

THE RECENT HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SEXUALITY IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY GERMANY

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ABSTRACT. *This article sets out to explore the extent and to test the limits of the history of sexuality in twentieth-century Germany. It examines the ways in which sexuality can be explored from above and below. Drawing on medical-legal definitions of sexuality, feminist debates about sexuality, the science of sexology, and advice literature, the article sets out the state of debate together with ways that it might develop in the future. Arguing in favour of a milieu-specific history of sexuality, it suggests ways that the study of youth cultures and teenage magazines together with everyday, oral history and biographical approaches might help to arrive at this. It then goes on to chart new approaches, particularly with regard to sexuality in the Third Reich, and suggests ways that these reshape our understanding of sexuality in post-war Germany, East and West. Arguing against a reductive emphasis on a society being either 'pro-' or 'anti-sex' and calling for a clearer definition of what is meant by 'sexual liberalization', the article points to a more multi-layered and contradictory understanding of sexuality, which is still in the process of being written.*

Sexuality takes many forms. It constitutes an experience and an expression of identity. But it can also take the form of a label defining a person or group. Journeys of personal, sexual self-discovery commonly involve searching for the limits, which reflect and define who and what particular individuals feel themselves to be. By contrast, political ideologies more often involve defining the limits of what the state will tolerate and generating stereotypes about opponents and groups identified as other. Many modern prohibitions and taboos have been class, race, or gender specific. Double standards have tacitly allowed the group with the most power to define what constitutes permissible behaviour and to exercise sexual rights that they have explicitly denied to others. Minority groups within German society (and other societies) have been subjected to repression because of their sexuality; have seen their sexuality become the object of racist or sexist stereotypes and slurs; have had the right to exercise and control their own sexuality taken away from them and denied; or have experienced violation and intrusion of their own bodies (removing their ability to reproduce or denying their right to refuse sex). Sexuality has thus historically been about the exercise and denial of power as well as the pursuit and enjoyment of pleasure. The first part of the article provides an overview of the field of sexuality over the course of the

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twentieth century. The second part addresses in more specific fashion issues in recent research on constructions of sexuality under National Socialism and since.

However much they claim to be serious and detached, historians are no strangers to issues of sexuality. In the context of twentieth-century Germany, there are already specialist studies of topics as varied as pornography, sadistic fantasies, nudism, illegitimacy, masturbation, venereal disease, erotic emporia, state-regulated prostitution, sexual violence, and serial killing.¹ The history of sexuality can evidently be approached from a number of angles – not just from above, but also ‘from below’, and also, voyeuristically, from a more obtuse angle. Morality and ethics; medicine and the law; arts and the media; literature and film; music and fashion all have an influence on (and could form the basis of historical analysis of) sexuality.² This article explores the various approaches and points to new directions that studies of sexuality in German history appear to be taking.

The power of law to define sexuality has historically made it a key site of struggle. Following Bismarck’s foundation of the Empire and the creation of a unitary legal code, sex between consenting adult men was made an offence punishable with imprisonment as ‘sodomy’ and ‘unnatural vice’ under Paragraph 175 of the 1871 Criminal Code.³ Another section of the code that remained on the statute books for the major part of the twentieth century referred to the crime of ‘procuring’ (if hotel owners or parents allowed unmarried couples to stay the night together). With the abdication of the Kaiser, a range of groups campaigned to condone, reform, or restrict sexual practices seen as particularly beneficial or injurious to the public good. Many on the German Left believed that a revolution in German society would also bring about a revolution in sexual relations.⁴ Clara

¹ Gertrud Koch, ‘The body’s shadow realm’, in Pamela Church Gibson, ed., *More dirty looks: gender, pornography and power* (London, 2004), pp. 149–64; Klaus Theweleit, *Male fantasies* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1987–9); Anthony McElligott, *The German urban experience, 1900–1945: modernity and crisis* (London and New York, NY, 2001), pp. 97ff; Sibylle Buske, *Fräulein Mutter und ihr Bastard. Eine Geschichte der Unehelichkeit in Deutschland 1900 bis 1970* (Göttingen, 2004); Matthew Jefferies, “‘For a genuine and noble nakedness’? German naturism in the Third Reich”, *German History*, 24 (2006), pp. 62–84; Lutz Sauerteig, “‘The Fatherland is in danger, save the Fatherland!’: venereal disease, sexuality and gender in Imperial and Weimar Germany”, in Roger Davidson and Lesley Hall, eds., *Sex, sin and suffering: venereal disease and European society since 1870* (London and New York, NY, 2001), pp. 76–92; Elizabeth Heineman, ‘Der Mythos Beate Uhse: Respektabilität, Geschichte und autobiographisches Marketing in der frühen Bundesrepublik’, *Werkstatt Geschichte*, 40 (2005), pp. 69–92; Michaela Freund, ‘Women, venereal disease and the control of female sexuality in post-war Hamburg’, in Davidson and Hall, eds., *Sex, sin and suffering*, pp. 205–19; Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: sexual murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, NJ, 1995).

² Sexuality has been a particular focus of studies of film in Weimar Germany. For an overview, see Richard McCormick, *Gender and sexuality in Weimar modernity: film, literature, and ‘new objectivity’* (New York, NY, and Basingstoke, 2002).

³ This did not prevent the continued development of lesbian/gay subcultures. See Adèle Meyer, *Lila Nächte: Die Damenklubs der Zwanziger Jahre* (Cologne, 1981).

⁴ Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic sourcebook* (Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles, CA, and London, 1994), pp. 693ff; Willem Melching, “‘A new morality’”: left-wing intellectuals on sexuality in Weimar Germany’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 25 (1990), pp. 69–85.

Zetkin later claimed to have been berated by Lenin for allowing her comrades to discuss sex reform at the expense of more pressing political necessities.⁵ In the event, the liberal constitution and the temporary compromise reached between the Majority Socialists and the Centre Party produced results in the sphere of sexuality that fell far short of radical expectations. Nevertheless, the League for the Protection of Motherhood and Sex Reform (Bund für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform – BfM) and its founder Helene Stöcker continued to fight for women's rights to sexuality and unwed motherhood.⁶

In the practical work of advice clinics, a 'motherhood–eugenics consensus' emerged across a wide spectrum of sex reformers, which assumed that it was "better to prevent than to abort", that sexuality was better regulated than repressed and that access to legal abortion, contraception, eugenic sex education, and general social welfare would assure a new rational and humane social order.⁷ Left-wing intellectuals lent their support for campaigns to reform inequalities in sexual relations.⁸ Social Democrats and Communists showed a rare degree of solidarity in supporting campaigns to abolish Paragraph 218 (that criminalized abortion), arguing that access to legal abortion would alleviate the suffering of working-class women.⁹ But in the public sphere, dominated by right-wing mass media and political propaganda, the humane and the rational were often fighting defensive battles against renewed conservative ideas about the proper place for women and the need for increased moral purity. Calls for Paragraph 175 (and with it the criminalization of homosexuals, nicknamed '175ers') to be abolished were unsuccessful during the Weimar Republic, but were taken up by campaigners in both East and West Germany after the Second World War.

From the 1970s onwards, feminist historians placed a new emphasis on exploring the historical development of patriarchal relations and the ways in which gender bias and discrimination have affected women's rights, particularly their rights to make decisions about their own bodies. Early feminist research tended to concentrate on those areas where women had suffered discrimination and persecution, either as a result of exclusion from the workplace or because of interventions by the state and the medical profession. While debates have continued

⁵ Clara Zetkin, *Erinnerungen an Lenin* (Berlin, 1985), pp. 66ff.

⁶ Christl Wickert, *Helene Stöcker, 1869–1943: Frauenrechtlerin, Sexualreformerin und Pazifistin* (Bonn, 1991).

⁷ Atina Grossmann, 'Sex reform and birth control', in Dieter Buse and Juergen Doerr, eds., *Modern Germany: an encyclopedia of history, people and culture, 1871–1990* (New York, NY, and London, 1998), pp. 914–15; Atina Grossmann, *Reforming sex: the German movement for birth control and abortion reform, 1920–1950* (New York, NY, 1995).

⁸ Manfred Herzer, 'Communists, Social Democrats and the homosexual movement in the Weimar Republic', in Gert Hekma, Harry Oosterhuis, and James Steakley, eds., *Gay men and the sexual history of the political left* (New York, NY, and London, 1995), pp. 197–226; Magnus Hirschfeld, ed., *Zur Reform des Sexualstrafrechts* (Berne and Leipzig, 1926).

⁹ Eric Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890–1990: from popular protests to socialist state* (Princeton, NJ, 1997), pp. 205ff.

for years about how far young women were genuinely liberated by the First World War and whether the realities for the 'new women' were anything like the images presented in Weimar films and the press, there is little dissent from the view that the Third Reich sharply eroded women's rights and suppressed debate about equality and liberation.¹⁰ More controversial were the questions of whether or not women had been complicit in destroying their own freedoms and how the victimization of women in National Socialism intersected with persecution of other marginal and oppressed groups.¹¹

While 1933–4 can be seen as a clear turning point in terms of attitudes towards women as a whole, the consequences of the Nazi seizure of power were much more far-reaching and potentially disastrous for those women and men who were deemed racially unfit, for interracial couples, and for lesbians and homosexuals.¹² Research on eugenics and the politics of race has shown that the state was not only prepared to make deep intrusions into the private lives of its citizens, but to use medical interventions in order to bring about a permanent alteration of the German body politic.¹³ The racial health of the national community was to be constructed by means of forced sterilization of 'unfit' women and castration of homosexual men.¹⁴ Atina Grossmann has pointed to the way in which eugenic thinking and attempts to suppress abortion among racially 'healthy bodies' not only occurred before, but also continued after, the Third Reich.¹⁵

Sexology, the scientific discipline devoted to the study of sex, offers another common starting point for the study of historical attitudes to sexuality. Early sexology was strongly influenced by the late nineteenth-century passion for collecting and naming. Early sexologists merged anthropology with biology in the pursuit of a typology categorizing various types of sexual deviation and the sexual characteristics of different races. Recounting the unusual practices of far-flung

¹⁰ Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, 'Beyond *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*: Weimar women in politics and work', in Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan, eds., *When biology became destiny: women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York, NY, 1984), pp. 33–65; Renate Bridenthal, 'Something old, something new: women between the two world wars', in Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz, and Susan Stuard, eds., *Becoming visible: women in European history* (Boston, MA, 1987), pp. 422–44; Cornelia Osborne, *The politics of the body in Weimar Germany: women's reproductive rights and duties* (Basingstoke, 1992).

¹¹ Adelheid von Saldern, 'Victims or perpetrators? Controversies about the role of women in the Nazi state', in David Crew, ed., *Nazism and German society, 1933–1945* (London, 1994), pp. 141–65; Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: women, the family, and Nazi politics* (New York, NY, 1987), pp. 387ff.

¹² Patricia Szobar, 'Telling sexual stories in the Nazi courts of law: race defilement in Germany, 1933 to 1945', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 11 (2002), pp. 131–63; B. Jellonek, *Homosexuelle unter dem Hakenkreuz: Die Verfolgung von Homosexuellen im Dritten Reich* (Paderborn, 1990); B. Jellonek and R. Lautmann, eds., *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle* (Paderborn, 2002).

¹³ Gisela Bock, *Zwangsterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen, 1986).

¹⁴ Geoffrey Giles, "'The most unkindest cut of all": castration, homosexuality, and Nazi justice', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 27 (1992), pp. 41–61.

¹⁵ On the role Hans Harmsen played in West German family planning, see Grossmann, *Reforming sex*, pp. 204ff.

tribes and exotic peoples served as a means of projecting particular characteristics on to an imaginary other at the same time as underlining the superiority of white civilization and European society. Using highly spurious 'scientific' categories and causation, Professor Dr August Forel 'proved' that the mercantile nature of the Jews also imbued their sexual relations and that the 'violent and unbridled sexual passion of the Negro' was a characteristic of 'the intellectual inferiority of this race'.¹⁶ Despite its relative proximity, the urban proletariat was viewed through the same lens of prurient interest masked by disgust and disdain that served to underpin the proclivities of the white, adult, male bourgeoisie as natural and normal. 'What is to be expected of the sexual life of the elder children who live and sleep in the same room and often even in the same bed as their mother and father?!'¹⁷ During this period, fears that adolescent masturbation constituted a dangerous, debilitating, and contagious pathology themselves became pandemic.¹⁸

Nevertheless, even before the end of the *Kaiserreich* men like Magnus Hirschfeld, Eduard Fuchs, and Otto Rühle began to challenge the assumptions on which these categories were based. Influenced by the emergence of Freud's ideas about psychoanalysis and discussions within German Social Democracy about marriage, the family, and the rights of women, they pursued a less judgemental approach to sexual difference and championed the rights of gays and lesbians.¹⁹ In the Weimar Republic, Hirschfeld founded the Berlin Institut für Sexualforschung (Institute for Sexological Research). His theory that homosexuality constituted a third, intermediate gender between masculinity and femininity gained international recognition while his prominent role in campaigns for greater liberalization in sexual affairs made him a target for National Socialist and conservative hostility. The bonfire made of the institute's archive after the Nazi seizure of power has often been interpreted as an attempt to destroy sexology (along with Marxism and Freudianism) in Germany for good. But as was the case with the related disciplines of biology and anthropology, sexology was allowed to continue, albeit in a form heavily influenced by Nazi racism.

Many sexologists sought not only to study and categorize sexuality, but to influence sexual behaviour by offering explanations and advice. Sex advice literature offers a good opportunity for studying the often ideological nature of discussions about sexuality. While some authors sought to popularize the findings of biology and sexology and to make them available to the wider population

¹⁶ August Forel, *Die sexuelle Frage: Eine naturwissenschaftliche, psychologische, hygienische und soziologische Studie für Gebildete* (Munich, 1909), pp. 214–15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 373.

¹⁸ Peter Gay, *Schmitzler's century: the making of middle-class culture, 1815–1914* (New York, NY, and London, 2002), pp. 147–51; Robert Nye, ed., *Sexuality* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 113ff; Lutz Sauerteig, *Krankheit, Sexualität, Gesellschaft: Gesellschaftsrankheiten und Gesundheitspolitik in Deutschland im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1999), pp. 52ff.

¹⁹ John Fout, 'Sexual politics in Wilhelmine Germany: the male gender crisis, moral purity, and homophobia', in Fout, ed., *Forbidden history: the state, society and the regulation of sexuality in modern Europe* (Chicago, IL, and London, 1992), pp. 259–92.

(along with techniques for achieving orgasms and information about contraception), other writers more influenced by theology saw advice literature primarily as a means of encouraging abstinence, continence, and the inviolability of marriage.²⁰ Sex advice writers were also divided over the issue of how much (or how little) knowledge about sex it was healthy and necessary for children and adolescents to have.²¹ Although the focus tends to be on the high-profile Weimar sexologists (like Max Hodann and Wilhelm Reich) who were forced into exile and who did not return to Germany after the war, less prominent figures continued to give advice during the Third Reich and afterwards adapted their ideas for the altered conditions of post-war, divided Germany.²² Although historians of sex education are tentatively beginning to explore this area, the history of the relationship between these separate, competing strands (how they merged and overlapped as well as contradicted each other) has yet to be written. The extent to which figures like Reich and Hodann had an influence on Scandinavian and Soviet sex reformers, and that the Catholic Church sought to speak uniformly on sexual matters, means that this history is probably best approached from a comparative European perspective.²³

Germany's eventful political history in the twentieth century – with two attempts at liberal democracy and two highly ambitious attempts to transform society by means of racial and/or social re-engineering – has inevitably made it an interesting place to study continuities and changes in medical-legal attempts to define and control sexuality. Politics have frequently intervened (at times with great violence) into the history of sexuality in Germany. The emphasis on political and state interventions has tended to overshadow and preclude research into alternative social and cultural interpretations. Medical-legal attempts to define and control sexual behaviour naturally lend themselves to a 'Foucauldian meta-narrative of modernity'.²⁴ While the history of sexuality continues to be dominated by this preoccupation with 'bourgeois knowledge-workers', new research is beginning to reveal the extent to which the 'deviants' themselves were able to contribute towards the way in which the 'experts' defined them.²⁵

Some would argue that the power of the political has led to an underestimation of longer-term factors of social change. It is legitimate to ask whether the watersheds and nadirs so violently brought into relief by the Third Reich, its radical racial vision, and its demise have not resulted in a downplaying of trends similar

²⁰ Georg Buschan, *Vom Jüngling zum Mann: Ratschläge zur sexuellen Lebensführung* (Stuttgart, 1912).

²¹ Wilhelm Karl Bach, *Über die Behandlung des Sexuellen in der Schule* (Bielefeld, 1907).

²² Atina Grossmann argues that Reich greatly inflated the role he played in the sex reform movement in Berlin. See Grossmann, *Reforming sex*, pp. 124ff.

²³ Lutz Sauerteig and Roger Davidson, eds., *Shaping sexual knowledge: a cultural history of sex education in twentieth-century Europe* (London and New York, NY, 2009).

²⁴ Edward Dickinson and Richard Wetzell, 'The historiography of sexuality in modern Germany', *German History*, 23 (2005), pp. 291–305.

²⁵ Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of nature: Kraft-Ebbing, psychiatry and the making of sexual identity* (Chicago, IL, 2000), pp. 189ff.

to those in other countries. Debates about the images and reality of 'new women' in Weimar raise important questions about the degree to which urbanization and industrialization brought genuine increases in sexual freedom for young, single career women. Likewise the disruption caused by the world wars can be seen to have caused lapses in morality and alterations in the usual relationships between men and women.²⁶ But while there is growing recognition that the Foucauldian approach is overly top-down and constraining, many historians of sexuality in Germany find it difficult to go beyond the well-travelled path of sexuality as constructed by sexual experts.²⁷ Despite the interest in sexuality shown by a wide range of cultural and social historians, their work appears to have little impact on those who explicitly devote themselves to studying the history of sexuality. As Vibeke Petersen suggests, historical examination of films, magazines, and cheap fiction can help explore popular culture's role in women's self-fashioning.²⁸ Everyday, oral history and biographical approaches can reveal the extent to which sexuality is not only intensely personal and private, but also socially constructed and milieu-specific.²⁹

Youth culture provides another important site for the study of sexuality. One of the main attractions of the unofficial youth subcultures that sprang up from the end of the nineteenth century was the opportunity they offered for interaction unsupervised by adults and the possibility for generating attitudes to sex at odds with those of wider society.³⁰ The *Wandervogel* movement offered members an escape from the constraints of bourgeois, suburban civilization. Meeting in Steglitz, the founding members explicitly excluded girls and shunned conventional interactions with the opposite sex. Fierce debate developed within the movement as to whether it constituted a homosocial *Männerbund* or a club for the grooming of 'inverted' acolytes.³¹ During the Third Reich, a range of milieu-specific experiences and outlooks towards sex were reflected in youth subcultures such as the Edelweiss pirates, the Leipzig *Meuten*, the Hamburg Swings, and the

²⁶ Magnus Hirschfeld, *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges* (Leipzig, 1930); Hilary Sy-Quia and Susanne Baackmann, eds., *Conquering women: women and war in the German cultural imagination* (Berkeley, CA, 2000).

²⁷ Dickinson and Wetzell, 'Historiography of sexuality', pp. 299, 305; cf. H. G. Cocks, 'The growing pains of the history of sexuality', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39 (2004), pp. 657–66.

²⁸ Vibeke Petersen, *Women and modernity in Weimar Germany: reality and representation in popular fiction* (New York, NY, and Oxford, 2001), p. 1.

²⁹ Maxie Wander, *Guten Morgen, du Schöne: Protokolle nach Tonband* (Berlin, 1977); Christine Müller, *Männer-Protokolle* (Berlin, 1985); Christine Lambrecht, *Männerbekenntnisse: freimütige Protokolle* (Halle and Leipzig, 1986); Jürgen Lemke, *Ich bin schwul: Männerbiografien in der DDR* (Berlin, 1989).

³⁰ Jürgen Reulecke, "'Auf, werdet Menschen von unser'm Jahrhundert!'" Anmerkungen zum jugendbewegten Aufbruch ins 20. Jahrhundert', in Burkhard Dietz, ed., *Fritz Helling, Aufklärer und 'politischer Pädagoge' im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 2003), pp. 23–36, at p. 32.

³¹ J. A. 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 (2001), pp. 163–89; Hans Blüher, *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen: ein Beitrag zur Erkenntnis der sexuellen Inversion* (Berlin, 1912).

Viennese *Schlurfs*.³² In the post-war period, successive subcultural phenomena were proclaimed to be decadent and depraved from jazz and bebop fans in the 1940s and early 1950s; fans of Rock 'n' Roll from 1956 to the beginning of the 1960s; to Beat fans and mods in the mid- to late 1960s.³³ While student radicals and members of the commune movement in West Germany took sexual rebellion further by deliberately drawing attention to their sexual freedom, the Trumper fans of East German rock music generated more traditional concern about youth subcultural decadence.³⁴ In spite of the much-vaunted liberalization of attitudes towards sex in the GDR, the sexual antics of punks, skinheads, heavy metal fans, *Poppers*, and graveyard-frequenting *Gruftis* were as much of concern to the authorities in the 1980s as their real or potential political beliefs.

Magazines aimed at adolescents can provide a particularly useful site for charting changing social and cultural mores, especially with regard to sexuality. *Bravo*, the mass circulation magazine for West German teenagers, has been the subject of a number of studies.³⁵ Discussions of clothing, fashion, music, and dancing all had a bearing on how sexuality was defined, interpreted, and experienced. Problem pages and personal ads offer a codified arena for exploring the conflict between desire and the constraints of 'normality'. The onset of Capri pants and miniskirts represented important battles in widespread, but highly personal struggles to redefine ownership of adolescent female sexuality. In the GDR discussions of teenage sexuality were dominated by the mood of party politics, but more liberal discussions did emerge during periods of reform. *Junge Welt*, the daily newspaper aimed at members of the Free German Youth (FDJ), first began to address issues concerning relationships and sex in its advice column in 1955.³⁶ This new-found interest in sex led to a campaign of sexual enlightenment which went as far as the proposal that male and female FDJler should share tents.³⁷ Although this minor 'sex wave' subsided again in the aftermath of the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, similar swells emerged in the 1960s and then with more lasting effect in the 1970s.

³² Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: conformity, opposition and racism*, trans. by Richard Deveson (London, 1993), pp. 145ff.

³³ Uta Poiger, *Jazz, rock and rebels: Cold War politics and American culture in divided Germany* (Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles, CA, and London, 2000); Mark Fenemore, 'Saints and devils: youth in the SBZ/GDR, 1945–1953', in Eleonore Breuning, Jill Lewis, and Gareth Pritchard, eds., *Power and the people: a social history of Central European Politics, 1945–1956* (Manchester and New York, NY, 2005), pp. 168–81; Michael Rauhut, *Beat in der Grauzone: DDR-Rock, 1964 bis 1972* (Berlin, 1993); Dorothee Wierling, 'Die Jugend als innerer Feind: Konflikte in der Erziehungsdiktatur der sechziger Jahre', in Hartmut Kaelbe, Jürgen Kocka and Hartmut Zwahr, eds., *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart, 1994), pp. 404–25.

³⁴ Michael Rauhut, *Rock in der DDR, 1964–1972* (Bonn, 2002), pp. 66–70.

³⁵ Kaspar Maase, *Bravo Amerika: Erkundungen zur Jugendkultur der Bundesrepublik in den fünfziger Jahren* (Hannover, 1992); Erica Carter, *How German is she? Postwar West German reconstruction and the consuming woman* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1997).

³⁶ *Junge Welt*, 18/19 June 1955.

³⁷ 'Jungen und Mädchen in einem Zelt?', *Junge Welt*, 25 May 1956.

I

A growing number of historians of sexuality have begun to argue that a re-assessment of Nazi attitudes to sex and sexuality is long overdue.³⁸ It is no longer possible to argue (as many in the 1968 generation did) that National Socialism was simply sexually repressive. Instead of seeing the Third Reich as a prudish era similar to that of mid-1950s West Germany, they point to the many areas where sex took place without heed to Christian or bourgeois conventions and where eroticism was at least tacitly allowed to flourish. Sexuality, they argue, played a much more important part in the way in which the Third Reich was experienced than has previously been recognized. In certain respects, Elizabeth Heineman has argued, this new emphasis can be seen as reflecting the already existing distinctions between perpetrators, victims, and bystanders with sex variously helping people to kill, to survive, and to be co-opted by the regime.³⁹

Sex in the Third Reich has ceased to constitute an unspeakable 'terra incognita for historians of Germany'.⁴⁰ Newly discovered areas include: state regulation of prostitution;⁴¹ the 'Hiller Girls' erotic revue;⁴² the persistence of homosexual subcultures in spite of increased persecution;⁴³ the prevalence of homosexual 'crimes' even in the virulently homophobic SS;⁴⁴ the role played by sex in the erosion of inhibitions about killing;⁴⁵ and the baby boom among Jewish survivors after the war.⁴⁶ George Mosse's insistence that sculpture in the Third Reich contained nothing that was genuinely erotic is understandable, but difficult to sustain.⁴⁷ The naked 'living bodies' depicted in Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* and photographed as part of the 'Belief and Beauty (*Glaube und Schönheit*)' programme certainly were.⁴⁸ Surviving photographs and film footage of the 'Festival of the Amazons' and the 'Night of the nymphs', held in Munich in 1938 and 1939

³⁸ Elizabeth Heineman, 'Sexuality and Nazism: the doubly unspeakable', in Dagmar Herzog, ed., *Sexuality and German fascism* (New York, NY, and Oxford, 2005), pp. 22–66. ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁴⁰ Annette Timm, 'Sex with a purpose: prostitution, venereal disease, and militarized masculinity in the Third Reich', in Herzog, ed., *Sexuality and German fascism*, pp. 223–55, at p. 223.

⁴¹ Julia Roos, 'Backlash against prostitutes' rights: origins and dynamics of Nazi prostitution policies', in Herzog, ed., *Sexuality and German fascism*, pp. 67–94.

⁴² Terri Gordon, 'Fascism and the female form: performance art in the Third Reich', in Herzog, ed., *Sexuality and German fascism*, pp. 164–200.

⁴³ Carola Gerlach, 'Außerdem habe ich dort mit meinem Freund getanzt', in Andreas Pretzel and Gabriele Rofsbach, eds., *Wegen der zu erwartenden hohen Strafe ... Homosexuellenverfolgung in Berlin, 1933–1945* (Berlin, 2000), pp. 305–32.

⁴⁴ Geoffrey Giles, 'The denial of homosexuality: same-sex incidents in Himmler's SS and police', in Herzog, ed., *Sexuality and German fascism*, pp. 256–90.

⁴⁵ Heineman, 'Sexuality and Nazism', pp. 54ff; Sophinette Becker, 'Zur Funktion der Sexualität im Nationalsozialismus', *Zeitschrift für Sexualforschung*, 14 (2001), pp. 130–45.

⁴⁶ Atina Grossmann, 'Victims, villains and survivors: gendered perceptions and self-perceptions of Jewish displaced persons in occupied postwar Germany', in Herzog, ed., *Sexuality and German fascism*, pp. 291–318.

⁴⁷ Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after fascism: memory and morality in twentieth-century Germany* (Princeton, NJ, 2005), p. 15.

⁴⁸ Gordon, 'Fascism and the female form', pp. 167ff; Michael Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), pp. 95ff.

respectively, show that parts of the Nazi elite had no problem in embracing public displays of carnivalesque nudity. It is only if we take the claim that the Nazis would 'clean up Germany' at face value that it becomes surprising that they were prepared to use sex to manipulate people. Sex was an important part of the 'seductive surface' used to promote, advertise, and sell 1930s Germany (not least abroad).⁴⁹

Dagmar Herzog goes the furthest in her attempt to re-evaluate (or 'historicize') sexuality in the Third Reich. Sex, she argues, was used not just as a means of exclusion, but also of inclusion. She points to Nazi-inspired advice literature which encouraged the heightening of pleasure for married women and the fact that the Nazis did not ban the sale of condoms or remove the machines that vended them. Contrasting 'Nazi affirmations of sexual pleasure both within and outside of marriage' with more traditional attempts by the churches and bourgeois society to control sexuality, she argues that this constituted a continuation of 'liberalizing tendencies'.⁵⁰ The fact that people deemed to be Aryan could have conscience-free, non-reproductive heterosexual sex in the Third Reich (against a backdrop of virulent anti-Semitism, homophobia, and brutal eugenic medical interventions) indicates 'libertine', pro-sex trends.⁵¹

Parts of Herzog's book (particularly those dealing with West Germany) are highly persuasive. In an original and thought-provoking chapter, she argues that the stance adopted by Christian Democrats in West Germany in the mid-1950s was a reaction to (rather than a continuation of) National Socialist attitudes to sex. By emphasizing the extent to which the Third Reich had been sexually decadent and morally transgressive (as well as routinely brutal and murderously racist), the churches were able, disingenuously, to distance themselves from the defunct regime and to disguise their own involvement in bringing the Nazis to power. Herzog goes further in arguing that the 1968 generation was brought up with 'a profoundly distorted understanding of the national past'.⁵² This led 1960s radicals to misinterpret the conservative outlook of the Federal Republic as a continuation of National Socialism. 'To liberate sexuality, it was believed, would help cleanse Germany of the lingering aftereffects of Nazism.'⁵³ In rebelling against the stifling puritanism of their youth, they embraced a position (and proclaimed it to be 'anti-fascist'), which was actually closer to the Nazis' self-serving disavowal of Christian morality.

On their own, the chapters on West Germany would make for a powerful and convincing book. Unfortunately, Herzog's critique of the 1968 generation leads her to argue that the entire history of sexuality in Germany requires rewriting because it is dominated by the misperceptions of the 68ers. The 'standard scholarly assumption, so widely held that it is seldom documented in detail, is that

⁴⁹ Hans Peter Bleuel, *Strength through joy: sex and society in Nazi Germany* (London, 1973), pp. 92ff; Peter Reichel, *Der Schöne Schein des Dritten Reiches: Faszination und Gewalt des Faschismus* (Munich, 1991); Irene Guenther, *Nazi chic? Fashioning women in the Third Reich* (Oxford and New York, NY, 2004).

⁵⁰ Herzog, *Sex after fascism*, pp. 5ff, 72. ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5. ⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 183. ⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Nazism was at its core antisex'.⁵⁴ Yet Hans Peter Bleuel's 1973 book amply illustrated the ambivalence of Nazi attitudes to sex.⁵⁵ Equally, the large body of literature, which exists on gender in the Third Reich, does not find adequate recognition in *Sex after fascism*. Instead Herzog refers repeatedly to 'most scholars', who on closer inspection turn out to be a few, not particularly influential, self-confessed publicists.⁵⁶ This lack of clarity and a tendency (in certain chapters) to argue against the evidence make it a very uneven book. Nevertheless, this does not prevent Herzog from making bold claims. Thus we are told that careful attention 'to the history of sexuality prompts us to reconsider how we periodize twentieth-century German history; it changes our interpretation of ruptures and continuities across the conventional divides of 1918, 1933, 1945, 1968, and 1989'.⁵⁷ But the evidence that such turning points are invalid is thin. How 'liberating' was a political regime in which an organization like the SS implemented racial screening of potential spouses? Herzog's binary attempt to define eras and political systems as either 'pro-' or 'anti-sex' is inevitably reductive.⁵⁸ As a consequence, she succeeds in displacing an impossible and unrealistic state of total and complete sexual repression from one period (the Third Reich) to another (late 1950s West Germany).

In emphasizing the late 1950s as a period of 'extraordinary sexual conservatism', she blinds herself to the controversy (or 'moral panic') surrounding Rock 'n' Roll (and by extension to the conflicts over adolescent sexuality) that occurred precisely during this period in both East and West Germany.⁵⁹ Far from having forgotten about 'the antibourgeois and sexually transgressive aspects of Nazism', commentators from across the political spectrum continued to make direct references to them. In condemning the loss of inhibition and the ecstatic, uncontrolled behaviour demonstrated by fans at jazz and Rock 'n' Roll concerts, critics made direct allusions to the reactions of preceding generations to Hitler.⁶⁰ Likewise, Herzog fails to recognize that the communist Socialist Unity Party (SED) leadership embarked on a major 'anti-sex campaign' in the winter of 1965 (just two years after issuing a more liberal communiqué to youth). Fearful of stirrings of discontent among fans of Beat music in the GDR, the *Kahlschlag* Plenum vilified writers, filmmakers, and other intellectuals for daring to explore issues of sexuality.⁶¹

At times, Herzog's approach serves to decontextualize rather than to illuminate the episodes of German history she is referring to. In her account, the League of

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

⁵⁵ Bleuel, *Strength through joy*.

⁵⁶ It is necessary to read an earlier article to find out who these are. Dagmar Herzog, 'Hubris and hypocrisy, incitement and disavowal: sexuality and German fascism', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 11 (2002), pp. 3–21, at pp. 5ff. ⁵⁷ Herzog, *Sex after fascism*, p. 1. ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 4, 11.

⁵⁹ Herzog, *Sex after fascism*, p. 102; Poiger, *Jazz, rock and rebels*, pp. 182ff; Peter Kuhnert and Ute Ackermann, 'Jenseits von Lust und Liebe?', in Heinz-Hermann Krüger, ed., *Die Elvis-Tolle, die hatte ich mir unauffällig wachsen lassen: Lebensgeschichte und jugendliche Alltagskultur in den fünfziger Jahren* (Opladen, 1985), pp. 43–83.

⁶⁰ Poiger, *Jazz, rock and rebels*, pp. 95ff.

⁶¹ Günter Agde, ed., *Kahlschlag: Das 11. Plenum der SED 1965* (Berlin, 1991).

German Girls (BDM) was a simmering pot of unconstrained debauchery.⁶² Most studies of this organization, however, have described the experience of membership as limiting and regimented in comparison to the opportunities for entertainment and interaction with the opposite sex to be found in the big cities and in the alternative youth subcultures.⁶³ Michael Kater (whose 1980 article was Herzog's source for her arguments about BDM depravity) does emphasize the 'sexually alluring' qualities of the 'Faith and beauty' programme (in which young women with film-starlet figures dressed up in glamorous apparel). But he argues that, far from being their intention, the 'unabashed sexual promiscuity among youth turned out to be a slap in the Nazis' face'.⁶⁴ Party leaders could only look on with prurient horror as the 'giving a child to the Führer' slogan became a runaway success.⁶⁵

The Nazi authorities may, as Herzog suggests, have condoned the publication of advice literature linking sexual pleasure with their racial vision. By encouraging husbands to push their wives' buttons such advice writers supported the goal of producing a master race. But the Nazi leadership in no way condoned the unmarried woman's independent and non-reproductive search for sexual pleasure. As Elizabeth Heineman argues, 'Healthy, fertile Aryans who chose not to marry could not be full members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.'⁶⁶ It is worth repeating what Hitler had to say about the need for boys to toughen themselves up (and to harden their bodies) in order to avoid developing 'sensuality', syphilis, and other allegedly 'Jewish' characteristics.⁶⁷ Young people who made the mistake of thinking that their sexuality belonged to them could rapidly find themselves at odds with a ruthlessly cynical regime. Indulging in promiscuous behaviour defined as 'asocial' (in other words without tacit encouragement or an officially turned blind eye) frequently resulted in a trip to a re-education camp.⁶⁸

Himmler's Police Order of 1943 was brought in to curb young people's access to unsupervised entertainment and to reclassify virtually all uncontrolled

⁶² Herzog, *Sex after fascism*, p. 28.

⁶³ Matthew Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich* (London, 2003), p. 124; Dagmar Reese, 'Straff, aber nicht stramm – herb aber nicht derb': zur Vergesellschaftung von Mädchen durch den Bund Deutscher Mädel im sozialkulturellen Vergleich zweier Milieus (Weinheim and Basel, 1989), pp. 219ff.

⁶⁴ Kater, *Hitler Youth*, p. 107.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 106; Robert Waite, 'Teenage sexuality in Nazi Germany', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 8 (1998), pp. 434–76.

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Heineman, *What difference does a husband make? Women and marital status in Nazi and postwar Germany* (Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles, CA, and London, 1999), p. 26.

⁶⁷ Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The racial state: Germany, 1933–1945* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 201–2.

⁶⁸ Michael Hepp, 'Vorhof zur Hölle: Mädchen im "Jugendschutzlager" Uckermark', in Angelika Ebbinghaus, ed., *Opfer und Täterinnen: Frauenbiographien des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), pp. 239–70; Heineman, *What difference?*, p. 26ff.

leisure-time activities for young people as 'loitering' (*Herumtreiberei*).⁶⁹ As Detlev Peukert argued, in condemning those in the subcultures, the

semi-official National Socialist reports on the swing cliques stress the incidence of promiscuity, group sex, 'sexual intercourse involving minors' and, generally, unabashed pleasure in sexuality (which the reports denounce as moral depravity). The wording and tone of these internal reports as a rule said more about their authors and readers than about the objective behaviour of the young people.⁷⁰

What was particularly 'characteristic of male-supremacist Nazi society', Michael Kater suggests, is that 'it was girls, rather than the boys, who were singled out as sexually abnormal or seduction-driven culprits'.⁷¹

The history of (hetero)sexuality Herzog offers is strangely silent about the disempowerment women have traditionally experienced (and continue to experience) as a result of gender stereotyping and discrimination. To suggest, as Herzog does, that elements of National Socialist ideology were 'liberating' because they incited and manipulated sexual desire is to risk falling prey to a masculinist discourse that legitimates and condones the objectification of women and which equates sexual pleasure with male pleasure. Should we be so surprised that the SS tabloid *Das Schwarze Korps* used allusions to sex to titillate its readers as well as pandering to their prejudices?⁷² William Combs saw this as a predictable attempt to appeal to a young male readership and in line with a policy of encouraging early marriages and higher birth rates. But unlike Herzog, he also pointed to the paper's hostility to women's independence (as expressed in glamorous, 'exotic' fashions and make-up) and its tacit acceptance of husbands' violence towards disobedient wives. 'To achieve the Aryan culture the SS considered appropriate, it was willing to regulate every woman's life from the lipstick she could wear to the number of children she should bear. Seen from this perspective, the powerlessness of women was essential to the SS plan for a totalitarian society.'⁷³

This powerlessness is reflected in the SS policy of vetting potential wives and civil service edicts encouraging husbands to have extramarital affairs as long as they were racially appropriate (or as Herzog puts it, giving men a 'legal right' to 'fool around').⁷⁴ While Nazism made it easier for men who were deemed 'racially fit' to cheat on their wives, it made it much harder for women to escape from loveless marriages or to speak out about their mistreatment at the hands of men. The Nazis replicated and reinforced the traditional double standard.⁷⁵ They gave themselves opportunities in the sexual sphere precisely because they denied them

⁶⁹ Alfons Kenkmann, *Wilde Jugend: Lebenswelt großstädtischer Jugendlicher zwischen Weltwirtschaftskrise, Nationalsozialismus und Währungsreform* (Essen, 1996), p. 151.

⁷⁰ Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, p. 168. A similar tone can be found in many of the GDR's internal reports. See, for example, 'SED-Stadtleitung Leipzig: Teilbericht zur Analyse über Jugendarbeit in der Stadt Leipzig – gefährdete Jugendliche (Leipzig, am 11.1.1965)', Saxon State Archive Leipzig, IV A-5/01/269, pp. 9ff. ⁷¹ Kater, *Hitler Youth*, p. 107. ⁷² Herzog, *Sex after fascism*, p. 50.

⁷³ William Combs, *The voice of the SS: a history of the SS Journal 'Das Schwarze Korps'* (New York, NY, Berne, and Frankfurt am Main, 1986), pp. 333ff. ⁷⁴ Herzog, *Sex after fascism*, p. 53.

⁷⁵ Stibbe, *Women in the Third Reich*, p. 50.

to others (gays, lesbians, Jews, gypsies, *Afrodeutsche*, and the disabled). What Herzog sees as 'sexually liberating', many others would interpret as manipulative, abusive, unequal, sexist, and intrusive.⁷⁶ As much as the Nazi regime promoted pride in healthy bodies and the absence of feelings of guilt, it destroyed intimacy and privacy. Anxieties about racial defilement replaced fears about immortal sin.⁷⁷

Herzog does not define what she means by 'sexual liberalization'. Chauvinistic, potentially wife-beating SS-men were apparently 'liberated' because they could cheat on their wives. Men in the GDR, meanwhile, were liberated because they supposedly did their share of housework. But the underlying message of her argument seems to be that the more it is possible to silence the churches and to deny them a public voice on issues of sexuality, the freer, happier, and more liberated we will be. Herzog, a former church historian, takes such a dim view of Christianity and its message on sex that even the Nazis seem preferable. The sex advice literature of the Third Reich became more enlightened, she suggests, because the church presses were closed down.⁷⁸ Similarly, it is possible to present the sex advice literature of the GDR as being much more rational than its counterpart in the Federal Republic because the churches were denied a voice on these issues. But can Nazi sex advice be described as 'liberating' without comparing it to the rational, humanist, secular advice offered in Weimar Germany? Such a comparison would show that in spite of its references to female orgasm, Nazi sex advice was but a pale (and reactionary, racist) imitation of its Weimar forebears. Likewise, GDR sex advice would have taken a very different form without the model provided by Max Hodann and others in the Weimar Republic.⁷⁹

Progressive advice without clearly defined and practicably defensible rights is not necessarily all that liberating.⁸⁰ The image of sexual utopia depicted in East German sex research is substantially diminished and undermined by the absence and official suppression of discussion about western-style feminism and gay liberation in the GDR. Lesbians and gays who sought to commemorate those who died wearing the pink triangle in concentration camps were subjected to Stasi surveillance, arrest, and varying degrees of intimidation.⁸¹ Women who did not just want to praise the state's record on childcare and female employment opportunities, but who wanted opportunities to discuss issues affecting women freely

⁷⁶ Kater, *Hitler Youth*, p. 70.

⁷⁷ Gisela Bock, 'Racism and sexism in Nazi Germany: motherhood, compulsory sterilization, and the state', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and History*, 8 (1983), pp. 400–21, at p. 412.

⁷⁸ Herzog, *Sex after fascism*, p. 52.

⁷⁹ Rudolf Neubert, 'Gedanken zum Problem der Sexualpädagogik', *Das Aktuelle Traktat: Beiträge zum Sexualproblem*, 1 (1956), pp. 7–38 at pp. 7ff; Rudolf Neubert, *Mein Arztleben: Erinnerungen* (Rudolstadt, 1974), pp. 150ff.

⁸⁰ Sonja Süß, *Politisch mißbraucht? Psychiatrie und Staatssicherheit in der DDR* (Berlin, 1998), pp. 523–34; Inga Markovits, 'Pursuing one's rights under socialism', *Stanford Law Review*, 38 (1986), pp. 689–761, at pp. 697, 758.

⁸¹ Ursula Sillige, *Un-Sichtbare Frauen: Lesben und ihre Emanzipation in der DDR* (Berlin, 1991), pp. 139ff.

and openly, played a significant role in the development of the opposition movement that helped to bring down SED rule.

In Herzog's account, East Germany becomes a screen on to which to project the possibility of an alternative to West Germany rather than an actual society with its own preoccupations, shibboleths, and contradictions.⁸² This leads her to make assumptions about the SED's ability to transform East German society that even ardent Marxist-Leninists dismissed as over-simplified and mechanistic.⁸³ The reality is that East Germany was far more interesting, multi-layered, and conflict-ridden than Herzog allows. Although, from the start, gender equality was loudly proclaimed and more rational attitudes to sex later became an important means of defining the superiority of socialism, in practice huge contradictions, problems, and divisions remained. Ignoring contradictions within the official message and placing blind faith in the SED's ability to predict what the population wanted and needed, Herzog argues that the regime leadership succeeded in accomplishing exactly what it set out to achieve.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, as a wide range of feminist historians have argued, in spite of the SED's bold propaganda claims about the future of women in socialism and massive state support for women's involvement in the workplace, gender inequality proved highly resistant to 'quick fix' solutions. The principle of equality was not just 'automatically established in everyday life'.⁸⁵

Although Herzog credits the SED with eradicating both gender inequality and shame, both persisted as a result of a lack of will (on the part of senior politicians) to challenge outdated concepts and behaviour and the determination of significant numbers of men to carry on as usual. Herzog alludes to the hypocrisy of *Das Schwarze Korps* in showcasing 'pulchritudinous naked women luxuriating in sun, sand, and sea' while condemning 'half-clothed and overly made-up women from what look like Weimar dance halls'.⁸⁶ Yet when the East German publication, *Das Magazin*, exhibits the same tendency (of viewing its female nude photography as pure, natural, and life-enhancing), this is seen in a much more favourable light. Apparently 'these photographs generally lacked the lascivious look and the nonaverage bombshell bodies so prevalent in Western pornography. Meanwhile, the heterosexual male anxieties that both funded and were fostered by the pornography typically available in the West were not provoked in the same way in the East'.⁸⁷ But even loyal East German commentators could find this

⁸² Herzog, *Sex after fascism*, pp. 7, 184ff.

⁸³ Helga Hörz, *Die Frau als Persönlichkeit: Philosophische Probleme einer Geschlechterpsychologie* (Berlin, 1968), p. 115.

⁸⁴ Herzog, *Sex after fascism*, pp. 206, 218.

⁸⁵ Barbara Bertram, Walter Friedrich, and Otmar Kabat vel Job, *Adam und Eva heute* (Leipzig, 1988), pp. 7ff; for a good summary of the state of debate, see Eva Kolinsky, 'Gender and the limits of equality in East Germany', in Eva Kolinsky and Hildegard Maria Nickel, eds., *Reinventing gender: women in eastern Germany since unification* (London and Portland, OR, 2003), pp. 100–27.

⁸⁶ Herzog, *Sex after fascism*, p. 37.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

wishful-thinking self-justification difficult to credit.⁸⁸ The reality is that popular publications in the GDR (particularly those targeted at men in the military) shared the tendency identified by Herzog of trying to have ‘things both ways at once’ – to present themselves as guardians of good taste and pristine morals ‘and to titillate and pander to the pleasures of looking’.⁸⁹

While it was common for East German commentators to criticize lurid headlines about sex crimes as characteristic of the inciting (and brutalizing) nature of capitalism, the GDR press was not above using similar tabloid-style techniques when the circumstances suited.⁹⁰ Thus in 1956 *Junge Welt* published a picture of a fifteen-year-old girl from Bamberg who, according to the accompanying extracts from a West German newspaper, had been raped by seven US soldiers together with the message ‘Get out of Germany’.⁹¹ In an attempt to deter young people from latching on to the ‘mod’ phenomenon, the November 1965 issue of *Konkret*, the magazine for members of the paramilitary Society for Sport and Technology (GST), printed a photograph of boys in parkas alongside a selection of explicit covers from Scandinavian pornographic magazines, some of which were evidently gay.⁹² The implication was clearly that listening to the Rolling Stones would turn adolescents ‘queer’. Leading educational psychologists criticized such propaganda techniques for stimulating the sexual curiosity of youth.⁹³

The question remains as to how we should interpret sexuality in the Third Reich. Should we, as Herzog suggests, recognize that ‘liberalizing elements’ continued unchecked or should we, following Jeffrey Herf, decide that this, like other forms of modernism in the Third Reich, was not only anti-traditional, but also deeply reactionary?⁹⁴ The period immediately after the Second World War also raises questions that are not easily answered. How do we relate the apparently positive memories of sexual liberation (and ‘fraternization’ with British and American soldiers) during this period with the waves of mass rapes of German

⁸⁸ Discussion during the conference on ‘Beiträge zur Geschlechterziehung in der Schule’, *Pädagogik Beiheft*, 2 (1962), at p. 34.

⁸⁹ Herzog, *Sex after fascism*, p. 40; Christine Eifler, ‘“... es schützt Dich mein Gewehr”: Frauenbildern in der NVA Propaganda’, in Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Frauenforschung der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, ed., *Unter Hammer und Zirkel: Frauenbiographien vor dem Hintergrund ostdeutscher Sozialisationserfahrungen* (Pfaffenweiler, 1995), pp. 269–76; Christine Eifler, ‘“Ewig unreif”’: Geschlechterrollenklichs in der Armeerrundschau’, in Simone Barck, Martina Langermann, and Siegfried Lokatis, eds., *Zwischen ‘Mosaik’ und ‘Einheit’. Zeitschriften in der DDR* (Berlin, 1999), pp. 180–8.

⁹⁰ Hans-Joachim Borchert, ‘Zur sexuellen Stimulation der Schuljugend durch die Tagespresse’, *Pädagogik Beiheft*, 2 (1962), pp. 31–3.

⁹¹ ‘Opfer der USA-Gangster’, *Junge Welt*, 27 July 1956.

⁹² *Konkret*, 8 Nov. 1965.

⁹³ Walter Friedrich and Adolf Kossakowski, *Zur Psychologie des Jugendalters* (Berlin, 1962), p. 169.

⁹⁴ Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary modernism: technology, culture, and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1984).

women committed by Soviet soldiers (together with other forms of objectification and mistreatment of women) in the aftermath of the war?⁹⁵

The history of sexuality as constructed in life-worlds 'is still in its infancy, and the literature itself [is] in flux'.⁹⁶ It is possibly premature therefore to talk of using insights from the history of sexuality to rewrite mainstream political history. As the new literature that is emerging from the study of the GDR (much of it combining archival research with various forms of 'discursive analysis') suggests, we are only tentatively beginning to explore what sex (and sexuality) was like for people from different generations and milieux.⁹⁷ With more common ground for interaction between diverse theoretical and methodological approaches, it is possible to look forward to a new period of intense and stimulating debate about this fascinating, but controversial and often difficult, subject. But while it is interesting and exciting to explore the 'seductive surfaces', we should not let them blind us to deeper, less accessible, underlying human realities.

⁹⁵ Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: a history of the Soviet zone of occupation, 1945–1949* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), pp. 69–140; Atina Grossmann, 'A question of silence: the rape of German women by occupation soldiers', *October*, 72 (1995), pp. 43–65; Hsu-Ming Teo, 'The continuum of sexual violence in occupied Germany, 1945–1949', *Women's History Review*, 5 (1996), pp. 191–218; Elizabeth Heineman, 'Gender, sexuality, and coming to terms with the Nazi past', *Central European History*, 38 (2005), pp. 41–74, at pp. 53ff.

⁹⁶ Dickinson and Wetzell, 'Historiography of sexuality', p. 299; Claudia Bruns and Tilmann Walter, eds., *Von Lust und Schmerz: Eine historische Anthropologie der Sexualität* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 2004).

⁹⁷ Jennifer Evans, 'The moral state: men, mining and masculinity in the early GDR', *German History*, 23 (2005), pp. 355–70. Josie McLellan, based at the University of Bristol, is set to publish a number of important and ground-breaking articles on the topics of erotica and nude photography in the GDR. Josie McLellan, 'State socialist bodies: East German nudism from ban to boom', *Journal of Modern History*, 79 (March 2007), pp. 48–79.