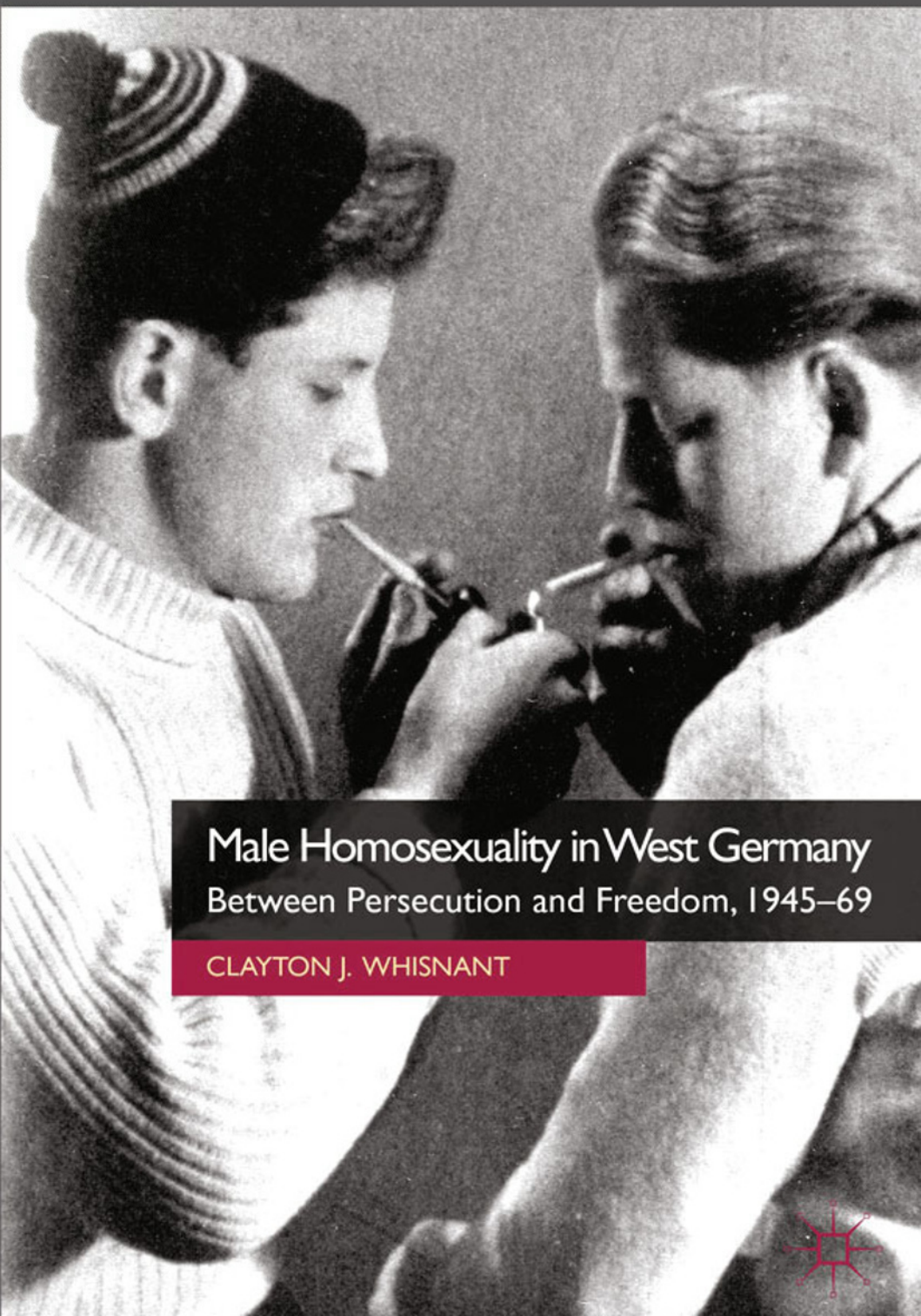
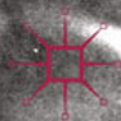


Genders and Sexualities in History



Male Homosexuality in West Germany
Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945–69

CLAYTON J. WHISNANT



Genders and Sexualities in History

Series Editors: **John H. Arnold, Joanna Bourke and Sean Brady**

Palgrave Macmillan's series, *Genders and Sexualities in History*, aims to accommodate and foster new approaches to historical research in the fields of genders and sexualities. The series promotes world-class scholarship that concentrates on the interconnected themes of genders, sexualities, religions/religiosity, civil society, class formations, politics and war.

Historical studies of gender and sexuality have often been treated as disconnected fields, while in recent years historical analyses in these two areas have synthesized, creating new departures in historiography. By linking genders and sexualities with questions of religion, civil society, politics, and the contexts of war and conflict, this series will reflect recent developments in scholarship, moving away from the previously dominant and narrow histories of science, scientific thought, and legal processes. The result brings together scholarship from contemporary, modern, early modern, medieval, classical, and non-Western history to provide a diachronic forum for scholarship that incorporates new approaches to genders and sexualities in history.

Male Homosexuality in West Germany: Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945–69 is a groundbreaking study of male homosexuality in the neglected period between World War II and the advent of the Gay Rights movement in the late 1960s. In this original book, Clayton Whisnant provides a meticulously researched, incisive, and fascinating analysis of the formation of male homosexual life and homosexual institutions in the new West Germany, following their near-total destruction during the Nazi era. Through its focus on the creation of intensely masculinist gay identities in West German urban subcultures, especially that of Hamburg, and campaigns for legal reform and decriminalization of male homosexuality in the 1950s, Whisnant repositions our understanding of the significance of this period in the broader history of homosexuality in Germany—and in Europe. This book challenges scholarly assumptions about the inevitability of repeal of the notorious Paragraph 175 of the West German penal code, inherited from the Nazi era, and offers a new and often moving account of gay men's lives in the socially conservative Adenauer years. It is a significant contribution to the debates on contemporary European concepts of male homosexuality, and of the history of sexual liberation. In common with all volumes in the *Genders and Sexualities in History* series, Clayton Whisnant's *Male Homosexuality in West Germany: Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945–69* presents a multifaceted and meticulously researched scholarly study, and is a sophisticated contribution to our understanding of the past.

Titles include:

John H. Arnold and Sean Brady (*editors*)

WHAT IS MASCULINITY?

Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World

Heike Bauer and Matthew Cook (*editors*)

QUEER 1950s

Cordelia Beattie and Kirsten A. Fenton (*editors*)

INTERSECTIONS OF GENDER, RELIGION AND ETHNICITY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Chiara Beccalossi

FEMALE SEXUAL INVERSION

Same-Sex Desires in Italian and British Sexology, c. 1870–1920

Peter Cryle and Alison Moore

FRIGIDITY

An Intellectual History

Jennifer V. Evans

LIFE AMONG THE RUINS

Cityscape and Sexuality in Cold War Berlin

Kate Fisher and Sarah Toulalan (*editors*)
BODIES, SEX AND DESIRE FROM THE RENAISSANCE TO THE PRESENT

Christopher E. Forth and Elinor Accampo (*editors*)
CONFRONTING MODERNITY IN FIN-DE-SIÈCLE FRANCE
Bodies, Minds and Gender

Dagmar Herzog (*editor*)
BRUTALITY AND DESIRE
War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century

Andrea Mansker
SEX, HONOR AND CITIZENSHIP IN EARLY THIRD REPUBLIC FRANCE

Jessica Meyer
MEN OF WAR
Masculinity and the First World War in Britain

Jennifer D. Thibodeaux (*editor*)
NEGOTIATING CLERICAL IDENTITIES
Priests, Monks and Masculinity in the Middle Ages

Hester Vaizey
SURVIVING HITLER'S WAR
Family Life in Germany, 1939–48

Clayton J. Whisnant
MALE HOMOSEXUALITY IN WEST GERMANY
Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945–69

Forthcoming titles:

Matthew Cook
QUEER DOMESTICITIES
Homosexuality and Home Life in Twentieth-Century London

Rebecca Fraser
GENDER AND IDENTITY IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA FROM NORTHERN WOMAN
TO PLANTATION MISTRESS

Julia Laite
PROSTITUTION AND REPRESSION IN THE METROPOLIS
Criminalization and the Shaping of Commercial Sex in London, 1885–1960

Melissa Hollander
SEX IN TWO CITIES
The Negotiation of Sexual Relationships in Early Modern England and Scotland

Genders and Sexualities in History Series
Series Standing Order 978-0-230-55185-5 Hardback
978-0-230-55186-2 Paperback
(*outside North America only*)

You can receive future titles in this series as they are published by placing a standing order. Please contact your bookseller or, in case of difficulty, write to us at the address below with your name and address, the title of the series and the ISBN quoted above.

Customer Services Department, Macmillan Distribution Ltd, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS, England

Male Homosexuality in West Germany

**Between Persecution and Freedom,
1945–69**

Clayton J. Whisnant

Wofford College, USA

palgrave
macmillan



© Clayton J. Whisnant 2012

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2012 978-0-230-35500-2

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The author has asserted his right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2012 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-34681-3 ISBN 978-1-137-02834-1 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9781137028341

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12

For my family

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
<i>List of Abbreviations and Translations</i>	x
<i>Note on Terminology</i>	xi
1 Introduction: The Neglected Postwar Period	1
2 Policing and Prejudice after 1945	15
3 The Homophile Movement	64
4 Struggle over the Gay Scenes' Boundaries	112
5 Reforming Paragraph 175	166
6 Conclusion: Between Persecution and Freedom	204
<i>Notes</i>	213
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	246
<i>Index</i>	253

Acknowledgements

Several institutions gave me research money, without which I could never have completed this book. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) provided a year-long scholarship in 1998–9 so that I could work extensively in the *Staatsarchiv* and the many university libraries in Hamburg. Support from the History Department and the Graduate School at the University of Texas, Austin, allowed me to finish my research in Hamburg and make a short trip to Koblenz. Last, two professional development grants from Wofford College allowed me to make a final visit to Germany in 2002 and then to devote a summer to writing in 2008.

The staff at the following archives and libraries helped me hunt down sources for my project: the *Staatsarchiv* in Hamburg, the *Bundesarchiv* in Koblenz, the *Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg*, the *Staatsbibliothek Berlin*, and Wofford's Sander-Teszler Library. In particular, I would like to thank Frau Irmgard Mummmenthey in Hamburg's *Staatsarchiv*, who patiently helped me acquire the necessary permissions to see the many documents necessary for my research. I also wish to express my appreciation to Manfred Baumgardt and the rest of the staff at the *Schwules Museum* in Berlin, who welcomed me twice into their archive, clearing some space for me to work as I read through their impressive collection of gay magazines from the 1950s and other assorted material. The work they have done in both collecting historical documents and then presenting them in a number of publications and exhibitions has been invaluable to all of us interested in German gay history. Last, I should mention the Interlibrary Loan staff, whose service makes it possible to carry on research at small institutions of learning like Wofford College.

In addition, a number of individuals have given me assistance in various ways since I began work on this project. Uwe Lohalm at the *Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte* in Hamburg gave me a number of good ideas about where to begin looking for sources; Norbert Finzsch agreed to act as my *Betreuer* at the University of Hamburg during the year that I was there and was immensely helpful in making contacts in the first few months; and Stefan Micheler and Jakob Michelsen were extremely friendly, providing me with a bibliography of books to read and introducing me to the small but growing circle of scholars working on gay

and lesbian issues in Hamburg. I am also thankful for the work of the now defunct *Arbeitskreis schwule Geschichte Hamburg*, which in the early 1990s interviewed several men who lived through the mid-twentieth century. Finally, I could never forget the five men who gave up an afternoon of their time in the summer of 1999 so that I could talk with them about their experiences of West Germany's gay scenes. Their stories were sometimes funny, sometimes sad, but always enlightening; I hope that my analysis does them justice.

A number of teachers, scholars, colleagues, and friends have been generous with advice, critical comments, and many years of encouragement and support at different stages of the work: Ken Banks, Kit Belgium, Mark Byrnes, Alan Chalmers, Judy Coffin, David Crew, Jennifer Evans, Lisa Heinemann, Dagmar Herzog, Peter Jelavich, Paul Hagenloh, Sally Hitchmough, David Imhoof, Standish Meacham, Geoffrey Parker, Phil Racine, Tracy Revels, Anne Rodrick, David Sabean, Tim Schmitz, Julia Sneeringer, James Steakley, Robert Stephens, and a number of others who participated in the Young Scholar Forum of March 2001, in the Southeast German Studies Workshop in 2009 and 2010, and Wofford's Writing Group. Thanks, also, to the readers and editors at Palgrave Macmillan, who helped me to streamline this book and fix many of its mistakes. Last, I want to express my deep gratitude towards my family. My wife Megan DeMoss has given me endless amounts of love and encouragement; she also gave a great deal of time towards editing this manuscript in its final stage. Her parents and grandparents have welcomed me into their family, providing me with love, all sorts of new experiences, and at times much needed financial support. My own parents have been exemplary in encouraging both me and my brother to be creative and to pursue our interests; they nourish us in every way imaginable, always supporting the choices we have made. I hope I can do the same for my own children.

* * * * *

Portions of Chapters 2 and 4 were previously published as 'Styles of Masculinity in the West German Gay, 1950–1965,' *Central European History* 39 (2006), 359–93.

The author and publishers wish to thank Wolfgang Voigt and Klaus-Peter Adamczik for giving permission to use small selections from the transcripts of four unpublished interviews carried out by the *Arbeitskreis Schwule Geschichte Hamburg* in 1992.

Abbreviations and Translations

Bundesrat	Federal Council, the upper house of West Germany's parliament
Bundestag	Federal Congress, the lower house of West Germany's parliament
CDU	Christian Democratic Union, West Germany's conservative party
FDP	Free Democratic Party, which tends to stand for secular, free-market policies
<i>Hausverbot</i>	ban on entering a location (in this case, public bathrooms)
ICSE	International Committee for Sexual Equality
<i>Rechtsstaat</i>	rule of law (literally, a state based on law)
<i>schwul</i>	gay
<i>Sexwelle</i>	the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s
SPD	Social Democratic Party, the traditional socialist party of West Germany
<i>Tunte</i>	slang for an effeminate homosexual, perhaps roughly equivalent to 'fairy' or 'poof'

Note on Terminology

The issue of terminology is a significant challenge facing any historian studying evidence of same-sex desire in the past. The work of French philosopher Michel Foucault has rightly made scholars of sexuality very aware of the role of language in organizing, shaping, and even generating experience. Contemporary usage of terms such as 'gay' or 'homosexual' tends to assume that there are clearly identifiable persons who can be erotically excited by members of the same sex and who have a preference for having sex with them. However, this assumption cannot easily be applied to the past. Other cultures have held very different notions about the organization of the numerous desires, feelings, acts, and interpersonal relationships that we lump together under the term 'sexuality.' The present work cannot ignore this problem, even if it deals with a time period a full century after the term 'homosexual' was invented. Although there were many men who clearly understood themselves as having a preference for sexual contact and loving relationships with other men, I will show that they did not necessarily agree on the terminology that should be employed, nor on what this preference meant for their sense of self.

In the end, though, I have chosen the term 'homosexual' (*homosexuell*) because it had emerged as the dominant term in the German-speaking world by the middle of the twentieth century. Even those who preferred other descriptions, such as 'friend' or 'homophile,' acknowledged the term's ascendancy. I will use the term in largely the way they would have used it; that is, to describe the sexual activities between men (or between women), the social relationships and institutions that they created to pursue these activities, and the people who at some level preferred having sex with members of the same sex. Unlike many men at the time, though, I will not assume a strict division between the categories of homosexual and heterosexual; instead, as suggested by many contemporary queer theorists, I will assume that individual sexuality is in fact a 'fluid, fragmented, dynamic collectivity of possible sexualities.'¹ Self-defined heterosexual men were capable of pursuing and even enjoying sex with other men, and men who understood themselves as homosexual were capable of carrying on relationships with girlfriends and wives.

As a synonym for 'homosexual,' I will also use the term 'gay'—although I will admit that this choice is more problematic. Although its German equivalent, *schwul*, is a term that was also used in the mid-twentieth century, at the time it was one of the more pejorative of words, the connotations of which can perhaps be suggested best by the American slang 'fag.' However, failing to find another suitable synonym besides 'gay' that would keep me from overusing the word 'homosexual,' I have chosen to employ it. It is one with which both German and English speakers will be familiar, and indeed today we often feel more comfortable with 'gay' than even 'homosexual,' which often sounds quite clinical to our ear.

1

Introduction: The Neglected Postwar Period

The period between the end of World War II and the emergence of the contemporary gay rights movement around 1970 has long been neglected by historians of same-sex desire. Scholars have devoted much time to the nineteenth century, which witnessed the rise of sexological investigations into homosexuality and the appearance of some of the earliest opponents of the sodomy laws. The nineteenth century also allows for a consideration of the fascinating question of the place of same-sex desire in a society that was only beginning to be affected by modern scientific conceptions of homosexuality. The early twentieth century, on the other hand, holds out the lure of the vibrant Bohemian scenes located in Berlin, New York, Paris, and London, as well as the fascinating material produced by the early homosexual movement. The 1930s and 1940s raise questions about the relationship between state power and sexual regulation in the context of totalitarian regimes and world war. German historians of the gay past have inevitably been drawn to the Nazi era, which offers the archetypal story of homosexual repression in the modern era and, at the same time, intriguing hints of homoeroticism within the movement. And for gay scholars interested in a more recent topic, the events surrounding the birth of the contemporary gay rights movement after the Stonewall riots of 1969 provide ample material.

In contrast, the 20-year period following World War II seems to have little to offer. The conservative, family-oriented atmosphere of the so-called 'Golden Fifties' appeared unpromising for historians looking for subcultural activity. The small, conservative 'homophile' groups (as the movement of this era is generally called) represented most prominently by the United States' Mattachine Society lacked the originality and glamour of early twentieth-century organizations, and also

the energy and radicalism of the post-Stonewall organizations. And in Germany, there were enough questions about the fate of homosexual men and lesbians under the Nazis to keep historians busy for some time. For those who *were* interested in homosexuality in the 1950s and 1960s, there were serious obstacles to research. Most countries have privacy laws that make it difficult to examine archival material dealing with personal information of a sensitive nature until a considerable time has passed. Exceptions to the rule can occasionally be made, but it often requires a great deal of effort and luck to receive these special permissions.

Two notable pioneers, Jeffrey Weeks and John D'Emilio, together constructed a framework for our understanding of the 1950s and 1960s.¹ Only by the mid-1990s, though, did a significant number of scholars begin to follow their example. Neil Miller's *Out of the Past* offered a much needed survey of gay and lesbian history from the mid-nineteenth century until the present.² Numerous studies of specific urban gay communities in the twentieth century yielded new insights into the evolution of gay life in the metropolises of the gay landscape (San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles, London, and Berlin, for example) and also a number of less well known gay scenes (Philadelphia, Washington, DC, Cologne, and Hamburg).³ In Germany, a group of independent scholars associated with Berlin's Gay Museum (*Schwules Museum*) produced a series of oral interviews with gay Germans who lived through the mid-twentieth century, as well as a number of microhistories of critical institutions within the homophile movement.⁴ Robert Corber published two fascinating books that offered a queer reading of American film and literature during the Cold War. More recently, Julian Jackson and Scott Gunther have published two important works on homosexuality in post-World War II France, while Martin Meeker has produced a fascinating perspective on the networks of information exchange among gay men that proliferated in the United States.⁵

This book will pull together many of the insights gained from these 15 years of research and apply them to West Germany after World War II. It will argue that the significance of the mid-twentieth century for the long-term history of homosexuality in Germany has generally been underappreciated. This period does not represent merely a brief interlude between the early 1930s, when the gay scenes and homosexual institutions were destroyed by the Nazi state, and the early 1970s, when the energy and freedoms of the Weimar era were resurrected. Instead, it made three major contributions on which the homosexual movement and gay scenes of the post-Stonewall era would build.

First, it was a period in which gay scenes were re-established after being virtually destroyed by the Nazis during the 1930s and early 1940s. These returned some vitality to gay life in the major cities of West Germany, and in Hamburg's case the excitement associated with this scene in the 1950s was temporarily able to challenge Berlin's position as the center of the German gay landscape. Second, it witnessed a transformation of the concept of homosexuality, allowing for a masculinized vision of same-sex desire to become widespread. This concept would ultimately affect both the wider social prejudices against homosexuality and the identities that same-sex desiring men themselves embraced. Last, this period culminated in the decriminalization of adult male homosexuality with the reform of Paragraph 175 of the West German criminal code—a fact that is relatively well known but still not all that well understood. Too often this reform is seen as the simple and inevitable culmination of a general process of sexual liberation taking place in twentieth-century Europe. Uncovering the actual debates that surrounded the reform of Paragraph 175 will reveal the sexual revolution to be not simply the product of New Left radicals and countercultural hippies. Equally importantly, this study will cast new light on the legal transformation that enabled the formation of the modern gay movement.

Each of these three transformations will be analyzed in terms of power struggles that took place in distinct social and political arenas. Like most historians of sexuality, I have learned a great deal from the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault, who argued, among other things, that sex can be seen as invested with a 'multiplicity of force relations.'⁶ Investigating these force relations reveals the strategic importance that homosexuality represented for several distinct groups. For men interested in pursuing same-sex contact, it was an activity that could forge human relationships, social spaces, and symbolic meanings that worked against the culture, social structures, and political institutions of the world around them. For the political leaders, policing institutions, and social figures who wielded authority over the country, homosexuality constituted one element within a larger arsenal of fears and concerns that was useful in managing and shaping West German society. For the homosexual activists of the era, homosexuality was the key to recreating society in a more genuinely democratic fashion and opening up masculinity to a wider range of sexual behavior. Last, for the forces of political progressivism that gradually emerged in the 1960s, the legal treatment of homosexuality was the cause that could mobilize energy behind a project to initiate West Germany into a modern world,

and one that would guarantee more social justice, personal freedom, and individual self-development than the Germany of the past. The intense conflicts between these groups help to explain some of the incongruities of the period: a thriving gay scene alongside persistent state repression; conceptual struggles over the nature of homosexuality that could produce new identities but also new prejudices; and, finally, the gradual success of arguments for sexual liberalism despite the prevailing sexual conservatism of the 1950s and early 1960s.

* * * * *

The criminalization of homosexuality in Germany has a long history, theoretically going back to the sixteenth-century Carolina criminal code of the Holy Roman Empire, but more recently embodied in Paragraph 175, passed into law soon after German unification in 1871. This criminalization, though, did not stop nineteenth-century homosexual men from gradually laying some claim to a whole series of physical spaces—specific bars, parks, streets, and public baths—in several large cities, especially Berlin and Hamburg. The social networks and patterns that revolved around these sites were not unique to Germany, of course, and historians of gay life have spent a great deal of time analyzing these ‘subcultures,’ as they are still generally called. This term—coined in the 1940s by sociologists associated with the University of Chicago, and then further developed in the 1970s by scholars at the Birmingham School—seems in many ways apropos because it suggests that small groups can appropriate urban space for themselves with a range of linguistic, symbolic, and material strategies peculiar to the specific subculture. The notion that subcultures represent a kind of resistance against the hegemony of the dominant culture at the symbolic level also makes it attractive to scholars searching for signs of assertiveness of same-sex desire outside a specifically political movement.

By the early 1990s there were a number of scholars associated with social constructivism who used the sociological and anthropological methods associated with subcultural studies to produce outstanding research on homosexuality in the context of everyday life. Works by Jeffrey Weeks, Randolph Trumbach, George Chauncey, and others served as a model in many ways for my own research.⁷ Like these earlier works, this book reveals how gay men resisted the dominant notions of sexual order. They created social spaces to pursue their sexual interests in small and often subtle ways, employing what Michel de

Certeau has called local ‘tactics’ to ward off the larger-scale ‘strategies’ of the police and other government authorities designed to enforce their (hetero)sexual order.⁸ Such methods allowed homosexual men to create their own culture—their own language, histories, stories, poems, paintings, sketches, and forms of silent communication. This culture often involved a ‘tactical redeployment’ of the dominant culture, as can be seen in the styles of dress and behavior fashioned by men in the gay scene.

The culture of the gay scenes, one might argue, was a ‘subculture’ insofar as it was clearly marginalized: there was little to no space for it within the workplaces, family homes, popular media, churches, social clubs, professional organizations, or other institutions of West Germany’s heteronormative society. I will avoid the term, however, since there are real limitations to the concept as applied to gay social spaces. The notion of subculture as developed by the Birmingham School always suggested a subset of a particular class, whereas men who come together in cities in search of same-sex contact normally originate from different classes, and often different ethnicities, nationalities, and ages. Indeed, ‘subculture’ suggests a coherence and identity that would be misleading if it were applied to the gay social spaces that men constructed in Germany during the 1950s and 1960s. Instead they were diffuse spaces that even in a single city could be spread out over numerous neighborhoods, parks, and locales. They often blended into other social areas, such as red-light districts or entertainment quarters. Finally, the people who constructed them were dissimilar. As this book will reveal, they not only had different social backgrounds but also adopted many different styles of behavior and dress that implied alternate understandings of their masculinity and sexuality.

Because of the problems with using ‘subculture,’ I will opt to use another term instead—‘scene.’ This word deserves some attention since it is frequently used in colloquial German and English but rarely used yet in a scholarly sense. In contrast to ‘subculture,’ the term ‘scene’ suggests a space in which several people meet to pursue a common interest. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, this usage was initially introduced sometime around the early 1950s in the social milieu that surrounded black jazz musicians. From here, the slang term was extended to include other leisure-time activities, especially rock music, drug use, and other elements of the 1960s youth counterculture in both English- and German-speaking areas. In the course of the 1970s, the term also increasingly became applied to the public areas of the city in which gay men met.

While gay men in the 1950s and early 1960s were not familiar with the German term *die Szene*, they certainly had some working knowledge of such public spaces. In some cases, the gay scene may have included exact physical locations; for example, the many parks, public bathrooms, bars, and other sites used by men searching for same-sex contact. Yet this may obscure the fact that the scene was really an abstract space constructed by the knowledge of the participants—knowledge about where to go, what signals to look for, how to react to these signals, and, in general, how to interact with other participants. One did not enter the scene, therefore, simply by setting foot inside a gay bar or a public bathroom; one had to be in the know. Participants in the scene understood it to include people who were pursuing a central interest, namely same-sex contact, as well as others who in one way or another consciously and actively promoted this central interest, including the occasional straight bartender or bar owner. The relationships between these individuals could be fleeting ones constructed on the fly in parks or public bathrooms; they could also be longer-lasting relationships constructed in clubs, gay bars, or informal social circles.

I will always talk about scenes in the plural. They were always local phenomena, with a complex relationship with the neighborhoods, the specific physical topography, and the patterns of policing and law enforcement that existed in the city in which they took shape. The people they comprised—their preferences, habits, and choices—often left their mark on the patterns of interaction within any given scene. And yet I was also struck by the many similarities between the many scenes that developed in West Germany, and indeed between this country's scenes and those that one could find in London, Amsterdam, New York, San Francisco, or any other significant city of the Western world since the end of the nineteenth century. These similarities hint at the connections between them—the tourists, sailors, soldiers, and immigrants who moved between the scenes and sometimes maintained long-distance relationships with men in other cities—but more concretely reflected social and cultural transformations that crossed national boundaries to create similar assumptions and experiences.

In particular, historians have drawn multiple connections between modern urban life and homosexuality. As Matt Houlbrook has recently made clear, the studies of gay scenes are as much histories of the city as they are histories of gay life. Urbanization was involved in complex ways with other kinds of sociological processes essential for the emergence of the 'homosexual' as 'an identity, state of being, and social world': the disruption of traditional patterns of life, the loosening of

familial authority, and the creation of modes of living free from the subtle modes of surveillance and control associated with small communities. Cities offered both public and commercial sites for the emergence of gay scenes. In the midst of such urban social spaces, through symbolic interactions that were shaped by the 'flux, anonymity, and visibility of the crowd,' homosexuals formed both identities and an entire 'way of being.'⁹ Thus, as historians are increasingly exploring in an explicit way, urban gay scenes are bound together with the 'trajectory of modernity' through their connections with 'modern experiences of urbanity,' the larger nation-building process, and the proliferation of networks of information exchange.¹⁰

Although recently there have been a growing number of calls for historical research into the same-sex experience of men in rural areas and small towns, I have chosen to focus again on the major cities of West Germany, in part because of the limitations of source material, but mainly because of the questions that guided my research. How did homosexuals rebuild the social networks and social institutions that had been destroyed by the Nazis? In what ways did their identities change in the mid-twentieth century? How did the sexual conservatism of the 1950s and early 1960s affect homosexuals? How successful were the political efforts of homosexuals in this era? Such questions naturally pointed me to the cities, where gay scenes could provide the environment for building social institutions and potentially a political movement.

* * * * *

By reconsidering the importance of the mid-twentieth century for the long-term development of homosexuality, this book contributes to an already sizeable body of work examining the fate of Germany after the destruction of World War II and the collapse of the Nazi regime. As sexuality is the issue at hand, this study naturally must look beyond the 'formal institutions and the processes of political policy-making', which was the topic of so much excellent work before the early 1980s.¹¹ The political history of the country will not be ignored, but the book's focus is on the social and cultural life of West Germany in the decades after World War II.

Investigating postwar German history from the point of view of gay men will provide an interesting perspective on the larger problem of the continuities and discontinuities of German history. This is an issue that has special significance for German historians because of the way that

the Nazi era has affected how we potentially view all of German history. Since the 1950s, German historians have been debating whether to view the Nazi period as something integral to German history—that is, the product of larger trends and forces at work potentially since the sixteenth century—or as a serious rupture in the historical development of the country, when the nation of ‘poets and thinkers’ was transformed through the traumas of a lost world war and the Great Depression into a country of barbarians. For a time in the 1960s and 1970s, German historiography was powerfully shaped by the notion of a *Sonderweg*, or ‘special path,’ that Germany took on its way to modernity. Historians influenced by Weberian social science argued that the failure of the 1848 Revolution and the persistent social and political influence of the German aristocracy left the country tainted with antidemocratic social institutions and habits of mind. These national characteristics undermined Germany’s first attempt at democracy in the 1920s and ultimately paved the way for the rise of Nazism in the early 1930s.

The *Sonderweg* thesis has been substantially challenged since the mid-1980s as the modernization theory undergirding the thesis was increasingly questioned on a number of fronts. Today, German historians are faced with the challenge of constructing a new historiography based not on a single metanarrative but as an accumulation of intertwined (but not necessarily coherent or comprehensive) histories. Instead of looking for the kind of linear continuity assumed by the *Sonderweg*, Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer have suggested embracing the many ruptures of German history and making ‘the very instability of the German condition’ an integral part of these stories.¹² Choosing themes that cut ‘across politics, economy, society, and culture’ could provide interesting paths through the shifting terrain of German history, ultimately allowing the ‘fragments of a central European past’ to be reassembled into new patterns.¹³

Homosexuality provides just such a theme. Focusing on homosexuality allows us to see a series of struggles that were certainly affected by regime changes and war, but which could be equally influenced by more subtle social and cultural processes that often proceeded despite major political ruptures. In particular, homosexuality will provide a perspective on the expanding consumerism, the proliferation of popular cultural styles associated with the United States, and the transformation of sexual morality. Understanding such trends is critical to appreciating the nation Germany became by the end of the twentieth century. These transformations also operated on a much wider scale than simply the nation state, and so understanding the role they played in Germany

in the 1950s and 1960s will also allow us to see Germany's place in a Europe that would become increasingly integrated through Cold War pressures, the logic of consumerism, and the institutions of economic coordination.

* * * * *

My choice to study male homosexuality was very much influenced early on by my desire to make a contribution to the research on masculinity in the years after World War II. My thinking on the topic was influenced by a number of fascinating works by Robert Moeller, Heide Fehrenbach, Uta Poiger, Dagmar Herzog, and others.¹⁴ These works have shown that gender and sexuality were of great importance for the conservative 'family politics' of the era associated with West Germany's first postwar chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, whose personality and policies guided the country between the end of the 1940s until his retirement from power in 1963. Like Moeller's work, which reveals how the dominant notions of gender and sexual order affected family policy in the early Federal Republic of Germany, my research demonstrates how these notions influenced law and government policy as it affected homosexuals in the 1950s.¹⁵ It suggests that a mutually reciprocal relationship existed between the prejudices against homosexuals and the Adenauer-era family politics. On the one hand, the desire for sexual order and the anxieties about youth provided new justifications for the legal persecution and social stigmatization of homosexuality now that the racial hygienic arguments favored by the Nazis had been officially discredited. On the other hand, long-standing prejudices against homosexuals strengthened by years of Nazi oppression also bolstered Adenauer's project of rebuilding the country based on strong, German families.

I hope to make a contribution to the already sizeable body of literature that outlines the norms of hegemonic masculinity in the Adenauer era by suggesting that it was powerfully influenced by the heterosexist image of the 'corrupting homosexual' that became the most common stereotype of same-sex desire. My focus on power struggles, though, will reveal some of the resistance against these hegemonic norms. Both these norms and the stereotype of the 'corrupting homosexual' were implicitly disputed from within the gay scene by the 'marginalized masculinities' that took shape here.¹⁶ The analysis of these styles of masculinity should challenge historians to move beyond the public discourses that shaped hegemonic masculinity and instead look for evidence that might suggest to what extent this version of masculinity

was either accepted or contested at the level of the 'everyday' (*Alltag*). Gay men, we will see, performed a range of gendered styles, including the effeminate *Tunte*'s ('queen') assertive rejection of normative masculinity, the respectable homosexual's difficult efforts to accommodate masculine norms while also making room for his sexuality, and the leatherman's creative construction of a sexually charged version of masculinity, borrowing elements from American popular culture and working-class masculinity.

My interest in West German masculinity led me very early on to deliberately exclude the consideration of female same-sex desire. This decision was confirmed by other legal and social factors that became clear as my research progressed. Germany's laws against homosexuality inherited from the early modern period focused specifically on males. These laws were originally organized around the notion of sodomy, which was based on the concept of penetration and was therefore difficult to apply to women. By the end of the nineteenth century there was some discussion about extending Paragraph 175 to include women; eventually, though, it was decided that criminalizing female same-sex acts might actually be counterproductive since it would inevitably draw great attention to female same-sex activity. The result was that lesbian sexuality was never criminalized, and lesbians faced a radically different set of legal circumstances than men. Their social circumstances were also distinct. Lesbians in my period largely stayed away from the areas of the male gay scene in, especially, the bathrooms and parks. Consequently, their social networks developed largely independently of the gay male scene.

By considering the role of gender and sexuality in the postwar social order, this book addresses not simply the research into postwar masculinity but also the rapidly expanding literature on European sexuality in the second half of the twentieth century. Along with many other historians of sexuality, I will assume that the changes that took place during the Sexual Revolution (or in German, the *Sexwelle*) of the 1960s and 1970s were just an episode within a long-term process dating back at least a century, if not more. During the second half of the 1800s, the intellectual impact of Malthus and Darwin, the growing interest of science in issues of sexuality, and the public debate stoked by both moral purity advocates and sex radicals contributed to an escalating struggle over the meaning of sexuality—its relationship to society, happiness, morality, and self. At the same time, the expansion of state regulation and policing of sexual behavior; the impact of birth control, advertising, sex manuals, and other sexually oriented consumer products; and urbanization and secularization all left their mark on sexual behavior.¹⁷

And yet for too long scholars have assumed a ‘steady liberation and the gradual overcoming of obstacles to sexual freedom,’ as Dagmar Herzog has observed.¹⁸ Recent work has emphasized that what we once thought of as a singular process should in fact be conceptualized as ‘a series of competing struggles, each with different agendas and widely varying results.’¹⁹ Progress in one series of confrontations did not necessarily bring success in others. Distinct differences can also be found between different nations; sexual development in Europe did not proceed evenly across the continent, but in fact had a ‘syncopated quality.’ Setbacks were common, a reminder that sexually conservative attitudes still could hold a great deal of appeal for certain segments of the population and at certain moments in history. And attitudes that we might today call sexually progressive could be identified in surprising contexts, as Herzog’s work on sexuality in Nazi Germany has revealed.

This book enhances our understanding of the transformations of sexual attitudes by examining same-sex desire across two transitions: the political transition from the Nazi state to the Federal Republic of Germany that took place at the end of the 1940s, and the social-cultural transition from an atmosphere of sexual conservatism to the more relaxed era of the late 1960s. Like recent research by Elizabeth Heinemann, my work will locate certain undercurrents amidst the otherwise sexually conservative Adenauer Era—the steady expansion of the urban gay scenes, the formation of novel sexual identities, and the small stream of debate around the criminalization of homosexuality in the 1950s—that will point forward to the explosion of images and debate that came at the end of the 1960s.²⁰ Yet, my study also reinforces an observation made recently by Dagmar Herzog, namely that laws have a significant impact ‘in shaping national and local sexual cultures and individuals’ self-conceptions alike.’²¹ For homosexual men, the reform of Paragraph 175 in 1969, ending a nearly century-long struggle over the criminalization of homosexuality, was going to be just as important as the rupture in the legal context and methods of policing that came with the collapse of Nazism in 1945.

The importance of the legal framework provided by the structures of the nation state will help explain one final parameter I set for my research, namely my decision not to include East Germany. This decision was partly pragmatic because East German documents are generally not housed in the same locations as West German documents; going through these documents would have taken more time, and explaining their context would have made this book appreciably longer. More important, though, were the considerable legal, social, and political

differences between East and West Germany. The East German communist government reverted to an earlier version of Paragraph 175 instead of using the Nazi-era law from 1935; this version was much more relaxed, making it more difficult to convict men of the law and also threatening less severe punishment upon conviction. In spite of this leniency, there were real, serious restrictions on organizing any sort of public life or institutions outside of state or party control in East Germany. The result was that homosexual organizations and magazines were forbidden and remained so even after the East German government decriminalized adult male homosexuality in 1969. Other aspects of a gay scene—gay bars, parks, and public toilets—did exist, but in general activities remained more subdued than in West Germany. Gay East Berliners, in fact, often visited West Germany to take advantage of opportunities there—that is, before the erection of the Berlin wall in 1961.²² Censorship restrictions meant that public discussion of homosexuality was extremely limited. In short, the situation was different enough from West Germany to warrant its treatment as truly a separate country.

* * * * *

This book focuses on various, often intense, struggles over homosexuality in the era between the end of severe Nazi persecution in 1945 and the legal freedom promised by the reform of Paragraph 175 in 1969. As the purpose of the book is to show the contribution that this period made to the history of homosexuality in West Germany, it is organized thematically. It begins by examining the social, legal, and cultural context in which gay men lived. The upcoming chapter looks at the transition from war to peace and from dictatorship to democracy that made an immediate impact on the lives of gay men. And yet it will suggest that 1945 cannot be understood as a 'zero hour' for this population of Germans, since memory and effects of the Weimar and Nazi years continued to be felt for years to come. In particular, the Nazi version of Paragraphs 175 and 175a continued to be enforced, although admittedly in a legal and political environment that was very different after 1945. Nevertheless, there were some real changes taking place in terms of the conceptualization of homosexuality. It was in these decades that a more masculine image of homosexuality cemented itself. Although the stereotype of the effeminate homosexual did not entirely vanish, in general it was this new understanding of male homosexuality that

increasingly shaped the anxieties of West Germany and the identities of gay men.

Chapter 3 turns to the homophile movement of the 1950s. This movement was very much affected by the changing conceptualization of homosexuality. Its chief strategy was focused on respectable, masculine behavior as a means of achieving wider social acceptance. Although the achievements of this movement were not as striking as the Weimar-era associations or as enduring as 1970s gay liberation, they still need to be remembered for reviving a political tradition that had been utterly destroyed by the Nazis, for bringing a truly international dimension to homosexual politics, and last for reworking arguments for decriminalization in ways that in the long run will be important for the fate of Paragraph 175.

Chapter 4 examines the recreation of the West German gay scenes after their near eradication under the Nazi regime. This rebirth built upon the legal guarantees of democracy enshrined in the West German constitution, but also was driven by many of the same social processes responsible for the initial birth of the scene in the second half of the nineteenth century: urbanization, consumerism, the circulation of information on homosexuality, and the development of the homosexual movement. The reappearance of gay scenes in West Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, Munich, and elsewhere did not occur without conflict, and indeed from the beginning homosexuals faced a legal environment shaped by continued prosecution by a police force that over time proved very creative in coming up with new techniques of enforcement. The scene survived, though, and even grew. The bathrooms, parks, streets, and bars provided space in which sexual encounters could be pursued, friendship networks could be pieced together, and sexual identities fashioned.

Chapter 5 demonstrates that the mid-twentieth century was important for producing arguments for decriminalization that eventually yielded the reform of Paragraph 175 in 1969. Although this moment in Germany's gay history is certainly appreciated, too often it is connected with what came afterwards—namely the birth of the gay liberation movement of the early 1970s—instead of with what came beforehand. This perspective on 1969 has led to an underappreciation of both the role that the homophile movement of the 1950s played in circulating arguments for legal reform, and the significance of progressive professionals in the 1960s in generating a widespread debate on the issue.

The conclusion will offer some observations on the legacy of the 1950s and 1960s for the period that followed the reform of Paragraph 175 and the rise of a new generation of gay activists. It will also return to the issue of why the gay history of postwar Germany is important not only for the development of the homosexual community, but also for German history and our understanding of the sexual revolution.

2

Policing and Prejudice after 1945

As a child living in the early 1960s West Germany, Christian M. remembered hearing his stepfather say to a group of friends around the kitchen table, 'Under Adolf, the *warme Bruder* were sent to the work camps. And if that wasn't enough, then they were thrown into the gas chamber, and the problem was solved.' Given this attitude, it is not surprising that Christian was terrified to tell his stepfather about his attraction to men. In fact, he believed that if his stepfather had ever learned of his homosexuality, he 'would have beaten me to death. Without doubt.'

This frightening memory suggests how long memories of the Nazi era lingered in the minds of West Germans, influencing public impressions and personal reactions to homosexuality. Such memories overlapped and influenced other understandings of homosexuality inherited from the past. Christian discourse defined it as a sin; scientific and medical discourse treated it as an illness and a perversion. Sexual activities between men were 'unnatural,' hinting at very old ideas inherited from ancient Stoicism and medieval Christian philosophy. A man who found himself irresistibly drawn to homosexuality was often portrayed as effeminate—a *Tunte*, to use the German slang equivalent of 'sissy' or 'fairy.' Above all, though, he was a criminal whose social marginality made him prone to murder, child abuse, and even major political crimes.

All of these prejudices were articulated repeatedly in the first half of the twentieth century and were eventually used by the Nazis to justify their massive assault on Germany's gay scene and homosexual organizations. They were not specifically German, though—their impact was noticeable in the United States, the rest of Europe, and elsewhere at the same time—and so it is no surprise that the Allied powers made no real effort to uproot these prejudices after their victory in World War II. The