity to challenge society’s widespread prejudice against homosexuality? Hiller had hoped for a bolder Wyneken who would have said, “that’s right, I am one of them; your view on such things and people is so wrong!” “Socrates,” he concluded, “would have handled this differently.”<sup>568</sup> Hiller did not share with the readers how he thought Socrates would have responded. In any case, he did tell them that the judges should not be pardoned. They had handled the situation poorly, as well.

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<sup>566</sup> Numa Praetorius, “Einige Worte zum Fall Wyneken,” *Die Freundschaft* 5, Nr. 2 (13. Januar 1923).

<sup>567</sup> Max H. Danielsen, “Gustav Wynekens ‘Eros’,” *Die Freundschaft* 3, Nr. 45 (12. - 18. November 1921).

<sup>568</sup> Kurt Hiller, “Zum Fall Wyneken,” *Die Freundschaft* 3, Nr. 36 (10-16. September, 1921).

More important than the discussion of Wyneken's innocence or guilt, his unfortunate embrace started a heated debate about the place of pederasty in the movement. After the scandal, more readers started to treat pederasty with ambivalence. Wyneken's erotic inclination (and his excuses) turned into an embarrassing and politically damaging relic of the past. K. B., a reader who chose to keep his name hidden, admitted in a letter to *Friendship* that the statement "homosexuals harm youths" contained a morsel of truth. In the end, many homosexuals could not resist "the pureness, freshness and elasticity [of youth], their susceptibility for everything good and ideal, and their physical beauty." That attraction included a pedagogical aspect for sure: "One wants to live on—live on in their children." Since homosexuals could not have children, K.B. argued, they chose to pass their "intellectual imprint" onto adolescents via an erotic relationship.<sup>569</sup> K.B. was clear about how homosexuals could *help* youths. He chose not to say how they could harm them.

Not everyone was so sympathetic. Many readers of *Friendship* disapproved of Wyneken and of pederasty. Many thought that Wyneken was guilty and that he should have stopped teaching immediately.<sup>570</sup> An anonymous teacher wrote: "despite all the love that I, as an invert, feel for our youths, I cannot imagine and conceive of an erotic relationship between a teacher and a student, especially under 16 years of age." Adolescents above that age, the author maintained, were physically mature and essentially "free men."<sup>571</sup> Younger boys, in contrast, should be off limits. Such arguments were used to support sixteen as the age of consent for male,

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<sup>569</sup> "Der Homoerot in der menschlichen Gesellschaft Nr. 27" *Die Freundschaft* 9, Nr. 6 (Juni 1927): 172-179.

<sup>570</sup> "Wochen Allerlei: 'Dr. Gustav Wyneken geflüchtet'," *Die Freundschaft* 3, Nr. 12 (1921).

<sup>571</sup> "Der Fall 'Wyneken' (von einem Lehrer), *Die Freundschaft* 3, Nr. 37 (17. - 23. September 1921). The emphasis is mine.

same-sex acts, if only because sixteen was the age of consent for heterosexual relationships. This was a moderate attempt by the editorial staff to differentiate between pederasty—the love between men and adolescent boys—and homosexuality—the love between consenting, adult “free” men. This view still allowed for the eroticization of youth, albeit within certain age limits. Less ambiguous, and increasingly more common, were the opinions of readers who claimed that it would be rather “unwise” to support “the lovers of youths.” E. v. Hefeler claimed that the movement had made some progress towards decriminalization and acceptance, but “public opinion [stood] on shaky ground [and, for that reason,] one should not afford such extravagances.”<sup>572</sup> The consideration of pederasty as an “extravagance” illustrated how readers increasingly viewed such relationships as deviant and politically harmful for the movement’s main goals: social acceptance and decriminalization.

The opinion of homosexuals regarding pederasty was changing dramatically. Radszuweit would capitalize on this development, which he would transform into one of its strongest political slogans: youths had to be protected and pederasty condemned. A still unknown Radszuweit wrote a letter to *Friendship* in 1922. He was responding to a series of articles written by the entomologist (and regular contributor to the journal) Ferdinand Karsch-Haack. In his “Urning Chronicle” (*Urnische Chronik*), Karsch-Haack wrote on diverse homosexual topics, such as celebrities, historical events, and criminal cases. Whereas Radszuweit praised the author’s portrayal of celebrities (they were the movement’s pride), he disapproved of his treatment of criminals and, especially, of pederasty (the movement’s shame). Radszuweit argued that the elite might celebrate pederasty and see in it the possibility for the fulfillment of some sort of philosophical ideal. But the “masses” (*große Masse*) had a different perspective on such

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<sup>572</sup> “Meinungsaustausch VII. E. v. Hefeler,” *Die Freundschaft* 4. Nr. 24 (17. Juni 1922).

relationships, which they saw as deviant and harmful to youths. If the movement really wanted to attract the masses, something that was crucial for its success, it had to condemn these erotic inclinations and stress that sex with minors (regardless of whether they were male or female) should be considered criminal and shameful.<sup>573</sup>

Radszuweit's strong position against pederasty would inform his political agenda when he became the leader of the newly formed League for Human Rights one year later. In an attempt to placate some of the organization's members who may still have been ambivalent about intergenerational relationships, Radszuweit claimed that there was nothing wrong with the term "pederasty" (*Päderastie*) or with its German form "youngling love" (*Jünglingsliebe*). This erotic tradition had a *history* that should be known and acknowledged. This recognition did not mean that he was not concerned with the political implications of this practice for the movement. The word "pederast," he argued, had become tainted after Wyneken's scandal and its portrayal in the sensationalist press.<sup>574</sup> If the movement was to be successful in its goal of decriminalizing homosexuality, it had to distance itself from it. This time around it was not Wyneken who rejected homosexuality, but homosexuals—at least those active in the League for Human Rights—who repudiated Wyneken and his like.

The League's position on pederasty had much more to do with its "politics of respectability" than with theories about homosexuality that stressed the role of "seduction" as its etiology. As it happens, the League had been consistent in its description of homosexuality as inborn and natural in its program and articles. This was the position that many prominent

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<sup>573</sup> "Meinungsaustausch XI. Friedrich Radszuweit," *Die Freundschaft* 4. Nr. 24 (17. Juni 1922).

<sup>574</sup> F. Radszuweit, "Päderasten-Lokale," *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 1, Nr. 20 (1. Dezember 1923).

doctors, such as Magnus Hirschfeld, Gustav Aschaffenburg, or Alfred Grotjahn defended.<sup>575</sup> The League's leadership generally rejected psychological theories, such as those by Alfred Adler, which identified the origin of homosexuality in a trauma that had taken place during childhood and youth.<sup>576</sup> Nevertheless, Radszuweit and his colleagues could not dismiss that a large segment of the medical profession and public opinion continued to believe in the possibility of homosexual seduction. The League's support of youth protection measures, therefore, often felt like an endorsement of such views, even though it was a political and not a scientific endorsement. The League, after all, did not bother to make scientific claims. It did not bother to completely reject them either. "Seduction" thus became an axiom for the League, if only because this justification for criminalization was too important for popular understandings of homosexuality to be disavowed completely.

The League had to work hard to separate youth as an erotic interest from a political one. The League, as it did often with the covers of the magazines, eroticized the youth and, at the same time, condemned those who enjoyed these images.<sup>577</sup> Articles that condemned sex with youths could be sensationalist, voyeuristic, and titillating, even when they ended with punishment and rejection. This contradiction emerged likely from commercial interests: the handsome, athletic youth on the cover sold magazines. The question now was how to reconcile the adolescent's erotic allure and the need for his protection. Despite this contradiction, the League for Human Rights made the protection of youth central to its political campaign. Radszuweit underscored

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<sup>575</sup> Radszuweit, however, failed to mention that their positions were not always unambiguous. Albert Moll, for example, continued to defend that seduction was possible and recommended that the age of consent for same-sex acts be set at twenty-three years. F. Radszuweit, "Sexualforscherkongreß in Berlin," *Menschenrecht* 7, Nr. 2 (Februar 1929).

<sup>576</sup> F. Radszuweit, "Erziehungsmethoden," *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 10, Nr. 11 (17. März 1932).

<sup>577</sup> F. Radszuweit, "Knabenschänder!" *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 5, Nr. 6 (11. Februar 1927).

that the slogan “Protect Youth!” was more than empty words that the organization could use to appease the popular sentiment about homosexuality. The League was going to do everything in its power “to protect youths from seduction.”<sup>578</sup> Since this threat legitimized the repression of homosexuality, it followed that if the League succeeded in delinking homosexuality from pederasty, it could eventually be accepted and decriminalized. Even Berlin’s police chief inspector argued that this differentiation was essential in order to achieve the movement’s goals.<sup>579</sup> Radszuweit took that advice to heart and accommodated to such demands. He insisted that the League’s members make a sacrifice: to let youths go. Only this path would secure the decriminalization of homosexuality.

The protection of adolescence became codified in the League’s demands for decriminalization. Since homosexuality was a “natural” occurrence, the League for Human Rights demanded that “homosexual citizens [be exempt] from punishment for all homosexual acts that are committed by adult persons by free will and mutual consent.”<sup>580</sup> The League wanted to prove that the fears of adolescent seduction were ungrounded and exaggerated: homosexual men could control themselves; in fact they only wanted to sleep with each other. For that reason, the League demanded that the age of consent for male same-sex acts should be set to eighteen, public nuisance (and act often used as an excuse to arrest homosexual men) punished, and male prostitution criminalized.<sup>581</sup> Radszuweit assured that if these demands were met, “homosexual

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<sup>578</sup> F. Radszuweit, “Jugendämter bekämpfen unsere Zeitschriften!” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 6, Nr. 19 (11. Mai 1928).

<sup>579</sup> Kriminal-Kommissar Strewe (Berlin), “Jugendverführer,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 4, Nr. 11 (Nov./Dez. 1926).

<sup>580</sup> F. Radszuweit, “Der Streit um den §175,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 8, Nr. 3 (März 1930).

<sup>581</sup> F. Radszuweit, “Irrlehren über die Homosexualität,” *Menschenrecht* 7, Nr. 4 (April 1929): 10-11.

propaganda would stop and no one would speak about homosexuality ever again, so that this matter disappears completely from public discussion, just as it is the case in other states, where there are no laws against homosexuality.”<sup>582</sup> Guaranteeing the right to privacy implied limiting the homosexual’s freedom in public. The path towards acceptance looked more like a path towards self-obliteration.

*The League for Human Rights’ Campaign against Male Prostitution*

The League for Human Rights’ demands matched those of the lawmakers. At least since 1924, both demanded measures to protect youths, the criminalization of male prostitution, the harsher punishment of sexual abuse in relationships of dependence, and the condemnation of public nuisance. Radszuweit and his colleagues at the League were no idealists. In their opinion, supporting these measures would benefit *most* homosexuals. It was not clear whether this was actually the case. The sexologist Albert Moll had argued that the majority of homosexual men desired adolescent boys and that only a minority of adult homosexual men truly desired other adult men. Public opinion seemed to be on the same page.<sup>583</sup> Provided that this was indeed the case, many men would have to be excluded from the movement in the path towards homosexual equality. “We had in the League for Human Rights several supporters,” Radszuweit reproached, “who [...] have an obsession with hustlers (*Strichmanie*) and who wrongfully denigrate many young people whom they occasionally meet dancing at the ‘Florida,’” one of the League’s gathering venues at the time. Respectable homosexuals, he stressed, should have “a certain

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<sup>582</sup> Ibid.

<sup>583</sup> Albert Moll, “Ueber die Strafbarkeit des gleichgeschlechtlichen Verkehrs,” *Deutsches Ärzteblatt* 59, Nr. 1 (1. Januar 1930): 5-7.



conception of morality.”<sup>584</sup> Men who pay for sex (especially with minors) should be excluded from the movement. The League wanted to stress that homosexuals cared about morality, respected the same values as heterosexuals, and were not blinded by their sexual desire and needs.

Age of consent and prostitution were the two most common topics in the League’s discussions about decriminalization. Even though they appear to be two disparate issues, they were deeply related to each other on a basic level: male prostitution had always been about youth. Karl Keffon, in an essay on the topic for the journal *Friendship*, summarized the inseparable link between prostitution and youth: male prostitutes needed “certain qualities” and the most important was young age. Homosexual men, he continued, desire charming “young lads between the ages of 16 and 22 [or] 25 years at most.”<sup>585</sup> Youth and good looks definitively mattered for both male prostitutes and their johns. On a more complex level, the issues of prostitution and youth were at the center of what it meant to be a homosexual during the Weimar Republic. The historian Martin Lücke, for example, has shown how male prostitution became one of the ways in which the homosexual movement debated the decriminalization of homosexuality.<sup>586</sup> Lücke argues that the movement’s internal debate on male prostitution was

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<sup>584</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Strich,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 10, Nr. 7 (18. Februar 1932).

<sup>585</sup> Karl Keffon, “Männliche Prostitution,” *Die Freundschaft* 14, Nr. 5 (Mai 1932): 65-69: 69.

<sup>586</sup> Martin Lücke argues that male prostitution threatened the “order of sex relations and society’s morality.” He considers male prostitution a productive discourse from which we can learn how different masculinity traits were negotiated, contested, and rejected. In particular, he pays attention to the sexological, legal, political and social debates about “exemplary and abject masculinity,” that is, between “libidinal and socially acceptable sexuality” that the heterosexual and the homosexual man (in particular the male prostitute) represented (11). Martin Lücke, *Männlichkeit in Unordnung: Homosexualität und männliche Prostitution in Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2008). For an extraordinary analysis of male prostitution as a sign of the survival of Berlin’s homosexual subculture after the Second

actually about masculinity. Should homosexuals be respectable or deviant, masculine or effeminate men?<sup>587</sup> Talking about homosexual masculinity implied talking about sex between men. Was it acceptable only between adults, or was sex with minors acceptable, as well? If for Lücke the prohibition of homosexuality was a way to defend hegemonic masculinity by constructing the prostitute as a deviant male, the League's anti-prostitution position reinforced a relatively novel form of hegemonic homosexuality.

The League announced that those who failed to dissociate from youths would be excluded from the organization. The League would not protect men who were having sex with youths because "such acts are pernicious and should be punished" and because "such kind of homosexual men always damage the reputation of our movement and discredit the entirety of German homosexual men."<sup>588</sup> The League would not offer these men legal support, as it did with other members who had gotten into trouble with the law. Disapproving of male prostitution had clear political ends: the League wanted to claim a higher moral ground and respectability by protecting youths.

The prohibition against male prostitution became a youth protection measure because youths were the most vulnerable members of society in both economic *and* sexual terms. Male prostitution became such a relevant topic because it seemed to have increased towards the end of

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World War, see: Jennifer V. Evans, "Bahnhof Boys: Policing Male Prostitution in Post-Nazi Berlin," *The Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 4 (2003): 605-636. For the relationship between male prostitution and youth, see: Kerwin Kaye, "Male Prostitution in the Twentieth Century: Pseudohomosexuals, Hoodlum Homosexuals, and Exploited Teens," *Journal of Homosexuality* 46 (2003): 1-77; and Jeffrey Weeks, "Inverts, Perverts and Mary-Annes. Male Prostitution and the Regulation of Homosexuality in England in the nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries," *Journal of Homosexuality* 6, no. 1/2 (1980/81): 113-134.

<sup>587</sup> Lücke, *Männlichkeit in Unordnung*, 142.

<sup>588</sup> F. Radszuweit, "Bittere Wahrheiten!" *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 9, Nr. 2 (Februar 1931).

the decade.<sup>589</sup> The great depression was leaving its mark on Germany's youth at the beginning of the 1930s. Unemployment brought about adversity and misery. Thousands of young men, mostly between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five were streaming into cities looking for jobs. Many of these young men had resorted to prostitution to survive. At least this was the story that newspapers were telling. Newspaper articles reported that whereas only three or four hundred male prostitutes had been active in Berlin before the war, more than a thousand were active now in the city's streets, pubs, and dance halls. Male prostitutes were ubiquitous. They moved "from the dirtiest basements to the most elegant bars."<sup>590</sup> The situation was similar in large urban centers, such as Hamburg, where a hustling area, the so-called *Strich*, had appeared. The popular press lamented the tragic fate of most of these young men who had come from the country to the city looking for employment only to end up engaging in same-sex acts for money.

Such stories were reproduced in the League's publications. Many homosexual men, Radszuweit observed, felt that it was their duty to "help" these homeless boys, a euphemism for sex for pay. The League's leadership warned its members to be cautious about these young men. Before they became too "sympathetic" with them, they should consider the consequences. Men who associated with male prostitution were often victims of theft or blackmail, crimes that could end them in jail, and, in the worst cases, death. Radszuweit often put the blame on the youths themselves. These were lazy boys who expected to "become rich with this dishonorable

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<sup>589</sup> See Martin Lücke, "Sorge und Fürsorge—Männliche Prostitution in der Jugendfürsorge der Weimarer Republik," *Männlichkeit in Unordnung*, 154-232.

<sup>590</sup> F. Radszuweit, "Evangelischer Bahnhofsdienst gegen Homosexuelle," *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 9, Nr. 19 (14. Mai 1931). The news article had been originally published in the *Freiburger Tagespost*.

business” and who turned quickly into blackmailers.<sup>591</sup> And he advised those men “whose sexual orientation [*Sexualtrieb*] leans toward youth” to rely on their “self-discipline and strength of character” to avoid any conflict with the law. At the same time, Radszuweit claimed that the League “[had] warned male youths against moving to the city and has very often sent young, destitute boys back to home. This is proof that the homosexual organization wants to protect youths from seduction and impoverishment.”<sup>592</sup>

The League propagated a series of tropes taken from the mainstream press. Radszuweit did not hesitate to draw upon the same tales of civilizational collapse that conservatives had used to push support the Schundliteratur law to legitimize his fight against male prostitution. He compared contemporary German society to the “decay and moral corruption” of the Roman Empire. Male prostitution was a symptom of such decay and the result of larger social problems, in particular of the disintegration of the family. “Parents are required to work, [...] children are left without supervision, drift to the streets, fall into bad company, and are seduced to engage in sexual acts in exchange for small presents,” Radszuweit argued. “Above all society and the government should make every possible effort so that male prostitution would disappear from the streets.”<sup>593</sup> This action would help both youths and homosexuals.

Why would Radszuweit make such statements? Was his approach based on genuine beliefs or the product of a pragmatic realism? On the one hand, he wanted to show that the homosexual shared the same concerns about society as heterosexuals. Radszuweit wanted to

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<sup>591</sup> Ibid.

<sup>592</sup> “Eine Gefahr für die männliche Landjugend,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 7, Nr. 3 (18. Januar 1929).

<sup>593</sup> F. Radszuweit, “Männliche Prostitution!” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 5, Nr. 3 (März 1927): 1-9: 8; F. Radszuweit, “Männliche Prostitution... soll sie bestraft werden?” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 7, Nr. 18 (3. Mai 1929).

reconcile homosexuality with the “new morality” (*neue Sittlichkeit*), a comprehensive reform of values and a rejection of the over-sexualization of society that moral conservatives had undertaken during the 1920s.<sup>594</sup> Supporting this moral agenda, however, came into conflict with the League’s more liberal positions. The League tried to reconcile a conservative and a social-democratic agenda. While he blamed parents for Germany’s moral decay, he also acknowledged the larger structures of inequality that caused it. For that reason, and the League encouraged the government to introduce educational and social measures. The best way to prevent youthful waywardness was to improve sexual education (that is, to teach youths about sexuality, including homosexuality, in the most objective and scientific terms possible) and to provide young, male prostitutes with the housing and employment that would take them off the streets.<sup>595</sup> He recognized that economic hardship led to male prostitution, but also stressed that his was not an attack against economically challenged homosexuals, since the vast majority of male prostitutes were heterosexual. In the end, he thought, naively, that male prostitution would disappear if male, same-sex acts were decriminalized and equality was finally achieved. He pretended that homosexuals would voluntarily refrain from engaging in paid sex if they were able to have it for free.

Radszuweit chose fiction as a productive way to spell out his views on male prostitution, youth, and the decriminalization of male, same-sex acts. Published in 1931, the novel *Men for Sale* represents the peak of this campaign.<sup>596</sup> The title of the book, although sensationalistic,

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<sup>594</sup> For the concept of “new morality” (*neue Sittlichkeit*), see Chapter 4.

<sup>595</sup> F. Radszuweit, “Schützt die deutsche Jugend!” *Menschenrecht* 7, Nr. 2 (Februar 1929); F. Radszuweit, “Gefahr im Verzuge!” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 5, Nr. 8 (August 1927): 1-4.

<sup>596</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, *Männer zu verkaufen. Ein Wirklichkeitsroman aus der Welt der männlichen Erpresser und Prostituierten* (Berling: Verlag Martin Radszuweit, 1931).

disguised a story that reflected the League's moralizing approach. As we soon will see, *Men for Sale* was written once decriminalization was no longer feasible in the foreseeable future. The League's views did not change because of that. The failure to decriminalize homosexuality in the previous decade and the poor prospects for achieving it in the near future made his arguments all the more forceful. The book was a considerable success and by 1933 six editions had been printed. In the preface to the fourth edition, Radszuweit announced his intention of publishing a second volume upon popular request, a wish that he would not be able to accomplish due to his death in 1932.<sup>597</sup>

*Men for Sale* was not the first novel about male prostitution. It had a well-known predecessor. In 1926, John Henry Mackay, a Scottish-German writer and anarchist thinker, had published *The Hustler (Der Puppenjunge)*.<sup>598</sup> The novel tells the story of a fifteenth-year-old boy named Günther. One of his former school friends, Max, seduces him to go to Berlin under the premise—and promise—that lots of money could easily be made. Max, however, never tells Günther how he would be able to make a fortune like his. It was obvious, given his sophisticated appearance, that Max had been successful in the city. Characterized by the impressionability that young people share, Günther chooses to follow his friend's advice and runs away from home to try his luck in the big city. After wandering through Berlin's streets, unable to find work, hungry and tired, Günther ends up hustling in the famous Friedrich Street arcades, to which he had been attracted due to their mesmerizing window displays and the enigmatic presence of other roving youths. The story, although crude at times, romanticizes the milieu of male prostitution, the

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<sup>597</sup> F. Radszuweit, *Männer zu verkaufen*, Vorwort zur 3. und 4. Auflage.

<sup>598</sup> John Henry Mackay, *Der Puppenjunge: Die Geschichte einer Nanemlosen Liebe aus der Friedrichstraße* (Berlin: Rosa Winkel, 1999) (1926). Mackay had written regularly on pederasty for the journal *Der Eigene* under the penname Sagitta. Oosterhuis, *Homosexuality and Male Bonding*, 33.

world of homosexual joints and clubs, and its display of odd characters, hustlers, and johns. But this is a tragic life story. Despite the attention, care, and financial support that Günther receives from his admirer Hermann Graff, he ends up in juvenile detention and is subject to abuse there.<sup>599</sup> Whereas Mackay's novel had focused on the adolescent's fate, Radszuweit was interested in how male prostitution dramatically affected the lives of homosexuals.

The style of *Men for Sale* is straightforward—it uses the same plain language that Radszuweit employed in his magazine articles—but its plot is rather complex. The novel tells the intertwined stories of three characters: Erich Lammers, a private tutor at the Baron von Rotberg's house; the Baron von Rotberg, an unhappy married man living out his homosexuality in secret (a sign of the hypocrisy of the elites?); and Helmut Hintze, a young male prostitute from Berlin who happens to be Lammer's estranged brother and who is blackmailing the baron. Erich represents moral authority in the novel. He sets out to protect his employer against his blackmailer, but soon he learns that he will have to help both his blackmailing brother and the blackmailed baron. During his eventful journey through the streets of Berlin, Erich becomes acquainted with the city's demimonde of male prostitutes. The story unfolds in a series of visits to bars that contrast the image of reputable or “true” homosexuals with indecent or “pseudo-homosexuals,” heterosexual men who have sex with other men only for the money. Erich's brother, Hintze, was one of such immoral “pseudo-homosexuals,” who could only “sell his body without feeling anything.”<sup>600</sup> Erich, standing for Radszuweit's conscience, feels comfortable or disgusted depending on which setting he is in. When visiting a bar where male prostitutes or

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<sup>599</sup> Peter Martin Lampel explored the topic of abuse in his popular book *Boys in Misery*. Peter Martin Lampel, *Jungen in Not* (Berlin: J. M. Spaeth, 1928). See also: Werkstatt Alltagsgeschichte, “*Du mörder meiner Jugend: Edition von Aussätzen männlicher Fürsorgezöglinge aus der Weimarer Republik* (Münster: Waxmann, 2011).

<sup>600</sup> *Männer zu verkaufen*, 74.

transvestites gather, he feels uneasy. For Radszuweit, David J. Prickett claims, “transvestites are offensive because they underscore the heterosexual associations of homosexuality with effeminacy and of transvestism with homosexuality.”<sup>601</sup> In contrast, when visiting the places considered respectable—those that the League recommends—Erich feels relaxed. Members of this “respectable family” are a male couple that has been together for forty years.<sup>602</sup>

The “pseudo-homosexual” Hintze is the character most informed about the homosexual movement. He explains in detail the program and organization of the League for Human Rights, its magazines, and its vehement fight against prostitution and blackmailing. Radszuweit transforms Hintze’s character in a “didactic model.” (Why would a heterosexual male prostitute and a blackmailer become a champion of homosexual rights?) Hintze’s wants to make amends. His respect for the homosexual movement and the League for Human Rights is a step in the search for his lost morality and his return to heterosexuality.

The novel ends with a double reconciliation scene. Helmut Hintze takes back his birth name Herbert, a sign of his recovered old self. Together with his brother, he pays the Baron a visit. Rotberg, in turn, forgives Helmut and understands that his love cannot be reciprocated due to the latter’s heterosexuality. Afterwards, they visit their parental home together with another rescued young male prostitute they had found along the way. Herr Lammers, a Lutheran pastor, forgives his son and acknowledges the hypocritical position of the Church toward

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<sup>601</sup> David J. Prickett, “Defining Identity via Homosexual Spaces: Locating the Male Homosexual in Weimar Berlin,” *Women in German Yearbook* 21 (2005): 134-162: 150.

<sup>602</sup> *Männer zu verkaufen*, 85-6.



homosexuality. Indeed he is glad to meet a ‘respectable homosexual’ such as the baron.<sup>603</sup> Order is restored—and the novel ends happily.

The novel portrayed the model of homosexuality that Radszuweit and the League considered positive. The baron, an unsympathetic figure at first, regains his respectability by coming out to his tutor *and* his wife and, especially, by giving up his relationships with male prostitutes. The male prostitute Hintze, on the other hand, represents the other side of this problem, but his desire for betterment suggests that change is possible. In the end, Radszuweit suggest that respectability, educating the larger public about homosexuality, and addressing broader social problems, such as economic inequality and the Church’s position on homosexuality would lead to homosexual equality—to the homosexual’s happy end, so to speak.

*Men for Sale* was critically acclaimed. The book was a page-turner: “I bought the book at 12pm and was done reading it by 4pm,” exclaimed an enthusiastic reader.<sup>604</sup> Praise, however, came mostly from his supporters and friends. Paul Weber<sup>605</sup> argued that the book’s success showed the strength of the movement: “everything that has been undertaken against us has remained ineffective, the organization is here, lives and functions.” Popular books that portrayed homosexuals in a good light were crucial for the movement’s success, since “heterosexual people cannot be convinced about the injustice of Paragraph 175 with dry scientific propositions alone.”<sup>606</sup> According to the psychiatrist Siegfried Placzek, a long-term supporter of the League, the book introduced the masses to the dangers of male prostitution and its success relied on its

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<sup>603</sup> Prickett, 153.

<sup>604</sup> Paul Weber, “Männer zu verkaufen,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 9, Nr. 2 (15. Januar 1931).

<sup>605</sup> Paul Weber replaced Radszuweit as editor-in-chief of the League’s publications in 1932 after Radszuweit had stepped down due to illness.

<sup>606</sup> “Es äußern sich... Berlins bekanntester Strafverteidiger Rechtsanwalt Walter Bahn, Dr. Placzek, Berlin, u.a.,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 9, Nr. 9 (5. März 1931).

realistic portrayal of this social environment.<sup>607</sup> Readers reported that one could not quite know whether “this was reality or the author’s imagination.” “[E]very single one of us can see himself in your book,” other readers affirmed.<sup>608</sup> Radszuweit wanted to elicit a response based on emotions and identification, something that scientific books could never quite achieve in the same way.

The League for Human Rights’ position on male prostitution, however, did not represent the entire movement. The members of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee saw in that position a lack of commitment to full equality for homosexuals: if female prostitution had been decriminalized in 1927,<sup>609</sup> why should male prostitution be illegal? The Scientific Humanitarian Committee also argued that the policing of male prostitution would lead to more raids in gay bars and gathering places, and that business owners could be accused of procuring if prostitutes happened to be in their shops. For the League, such opinions seemed senseless and politically dangerous. Radszuweit did not think that Berlin’s police department—with its strong record of tolerance—would be so unreasonable. In the end, the police department knew male prostitution spots very well and had not launched a comprehensive attack against them.<sup>610</sup> Radszuweit and most of those who read his publications had faith in the police department and that society would ultimately accept the respectable homosexual.

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<sup>607</sup> Ibid.

<sup>608</sup> Paul Weber, “Männer zu verkaufen,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 9, Nr. 2 (15. Januar 1931).

<sup>609</sup> On prostitution during the Weimar Republic, see: Victoria T. Harris, *Selling Sex in the Reich: Prostitutes in German Society, 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Julia Roos, “Backlash against Prostitutes’ Rights: Origins and Dynamics of Nazi Prostitution Policies,” *Sexuality and German Fascism*, ed. Dagmar Herzog (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 68; and Annette F. Timm, “Sex with a Purpose: Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and Militarized Masculinity in the Third Reich,” *Sexuality and German Fascism*, 223-255.

<sup>610</sup> F. Radszuweit, “WhK und männliche Prostitution,” *Menschenrecht* 7, Nr. 8 (August 1929).

*Raising the Age of Consent and the Decriminalization of Male Homosexuality*

Whereas the League's rejection of male prostitution was central to an internal agenda that emphasized respectability, its focus on raising the age of consent for male, same-sex acts was the clearest sign of its willingness to accommodate to society's prejudice about homosexuals as seducers of youth, if doing so would bring the movement closer to decriminalization. Youth had been central to the development of theories of inborn and acquired homosexuality.<sup>611</sup> In 1929, however, medical opinion played an important but not a definitive role in the debates on decriminalization. In contrast, the protection of youth from homosexual seduction became central to such debates. Even Magnus Hirschfeld, who otherwise strongly believed that homosexuality was inborn and that homosexual seduction did not exist, was aware that pederasty raised concerns about the seduction of youths into homosexuality and that defending this practice made achieving the movement's goals more difficult.<sup>612</sup>

The League's support for raising the age of consent for male, same-sex acts brought the organization—and the homosexual movement as a whole—internal trouble. By raising the age of consent, the League sought to differentiate homosexuality from pederasty. The former should be a condoned erotic and romantic practice involving consenting, adult men; the latter should be codified as an expression of criminal same-sex acts between adults and minors. The complex political dynamics during the Weimar Republic prevented the Reichstag from moving forward with a revised Criminal Code that would have satisfied such demands.

The reform of Germany's criminal code had been long in the making, but it was not until 1929 that it had any chance to succeed, largely due to changing views on crime and

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<sup>611</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>612</sup> Florian Mildenerberger, *Beispiel: Peter Schult. Pädophilie im öffentlichen Diskurs* (Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2006), 24-32.

homosexuality.<sup>613</sup> Wilhelm Kahl (1849-1932), a member of the national-liberal German People's Party (*Deutsche Volkspartei*) and a professor of Law at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in

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<sup>613</sup>A reformed criminal code never made it past the Reichstag's Legal Committee (*Strafrechtsausschuß*) and was never considered for plenary vote during the Weimar Republic. Wilhelm Kahl had been involved with the project of legal reform since 1902 when the State Secretary, Arnold Nieberding, had put together a committee of eight law professors, including the prominent Franz von Liszt to discuss a possible the modernization of the German Imperial Criminal Code (*Reichsstrafgesetzbuch*—RStGB). The purpose was to make the law more compatible with other European nations and to create a milder code oriented towards reintegration and crime prevention. Together with von Liszt, Kahl had introduced the first failed steps to draft a new criminal code in 1909, in 1911, and again in 1913, when the war thwarted its advance. It was not until 1919 that a complete draft was ready to be discussed on the floor of the Reichstag. The revisions in the 1920s introduced important changes that made its approval difficult. In 1922, and under the leadership of the Social-democratic justice minister Gustav von Radbruch, the death penalty and *Zuchstrafe* (a harsher form of imprisonment that included forced labor) were abolished in the draft, decisions that made moving forward with it impossible, since the parliament was deeply divided on these issues.

The reform of the Criminal Code also aimed to introduce a unified law in Germany and Austria. It was a bilateral process of negotiation under a Criminal Law Conference (*Strafrechtskonferenz*). Austria was a more conservative partner, especially in terms of morality laws. A divided Reichstag and *Strafrechtskonferenz*, therefore, were unlikely to vote for the liberalization of controversial issues such as the death penalty, blasphemy (*Gotteslästerung*), abortion, pornography, and homosexuality.

The Reichstag spent most of its energy in drafting and revising a bill that sought to counterbalance political extremism and terrorism, the so-called "Law for the Protection of the Republic" (*Republikenschutzgesetz*). Revised drafts of the new criminal code were brought to the Reichsrat, Germany's high legislative chamber, in 1919, 1922, 1925 and 1927, but the political instability of the Republic and, in particular, the dissolution of the Reichstag in 1928 halted the bill once again. The Legal Reform Committee was able to meet 127 times during the Reichstag's fourth legislature (1928-1930) but the project faltered in the end, just as moderate, democratic parties (*bürgerliche Parteien*) were losing power. The 1930 Reichstag signed a bill to proceed with legal reform but it was clear that this reform would never move forward, given the Reichstag's antiparliamentarian and antidemocratic turn. The NSDAP had a different vision for legal reform that would result in the nazification of the criminal code. Despite these apparent failures, legal reform—if not of the criminal code as such—achieved some success in other areas related to sexuality, such as in the legalization of abortion, the law for the prevention of venereal diseases, and the legalization of prostitution. Far-reaching was also the reform of laws involving juvenile crime, such as the increase of the age of criminal responsibility from 12 to 14 years. The *Jugendgerichtsgesetz*, in fact, increased the legal protection of children and contributed to the definition of youth as vulnerable and subject to special treatment, a belief that the Trash and Filth Law also aimed to reify. See: Eberhard Schmidt, *Einführung in die Geschichte der deutschen*

Berlin, was the chairman of the Reichstag's Legal Committee (*Strafrechtsausschuß*) and the leading voice in the parliamentary debates on the decriminalization of homosexuality. He had been part of a long tradition in legal reform that his mentor, the acclaimed legal scholar Franz von Liszt (1851-1919) had started. Von Liszt's ideas are the typical example of an epistemological shift that had taken root in Germany around the turn of the century—and that continued to be prevalent during the 1920s—a move from an anthropological to a sociological school of legal thought. Contrary to Cesare Lombroso's idea of the “born criminal,” von Liszt argued that the environment deeply influenced an individual's development. Not only those active in this school agreed on the importance of the *Milieu*. Medical doctors, psychologists, and psychiatrists took the environment into account, as well. This was particularly the case in their views on homosexuality. During the 1920s, most scientists continued to trace the etiology of homosexuality to some environmental factor, often to an instance of seduction, as much as they thought of it as an inborn, pathological, and degenerative trait. Such views impacted Kahl's and the Legal Committee's decision: the possibility of homosexual seduction was never taken out of consideration, Hirschfeld's prominent theories notwithstanding. If there was no “born criminal,” it was likely that there was no “born homosexual” either.<sup>614</sup>

Despite the links between legal and medical theories, Kahl was not interested in medical theories when discussing homosexuality because they were generally inconclusive. He opted for a *legal* argument instead. Like von Liszt, Kahl thought that criminality was a “legal concept” that changed according to morals and behaviors. He treated homosexuality as a similar legal concept

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*Strafrechtspflege* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1995), 395-411. See also: Werner Schubert und Jürgen Regge, eds. *Quellen zur Reform des Straf- und Strafprozeßrechts. Abteilung I Weimarer Republik (1918-1932), Band I Entwürfe zu einem Strafgesetzbuch (1919, 1922, 1924/25 und 1927)* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995).

<sup>614</sup> Schmidt, *Einführung in die Geschichte der deutschen Strafrechtspflege*, 359-379.

that had failed to fulfill its social purpose. Most cases involving same-sex acts were never brought to court, mostly because such acts took place in private and were difficult to prove in court. The law was “ineffective” and only crimes, such as blackmail, that were preventable in other ways. Kahl may have been skeptical about the law, but he was no supporter of homosexuality or the homosexual movement. Despite his lack of faith in the utility of Paragraph 175 and his ambivalence about medical theories, he firmly believed in the possibility of homosexual seduction, just as many prominent doctors did.

Some representatives of the medical profession were upset about Kahl’s focus on legal arguments at the expense of medical ones. Julius Schwalbe, the editor of the *German Medical Weekly* (*Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift*), Germany’s leading medical journal, argued that Kahl had ignored medical doctors’ views on homosexuality,<sup>615</sup> something which they most likely perceived as a diminishment of their influence in society and political affairs. Had not the entire debate surrounding homosexuality since the late 1890s used the language of pathology and psychiatry? Why was the focus now on legal terms? To reclaim some lost ground, Schwalbe invited a series of prominent professors, psychiatrists, and forensic doctors at Germany’s leading universities and psychiatric wards to express their opinion on the decriminalization of homosexuality. As we saw in Chapter 1, theories of acquired homosexuality and seduction continued to be as relevant as ever before. In fact, it seemed that Hirschfeld was standing alone in his theory of inborn homosexuality.

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<sup>615</sup> “Stellungnahme zu einer Aufhebung des §175 RStGB. Eine Umfrage,” *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift* 56, Nr. 3 (17. Januar 1930): 85-86; “Stellungnahme zu einer Aufhebung des §175 RStGB. Eine Umfrage,” *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift* 56, Nr. 4 (24. Januar 1930): 127-130; and “Antworten auf die Umfrage der ‘Deutschen Medizinischen Wochenschrift’ Heft 3 und 4 (1930),” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 8, Nr. 4 (Mai 1930).

Most psychiatrists may not have fully agreed with Hirschfeld, and many had very negative views on homosexuality. This does not mean that most of them supported holding on to Paragraph 175. Nevertheless, even these doctors believed that the seduction of youths should be punished. Some German psychiatrists had not completely dismissed the link between homosexuality and degeneration during the 1920s. Karl Bonhoeffer, a professor of neurology and psychiatry in Berlin and the director of the Charité's mental clinic, continued to argue throughout the decade that homosexuality was not inborn, but rather a psychological disorder that afflicted psychopathic individuals, "who due to any combination of affairs end up homosexual," commonly the result of wrong development and homosexual seduction. Paragraph 175 tried to prevent instances that would lead to such faulty development and it needed to stay on the books for that reason.

Oswald Bumke, who sat at the chair in psychiatry at the University of Munich that Emil Kraepelin had formerly occupied, agreed that homosexual seduction was common, but that the law failed to prevent it. Like many other supporters of decriminalization, he argued that decriminalization and the ensuing end to the spread of "disgusting and criminal propaganda" about homosexuality would be more successful than Paragraph 175 itself.<sup>616</sup> Wilhelm Weygandt, the director of Hamburg's mental hospital, also supported decriminalization. He argued that most homosexuals were "constitutionally degenerate," and that the characteristics of the other sex could be identified (a view that was closer to Hirschfeld's). At the same time he believed that homosexuality need not be pathological either: the lack of access to heterosexual intercourse and sexual excess, for example, could lead to same-sex acts, which could develop into

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<sup>616</sup> "Stellungnahme zu einer Aufhebung des §175," *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift*: 86-87.

homosexuality. This affected nonetheless only a minority of cases and should not determine the fate of the majority of homosexual men who could do nothing against their condition.

Arthur Hübner, a psychiatrist and forensic doctor in Bonn, doubted that homosexuality represented a threat to the state or society and argued that it should not be punished for that reason. However, like Weygandt's, his opinion was a matter of *what* type of homosexuality should be made legal. Certainly, exemption from punishment should be considered only in cases where such acts took place “in silence, without causing public offense, without coercion, without commercial nature” and as long as the “offenders are of the age of criminal responsibility.” Despite Hübner's apparent benevolence, men who engaged in same-sex acts would remain offenders, unless they made their sexuality—and potentially themselves—quiet and invisible, a view that run counter to the League's efforts in homosexual visibility, but which highlighted how contradictory the League's approach was, as well. If there was one point of consensus among all these psychiatrists, it was that youths under eighteen—the age that had been somewhat consensually agreed upon as the entry into adulthood— had to be protected from homosexuals.

The homosexual movement had a reason to celebrate: many prominent psychiatrists supported decriminalization. Instead of focusing on the imminent threat that decriminalization may imply for the survival of the homosexual movement and its press, Radszuweit stressed that setting the age of consent at eighteen was a condition to prevent seduction, a view that the League accepted as a compromise in the path towards decriminalization.<sup>617</sup> The League, however, could not dispel the myth of the homosexual as the “seducer” and “recruiter” of youth. An article by Bruno Balz in *The Journal of Friendship (Das Freundschaftsblatt)* titled “Youth, We Call You!” called into question the sincerity of the League's demands for raising the age of

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<sup>617</sup> F. Radszuweit, “Kritik der Zeit,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 8, Nr. 6 (Juni 1930).



consent.<sup>618</sup> The article could be read as a direct call to youths to join the League's ranks. Balz discussed the success that political parties had had in attracting (and radicalizing) youths and how unsuccessful the League had been in doing so. This was a direct call to action: more youths should become members of the organization if they wanted to achieve the "liberation of homosexuals from a rabid law [and] from dumb and wrong assumptions" and gain "equality of all kinds."<sup>619</sup> The members of the Schundliteratur Vetting Offices could have easily misinterpreted this message. And, as a matter of fact, the magazine was included in the Schundliteratur List shortly after it had been published. In the eyes of legislators, the homosexual and his press remained a threat to youths.

The different drafts of the criminal code over the 1920s allow us to see how discussing the age of consent shaped the Legal Committee's debates. In the 1919 draft of the criminal code, Paragraph 175 still punished male, same-sex acts, male prostitution, and bestiality (*Unzucht mit Tieren*) with prison terms. Same-sex acts with minors were punished with even harsher *Zuchthaus* sentences.<sup>620</sup> In the 1922 draft, the punishment of bestiality and adult, male, same-sex acts had been repealed. The 1924 draft punished male, same-sex acts again and made the definition of such acts more concrete by introducing the concept of "intercourse-like acts" (*beischlafähnliche Handlungen*), a vague phrase that left kissing, fondling, caressing, or mutual masturbation unpunished. While the 1924 draft seemed generally milder, it introduced a new law

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<sup>618</sup> Balz was the writer of the popular 1924 gay tune *Little Boy, Let us Be Friends*, (*Bubi, laß uns Freunde sein*) an ambiguous title in itself. See: Ralf Jörg Raber, "'Wir sind... wie wir sind!' Homosexualität auf Schallplatte 1900-1936," *Invertito—Jahrbuch für die Geschichte der Homosexualitäten* 5 (2003): 39-66: 64.

<sup>619</sup> B. Bz. (Bruno Balz), "Jugend, wir rufen dich!" *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 6, Nr. 24 (15. Juni 1928).

<sup>620</sup> Schubert and Regge, 72.

against “flagrant sodomy” (*Schwere Unzucht zwischen Männern*) that punished male prostitution and sexual abuse of dependents, such as students, apprentices, and employees and set the age of consent to the age of eighteen.<sup>621</sup>

The Legal Reform Committee was not able to move forward with the 1924 draft of the Criminal Code because its members were not able to find common ground on other issues, such as the death penalty. Like German politics in general at the time, the left and the right had irreconcilable positions; the center party’s position swung on an issue-by-issue case. The government, preparing for a possible positive outcome, came to the conclusion that the forces of the center-right were a majority and that in the most “decisive questions,” such as male homosexuality, the Center Party would decide the final result. The party was willing to accept the decriminalization of male, same-sex acts *between adults* if abortion, pornography and adultery were further regulated. Furthermore, the Legal Committee also felt pressure from the Austrian members of the Criminal Law Conference (*Strafrechtskonferenz*), which had a more conservative position regarding precisely such issues and wanted to keep all of these “crimes” on the books.<sup>622</sup> In the middle of the decade, even when the political composition of the committee was most favorable to decriminalization, the decriminalization of male, same-sex acts was not likely to happen.

The Reichstag’s Legal Committee had not decided on the fate of Paragraph 175 by the end of 1925. Another year had passed without success. In the meantime the movement was more

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<sup>621</sup> Reichsratsausschüsse VII, III und V. Berichterstatter: Oberlandesgerichtspräsident Dr. Mannsfeld und Ministerialrat Schäfer: Entwurf eines Allgemeinen Deutschen Strafgesetzbuchs. Nr. 174 der Drucksachen von 1924 (Vorläufige Beschlüsse der Reichsratsausschüsse in zweiter Lesung). BArch R 3001/5818, p. 76.

<sup>622</sup> “Mehrheitsverhältnisse im Strafrechtsausschuß und im Reichstagsplenum (1931). BArch R 3001/5825, p. 48; BArch R 3001/5824, p. 94.

divided on the issue than ever before. During that year, the League had continued its lobbying work: it had contacted all political parties, members of parliament, and government officials. Radszuweit reported that the national press had received the work of the League positively, to the point that public opinion was starting to support decriminalization as long as youths would be explicitly protected against seduction. Radszuweit was aware that Josef Frenken, the new (and short-lived) justice minister, as a member of the Catholic Center Party, was a “particularly strong advocate of youth protection” and stressed that the League, unlike the Scientific Humanitarian Committee “completely agreed” with such measures.<sup>623</sup> Although Hirschfeld rejected the possibility of “seduction” and stressed that the state had more important things to do than to “police morality,” he recognized that the movement needed to be united in order to succeed.<sup>624</sup> Nevertheless, the protection of youth would remain a divisive issue until the end.

The legal reform committee finally sat together to discuss the fate of Paragraph 175 on October 16, 1929. This was the glorious day—at least for the homosexual press—when homosexuality was “almost” decriminalized in Germany. The final draft of the law, however, strengthened the punishment for same-sex acts in general, even though some legal scholars claimed later that it did not go far enough.<sup>625</sup> Motivated by Kahl’s arguments, most members of the Legal Reform Committee agreed that there were legal and procedural reasons to abolish this law: judges had difficulty in proving or delineating “intercourse-like acts” (*beischlafähnliche Handlungen*) and in assessing whether homosexuality was inborn or acquired on a case-by-case basis.

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<sup>623</sup> F. Radszuweit, “Zur Jahreswende,” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 3. Jg. Nr. 12 (Dezember 1925)

<sup>624</sup> Magnus Hirschfeld, “Der neue §175. Ein Gesetz für Erpresser,” *Die Freundschaft* 7, Nr. 1 (Jan./Feb. 1925).

<sup>625</sup> Rudolf Klare, *Homosexualität und Strafrecht* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1937).

The Committee was still divided in 1929 and not every member supported decriminalization. Rudolf Schetter, a member of the Catholic Center-Party, continued to believe that homosexuality was on the rise. Whereas one could feel sympathy for an individual, he argued that homosexuality as such had to be condemned because it represented a “cancer for the wellbeing of the people” (*Krebsschaden am Volkswohl*), an ever-growing disease that was eating the nation out from the inside.<sup>626</sup> The position of the government towards the issue was more ambivalent. Theodor von Guérard, the Center-Party minister of justice at the time, claimed that science had not provided a clear answer to the issue, which complicated making a decision. In his opinion, homosexuality threatened marriage, the fundament of the state and society. He feared that decriminalization would increase the number of homosexuals. Guérard anticipated that prejudice would not disappear with decriminalization.<sup>627</sup>

The Socialist and Communist Parties supported the decriminalization of adult, same-sex acts, but the parties did not agree on every issue. The Communist Party justified decriminalization as an attack against the bourgeois morality and hypocrisy that the law represented. Arthur Ewert, a Communist representative from Thuringia, claimed that medical research was unambiguous on this issue and that homosexuality was inborn. In contrast, the more moderate socialist committee members accepted that at least some forms of acquired homosexuality existed and expressed concern about the seduction of youths. It was not mentioned whether this was indeed the party’s consensus on the issue or a political maneuver to find some common ground with centrist parties.

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<sup>626</sup> Reichstag IV. Wahlperiode. 21. Ausschuß (Reichstrafgesetzbuch). 85. Sitzung. Verhandelt Berlin, den 16. Oktober 1929. In: *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees, E.V.* Nr. 24 (September/Oktober 1929): 183.

<sup>627</sup> *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees* Nr. 24 (September/Oktober 1929): 185.

Kahl also favored a moderate outcome. He argued that the law had failed to prevent same-sex acts between adult men, fostered blackmail, and led many men to commit suicide. More importantly, Paragraph 175 meddled in adult men's right to privacy and their right to use their body as they pleased. That being said, not all forms of male, same-sex acts should be tolerated. After consulting with "judges, lawyers, doctors, and clergymen," he had come to the conclusion that homosexuality was not always inborn: seduction was not uncommon and youths its usual victims. For that reason, same-sex acts between consenting adult men should be tolerated, but instances of public nuisance and the sexual abuse of minors should continue to be punished.<sup>628</sup> Ultimately, Kahl and other committee members believed that the decriminalization of homosexuality would end the "rampant agitation and propaganda" that were spreading "homosexual ideas to the Volk." If seduction was a threat to youths, the homosexual press was its agent.<sup>629</sup> Abolishing the law would end, at least, some collateral evils. It would also put an end to homosexual visibility.

Despite the differences among its members, the committee voted to eliminate the law from the Criminal Code draft with fifteen votes against thirteen.<sup>630</sup> Adult, male, same-sex acts would no longer be punished in Germany, that is, if the Criminal Code were to be approved by the Reichstag. The Legal Committee's decision was celebrated in the pages of the League for

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<sup>628</sup> "85. Sitzung vom 16.10. 1929 (§296 Unzucht zwischen Männern)," *Quellen zur Reform des Straf- und Strafprozeßrechts. I. Abteilung Weimarer Republik (1918-1932), Band 3: Protokolle der Strafrechtsausschüsse des Reichstags*, ed. Werner Schubert (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 56.

<sup>629</sup> *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees* Nr. 24 (September/Oktober 1929): 187.

<sup>630</sup> The members of the Socialist Party (SPD), Communist Party (KPD) and the German Democratic Party (DDP) were in favor of the abolition of paragraph 175. Except for Kahl's vote, the members of his party (German Popular Party (DVP)), the German National People's Party (DNVP), and the Catholic Center Party (*Zentrum*) members of the Legal Committee voted against eliminating this law.

Human Rights' journals and in other publications of the movement nonetheless. There were not so many reasons to celebrate.

The possibility of seducing youths kept homosexuality a criminal act.<sup>631</sup> One day later (on October 17, 1929), the Legal Committee sat together again to continue debating a new law, Paragraph 297, which sought to punish “flagrant sodomy between men” (*Schwere Unzucht zwischen Männern*).” Behind these ominous words was an emphasis on the age of consent. The law would punish with prison male prostitution, male same-sex acts, the abuse of dependents, reciprocal masturbation, and even kissing, *if* one of the partners were to be younger than twenty-one years of age. The name of the new law alone created a crucial distinction: homosexuality could be divided into a relatively harmless form, that involving consenting adults, and a grave form that punish male, same-acts between adults and minors. For the most liberal members of the committee, this law seemed superfluous: the criminal code already accounted for the sexual abuse of minors and had increased the age of consent from fourteen to sixteen. Furthermore, the use of coercion for sexual acts was punished under a separate law. Why was there a need to create special measures for male, same-sex acts? The need to protect youths against homosexuality was the answer to this question, since heterosexuality was of the utmost important to the future of the nation and its institutions. If even the largest organization of homosexuals

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<sup>631</sup> Theories of adolescent sexual development justified such decision. The “critical age for male youths was by no means sixteen or eighteen,” as it was common believed. Experts argued that adolescent development [and] its typical characteristics, by which they meant sexual indeterminacy, “extended into the second half of [a man’s] the twenties.” “Beratungen des Strafgesetzausschusses des Deutschen Reichstags über den §297 des Amtlichen Strafgesetzentwurfs,” *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlichen-humanitären Komitees E.V.* Nr. 26 (Dezember 1929 /Januar 1930): 209-222: 220.

supported the protection of youth, what was going to stop the committee for making their desire into law?<sup>632</sup>

### Conclusion

The history of male homosexuality in Germany took a new turn after Gustav Wyneken's scandal. After the accusations of sexual abuse of minors that the pedagogue confronted, the homosexual movement's press could not avoid discussing the relationship between homosexuality and pederasty. Pederasty did not leave the readers of Weimar's homosexual publications untouched: they were supportive, ambivalent, or disdainful about the issue. In particular, Wyneken's case made the League of Human Rights consider how the homosexual movement could participate in the protection of youth, given the relevance that this discourse had acquired during the Weimar Republic. The League chose to condemn male prostitution and to exclude pederasts from the organization in an attempt to distance homosexuals from anything that could be linked to youths. Radszuweit hoped that by doing that, male same-sex acts between adult men would be decriminalized and that homosexual men would be accepted as respectable and productive members of society. In the end, the League sided with conservative forces and became more normative and exclusionary, a strategy that worked against itself. The separation between homosexuality and pederasty was never achieved. Weimar's legislators, with the support of relevant medical professionals, continued to believe that the homosexual represented a threat to youths. Homosexuality could not be completely decriminalized for that reason. The entangled history of youth and male homosexuality was far from over.

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<sup>632</sup> *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlichen-humanitären Komitees E.V.* Nr. 26 (Dezember 1929 /Januar 1930): 210.

## Conclusion:

### Youth and the Demise of Weimar's Homosexual Movement

The homosexual movement was divided about the outcome of the new Criminal Code. Regardless of what the different views on the new Paragraph 297 were, the future of the movement had been sealed on that October day. For Hirschfeld's Scientific Humanitarian Committee, the new law came as a complete failure, a sign that their radical program had been cut short. The organization saw in this law a continuation of the government's discrimination against homosexuals. For the League for Human Rights, in contrast, this decision came as a victory, even though the organization had not influenced the Legal Reform Committee's decision directly and the new Code had not been actually enacted.<sup>633</sup> The members of the League celebrated decriminalization as their own achievement and claimed that this victory recognized the League as the "leading organization" of homosexuals in Germany.<sup>634</sup> As a matter of fact, the League would be soon the only organization left. By March 1933, the once-vibrant homosexual movement disappeared as the result of Hitler's raise to power. Yet the League and the movement as a whole had already been faltering. The disagreement between these two groups on the age of consent and the law's final outcome led to multiple intrigues, tensions, and, ultimately, to the demise of the movement.

The homosexual movement had been divided throughout the 1920s on the issues of mass culture and youth. Were popular magazines the best way to spread the movement's message and

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<sup>633</sup> Both organizations expressed their contrasting views in their publications. Whereas the Scientific Humanitarian Committee announced that paragraph 175 had not been abolished, the League for Human Rights celebrated its abolition. "Kundgebung des Vorstandes des W.H.K. Der § 175 nicht gefallen!" *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees* Nr 26 (Dezember 1929/Januar 1930); "§ 175 Gefallen! *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 7, Nr. 12 (Dezember 1929).

<sup>634</sup> "§ 296," *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 8, Nr. 2 (Februar 1930).



to achieve its goals, as Radszuweit believed? Or should the movement stick to its older ways, trying to convince the country's elites that homosexuality should be decriminalized with medical theories? Finally, what was the relationship, real and discursive, between homosexuality and youth? How did the movement go about its protection, given the importance of this discourse during this period? These questions split the movement into what we could describe as two generations of activism. The first generation—that of Brand and Hirschfeld—was anchored in the ways of the past. Adolf Brand's elitist understanding of male "eros" and his support of intergenerational relationships made the Community of the Special controversial and unviable during the Weimar Republic. Brand's journal *The Self-Owner (Der Eigene)* catered to a group of men who were willing to publicly accept the erotic allure of youth, "pedagogical eros," and man-boy love (*Knabenliebe*) regardless of the political (and personal) harm this could cause to them or the movement as a whole. The decriminalization of male, same-sex acts was not a real issue for them either. In fact, Brand and his circle perceived this campaign as a vulgar undertaking (just as vulgar as its main promoter Friedrich Radszuweit was) that did not do any justice to the aesthetic and noble qualities of male, same-sex love.

The Scientific Humanitarian Committee was the oldest homosexual organization. Founded in 1897, it experienced its heyday in the years prior to the Weimar Republic. Its overreliance on medical theories felt dated during the 1920s and proved unsuccessful in an epoch in which reaching the popular masses was crucial to political success. It is understandable that after the debacle that became the film *Different from the Others*, the Committee was less inclined to use mass culture as a political strategy. Its members, however, did not give up their hopes to decriminalize homosexuality. The organization did not want to risk censorship with popular films, when it had been successful up until that point by spreading its ideas in scientific journals.

Youth became the real divisive issue for the Committee. The Committee's leadership perceived the League for Human Rights' (and the Social Democratic party's) willingness to compromise on the issue of male prostitution and age of consent as a betrayal to its values and demands for complete decriminalization.<sup>635</sup> It interpreted the Legal Committee's decision to enforce a higher age of consent for male, same-sex acts as a terrible failure for the entire organization and its leader. The organization was true to its values, but by the end of the decade it became clear that its demands were irreconcilable with the current political moment. The organization went into a deep crisis. Its main publication became a bimonthly, one-page newsletter by 1929.<sup>636</sup> On November 24, 1929, Hirschfeld stepped down as the Committee's president after more than thirty years in service.<sup>637</sup> Radszuweit saw in Hirschfeld's departure from the homosexual movement a good opportunity for the Committee to become a more successful organization under the leadership of Richard Linsert and Max Hodann.<sup>638</sup> He was convinced of the League's superiority, even though his leadership role was declining.

The Weimar Republic gave rise to a second generation of activism that the League for Human Rights investment in mass culture represents. Eduard Richter, in an opinion piece for *The Journal of Friendship*, argued that the Scientific Humanitarian Committee had used the "wrong

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<sup>635</sup> An den Vorstand der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands," *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees* Nr. 28 (April / August 1930): 274-275; Herzer, *Magnus Hirschfeld*, 147-9.

<sup>636</sup> "Hochverehrtes Mitglied" *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees* Nr. 23 (Juli/August 1929): 173.

<sup>637</sup> "Wichtige Beschlüsse der Obmannschaft des W.H.K. vom 24. November 1929," *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees* Nr. 25 (November 1929): 197-198. In 1930, he embarked for the United States, Japan, China, India, Egypt, and Palestine to give a series of lectures about sexology. Sickness and the political developments in Germany impeded his return. Herzer, *Magnus Hirschfeld*, 229.

<sup>638</sup> F. Radszuweit, "Kritisches aus unserer Bewegung," *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 8, Nr. 11 (1930): 1-2.

fighting methods” and failed to reach the masses, in part because mass support required that the organization change its position on male prostitution and age of consent.<sup>639</sup> Radszuweit commented that setting the age of consent to twenty-one did not correspond to the League’s demands, yet it was not wise to complain about the Legal Committee’s decision “because it could do more damage than good.”<sup>640</sup> The League sought to find a middle way that would allow for decriminalization while acknowledging that something had to be done to soothe society’s anxiety about homosexual visibility in public and the fears about the seduction of youth that this public presence instilled. The tried to minimize (and disable) this perceived homosexual threat by encouraging respectability, productivity, and, most importantly, by advocating the protection of youth.

The League’s assimilationist agenda had its disadvantages. An article in the last issue of the *Journal of Friendship* in March 1933, days before the Nazis would put an end to the movement, referred to the homosexual’s “right to existence” (*Existenzberechtigung*). Little did its author know that this phrase that would acquire a serious and literal dimension very soon. According to Dr. F. O. Hartog, the article’s author, the homosexual’s “right to existence” depended on his respectability. Scientists may have proven the natural existence of homosexuality. Yet homosexuals still had responsibilities toward their families, communities, and the state. Homosexuals had to lead productive lives, Hartog reminded his readers. They may not be able to “enrich the world with children,” but they could educate them. Such a valuable role would ensure that homosexuals be treated with respect, which was crucial if homosexuality

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<sup>639</sup> Eduard Richter, “10 Jahre Gefängnis wegen Vergehen gegen §175 R.St.G.B.” *Die Insel* 3, Nr. 21/22 (22. Mai 1925).

<sup>640</sup> F. Radszuweit, “Zum neuen Jahr!” *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 8, Nr. 1 (Januar 1930).

was to be decriminalized.<sup>641</sup> Whereas Hartog did not seem to realize that close contact with youths may be counterproductive for achieving homosexual rights, he wanted to stress that homosexuals had to play an active role in protecting and educating the nation's young—the future of the nation.

Assimilation into heterosexual society required a form of homosexuality that only involved adults and emphasized privacy. The homosexual should have “a certain conception of morality” and leave young boys alone.<sup>642</sup> For the League of Human Rights, pederasty had become an undesirable relic of the past that was politically harmful for the movement. Although Radszuweit's views resonated with that of legislators and contemporary society, this strategy had the potential to become a double-edged sword. Kurt Hiller, one of the leaders of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, claimed that the League's “step back, avoid fighting, and trust the development” approach was wrong. This over-optimistic position was putting the movement “on the side of conservatives powers.” The movement should not betray its principles and its demands for full decriminalization. It could not accept rights for some, while foreclosing freedom for all.<sup>643</sup> If the ultimate goal was the noble dream of equality, the new law and the League's support of its terms had failed to achieve that.

The League's leadership—especially its mastermind, Friedrich Radszuweit—was stubborn. The League seemed to stress that homosexuals should not be “different from the others,” but “just the same as the rest.” “We don't want to be disenfranchised and annihilated, we don't want to be degraded to second-class citizens! We also have a right to life and a right to be

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<sup>641</sup> Dr. F. O. Hartog, “Die Existenzberechtigung der Menschen,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 11, Nr. 11 (16. März 1933).

<sup>642</sup> Friedrich Radszuweit, “Strich,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 10, Nr. 7 (18. Februar 1932).

<sup>643</sup> Kurt Hiller, “Der Stand unserer Bewegung,” *Die Freundschaft* 13, Nr. 3 (März 1931): 33-35.

happy!” Hans von Laubblank, writing for *The Journal of Friendship* in 1928, complained that homosexuals should have the same rights and privileges as heterosexuals. “Aren’t homosexuals tax payers, were they not fighters for the fatherland and defenders of the home country (*Heimat*)?”<sup>644</sup> Being “the same” implied participating in the same economic structures as the majority; it implied supporting war. This was the bargain if the homosexual was to be “happy.” Laubblank’s article went beyond this message of assimilation. It anticipated what was to come. The author feared that the movement could not foresee where legislators would stand in the future: “Will not perhaps the next legal reform in a few decades include the death penalty?” In his opinion, homosexuals had to be united and continue fighting for their rights instead of rejoicing in their “complacency” (*Gleichgültigkeit*). Otherwise the future would be dim.<sup>645</sup> This was a call for responsibility and political engagement. Many members of the League for Human Rights, however, were not motivated enough by the end of the decade. While we could use Laubblank’s tirade to trace a straight path from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich, we should be cautious of such a facile connection. Despite Laubblank’s best efforts, the leaders of Weimar’s homosexual movement could not foresee the future. That being said, we can examine their shortcomings and their responsibility in the movement’s failure. The prospects were dim in 1928 because homosexuals themselves were not doing enough, not fighting enough, not demanding enough. The mass of homosexuals was too self-satisfied.

It did not get any better in 1929. After the Legal Committee’s decision to legalize same-sex acts between adult men had been announced in the pages of the League’s magazines with great fanfare, the League started to stagnate. Once the movement’s goal seemed to have been

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<sup>644</sup> Hanns von Laubblank, “Die versuchte Vernichtung der homosexuellen Staatsbürger,” *Das Freundschaftsblatt* 6, Nr. 5 (3. Februar 1928).

<sup>645</sup> *Ibid.*

achieved, its members felt no need to continue offering their support. Regional groups became less active than before. Radszuweit felt that his subordinates were losing respect for him. He accused the regional groups of not listening to the central organization and of sacrificing respectability for mindless (and immoral) enjoyment.<sup>646</sup> The homosexual's "complacency" had been in part fueled by the availability of entertainment venues that the League had created and supported throughout the years. Finally, the economic crisis of 1929 was hurting young blue- and white-collar workers and business owners alike—the bulk of the League's membership.<sup>647</sup> Jobless members could no longer pay their fees, attend the League's events, or purchase its magazines. As a consequence, the League had less money for advocacy and "propaganda."<sup>648</sup> The movement had been run "like a business," but this venture was not profitable anymore.

The movement's leaders had every reason to be pessimistic about the near future once the government took a conservative turn. After 1929, the prospect for total decriminalization was over. The growing political polarization and the economic crisis in 1929-1930 halted any further discussion of the reform of the Criminal Code.<sup>649</sup> In the summer of 1932 the Reichstag was dissolved and new elections were called. The results would not be favorable for the homosexual movement's cause: the Nazi Party received 37.3% of the vote.<sup>650</sup> Paul Weber, the League's new leader after Radszuweit's death in 1932, did not want to give up because of the new state of

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<sup>646</sup> F. Radszuweit, "Rückblick—Ausbblick," (1931): 1.

<sup>647</sup> F. Radszuweit, "Lehrreiche statistische Feststellungen!" *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 4, Nr. 11 (1926): 34-37.

<sup>648</sup> F. Radszuweit, "Unsere Bewegung. Rückblick — Ausblick," *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 9, Nr. 1 (Januar 1931): 3-7.

<sup>649</sup> Herzer, *Magnus Hirschfeld*, 147.

<sup>650</sup> Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*, translated by Elborg Forster and Larry Eugene Jones (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 352.

affairs. The League continued to advise its members to support the three parties that promoted decriminalization: the Communist, the Social Democratic, and the German Democratic parties. The Nazi's victory was no reason to consider their cause lost. After all, Weber believed that the Nazis "had not made up their mind about the issue [of homosexuality]." In fact, he informed the *Journal of Human Rights*' readers (he certainly hoped that Nazi officials would be reading the journal) that many homosexuals could accommodate to the Nazis if the party showed a little bit more support of homosexuality.<sup>651</sup> How far was the League willing to go to achieve the goal of decriminalization? When would their willingness to compromise become untenable? Did the rights of others ever matter to the League's leadership?

Certainly, the League for Human Rights had shown great ability to adapt to changing political contexts. Its embrace of youth protection measures had shown precisely that.<sup>652</sup> In 1933, once the Nazi takeover was a reality, the League's leadership continued to stay positive: "there are many leading figures in the NSDAP who support the efforts of the League for Human Rights, but there also many voices, probably even more, we should assume, that do not want to know anything about it."<sup>653</sup> At least this time, Weber was right: decriminalization was unlikely for the time being. The Legal Reform Committee counted now with a majority of Nazi members. In 1931 the Committee included five National-Socialist votes and there was no reason to hope that they would change their mind on the topic of homosexuality. This alone ensured that a favorable reform of the Criminal Code would not happen any time soon. On the contrary, the Nazi

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<sup>651</sup> Paul Weber und Martin Radszuweit, "Zur Reichstagswahl," *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 10, Nr. 10-11 (Oktober/November 1932).

<sup>652</sup> Paul Weber, "Die Aussichten für das neue Strafgesetzbuch. Ein Rückblick und Ausblick," *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 10, Nr. 12 (Dezember/Januar 1932/1933).

<sup>653</sup> Paul Weber, "Reichstagswahl," *Blätter für Menschenrecht* 11, Nr. 2-3 (Februar/März 1933).

government would strengthen the severity of sanctions against male, same-sex acts with a revised Paragraph 175a in 1935. The revised law punished with up to ten years in prison *all* homosexual acts regardless of the age of those involved.<sup>654</sup>

It would be shortsighted to claim that the Nazis alone contributed to the League's and, for that case, to the entire movement's disintegration. We may never quite know why the homosexual movement disappeared "from one day to the next" in 1933, as Hans-Georg Stümke wonders.<sup>655</sup> But we do know that by 1929 the Scientific Humanitarian Committee was weak and leaderless. The magazine *Friendship*, the publication that ushered in the movement's use of mass culture, was only a shadow of what it had been in 1919. The League for Human Rights had lost most of its members and funding. In a couple of years it would lose its leader, as well. The abolition of Paragraph 175 had proven impossible and the Law for the Protection of Youth against Harmful Publications had eliminated most of the visibility that homosexuality had achieved during that period and decimated the movement's main recruiting tool.

Mass culture had failed to guarantee homosexual equality. The 1926 Law for the Protection of Youth Against Schundliteratur, in particular, exemplifies the limitations of mass culture for the homosexual movement and foreshadows some aspects of National Socialism, as well. As historian Dagmar Herzog argues, "however laughable Weimar-era censors might have appeared to be, they were the ones who had emotionally prepared the German people for Nazi

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<sup>654</sup> Herzer, *Magnus Hirschfeld*, 148; Steakley, 85; Hans-Georg Stümke, *Homosexuelle in Deutschland: Eine politische Geschichte* (München: C. H. Beck, 1989), 109.

<sup>655</sup> Stümke has explained the more intense persecution of homosexuality during the Third Reich was a consequence of the National Socialist obsession with racial hygiene and reproduction. I suggest that acquired theories of homosexuality continued to be popular during the Third Reich. We need to explore how the protection of youth justified homosexual persecution during the Third Reich and beyond. Stümke, 102.



“laughable” than historians would have it if we consider the fate of homosexual publications during the Weimar Republic. Despite their differences, all segments of society—including large part of the homosexual movement—agreed that something had to be done to improve the physical and moral conditions of German youths. The moral panic surrounding Schundliteratur and homosexual seduction as well as the efforts to curtail their harmful effects on youths were full of potential for repression, surveillance, denunciation, and a dynamic of group cohesion based on fanaticism and affect that came to represent the politics of National Socialism. The law, its intent, its enforcement, and its effects previewed the abilities of the state to control and discipline the young and to support conservative civil platforms entrusted with surveillance and denunciation of what they considered morally questionable.

Homophobia in the Third Reich followed an older path that had its origins in medical science and in the efforts to protect youth undertaken during the Weimar Republic.<sup>657</sup> The League for Human Rights failed to convince society that the homosexual was a respectable member of society. Throughout the 1920s and during the Third Reich, theories of acquired homosexuality continued to be popular. Efforts to protect youths against homosexuality continued after the end of the Weimar Republic. And the homosexual remained a deviant seducer of youths in the popular imagination. The continuation of this homophobic discourse during the Third Reich (and beyond) would not have been possible, had it not been for the great

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<sup>656</sup> Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 111.

<sup>657</sup> The protection of youths against homosexual seduction shaped the Nazi reform of the Criminal Code. In fact, the protection of youth would continue to play a role in the debates about the decriminalization of homosexuality until 1994, when Paragraph 175 was finally removed from Criminal Code. Stümke, 132-171.

efforts taken to protect youths against homosexuality during the Weimar Republic, efforts which, for better or worse, the League for Human Rights supported. Thus, at least for the history of the homosexual movement, 1933 does not only mean an abrupt break, but also the endpoint of a slow, self-inflicted death. Of course, this does not justify the brutality with which the National Socialist State treated the remaining organizations and persecuted individual homosexual men and women. Censorship and the harshness with which Paragraph 175 was enforced made the survival of the homosexual movement impossible. More than ever, securing normative sexuality became essential for the *Volksgemeinschaft* and for ensuring the future of the German nation. The protection of youth required the repression of homosexuality.

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