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New Research on Social Movements in Cold War Germany: A Roundtable

Tiffany N. Florvil, Craig Griffiths, Samuel Clowes Huneke, and Anna von der Goltz in conversation with Kerstin Brückweh and Richard F. Wetzell

The last few years have seen a burst of new scholarship on social movements in 1970s and 1980s Germany, including gay and lesbian movements, new visions of conservatism, and antiracist activism that arose in East and West Germany. Drawing on a diversity of archives, oral histories, and printed sources, these new studies make a forceful case for the centrality of these social movements to understanding the social, political, and cultural histories of East and West Germany. At the same time, they help us rethink the contours of social movements, by integrating previously overlooked actors and perspectives and by questioning the totems of traditional political and activist historiography.

On May 19, 2022, the German Historical Institute Washington (GHI) hosted a roundtable discussion with four scholars who focus on the 1970s and 1980s in East and West Germany

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and whose recent work both constitutes and engages with this new historiography on social movements in this period: Tiffany N. Florvil, Associate Professor of History at the University of New Mexico and author of *Mobilizing Black Germany: Afro German Women and the Making of a Transitional Movement* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2020); Craig Griffiths, Senior Lecturer in Modern History at Manchester Metropolitan University and author of *The Ambivalence of Gay Liberation: Male Homosexual Politics in 1970s West Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); Samuel Clowes Huneke, Assistant Professor, George Mason University, and author of *States of Liberation: Gay Men between Dictatorship and Democracy in Cold War Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022); and Anna von der Goltz, Professor of History at Georgetown University, and author of *The Other ‘68ers: Student Protest and Christian Democracy in West Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

The roundtable was moderated by Richard F. Wetzell, Research Fellow at the GHI, and Kerstin Brückweh, Professor of History at the Berliner Hochschule für Technik at the time of the roundtable, and now Professor at Europa-Universität Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder) and head of the research area ”Contemporary History and Archive” at the Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space. Heike Friedman (GHI Pacific Office) served as tech host for this virtual event. The conversation is published here, with only minor edits for style, on the basis of a transcription prepared by Franz Lukas Bolz (GHI). A video recording of the roundtable is available on the GHI website.

Richard F. Wetzell: Today, we are excited to host this roundtable on an important aspect of postwar German history. Our panelists are the authors of four recent books: on the mobilization of Afro-German women in a transnational movement, on center-right student activists within the West German student movement, and on gay liberation movements in West and East Germany. These are four really amazing books. But our purpose today is not a book presentation. After the authors will initially have a chance to sketch out their main arguments, our discussion will address larger questions. It will offer the panelists a forum to engage with the ways in which questions of race, class, sexuality, gender, and ideology shape our understanding of social and political movements and to think through how this new scholarship has recast or might recast the historiography of Cold War Germany.

I. Four Topics

Kerstin Brückweh: It is a great pleasure for me to co-host this and it was a great pleasure to read all your books. Starting with Tiffany, could each of you briefly sketch out the main thesis of your book?

Tiffany N. Florvil: Thank you for the lovely invitation, I am excited to be in conversation with everyone. I will keep it brief: my book, *Mobilizing Black Germany*, is about the intellectual, institutional, and cultural contours of the Black German movement of the 1980s and 90s. I really focus on how activism is a site for knowledge production and how activist-intellectuals, whom I refer to as "quotidian intellectuals," use activism in a variety of ways to disseminate knowledge, to inform German publics, and also to reclaim their place in the national polity. Black German quotidian intellectuals employed vernacular aesthetic cultural forms and styles such as spoken word poetry, hip-hop music, and abstract artwork to create new vocabularies, literature, and practices that in turn led to the formation of a vibrant Black public sphere. They also did not privilege one creative or expressive form over the other. And so, all of this is about their political and cultural work, and about Black Germans showing us why notions of race still matter, processes of racialization still matter, and how all of that was coded in different forms of aesthetic and vernacular forms in and beyond the German nation.

I see all of this as a way of thinking about social movements more broadly as sites for knowledge production, as sites for everyday intellectualism, everyday activism, and why these themes matter, especially in a larger context. When we think about Germany as a *Land* of *Dichter* and *Denker*, people do not necessarily see activism as a site for intellectual labor or intellectualism, but these grassroots activists were intellectuals. So, that is my larger claim, along with emphasizing the persistence of everyday racism, thinking about the erasure of Black Germans in the national historical context(s), as well as a variety of other themes. Indeed, one of the main themes is (re)considering intellectualism in a new way in Germany.

Craig Griffiths: My book *The Ambivalence of Gay Liberation* is about the gay movement in 1970s West Germany, which was a movement made possible by homosexual law reform in 1969. But legal reform did not change everything; it did not give rise to a linear shift from cautious to radical, from closeted to visible, or from shame to pride. And that ambivalent situation is something I have sought to capture in the book. Ambivalence is the analytic prism through which I tried to make sense of the complexities of gay liberation, and to think about how we can see some continuities in a longer history of homosexual emancipation as well. I am interested in discussing to what extent that ambivalence might be useful for other social movements too. Another intervention that I am trying to make with the book is to reveal, or to help reveal, the clear limits of liberalization in postwar West Germany. My focus on ambivalence is a means of moving beyond the so-called “gay success story” (Benno Gammerl’s phrase). I also want to problematize success stories of the Federal Republic itself, and in this I think my book has a lot in common with the wonderful work of Tiffany, Anna, and Sam.

Anna von der Goltz: As the title of my book *The Other ’68ers: Student Protests and Christian Democracy in West Germany* suggests, it is a book about Christian Democratic student activism in the years around 1968. I wrote the book because I was really intrigued by the fact that a central chapter in Germany’s postwar history seemed to deal almost exclusively with the Left, even though Christian Democrats had been and they continued to be the most important political force in German history after 1945. The book makes three core arguments, which I will only sketch here. The first one is quite basic, namely that center-right students were present in 1968, not just as staunch opponents of protest, but actually often as central characters and participants. The book’s cover shows a famous photograph of a debate that took place in early 1968 that is very often referenced in the literature. It involved Rudi Dutschke, and I show, for instance, that this debate was organized and shaped in significant ways by center-right activists. And so, the idea is about expanding the frame, as it were, writing center-right activists back into a history they were always a part of but that they are not usually included in. This shows that it was a broader, more complex, and, ultimately, a more consequential moment than the traditionally narrow focus on left-wing activism has allowed.

Secondly, the book makes an argument about generation. It is a call to rethink how we conceive of generations in German history and the ”’68er”-generation, in particular. Generational histories often universalize the experiences of a particular subset of an age cohort, and my approach of focusing on the “other ‘68ers” offers a corrective here and directs our attention towards thinking about diversity and division within generational cohorts. Finally, the book revisits the extraordinary role that Christian Democracy has played in the history of postwar Europe and postwar Germany, in particular. Some of its protagonists would go on to shape West German political culture in important ways, particularly during the Kohl era of the 1980s. They were an important factor in explaining the success of the Kohl government, I argue. So, in a way, the book helps us to understand why the age of Christian Democracy was interrupted but never really ended in the Federal Republic, at least until now.

Samuel Clowes Huneke: *States of Liberation: Gay Men between Dictatorship and Democracy in Cold War Germany* is my new book, just out a couple of months ago. Basically, it started with a big question about how Germany evolved from the Nazi period, when it was one of the most homophobic states in modern history, up to the present, where Germany is often considered one of the most LGBTQ-friendly states in existence today. In order to answer the question of how Germany evolved on LGBTQ rights, the book looks at both East and West Germany and how the two states treated gay men in particular across the postwar period, starting at the end of World War II and going all the way up through the end of the Cold War. It also looks at liberation movements, how gay and lesbian activists portrayed themselves vis-à-vis these two governments, and how they developed new notions of sexual citizenship in order to ground new claims to rights and privileges under two very different state forms.

In making this argument, or charting this history, the book is diachronic – it moves across time and bounces back and forth between the two states. But it also compares and contrasts gay experiences in East and West Germany. In so doing, it comes to the startling revelation that, in many ways, East Germany was actually better than West Germany in terms of how it treated queer people. Particularly in the 1980s, the gay and lesbian liberation movement in East Germany was wildly successful in terms of pushing specific policies within the socialist government. Ultimately, that is where the title *States of Liberation* comes from: the book makes the argument that there is not really one single project we can refer to as gay or queer liberation, but rather that it is a set of shifting projects, processes, and priorities that arise in different ways in different times and places.

II. Connections

Wetzell: We will now move to questions that try to draw these themes together and enable us to have a discussion about the state of the field, about social movements, and how they are connected. We wanted to start with this question: What kinds of connections do all of you see between the different social movements that you have analyzed? For instance, what is the relationship of the gay liberation movement, or I should probably say movements, to the student movement or the different parts of the student movement? More generally, in what ways were feminism and antiracism, gay rights and the critique of capitalism, to just name a few issues, connected or related in these different movements? Another way to ask this question is: what did each of you learn from reading the books of the others?

Griffiths: To approach this question, we can think about intellectual or ideological links, emotional links, also inspiration, inspiration in action forms for example. To start with the student movement: despite the heteronormativity of the student movement, it *was* important for gay liberation, most especially for the gay left. So, I see the gay left taking from the student movement a really foundational skepticism of capitalism and a skepticism about what was actually possible or realizable within the framework of a liberal democracy. In terms of the types of action, one of the most famous public actions of the gay movement in the 1970s was the front cover story of *Stern* magazine in October 1978, when 682 men collectively outed themselves in that publication. We cannot possibly imagine the action having taken place without the prior action of feminists, in 1971, when 374 women declared on the front cover of the same magazine that they had had an abortion.

I see the connections between the gay movement and antiracist movements as being less clear as compared to feminism. So certainly, there are examples of inspiration, there are empathetic kinds of identification, but, at least for the 1970s, I do not think we see that many examples, let us say, of tangible solidarity on the part of the gay movement. Christopher Ewing's work – see his *The Color of Desire: Untangling Race and Sex in German Queer Politics since 1970* [forthcoming, Cornell University Press] – here is really good in helping us think about or in showing the real lack of reflection on the part of some white gay men, for example, regarding racist depictions in the gay press.

I learned a lot from Tiffany's work, Anna's work, and Sam's work regarding these entanglements between different movements and different political traditions. Above and beyond that, Tiffany's work has really made me think more about the link between activism and intellectualism, and I found the concept of "quotidian intellectuals" really fascinating. I hesitate perhaps to apply it to the gay movement, in the case of white gay men at least, but it is certainly a really important concept and it simply forced me to think afresh about the role of social movements in actually producing knowledge and that is something I did not foreground enough in my book. More generally, I think myself and Tiffany and the other panelists share a focus on the role of emotions in solidifying and helping a movement cohere. Anna's work, over many years, has been so important for myself and many others in asking us to think in a more nuanced way about generation, which Anna has already mentioned, but also in terms of links between different movements, the contingency of activists' lives. Someone Anna mentions, Jürgen-Bernd Runge, who was a Christian Democratic student activist, becomes a Communist and then a Stasi informant, which, of course, makes me think of Sam's book, his comparative analysis of gay men and sexual citizenship, which has really forced me to revisit some of my assumptions about the two Germanies and to think about gay activism, gay liberation – I know gay liberation is a term that Sam, I think, is not so keen on in certain instances — but how that can operate outside of the framework of a liberal democracy; that has been really compelling for me.

von der Goltz: I also learned a lot from these books. In Sam's case and in Craig's case I saw them develop over time and it was particularly gratifying to see how everything came together, and I have been extremely impressed and learned a lot just in terms of factual details and protagonists I had not been aware of. In Tiffany's work, there was so much that was new to me, even though I had been working on the years around 1968 for a long time. And I am now working on a related article about a Christian Democratic campaign, where Christian Democrats in the 1970s adapted the slogan “Black is beautiful” from the American Civil Rights Movement and linked it to their own identity as a party that was associated with the color black. Black was the color of the Christian Democrats. I found so much in Tiffany’s work that is going to help me think critically about this and to put it into a new context.

In addition, I have to say that when reading the books, I was also really struck by how much we share, even though we all work on very different subjects. In some ways, I think we are engaged in a joint project of writing more nuanced histories of social movements, of moving away from left-wing intellectual male protagonists, heterosexual male protagonists, as natural agents of progressive change.

I think that all of our studies betray a certain unease with linear liberalization narratives, something Craig alluded to in his own introduction. He talks explicitly about the ambivalence of Gay Liberation. Sam blurs the boundaries between dictatorship and democracy, which leads to very productive insights, and I think Tiffany’s focus on the subjectivities of Black German women and the persistence of racism is really crucial here and obviously sheds new light on the history of the Federal Republic. I think that in one way or the other, we all move past lionizing our protagonists and portraying them as heroic agents of progressive change, whereas that was the dominant framing of an older social movements literature. I was really struck in reading your works that, in one way or the other, you are all far more nuanced and critical of the experiences, but also the legacies of these activists. In short, I definitely noticed the similarities between some of our conclusions and methods, and it has been fascinating.

Florvil: Much like Anna, I was struck by some of the similarities that were quite stark in our books in terms of reimagining the Cold War as a site for complex interactions with activists.

Regarding scholarship on the Cold War – like when we think about the militarization of the United States, the policy of containment, and how those policies were mapped out by a variety of allies and how Germany took part – each of these books offers a richer legacy of what the Cold War actually meant on the ground, the grassroots responses that eventually led to, in Anna's case, affected politics in interesting ways. But then also the cultural implications of those activists and strategies and that they are not disentangled from one another. We oftentimes also observe this separation of the ideas of politics and culture. But it is in this Cold War period where we see them so enmeshed and driving one another.

With Craig's book in particular, I see the similarities with analyzing and thinking about affective communities, exploring the implications of how communities cohere and why they cohere. You can also observe this in the other books, but the fresh methodological approach of using ambivalence as an analytic to chart out the complexities of gay men's activism was quite significant for me. I have taught his 2016 *German History* article "Sex, Shame and West German Gay Liberation" in some courses, and so now I can teach his book. With Sam's book, I was struck by the fact that East Germany became a site for an entrenched gay culture that I had no idea existed. I mean, I knew that it existed, but I did not know that it was such a freeing and powerful space in so many ways. It also helped to shape legislative change in ways that we as scholars do not necessarily think about.

Anna's book was striking because, much like teaching parts of Craig's work, I also teach Anna's co-edited volume on the conservative right [*Inventing the Silent Majority in Western Europe and the United States: Conservatism in the 1960s and 1970s* (Cambridge UP, 2017)], and so it was just interesting to see center-right or conservative activists and how they negotiated. In many ways, they adapted similar ideals from the more radical elements of leftist politics. I found that dynamic quite interestingly unpacked in her book. And her book helps me complicate the idea of generation as well, in terms of my own work thinking about the intra/multigenerational issues that emerge in social movements like this, in which you see a contrast in terms of approaches and practices, and a collective identity that evolves and becomes more complicated. So, all of these books were really wonderful, and I am excited to be teaching again to incorporate these works in my classes.

Huneke: I echo all of these thoughts. In many ways, I feel lucky that my book was the last of these four to come out, which meant that, while I was writing it, I benefited from these other three works, all of which I read and engaged with. They were quite important for how I thought about my own project. Craig obviously has the closest subject to mine. The focus of Craig's book is the topic of one of the chapters in my book, and I think both the book and Craig's earlier writings really helped me to think critically about this sort of activism, gay activism in the 1970s in the Federal Republic. The idea of ambivalence, as Tiffany and Anna have both touched on, is incredibly productive and rich. I do think that I wind up coming away slightly less skeptical than Craig of these movements, but I would not have been able to write that chapter without the really profound insights of Craig's work.

When it comes to Tiffany's work, it certainly has, as Anna said, just opened up a whole new vista of actors and issues and concerns – especially in the late Cold War period in the Federal Republic – that had not been on my radar before I read *Mobilizing Black Germany*. I, too, found the idea of "quotidian intellectuals" really fascinating, and it helped me think about the kind of cultural and intellectual production of the activists I was writing about. And Anna: I mean Anna was really involved in the production of my book, she read an early draft of it, and shared chapters of her own book with me before it was published. She helped me think critically about the place of the center–right in the Federal Republic, and the place of conservatism, and to think in a nuanced way about how the CDU, in particular, changed, but also about how other parties, such as the Free Democrats, evolved over the course of the Cold War.

I will add one more thing about all of our works, as an addendum to what Anna said about how we are all critical of the Federal Republic. We are all critical of the activists we're writing about: these are not just hagiographies that we've written. I also think, and maybe this is just my own predilection coming out of queer theory and queer history, but I do not think we are merely critical. I think there is a critical edge to what we are doing, but there is also an element of recuperative joy that we bring. What I mean is that there is an effort not only to be critical but also to understand the progress or the good or beneficial elements of these movements. That is certainly something I see in my own work. For instance, I think that Anna actually tells quite a happy story about the evolution of the CDU. Similarly, Tiffany's story is, I find, a joyful one of Black Germans creating consciousness and cultural space for themselves. And similarly, I think, Craig, even though you do focus on ambivalence, there is an element of appreciation and a reluctance to get dragged into a singularly critical position vis-à-vis your activists.

III. East and West Germany

Wetzell: "Joy" is not a word one hears a great deal as a German historian, but I think in this context it is perfectly appropriate. So, we will move on to our next round, which is a two-part question: I will start and Kerstin will continue with the second part. We would like to ask you about the relationship between social movements in East and West Germany. Sam's book, of course, is the book that takes that on directly, but I know all of you have thought about this. So, another way of phrasing this is to ask you: What does comparison between East and West Germany, or an examination of their entanglements, contribute to our understanding of both societies and of their social movements from the 1960s to the 1980s? And I hand it over to Kerstin for the second part of this question.

Brückweh: I would like to go even one step further in time: what was the impact of 1989 and 1990 – when the East German Revolution and then the unification of the two unequal German states took place – on the social movements? From my own research, I would attribute a great influence precisely to this time period because, on the one hand, there was euphoria but then disillusionment followed right after. And so I am pleading for connecting the time periods before, during, and after 1989 to understand the 1990s. Put differently: I was quite amused when Sam just said it was a "joyful" story because in my understanding the "joyful" upheaval of 1989 and the *Wende* was followed instantly by ambivalence – and thus a concept we've already talked about in our roundtable, but let us see what you say about it, Anna!

von der Goltz: "Recuperative joy" is certainly an interesting idea when writing about Christian Democrats! Well, so on the East-West comparison and the entanglements between the two German states, obviously my book is mostly a history of West Germany, even though I previously worked on the East German "'68ers" as part of a smaller project. In the classic formulation of Christoph Kleßmann on German-German history, there was this asymmetric entanglement between the two: this assumption that the presence of West Germany had a much larger impact on East Germany than vice versa. However, I think that when writing histories of the Federal Republic, we need to keep in mind that the existence of East Germany did actually shape the political culture of the Federal Republic in really important ways. That is what I try and incorporate in my own work by highlighting the importance of anti-Communism, for instance, for the center-right and the centrality of German division to their thinking. I also have a chapter on "mental maps" which highlights European and German division, the role of West Berlin as an "island city," and how important that was to the center-right's view of the world. So, the East does feature, and I think in the end it throws the political culture of West Germany into much sharper relief by being mindful of the ways in which this was a divided country and this shaped what was going on.

In terms of 1989, the bulk of the book is about the 1960s and 1970s. Five out of six chapters deal with the 1960s and 1970s, but the sixth and final chapter does trace the afterlives of this activism. I do that by looking at trajectories, the careers of former student activists who ended up in government, in policy work, and so forth. But I also look at commemorations of "1968," and there you really see a big difference between pre- and post-1989. In the late 1980s, center-right activists wanted to be the other "'68ers" or alternative "'68ers," as they called themselves, and they connected their own biographies to this narrative of "1968" as a cultural revolution, which was really taking shape at this time. This was the moment when the "success narrative" of the Federal Republic really took hold in public commemorations and in historiography. And so, they were writing their own lives into this larger narrative. After 1989, and especially in the far more challenging post-unification era – with anti-foreigner violence and so forth and a moral panic about hedonistic youth – "1968" suddenly appeared in a far more negative light. The cultural revolution was suddenly seen as something negative, the destruction of values. And at this point, center-right activists preferred to be anti-"'68ers," and this is when the focus shifted to political violence, the terror of the 1970s and so forth. So, part of what the book does is to peel away the different layers of interpretation and commemoration to show how the story changed over time. Therefore what Kerstin said about writing across the caesura of 1989 may not be at the center of what I do, but it is something I try to accomplish, at least in that one chapter.

Huneke: Comparing East and West Germany is one of the explicit aims of my book. And so, as I think I have already hinted, one of the real goals is to question the success story of the Federal Republic, as I think we all are doing, while also questioning the totalitarian model, or the various other names that it has taken, of East Germany. In that way, my book is very much in line with the revisionist historiography of East Germany. In so doing, I do try to blur some of the distinctions between dictatorship and democracy. The book also tries to show, in various ways, how, as Anna alluded to, it was not necessarily an asymmetrical entanglement between the two countries, that there are ways in which the East German gay activists and their thinking on homosexuality also influenced what was going on in West Germany. This was definitely clear in the 1950s and 1960s, when Paragraph 175 was in force, which criminalized male homosexuality in both countries, but much less so in East Germany. Conservatives and other right-wing groups in West Germany took this leniency as evidence that communism and homosexuality somehow go hand in hand, which, in turn, shaped anti-gay animus in the Federal Republic. Later on, when we get to the very successful East German gay and lesbian movements of the 1980s, West Germans start paying attention to their successes and many West German gay men start looking over to the East with a certain degree of envy at the political movement they built. They start comparing it to their own perceived failures in West Germany.

I wrote an epilogue that explicitly deals with the post-*Wende* period. I got to interview Lothar de Maizière, who was the only freely elected prime minister of East Germany. He was one of the first people I interviewed, and he was involved, as a lawyer, with the East German gay and lesbian movement. And he told me, quite strikingly – remember, this is someone who is a Christian Democrat; he was an enemy of the socialist regime – but he told me that he thought East Germany had been more progressive or more tolerant on gay issues than West Germany and that this tolerance seeped over into the West after reunification. And, indeed, I was able to show how there was legislative change in East Germany that made its way into West Germany. And we know that there are other areas, especially related to women's rights, where more progressive policy from East Germany did find its way into West Germany afterwards. I think this is something that a lot of scholars are interested in now, looking at the afterlives of East Germany and how the *Wende* was not just a clean break with the past but rather a messy process of amalgamation.

Florvil: My book focuses largely on Black German activism in the West, but it does engage with this idea of the *Wende* and the implications of the *Wende*, and how there was much more continuity, especially with regards to thinking about the larger idea of German racecraft, processes of racialization and exclusion, as well as how we see those still remaining relevant in the context of the "post-Wall." I think it has been interesting too to see that, in many ways, Black Germans were able to initiate and lead conversations on how both East Germany and West Germany were more similar in terms of their racial politics than previously considered. There is a sense that East Germany was very much committed to international antiracist solidarity, but on the ground, the reality was far from that. Those sort of everyday experiences, racialized experiences, feelings of exclusion that Black Germans as well as other African students, who were also in East Germany, expressed, are also quite telling. Black Germans and other minoritized communities integrated those themes and discussions into "Black History Month" events and/or tackled those issues by thinking and writing about racism across time in both Germanies.

There was also a commitment to name and address the violence that was inflicted, not only on Black Germans but on immigrants, other Germans of Color. There was a Black community organization that emerged, the Black Unity Committee. It was founded in 1990 in direct response to the increase or uptick in racial violence that Black Germans were witnessing, and they shared their thoughts about the continuity of German approaches to the "Other" and how they saw that playing out in a variety of ways that seemed similar to other historical moments. They also documented the incidents to provide a record of contemporary racism. What was interesting about the post-*Wende* period was considering the larger development of the European Union (EU). We witnessed how European countries tackled immigration, with more draconian legislative measures to keep out immigrants from Global South countries. This corresponded to the larger push for the EU in terms of keeping out those presumed to be social or economic immigrants and migrants, who were allegedly a drain on these nations. So, I think it has been interesting to see how Black Germans pushed not only for more recognition about being Black Germans, being German citizens, but also for recognition about the role that immigration has played in the German context and why fighting for migrant rights was important to pursue.

In my book, I also address the afterlives of 1989/90 and political reunification on October 3rd. Black Germans, migrants, People of Color could tell – they saw it on November 9th, 1989 – that things were not going to be positive for them. May Ayim, a Black German poet and activist whom I discuss in the book, wrote explicitly about this German ethnonationalism in her poetry, connecting it to previous moments of exclusion, thinking about *Kristallnacht*, thinking about all of those other moments of exclusionary practices, of violence that had been enacted inside and outside of the German nation, in its colonies. It has been interesting to see Black Germans connecting those longer legacies of racial violence, racecraft, in Germany, but also revealing how those processes were enacted in colonial settings like Africa, German Samoa; all of these interesting dynamics emerged during the moment. So for me, it has been largely a narrative Black German activism in the West, but Black Germans in the West were also cognizant of those dynamics occurring in the East and how the East was always an imprint of how identity and community were configured in legislative measures, in particular.

Griffiths: I do not have a great deal to add here, because I want to acknowledge where my expertise lies, which is in West German history and my book is squarely about the 1970s. So, I have less to say about unification. I do want to flag up Sam's achievement in writing a comparative history of East and West German gay liberation, which is unprecedented, and is going to be incredibly useful for the field. I certainly wished that I had had that to intellectually work with, previously. I did have aspirations, back in the day, of writing a comparative history and I shied away from that task, so Sam's publication is all the more compelling. In the book I do talk about some of the links that existed between East and West Germany in the 1970s. Josie McLellan has written about how some West German gay magazines were smuggled into East Berlin and how a famous film, Rosa von Praunheim's *It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Situation in Which He Lives* [1971], could be viewed in parts of East Germany. Richard and Sam have both written about this film, too. So there were some links, but what I argue in the book is that there was not such an obvious framework for understanding. In particular, the socialism of the gay left in West Germany was very different from the socialism practiced across the German border, or even the socialism espoused by East German gay activists.

One thing worth thinking about is homosexual law reform itself, because, as Sam explains in his book, the legal situation was markedly better in the GDR, in that, unlike the West, the GDR did not enforce a Nazi-era revision of Paragraph 175 and then repealed it altogether in 1968. Much has been written in queer history about transnational influences with regard to homosexual law reform, for example the influence of the Sexual Offences Act in 1967, which partially decriminalized sex between men in England and Wales. Activists sent a copy of that law to every West German parliamentarian, but actually the 1968 reform in East Germany was also influential, I think, in concentrating West German parliamentarian minds, and that does not get acknowledged enough.

Just briefly on unification: it does fall outside my area of expertise, but I think – and Sam has much more detail about this – that the relative absence of a commercialized gay scene in East Germany was important. This was one of the reasons why, historically, there was a somewhat greater cooperation between gay men and lesbians in the East, as opposed to the West. As part of the unification process – "unification" would be the wrong word – there was to a certain extent a "growing together" of gay male and lesbian activism, which had already been happening in the context of the HIV/AIDS crisis, but which is pushed further forward by the *Wende*.

IV. Master Narratives?

Brückweh: I liked all your books and I thought all your arguments very convincing. And now comes the "however": However, I sometimes fear that we focus too much on single stories or single movements and that we somehow leave the master narrative in historical surveys to others. These surveys are being written all the time, but we do not write them. Do we need to focus on "single stories" or, as one of you said, "nuanced histories" as a step towards a bigger picture? Or should we leave master narratives behind us anyway? This goes back to Richard's question about connections that you see among your stories. Besides historiography, it also brings us right into current political debates about the relationships between individuals and groups, and what makes a "society." So, that is kind of a two-fold question, one that I am struggling with myself in my own writing of history.

Huneke: To some extent, we have already talked about how generative everyone's work has been for each of us. And so, the first thing I would say is, although I am writing about one group, I do have all these other groups at least in the rear-view mirror. I had them in mind when I was writing the book. And these three books, as well as other books, were incredibly influential in getting me to do that, in getting me to expand the book's implicit focus.

We are critical of various master narratives, whether that is the narrative of Germany being a white country, or whether it is the narrative of the "'68ers" just being a group of leftists, or whether it is a version of West German or German history that leaves out queer people. So, I think that we are all being critical, but I guess my hope is that it is in the interest of putting together, maybe not a master narrative, but some sort of larger narrative of Germany, of Europe, of the modern period, that takes account of these marginalized or excluded or forgotten groups, individuals, and movements. I do think that there are real ramifications for politics today in all of these works. They reveal, for instance, the dangers of focusing on identity or focusing only on narrow identity groups. Certainly in queer history, both Craig and I talk about not only the "joy" of these movements, but also the real exclusions within them, whether we're talking about racism, misogyny, or ideological conflict. There was a huge amount of conflict over the question of age and intergenerational relationships. There was a huge amount of strife within these groups and the purpose of studying these activists' shortcomings is to imagine new cross-coalitional political movements, to imagine the possibility of mobilizing different groups in broad ways to achieve a better future.

von der Goltz: Our four books are monographs, even though Sam covers forty years and two countries and his is really a survey in all but name and obviously the most ambitious in terms of just the sheer temporal scope of it and in covering two countries. But I think you need both. I think the kind of research we do and the kind of sources we work with, be it oral history or the close engagement with individual biographies, it is a particular genre and it is necessary, and then the survey is something that, to me at least, is a second step in a way.

And a note on identity politics because I think the argument is often made by conservatives that this is somehow a left-wing project and that it is about dividing up a homogeneous society into these different groups that all have conflicting identities and that this somehow undermines society's natural coherence. Part of what I do in the book is to say: "conservatives also engage in identity politics." The generational narrative that I trace in the book also conveys that "we are a group with a distinct identity," which had already emerged at the time but then was commemorated and was always tied to specific political agendas. It was not a natural identity that was just out there, it was one that was made and that was weaponized in particular moments in time. I think that it is worth highlighting the fact that this is something that many different groups do, including conservative ones, in the modern period certainly, and especially in times of rapid social and cultural change. It is a way of fostering community and making arguments and speaking to specific groups for specific purposes. In terms of the critique that this is something that undermines social coherence, it is important to point out that this is something that happens across the political spectrum.

Florvil: I do think there is some utility in master narratives, and so we should not completely discard them. But the master narrative also runs into the problem of the single story. When we fixate on the master narrative, this single-story narrative, we are limited in our ability to witness much more complexity in a particular moment. And so that is why I like all of these books: because we all challenge the master narrative. For instance, Anna explains that it was not purely a leftist narrative, and the 60s were not purely a moment for leftists. It was also the emergence of conservativism, globally, and Germany played an important role in that. Sam tells us that we can see complexity when we look at both East and West Germany and their approaches to advocating for queer rights in a variety of ways that do not fixate on success or failure. Queer community-making and activism never followed a linear path on both sides of the Wall. Craig shows us that there were "dualities that helped to complicate how queer activists were working on the ground." So, I think we are all challenging this idea of a single story in very innovative ways.

For me it was important to do that because the discourses and narratives that I kept hearing were that “Black Germans do not matter” and that “there is a small number of them.” Often followed by a question of “why are you studying this?” And I kept thinking, the number of Black Germans was comparable to the number of German Jews prior to the Second World War. This tells us that numbers still do matter in ways that we need to critically interrogate. And so our books are all challenging this idea of a single story, and mine, in particular, challenged the myth that “post-‘45” was raceless and antiracist, and that Germans (on both sides of the Wall) had overcome these issues of exclusion and racialization. Indeed, it was far from the truth. Racism and antisemitism still existed in the “post-‘45” period, and all of these dynamics are still connected. In many ways, all of our books do that. We are challenging the notion that master narratives are the only way to tell compelling narratives. Certainly, we can have a larger understanding of society, of German society quite frankly, if we pursue these novel avenues of research in ways that are not tethered to one single narrative or one single point of origin.

Griffiths: So – master narratives. This makes me pause. I work in a field, queer history, which is essentially antithetical to the whole idea of there being a master narrative. The queer intellectual project is about disturbing truths, overcoming narratives, disturbing normativities of any kind, whether chronological, historiographic, hetero- and homonormative, whatever. So, in that sense, I would say there *cannot* be a queer master narrative, but there can certainly be a *gay* one, and that is one of the things that I am trying to push against. To simplify the story, it would go something like this: In 1969, with the Stonewall Riots in the U.S., or the legal change in West Germany, young gays and lesbians came together, came out, overthrew decades of shame and exclusion and set us on a path to ever-unfolding greater equality, which eventually, with some sideways steps along the way, resulted in the gay marriage laws of the last decade. This kind of "gay success story," whatever we prefer to call it, is problematic in many ways. It presupposes that a type of legislation like gay marriage or equal marriage would be a suitable barometer of progress; however, there are a lot of exclusions built into that. This is one of my favorite words, as you can probably tell, but I do feel quite *ambivalent* about this.

We cannot deny that, at times, the insights of feminist history, Black history, queer history are gradually being somewhat better incorporated into historical work. But sometimes, that is in a tokenistic fashion, sometimes there is not a deep engagement, and, of course, it can be part of, let us say, a co-optation or an appropriation into a rosy, self-serving national narrative or, of course, one about neoliberalism, in terms of the type of change deemed possible within a certain socioeconomic system. I am thinking here about "pink washing" and homonationalism. So I am quite skeptical about master narratives, but, on the other hand, I also acknowledge, being self-critical, that a lot of us, or certainly a lot of people in queer history but also in other historical fields, do exhibit a kind of intellectual or emotional attachment to exclusion or to marginalization; that might be seen as a structural feature of the field. And there is a danger, of course, of always leaving others to write the survey histories or leaving others to write master narratives, as Kerstin highlights. So, it is something I need to think about some more.

Brückweh: Exactly that was my point, Craig, and thank you all for your answers. I have to think about them, too, because at the end of our project on the "Long History of 1989," we said: "Differentiation is the new master narrative" – meaning, that it's time to accept the different stories without wanting to write an overall narrative. But then, conventional master narratives are being written anyway and they are influential in public discourses, so I ask myself shouldn't it be us who write them or – at least – have a greater say in them?

V. Political and Cultural Transformations

Wetzell: How do you see the relationship between political and cultural transformations in the social movements that you investigated? This really was a theme in several of the books. Anna, in her book, for instance, makes a very good case and shows that the center-right "'68ers" also signed on to some of the cultural transformations of the 60s that we have often associated with the left wing, in terms of sexuality, gender roles, personal appearance, and music. And by the same token, not all gay men fighting for gay rights were necessarily leftists. So, the broad question is: what do your studies teach us about the relationship between political movements and cultural change?

Huneke: I would say that this is one of the main points that I am driving towards in *States of Liberation*: this notion that you can have change in one realm that does not necessarily translate into change in another realm. That is really where I land in the comparison between East Germany, which has legal and policy-driven liberation, and West Germany, which does not experience that kind of legal change but does have this flourishing subculture. And, obviously, East Germany does not have anything like the West German subculture. My goal is then to conceptually decouple these two realms, to say that they are not necessarily connected to one another. You can have changes that do not translate, political changes that do not translate into cultural change and vice-versa.

Griffiths: I think looking at conservatism is a really fruitful avenue in social movement research, and Anna's work has been really formative here. While I did not do this conceptually in the book, I have a piece coming out this year looking at cultures of conservatism in queer politics in the U.S. and West Germany. Regarding the link between social movements and cultural change, it's important to incorporate different actors. I do not think it means – Anna reminds us of this – that we need to lionize conservatives or disparage those whom we might call radical, but I do think it might require a more complex story than that sometimes told by an earlier wave of historiography on social movements that has often been written by activists themselves reflecting on their own achievements. I am not trying to set up a false divide between "academic work" and "activism," but I think some critical distance can be helpful here, at least in gay and lesbian history, queer history.

Florvil: In my own work, the cultural and intellectual changes have been much more significant and present than, say, some of the political changes. So for example, in the 1980s, Black Germans argued for the creation of some type of census in order to quantify the discriminatory practices that were deeply embedded in German society. It is not until 2020 that we have an official "Afrozensus" in the German context. [For more on the Afrozensus, see https://afrozensus.de/.] Unfortunately, it did not happen in the 80s, in the 90s, and it was not due to a lack of interest. It finally happened in the 21st century. And so, what has been striking for me is that the cultural realm also advanced political action, even though we may not see the tangible political change immediately. And so, the mere idea and the creation of designations such as "Afro-German" or "Black German," "Afrodeutsche," or "Schwarze Deutsche," were critical political and cultural moments as well as epistemic moments, in which Black Germans challenged heteronormative understandings of Germanness and racialized understandings of Germanness. And so, those are much more important in terms of, well not much more important, I should not say that. But they show us more about the boundaries and the limitations that Black Germans pushed through and against to gain more recognition, to instigate more cultural, intellectual, and social change.

von der Goltz: Political and cultural changes are linked in complex ways, and I think causality is often difficult to establish. In the 1980s, when "1968" was first systematically commemorated on the left and on the center-right, the notion was very powerful that "1968" had led to a cultural revolution but lost politically – a political revolution had not occurred, but there had been a cultural revolution, which had democratized West German society from below. And I think in the last twenty years or so, that story has been increasingly questioned, and various historians have pointed out that many of those cultural changes had already been underway for some time when the student movement crested. Therefore "1968" was at most a catalyst. That is now more or less the consensus. So in that interpretation the causality is reversed, and I continue in that vein and show that center-right activists were also growing up in a society that was already changing or affected by consumer society and the pluralization of lifestyles. The chapter in the book that deals with this calls them the "children of Adenauer and Coca-Cola" because there was still a lot of admiration for the postwar chancellor but also an embrace of new cultural norms and so forth. I will conclude with the idea that the very definition of what is cultural and political is also extremely fluid. Part of the 1960s project was about broadening the very definition of what was considered political. And that happened much more so on the left. The right had a much more traditionalist idea of what politics was: it is about organizations, power, and so forth. But they also started to think that relationships and how one acts in the private sphere were actually political acts. These things were fluid, and part of what I do in the book is to trace how these understandings changed around 1968 and then in the years after.

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