



## Studies in Visual Communication

---

Volume 9  
Issue 2 *Spring 1983*

Article 1

---

1983

**Volume 9 Number 2**

---

### Recommended Citation

(1983). Volume 9 Number 2. 9 (2), 1-96. Retrieved from <https://repository.upenn.edu/svc/vol9/iss2/1>

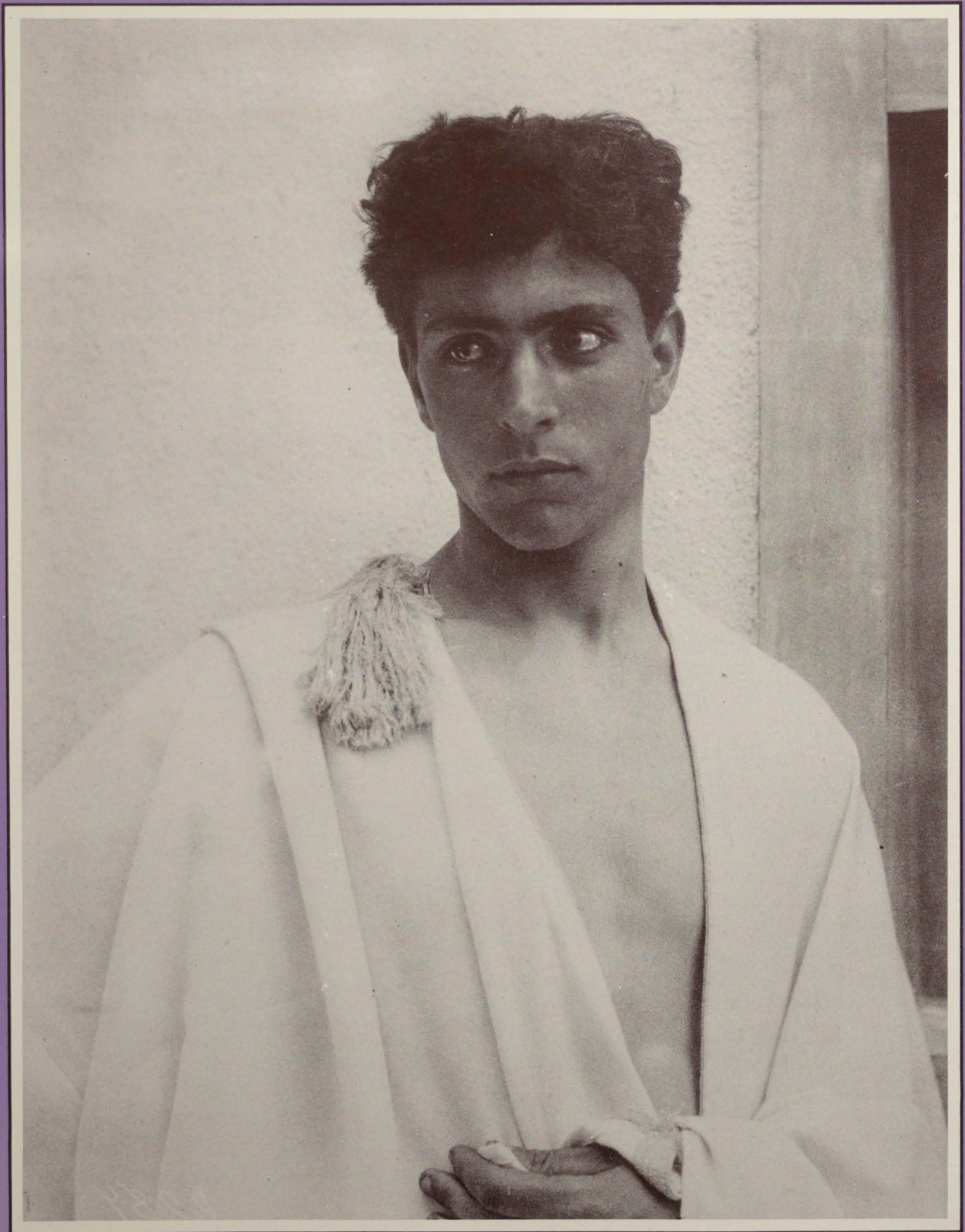
This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. <https://repository.upenn.edu/svc/vol9/iss2/1>  
For more information, please contact [repository@pobox.upenn.edu](mailto:repository@pobox.upenn.edu).

---

Volume 9 Number 2

studies in

# Visual Communication



Volume 9 Number 2 Spring 1983

- Editors:** Larry Gross and Jay Ruby
- Associate Editor:** Tobia L. Worth
- Business Manager:** Christopher Wessel
- Graphic Designer:** Penelope Malish
- Assistant:** Janice Fisher
- Editorial Secretary:** Anne Evans
- Editorial Board:** Howard S. Becker (Northwestern University)  
Steven Feld (University of Pennsylvania)  
Jay Ruby (Temple University)  
Larry Gross (University of Pennsylvania)  
Carroll Williams (Anthropology Film Center)
- Review Editors:** Paula Ben-Amos (University of Pennsylvania)  
George Custen (Cedar Crest/Muhlenberg)  
Dan Schiller (Temple University)
- Consulting Editors:** Robert Plant Armstrong (University of Texas at Dallas)  
Howard S. Becker (Northwestern University)  
Peter Burke (Cambridge University)  
James Carey (University of Illinois)  
Richard Chalfen (Temple University)  
William Davenport (University of Pennsylvania)  
Phoebe Ellsworth (Stanford University)  
Howard Gardner (Harvard University)  
Henry Glassie (University of Pennsylvania)  
Nelson Graburn (University of California at Berkeley)  
Julian Hochberg (Columbia University)  
Elihu Katz (Hebrew University)  
John Katz (York University)  
John Kennedy (University of Toronto)  
Rhoda Metraux (Craftsbury, Conn.)  
Linda Nochlin (City University of New York)  
John Reilly (Global Village)  
Jean Rouch (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique)  
Gavriel Salomon (Hebrew University)  
Allan Sekula (Ohio State University)  
Joel Snyder (University of Chicago)  
Amos Vogel (University of Pennsylvania)  
Annette Weiner (New York University)

- Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication
- President Carroll Williams (Anthropology Film Center)
- President-elect Jack Rollwagen (SUNY Brockport, NY 14420)

*Studies in Visual Communication* continues *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* (Volumes 1 through 5), founded in 1974 by Sol Worth.

*Studies in Visual Communication* is a multidisciplinary journal drawing on the many areas of scholarship that focus upon aspects of visual communication. The editors welcome theoretical and empirical contributions devoted to significant problems and issues in the study of visual communication.

Manuscripts should follow the style of *Studies* and should be submitted typed, double-spaced, and in duplicate. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by an addressed and stamped envelope. *Studies* assumes no responsibility for the safety of manuscripts.

All manuscripts, books for review, and communications concerning editorial matters should be sent to Editor, *Studies in Visual Communication*, The Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, 3620 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

Inquiries and all correspondence regarding advertising should be sent to Business Manager, *Studies in Visual Communication*, The Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, 3620 Walnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104. *Studies* is printed at Consolidated/Drake Press, 5050 Parkside Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19131.

*Studies in Visual Communication* subscription rates are \$18.00 for one year, \$34.00 for two years, and \$48.00 for three years. There is no additional charge for institutions (libraries) or for foreign surface mail. Single copies are \$5.00. Checks should be made payable to: *Studies in Visual Communication* and sent to *Studies in Visual Communication*, P.O. Box 13358, Philadelphia, PA 19101, U.S.A.

By agreement with the Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication, the editorial board of *Studies* is jointly appointed by SAVICOM and The Annenberg School of Communications, and all SAVICOM members receive a subscription to *Studies* as part of their membership.

Information on SAVICOM membership may be obtained by writing to SAVICOM, c/o Annenberg School Press, P.O. Box 13358, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

***Studies in Visual Communication* is published four times a year by The Annenberg School Press, an activity of The Annenberg School of Communications, 3620 Walnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104. The subscription price is \$18.00 per year.**

**Third-class nonprofit postage paid at Philadelphia, PA, and at additional post offices. Copyright © 1983 by The Annenberg School of Communications. All rights reserved.**

**Postmaster: Send address changes to *Studies in Visual Communication*, P.O. Box 13358, Philadelphia, PA 19101.**

**Front Cover:** Photograph by Wilhelm von Gloeden, p. 72.

**Back Cover:** Photograph by Wilhelm von Gloeden, p. 80.

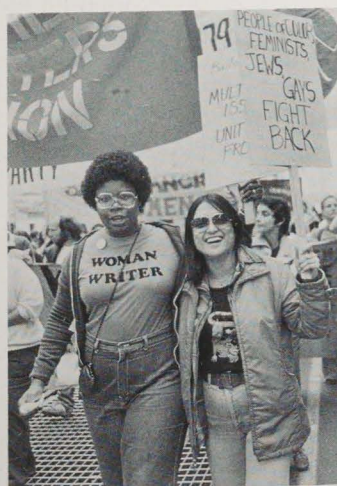
# Visual Communication



Iconography of a Scandal



Wilhelm von Pluschow and Wilhelm von Gloeden



Lesbian Photography

## Contents

Volume 9 Number 2 Spring 1983

- 
- 2** Seen to Be Believed: Some Problems in the Representation of Gay People as Typical  
**Richard Dyer**
- 
- 20** Iconography of a Scandal: Political Cartoons and the Eulenburg Affair  
**James D. Steakley**
- 
- 52** Review Essay: Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*  
**Richard Dyer**
- 
- 57** Wilhelm von Pluschow and Wilhelm von Gloeden: Two Photo Essays  
**Bruce Russell**
- 
- 81** Lesbian Photography—Seeing through Our Own Eyes  
**JEB (Joan E. Biren)**
-

# Seen to Be Believed: Some Problems in the Representation of Gay People as Typical

Richard Dyer

## The Importance of Gay Typification

A major fact about being gay is that it doesn't show. There is nothing about gay people's physiognomy that declares them gay, no equivalents to the biological markers of sex and race. There are signs of gayness, a repertoire of gestures, expressions, stances, clothing, and even environments (see Figure 1) that bespeak gayness, but these are cultural forms designed to show what the person's person alone does not show: that he or she is gay. Such a repertoire of signs, making visible the invisible, is the basis of any representation of gay people involving visual recognition, the requirement of recognizability in turn entailing that of typicality. Though not indispensable, typification is a near necessity for the representation of gayness, the product of social, political, practical, and textual determinations.

### Social

All societies categorize objects, animals, persons, and behaviors, and it is hard to imagine how it could be otherwise. This is the means by which societies order the world and make sense of it. Such categories require words and images to represent them. "Homosexual" and "lesbian" are only two of the many categories, words, and images of sexuality that contemporary Western societies designate or recognize.

That much we can, hopefully, agree on. Recent thinking, however, has been concerned to show that while categorization may be a general activity of human societies, the categorization of sexuality is not. It is argued that not only such sexual categories as lesbian and homosexual but also the activity of sexual categorization itself are historically specific, and indeed relatively recent, phenomena. In this view, sexuality is seen to have been granted a privileged position in the explanation of human affairs; sexual behaviors have been assumed to belong to types of persons who perform them, words like "homosexual" and "lesbian" thus designating persons not acts; and a taxonomy of such sexual types has been produced, not only in psychosexual therapy but also in popular culture and common sense.

---

*Richard Dyer teaches in the Department of Film Studies at the University of Warwick, England, and has written widely on film and other aspects of contemporary culture.*



Figure 1 *The Detective*, U.S.A., 1968. Production still.

---

There are a number of problems with this view of the emergence of the homosexual category. It is lacking in sustained empirical evidence and often extrapolates too widely from official or high-culture ideas about sexuality. It is often used in concert with an essentialist view of human sexuality as being "really" either bisexual or polymorphous perverse. It assumes that because there were no terms or images of homosexual persons in a given historical period, there were not persons whose sexual activity was predominantly or exclusively with members of the same sex. In these and other ways this view of the development of sexual categorization needs further thought and research. Yet it does draw attention to salient features of the way our society characteristically thinks about sexuality, namely, the importance accorded sexuality in the understanding of human behavior in general and the conflation of sexual behavior and psychological disposition, the idea of sexual personality types.

### Political

Homosexual and lesbian have been negative sexual categories, at best to be viewed pathologically, at worst as moral degeneracy, and in either case calling forth images in which such features as skin pallor, hooded eyes, and genital deformity have been used as visual correlatives of sickness and sin. Such views of lesbianism and homosexuality have been challenged, above all by those people who found themselves designated by the categories. There have been two predominant forms of challenge.

One has attempted to alter the object of the categories, to change the terms of what they refer to by shifting from persons to acts. The most familiar form that this argument takes is that people who perform homosexual acts are in every other respect just like everyone else: their sexuality does not imply anything else about their personality. This has been a major plank in the arguments of homosexual civil rights and law reform movements, and it is in the logic of this position that all typification is anathema. The problem was and is that the arguments about homosexuality are very hard to make on the terrain of existing definitions which do inexorably imply categories and types. Thus a statement like "homosexuals are just like anyone else" already reproduces the notion that there are persons designated homosexuals. Moreover, the development of gay subcultures meant that many homosexual people did participate in a life-style, a set of tastes, a language, and so on that meant that their lives were, in more respects than the sexual, different from that of most heterosexual people.

This subcultural activity was itself a form of resistance to the negative implications of the lesbian/homosexual categories, in that it took the categories as a basis for a way of life rather than as something to be overcome or cured. From this subculture emerged the politics of the late-sixties gay movement, with its stress on accepting oneself as lesbian/homosexual, identifying oneself with other homosexual people under the term "gay" and coming out, openly declaring and showing oneself as gay to society as a whole. These strategies of identifying and coming out immediately raise the problem of visibility, of being seen to be gay. Wearing badges, kissing in the streets were means of being visible, but so equally were behaving and dressing in recognizably gay ways—they brought you together in an act of sharing and they made you obvious on the streets. Typification, visually recognizable images and self-presentations, is not just something wished on gay people but produced by them, both in the prepolitical gay subcultures and in the radical gay movement since 1968.

### Practical

Socially, then, in the fact of the sexual categories of homosexual and lesbian, and politically, in the desire for subcultural identification and for coming out on the basis of those categories, homosexual typification is all but inevitable. It also comes to have a practical advantage. Visibility, and hence typicality, means that it is easier for gay people to meet others like themselves. This is most notable in the elaboration of cruising as a major pattern of male homosexual contact. Initially, mere visual obviousness makes it easier for gay men to establish who is gay and who is not;

subsequently, different sexual interests can be signalled through a set of dress and other signs, developed enough to be explored semiotically as Hal Fischer has in his *Gay Semiotics* (Fischer 1978). In some measure the male gay cruising system would seem to have beaten what Michel Foucault refers to as the regime of the sexual at its own game of delineating with ever-greater specialization a taxonomy of desire.

### Textual

Finally, typification has certain advantages in the production of cultural texts representing homosexuality and lesbianism. First, typification is, as a mode of representation, immediate and economical. It dispenses with the need to establish a character's sexuality through dialogue and narrative by establishing it literally at first glance. Dialogue and narrative may themselves be stereotypical. There are conventional ways of indicating in dialogue that a character is gay—certain topics of conversation often function as the trigger for the discussion of whether another character is gay. For example, childlessness, loneliness, a man's interest in arts or domestic crafts, a woman's in mechanics or sports may be used, each implying a scenario of gay life. As secondary characters, gays have familiar narrative functions—the gay male best friend, the threatening lesbian. When central characters, there are formulaic gay plots: the tussle between a lesbian and a heterosexual man for a sexually unformed woman, a plot often ending in violence, murder, or suicide; the gay male affair that has built into its presentation from the beginning intimations of its inevitably fleeting, and therefore melancholy, quality. Many of these dialogue and narrative conventions may also be immediately presented through visual types, but that is not necessary and is often avoided since much of the dramatic quality resides in the revelation or discovery that a character is gay, or in the teasing doubts and hints that the text offers on the subject. But, equally, this then becomes the subject matter of the text, whereas a quick visual type allows the text to concern itself straightforwardly with homosexuality, not within the formulas of revelation and discovery.

Second, types use a few easily recognizable signs to convey not just that a character is lesbian or homosexual but what that implies in terms of a psychology, a social role, and/or a subculture. In a shot from the end of *La dolce vita* (Figure 2), we not only at once and without difficulty identify the men second and fourth from the right as homosexual by their dress and hairstyle, but in so doing are also recognizing a great deal else. We are drawing on our knowledge of the very notion of homosexuality and hence of heterosexuality and the whole conceptual system of sexualities that they fit into. We are also drawing on a knowledge of the social forms this takes, of the sub-cultural styles of gay men. This is not just taxonomic knowledge, an ability to slot someone into the correct social category, but value-laden. We recognize these men as gay not just because those are the kinds of clothes and haircuts gay men wear, but because that sort of appearance is related to certain assumptions about gay men, especially their relation to gender. That sort of appearance has qualities—the tactility of the sweater, the pretty patterning of the scarf, the carefully adjusted set of the collar, the crimped, set look of the taller man's hair—that are associated with femininity in our culture. We know these men are gay because we see aspects of them as in some sense feminine. This implies a conflation of sexuality and gender roles that is characteristic of gay types; I shall return to this point below. What I want to stress here is the way in which such small details of an image can so quickly and assuredly summon up such a breadth of social implication, can condense such a wealth of meaning and knowledge (see Perkins 1979).

Finally, types keep the fact of a character's gayness clearly present before us throughout the text. This has the disadvantage that it tends to reduce everything about that character to his/her sexuality. It has the advantage that it never allows the text to closet her or him, and it thus allows gay subcultural perspectives to be always present in a scene. For gay readers and audiences, in particular, this allows a place in the text from which to view the proceedings.

The prevalent fact of gay typification is determined by the importance of a social category whose members would be invisible did they and the culture not provide life-style signs with which to make recognition possible. It should be added that it is probable that most gay people are for most of their lives in fact invisible. Acting and dressing gay may be only an evening or weekend activity; in particular, it may not be practiced at the workplace, or for married gays at home either. Equally, many people who are homosexual may never identify with the various gay life-styles, never, in this sense, define and produce themselves as gay.



Figure 2 *La dolce vita*, Italy, 1960. Production still.

### Sexuality/Gender/Biology/Nature

The majority of gay types signify gay sexuality through signs that also have gender connotations. Gay types are thus bound up in this double way with notions of the natural, whether these be cast more within biological discourses or more within romantic traditions of perceiving nature.

That this should be so is hardly surprising since our notions of both sexuality itself and sexual variations are themselves biological. I mean this in the loosest sense, that ideas about human sexuality have been insistently organized in terms of what is given by nature, by what John Gagnon and John Simon refer to as the notion of a "basic biological mandate" (Gagnon and Simon 1973), whether that be the urge to reproduce or the need for orgasm or the drive for sexual release. A major aspect of this biological view of sexuality has been the attempt to determine and differentiate male and female sexualities, so that not only are sex and gender conflated (biological sex being deemed to produce psychological gender dispositions), but so are sex and sexuality, there being a sexuality appropriate to the two biologically distinct sexes. Although these sexualities have been predominantly defined in terms of heterosexuality, they have perhaps more importantly been defined in terms of male and female sexual predispositions, of which the active male drive and the passive female receptivity are the most familiar examples. Thus it is not the act of heterosexual intercourse that makes someone heterosexual, but one or another psychosexual predisposition which is heterosexual only in the sense that an active drive and a passive receptivity are seen to be inherently complementary.

For various reasons this kind of thinking, although at the level of common sense undoubtedly still dominant today, has been roundly rejected in many quarters. The case against it can be made on the grounds of the anthropological and historical evidence of the enormous differences in the construction of both gender and sexuality in other cultures and other times, but the force of the rejection is above all political. In part it springs from a rejection of all models that root understanding of human society so firmly in the bio-



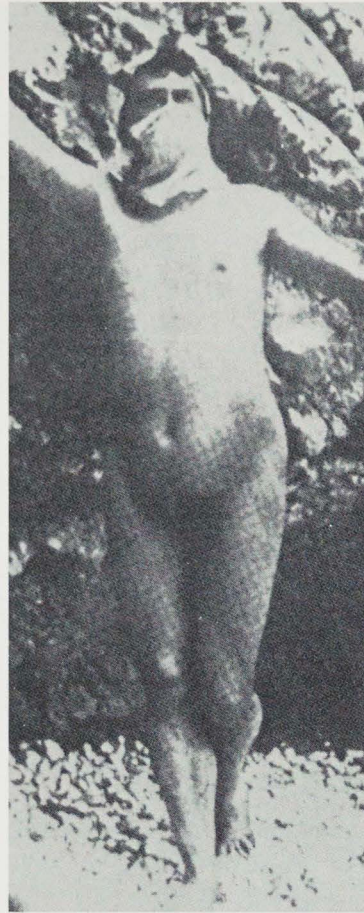
logical. Not only sex and sexuality but also race are all biologically based notions that have historically been used in infamously destructive ways, of which the Nazi designation of biologically inferior peoples (races and sexualities) and medical experimentation on them is only the most obscene. The sexist bias in biological theories of sex and sexuality was very clearly demonstrated by feminist writing in the late sixties and early seventies. More recently, the work of Michel Foucault has been influential in spreading the idea that sexuality, precisely by its intimate and apparently biologically given character, is the aspect of human lives that is most open to the exercise of power relations in modern society, that it is through the regulation of our bodies in the regime of sexuality that we are controlled.

In general I would share the emphases of all these arguments, but it is important to recognize that arguments from biology are not necessarily and always reactionary. If a major assumption of many biological arguments is that what can be shown to be natural must be accepted as a proper part of human life, then it is not surprising that those arguing for the rights of gay people have often sought to show that gayness too is natural: hence, on the one hand, the attempt by campaigners like Edward Carpenter and Magnus Hirschfeld to show that gays are a third or intermediate sex (see Figure 3) or, on the other, the importance of the rhetoric of naturalness in much contemporary lesbian art. Though there is a culturally very significant shift here from a more biological to a more romantic-naturalist world view, both are arguing for the rights of gay people from a model of nature. It is their conception of nature that is different, not the form of the argument.

### Another Argument, Another Type: The Classical Model

Other kinds of argument are possible, hence other sets of types, although those based on biology/nature have proved most successful in our time. One alternative argument has been drawn from classical example. If in relation to female homosexuality this has largely been confined, as far as I can see, potently to the use of the words "lesbian" and "sapphic," in relation to male homosexuality it has produced, in addition to the rhetoric of which Wilde's "love that dare not speak its name" speech is the most celebrated example, a particular range of visual images.

The classical example could be for men a way of representing desire, both in the sense of imaging it to themselves and in the sense of arguing for it to the world; it could be both the form of desire and the defense of it. This inspiration from classical antiquity, which is of course based on the nineteenth-century



**Figure 3** "Intermediate type," published by Magnus Hirschfeld in volume 1 of the 1903 *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (Yearbook for Intersexual Variants).

understanding of the classical, is classical in two senses. First, it invokes the period of classical antiquity as an unquestionable touchstone of the finest achievements of the human race—if gayness can be shown to be characteristic of the classical age, then how can it be condemned now? Second, the argument is itself classical rather than romantic or biological insofar as it is based on the notion of the ideal example to be followed, rather than on what is given in nature. It has thus the character of a moral argument rather than a rational or pragmatic one. The types that derive from it are not only available for both formal and defensive representation but bathe both in a morally idealistic glow.

The costume balls of Stefan George, whose fame as a poet ensured that they became widely known (if as much through ridicule as emulation), were in their adoption of Greek and Roman garb and props (see Figure 4) both rituals of desire—as balls generally are—and the enactment of a homosexual ideal that had something of the force of propaganda. Some of the earliest gay rights publications, such as *Der Eigene* (first published in 1896), used classical motifs so that they both argued for gayness and provided their readers with attractive embodiments of gay desire (see Figure 5); but also soft male gay pornography has often used classical reference, both in the poses of the models and in the use of vaguely classical props (see Figures 6 and 7). Among the most cel-



**Figure 4** Costume ball at Stefan George's house, n.d. From Robert Boehringer, *Mein Bild von Stefan George*, Düsseldorf, 1967, p. 89.

ebred images of this kind are the photographs of Wilhelm von Gloeden, which not only use classical poses and props and quite literally bathe the subjects in a pure "classical" light but also concentrate on the adolescent male, the ephebe supposedly so central to the classical construction of homosexuality.

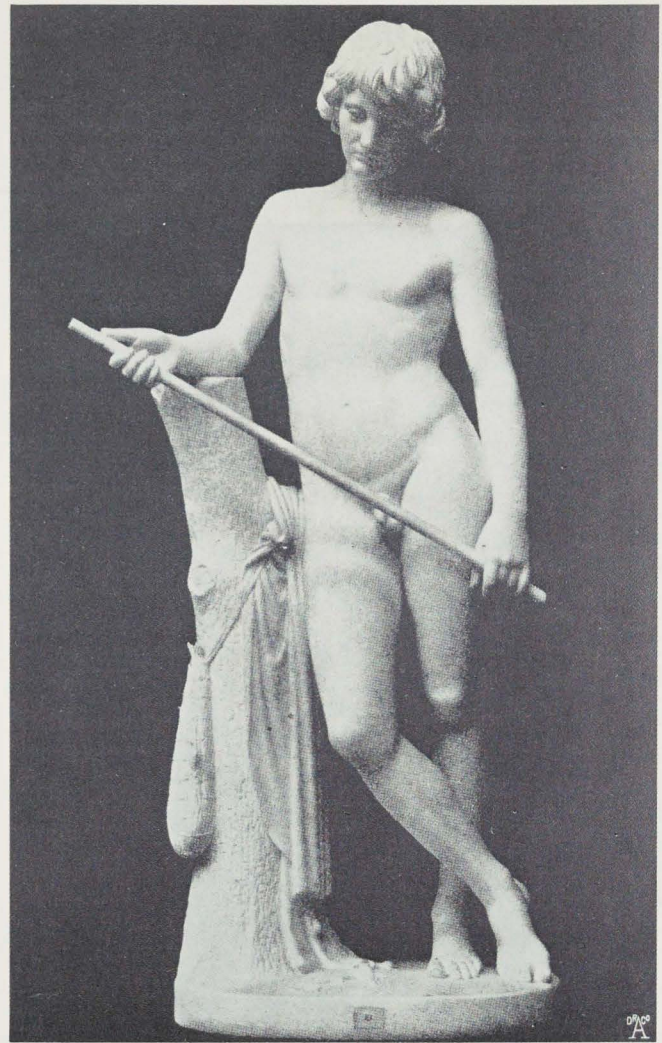
Despite the coherence and appeal of this tradition, however, it has largely been superseded in gay cultural production and has never been widespread in dominant representation of homosexuality. This is due in part perhaps to its proselytizing dimension, but more centrally to the fact that arguments from (moral and aesthetic) ideals have little force in our culture compared to arguments from biology/nature. It is these that predominate in both mainstream and gay subcultural homosexual types.

### Four Types

I want to describe here four predominant gay types. Obviously these do not exhaust the range of gay types in the culture. They illustrate two themes already discussed: the importance of gender and of biology/nature in gay representation, and the pressure from both dominant and subcultural forces to produce gay types. One aspect of the latter that emerges is the way in which the same types may have different meanings and functions in mainstream and subcultural contexts. Two further points may be noted. As mentioned in discussing the use of the argument from classical example, gay types may be both the form of desire and a defense of it; further, they may embody both what it is like to be gay and what it is gay people find attractive—gay types can embody both the subject and the object of desire. Finally, it is clear that any gay type will inflect and articulate other traditions of representation in the culture as a whole. Ideas of sexuality and gender, biological



**Figure 5** "Fluteplayer."  
From *Der Eigene*, n.d.



**Figure 6** "Fisherboy."  
From *Der Eigene*, 1903.

and romantic conceptions of nature are such traditions, as are, for example, bodies of religious and secular myth. Gay types are always caught up in the total web of the system of cultural meanings; what they mean has in part to be understood through this web of meanings.

Most of my examples are drawn from films, though I shall make reference to other media. This is partly because films are my particular area of competence, but the cinema has probably been more significant as a central definer of sexualities than any other cultural institution in our century, including television, where the representation of sexuality has been severely restricted. Many of the examples discussed are production stills, not frame enlargements; they are photographs taken on set during production, deliberately posed for the still photographer and intended for use in publicizing and marketing the film. They are interesting because they are produced and selected for use with the aim of suggesting or even summing up the entire film or an aspect of the film. In this sense they are even more liable to lean heavily on typifica-

tion in order to convey an idea of homosexuality than the film itself may have been. Equally, in their wide availability and reproduction, they may fix the gay type more definitively for the viewer than the memory of the film itself does.



Figure 7 1950s "physique" photo.

### 1. In-betweenism

Probably the most familiar gay types are the queen and the dyke. Although I shall designate them thus singly, there are any number of variations on each. This production still from *The Killing of Sister George* (Figure 8) shows, as the film does, two versions of the dyke type—both with cropped hair and wearing mannish clothes, but George/June at the back is in tweeds, has a more fully masculine cut to her suit, and uses no makeup, whereas Mercy Crofts in the center wears a bright red (primary not pastel colors being more "masculine") dress with a more "feminine" rounded collar and makeup which is, however, applied with expert, military precision, giving her face a hard-edged look. Both are dyke types, though Mercy is the more ambivalent as befits her role in the film. Both types connote different notions of masculinity: tweed suggests traditional, rural, rough masculinity, whereas Mercy Crofts's appearance suggests the modern, professional, business milieu. Both, however, also connote the upper middle class. Elsewhere in the film, in the sequence at the Gateways Club, other more working-class dyke types are present. Similarly, there are many variations on the queen type, and these often inflect other values—whether, for instance, of aesthetic sensibility, as in the contrast between a queen working in the trivial art of fashion (see Figure 9) and the exquisite aestheticism of Sebastian in *Suddenly Last Summer* (Figure 10), or else of ethnic difference, as in the contrast between the two examples just mentioned and Lindy in *Car Wash* (Figure 11). I do not intend, however, to offer an exhaustive taxonomy of the inflections of the dyke and queen types; my purpose here is simply to indicate that each is a type found in many well-established variations which cross with other social and cultural types and value systems.

The queen and the dyke both represent homosexuality through what is assumed to be a gender correlation—that is, both are represented as if their sexuality means that they are in between the two genders of female and male. Thus dykes are mannish, queens effeminate. The examples already cited, from *La dolce vita* and *The Killing of Sister George*, illustrate this directly.

We are familiar with the use of these types as put-downs. The form this often takes is the tag that gay men and lesbians are not "real men" and "real women," which expresses the assumption that true masculinity and femininity are in large measure defined in heterosexual sexuality. However, this negative use of the types should not blind us to the fact that ideas of in-betweenism have been used by gay people themselves, not only in subcultural practices but in historically progressive activism. The arguments of Magnus Hirschfeld were very directly based on ideas

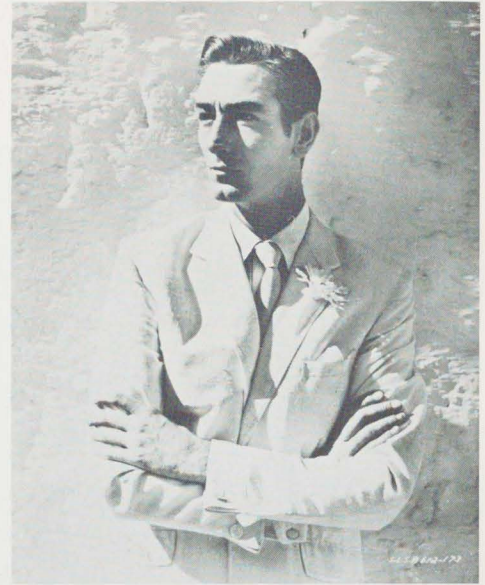


**Figure 8** *The Killing of Sister George*, Great Britain, 1969. Production still.

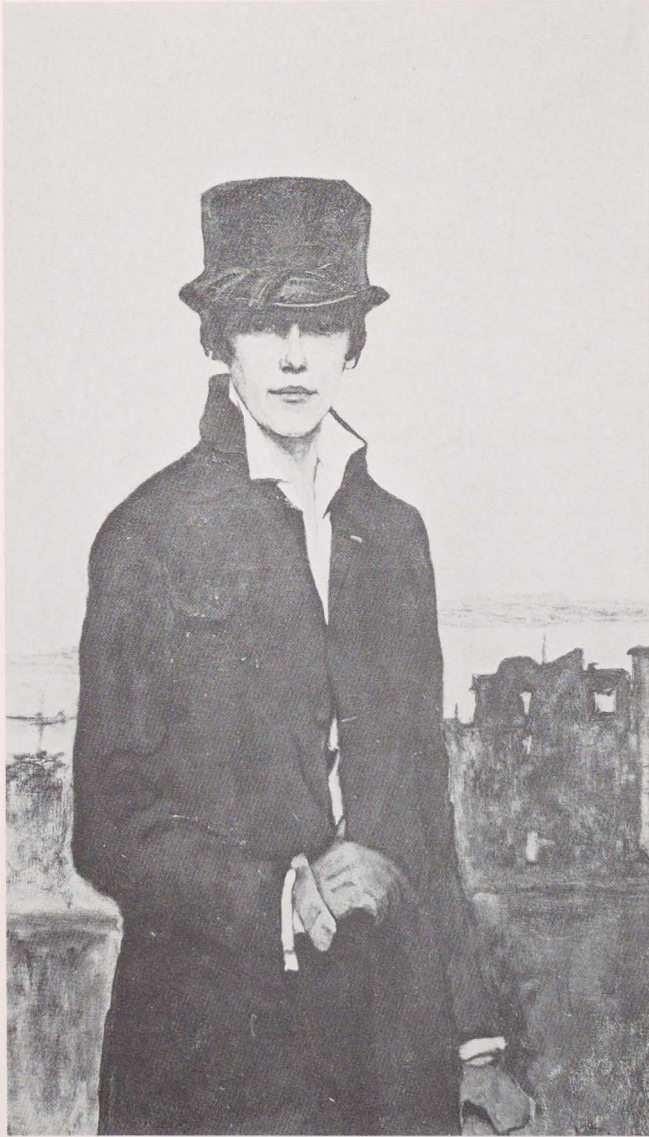


**Figure 9** *Irene, U.S.A.*, 1926. Production still. (Courtesy of Vito Russo.)

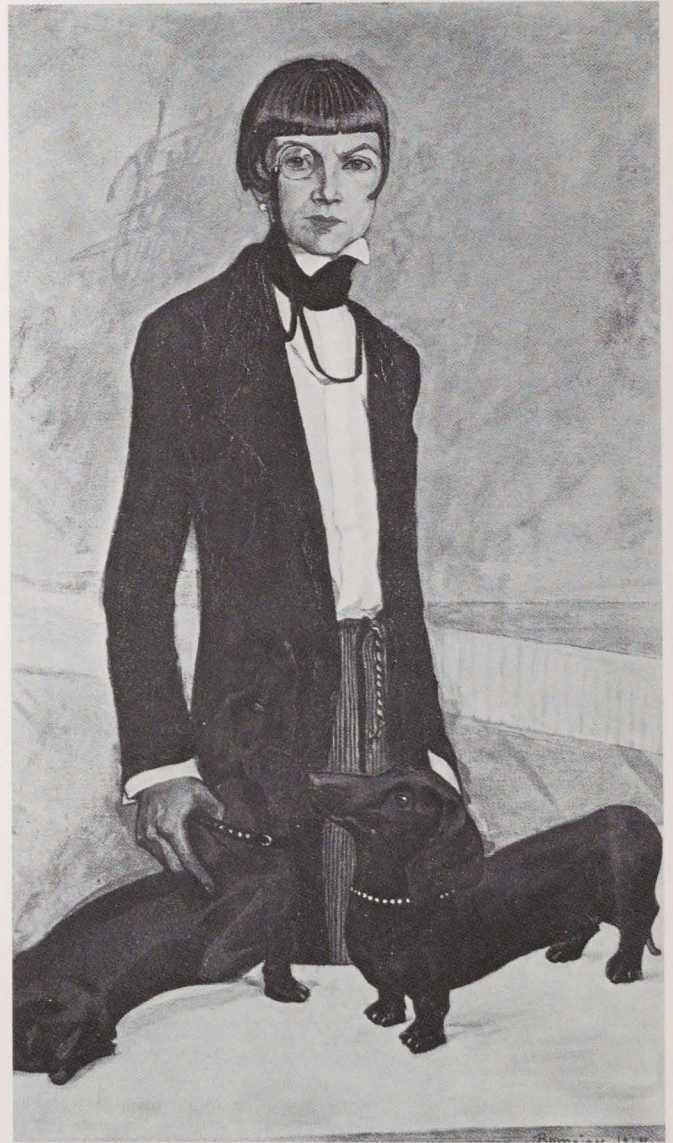
**Figure 10** *Suddenly Last Summer, U.S.A.*, 1957. Production still. (Courtesy of Vito Russo.)



**Figure 11** *Car Wash, U.S.A.*, 1976. Production still. (Courtesy of Vito Russo.)



**Figure 12** Romaine Brooks, *Self-Portrait*, 1923.



**Figure 13** Romaine Brooks, *Una, Lady Troubridge*, n.d.



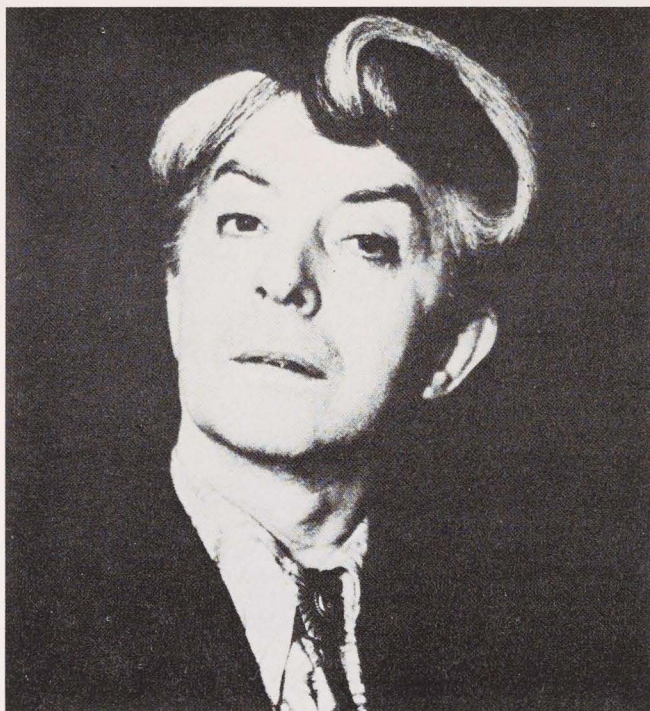
**Figure 14** *Blood Money, U.S.A., 1933.* Production still. (Courtesy of Vito Russo.)



**Figure 15** Greta Garbo as Queen Christina, 1933. Publicity shot.



**Figure 16** Marlene Dietrich. Publicity shot.



**Figure 17** Quentin Crisp. Photograph illustrating interview in British gay magazine, *Jeremy*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1969.

**Figure 18** *The Naked Civil Servant*, Great Britain, 1977. (Courtesy of Vito Russo.)



of gay people as a biologically intermediate sex, and he had photos to prove it (see Figure 3). Equally, figures like Radclyffe Hall, Romaine Brooks, and Una, Lady Troubridge, both in their own publicly prominent adoption of a dyke style and in Brooks's reproduction of them in her painting (see Figures 12 and 13), were proclaiming an in-betweenist lesbian life-style in a defiant, declamatory fashion. It is clear where the aristocratic dyke in the 1933 film *Blood Money* (Figure 14) gets her style from, and equally why a gay following has accrued to stars prepared to appear as Garbo did in *Queen Christina* (Figure 15) or Dietrich in her films with von Sternberg (Figure 16). This was not only important in its time but has been important in the reclamation of our history, which has stemmed from the development of the post-sixties gay movement. A queen figure like Quentin Crisp becomes crucial here; his life as an "out" effeminate homosexual is seen as exhibiting exemplary courage in his visual display of himself as a queen before coming out became an established strategy of the gay movement. The enshrinement of this in an acclaimed television film put queenliness in the mass public eye, and at the same time he became a focus for debate about the value of the role, its progressive force for us now (see Figures 17 and 18). As I argue in the review essay in this issue, this legacy of the queen (or sissy) type, as of the dyke (or butch lesbian) type, is both challenging and confusing to contemporary gay political thought.

I have referred to the queen and dyke types as effeminate and mannish, and much of the force of the image is that gay men and lesbians are, by virtue of their sexuality, in some sense more like the biologically opposite sex. Yet they are not exactly masculine or feminine either. In gay usage, they may be an assertion of in-betweenism or more generally of a refusal of rigid sex role-playing; but in their use within the dominant culture they are more characteristically portrayed as people who in failing, because of not being heterosexual, to be real women or men, at the same time fail to be truly masculine or feminine in other ways—dykes are unwomanly but fall short of being truly masculine; queens are unmanly and unwomanly. Both are thus often seen as tragic, pathetic, wretched, despicable, comic, or ridiculous figures.

This calls forth the violent and melancholy narratives suggested above, and with it certain predominant inflections of the types. This is particularly elaborated with the dyke, who is frequently represented as dangerous and threatening. It is remarkable how often she is shown positioned in the same ways behind the sexually indeterminate (i.e., she might "go either way") woman (see Figures 19–21). In this pose she appears to be trying to draw the indeterminate woman into her thrall, not by direct assault





**Figure 19** *Roma, città aperta* (Open City), Italy, 1945. Frame enlargement.



**Figure 20** *Huis clos* (No Exit), France, 1954. Production still.



**Figure 21** *From Russia with Love*, Great Britain, 1963. Production still. (Courtesy of Vito Russo.)



**Figure 22** *Lust for a Vampire*, Great Britain, 1970. Production still.

or honest seduction but by stealth. This image of malignant lesbian power is explored still further in the use of lesbianism in the vampire film (see Figure 22), where sexual power through stealth, the very heart of the vampire myth, may be articulated with other aspects of fears and taboos concerning women, including the imagery of blood as both sexual juices and menstrual flow. Although undoubtedly intended as negative representations, the very force and vividness of these evocations of female/lesbian power mean that films such as *Daughters of Darkness* or *Blood Beast of Terror* might be appropriated as almost radical lesbianfeminist films.

In-betweenism probably remains the most familiar and widespread gay typology. In its tragic and violent modes it reinforces negative views of gay sexuality; in its representation of the nastiness or ridiculousness of not being really one sex or the other, it serves to maintain the notion of rigid gender role differentiation. Yet it may also, through a paradoxical inversion, embody a rejection of those roles.

## 2. Macho

In *The Boys in the Band* one of the characters is given a macho-style hustler as a birthday present (see Figure 23)—his exaggeratedly masculine style contrasts with the varieties of queens and sad young men who make up the rest of the cast. By the time of *A Different Story*, however, the gay man is himself identified by his macho look (see Figure 24). It is an exaggerated masculinity, and indeed its very exaggeratedness marks it off from the conventional masculine look on which it is based. It is, moreover, a consciously erotic look. The practical, instrumental connotations of working-class male clothing are transformed into pure signs of eroticism. The typing of the Perry King character in the still is precise—the stance draws the eye to the crotch; the t-shirt is stretched not only to reveal body contours but to become a tactile surface in its own right; the hair is not just neat but clean as well with the light catching it so that the viewer might wish to run her/his fingers through it.

In marking off the macho man from the simply straight man, this gay type retains the idea of (male) homosexuality implying something different in relation to gender, but here there is no notion of a biological in-betweenism but an excess of masculinity. However, whereas in-betweenism is predominantly conceptualized in relation to biological androgyny, macho is far more clearly the conscious deployment of *signs* of masculinity. In this way macho is close to the other predominant forms of gay male ghetto culture, camp and drag. The latter may be read within the idea of in-betweenism, the queen being, after all, camp in behavior and given to wearing women's clothes. But there is a difference between camp behavior and a camp attitude. The latter implies an ironic stance toward official or mainstream images or representations. Camp in this sense is profoundly denaturalizing. Far from expressing a sense of what is natural, it constantly draws attention to the artifices attendant on the construction of images of what is natural. Camp, drag, and macho self-consciously play the signs of gender, and it is in the play and exaggeration that an alternative sexuality is implied—a sexuality, that is, that recognizes itself as in a problematic relationship to the conventional conflation of sexuality and gender.



Figure 23 *The Boys in the Band*, U.S.A., 1970. Press advertisement.



Figure 24 *A Different Story*, U.S.A., 1978. Production still. (Courtesy of Vito Russo.)

### 3. The Sad Young Man

In the fifties and sixties it was easy to spot the emergent and still rare gay novel by its cover (see Figure 25). Clean-shaven, young models are lit in ways that both soften their features and also suggest a twilight existence, with all the melancholy associations that twilight has in our culture. Neither man manages directly to catch the other's eye: either one gazes and the other looks thoughtfully (troubledly?) away, or else both look over their shoulders toward but not at each other. Thus everything is young, soft, half-lit, half-establishing contact, but frozen at that moment, at the moment of yearning. They are "sad young men."

The sad young man is neither androgynously in-between the genders nor playing with the signs of gender. His relationship to masculinity is more difficult, and thus sad. He is a young man, hence not yet really a real man. He is soft; he has not yet achieved assertive masculine hardness. He is also physically less than a man. In many paperback covers he does not hold his head up but hangs it. There is perhaps an echo in the stance of the major source of this imagery, the Judeo-Christian tradition. The sad young man is a martyr figure.

Christ was a young man on the cross; he is also the most familiar image of a man in Western culture. The crucifix sets the characteristic Christian register of aesthetic response, adoration of a man in pain. Subsequent martyr figures, especially St. Sebastian, have developed this register and have also been the occasion for the representation of male beauty. Once again conflating subject and object of homosexual desire, the sad young man embodies a mode of sexuality we might now label masochistic. Not simply despite but because of the history of Christian persecution of gays, the Christian tradition yields an iconography of punishment as pleasure, suffering as beauty, that has been particularly fruitful in the development of gay images.

It is explored in the film *Fireworks*. The central motif of the film is a photograph of a sailor holding a young man in his arms in a stance that is a visual rhyme with the Christian Pietà (see Figure 26). This photograph, often used to evoke the film and the filmic world of its director, Kenneth Anger, is in itself an image of masochistic homosexual desire. In the film it is looked at by the young man and thus represents his memory or fantasy. (The fact that it is a photograph does not mean in the logic of this film that it represents an event that has actually taken place.) Thus an image of gay desire is also an image of what the gay person is. The face of the young man, in its soft, trou-

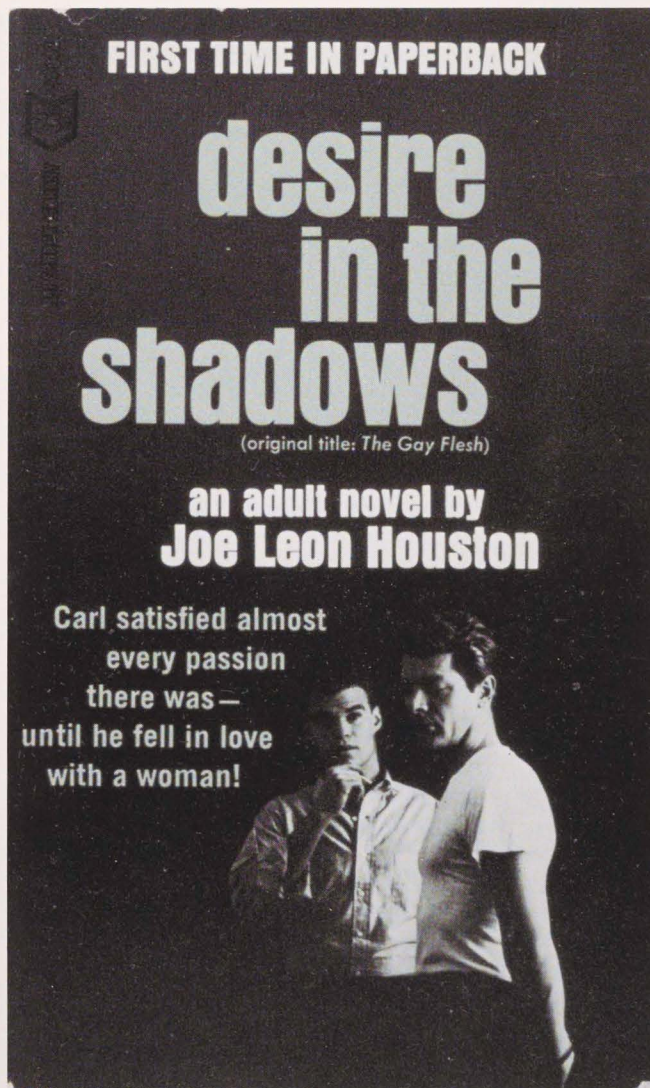
bled expression, is an icon of beautiful melancholy found equally, for instance, in the book covers, in an even earlier avant-garde film, *Lot in Sodom* (see Figure 27), and in such gay identification figures as Montgomery Clift and Dirk Bogarde (Figures 28 and 29).

(There are of course other sources of sad young men imagery, notably the image of the romantic hero who, in being the object of [female] desire, thus becomes unmanly and available for gay representation; and the psychoanalytic construction of male fears as expressed through imagery of mutilation and castration, the sad young man in this discourse being the exemplar of the castrated, less-than-mature man.)

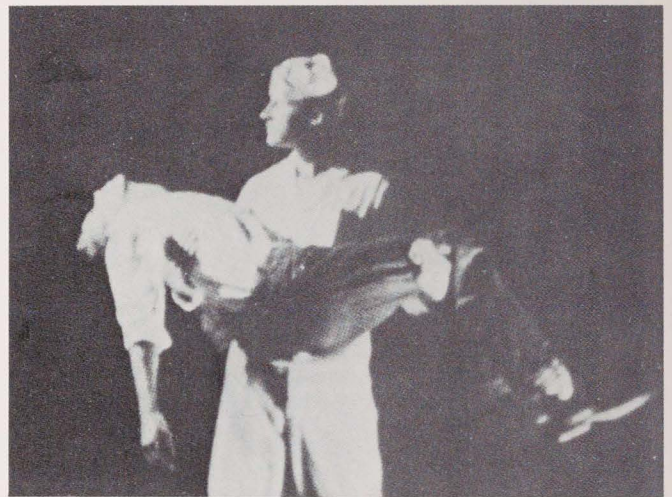
### 4. Lesbianfeminism

The film *Word Is Out* registers a difference between contemporary lesbian and gay male life-styles. Though concerned to present a range of gay people, and in some ways setting itself against the notion of typicality, the film nonetheless marks a broad distinction between a gay male culture that tends toward artifice and a lesbian culture that tends toward naturalness. The film's musical interludes show this most clearly, not only in the kind of music but in the visual presentation of it. The gay male music is disco, clearly related to Tamla in the accompanying visual production, the line-up of singers following a set routine dressed in identical, showbizzy, sexy clothes. The lesbian music is folk-related, with all that that connotes of ideas of natural music; the singers each accompany themselves on a guitar, a simple, widely available instrument, and do not appear to perform to an audience, as the male group does, but as it were for themselves. Nor are the signs of self-presentation marked as with the men—no makeup, nonshowbiz clothes, indeed checked shirts and jeans that themselves carry rural, naturalistic connotations.

This tendency of lesbian cultural production can be seen elsewhere. The book *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians* by JEB is particularly interesting here. Did one not have the title of the book, one would not necessarily interpret photographs like these as lesbian. Yet one does have the title, it is part of the meaning of the photos, and the title renders the lesbianism of the photos visible. The majority of the photos deploy a rhetoric of the natural, in their largely direct (apparently transparent), eye-level approach and in their iconography of, for instance, ethnic or subhippie dress (Figure 30), practical, hands-on-tools crafts (Figure 31), even where the technology itself is quite highly developed (Figure 32), and in their use of nature itself (Figure 33).



**Figure 25** *Desire in the Shadows*, 1966. Paperback book cover.



**Figure 26** *Fireworks*, U.S.A., 1947. Frame enlargement.

This series of photographs, or, for example, the films of Barbara Hammer with their extensive use of flower imagery, is neither an assertion of in-between-ism nor a play on the signs of the natural. A further example from JEB (Figure 34) with its caption illustrates most clearly what is involved. It is a representation of lesbianism as a femininity that is almost pantheistic in origin. It refuses the analytical, taxonomic appropriation of nature that the institution of biology has promulgated, and in this sense it is close to the kind of romantic receptivity to nature of the hippie movement, to which JEB's and Hammer's work is visually quite close. This is, however, crossed with radical feminist ideas that see women as having a special and even mystical relationship to nature, through the traditions of herbal healing and witchcraft, through women's more intimate relationship with the reproduction of human life, through the magical correlation of the menstrual cycle with the phases of the moon, and so on. Lesbianism here is not an object choice but the means to achieve full recognition of this repressed or despised femininity without the repressive, destructive presence of masculinity and male sexuality. Such lesbian imagery is just as involved, on the one hand, with typification in its depiction of a range of variations on a clearly recognizable type, and on the other with a conventional view of nature. To say so, however, is to speak from within the very denaturalizing, rationalistic perspective that such imagery, with good reason, opposes.

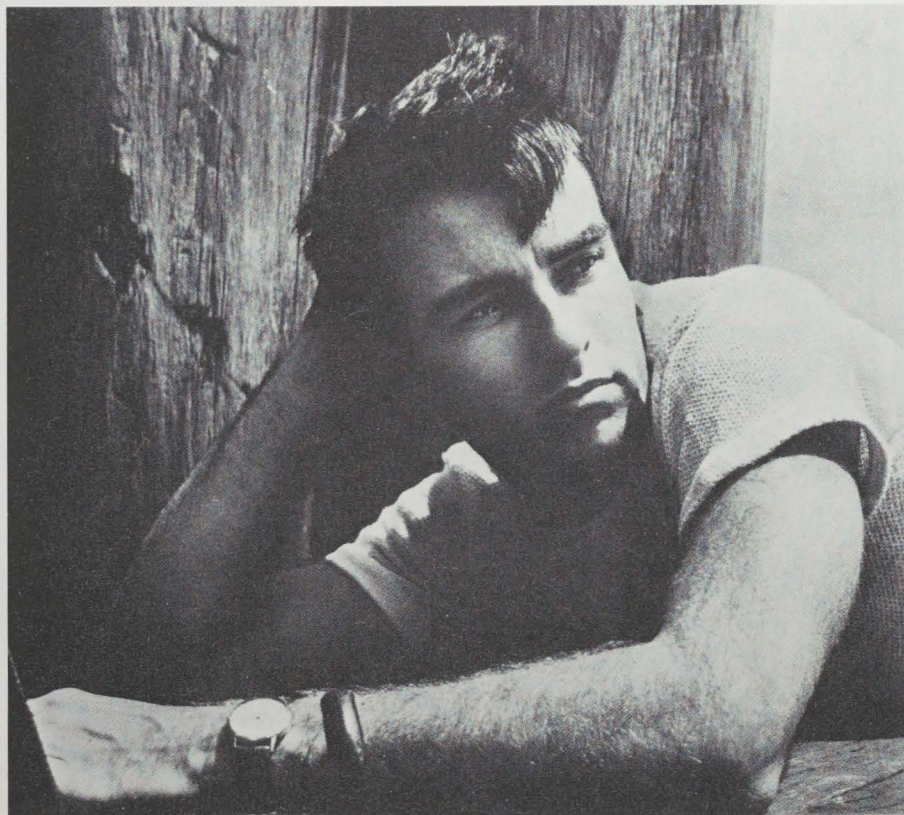


**Figure 27** *Lot in Sodom, U.S.A.*, 1934. Frame enlargement.



**Figure 29** Dirk Bogarde. Publicity shot for *Victim*, 1961.

**Figure 28** Montgomery Clift. Publicity photo.

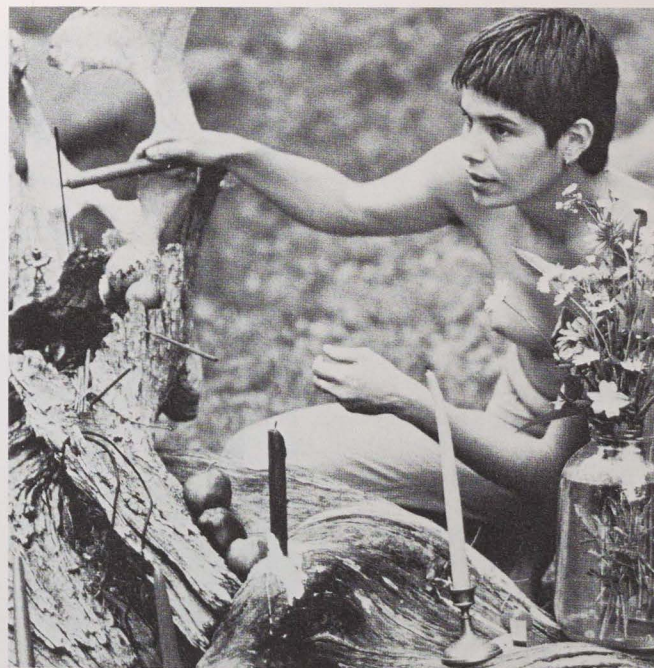
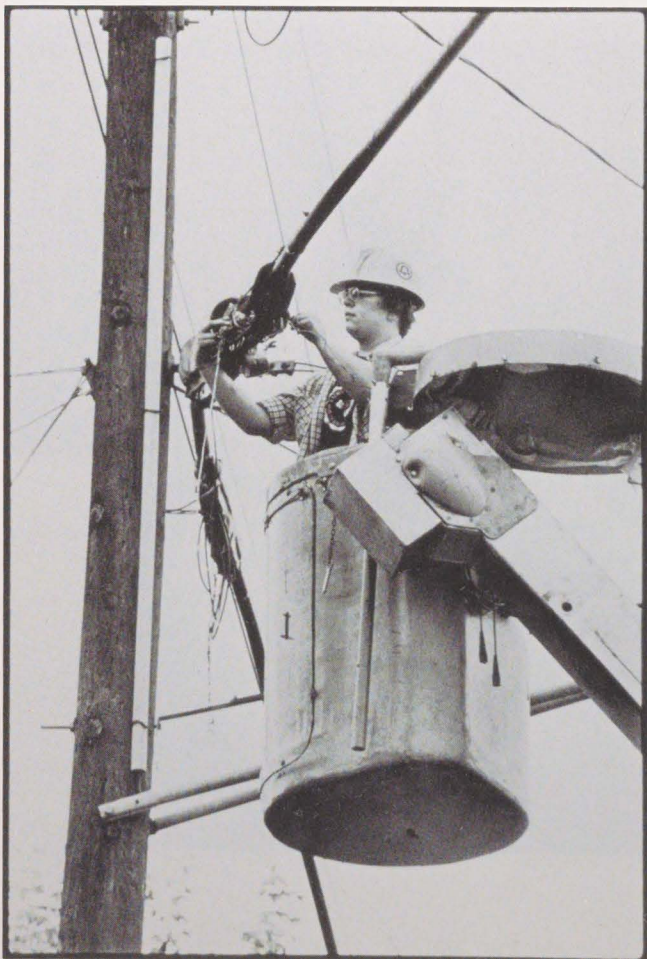




**Figure 30** JEB. "Makara, Marta and Burning Cloud. Washington, D.C. 1979." From *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians, Washington, D.C., 1979*.



**Figure 31** JEB. "Jane. Willits, California. 1977." From *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians, Washington, D.C., 1979*.



**Figure 32** JEB. "Joan. Mt. Rainier, Maryland. 1979." From *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians, Washington, D.C., 1979*.

**Figure 33** JEB. "Flo. Flint Hill, Virginia. 1978." From *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians, Washington, D.C., 1979*.



**Figure 34** JEB. "Mara. Broomes Island, Maryland. 1976." From *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians*, Washington, D.C., 1979. "Under the domination of the egg, one usually finds a prevalence of peaceful, uterine life, satiated, comfortable, complacent, though determined in its defense against outsiders. A matriarchal realm hardly knows such a thing as a war of conquest, although the defense of the domestic egg is stalwart and brave" (Helen Diner, *Mothers and Amazons: The First Feminine History of Culture*, Julian Press, New York, 1965).

## Summary

My purpose in this article has been to explore some of the complexity behind the apparently simple face of gay types. This very complexity gives them their force, for good or ill, as a mode of representation. The complexity springs in part from the nature of typification, which always condenses a wealth of social knowledge into a few striking and vivid signs. It springs in turn from the types' connectedness to other enormously complex sign systems, for example, competing conceptions of nature and mythologies such as Christianity or the vampire tale. Above all, it springs from the creativity of gay people in producing such rich and varied cultural systems, endowing such simple images with a range of contradictory meanings.

## References

- Fischer, Hal  
1978 *Gay Semiotics: A Photographic Study of Visual Coding among Homosexual Men*. Berkeley, Calif.: NFS Press.
- Gagnon, John, and William Simon  
1973 *Sexual Conduct: The Sources of Human Sexuality*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Perkins, T. E.  
1979 Rethinking Stereotypes. In *Ideology and Cultural Production*. M. Barrett, P. Corrigan, et al., eds. Pp. 135–159. London: Croom Helm.

# Iconography of a Scandal: Political Cartoons and the Eulenburg Affair

James D. Steakley

From 1907 to 1909, imperial Germany was by turns amused and mortified by a series of journalistic exposés, libel trials, and Reichstag speeches, all of which turned upon the alleged homosexuality of the chancellor and of two distinguished members of the entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Taken together, these discourses constituted the most stunning scandal on the level of domestic politics in the history of the Second Reich (1871–1918). National honor was palpably at stake, and the German people were willing and even eager to judge the kaiser not by the company he kept but by the robustly paternal image he sought to project (see Figure 1). It was defensively asserted from the rostrum of the Reichstag that “no one can doubt the moral earnestness of our Kaiser and his consort, whose family life provides the entire country with a fine model.”<sup>1</sup> Yet Philipp Prince zu Eulenburg-Hertefeld—the central figure in the scandal, which thus became known as the Eulenburg Affair—was, to all appearances, himself a happily married man, and for a time the nation was brought uncomfortably close to having to consider the disturbing implications of the kaiser’s penchant for frequent hunting trips and the annual holiday cruise on the royal yacht in exclusively male company (see Figure 2). The implications were abundantly clear to the initiator of the attacks on Eulenburg, Maximilian Harden, for he possessed documentary evidence that probably would have sufficed to expose and depose the kaiser.<sup>2</sup> He chose never to make use of it.

National attention shifted to yet another grave scandal late in 1908, this time affecting the Reich’s foreign diplomacy rather than its domestic politics. The kaiser had given a bombastic interview to the *Daily Telegraph* of London in which, typically, he offered unwanted advice and rashly expatiated on his peaceable vision of future relations between Germany and its archrival on the seas, Great Britain. Its publication unleashed a storm of outrage in the Reichstag, both from implacable foes of Britain and from those who simply expected the kaiser to exercise reasonable discretion when discussing German strategy. Shaken by his obvious blunder and the ensuing furor, Wilhelm was all too happy to flee his duties for the regular November hunt at the Black Forest estate of an aristocratic confidant. It was here that the chief of the Military Secretariat, Dietrich Count von Hülsen-Häseler, donned a ballerina’s tutu and was performing a *pas seul* as his customary after-dinner entertainment when he suddenly dropped to the floor, dead of



**Figure 1** Kaiser Wilhelm II as an idealized paterfamilias, 1898. “This sort of cozy photograph of the Imperial family sold by the million throughout Germany” (Kurtz 1970:5).

a heart attack. “The incident with all that it implied was hushed up” (Balfour 1964:290), but the combination of events proved too much for Wilhelm, who shortly suffered a nervous breakdown. One dinner party guest who witnessed these events wrote: “In Wilhelm II I saw a man who, for the first time in his life, with horror-stricken eyes, looked upon the world as it really was” (Czernin von und zu Chudenitz 1919:54).

Like the bizarre death of Hülsen-Häseler, the entire Eulenburg Affair has been discreetly hushed up in all but the most recent historiography. Bound by disciplinary restraints, diplomatic historians have given due attention to the international controversy but imposed what amounts to a scholarly blackout on its domestic counterpiece—a disparity all the more striking in light of Maximilian Harden’s astute observation that the Eulenburg scandal was “the underlying cause” of the *Daily Telegraph* affair (Holstein 1963:no. 1151). This embarrassed silence has been even more obvious among German than among non-German historians,<sup>3</sup> manifesting an understandable reluctance to wash the nation’s dirty linen in public (see Figure 3).

---

James D. Steakley is an Assistant Professor in the Department of German at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and a contributing editor of *New German Critique*.



It is in the nature of scandal, however, to catapult sexual conduct out of the supposedly inviolable private sphere into the public arena, thus generating discourses on sexual politics and influencing both attitudes and actions. In the specific instance of the Eulenburg Affair, the long-range consequences were so severe that the scandal defies dismissal as a mere episode. French, British, and American historians have linked the events of 1907–1909 to a far-reaching shift in German policy that heightened military aggressiveness and ultimately contributed to the outbreak of World War I (cf. Hull 1982b; Baumont 1933; Röhl 1976:35–53). Such insights were by no means unknown to earlier observers. Writing in 1933, for example, Magnus Hirschfeld argued that the outcome of the whole sordid affair was “no more and no less than a victory for the tendency that ultimately issued in the events of the World War (Hirschfeld 1933:2). And in a bitterly racist vein, Wilhelm himself fulminated in 1927 that the scandal had been started “by international Jewry” and marked “the first step” of a conspiracy that led in 1918 to German defeat and his abdication.<sup>4</sup> Yet these assessments of the long-range effects of the Eulenburg Affair, however apt or grotesque they may be, overlook the vital dimension of the scandal’s more immediate, short-term impact on the moral life of the German nation. While hindsight can link the scandal with momentous events that occurred years later, such interpretations were obviously unavailable to contemporary observers struggling to draw their own set of conclusions.



**Figure 3** (caption above) Dirty Laundry. (caption below) “It’s never been this filthy before.” From *Der wahre Jacob* (Stuttgart), no. 570 (May 16, 1908), p. 5819.

As the most tumultuous *cause célèbre* of its era (see Figure 4), the Eulenburg Affair provoked a flood of press coverage, ranging from articles and editorials in daily papers to pocket digests of courtroom testimony. Political pamphlets and broadsides appeared, and virtually every facet of the shocking revelations was minutely depicted in political cartoons as the courtroom drama unfolded.<sup>5</sup> Drawn from a variety of periodicals ranging from the far left to the far right of the political spectrum,<sup>6</sup> the cartoons selected for inclusion here provide a unique access point for a socio-historical analysis of the Eulenburg Affair by illuminating some of the values, anxieties, and cultural norms of Wilhelminian society. Apart from the anti-Semitic interpretation of events (see Figure 5) advanced in reactionary *völkisch* circles and adopted by Wilhelm, the pictorial handling of the scandal reveals a remarkable degree of uniformity. A handful of images appears repeatedly, a phenomenon that cannot be adequately attributed to the possibility of artis-

**Figure 2** The kaiser and select members of his entourage on the royal yacht *Hohenzollern*, 1897. Wilhelm, wearing sunglasses, is seated in the front row; immediately behind him, wearing a white cap, is Philipp zu Eulenburg. Kuno von Moltke, also wearing a white cap, is the third figure to the right of Eulenburg. At the kaiser’s side, wearing a dark cap, is Georg von Hülsen. From Eulenburg 1931: facing p. 32.





**Figure 4** (caption above) Justice without a Blindfold. (caption below) Justice (finally ripping the blindfold from her eyes): "Hey, with the constant racket about the scandal trials, I'm going to quit playing blind man's bluff!" From *Kladderadatsch* (Berlin), vol. 60, no. 44 (December 3, 1907), Beiblatt 1, p. 1.

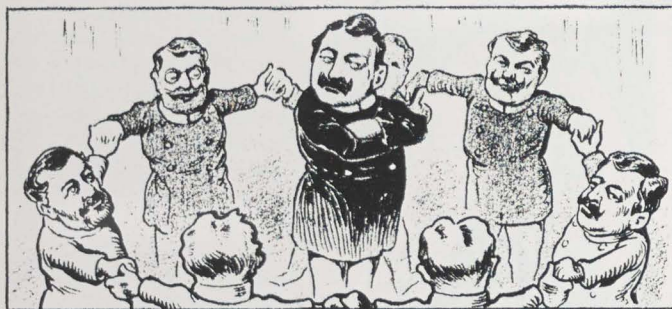
tic plagiarism or the favored use of certain motifs (such as the cuirassiers' uniform; see Figures 12, 19, 24, 32) that emerged in court testimony. Among the cartoons' recurrent themes are the threats to national honor and security posed by the spread of decadence among the ruling class, the corruption of military discipline, and the inversion of traditional sex roles. The common denominator of these concerns was a profound sense of cultural pessimism that transcended party divisions and was only superficially belied by the humor of the caricatures.

## Background Events

The starting point of the Eulenburg Affair can ultimately be traced back to the rupture between the political visions and programs of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and those of Kaiser Wilhelm II. The "Iron Chancellor" had single-mindedly—some would say brilliantly—shaped Germany's destiny by founding the Second Reich and for almost two decades guiding the nation to great-power status under Wilhelm I, who was content to serve as a mere figurehead. Shortly after succeeding to the throne in 1888, Wilhelm II dismissed Bismarck and energetically instituted "personal rule," reclaiming for the monarch constitutional powers that had heretofore devolved upon the chancellor. The young kaiser saw himself as the embodiment of the Reich's historical mission, but he struck seasoned political observers as brash and incompetent, and insiders were alarmed by his precarious mental balance—impressions that were only deepened by the passage of time. In a display of compensatory bravado, Wilhelm dismantled Bismarck's *Realpolitik*, based on a dense network of treaties designed to guarantee the European balance of power, and replaced it with a confrontational *Weltpolitik*, which promised to gain the Reich its rightful "place in the sun" by mounting a naval fleet and aggressively pursuing overseas expansion. But Bismarck's sophisticated statesmanship was actually supplanted by vacillatory bluster, for Wilhelm surrounded himself with a mixed retinue of military and civilian advisers whose outlooks diverged widely; tugged in competing directions, he proved incapable of synthesizing a consistent stance on foreign affairs.

The preeminent figure in Wilhelm's civilian entourage during the 1890s was Eulenburg, a member of the diplomatic corps whose anti-imperialist outlook and willingness to seek an accommodation with the "hereditary enemy," France, earned him the undying enmity of hawkish Gallophobes in the upper echelons of both the military and the Foreign Office. He seemed untouchable, however, for it was rumored in court circles "that His Majesty loves Philipp Eulenburg more than any other living being,"<sup>7</sup> and Wilhelm swiftly promoted his "bosom friend"<sup>8</sup> to an ambassadorship. Even prior to his dismissal, Bismarck's assessment of the relationship between the two was such that it could "not be confided to paper"; therefore, he explained in a letter to his son, "I will not write much that I intend to tell you" (Bismarck 1964:525). In 1892, after his retirement, Bismarck also disclosed his suspicions to Maximilian Harden and elaborated on his concern in acidulous terms: "There are supposed to have been some quite good generals among the *cinaedi* [a pejorative Greek word for homosexuals], but I have yet to encounter any good diplomats of the sort."<sup>9</sup> Fourteen years would elapse before Harden's public disclosure of Eulenburg's

### Die Politik des Juden Harden.



Diesen Ring hat er zerbrochen —



nun wünscht er, daß ein solcher geschmiedet wird.

**Figure 5** (caption above) The Politics of the Jew Harden. (captions below) *This ring he broke—Now he wants this kind to be forged.* From *Kikeriki* (Vienna), vol. 47, no. 90 (November 10, 1907), p. 2.

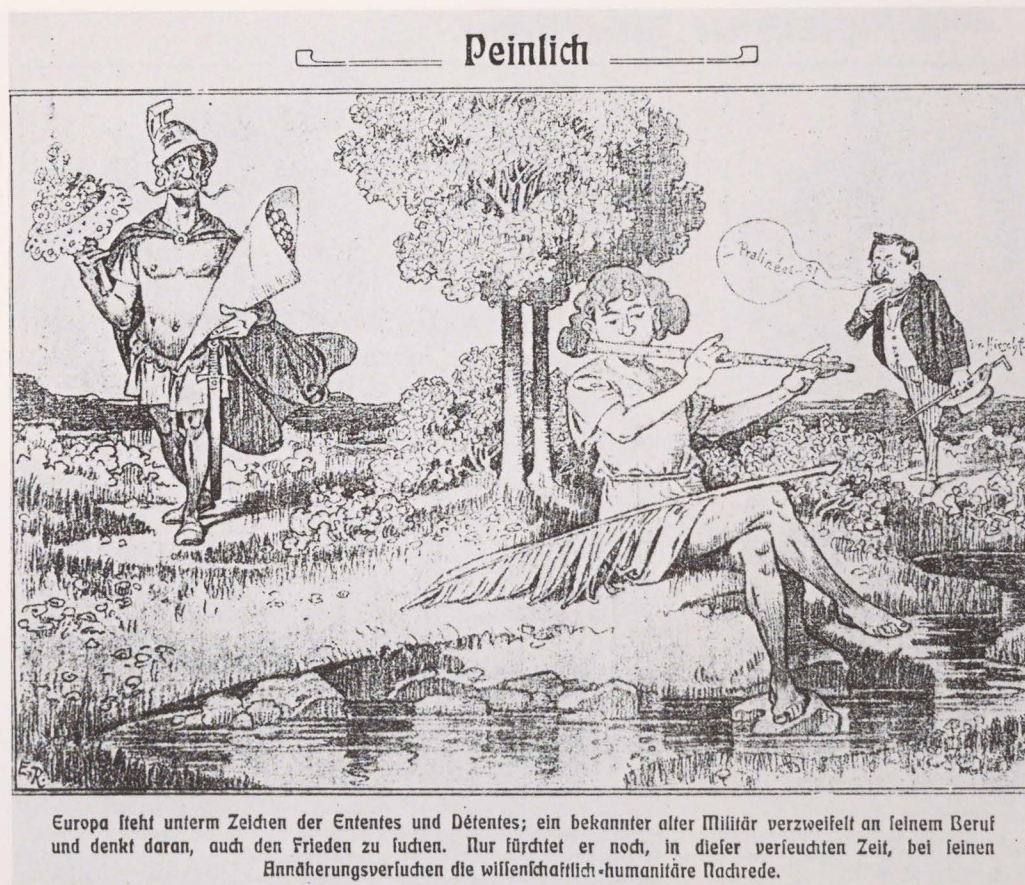
homosexuality, but the motive was unaltered and widely shared: breaking his “mesmeric power” over the kaiser’s heart and mind.<sup>10</sup> And indeed, his removal from the entourage signaled a decisive and fateful shift from competing civilian and military influences on German foreign policy to the outright dominance of “preventive war” advocates.

Were one to restrict the investigation of the Eulenburg Affair to the cartoons it inspired, it would be easy to arrive at the erroneous conclusion that Eulenburg came under fire solely because of his homosexuality and to lose sight entirely of the political background just outlined. Of some 250 cartoons that I examined, only one (Figure 6) sets the scandal in the context of German foreign policy. Its caption refers to the climate of “entente and détente” circulating in Europe and suggests that Germany—symbolized as a “well-known old soldier” with a Wilhelminian mustache—has wearied of its status as a bellicose outsider among nations. The soldier bears flowers and candies intended for the young man peaceably playing a flute, the quill on his lap symbolizing the signing of international accords. The soldier fears, however, that presenting his gifts will cause him to be (mis)labeled a homosexual by Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, the sexologist whose expert testimony helped shape the verdict in three libel trials during the course of the scandal.

That this is the only cartoon explicitly linking homosexuality and anti-imperialism is perhaps less surprising when one considers that all the other cartoons originally appeared in journals that dealt simultaneously with a broad range of foreign and domestic affairs. A panoptic review of the sources would enable one to discern certain ramifications of the Eulenburg Affair that remain largely invisible when the cartoons are examined in isolation. Because political cartoons generally comment on or embellish news reports, they

are documents rather than historiography, historical in nature rather than mode. They are reliable indicators of the response to new information that is still being digested (a process they stimulate), but their full operational effectiveness relies upon a context of cultural and historical assumptions embedded but not necessarily inscribed in their images. In the case of the Eulenburg Affair, the element left unspoken and unpictured resides in the quest for power by his adversaries; their weapons, not their motives, are revealed in the cartoons. Indeed, the Eulenburg Affair was prompted neither by Eulenburg’s homosexuality nor even by his politics. As his loyal and courageous wife remarked to Hirschfeld during a court recess, “They are striking at my husband, but their target is the Kaiser” (Hirschfeld 1933:2). The All-Highest Person rarely appeared in any of the German cartoons (and in none selected for inclusion here), while he figured prominently in numerous foreign cartoons—trying more or less successfully to distance himself from the stench of scandal (see Figures 7 and 8).

Although Eulenburg had a formidable number of aristocratic opponents, including the kaiser’s sister,<sup>11</sup> these figures preferred to intrigue behind the scenes and to leave the public vendetta to a bourgeois individual, Maximilian Harden (see Figure 9). At the height of the scandal, one homosexual nobleman asked indignantly (and with no little trepidation): “Does this Jew actually rule in Prussia, deposing generals and ambassadors?”<sup>12</sup> Harden was perhaps the most accomplished and, to use his word, “effective” political commentator of an era when German Jews were more strongly represented in journalism than in any other profession.<sup>13</sup> After meeting him, Bismarck blithely remarked that Harden “was not at all like a Jew” and thereby alluded to a current stereotype: the word Jew was then synonymous with hack journalist



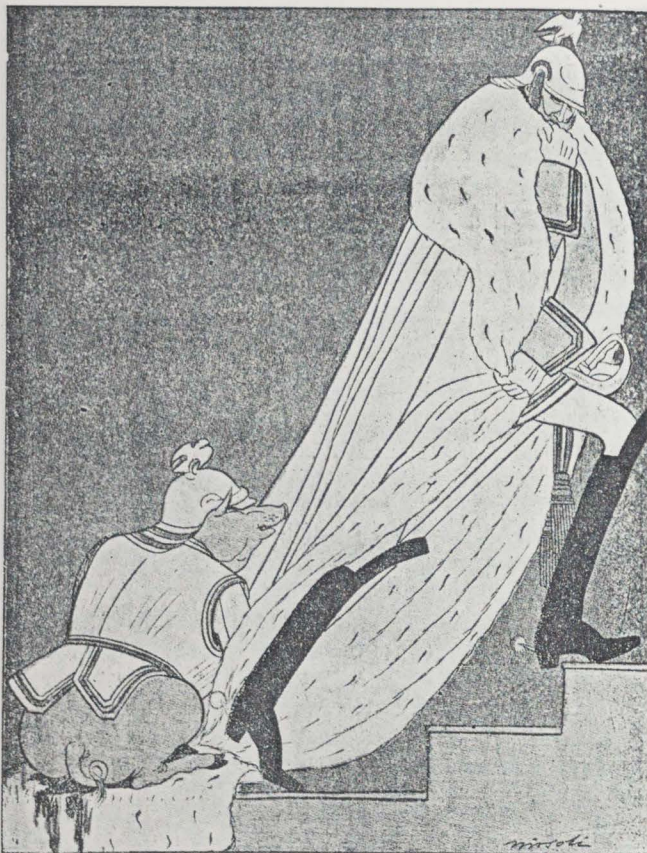
**Figure 6** (caption above) Embarrassing. (caption below) Europe has entered an era of entente and détente; a well-known old soldier despairs of his profession and thinks of seeking peace too. It's just that in these pestilential times, he fears that any approach will lead to scientific-humanitarian slander. (The figure at the right is labeled Dr. Hirschfeld, and he is asking, "Sweets?") From *Kladderadatsch* (Berlin), vol. 60, no. 52 (December 29, 1907), Beiblatt 4, p. 3.

(quoted in Weller 1970:39; cf. also Young 1959:43). Harden edited and largely wrote by himself *Die Zukunft*, a fiercely independent Berlin weekly, in which he called for progressive domestic reforms and for a coherent foreign policy combining Bismarckian diplomacy and expansionistic *Weltpolitik*. A relentless gadfly of Wilhelm's personal rule, Harden was repeatedly jailed and fined for *lèse majesté*,<sup>14</sup> but he always returned to the thick of the fray.

Harden was equally vitriolic in his published attacks on Eulenburg, which began appearing in 1893 and continued intermittently throughout the decade. He refrained from sexual innuendo because he upheld the classic distinction between public and private spheres, a patrimony of bourgeois liberalism to which he was devoted as a beneficiary of Jewish emancipation. But his patience was wearing thin by 1902, and he quietly issued what amounted to an ultimatum: if Eulenburg did not resign from public life, his secret life would be exposed. Eulenburg capitulated to this blackmail at once, for retirement seemed not too dear a price to pay to avoid disgrace: suffering ill health, mourning the death of his mother, and disheartened

**Figure 7** (caption above) The First Clean-up. (caption below) Poor Germania, you'll have to start all over again next week. From *Le Cri du peuple* (Brussels), November 3, 1907.





**Figure 8** (caption below) "It wouldn't do any harm if the imperial cape, which reaches to the bottom of the steps to throne, were really caught in it." From *Pasquino* (Turin), November 3, 1907.

**Figure 9** (caption above) The Song Is Over! (caption below) "There we are. I'm glad I've finally dumped out my cart." (The signpost bears an imperial German eagle and the legend: "Dumping manure and garbage is forbidden.") From *Der Nebelspalter* (Zurich), November 2, 1907.

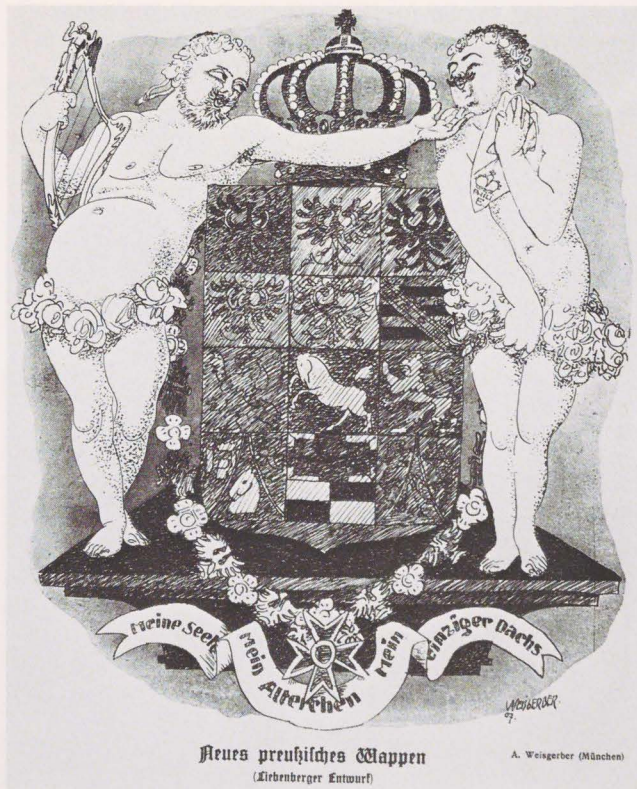


by a cooling in his relationship with Wilhelm (who may have feared exposure himself), the 55-year-old prince proved quite willing to yield his ambassadorship in Vienna and to retreat to Liebenberg, his country estate in the Mark Brandenburg, where he would spend the next years as a virtual recluse. Personally vindicated and genuinely relieved that exposing Eulenburg had not been necessary, Harden shared with his aristocratic allies the fond hope that a new and better day was dawning for the Reich.

It was therefore a rude jolt when, in late 1905 and 1906, Eulenburg ventured to resume his contacts with foreign diplomats and the kaiser, whom he invited to a shoot at Liebenberg. Moreover, Eulenburg's cautious rehabilitation coincided with a major foreign policy fiasco, Germany's yielding hegemony over Morocco to France at the Algeiras Conference, which it was all too easy to pin on Eulenburg's rising star. Finally, rumors began circulating that Eulenburg coveted the post of chancellor, and Harden renewed his attack, in stronger language than ever: two articles published in November of 1906 linked Eulenburg, "this unhealthy, late-romantic visionary"

(Harden 1906a:266), with General Kuno Count von Moltke, military commandant of Berlin. They in fact had a long-standing friendship, and this was by no means Harden's first attack on Moltke, who had suffered the ignominy of having his nickname, Tütü, revealed in *Die Zukunft* five years earlier.<sup>15</sup> In the second of the articles, ominously entitled "Dies irae," the two were identified only as the "Harpist" (Eulenburg was a widely performed amateur composer) and "Sweetie" (due to Moltke's weakness for chocolates [see Figure 6]; "sweet" was moreover a vernacular term for homosexual).<sup>16</sup> They engaged in a brief dialogue in which they wondered agitatedly whether Harden would dare to reveal "even more" and agonized over the reaction of "Darling" (Wilhelm) to their exposure (Harden 1906b:291).<sup>17</sup> Eulenburg beat a hasty retreat, removing to Switzerland and dispatching an intermediary to mollify Harden and avert further revelations.

And there matters remained for the moment. Journalists sensed that an important story was breaking, and newspapers throughout the country reported on Harden's second article or even reprinted it in full.



**Figure 10** (caption below) New Prussian Coat of Arms (Liebenberg Design). (The motto on the scroll reads: My sweetheart, my loverboy, my one and only cuddly-bear.) From *Jugend* (Munich), vol. 11, no. 45 (October 28, 1907), p. 1028.

**Figure 11** (caption above) The Latest Fashion. (caption below) Traveling salesman from Berlin: "Here are some lovely soldier's pants from Potsdam—at a bargain price. 'Tütü' brand. My name is Lynar." Proprietress: "You pathetic, crazy, lost man. Go back where you came from with your *Schweinehund*." (Lynar's hat has a Paragraph 175 label; the woman is an innkeeper at the Hotel for Political Asylum, i.e., Switzerland.) From *Der Nebelspalter* (Zurich), November 16, 1907.

But Harden's warning had been so carefully encoded that its meaning was cryptic to all but those immediately involved, and another six months would elapse before the identities of Sweetie and the Harpist became public knowledge and they could appear as heraldic figures in a "New Prussian Coat of Arms" (Figure 10). Harden's decision to breach the barrier between public and private was a difficult one and was reached due to an ensemble of factors. First, various aristocratic intriguers continued to egg him on. Second, military circles were embarrassed by a flurry of lesser scandals. They cumulatively convinced Harden that homosexuality was becoming rampant, and he hoped a deathblow to Eulenburg would stem the tide. The figures were indeed alarming: within the preceding three years, courts-martial had convicted some twenty officers of homosexual conduct, and 1906–1907 witnessed six suicides by homosexual officers ruined by blackmail (Brand 1975:[2]).<sup>18</sup> One officer stationed with the elite Garde du Corps Regiment in Potsdam, Major Johannes Count von Lynar (see Figure 11), was charged with molesting his aide-de-camp, while a second officer charged with homosexuality, Lieutenant General Wilhelm Count von Hohenau (see Figure 12), was not only Commander of the Garde du Corps but also a blood relative of the kaiser. The final factor prompting



Militärische Neuerungen.  
(Aus Volkbares Erinnerungen.)



„Seit wann kommandiert man denn bei Befestigungen: Das Ganze lebet!“  
„Ja Befehl, Herr Rittmeister, werde gehoramt, Abteilung wird heute vom Grafen Hohenau befestigt.“

**Figure 12** (caption above) Military Innovations. (caption below) “Since when is an about-face order given for inspections?!” “At your service, Captain—reporting that the division is being inspected today by Count Hohenau.” From *Der wahre Jacob* (Stuttgart), no. 447 (November 26, 1907), p. 5621.

**Figure 13** (caption above) The Camarilla. (caption below) The German Michel: “Is it truly, totally dead for good?” From *Ulk* (Berlin), vol. 36, no. 46 (November 15, 1907), p. 1.

Harden was Eulenburg’s foolhardy decision to return from Switzerland to be initiated into the High Order of Black Eagle. This honor appeared all the more inappropriate when, one month later, Friedrich Heinrich, Prince of Prussia, regrettably declined investiture as Grand Master of the Order of the Knights of St. John with the shocking explanation that his homosexual proclivities made him unsuited for the prestigious post. Convinced that the body politic was under assault, Harden scathingly denounced Eulenburg as a pervert on April 27, 1907, noting acidly that since his “*vita sexualis* [was] no healthier” than Friedrich Heinrich’s, he should have the decency to follow the prince into exile (Harden 1907a:118). He had been forced to expose this secret, so he argued, because of the political “side-effect of abnormal (even if idealized) friendship among men” (Harden 1907c:423). He quoted Moltke as having said: “We have formed a ring around the Kaiser that no one can break through” (see Figure 5) (Harden 1907b:369).

As anxious speculation about the homosexual camarilla intriguing against the national interest began to fill the German press, the royal suite realized it would finally have to act. The kaiser was no reader, and it had been easy for his cabinet and entourage to keep him blissfully ignorant of the growing scandal. Now, however, the 25-year-old crown prince—an officer in





**Figure 14** (caption above) Sodom's End. (caption below) It wasn't exactly Tell's shot, but it hit the mark. (The crossbow is labeled *Zukunft*, the kneeling figure is identified as "Sweetie," and the seated figure is "the Harpist." The standing figure is identified as M., for Moltke, for Harden's cryptic references led many journalists to think that "Sweetie" was Lecomte. The statuary shows Zeus and Ganymede on the left, Europa and the steer on the right.) From *Der wahre Jacob* (Stuttgart), no. 547 (July 9, 1907), p. 5453; original in color.

the Garde du Corps—was selected to break the news to his father. On May 2, he marched in to the appointment armed with back issues of *Die Zukunft*. He later reported that an expression of utter horror and despair had spread across his father's features and charitably attributed this to disgust at the mention of homosexuality (Wilhelm 1922:14–15).<sup>19</sup> After regaining his composure, Wilhelm hastily conferred with Hülsen-Häselser and the minister of police affairs, who presented him with a carefully edited list of approximately fifteen prominent aristocrats adjudged homosexual by the Berlin vice squad; it had been pared down from several hundred to spare the kaiser's feelings.<sup>20</sup> Apparently finding their names on the list, the kaiser commanded Hohenau, Lynar, and Moltke to resign their commissions, while Eulenburg was told either to exculpate himself or to go into exile. Pleased that the camarilla was eliminated (see Figure 13) and hailed Harden as a modern Wilhelm Tell, the liberator of his fatherland (see Figure 14). In a hollow gesture derived from the aristocratic code of honor, Moltke promptly challenged Harden to a duel, acting out a ritual that was not simply anachronistic but by now illegal.

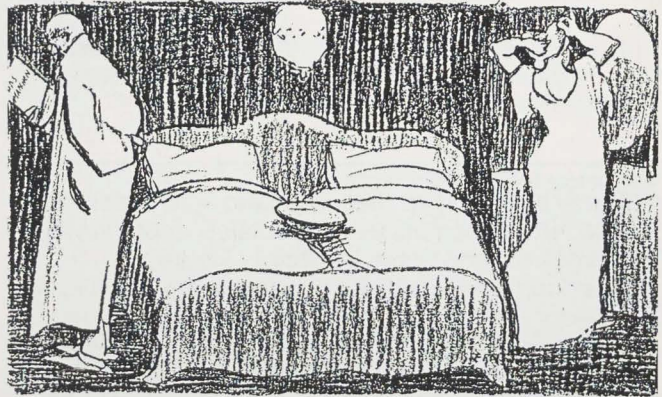
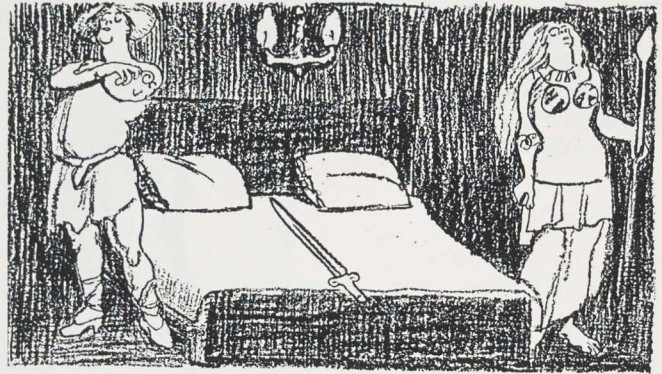
## The Trials

Moltke and Eulenburg retained lawyers who pursued different tactics. Their dismissal by the kaiser had led many observers to presume their guilt, and Moltke's attempt to file a suit for criminal libel against Harden was rebuffed by the state prosecutor, who instead advised him to file for civil libel, thus placing him at a considerable procedural disadvantage. Eulenburg's strategy was cleverer and avoided direct confrontation with Harden: after denying his culpability, he presented the local district attorney of his home area with a self-accusation of violating Paragraph 175 (see Figures 11 and 39) of the Penal Code, which punished "unnatural vice" between men with prison sentences of anywhere from one day to five years. By late July, the DA had completed his investigation and, predictably, cleared Eulenburg. Harden meanwhile set about preparing his defense for the upcoming civil libel trial, and Berlin was further shaken by accusations of homosexuality leveled against the intendant of the Royal Theater, Georg von Hülsen, and the crown prince's equerry, von Stückradt. Finally, the imperial chancellor, Bernhard Prince von Bülow, was linked romantically with his secretary (described as his "better half"), Privy Councillor Scheefer, by two different publicists; and against one of them, Adolf Brand, Bülow pressed criminal libel charges (see Figure 15).

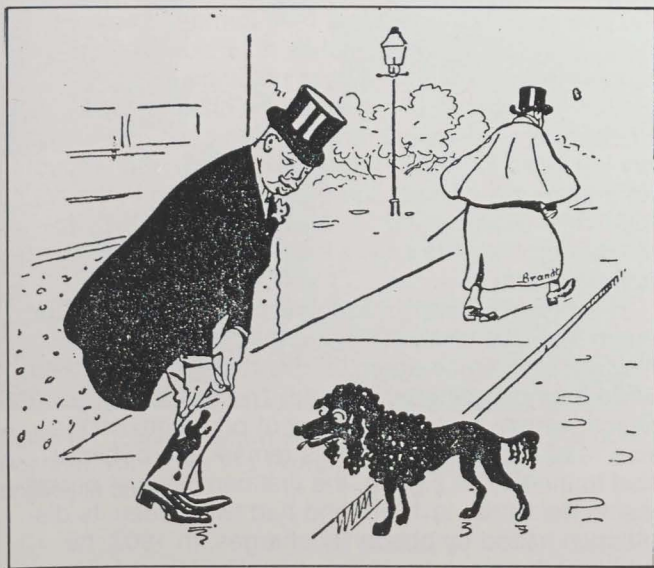
The first of the cases to go to court, *Moltke v. Harden*, opened on October 23. The lackluster performance of Moltke's lawyer contrasted sharply with Harden's brilliant defense. Three chief witnesses took the stand: Moltke's former wife, who had divorced him nine years earlier; Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, the forensic expert on homosexuality; and an enlisted man named Bollhardt. Lily von Elbe testified that, in two years of marriage, conjugal relations had occurred only on the first two nights; on the few other nights they had shared a bed, Moltke had sometimes placed a pan of water between them, apparently to discourage her advances (see Figure 16). She reported that her husband had once espied a handkerchief (see Figure 10) left behind by Eulenburg and had warmly pressed it to his lips, murmuring "Phili, my Phili!" Moltke had variously addressed Eulenburg as "my sweetheart, my loverboy, my one and only cuddly-bear" (see Figures 10 and 38), and the two had referred to Wilhelm as their "Darling." Eulenburg had always vehemently opposed their marriage, she added, and her husband spent more time with him than with her—including Christmas Eve; but she had not suspected the worst, since the very existence of homosexuality was unknown to her at the time. Still, the two had behaved in such a blatant way that her 10-year-old son (of a previous marriage) had taken to imitating their "revolting" mannerisms with the servants.<sup>21</sup>



As the trial entered its second day, an "enormous crowd" gathered before the courthouse and police reinforcements had to be summoned to maintain public order; the crowd grew larger day by day, and an "army" of German and foreign reporters encamped at the scene. A soldier, Bollhardt, testified that sexual relations between officers and enlisted men in the Potsdam regiments were common knowledge (see Figure 17, which notably appeared prior to the scandal) and went on to confess in unprintable detail his participation in champagne orgies at Lynar's villa (see Figure 18), stating that he had seen both Hohenau and Moltke there. The hushed courtroom was fascinated by Bollhardt's report on the powerful sex appeal of the white pants and kneehigh boots of the cuirassiers' uniform: any guardsman who ventured to wear it in public was virtually certain to be approached by men soliciting homosexual intercourse (see Figure 19). "But that's forbidden now, you know," he remarked, unwittingly provoking an outburst of hilarity. After the mirth had subsided, he explained his meaning: due to importunities, wearing the uniform after nightfall had recently been banned.<sup>22</sup>

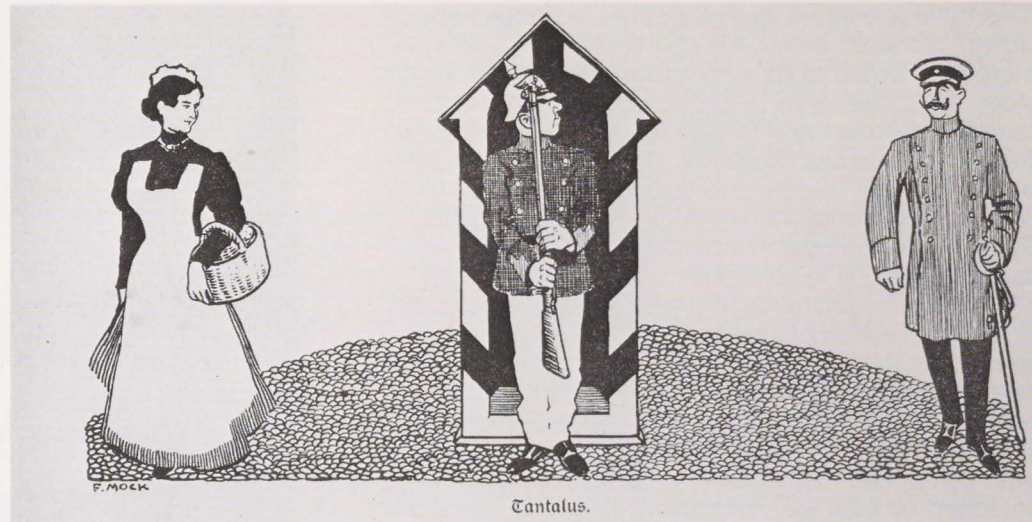


**Figure 15** (caption below) Bülow: "My little Moor, you'd never be such a poorly trained dog." (The departing figure is labeled Brand.) From *Kladderadatsch* (Berlin), vol. 60, no. 43 (October 27, 1907), p. 164.



**Figure 16** (caption above) Heroes. (caption below top picture) In the old days, the German Siegfried put a naked sword between himself and his spouse. (caption below bottom picture) Nowadays, it's a little pan of water. From *Lustige Blätter* (Berlin), vol. 22, no. 45 (November 5, 1907), p. 10.

**Figure 17** (caption below)  
Tantalus. From *Der wahre Jacob* (Stuttgart), no. 525 (September 4, 1906), p. 5156.



The final witness to take the stand was Hirschfeld, whose very appearance—immediately captured in numerous cartoons (see especially Figure 20)—seemed to exemplify a Jewish stereotype. He had served for the past ten years as chairperson of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (see Figure 6), an organization that campaigned for the repeal of Paragraph 175, and his courtroom appearance on Harden's behalf tended to strengthen the association between Jews and the unprecedented publicity being given to homosexuality. (In the following days, handbills advertising anti-Semitic lectures were distributed in front of his apartment [Hirschfeld 1907d:232].) Basing his remarks on Lily von Elbe's testimony and on his observation of Moltke in the courtroom, Hirschfeld asserted that the plaintiff had a "feminine side" that "deviated from the norm, i.e. from the feelings of the majority." In particular, his treatment of his wife, his devotion to Eulenburg, his "sensitivity" for the arts, and his use of makeup (visible in the courtroom) permitted the deduction that Moltke's "unconscious orientation" could "objectively" be labeled "homosexual," even if he had never violated Paragraph 175.<sup>23</sup> In his closing argument, Harden stressed that he, too, had never charged Moltke with lawbreaking but only with suffering from a "mawkish, unmanly, sickly condition" and that he had revealed Moltke's orientation not to profit from sensationalism (sales of *Die Zukunft* were up dramatically; see Tresckow 1922:184–185), but for political ends (Young 1959:101, 104).

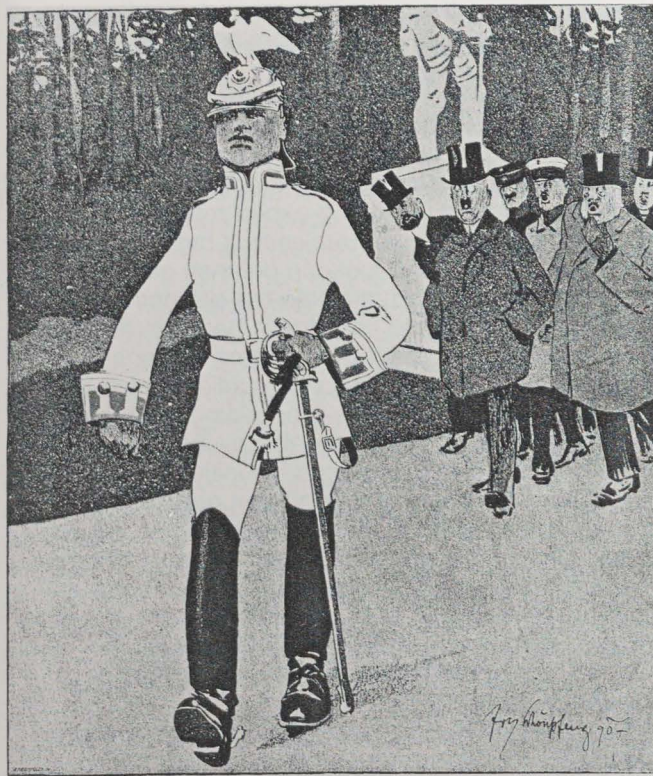
On October 29, the court handed down its verdict: the plaintiff's homosexuality had been confirmed and the defendant was therefore acquitted of libel, court costs falling to the plaintiff. According to Hirschfeld, "a storm of moral outrage" swept through the country,

but it was curiously two-pronged, directed both at decadent "upper classes" and at the Jewish bearers of bad tidings (Hirschfeld 1907c:1519). A cloud of suspicion settled more firmly than ever over Eulenburg, and Moltke's disgrace seemed irremediable, when an unexpected development took place. The trial was voided due to faulty procedure and, in a reversal of the earlier standpoint, the state prosecutor called for a retrial against Harden, this time on grounds of criminal libel. This announcement came just a few days before the opening of the second major trial, which was to pit Chancellor Bülow against Adolf Brand. It appears that the German judiciary now regarded Harden's acquittal as a serious blunder that tended to undermine public confidence in the regime.<sup>24</sup> Convinced that it would be child's play to find Brand guilty of libel in the upcoming case, the judiciary intended to make an example of him, then mount an aggressive prosecution against Harden in the retrial. In its determination to restore respectability to the ruling class, the justice system was henceforth far from impartial.

The *Bülow v. Brand* case was handled quickly, the entire trial and sentencing occurring on one day, November 6. Once again the courtroom was packed, while throngs gathered outside. The first to testify was Brand, whose extensive history of prior convictions was read into the record. This remarkable publicist had founded *Der Eigene*, the first homosexual periodical in the world, in 1896, and had twice seen its distribution halted by obscenity charges. In 1902, he had founded an organization that, like Hirschfeld's group, aimed at repealing Paragraph 175. Here the similarities with Hirschfeld ended, but—as the latter noted—the two were subsequently lumped together or actually confused by the German press.

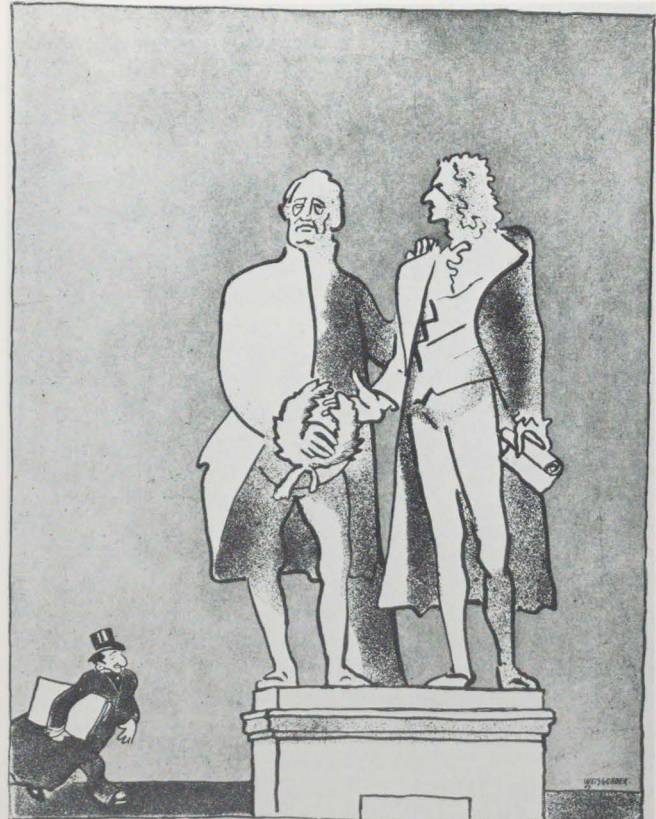


◀ **Figure 18** (caption above) On the Harden Trial. (In an exclusive Berlin restaurant.) (caption below) "Well, what do you want, old Diogenes?" "I'm searching for normal people." "Oh no, my good man, that's pointless, for what you might call gentlemen of distinction are all perverse." From *Figaro* (Vienna), vol. 51, no. 44 (November 2, 1907), pp. 660–661.



**Figure 19** (caption below) Hero-Worship. From *Die Muskete* (Vienna), vol. 5, no. 111 (November 14, 1907), p. 49; original in color.

**Figure 20** (caption above) Panic in Weimar. (caption below) "Wolfgang, let go of my hand! Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld is coming!" From *Jugend* (Munich), vol. 11, no. 48 (November 19, 1907), p. 1089.



**Panik in Weimar**  
 „Wolfgang, lassen wir die Hände los!“ — „Der Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld kommt.“

(Hirschfeld 1907d: 230–232).<sup>25</sup> Brand was charged with authoring and distributing a libelous leaflet, in which he alleged that Bülow had been blackmailed because of his homosexuality, that he had embraced and kissed Scheefer at all-male gatherings hosted by Eulenburg, and that he was morally obligated as a homosexual to use his influence for the repeal of Paragraph 175. Brand maintained the truth of these claims and argued that he had not intended to insult Bülow by calling him a homosexual, since he had a positive view of those who shared his own sexual orientation. He had exposed Bülow with the political goal of hastening the repeal of Paragraph 175, for he had come to believe that this could only be achieved by creating martyrs—the strategy of “the path over corpses.” Finally, borrowing an argument from Harden’s defense, he claimed that he had only labeled Bülow’s orientation, not accused him of lawbreaking.<sup>26</sup>

Bülow took the stand next, airily dismissing Brand’s imputations and demanding an exemplary punishment. He made the gratuitous observation that, while his private life was beyond reproach, the same could not be said of Eulenburg, about whom he had heard unsavory rumors. The next witness was Eulenburg, who passed over Bülow’s slur in silence and merely asserted that he had never hosted parties such as those described by Brand; he simultaneously used the opportunity to swear, as had Bülow, that he had never violated Paragraph 175. He appealed to public sympathy by arguing that Hirschfeld’s sophistic system of sexual “nuances” could turn any innocent friendship into a source of calumny. Brand spoke again, expressing his esteem for Eulenburg’s vision of ideal friendship and inserting a jarring political note: the campaign of vilification against Eulenburg could ultimately be traced to Bülow, who saw in him a rival for the post of chancellor. This assertion, already suggested by Bülow’s disparaging remark, has been confirmed by diplomatic historians (Hull 1982b:121–127; Cole 1982:250–251); but, at the moment, Brand was speaking the unspeakable by exposing the chancellor as an intriguer. Thus, when Eulenburg was asked whether he gave any credence to Brand’s analysis, the question was instantly ruled out of order by the judge, who claimed to be “determined to keep politics out of this case.”<sup>27</sup> The proceedings briefly took another unplanned turn when the head of the Berlin vice squad testified that Bülow may indeed have been a blackmail victim, but the prosecution hurriedly dropped this line of inquiry and instead obliged Brand to identify his sources. These were numerous, but the prosecution focused only on one: Brand claimed that Hirschfeld had spoken to a mutual acquaintance about Bülow’s blackmail problem. When Hirschfeld then testified that he had never engaged in such a conversation (and he may well

have perjured himself in doing so),<sup>28</sup> the prosecution closed its case. The judge withdrew briefly and returned with a conviction and an eighteen-month prison sentence for libel.

The *Brand v. Bülow* trial made a mockery of justice, but the nation was gratified by its outcome and little inclined to scrutinize the procedure. Brand had been railroaded, and he later pointed out that he was the sole individual actually imprisoned as a result of the scandal. He was, in any case, convinced that the cause of homosexual emancipation, to which he devoted his life, needed martyrs; and his months in prison strengthened his martyr complex. His fate suggests that public opinion was beginning to rally around the established order and against those Jewish and homosexual publicists who were increasingly perceived not as saviors but as rumormongers and purveyors of filth (see Figures 9 and 15). An element of judicial and media manipulation was at work here, but the public responded eagerly. While the onus fell especially hard on Hirschfeld, Harden was at greater risk because of his upcoming trial on criminal libel charges.

The third trial opened on December 18 and lasted for two weeks, casting a pall over the holiday season. Lily von Elbe was placed back on the stand, and the state prosecutor destroyed the credibility of her earlier testimony by summoning expert medical witnesses who declared her a classical hysteric. Both Moltke and Eulenburg spoke in defense of the spirit of male friendship and attacked the distinction Harden and Hirschfeld had drawn between homosexual orientation and practices as mere chicanery. Intimidated by the about-face in public opinion and the obvious direction of the proceedings, Hirschfeld was reduced to a national laughingstock (see Figure 20) when he formally retracted his initial forensic opinion, feebly claiming that it had been predicated on the assumed truth of Elbe’s testimony. Even Harden’s claim to have acted from political motives was now discounted as a red herring, and the verdict handed down on January 4, 1908, became a foregone conclusion: Moltke’s reputation was cleared, while Harden was convicted of libel and sentenced to four months in prison.<sup>29</sup>

Delighted by this turn of events, the kaiser envisioned a complete rehabilitation of Moltke and Eulenburg, planning for them a greater role than ever in his entourage (Zedlitz-Trützschler 1924:212). A semblance of judicial evenhandedness was created later that month when Lynar was convicted and Hohenau acquitted by a court-martial.<sup>30</sup> The German press breathed a sanctimonious sigh of relief that public discussion of sexual matters was at an end and braced itself for a decline in sales to its sensation-hungry readership (see Hirschfeld 1908b:656–657). After six months of revelations and

two months of trials, most observers prematurely concluded that the Eulenburg Affair was over. To be sure, the scandal had taken its toll: in the winter of 1908, all the major parties involved—Moltke, Lily von Elbe, Eulenburg, Harden, Hirschfeld, Brand—suffered illnesses brought on by sheer exhaustion (Hirschfeld 1908b:651); the kaiser was near a nervous breakdown (Balfour 1964:276). But the nation underestimated the resourcefulness of Harden, who was motivated not just by opposition to the rehabilitated camarilla but now, as well, by vengefulness.

By testifying under oath in the second and third trials that he had never violated Paragraph 175, Eulenburg had perjured himself.<sup>31</sup> Harden faced the challenge of producing incontrovertible evidence so as to force the state prosecutor into action. In an elaborate legal ruse, Harden colluded with an ally, the Bavarian editor Anton Städele, who published a fraudulent article alleging that Harden had received a million Marks in hush money from Eulenburg to desist in his attacks. Harden then sued Städele for libel and turned the court proceedings into a forum for presenting his evidence on Eulenburg. Arranging for a trial outside of Berlin, in anti-Prussian Munich, was also part of the devious strategy.

With little advance fanfare in the press, the Harden-Städele trial was convened and completed on April 21, 1908. Harden had subpoenaed Georg Riedel, a Munich milkman, and Jakob Ernst, a Starnberg farmer and sometime fisherman on the Bavarian lakes where Eulenburg had vacationed in earlier years. Since the statute of limitations had expired, Riedel freely admitted that in 1881, while serving in the military, he had once engaged in sexual relations with Eulenburg, who later made him gifts of money and also introduced him to Moltke. The second witness, Ernst, had more on his conscience and initially denied any wrongdoing. But, persuaded by the judge that swearing a false oath would lead to punishments in this world and the hereafter, he haltingly confessed that in 1883, as a 19-year-old, he had likewise been seduced by Eulenburg. Ernst later revealed that this incident initiated a long-term sexual relationship with the prince that had continued until quite recently (see Figure 21). During these years, Ernst had led a double but apparently charmed life as a respectable family man in Starnberg and as Eulenburg's intimate companion in Liebenberg, Munich, Berlin, and on princely vacations in Garmisch, Meran, Zurich, Rome, the Riviera, and Egypt (Harden 1913:252–253). The court's verdict was anticlimactic: Städele was convicted of libel and sentenced to a 100 Mark fine (which was covertly reimbursed by Harden).

Harden's real victory became evident in the stunned public reaction to the Munich trial. Gradually, a welter of opinions began to emerge. To some, Eulenburg seemed disgraced beyond repair; one

close friend forthrightly suggested he commit suicide.<sup>32</sup> Others gave credence to Eulenburg's claim that Riedel and Ernst must have been paid by unknown enemies to give false testimony; Harden was suspect to many. And finally, public response was characterized by a certain jadedness, a conspicuous lack of interest when compared with the high emotions aroused by the first trials.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, the socialists put the judiciary on notice that they would be closely monitoring the state prosecutor's response for signs of class justice, a legal double standard for aristocrats and commoners.<sup>34</sup> With considerable reluctance, the state prosecutor moved into action: Eulenburg was arraigned on perjury charges on May 7, 1908, and two weeks later the imperial Supreme Court overturned Harden's libel conviction in the Moltke case on procedural and substantive grounds and called for a second retrial.



**Figure 21** (caption above) On Eulenburg's Track. (caption below) "It was on this spot that the Prince first confessed his love to me!" From *Simplicissimus* (Munich), vol. 13, no. 10 (June 8, 1908), p. 165; original in color.

The fifth major trial of the scandal was convened in Berlin on June 29, after Eulenburg had unsuccessfully sought a postponement due to ill health. The state prosecutor introduced as evidence incriminating books and correspondence confiscated at Liebenberg Castle, including one letter to Ernst written by Eulenburg prior to the Munich trial, urging him to reveal nothing. Ernst was, in fact, the prosecution's star witness, turning at one point to Eulenburg and uttering in Bavarian dialect: "By God Almighty, Your Excellency, you can't deny that we two did it. . . . Excellency, it's true. We two haven't got a chance in the world."<sup>35</sup> So enfeebled that he had to be carried into the court on a litter, Eulenburg continued to protest his innocence even when confronted with ten witnesses summoned by the prosecution—including three police officers, two former stewards on the royal yacht *Hohenzollern*, and a court servant who testified to having observed Eulenburg through a keyhole in 1887.<sup>36</sup> The prosecution planned to call another thirty witnesses, but the defendant collapsed during a recess and was declared dangerously ill by medical attendants. Determined to press to a close, the judge resumed the trial on July 17 in Eulenburg's hospital. When the defendant passed out during the hearing, the judge relented and postponed further hearings until Eulenburg's health improved. Two months later he was provisionally released from the court's custody on posting a bond of 100 Marks and returned to his Liebenberg estate, where he was warmly received by his loyal tenants and gave interviews protesting his innocence.

Eulenburg's circulatory ailment enabled a broad sector of the German populace to accept the fact that the trial was repeatedly postponed—and ultimately never concluded. While they were convinced that the illness was feigned, even the socialists were not entirely displeased, since the Eulenburg case could serve as an object lesson in class justice only so long as he was not convicted. Most aristocrats and members of the middle class felt that Eulenburg had already been punished enough by his fall from grace; and indeed, he was never reaccepted into the kaiser's entourage. When he was audacious enough to vacation at a foreign spa, press grumblings led the judge to reconvene the trial on July 7, 1909, almost a year after the postponement. But when Eulenburg fainted one hour into the proceedings, he was given a conditional postponement: he was to undergo a medical examination at six-month intervals to determine whether he was fit to stand trial. This charade continued for a decade, after which the trial was indefinitely postponed. Eulenburg died in 1921.

The final trial of the scandal—the third between Moltke and Harden—received far less media attention than the earlier ones. It was originally scheduled for November of 1908 (the time of the *Daily Telegraph* affair) but was delayed until the following April. Harden was again convicted of libel and sentenced to pay a fine of 600 Marks plus court costs, which now amounted to 40,000 Marks. Unlike Eulenburg, Moltke was thus rehabilitated, and Harden continued to fret over the homosexual influence of Moltke and "the many other affiliates of the same caliber, who are *still* up there."<sup>37</sup> As litigious as ever, he fully intended to appeal the verdict but allowed himself to be talked out of it by Chancellor Bülow, who argued that they had both achieved their goal by eliminating Eulenburg and that further trials dealing with homosexuality would be detrimental to the national interest. Harden was finally satisfied with a formal acknowledgment that he had acted out of "patriotic considerations" and a full reimbursement for his fines, secretly paid by the imperial chancellery. Fifteen years later, Harden acknowledged to Magnus Hirschfeld that initiating the Eulenburg Affair had been the greatest political mistake of his career.<sup>38</sup> He came to realize regretfully that Eulenburg had exercised a moderating influence on the kaiser and that his elimination had set Germany on a war course. And, although he never said so, Hirschfeld too may well have regarded his own involvement in the libel trials as the gravest misstep of his career.

## Effects on the German Image

Just a few days after the opening of the first trial in the three-year scandal, a leading Berlin daily described it as a "forensic drama claiming universal attention at home and abroad."<sup>39</sup> A month later, one Reichstag delegate asseverated that the courtroom revelations quite properly filled "the entire German people with revulsion and loathing" but noted with concern that "these matters, naturally blown up, are entering the foreign press and there producing extremely odd views about German morality and the future of Germany."<sup>40</sup> The Eulenburg Affair was thus a double crisis, damaging both national self-image and the international image of Germany; but while the former was subject to a certain amount of manipulation, the latter seemed exasperatingly beyond control. This concern was captured in one cartoon, "The Effect Abroad" (Figure 22). Here, two English tourists in Venice are struck by the appearance of a group of German women, and one concludes that their egregious homeliness is what drives German men to homosexuality. The thinly veiled misogyny of this cartoon points simultaneously to the thoroughgoing exclusion of women from the discourses of the scandal (the courtroom silencing of Lily von Elbe being the *locus classicus*) and to the attempt to find a scapegoat (be it Jews, homosexuals, or women) for the nation's image problem.

While a comprehensive survey of the international reception of the scandal is beyond the scope of this essay, its outline can briefly be limned. Press coverage in the United States was quite extensive and ranged from the guarded reportage of the *New York Times* (see Katz 1983:322–323) to rank sensationalism in the era's yellow press. The French response was equally mixed but dealt with an additional dimension: Raymond Lecomte, counselor at the French embassy in Berlin, was a close friend of Eulenburg and was directly implicated in the scandal by Harden (see Figure 14). He claimed that as a result of a meeting between Lecomte and the kaiser at a Liebenberg shoot in 1906, the French went to the Algeciras Conference with the inside knowledge that Germany would not go to war with France over hegemony in Morocco. When Harden published his accusation, Lecomte—titled "king of the pederasts" (Tresckow 1922:168)—was recalled to Paris, but only to be rewarded with a post in another embassy. In light of ingrained Franco-Prussian hostility, it is scarcely surprising that some sectors of the French press gloated over Germany's embarrassment; homosexuality was in any case already called "le vice allemand" (Harden 1913:183, see also Blümner 1910:179–180). Paris cartoonists took special pleasure in lampooning the perverse esprit of "The Army Beyond the Rhine" (see Figures 23, 24, 25). Beneath the obvious *Schadenfreude* lurked the gleam of hope that the foe could



**Figure 22** (caption above) The Effect Abroad. (caption below) "Now I understand why homosexuality is so widespread in Germany!" From *Simplicissimus* (Munich), vol. 13, no. 8 (May 25, 1908), p. 113; original in color.



**Figure 23** (caption above) The Army beyond the Rhine. (caption below) Well, what can you do about it? A poor soldier always has to risk his ass. From *Le Rire rouge* (Paris), vol. 13 (November 23, 1907).



**Figure 24** (caption below) Byzantium in Germany. From *Fantasio* (Paris), vol. 2 (November 15, 1907).

be vanquished in the next war and, on a deeper level, the pervasive fear that France itself was suffering from decadence (see Nye 1982a, 1982b). Overall, the Eulenburg Affair was of such consuming interest to France that it remains the only country to have produced monographs on the subject (see especially Baumont 1933; Weindel and Fischer 1908; Grand-Carteret 1908). Switzerland and Belgium tried to maintain their neutrality, but cartoons from these countries (Figures 7, 9, 11) show the opprobrium they attached to homosexuality. In contrast, the Italian treatment tended more clearly to the sensational (see Figure 8).

Because they were yoked by a shared cultural heritage and an alliance that led to the Axis in World War I, Austria and Germany closely converged in their reactions to the scandal (see Figures 18, 19, 28, 29, 30, 32, 39, 41). Still, the Austrian cartoonists enjoyed greater freedom in linking the kaiser with the scandal, and pictorial anti-Semitism was more openly aggressive in Vienna than in Berlin (see Figure 5). The British response was initially quite restrained and even tactful; but, as the enmity between the countries grew, various English publicists demonstrated that the scandal was by no means forgotten. In the final year of World War I, the English "libel case of the century" began with the remarkable assertion that Germany was ruled by a homosexual clique whose secret agents had debauched thousands of English men and women who now obeyed orders from Potsdam (see Kettle 1977:4–12; cf. also Igra 1945). The

Eulenburg Affair was recalled during the war not just in Britain: cartoons in both France and Italy revived motifs from the era of the scandal, portraying the German army as perversely effeminate and thus easily defeated.<sup>41</sup> Yet the memory persisted longer at home than abroad: in the early 1930s, antifascist German cartoonists once again used the selfsame images to attack Ernst Röhm's SA, and both Hirschfeld and Hitler himself remarked on the historical parallel.<sup>42</sup> Fascists tended to perpetuate the anti-Semitic interpretation of the Eulenburg Affair and held up Harden and Hirschfeld as prime examples of the Jewish conspiracy against German morals (see Institut zum Studium der Judenfrage 1936:371–373; Frank 1942).

Hitler's recollection of the scandal is indicative of the abiding damage it inflicted on the German self-image. Harden's voice was only one in a chorus that harped on the theme of "national disgrace" (Harden 1913:248), an outlook that also found frequent pictorial expression. Cartoonists employed a variety of symbolic figures to invoke the nation. The one female representative was Germania (Figures 3 and 7), tellingly portrayed doing women's work—sweeping and washing—to cleanse the homeland. The nation's other avatars were all men and included the German Michel in his sleeping cap (see Figure 13), the hero Siegfried, Germany's legendary dragonslayer (see Figure 16), and the medieval Kaiser Barbarossa (see Figure 26), of whom legend said that he had not died but instead slept in a mountain fastness encircled by



ravens, whose departure would awaken him to do battle in the hour of Germany's greatest need. In addition to these mythical and allegorical figures, cartoonists also invoked historical figures to represent the nation. An amusing example is the statue of Goethe and Schiller in Weimar (see Figure 20). A statue of Hermann, the Germanic leader whose warriors defeated three Roman legions in the year A.D. 9, figures similarly in another cartoon not reproduced here. In both cases Hirschfeld is shown questioning the normalcy of these historical giants; and, indeed, articles published by Hirschfeld did explore the homosexual aspect of the writings of Goethe and Schiller.<sup>43</sup>

The most striking feature shared by these male national symbols is their apparent ineffectualness in the face of a moral transformation they can scarcely begin to comprehend. Germania alone rolls up her sleeves and resolutely sets about cleaning up the mess, whereas the men all embody one variant or another of powerlessness. Be it the German Michel timidly examining a dragon that may not be dead, the dragonslayer Siegfried belonging to an heroic past now irretrievably lost, Barbarossa still recumbent in his rocky redoubt, or Goethe and Schiller frozen in their statuesque but compromising embrace, these national symbols evoke a proud cultural heritage now perceived as crumbling under the onslaught of modernity. Not just in Germany but also in France and England, contemporaries experienced the era of the turn of the century as under assault by the accelerating tempo of change, and the rush of time brought in its wake new diseases of civilization: bad nerves, homosexuality, and degeneracy of all sorts (see Mosse 1982:229–230; Schivelbusch 1979:118–121). The agitated nervousness of the modern age was captured in the cartoon image of Hirschfeld actually running to the Weimar statue.

In an article entitled "Who Is to Blame?" Hirschfeld argued that the sensational publicity surrounding the Eulenburg Affair had given rise to three related but distinct misconceptions. First, he rejected the notion that "degeneration, a process of decay" was more extensive in Germany than in other nations (Hirschfeld 1907c:1522). This welcome assurance was widely echoed, often in a stridently xenophobic tone, by newspaper editorialists, Reichstag speakers, and the like.<sup>44</sup> Second, he described as mistaken the impression that homosexuality was more prevalent among the aristocracy than among commoners. While upper- and middle-class apologists for the status quo accepted and repeated this assertion, it did not find universal acceptance. Some members of the educated middle class suggested that centuries of intermarriage among German blue bloods had resulted in hereditary degeneracy, of which homosexuality was one manifestation (see, e.g., Tresckow 1922:111–112),

while others—including various middle- and working-class cartoonists—saw it simply as the latest variation on an age-old theme: the aristocracy's sexual license, at once despised and envied (see Figures 18 and 27). And third, Hirschfeld claimed that, contrary to popular belief, homosexuality was no more widespread in the present than it had been in the past. With this thesis he stood virtually alone.

A disturbing increase in the rate of "unnatural crimes" had been noted by cultural critics as early as the 1880s,<sup>45</sup> and by 1908 one alarmed editorialist asserted that the continued spread of homosexuality threatened the German race with extinction.<sup>46</sup> The Eulenburg Affair prompted Adolf Stöcker, court chaplain under Kaiser Wilhelm I and now the foremost anti-Semitic politician in the Reichstag, to argue that the

**Figure 25** (caption below) We don't want no antimilitarists here! We hold the firm seat of our soldiers' order and morality in respect. From *L'Assiette au beurre* (Paris), no. 346 (November 16, 1907).





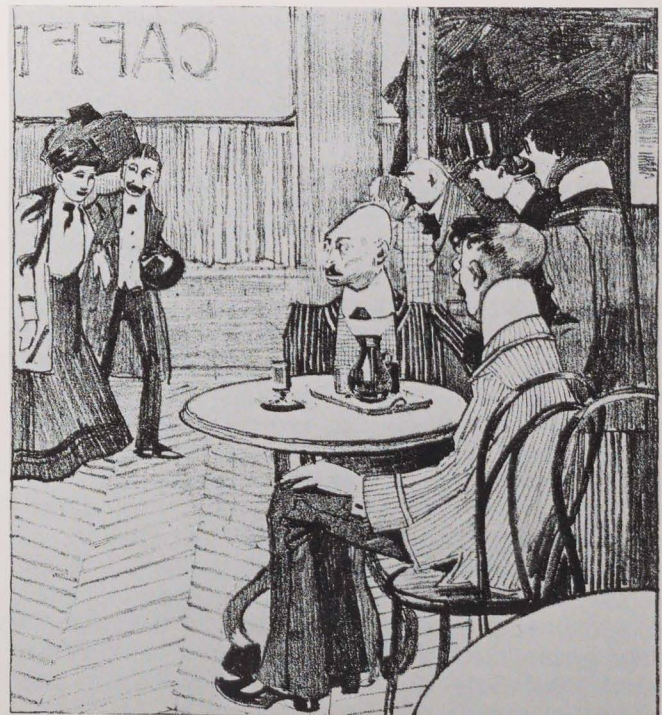
**Figure 26** (caption below) Barbarossa: "Are the ravens still flying around the tower?" From *Lustige Blätter* (Berlin), vol. 22, no. 45 (November 5, 1907), p. 3.



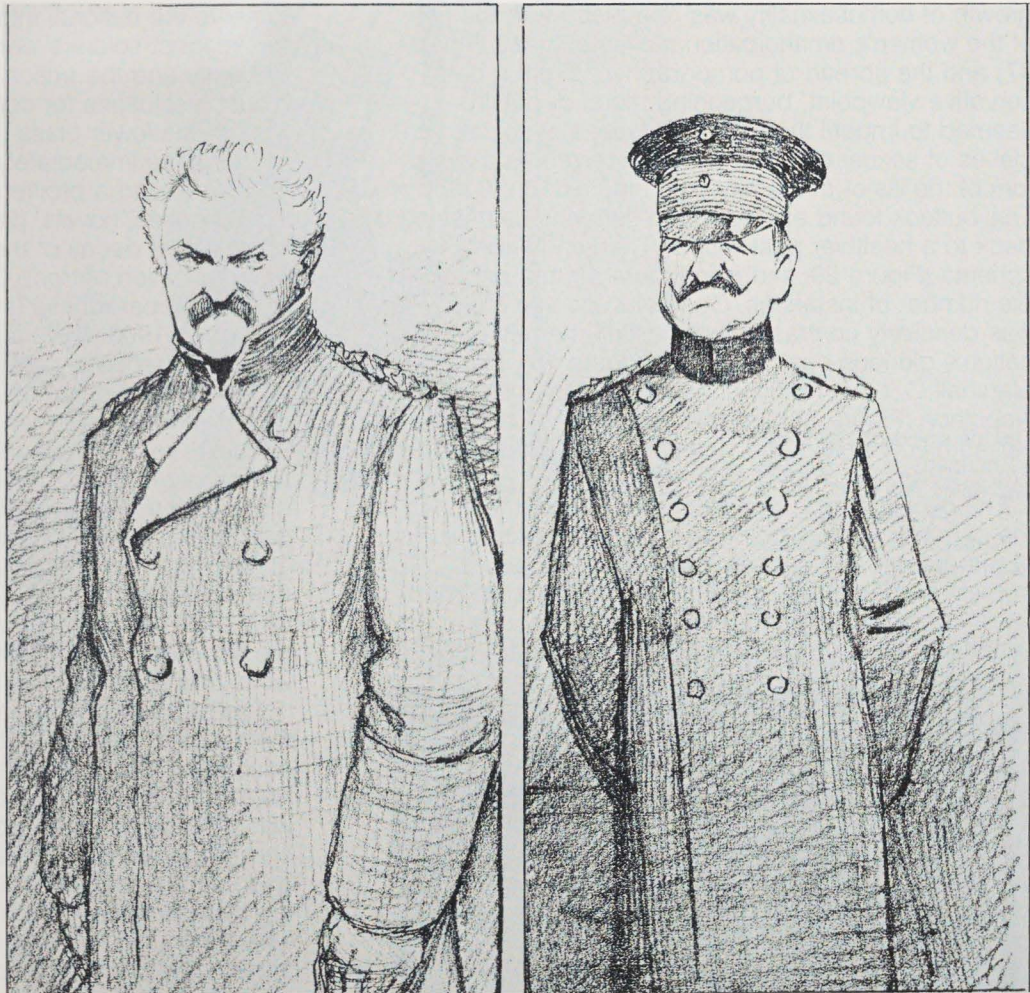
„Ach, Oscar, du bist doch nur ein gewöhnlicher Plebejer — gar nicht ein bißchen homosexuell!“

**Figure 27** (caption above) Disappointed. (caption below) "Oh, Oscar, you're just an ordinary plebian—not even the least bit homosexual!" From *Der wahre Jacob* (Stuttgart), no. 560 (January 7, 1908), p. 5683.

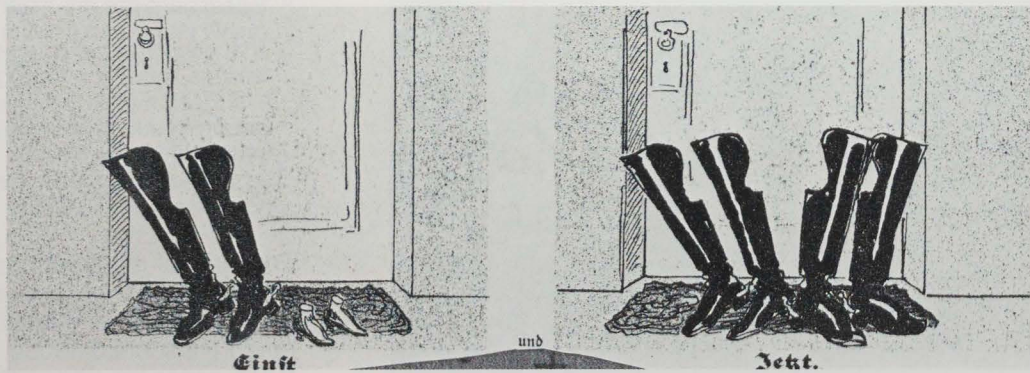
**Figure 28** (caption above) Sensation in the Café Moderne. (caption below) A married couple is coming! From *Wiener Caricaturen* (Vienna), vol. 27, no. 44 (November 3, 1907), p. 4.



**Figure 30** (caption above)  
 Changes in Prussia Over  
 the Past 100 Years.  
 (caption below) Marshall  
 Forward and General  
 Backwards! From *Wiener  
 Caricaturen* (Vienna), vol.  
 27, no. 44 (November 3,  
 1907), p. 12.



**Figure 29** (caption below)  
 Then and Now. From *Der  
 Floh* (Vienna), undated  
 special issue on  
 Paragraph 175 (ca.  
 November 1907), p. 4.



growth of homosexuality was of a piece with the rise of the women's emancipation movement (see Figure 37) and the spread of pornography.<sup>47</sup> From a conservative viewpoint, burgeoning moral depravity seemed to imperil the very foundations of society: enclaves of sexual deviates were perceived as a symptom of the ills of modernity (see Figures 18, 28, 35). This outlook found expression in cartoons harkening back to a healthier past with a "Then and Now" schema (Figure 29; see also Figure 5). In a remarkable number of instances, General Kuno von Moltke was derisively contrasted with military heroes of the nation's glorious past: Siegfried (Figure 16); Field Marshall G. L. von Blücher, who had vanquished Napoleon (Figure 30); and his namesake, General Helmuth von Moltke, the victorious commander in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 (Figure 31).

The overwhelming prevalence of military themes in the cartoons mirrors both the imperial preoccupations of the era and the concern that the army was extremely susceptible to corruption. Officers quite routinely subjected enlisted men to extreme abuse of various sorts. Extended into the sexual sphere, however, abuse not only undermined the status of rank but also sexualized the military, thus violating a major taboo (see Figures 32 and 33). Soldiers functioned as a particular variant of the national symbol, and although their uniforms were actually designed with aesthetic criteria in mind—and thus fostered fetishization as disembodied male power—the stereotype of the soldier was supposed to transcend sexuality by submitting aggressiveness to discipline, reshaping it



1870: Da lebt' noch der Moltke, ein tapferer Mann, Der griff die Soldaten von vorne an. 1907: Der heutige Moltke, man hat es gehört, Der machte den Angriff immer — „verkehrt“!

**Figure 31** Postcard from the scandal era, with a caption in doggerel. 1870: Moltke lived then, a truly brave man; he always attacked head-on. 1907: Today's Moltke, from what we hear, always attacks—from the "rear"! From Linsert (1931: facing p. 474).

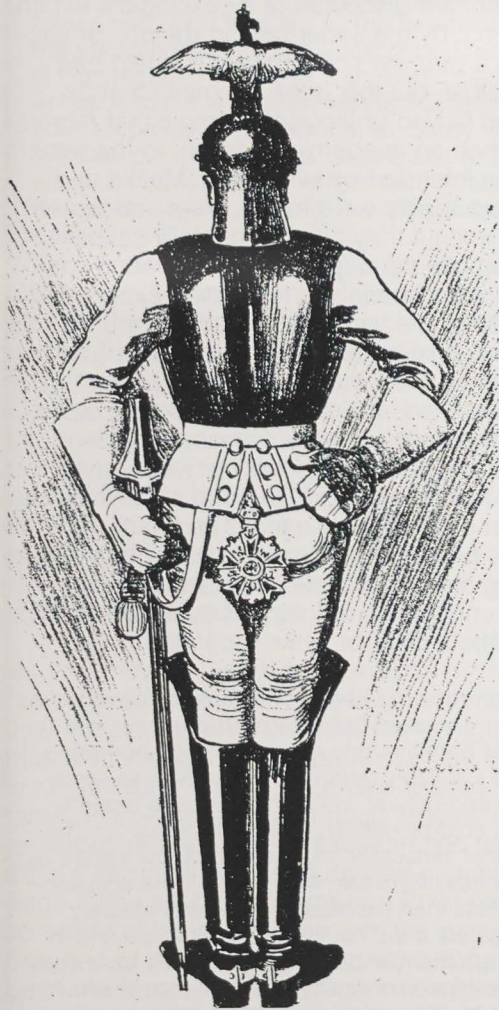
to serve the national interest (cf. Hull 1982b:297).<sup>48</sup> In this respect soldiers were not unlike criminals, and the army and the prison were perhaps the two paramount institutions for controlling and regulating the lives of the lower class (cf. Foucault 1980:17).

The years immediately prior to the Eulenburg Affair had witnessed a proliferation of discourses—journalistic exposés, novels, plays, autobiographies—suggesting that decay of the officers' code of honor and demoralization of troop discipline were undermining military preparedness (see, e.g., Bilse 1904; Hartleben 1900; Beyerlein 1914, 1915). Still, none of this had adequately prepared the nation for Harden's assertion that "entire cavalry regiments [were] infested with homosexuality."<sup>49</sup> Various Reichstag speakers rose to defend the spirit of Potsdam, but their confidence in the army was shaken by Harden's disclosure that uniformed soldiers were flagrantly prostituting themselves in certain areas of Berlin,<sup>50</sup> including the promenades of the Tiergarten (clearly discernable in Figure 19). The gravity of the situation was finally brought home when Harden revealed that the minister of police himself had been accosted while taking an evening stroll (see Figure 34).

The barrage of charges reached such intensity that the minister of war, General Karl von Einem, was compelled to deliver a rambling report to the Reichstag in which he variously asserted that there was no problem, that a problem did exist but was entirely attributable to civilian "rascals" (see Figure 19), and that the problem would be resolved by heightening disciplinary control.<sup>51</sup> Any officer guilty of homosexual conduct, he argued, dishonored himself and thereby forfeited the respect of his troops; the resulting contempt for one's superior undermined the authority of the officer corps:

That cannot and must not be. If such a man with such feelings should be lurking in the army, I command him: Resign your commission, get out, for you do not belong in our ranks! [Bravo!] If, however, he should be caught, then, gentlemen, regardless of who he may be, regardless of his post, he must be destroyed. [Bravo!] [Germany 1908a:1916]

The trials of the Eulenburg Affair were indeed conducted against a somber tattoo of resignations, suicides, and courts-martial. Ironically, as Hirschfeld noted (Hirschfeld 1908d:1–3), the publicity given these cases may have done more to erode than to restore the honor code and discipline for which the officer corps had traditionally been respected—and feared.



**Figure 32** (caption below) As we hear, the Prussian medal *pour le mérite* is to be worn thus in the future. From *Neue Glühlichter* (Vienna), vol. 10, no. 304.24 (November 20, 1907), p. [4].



Die eifersüchtige Rieck.  
 „Nee, det is meiner; da laß ick mir nich dran tippen!“  
 (Aus den „Lustigen Blättern“.)

**Figure 33** (caption above) Jealous Marie. (caption below) “No, he’s mine; get your hands off!” From *Lustige Blätter* (Berlin), vol. 22, no. 45 (November 5, 1907), p. 12.



**Figure 34** (caption above) Nightlife in Potsdam. (caption below) “Say, big fellow, want to come along?” From *Der wahre Jacob* (Stuttgart), no. 557 (November 26, 1907), p. 5616; original in color.

## Sexual Practices and Identities

Just what sort of men did the minister of war want removed from the officer corps? The answer was not nearly so straightforward as it might at first seem, for a satisfactory definition of sexual normalcy and abnormalcy was still evolving (Mosse 1982:221–246; Hull 1982a:247–268). Harden might thunder in court, “Let us draw a clear line between men like Eulenburg, Hohenau, Moltke and the men of Germany!” but the precise border seemed elusive to many.<sup>52</sup> The scandal contributed enormously to legitimating the embryonic discipline of sexology (cf. Stöcker 1908:285–288), which accounts for the grudging respect accorded Dr. Hirschfeld; not coincidentally, he founded the *Journal of Sexology* in 1908. As he noted, the very word “homosexuality” was either lacking in standard dictionaries or was hastily included in the latest editions; it had been coined in 1869 and, until the Eulenburg Affair, belonged exclusively to the parlance of forensic medicine. Throughout the trials, he complained, the term was continually confused with “pederasty” (which entailed two taboos, same-sex and transgenerational relations), “unnatural vice” (the acts criminalized by Paragraph 175), and a host of pungent colloquialisms (Hirschfeld 1908d:1–3).

In the first trial of the scandal, it will be recalled, Hirschfeld had argued—and the judge had agreed—that Moltke was neither a pederast nor a felon but instead a homosexual, i.e., an effeminate man, a person who confounded sex-role stereotypes by virtue of his emotionality, passivity, artistic temperament, emotional attachment to men, and so on. By demonstrating the existence of a sexual deviance that did not necessarily find expression in sexual behavior, Hirschfeld naively hoped to advance the cause of enlightened tolerance, but the court’s verdict had precisely the opposite effect. While the distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality was new and arcane, a clear boundary between masculinity and femininity had been established in the nineteenth century, and public consternation over the violation of the latter norm was far more severe than Hirschfeld had anticipated. In an era that was obsessed with the imperialist projection of such masculine traits as strength, courage, hardness, and military aggressiveness, the violation or nonviolation of Paragraph 175 became a secondary concern, while homosexuality—understood as male effeminacy—became a potent metaphor in political discourse (cf. Hull 1982b:133–136, 145, 296–297). This, of course, is why Harden had been able to exploit the issue in the first place, and why he produced evidence of Eulenburg’s misconduct only when his hand was forced. Harden’s final revelations rendered moot the distinction, so painstakingly constructed by Hirschfeld, between sexual orientation and conduct.

The dispassionate discourse of a sexological expert was drowned out by the saber-rattling rhetoric of sexual politics on a grander scale than Hirschfeld had imagined possible, but this does not mean that his standpoint was flawed or illogical—simply that more was at stake than an academic question. In the rather abstruse sense intended by Hirschfeld, Moltke and Eulenburg undoubtedly were homosexual and would have been so even if they had been totally sexually abstinent. In private correspondence, Eulenburg described himself as combining “feminine feeling with masculine activity”; he was proud, perhaps inordinately so, of his artistic “sensibility and finer organization,” precisely the traits that appealed to Kaiser Wilhelm.<sup>53</sup> Moltke, too, was characterized by a close friend as deficient in the “dash,” “masculinity,” and “toughness” of the kaiser’s other military advisers,<sup>54</sup> but neither he nor Eulenburg thought of himself as a homosexual. In a remarkably candid and revealing letter to Moltke (July 10, 1907), written prior to the first trial, Eulenburg struggled to defend his admittedly old-fashioned conception of their affinity against the new-fangled label:

At the moment when the freshest example of the modern age, a Harden, criticized our nature, stripped our ideal friendship, laid bare the form of our thinking and feeling which we had justifiably regarded all our lives as something obvious and natural, in that moment, the modern age, laughing cold-bloodedly, broke our necks. . . . The new concepts of sensuality and love stamp our nature as weak, even unhealthily weak. And yet we were also sensual, not any less than the moderns. But this area lay strictly segregated; it did not impose itself as an end in itself. Family, art, friendship, and all our ideals were completely divorced from sensuality and from that which we regarded only as dirt, even if it might have ruled us here or there in those unconscious reciprocal effects which characterize “mankind.” [quoted in Hull 1982c:199]

It would be all too pat to interpret the terms “ideal friendship” or “art” as mere euphemisms for homosexuality; in fact, the code word here is “dirt.” This letter suggests that these two aristocrats—and others of their estate—made a clean break between homosexual and what might be termed homosocial relations, strictly confining the former to contacts with members of the lower class and cultivating the latter with like-minded peers. They did not identify themselves as homosexuals because their occasional sexual escapades played at most a subordinate role in their lives.

When Eulenburg, trained as a lawyer, knowingly perjured himself by swearing that he had never violated Paragraph 175, he may have assuaged his conscience by reasoning that only relations in high society were at issue, and here he was no more and no less than a devoted father, husband, and friend. He was not dissembling when he swore in court:<sup>55</sup>

In my youth I was an enthusiastic friend. I am proud of having had good friends. . . . The best thing we Germans have is friendship, and loyal friendship has always stood in high regard. I have had enthusiastic friendships, I have written letters that overflow with enthusiastic feelings, and I don't reproach myself for it at all. Surely we know the letters of our great heroes, Goethe and so on, which are effusive. I have certainly written such letters too, but there was never anything wicked, evil, filthy in them.

When Hirschfeld remarked that the language of Goethe's era was no longer appropriate "in our technical and military age,"<sup>56</sup> Eulenburg once again defended his ideal vision of friendship against sexual inferences in emphatic terms: "This is a slam at German friendship, it's a poison that's being trickled into friendship, no one is safe, that is a betrayal of Germany!" (quoted in Hirschfeld 1908d:24). And, indeed, Hirschfeld may have underestimated the extent to which forms of expression regarded as outmoded by the middle class were perpetuated by the aristocracy, whose very station in life derived from and was legitimated by tradition.

If class distinctions were so central in Eulenburg's life that they allowed him to trivialize his felonies as mere peccadilloes and to resist the homosexual label, they likewise allowed Jakob Ernst to regard his extramarital intimacies as a separate sphere that did not impinge on his identity as a God-fearing, Bavarian family man—blessed with good fortune, thanks to the generous prince. Harden's researches revealed that Ernst's liaison with Eulenburg was common knowledge in the village of Starnberg. Ernst had long been so proud of his association with the prince that he bragged of it to his neighbors, who appear to have been more awed than outraged: no one had ever brought the affair to the attention of the district attorney. Ernst's court confession was highly revealing:

If I have to say it: what people say is true. What it's called I don't know. He taught it to me. Having fun. Fooling around. I don't know of no real name for it. When we went rowing we just did it in the boat. He started it. How would I have ever dared! With such a fine gentleman! And I didn't know anything about it. First he asked me if I had a girlfriend. Then it went on from there. [Harden 1913:258]

It proved easier to extract a confession from Ernst than from Eulenburg, for the simple farmer was eager to oblige the court—just as he had proved willing to oblige "a fine gentleman." And, unlike the prince, he had never cultivated a secret life.

Homosexual relations with the lower orders may have been regarded by the noblemen involved as an "obvious and natural" prerogative, but this outlook was anathema to the middle class, which—as Foucault has noted—supplanted the aristocratic focus on blood with the bourgeois focus on sex, ge-

nealogy with morality (Foucault 1978:124). The German bourgeoisie had touted its moral superiority to the frivolity and cavalier licentiousness of the aristocracy beginning in the eighteenth century, and during the nineteenth it extended its condemnation to the moral turpitude of the proletariat.<sup>57</sup> By exposing sexual liaisons between officers and enlisted men, a prince and a farmer, middle-class journalists suggested that two of the three pillars of society were shot through with moral rot and could precipitate national collapse.<sup>58</sup> One liberal, middle-class delegate to the Reichstag proclaimed the scandal a portent of a relapse into barbarism; homosexuality was a contagion that could attain epidemic proportions and wipe out culture.<sup>59</sup> His relatively enlightened standpoint was evident in his use of the medical model, describing homosexuality as a sickness rather than a sin (see Bullough 1976:161–172).

If homosexuality came to be regarded as perilous because it crossed class lines, it also came to be seen as traitorous because it crossed national frontiers. Eulenburg's French connection confirmed for Harden Bismarck's dire warning that the *cinaedi* constituted an international association in much the same way as the socialists—those "fellows without a fatherland." The homosexuals' secret "lodge," Harden asserted, was stronger than freemasonry and leaped over "the walls of creed, nation, and class" to create a "fraternity" that sneeringly regarded "normals as a lower form of life. . . . It is a different world than ours, with a different moral code, a different set of values." Since homosexuals regarded heterosexuals as "the common enemy" and were seeking "gradually [to] emasculate our courageous master race before the nation notices what is happening," Harden called for a "fight to the death" with this "powerful group." Eulenburg seemed to personify the danger: he was "the *amoureuse* who has toyed with scepters and thrashed in lustful ecstasy on the sweaty sheets of his coachman" (Harden 1913:182–183, 244, 248, 278).<sup>60</sup>

Harden's mordant attacks on Eulenburg are particularly noteworthy because they signaled a complete about-face. In 1898, Harden had become the first German editor to support the campaign for homosexual emancipation led by Hirschfeld. Articles by Harden, Hirschfeld, and others in *Die Zukunft* had called for the repeal of Paragraph 175 and for greater tolerance toward these "martyrs of a misguided sexual drive" who deserved "neither punishment nor contempt" (Harden 1905:314). He claimed that the flood of hate mail he had received during the Eulenburg Affair from homosexuals in all walks of life had convinced him that this tolerance was entirely misplaced, and his change of outlook matched a broader shift in middle-class attitudes toward homosexuality and sexuality in general. At the beginning of the scandal,

Hirschfeld noted with dismay that the most vehement spokesmen of "the antihomosexual movement" came precisely from "the educated middle class" (Hirschfeld 1908d:6), and he thanked the German working class and the socialist delegates in the Reichstag for their continued support of the campaign to repeal Paragraph 175. By the scandal's end, however, the "psychic epidemic" of homophobia had spread even to the far left (Hirschfeld 1907d:242; 1909:20). It remained for the right-wing fanatic, Dr. Wilhelm Hentschel, to proclaim that the Eulenburg Affair had been beneficial if it had driven homosexuals to poverty and to suicide, and to describe the extermination of all homosexuals a desideratum of German society (Hentschel, 1909:93).

The scandal not only scuttled the campaign to repeal Paragraph 175, but led to far harsher enforcement of the law and efforts to strengthen and extend it.<sup>61</sup> Whereas the existing statute punished homosexual acts only between men, a motion introduced by the Catholic Center party sought to align Paragraph 175 with the corresponding Austrian law, which included lesbians (see Figure 35) (see Kokula

**Figure 35** (caption above) Spring Excursion of a Berlin Ladies' Club. (caption below) "Never, my sweet, will a man break up our love." "Never, dearheart!—Unless it's a policeman." From *Simplicissimus* (Munich), vol. 14, no. 7 (May 17, 1909), p. 106; original in color.



**Figure 36** (caption above) Berlin Election Campaign. (caption below) A hotly contested race is taking shape in the red-light district around Tautzienstrasse, where the woman candidate is being challenged by agitators in the cocaine-infested homosexual bars. From *Simplicissimus*; here reproduced from Linsert (1931: facing p. 152).

1981:30–31, 248ff). With the imprisonment of Adolf Brand and the discrediting of Hirschfeld as a "monomaniac" who was lucky "not to be tarred and feathered" (Hirschfeld 1907d:231; 1908b: 650–651), the homosexual emancipation movement entered a period of enforced quiescence from which it would not recover until after the kaiser's abdication in 1918. The women's movement was also profoundly affected by the moral purity campaign advanced with evangelical fervor in the wake of the Eulenburg Affair. In 1908, a change of leadership in the League of German Women's Organizations replaced its progressive program of sexual self-determination with a racist and nationalist interpretation of women's sexuality that sought to increase the German birthrate (see Evans 1976:156). Those few homosexuals and feminists who continued to agitate for sexual emancipation were mocked in strikingly similar imagery (see Figures 36 and 37).



## Neue Ziele in der Frauenbewegung



„Meine Damen! Die Emanzipation des Mannes können wir nur auf eine Weise wirksam und erfolgreich bekämpfen — indem wir diese „Querschnittler“ einfach niederhauen.“

**Figure 37** (caption above) New Goals in the Women's Movement. (caption below) "Ladies! We can struggle effectively and successfully against the emancipation of men in one way only: by simply gunning the bastards down." From *Simplicissimus* (Munich), vol. 15, no. 46 (February 3, 1911), p. 765; original in color.

Repugnance at the inversion of traditional sex roles was particularly evident in the frequent use of animal and excremental metaphors for homosexuality in both the discourses and the cartoons occasioned by the scandal. This radically dehumanizing rhetoric reached a high point when one liberal Reichstag delegate, Dr. Siegfried Heckscher, declared that "homosexuality is dog morality," a slogan that was universally quoted and elaborated upon in the German press (see note 59). Eulenburg himself added ammunition to the antihomosexual arsenal when he swore that he had never engaged in "swinish" or "filthy" conduct,<sup>62</sup> but the impetus had actually been given on the first day of the first trial, when Lily von Elbe offered the shocking testimony that her ex-husband had called women "toilets" and termed marriage "a swinish institution."<sup>63</sup> Outraged, the virtually universal defenders of womanhood and family life responded in kind, and even the restrained *Vossische Zeitung*, the Berlin newspaper of record, rose to the occasion by coining the epithet "*cloaca maxima*" for Hirschfeld, slyly parodying the sexologist's Latinate neologisms.<sup>64</sup>

Dozens of cartoons employed dogs (see Figure 15), pigs (see Figures 8, 26), and excrement (see Figures 3, 8, 9, 15), and an unusual degree of inventiveness must be granted to the artist who actually depicted a *Schweinehund* (pig-dog), the beast often invoked but never seen in German-speaking lands (see Figure 11). Such a monster would obviously have to be the offspring of an unnatural pairing, and this too was portrayed (see Figure 38). The use of animal and excremental motifs was by no means limited to German cartoons: one from France features a pig-faced man (see Figure 25), effectively completing the transformation of human into subhuman. While well known in the history of racism, this phenomenon has an additional dimension in connection with homosexuality: the term "sodomy" has comprised both bestiality and homosexuality throughout the history of Christian Europe. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, sodomy was further so closely linked with heresy and witchcraft that at times the terms were virtually synonymous; by equating homosexuality with treason, Harden was merely updating this legacy (see Bray 1982:19–21). These animal images are in-

**Figure 38** (caption above) Head to Head. (caption below) "My sweetheart, my loverboy, my one and only cuddly-bear." From *Lustige Blätter* (Berlin), vol. 22, no. 45 (November 5, 1907), p. 9.



## Paragraph 175.



— Ich fürchte sehr, meine Frau, die ich seit Jahren vernachlässige, hält mich auch für homosexuell . . .  
 — Aber, Herr Kollege, in Ihren Jahren glaubt man schon an natürliche Ursachen . . .

**Figure 39** (caption above) Paragraph 175. (caption below) "I'm quite afraid that my wife, whom I've been neglecting for years, may now regard me as homosexual. . . ." "Come, come, old chap, in a man of your age it will be attributed to natural causes." From *Wiener Caricaturen* (Vienna), vol. 27, no. 44 (November 3, 1907), p. 8.

vested with a profoundly atavistic quality that may disclose a psychological fear of magical destruction of the body image; if so, such anxieties could only have been aggravated by Harden's revelation that Eulenburg dabbled in the occult (see Röhl 1976:47–52).

By describing and depicting homosexuality as unnatural, subhuman, animalistic—in short, as the radical Other—defenders of the status quo were striving to counteract the scandal's deleterious effects, not merely on the national image, but also on the sexual awareness and potential conduct of the German people. Commentators repeatedly lamented the loss of innocence precipitated by unprecedented discussion of sexual matters. The cartoons themselves offered something qualitatively new: the first depictions in public circulation of homosexuals.<sup>65</sup> Lily von Elbe spoke for many when she testified that she had not suspected her then husband of homosexuality because its very existence had been unknown to her, and one editorialist contrasted the small "circle of *cognoscenti*" with "the vast majority of people who heretofore knew nothing of all this."<sup>66</sup> Even Ernst confessed that he knew "no real name" for "it." With the courtroom extraction of sexual truths and the virtually unimpeded flow of journalistic reportage (see Figure



**Figure 40** (caption above) Stimulus. (caption below) Father: "The beauty of the male figure far surpasses that of the female." Daughter: "What, papa, you too?" From *Schalk* (Leipzig), November 1907.

21), newspapers began to take on a pornographic quality. Smut had been defined by a Reichstag commission in 1904 as a psychic danger to the community, certain to confuse the hearts and minds of young people and thus lead to a loss of idealism and to moral decay (Germany 1904:2308–2309). When a Reichstag delegate complained that one could no longer leave a newspaper lying where it could be found by children,<sup>67</sup> one paper protested that it was sadly compelled to print the news and helpfully suggested that family fathers simply remove the offensive pages.<sup>68</sup>

It is fair to say that, for at least a few months, the Eulenburg Affair brought homosexuality to the forefront of national discussion, prompting individuals to reflect on themselves and others in light of new knowledge. In one of his numerous case studies, Hirschfeld reported on a woman who correctly surmised her husband's homosexual orientation after reading about Moltke's marriage (Hirschfeld 1908d:22–23), and this sort of family crisis also found its way into cartoons (see Figure 39). Attitudes and forms of behavior that had earlier been quite acceptable now became suspect (see Figure 40), and parents were reluctant to allow their sons to enter the military or even to move from the country to the city

Am Land.



Mutter (weinend): Pflüt Gott, Leni, dir kann ja nix g'scheh'n, bleib' nur g'sund. Aber du, Franzl, gib schö' acht, daß d' der Versuchung in der Großstadt widersteht!

**Figure 41** (caption above) In the Country. (caption below) Mother (weeping): "Farewell, Leni, nothing can happen to you, just be well. But you, Franz, watch out that you withstand temptation in the big city." From *Der Floh* (Vienna), undated special issue on Paragraph 175 (ca. November 1907), p. 8.

(see Figure 41).<sup>69</sup> One Reichstag delegate expressed the most deep-seated fear when he argued:<sup>70</sup>

There can be no doubt that many hundreds and thousands of people who earlier hadn't the foggiest notion of the things now being discussed in public will, after having been enlightened about these things, be tempted to try them out with their own bodies.

With rare directness, this politician's remark points to what Foucault has described as the nub of sexual politics: "the fact that sex is located at the point of intersection of the discipline of the body and the control of the population" (Foucault 1980:125).

The biopolitical aim of the cartoons—as of the discourses that linked homosexuality with treason and the heightened enforcement of Paragraph 175—was the total suppression of homosexuality. But, paradoxically, these images, discourses, and practices may well have incited many individuals to follow through on desires they had heretofore ignored or suppressed; indeed, desire itself may have been created. And, for others who had led double lives up to this point, the scandal led to a new possibility for conceptualizing their secret vices and arriving at a fundamentally new identity. If this be true, then Hirschfeld

was simply wrong when he claimed that homosexuality was no more widespread in the present than in the past. Thus, the effect of the Eulenburg Affair was not exclusively repressive; despite its role in the outbreak of World War I, despite the campaign for moral rearmament, the anti-Semitic undertones, the heightening of military discipline, the concern about decadence, and the exhortations of middle-class morality, a subtle dialectic was at work tending to proliferate sexual practices and identities.

## Acknowledgment

Early versions of this essay were presented at the Wilde '82 conference in Toronto on June 30, 1982, and at the Social Science History Association convention in Bloomington on November 12, 1982; I would like to thank James Fraser, Alan Miller, and Allan Megill for arranging critical forums. The essay also benefited from suggestions by Jess Anderson, Isabel Hull, Jim Jones, Nancy Kaiser, Biddy Martin, George Mosse, Yvonne Ozello, John Tallman, and Sally Winkle. Manfred Herzer, Hans-Günter Klein, and Fred Sommer helped locate cartoons in West Berlin and Vienna. Finally, research was aided by a grant from the Universität Bremen, for which I am indebted to Professor Rüdiger Lautmann.

## Notes

- 1 In a speech on November 28, 1907, by Chancellor Bülow (Germany 1908a:1880).
- 2 Harden never fully disclosed the evidence he could bring to bear in order to force "a change of imperial personnel," but in a letter to Friedrich von Holstein dated November 15, 1908, he broadly hinted that his "trump" was Jakob Ernst, who later figured so prominently in the Eulenburg perjury trial (see Holstein 1963:no. 1151). In a part of this letter inexplicably omitted by the editors of *The Holstein Papers*, Harden also linked the kaiser with Eulenburg's private secretary and masseur, Karl Kistler; this passage appears in Hull 1982b:141. This evidence has been summarized and discussed in Röhl 1982:48.
- 3 Thus Germany has produced a monograph on the *Daily Telegraph* scandal, but none on the Eulenburg scandal (cf. Schüssler 1952).
- 4 In a letter dated September 8, 1927, to Fritz-Wend Prince zu Eulenburg, quoted in Röhl 1976:46.
- 5 Particular importance attaches to these ephemera because of enormous gaps in the documentary record. Eulenburg and others implicated in the scandal assiduously burned personal correspondence that might be subpoenaed, and all the evidentiary material collected during the course of his perjury trial was mysteriously destroyed by the Prussian Ministry of Justice in 1932 (Röhl 1976:35).
- 6 These political cartoons generally appeared not in the daily newspapers themselves but in separate, profusely illustrated weekly or biweekly periodicals ("Witzblätter"), of which some were autonomous (*Die Jugend* and *Simplicissimus*, for example) while others were editorially controlled by newspaper publishers (such as *Kladderadatsch*, published by Rudolf Mosse, or *Der wahre Jacob*, published by the Social Democratic party).
- 7 This remark was attributed to Wilhelm von Liebenau by Herbert von Bismarck in a letter dated October 5, 1888, to his father, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck (Bismarck 1964:523).
- 8 This epithet is attributed to Wilhelm II himself, in a conversation on January 1, 1889, with his tutor, Georg Ernst Hinzpeter (quoted by Hull 1982c:202).
- 9 Bismarck's comments are reconstructed in Harden 1913:173. For other comments on homosexuality by the Iron Chancellor, see Bismarck 1968:19–20.
- 10 This remark is attributed to the English diplomat Gosselin in 1895 (Röhl 1982:37).
- 11 Charlotte Princess von Sachsen-Meiningen is included in a list of Eulenburg's enemies in Weller 1970:179. Harden tried without success to summon Charlotte as a witness in the second *Moltke v. Harden* trial, claiming that she had spoken privately of Eulenburg's homosexuality (*Vossische Zeitung*, December 23, 1907, evening ed., no. 600, p. 3; December 27, 1907, evening ed., no. 604, p. 3). She declined to return from the Riviera to Berlin and had her courier express astonishment that her name had been dragged into the affair.
- 12 This remark was attributed to Edgard Count von Wedel, chamberlain of Wilhelm II, in a diary entry dated June 17, 1907, by Hans von Tresckow, head of the Berlin vice squad. See Tresckow 1922:183; Wedel's homosexuality is discussed on pp. 142–143 of the same work.
- 13 On the role of Jews in German journalism, see Pulzer 1964:13. On Harden's use of the term "effectiveness," see Young 1959:104.
- 14 At the opening session of the first *Moltke v. Harden* trial, Harden briefly described his career and criminal record: he had twice served six-month jail sentences for *lèse majesté* (*Vossische Zeitung*, October 23, 1907, evening ed., no. 498, p. 2).
- 15 On Harden's use of the name Tütü, see Young 1959:89. In the first *Moltke v. Harden* trial, Moltke testified that Tütü had been his nursery nickname and was still used by two of his sisters (*Vossische Zeitung*, October 23, 1907, evening ed., no. 498, p. 3).
- 16 One instance of the word "sweet" denoting homosexuals is Linden 1909. Note also that when Harden was convicted of libel in his second trial against Moltke, the court's decision was based in part on his use of "der Süsse" for Moltke. This epithet, taken together with his use of the word "warm," was interpreted by the court as synonymous with "homosexual" in the vernacular (*Vossische Zeitung*, January 4, 1908, morning ed., no. 5, 1. Beilage, p. 3).
- 17 The dialogue is amusingly cast in the form of a travesty of the "Nacht. Offen Feld" scene of Goethe's *Faust*.
- 18 This piece originally appeared as a newspaper article in 1907 and was reprinted as a pamphlet in 1914.
- 19 On the events leading up to the selection of the crown prince to inform the kaiser, see Hirschfeld 1907a.
- 20 On the list of homosexuals kept by the Berlin police, see Tresckow 1922:164–165.
- 21 This account of the first day of the trial is based on the reports in the *Vossische Zeitung*, October 23, 1907, evening ed., no. 498, pp. 2–3, October 24, 1907, morning ed., no. 499, 5. Beilage, p. 1.
- 22 *Vossische Zeitung*, October 24, 1907, evening ed., no. 500, pp. 2–3.
- 23 *Vossische Zeitung*, October 25, 1907, evening ed., no. 502, p. 3. Hirschfeld's testimony also appears in Hirschfeld 1907b:213–214.
- 24 It might well be argued that the judiciary was in no position to act on its own initiative, i.e., without instructions from the kaiser or the chancellor. Still, Harden himself attributed the change in his fortunes in part to the machinations of the judiciary; see his correspondence in Holstein 1963:nos. 1060, 1061, 1063, 1065, 1066.
- 25 On the differences between Hirschfeld and Brand, see Hohmann 1981:309–344.
- 26 *Vossische Zeitung*, November 6, 1907, evening ed., no. 522, pp. 2–4, and November 7, 1907, morning ed., no. 523, 5. Beilage, p. 1. Years after he had served his libel sentence, Brand bitterly maintained the truth of his original allegations and moreover added the charge that Bülow had more recently had a sexual affair with the pianist Karl Tausig; see the review of Bülow's memoirs, Brand 1930:49–52.
- 27 *Vossische Zeitung*, November 6, 1907, evening ed., no. 522, p. 3.
- 28 Since the assertion that Hirschfeld may have perjured himself is a serious charge, an aside is in order. Brand testified that he had learned of Bülow's homosexuality from (among others) Joachim Gehlsen, the editor of *Die Reichsglocke*, who in turn testified that his source was Hirschfeld. Hirschfeld argued that, while he had informed Gehlsen of various cases of homosexual blackmail—as he would inform any journalist—the question of Bülow's sexual orientation had never come up. A few weeks later, Hirschfeld pressed

- charges of slander and blackmail against Gehlsen. The case, however, was never tried because of Gehlsen's unexpected and premature death. It seems likely that Gehlsen sought to blackmail Hirschfeld by threatening to expose his perjury. For Hirschfeld's side of the dispute, see Hirschfeld 1907d:232–237; 1908d:17–20; and 1913:863–864.
- 29** Although the trial was conducted in closed session, testimony routinely appeared verbatim in the newspapers. See the *Vossische Zeitung*, from December 20, 1907, morning ed., no. 595 through January 4, 1908, morning ed., no. 5.
- 30** On the court-martial of Hohenau and Lynar, see the *Vossische Zeitung*, January 22–24, 1908.
- 31** Since the perjury trial of Eulenburg was never concluded, this judgment may seem unduly harsh. It is indeed possible that Eulenburg never violated Paragraph 175, as he claimed. Since the law penalized "unnatural vice" and this vague phrase was generally construed by the courts to apply only to anal intercourse, Eulenburg may have been technically innocent of violating the law by virtue of having engaged only in other sexual practices. Indeed, this is apparently why Hohenau was acquitted in his court-martial. But Eulenburg had blundered by testifying that he had never engaged in any "filth" whatsoever, for this word was interpreted by the state prosecutor to include the full range of homosexual practices. Newspapers avoided going into detail on this aspect of Eulenburg's perjury trial, although it occupied the lawyers for days. For a singularly explicit treatment of these and related issues, see Casper 1907.
- 32** The suggestion was made by Axel von Varnbüler; see Röhl 1976:42.
- 33** This lack of interest is suggested by the rapid decline in the number of political cartoons elicited by the various trials.
- 34** The Social Democratic concern about a possible double standard was revealed in print, in Reichstag speeches, and in cartoons. See August Bebel's Reichstag speech in Germany 1908a:1907–1910; Mehring 1907:145–148; and the cartoon on the double standard in *Der wahre Jacob*, no. 570 (May 26, 1908), p. 583.
- 35** *Vossische Zeitung*, July 7, 1908, evening ed., no. 314, p. 3.
- 36** On the keyhole incident, see *Vossische Zeitung*, July 11, 1908, morning ed., no. 321, 1. Beilage, p. 2.
- 37** This is in an unpublished letter dated April 5, 1909 to Albert Ballin (quoted by Röhl 1976:44).
- 38** Harden made this statement in a conversation with Magnus Hirschfeld (see Weller 1970:161).
- 39** *Vossische Zeitung*, October 27, 1907, morning ed., no. 505, p. 1.
- 40** Ernst Bassermann, delegate of the National Liberal party, on November 18, 1907 (in Germany 1908a:1889).
- 41** See the French and Italian cartoons reproduced in Hirschfeld 1930:275, 279, 299.
- 42** This parallel is shown with remarkable clarity in two Social Democratic cartoons—one from 1907, the other from 1931—reproduced in Eissler 1980:45 and 109. On Hitler's awareness of the parallel, see Wagener 1978:200. For Hirschfeld's standpoint, see his last published article, Hirschfeld 1934.
- 43** For a summary of the discussion of Goethe in volumes two through nine of the *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, which Hirschfeld edited, see Birnbaum 1908:179–181; see also Katte 1908:445–447.
- 44** See, for example, the Reichstag speech on November 28, 1907, by Wilhelm August Otto Varenhorst of the Deutsche Reichspartei (in Germany 1908a:1889).
- 45** See, for example, Otto Glagau's remarks in *Die Gartenlaube* in 1876 (as quoted in Pulzer 1964:89).
- 46** Hirschfeld thus paraphrases an editorial entitled "Rattenkönig" from the July 3, 1908, issue of *März* (Hirschfeld 1908c:512).
- 47** Stöcker's March 3, 1906, speech appears in Germany 1906:1712.
- 48** For some early documentation on uniform fetishism, see Symonds 1896:285–304, an excursus that was omitted from all subsequent English editions of *Sexual Inversion*; and Ulrichs 1898c:48; 1898b:47–48; 1898a:101–103.
- 49** *Vossische Zeitung*, October 27, 1907, morning ed., no. 505, 13. Beilage, p. 4.
- 50** *Ibid.* What Harden deposed on October 27 had already been entered in H. von Tresckow's diary on September 3 (see Tresckow 1922:185).
- 51** His speech of November 19, 1907, appears in Germany 1908a:1913ff.
- 52** *Vossische Zeitung*, October 26, 1907, evening ed., no. 504, p. 3.
- 53** In a letter dated September 17, 1904, to Nathaniel Rothschild (quoted in Röhl 1976:37).
- 54** In a letter by Axel von Varnbüler dated April 15, 1898 (quoted in Röhl 1976:40).
- 55** *Vossische Zeitung*, November 6, 1907, evening ed., no. 522, p. 2.
- 56** *Vossische Zeitung*, December 31, 1907, morning ed., no. 609, 1. Beilage, p. 2.
- 57** Isabel V. Hull is presently researching social class and the political use of sex in Germany, 1780–1870. For a useful contribution, see Holub 1981.
- 58** See the treatment of the views of Friedrich von Bodelschwingh in Hull 1982a:252–253.
- 59** Dr. Siegfried Heckscher, a Reichstag delegate of the Freisinnige Vereinigung, made these points in an article in the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, October 31, 1907. The article is reprinted in its entirety in the more accessible *Sexualreform* (cf. Heckscher 1907).
- 60** The German for "master race" is "Herrenvolk"; Harden (1913) also speaks of homosexuality as a "danger to the race" ("Rassengefahr") on p. 183.
- 61** The number of convictions under the same-sex provisions of Paragraph 175 (for the law also penalized bestiality) increased nearly fifty percent in the wake of the Eulenburg scandal. In the five-year span 1903–1907, the annual average was 363 convictions; the average rose to 542 in the years 1909–1913. In 1908, the number dropped to 282, a decrease that Magnus Hirschfeld may have accounted for when he noted that homosexuals were probably especially cautious during the height of the scandal (Hirschfeld 1908a:53). The statistics are extracted from Klare 1937:144–145.
- 62** *Vossische Zeitung*, November 6, 1907, evening ed., no. 522, p. 3.
- 63** *Vossische Zeitung*, October 23, 1907, evening ed., no. 498, p. 3.
- 64** *Vossische Zeitung*, December 24, 1907, morning ed., no. 601, 1. Beilage, p. 3.
- 65** This point was first made by Grand-Carteret 1908:59. There were earlier images of homosexuals, but these high-art images were highly restricted in circulation; see Beurdeley 1978 for a representative collection. Other early images, such as the broadsides on executions of sodomites, were more widely distributed but usually lacked any specifically homosexual quality; see, for example, Bray 1982:15, 94–95.
- 66** *Vossische Zeitung*, October 27, 1907, morning ed., no. 505, p. 1.
- 67** National Liberal delegate Ernst Bassermann, in a speech on November 28, 1907 (in Germany 1908a:1890).
- 68** *Vossische Zeitung*, October 27, 1907, morning ed., no. 505, p. 1.
- 69** The argument concerning the military was made by Center party delegate Peter Spahn in a Reichstag speech on November 18, 1907 (Germany 1908a:1875).
- 70** In a Reichstag speech on February 20, 1908, by W. A. O. Varenhorst (Germany 1908b:3299).

## References

- Baumont, Maurice
  - 1933 *L'Affaire Eulenburg et les origines de la Guerre Mondiale*. Paris: Payot. 2d rev. ed., Geneva: Edito-Service, 1973.
- Balfour, Michael
  - 1964 *The Kaiser and His Times*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Beurdeley, Cecile
  - 1978 *L'Amour bleu*. Michael Taylor, tr. New York: Rizzoli.
- Beyerlein, Franz Adam
  - 1914 "Jena" or "Sedan"? New York: George H. Doran. Orig. ed., 1903.
  - 1915 *Taps*. Charles Swickard, tr. Boston: John W. Luce. Orig. ed., 1903.
- Bilse, Lt. Fritz Oswald
  - 1904 *Life in a Garrison Town*. New York and London: John Lane, The Bodley Head. Orig. ed., 1903.
- Birnbaum, Max
  - 1908 *Notizen aus Goethes Werken über Homosexualität*. Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft 1:179–181.
- Bismarck, Herbert von
  - 1964 *Staatssekretär Herbert von Bismarck: Aus seiner politischen Privatkorrespondenz*. Walter Bussmann and Klaus-Peter Hoepke, eds. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Bismarck, Otto von
  - 1968 *Reflections and Reminiscences*. Theodore S. Hamerow, ed. New York: Harper & Row.
- Blümner, Rudolf
  - 1910 *L'Amour à l'allemande*. *Der Sturm* 10:179–180.
- Brand, Adolf
  - 1930 *Tante Reichskanzler*. *Eros* 2:49–52.
  - 1975 §175. In *Documents of the Homosexual Rights Movement in Germany, 1836–1927*. New York: Arno. Orig. ed., 1907.
- Bray, Alan
  - 1982 *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*. London: Gay Men's Press.
- Bullough, Vern L.
  - 1976 *Homosexuality and the Medical Model*. In *Sex, Society, and History*. Pp. 161–172. New York: Science History Publications.
- Casper, J. L.
  - 1907 *Das Treiben der Homosexuellen: Volle Aufklärung zum Verständnis der Andeutungen und "halben Worte" im Moltke-Harden Prozess*. Leipzig: Leipziger Verlag.
- Cole, Terence F.
  - 1982 *The Daily Telegraph Affair and Its Aftermath*. In *Kaiser Wilhelm II: New Interpretations*. John C. G. Röhl and Nicolaus Sombart, eds. Pp. 249–268. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Czernin von und zu Chudenitz, Ottokar
  - 1919 *In the World War*. London and New York: Cassell.
- Eissler, W. U.
  - 1980 *Arbeiterparteien und Homosexuellenfrage: Zur Sexualpolitik von SPD und KPD in der Weimarer Republik*. West Berlin: Verlag rosa Winkel.
- Eulenburg, Philipp zu
  - 1931 *Mit dem Kaiser als Staatsmann und Freund auf Nordlandreisen*, Vol. 2. Dresden: Carl Reissner.
- Evans, Richard J.
  - 1976 *The Feminist Movement in Germany, 1894–1933*. London and Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Foucault, Michel
  - 1978 *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1: *An Introduction*. Robert Hurley, tr. New York: Pantheon.
  - 1980 *Power/Knowledge*. Colin Gordon, ed. New York: Pantheon.
- Frank, Walter
  - 1942 *Höre Israel*. Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt.
- Germany (government)
  - 1904 *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, Vol. 208. Anlageband.
  - 1906 *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, Vol. 215. January 31–March 6, 1906.
- 1908a *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, Vol. 229. November 22, 1907–January 20, 1908.
- 1908b *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, Vol. 230. January 21–February 27, 1908.
- Grand-Carteret, John
  - 1908 *Derrière "Lui."* Paris: E. Bernard.
- Harden, Maximilian
  - 1905 *Kommerzienrath Israel*. *Die Zukunft* 53:311–315.
  - 1906a *Praeludium*. *Die Zukunft* 57:251–266.
  - 1906b *Dies irae*. *Die Zukunft* 57:287–302.
  - 1907a *Roulette*. *Die Zukunft* 59:117–130.
  - 1907b *Nur ein paar Worte*. *Die Zukunft* 59:367–374.
  - 1907c *Die Freunde*. *Die Zukunft* 59:405–425.
  - 1913 *Fürst Eulenburg*. In *Köpfe*, Vol. 3: *Prozesse*. Pp. 169–283. Berlin: Erich Reiss.
- Hartleben, Otto Erich
  - 1900 *Rosenmontag*. *Offiziers-Tragödie in fünf Akten*. Berlin: S. Fischer.
- Heckscher, Siegfried
  - 1907 §175. *Sexualreform* 2:362–364.
- Hentschel, Wilhelm
  - 1909 *Die Ursachen der Gleichgeschlechtlichkeit*. *Politisch-anthropologische Revue* 8:92–94.
- Hirschfeld, Magnus
  - 1907a *Die Hofaffäre*. *Monatsbericht des wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees* 6 (July 1):126–134.
  - 1907b *Komiteeangelegenheiten*. *Monatsbericht des wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees* 6 (November 1):209–215.
  - 1907c *Wessen Schuld? Allgemeinere Betrachtungen zum Prozess Moltke-Harden*. *Der Roland von Berlin* 5 (November 7):1519–1523.
  - 1907d *Zur Klärung*. *Monatsbericht des wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees* 6 (December 1):229–242.
  - 1908a *Materialien*. *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft* 1 (January):52–64.
  - 1908b *Jahresbericht 1906/8*. *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 9:623–663.
  - 1908c *Aus der Zeit*. *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft* 1 (August):509–512.
  - 1908d *Sexualpsychologie und Volkspsychologie: Eine epikritische Studie zum Harden-Prozess*. Leipzig: Georg H. Wigand.
  - 1909 *Einleitung und Situations-Bericht*. *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* 10:3–30.
  - 1913 §175. *Pan* 2:863–864.
  - 1930 *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges*. 2 vols. Leipzig and Vienna: Verlag für Sexualwissenschaft Schneider.
  - 1933 *Vor fünfundzwanzig Jahren*. *Freundschaft* 15:2–5.
  - 1934 *Röhm und Genossen*. *Volk*, July 17, no. 164, Beilage, p. 1.
- Hohmann, Joachim S.
  - 1981 "Der Eigene," seine Urheber und ihre Geschichte. In *Der Eigene*. J. S. Hohmann, ed. Pp. 309–344. Frankfurt and Berlin: Foerster.
- Holstein, Friedrich von
  - 1963 *The Holstein Papers*, Vol. 4: *Correspondence, 1897–1909*. Norman Rich and H. M. Fisher, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holub, Robert C.
  - 1981 *Heine's Sexual Assaults: Towards a Theory of the Total Poem*. *Monatshefte* 73:415–428.
- Hull, Isabel V.
  - 1982a *The Bourgeoisie and Its Discontents: Reflections on "Nationalism and Respectability"*. *Journal of Contemporary History* 17:247–268.
  - 1982b *The Entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1888–1918*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
  - 1982c *Kaiser Wilhelm II and the "Liebenberg Circle"*. In *Kaiser Wilhelm II: New Interpretations*. John C. G. Röhl and Nicolaus Sombart, eds. Pp. 193–220. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Igra, Samuel  
1945 *Germany's National Vice*. London: Quality.
- Institut zum Studium der Judenfrage  
1936 *Die Juden in Deutschland*. Munich: Ehler.
- Katte, Max  
1908 Schillers "Malteser"—ein homosexuelles Dramenfragment. *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft* 1:445–447.
- Katz, Jonathan  
1983 *Gay/Lesbian Almanac*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Kettle, Michael  
1977 *Salome's Last Veil: The Libel Case of the Century*. London: Granada.
- Klare, Rudolf  
1937 *Homosexualität und Strafrecht*. Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt.
- Kokula, Ilse  
1981 *Weibliche Homosexualität um 1900 in zeitgenössischen Dokumenten*. Munich: Frauenoffensive.
- Kurtz, Harold  
1970 *The Second Reich*. London: Macdonald.
- Linden, Karl Friedrich  
1909 *Die Süßen: Ein Berliner Roman*. Budapest: G. Grimm.
- Linsert, Richard  
1931 *Kabale und Liebe*. Berlin: Man.
- Mehring, Franz  
1907 *Der Prozess Moltke-Harden*. *Die neue Zeit* 26:145–148.
- Mosse, George L.  
1982 *Nationalism and Respectability: Normal and Abnormal Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century*. *Journal of Contemporary History* 17:221–246.
- Nye, Robert A.  
1982a *Degeneration and the Medical Model of Cultural Crisis in the French Belle Époque*. In *Political Symbolism in Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of George L. Mosse*. Pp. 19–41. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.  
1982b *Degeneration, Neurasthenia and the Culture of Sport in Belle Époque France*. *Journal of Contemporary History* 17:51–68.
- Pulzer, Peter G.  
1964 *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*. New York: John Wiley.
- Röhl, John C. G.  
1976 *Einleitung*. In *Philipp Eulenburgs politische Korrespondenz, Vol. 1*. Pp. 9–75. Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt.  
1982 *The Emperor's New Clothes: A Character Sketch of Wilhelm II*. In *Kaiser Wilhelm II: New Interpretations*. J. C. G. Röhl and Nicolaus Sombart, eds. Pp. 23–61. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schivelbusch, Wolfgang  
1979 *The Railroad Journey: Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Urizen.
- Schüssler, Wilhelm  
1952 *Die Daily-Telegraph-Affaire*. Göttingen: Musterschmidt.
- Stöcker, Helene  
1908 *Der Prozess Eulenburg und die Sexualwissenschaft*. *Die neue Generation* 4:285–288.
- Symonds, John Addington  
1896 *Soldatenliebe und Verwandtes*. In *Das konträre Geschlechtsgefühl*. Havelock Ellis and J. A. Symonds. Hans Kurella, tr. Pp. 285–304. Leipzig: Georg H. Wigand.
- Tresckow, Hans von  
1922 *Von Fürsten und anderen Sterblichen: Erinnerungen eines Kriminalkommissars*. Berlin: F. Fontane.
- Ulrichs, Karl Heinrich  
1898a *Ara spei*. Leipzig: Max Spohr. Orig. ed., 1864.  
1898b *Formatrix*. Leipzig: Max Spohr. Orig. ed., 1864.  
1898c *Inclusa*. Leipzig: Max Spohr. Orig. ed., 1864.
- Wagener, Otto  
1978 *Hitler aus nächster Nähe*. H. A. Turner, ed. Frankfurt: Ullstein.
- Weindel, Henri and Fischer, E. P.  
1908 *L'Homosexualité en Allemagne*. Paris: Juven.
- Weller, B. Uwe  
1970 *Maximilian Harden und die "Zukunft."* Bremen: Carl Schünemann.
- Wilhelm  
1922 *Memoirs of the Crown Prince of Germany*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Young, Harry F.  
1959 *Maximilian Harden: Censor Germaniae*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Zedlitz-Trützschler, Robert von  
1924 *Twelve Years at the Imperial German Court*. Alfred Kalisch, tr. New York: George H. Doran.

## Review Essay: Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*

Richard Dyer

Vito Russo's *The Celluloid Closet* is the first book to offer a history of how gays have been portrayed in the cinema. There have been series of articles in gay magazines presenting chronologies of gay characters in films, and two books—Parker Tyler's characteristically elusive, suggestive critical ruminations in *Screening the Sexes* (1972) and the British Film Institute publication *Gays and Film* (Dyer 1977), which raised some of the theoretical problems involved in thinking about homosexuality and film. *The Celluloid Closet* is the first survey/history book on the subject. It is clearly, fluently written, marvellously illustrated, and very informative, a more or less essential book for anyone concerned with the way that our century has constructed and inflected the notions of sexuality and homosexuality and the roles of the heterosexual and the homosexual.

Just because it is such an important book, it deserves more than the rather too easy praise it has generally received. What follows is in two sections: one, a relatively conventional "review," concerned with what the book is about and how it works as a book; the other, an attempt to draw out some of its implicit issues. In the rush to be comprehensive, Russo has never quite pulled out and fully explored many of the controlling ideas of the book. This is a pity—it makes the book look less intelligent and less political than it is. At the same time, many of these ideas seem to me to be caught at a transition point in current developments in theories of sexuality, and of gayness in particular, so that many unresolved problems remain.

*The Celluloid Closet* shares the problems of some other pioneering works dealing with the representation of social groups, such as those by Molly Haskell (1974) and Marjorie Rosen (1973) on women; Donald Bogle (1973), Thomas Cripps (1977), and Jim Pines (1975) on blacks; and Ralph and Natasha Friar on Native Americans (1972). It is not easy to write such a book, and one of the major difficulties is organization. Russo is trying to do three things at once, each important and each necessary. First, he is providing a survey of what have been the main ways in which gays have been represented in films, a catalog of types and images. Second, this basically synchronic enterprise is crossed with the diachronic aim of providing a history of gay filmic representation, relating the development of the images to changes in both the situation of gay people and the institutions of the cinema. Third, Russo offers a critical perspective on

the films, at once aesthetic and political. Partly because of pressures of space and the need to produce something easy to read, he has not entirely satisfactorily worked out a way of combining these three different elements.

To put it simply, I often found it quite hard to work out where the book was going (which is not to deny that it is very easy and pleasant to go along with the book's effortless readability). Thus the first section of the book, "Who's a Sissy?," focuses on the homosexual man represented as effeminate. Russo has uncovered a mass of unfamiliar material and he presents it well. But then the chapter rather falls apart as he tries to examine both the persistence of the sissy in later periods and what else was going on in the earlier period, and somehow that brings us round by the end of the chapter to a survey of gays in horror films. In between we have a rather thinly informed excursion to German films of the twenties and thirties. None of this deals with the historical specificity of the films except in the vaguest way.

The same sorts of problems plague the other chapters. Each chapter covers a period: Chapter 2 deals with the Hays Code-dominated Hollywood production; Chapter 3 with the gradual emergence of "adult," "sexual" themes in the fifties and sixties; and the last chapter with the relationship between cinema and movements for sexual liberation. Admirably, Russo does not want to remain within the somewhat suspect straitjacket of periods; his method of extending outward from a given period to show how a character type produced in one historical moment has a life beyond that particular moment is potentially a very useful one. The problem is that his procedures are not always clear, and the book reads muddled.

Then there are questions of interpretation and evaluation. The book slips between saying what a film means, what its value is from a sexual political standpoint, and whether it says it well. In each case, Russo does not have space to make a full argument and does not always make a very clear one. When one knows something about the films in question, one finds his remarks sometimes (not often) factually inaccurate, or questionable interpretations, or controversial judgments—and that then begins to make one wonder about the accounts of films with which one is not familiar. European cinema is given a bit too easy a ride; there is a lingering sense of the old critical equations of Hollywood is fun but trash and European cinema is Art. Russo does, moreover, seem to have a category of film "quality" separable from ideological meaning, and while aesthetic questions cannot be collapsed into ideological ones, equally notions of "quality" are highly problematic and a well-made film does not make up for reactionary politics. Finally, in terms of coverage the book is really about Hollywood and mostly about male gay representation. There are

---

Vito Russo. *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*. New York: Harper and Row, 1981. \$7.95 (paper).



surprising omissions, and the filmography in particular is oddly selective, without an explanation of the principles of selection. None of this alters the fact that Russo has produced a book of major importance, mapping out the territory of gay representation and uncovering much forgotten material and many hitherto unsuspected titles. The question is what to do with this information, what sense to make of the territory.

One of the difficulties in thinking about anything to do with homosexuality, and sexuality in general, is determining whether the object of one's thought is what society has done with homosexuality at a given point in time or how homosexuality has been socially constructed at a given point. The distinction is crucial, but hard in practice to keep in focus. In the first case, we are talking about something we assume exists before society gets hold of it, whereas in the latter we assume that homosexuality is itself socially produced. It is a question of degree. While there are essentialist positions that see (homo-)sexuality as a given human quality that is the same the world over and throughout human history, most would agree that how any society thinks and feels about (homo-)sexuality, and so lives (homo-)sexuality, is socially constructed. Equally, while many current theories of sexuality emphasizing it as a social construction give the appearance of meaning that it is a category of discourse entirely invented and produced over the past two or three centuries, the theoreticians must posit some kind of raw material, of human physical activity, out of which ideas of sexuality, homosexuality, gayness, friendship, and so on, are fashioned. We need to develop a way of thinking which recognizes the human body and its potentials as theoretically separable and relatively autonomous from the social/cultural/human and yet also encompasses the understanding that we can have very little knowledge or experience of that body except through socially, culturally, humanly specific ways of conceptualizing and feeling it. At present the difficulties of thinking through and holding together in one's mind this relationship between the biologically given (always remembering that "biology" is itself a particular way of making sense of the body) and the ineluctable practices of social construction tend to be too great, and it is hard not to put too great an emphasis on one or another dimension, falling back into essentialist or pure social constructionist conceptualizations. Where one puts the emphasis is crucial, however, and politically so. (For further consideration of these issues see Barrett 1980:Chaps. 2, 3; and Plummer 1981, especially the articles by McIntosh and Weeks.)

Both conceptualizations may issue in forms of radical politics, and I would like to characterize the difference in the gay context as between "gay liberationist" and some other kind of gay politics that has not yet acquired a name but that I would want to claim is a

social materialist politics (see discussion in Watney 1980:64–76). "Gay liberationist" politics was based on a conviction that gayness has certain inherent qualities that straight/bourgeois/patriarchal society had buried away; they needed releasing; and the very act of releasing them was an act of revolution against the society that had repressed them. The other kind of politics starts from the assumption that homosexuality is a social category forming part of a general system of regulating sexuality, whose broad function (and the trouble with this approach is that the function is so broad) is to keep people in their (social) place by assigning them a sexual place—that is, by assigning them a social place (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, frigid woman, rapist, masturbator) through the regulation of what appears to be the most intimate and urgent arena of human experience, sexuality (see Foucault 1976). A politics that starts at this point is both more negative and more positive than a gay liberationist one. It is more negative partly because it does not have one vivid, inspiring focus ("gay is good") and because it deals with and on behalf of a category which it itself defines as socially constructed (and thus arbitrary and limiting, and probably to be moved beyond). But it is more positive because it insists on a recognition of social construction, on the fact that most everything in human affairs has been constructed and therefore that most anything can be: it returns to politics the utopian project of what we want to construct rather than what we want to release. (It also, but this is a further argument, frees us from the tyranny of sex, whereas gay liberationism was in danger of reinforcing that tyranny.)

It will be clear where my own convictions lie, but this does not mean that the gay liberation movement was not, and is not, enormously progressive; nor does it mean that gay people have to abandon organizing around a gay identity. Quite apart from the continued need to defend our gay practices from oppression, we can work only within the social categories that exist; we cannot just "become" something other than "gay." But we can be working to establish a society in which the possibilities of the body are radically, differently understood and cherished.

Vito Russo's book seems to be caught between the two perspectives outlined above. This can be seen in his treatment of three key areas—the relationship between sexuality and gender, the nature of male-male friendship, and the question of the gay sensibility.

Russo rightly stresses the role of the sissy image in relation to gay male characters. He points out that the tomboy image is far less a focus of derision and implied homosexuality, since it expresses an aspiration toward things manly and is therefore understandable, whereas the sissy is reaching for womanly attributes. Implicit in this analysis is both the idea that womanliness is regarded as weak or despicable (and there-

fore demeaning for a "real" man) and the idea that the male role is particularly narrow and rigidly defined, so that its preservation (and male power along with it) is peculiarly precarious, because it is so unattractive, allowing even less leeway than the female role. (The point here is not that the female role is not also narrow, but rather that it is understood to be properly narrow, and therefore something that a girl might try to get away from even if she should learn restraint eventually—the structure of numerous films centered on spunky heroines; but the narrowness of the male role is not acknowledged, and hence anything which draws attention to it—like sissiness—must at the same time be ridiculed out of court.) Russo has, then, a complex, flexible, and original model of the interplay between gender and sexuality, between how to behave like a man and the imputed sexuality of people who behave like men, and he applies this model sensitively and productively to the films.

The model of a sexuality-gender nexus gives homosexuality a kind of "in-between" status, homosexuality as a refusal of, and therefore a threat to, traditional gender roles. But is this the case? What clearly is the case is that, at the level of public discourses on sexuality, homosexuality has been understood as in-betweenism, and this is as true of much progressive gay thought (e.g., Edward Carpenter, Magnus Hirschfeld, Charlotte Wolff) as of antigay thought. At this level Russo is describing an indisputable aspect of the social construction of homosexuality. Many of the illustrations in his book clearly show that a play on the signifiers of masculinity and femininity is what allows a figure to be read as gay. The assumption of a gender in-betweenism that is then taken to indicate a specific sexuality was equally made quite explicit in a sequence of photographs produced by the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in 1903 in Germany, illustrating the heterosexual male, the heterosexual female, and the non-male, non-female homosexual in-between (see Lauritsen and Thorstad 1974 and Steakley 1975.)

What is not clear—in current sexual theory no less than in Russo's book—is whether this in-betweenism, even if no longer biologically conceptualized, is true in the sense of homosexuality's being, inherently almost, a refusal of gender roles. While at the macro level of mass-circulation discourses the construction of homosexuality is offered on the model of gender in-betweenism, the actual histories of lesbians and gay men seem as often to involve constructing their sexuality out of, and within, the models of traditional masculine/feminine psychology that are offered them. Why a model of homosexual biography—gay men and lesbians as the most rather than the least masculine and feminine practitioners of sexuality, respectively—has not got into the mass media and the

dominant discourse on homosexuality is not a question I know the answer to. But pointing to it does mean that we have to be a bit more careful about our assessment of the sissy.

Russo seems to want to have it both ways with the sissy. He wants to point out its ideological role of shoring up heterosexual gender roles; but he also wants to say it carries within it the seeds of revolution because it does not fit those gender roles. In charting the former, the operations of gender ideology, he is on firm ground, but on the latter he is near to going along with the model of in-betweenism.

If they see themselves as profeminist, gay men can choose to use the sissy as some sort of model of how not to be "masculine"; this is our historical legacy, as it were, which may help in finding styles of fighting gender roles. But gender roles are not so invariably and rigidly decisive in the construction of homosexuality in the way in-betweenism suggests. Gay struggle against gender roles relates only to homosexuality itself insofar as, at the level of public representation, the two have been brought together; and this misses many other ways in which homosexuality is constructed (and oppressed) through the categories of male and female sexuality.

A perennial theme in gay (film) criticism has been the question of male-male friendships on screen, the buddy image. Are such images implicitly gay or a denial of gayness? Should we see Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid as "really" a gay relationship or as a relationship in which gayness has been deliberately suppressed? Or is it not gay at all in any sense?

One set of problems in relation to this has to do with procedures of textual criticism. Gay criticism has to deal with the fact that it is not always easy to know with any certainty whether a character is to be read as gay, because gayness is not something that is visible; it does not "show" as gender or race does. (This is in any case more complex than it appears—gender and race are less hard-and-fast as categories than we are generally led to suppose. Most representation of people of different genders or races involves a mass of signifiers in excess of the very limited and largely ambiguous signifiers of difference given by nature, but with gays, as with class, there are no given signifiers of difference whatsoever. See Perkins 1979.) Russo is very careful in his treatment of this problem. He does not get involved in the kind of reading-in of gayness that many critics go in for. This is partly because he argues from the film texts, clearly showing what the evidence is for reading a given character or sequence as gay/homosexual. Eyebrows may be raised at his inclusion of Laurel and Hardy as a gay couple in several of their films, but the argument is supported by evidence from the films themselves. In addition, Russo is arguing from a definition of gayness as a recognizable cultural

form—the signs of gayness are those produced to define gayness, whether by dominant or gay subcultural practices, and it is from these that he is producing his readings. In this way he is very different from those critics, largely psychoanalytic by persuasion and heterosexual by implicit self-definition, who do see homosexuality represented where there are no such signs of it. What this implies is that gayness as subcultural sexual practice and homosexuality as a description of a given human relation are not coterminous—not all people who have same-sex sexual contact are, or identify themselves as, gay. (Let me leave for now the ambiguity over whether one can be gay without identifying oneself as gay, a problem which is yet another road back to the essentialist/social constructionist divide.)

These problems of textual interpretation themselves derive from a second set of problems that are focused on the question of male-male friendships. Critics, gay and otherwise, often make the assumption that intense male-male friendship, in life as in movies, is always and necessarily sexual. This is a thorny question, but it would seem that it is at least dangerous to assume a priori that same-sex friendship is by definition sexual. This is the nub of the problem that Michel Foucault's influential work raises in relation to psychoanalysis, which has been the main route through which the idea of the sexuality of human relations hitherto not considered sexual has come to us. Freud's recognition of the crucial role of intense physical relations in childhood (in the child itself, between the child and others) seems like a real gain, a real departure from attempts to deny the body; but securing it, as Freudianism has, so inexorably to notions of sexuality seems part of a tyranny whereby sexuality is the explain-all of life.

Lillian Faderman's *Surpassing the Love of Men* (1981) argues very clearly the difficulty of necessarily assuming that we must call intense female-female relationships in earlier periods, or even our own, lesbian (see also Clark 1982 for a recent discussion of the use of the term lesbian in the women's movement). It would be wrong to make a simple transferral of this female experience to the male one, partly because awareness of sexuality seems more constructed into male experience generally in the periods Faderman covers. Equally, however, we need to resist the temptation, to put it bluntly, of seeing everything in terms of sex. That the intensity of friendship has a bodily dimension is one thing that we need to recognize, but the body cannot be reduced to "sexuality," which is a very specific concept of genital determination.

Bringing these textual and conceptual sets of problems together, we might argue in analyzing a buddy film that it operates with a concept of male-male friendship as sexual through its deployment of signifiers that indicate this. But it would be a different ar-

gument from saying that the film shows, or thinks it shows, an intense but nonsexual friendship between two men but that "really" the relationship is sexual because "really" all such relationships are. To call on this "really" here is to fall back into an essentialist position, which not only takes homosexuality as a given but also prioritizes the sexual in the understanding of human relationships. The problem with doing this is not just an intellectual one: by reinforcing the prioritization of sexuality we are in danger of acceding to a regime whereby we are controlled through our sexuality.

Russo is clearly caught up in these difficult ideas, and here flatly contradicts himself. He argues that buddiness is always constructed around a denial of homosexuality, but whereas on page 70 he writes that "gays are the manifestation of what stands between men's complete love of other men and their acceptance of women as friends" so that "men have never been granted the full emotional potential that they might have had on the screen," on page 148 he writes, "The appeal of the buddy relationship for heterosexual men has always been that of an escape from the role playing of men and women—a safe, neutral emotional zone with no chance for confusion." In the first case, buddiness is all but sexual, and intense and angst-ridden because of it; in the second it is thankfully not sexual, and a relief because of it. Male-male friendship, in reality or as represented, may be either, and we would do well not to start from the assumption that such a friendship is in some sense or other gay. To say that Butch and Sundance are gay was, at a certain time, outrageous and liberating; to go on saying it may be to reproduce the regime of sexuality.

A third reworking in *The Celluloid Closet* of what I am calling a gay liberationist versus a social materialist theory/politics comes out in the treatment of the idea of the "gay sensibility." Here Russo is concerned to show that anything which might constitute a sensibility is rooted in the actual material situation of gay people—ghetto cultures, the experience of passing, the fact of being defined as deviant. So far so good. There is such a phenomenon as a gay sensibility, that is, a characteristic way of feeling about things which has been produced out of the material circumstances of gay people and which gays learn as they come out into any developed gay subculture. The limitations of saying this need to be kept in mind: the situation of gay people did not give off the sensibility; it was the situation within which the sensibility was produced and about which it *made* a sense. And it has to be learned; one would not automatically have it without coming into contact with it somehow. Russo slips from the first, materialist, position to a second, essentialist, position, which sees gays as inevitably having a sensibility of "difference."

Russo's desire to hang on to a distinctive gay difference underpins many of his judgments. As a protest against blandness, I feel with him—the gay sensibility is much more fun, much more alive than the straight one. As a basis of action on the basis of a sense of shared feeling, this is good politics. But we should recognize that we have produced this sensibility in history and that we choose to promote it for what is good about it (recognizing, too, that many things about it are sexist, snobbish, and self-oppressive). It seems like freedom to assert the right to express a pre-given gay sensibility, but it is another and perhaps greater kind of freedom to assert the choice of constructing a kind of sensibility and determining the form it takes.

The importance of Vito Russo's book is that it both allows one to see clearly many of these difficult issues and gives one much-needed information and evidence with which to think them through. The problems of the book are not problems unique to Russo; on the contrary, they are the central problems of sexual political debate. In trying to outline some of them, I wish to emphasize the problems I share with him rather than suggest an intellectual distance from him.

## References

- Barrett, Michèle  
1980 *Women's Oppression To-day: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis*. London: Verso.
- Bogle, Donald  
1973 *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*. New York: Viking.
- Clark, Wendy  
1982 *The Dyke, The Feminist and the Devil*. *Feminist Review* 11:30–39.
- Cripps, Thomas  
1977 *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Films, 1900–1942*. London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dyer, Richard, ed.  
1977 *Gays and Film*. London: British Film Institute.
- Faderman, Lillian  
1981 *Surpassing the Love of Men*. New York: William Morrow.
- Foucault, Michel  
1976 *La Volonté de savoir*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Friar, Ralph E., and Natasha A. Friar  
1972 *The Only Good Indian . . . The Hollywood Gospel*. New York: Drama Book Specialists.
- Haskell, Molly  
1974 *From Reverence to Rape*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Lauritsen, John, and David Thorstad  
1974 *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement, 1864–1935*. New York: Times Change Press.
- Perkins, T. E.  
1979 *Rethinking Stereotypes*. In *Ideology and Cultural Production*. M. Barrett, P. Corrigan, et al., eds. London: Croom Helm.
- Pines, Jim  
1975 *Blacks in Films*. London: Studio Vista.
- Plummer, Kenneth, ed.  
1981 *The Making of the Modern Homosexual*. London: Hutchinson.
- Rosen, Marjorie  
1973 *Popcorn Venus*. New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan.
- Steakley, James D.  
1975 *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*. New York: Arno Press.
- Tyler, Parker  
1972 *Screening the Sexes*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Watney, Simon  
1980 *The Ideology of GLF. Homosexuality: Power and Politics*. Gay Left Collective, eds. London: Allison and Busby.

# Wilhelm von Pluschow and Wilhelm von Gloeden: Two Photo Essays

Bruce Russell

## Von Pluschow: Toward a Definition of His Canon

On the last day of the year 1889, in the presence of a great and reverent crowd, with solemn music . . . the body of Browning was laid in its resting place in Poet's Corner.

—Edward Dowden, *Robert Browning*  
(London, 1904, pp. 387–388)

While there is no cause to doubt either the size or the worthiness of that assembly in Westminster Abbey, history provides at least one small cause to doubt its reverence: Among the crowd was Edmund Gosse, poet, man of letters, and onetime librarian of the House of Lords, who apparently through much of the service could not keep his eyes from wandering to a photograph of a naked Italian youth which had accompanied him to the Abbey that day hidden, perhaps, in his prayer book. The photograph had been sent to him by his friend John Addington Symonds, and it seems safe to surmise that it was the work of a German expatriate photographer, "Guglielmo" (Wilhelm von) Pluschow (Grosskurth, 1964:276).<sup>1</sup> Such photographs by von Pluschow and his cousin Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden as well as by their Italian imitators d'Agata and Vincenzo Galdi<sup>2</sup> were widely circulated during the fin de siècle among literary and artistic gentlemen who shared the sexual tastes of Symonds and Gosse. Today, it is the photographs of von Gloeden which have survived to overshadow those of his cousin and the others. Only a handful of images by von Pluschow<sup>3</sup> (see Figures 1 and 2) can be identified, and he is noted only in the literature on his cousin. However, it seems probable that in the 1880s and for some years afterward von Pluschow's fame far exceeded that of von Gloeden, who did not become a professional photographer until shortly before 1890.

Although next to nothing is known of von Pluschow's life, we do know that in the 1870s he lived in Naples, where he maintained a portrait studio,<sup>4</sup> and that he was visited at this time by his cousin, who had moved to Taormina, Sicily, for reasons of health. Von Gloeden, like any young artist of his day, naturally would have been intrigued by the potential of his cousin's photographic apparatus and was duly instructed

in its use. Whether von Pluschow had already begun his studies of nude youths and what von Gloeden's early photographic efforts were like is not known. Neither cousin could have anticipated the machinations of fate whereby the youthful von Gloeden, an aspiring painter of independent means, would be stripped of his wealth as a result of his stepfather's political intrigues; would be forced to support himself, his sister, and even to an extent the household of his adopted home through the sale of his photographs; or, especially, that his reputation would obscure that of his well-established professional cousin to the point where von Pluschow's photographs would be misattributed to him.

The latter confusion has several causes. For one, the commercial value resulting from recent interest in von Gloeden has led on more than one occasion to unscrupulous dealers passing off the work of one cousin as that of the other. Also, the common practice of mounting albumen prints on cards, thus obscuring the name stamp, inventory numbers, and date with which both photographers usually marked the back of an image, has been an even greater cause of confusion. A significant number of what were thought to be photographs by von Gloeden, including some which were considered his best images, are now known to be the work of his cousin.<sup>5</sup> The question of attribution is not a simple one, however, as there are examples of the same image bearing contradictory signature stamps, perhaps a result of both photographers' retaining duplicate negatives from the period of their initial collaboration (Hieronimus 1979:18).<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps it is the very romanticism of the von Gloeden legend that accounts for his notoriety and the eclipse of his cousin. Von Gloeden's hagiographers step forward to explain all with hypotheses that crumble when confronted with the evidence of the photographers' works. In his historical romance *Les amours singulières*, Roger Peyrefitte attributes to von Gloeden the statement: "After a year of loyal competition, he [von Pluschow] admitted defeat and we agreed to divide the world between us; it was agreed that he would study the girls of Italy and would leave for me the boys of Sicily" (Peyrefitte 1949:123).

Since only one photograph containing a female model by von Pluschow is available (Figure 3) and since von Gloeden seems to have devoted much more attention to photographing girls (transvestism aside) than is often acknowledged, we need not see this assertion as anything other than a literary device used by Peyrefitte to write a character out of his story. Charles Leslie (1977), whose study is generally more reliable, dismisses von Pluschow as an excellent technician lacking in imagination and deserving his neglect, and falls back on a kind of critical Darwinism

*Bruce Russell is an artist and critic living in Montreal, where he is involved in the Centre Articule, a parallel gallery. This article will form part of a larger work on homoeroticism and the male nude in nineteenth-century photography. He is also writing studies of British gay painters of the past century and of New York gay artists and writers of the interwar period.*



**Figure 1** Von Pluschow illustration for "A Pompeiian Gentleman's Home-Life" by E. Neville-Rolfe (*Scribner's*, March 1898).

whereby chance is imbued with taste, suggesting that the forgotten is best forgotten.

While even the most basic information about von Pluschow's life has yet to be researched (even the place and date of his birth are not known) and given that only a handful of images are available, thus allowing for only the most tentative comments in comparing the work of the two cousins, the fact remains that the available examples of his work attest to considerable achievement and a talent stylistically distinct from von Gloeden's that is in no way its inferior. Von Pluschow's composition is more complex, elegant, and sophisticated. Hieronimus (1979:18) has argued that von Pluschow exhibits greater attention to detail and chooses a different physical type of model than von Gloeden. Certainly, the erotic is manifested very differently in their respective work; von Gloeden employs a kind of noncentered, fleshy voluptuousness, entwining models sculpturally in a manner reminiscent of Rodin, while von Pluschow creates situations with unmistakable sexual tension far more

explicit and evocative than his cousin's romantic sensuality. Von Pluschow focuses this eroticism by means of the spatial relationships between his models and their engagement with the viewer/camera, sometimes by drawing attention to the genitalia and other homoerogenous areas. The solicitousness among the participants in the image, and that includes us, approximates a dynamic familiar to any gay man: the exhibitionism and false modesty, the flirtatiousness of cruising.

Von Pluschow's work is more firmly rooted in mid-nineteenth-century academic reconstruction of the antique and the tradition of heroic portraiture, his painterly peers being Leighton, Alma-Tadema, Feuerbach, and Flandrin,<sup>7</sup> whereas von Gloeden is more involved with the romantic evocation of Arcadia, his peers being Puvis de Chavannes, Albert Moore, Hans von Marées, Böcklin, and even Eakins and Degas. The project von Gloeden shared with these artists, using the signifiers of high art and the antique to give dignity to the everyday without employing the tired rhetoric inherited from previous centuries, together with his commitment to the *plein-air* movement, ultimately set him in a more daring camp than his cousin.

If von Pluschow was more conservative, the result is that his academicism equipped him with a graphic strength and assurance often lacking in the work of von Gloeden. His mixture of elegance and raunchiness saves him from the sentimentality which is the downfall of von Gloeden at his worst. Von Pluschow's failure to experiment is perhaps the key not only to his success but the explanation of his neglect.

## Notes

- 1 Grosskurth presumably derived this information from an unpublished Gosse letter to Symonds. There were at least three other occasions on which Symonds corresponded with friends concerning von Pluschow: in April 1892, he suggested that Charles Edward Sayle, poet and librarian at Cambridge, visit his "friend" von Pluschow in Rome, giving his address as 34 Via Sardegna; he also told Edward Carpenter, pioneer British gay activist, socialist, and feminist, about von Pluschow's "studies from the nude in the open air"; and he sent photographs by von Pluschow to Charles Kains-Jackson, pedophile poet and journalist/art critic. There is no evidence in the Symonds letters to support d'Arch Smith's claim (1970:18) that he sent him von Gloeden photographs. For the Symonds letters see Peters and Schueller (1969:645-646, 677, 815).
- 2 Two photos by Galdi as well as by von Pluschow are illustrated in Trevor J. Fairbrother's article "A Private Album: John Singer Sergeant's Drawings of Nude Male Model," *Arts*, vol. 56, no. 4, pp. 70-79.
- 3 A listing of von Pluschow's known published photographs is as follows:  
Robert Cust, "Photographic Studies," *Photogram*, vol. iv, no. 44, pp. 130-133, 157-158, London, 1897.  
Jean-Claude Lemagny. See References.  
Neville-Rolfe, "A Pompeiian Gentleman's Home-Life," *Scribner's Magazine*, vol. xxiii, no. 3, pp. 277-290, New York, March 1898.  
R. W. Schufeldt, *Studies of the Human Form for Artists*, 1908.



**Figure 2** Von Pluschow illustration for "A Pompeian Gentleman's Home-Life" by E. Neville-Rolfe (*Scribner's*, March 1898).



**Figure 3** Wilhelm von Pluschow. Postcard, ca. 1900.

- 4 For a discussion of this complex problem see the Appendix and Table in Hieronimus (1979:18, 21).
- 5 Perhaps as many as a quarter of the images reproduced in Lemagny (1975) are probably the work of von Pluschow, not von Gloeden (see Hieronimus, *op. cit.*), specifically plates 15, 17, 23, 25, 31, 33, 35, 41, 43, 45, 79, 83, 91, 95, and 103. In addition to these reattributions I would add Lemagny, pages 37 and 93—the former because of the resemblance of the drapery, location, and background to plate 13 in Peters (1969); the latter because the setting, a painted Roman interior, suggests the works published here—as well as a number of others that don't seem to fit what is beginning to emerge as von Gloeden's distinctive style.
- 6 Gleeson White (1898) states that the work of both photographers could be ordered from J. Littauer, 2 Odeon Platz, Munich.
- 7 The coolness of Flandrin's work remains more akin to von Pluschow's style despite von Gloeden's documented association with the French classicist. He photographically approximated Flandrin's study in the Louvre, *Jeune homme nu assis au bord de la mer*, giving it the more anecdotal title *Cain* when he produced it as a photogravure in 1926.

## References

- d'Arch Smith, Timothy  
1970 *Love in Ernest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English Uranian Poets from 1889–1930*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Grosskurth, Phyllis  
1964 *The Woeful Victorian: A Biography of John Addington Symonds*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Hieronimus, Ekkehard, et al.  
1979 *Wilhelm von Gloeden*. Basel: Kunsthalle exhibition catalog.
- Lemagny, Jean-Claude  
1975 *Taormina, Début de siècle*. Paris: Éditions du Chêne. (An American edition was published in New York by Camera/Graphic Press in 1977.)
- Leslie, Charles  
1977 *Wilhelm von Gloeden, Photographer. A Brief Introduction to His Life and Work*. New York: Soho Photographic Publishers.
- Peters, Robert L., and Herbert M. Schueller, eds.  
1969 *The Letters of John Addington Symonds: Vol. III, 1885–1893*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Peyrefitte, Roger  
1949 *Les amours singulières*. Paris: Le Livre de Poche (original edition, Flammarion).
- White, Gleeson  
1898 *The Nude in Photography: With Some Studies Taken in the Open Air*. *The Studio* XVI:104–109.

## Von Gloeden: A Reappraisal

Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden, photographer, for many years resident of Taormina, born on September 16, 1856, at the Castle Volkshagen near Wismar, Prussian noble—winner of photographic awards (Cairo 1897, Rome 1889, Milan 1911), friend of royalty, millionaires, artists, writers, and peasants: it is strange that such a man has achieved greater fame in the past decade than at any time during his long and distinguished career. The explanation is perhaps twofold: the emergence of a reborn worldwide homosexual movement, eager to rediscover its forebears, which rejoiced in the baron's portraits of his lovers, the youths of his adopted Sicily; and the phenomenal explosion of interest in photography, its history, and the achievements of its practitioners.

Indeed, one of the surest as well as the most dubious compliments our age can pay, being "made into a movie," has twice been conferred upon von Gloeden. In Bertolucci's *1900*, Uncle Octavio indulges his taste for young men by arranging them in Gloedenesque tableaux on rocks overlooking the sea and photographing them with a view camera. The French film *Race d'Ep!* (Hocquengham and Soukaz, 1979), an often lighthearted review of the past century of the gay movement, offers a more direct portrayal in the guise of a stereotypical German shutterbug tourist lurking in bushes so as to capture the spontaneous erotic rambles of the golden boys of the south, who always seem to strike poses reminiscent of the baron's work. Given the oversimplification and distortion that cinematizing a historic person inevitably implies, what do these characterizations of von Gloeden nonetheless imply about contemporary conceptions of who he was and what he did? The character is semicomical, a jaded, voyeuristic dilettante involved in an exploitative relation to the innocent "natural" sexuality of his models (victims?). This image dates back to the earliest posthumous writings about von Gloeden, for example, that of Roger Peyrefitte (1949). If we proceed to consider the more recent writing (four monographs/catalogs have appeared since 1975, as well as numerous articles and brief discussions in more general texts), we find, for instance, that Estelle Jussim (1981), in her study of the New England pictorialist photographer F. Holland Day, contrasts what she considers his ability to disguise the vulgarity of his models and make great art of them with the "blatant homoeroticism" of von Gloeden's work, in which "flagrant ephebes . . . catered to pederastic taste."

While it is true that von Gloeden's work is often explicitly erotic and was clearly produced to be shared with men who shared his sexual interests, suggesting that this is what accounts for the stylistic difference in the two men's work is a failure to understand the reasoned aesthetic project of von Gloeden and to deni-

grate the erotic component of Day's. Perhaps a more serious appraisal of von Gloeden's work is that of Roland Barthes (1978), which nevertheless mixes real insight with hermeneutic subjectivity. Barthes accuses the baron of "overloading . . . the code of antiquity . . . and mixing up signs without thinking about it. . . . It seems he takes without any irony the most worn-out legends for cash value. *Il est surtout Kitsch.*" All this seems to add up to what is in fact the general response to von Gloeden: he was a silly old man who took sentimental naughty pictures; an amateur exploitative, voyeuristic pornographer whose work is "soft-core" and amusing if one has the right kind of humor.

Is all this fair or accurate? If not, why? And what did von Gloeden think *he* was doing, and did he succeed? In proceeding with these considerations, it is perhaps useful to separate the issues: (1) a moral one—did von Gloeden take sexual, financial, and cultural advantage of his Sicilian neighbors? (2) was he a photographer primarily motivated by sexual and financial considerations? and (3) do we read his images in a fundamentally different way from his peers?

### Exploiter, Tourist, Voyeur?

When Wilhelm von Gloeden first visited Sicily in the late 1870s, he was a consumptive young Prussian noble of independent means, a painter trained in the academic traditions of his homeland in search of an agreeable haven for his threatened lungs. The Taormina he settled in was rarely visited by northern tourists; soon it would be "discovered." A medieval town, it bore abundant evidence of its Greek, Roman, and Moorish periods. In the words of Charles Leslie, von Gloeden's biographer, it

hung between the sky and the sea with breathtaking panoramas of the rugged coast of Messina, the luminous transparent blue of the Mediterranean and the looming majesty of snow-capped Mount Aetna in the distance. Around and through the terraces, the little piazzas with their views of the seas and the mountains, the narrow climbing streets and the crumbling walls of the old villas were tumbling cascades of bougainvillea, fountains of grape vines, green floods of fragrant orange, lemon, and citron and fig. The tall spires of cypress and fronded palms rose upwards and brilliant geraniums were everywhere, like so much splashed paint. [Leslie 1977]

The population subsisted as it had for centuries on a mixture of fishing, agriculture, and artisan production. By the time of his death, in 1931, and indeed even by 1900, this small, picturesque town had become a tourists' haven and, as is always the case when "underdeveloped" traditional societies are inundated by affluent visitors, the impact of badly needed currency had to balance against the social cost. Northern Europeans had been making the Grand



Tours for centuries, and in von Gloeden's time rail and steam expanded the limits of readily accessible vacation possibilities to include Greece, Egypt, Palestine, and Sicily. Some indication of the impact of this expansion can be gleaned from the works of E. M. Forster dealing with the Italian context; *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, *Albergo Empedocle*, and *The Story of a Panic*. The contradiction between the idealized vision of classic glory and the contemplation of picturesque ruins, on the one hand, and the heat, fleas, and indifference to northern conceptions of class, comfort, and hygiene by natives who bore but little resemblance to their ancient marble prototypes, on the other, proved too much for all but the most determined travelers. The ensuing consternation, however, was insignificant compared to the disruption of traditional values and social organization that was left behind at the end of the various "seasons." Like that of its neighbors', Taormina's fate was sealed by the development of transportation, and while von Gloeden's presence no doubt attracted some visitors as his work became known, he cannot be held responsible for the change in the community's economic base. Is his moral culpability, then, to be found in examining more specifically his relations with the citizens of his adopted town?

The biographers Leslie and Peyrefitte tell us that von Gloeden quickly made friends with all but a few of the residents. In 1887 his stepfather, Baron von Hammerstein, published the secret proceedings of a meeting of the kaiser's Cabinet, of which he was a member, in the liberal newspaper he published. The reaction was instantaneous: the property of the entire family was seized by the Crown. Von Hammerstein fled to Greece, where imperial influence resulted in his arrest and imprisonment for ten years. Von Gloeden and his step-sister Sophie, who lived with him, were left penniless. Their neighbors, tradesmen and working people, began leaving food on their doorstep during the night as soon as their plight was known. Eventually, friends in Germany subscribed a small pension, but after these events von Gloeden resorted to selling prints and postcards to supplement his income. In addition to scenic views, largely ignored today, it was his "artistic" photographs that quickly won a large audience. Careful accounts were kept, and a royalty was paid to the models involved for each print sold. Von Gloeden was remembered as being ever-willing to help out ex-models or their families with capital for business projects; several were set up as photographers. He also provided generous dowries for local girls from poor families, hardly the portrait painted in *Race d'Ep!*

There remains the question of sex itself and the sexual power his position implied. If his biographers are to be believed, it seems that he simply fit into networks of intergenerational homosexual promiscuity al-

ready established in the community. In a sense, the selling of photographs which have their basis in this system of sexual exchange, and even the payment of the models, makes something else of the situation. But any insinuation of voyeurism, exploitation, or even prostitution seems to be countered by the esteem and affection expressed by his neighbors, even years after his death.

### Dilettante and Amateur?

Perhaps because of his family and privilege, it is often suggested that von Gloeden was a dilettante, an amateur photographer who was forced to sell his naive efforts because of circumstance. While it is quite possible that, like Day, he might never have sold his prints if it had not been for the von Hammerstein affair, I feel that he was a serious artist who brought to photography a preoccupation with some of the most significant aesthetic issues that concerned his generation.

The reaction against classicism had unleashed a wide range of responses, especially the rejection of its conceptions of subject, composition, and technique. All this would have been known to any art student of the period, and especially one like von Gloeden who could afford travel, the annual albums illustrating the various salons, and other publications and whose class privilege provided access to "advanced" circles.

According to Klaus Kertess (1980):

it all started with Manet. His *Dead Christ with Angels* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) portrays Christ about to be entombed . . . for the last time. Two angels, as unremarkable for the blandness of their grief as for the birdlike naturalism of their wings, just barely prevent Christ's body from sliding out of the picture into the viewer's space. His face is veiled by shadow; the light is focused on his drape encircled crotch. Christ is sliding into the plane—deadpan and demythologized. Christ with a small "c", Art with a capital "A".

While it is the trajectory of Manet's displacement, its consequence, which in retrospect distinguishes it, in its own time it was part of an interrogative context that crossed borders and included a wide range of work. *Dead Christ with Angels* (Figure 1) is but one example of a project shared by a generation of artists as disparate as Bouguereau, Millais, Hans von Marées, Puvis de Chavannes, and August Böcklin to "deconstruct the hierarchies of genres by which different kinds of paintings had been classified for centuries. The distinction between sublime (historical and religious painting) and the familiar (landscape, still life, scenes of everyday life) were effectively abolished" (Rosen and Zerner 1982:21–26). Artists were desperately trying to achieve

liberation from rhetorical figures of speech conceived pictorially . . . the whole repertory of poses and gestures that Renaissance artists derived from classical statuary and reliefs and invented in new forms. For the most part when classical formulas turn up in Realist painting they appear as quotations or parody (most notably in Manet). In general, however, the traditional ideologizing pose is absent, the force of the painting often depends on a sense of this absence. The great achievement of the Realist school in painting, however, was the acceptance of trivial banal material and the refusal to ennoble it, idealize it or even make it picturesque. [ibid.]

On the other hand, for a naturalist like Bouguereau, or for Feuerbach or Böcklin in their lighter moods, the object was, in fact, to ennoble and idealize the banal by the use of the hieratic mode in presenting the picturesque. Others, like von Marées and Puvis de Chavannes, sought to undermine both the idealization of the ancient world by putting it to work and to dignify labor by classicizing it. All these artists were born between 1824 and 1837 and had reached maturity by the time von Gloeden was a student. Their concerns would have been his, and his work reflects his sympathies.

It is strange, then, to read Barthes's suggestion that von Gloeden's work was arrived at "*without thinking about it*" (emphasis in original), an accident arising from his nonconformity, "a force more than art." What Barthes calls the mixing of sign systems in von Gloeden seems to be precisely his heavily informed synthesis of the very issues just discussed. Barthes sees rather

the contradiction between all this literary scenery of the Greek vision of antiquity and these black bodies of country gigolos. These little Greek gods (already contradicted by their darkness) have dirty peasants' hands, badly cured (sic) fingernails, worn-out and dirty feet; their foreskins are swollen and well in evidence; no longer stylized; that is pointed and smaller. They are uncircumcized, this is all one sees . . . [Barthes 1978]

Apart from the rather obvious point that it is rather difficult to stylize foreskins in photography and that the Greeks painted (white) marble to resemble real (tanned) flesh, even putting aside the racism of his anxiety concerning an Arcady "peopled with African bodies," what is most maddening is Barthes's blindness to his own insights and the resulting confusion. He points out that "the Baron's photographs are at the same time sublime and anatomic. The sublime softness of legend enters in collision with the realism of photography, for what is a photograph thus conceived, none other than an image where all is seen; a collection of details without hierarchy, without *order*, the great classical principle" (ibid.). Barthes's description is just as apt for *Dead Christ with Angels*. This is no mere coincidence. Von Gloeden draws to-

gether two projects much current at the time: the rejection of the classical formulas of the beaux-arts tradition and an attempt to reempower the memory of ancient Mediterranean society. The resemblance, for example, of Thomas Eakins's Arcadian photographs to von Gloeden's attests that this project was current not just among the circle of photographers working in Italy that included von Pluschow, von Gloeden, Galdi, and d'Agata.

Barthes's description of von Gloeden's models always reminds me that Ganymede must have stunk of his father's hunting dogs as he was carried off to Olympus. He was no doubt covered with dust, and much more than just his foreskin must have been swollen soon after his arrival. And yet countless cameo brooches were carved throughout the nineteenth century which depict a classically veiled woman discreetly offering a wine cup to an eagle. This image owes its origins to a convention of eighteenth-century portraiture whereby Ganymede is appropriated to the gender of Leda, Europa, Io, and Danae. Not just a simple equivalent of an operatic *pants-role*, this metamorphosis effectively tidied up what must have been a particularly unpleasant myth. Thomas S. W. Lewis (1982-1983:58-59) contrasts the versions of the legend in a series of classical dictionaries from Dr. Lemprière's frank if disapproving *Bibliotheca Classica* of 1788 to the more circumspect *Classical Dictionary*, by Charles Anthon, of 1842. As the spirit of the Enlightenment gave way to moral purity, one suspects that the classical tradition must have presented considerable problems for puritanically inclined parents intent on the aesthetic edification of their children. A stroll through any major gallery would have led from depictions of rape and abduction to patricide and unnatural vice. Nudity must have been relatively inconsequential, although Thomas Eakins noted during his years in Paris that "English ladies" simply did not enter the sculpture galleries of the Louvre. The sentimentalization and bowdlerization of classical subjects by the most rigid of the academicians must have been some consolation, but even years of covering youthful eyes before certain red-figure vases and explaining away Titian, the Pollaiuolo brothers, Piero di Cosimo, Michelangelo, and the rest as the products of a rawer age would hardly have tempered the shock of encountering the work of an artist like Arnold Böcklin. Once again shepherds smelled of dung and drunken satyrs hid in bushes waiting to ravish one's daughters. *The Isle of the Dead* (1880; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) presents none of the consolations of a Christian death. Equally disturbing, but for far more ambiguous reasons, must have been Anselm Feuerbach's strangely haunting *Medea* paintings or the *Nana* portraits. The reaction to a similar British work, the *Bacchus* (1868; Birmingham, England, City Museum and



◀ **Figure 1** Edouard Manet. *The Dead Christ with Angels*, 1864. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer (1929). The H. O. Havemeyer Collection.

**Figure 2** Hippolyte Flandrin. *Jeune homme assis nu au bord de la mer*, 1837. Louvre, Paris.

Art Gallery), of Simeon Solomon is documented in the comments of sympathetic contemporaries such as Swinburne (1908) and Walter Pater (1901). For these artists, the classics were not an inventory of stock pretty subjects, or an occasion for careful archaeological reconstruction, or the pursuit of conventionalized ideal pure form. Rather, for them, as for Pater, Freud, and Nietzsche, they were as red embers hidden below a layer of dull ash—the childhood, the unconscious memory of our civilization.

From the perspective of Marie Antoinette's dairy at the Petit Trianon, it is almost unthinkable that later generations would turn to Prometheus, Sisyphus, Electra, Oedipus, and the sphinx to express their most profound fears. After Sèvres milk buckets, the world needed to be reminded of the dirty feet, the peasant hands, and even the swollen foreskins of the inhabitants of the Golden Age.

Von Gloeden must also have known of Hans von Marées, who, like Puvis de Chavannes, regarded the making over of a vision of Arcady as a conscious project to dignify everyday life. If Courbet, in continuity from Caravaggio, sought to dignify labor through its realistic portrayal, von Marées and Puvis de Chavannes in their own manner sought to demystify the ancients, after Piero de Cosimo, by making them toil and spin. In all probability, von Gloeden would have visited at the nearby German Marine Biological Institute in Naples that von Marées had decorated with frescoes in 1873. Which of all the other possible influences might have reached von Gloeden remains speculative. We can say with certainty, however, that for him as for numerous other homosexuals of his class and education, the classics and the world they document offered not only a legitimization of their sexuality but also a vision of the possibility of a new age as different from the present as that of Pericles.

### The Modern Eye

There remains the biggest obstacle to the accessibility of von Gloeden's work, the reason so many of his images seem to be kitsch or sentimental: the contradiction between the *vérité* of the camera and the beaux-arts content of the images. We learn from family albums, photo-journalism, and the Polaroid that a photograph is an artifact which documents real time, and therefore our minds reject a photograph of the subject of a poem by Theocritus, just as they would a newsreel of the battle of Hastings. A representational painting poses no such conceptual problem. A viewer of the painting *Jeune homme assis nu au bord de la mer* by Flandrin (Figure 2) would probably not immediately concern him/herself with such questions as where the artist stood in relation to the model while sketching or whether an image was composed from a variety of figure, landscape, and perspective sketches. Instead, we accept the image as, in a sense, a fiction composed for our pleasure and edification by someone trained with specific mimetic skills. But these are precisely the questions posed by viewers of the von Gloeden photogravure *Cain*, based itself on the Flandrin painting. The eye registers the improbability of the vantage point of the camera and proceeds to solve the problem, noting that the image is collaged from three photographs—boy, rock, and landscape—and is considerably touched up. We make no demand that the execution of a representational painting chronologically correspond to its content; our century has even allowed historical representation through illustration to remain in a limited sense a legitimate prerogative of the artist as image maker. But a photograph of a picnic in a park in Buffalo in the summer of 1926 is just that or it is not. To an extent, the work of von Gloeden or Julia Margaret Cameron seems to become kitsch because

of the subsequent development, definition, and function of both painting and photography. That von Gloeden and Cameron attempted in good faith to explore in a new medium what were the concerns of art being explored by their painter peers is only a problem retrospectively for us. The confusion results from that aspect of kitsch whereby signs of high culture find themselves appropriated into more diffuse circuits of production, in which the class *origins* of the signs in question are paramount to the appropriators and become in fact their primary "meaning." No longer articulated within a discourse of distinction and power as pertaining to the ruling class with whom they are originally identified, these signs become one-dimensional, "empty," and flattened, their credibility undermined. The transferring of the signifiers of beaux-arts painting (draped figure, studio props) to what we perceive as a popular medium, photography, creates a shift that seems the equivalent of the appropriation by the bourgeoisie of signs of aristocratic discourse or even of more contemporary operations that characterize "mass culture," but again, this is so only retrospectively and to the modern eye.

The Pictorialists, perhaps unfairly, seem exempt from this confusion and elicit a different and simpler response. While we might subscribe to the conventional wisdom that their project was untruthful to the very nature of the camera and its historic destiny, their very rejection of its *vérité* and "function," of sharp focus and spontaneity for chiaroscuro and "art," set their production apart as a subspecies of graphic arts, which, after all, was their intent. Their textured quality as pieces of paper inscribed with impressionist or symbolist images allow them to be visually equated with the lithographs and etchings of Whistler, Shannon, and Zorn, which they resemble.

Wilhelm von Gloeden was left to work out his own synthesis of these various currents. His success in doing so is another issue, one I take up in the accompanying comparison with von Pluschow, but to dismiss the result without trying to assess it in its own terms is unfair and foolish. It is unfair to judge von Gloeden's work by the standards of the soft-focus pictorialism of the generation that succeeded him, as does Estelle Jussim. In fact, one may be reasonably sure that F. Holland Day, whom she prefers to von Gloeden, would have thought so as well. After all, he chose a photograph of von Gloeden's to illustrate an article he wrote in *Camera Notes* (Day 1897:27-28), and concerning "the correct approach to photography as applied to the human figure" (Day 1897:27-28). Asserting, as does Roland Barthes, that von Gloeden's work attacks the purity of received classical harmony by the intrusion of discordants is to pay it the great compliment of success in its own terms.

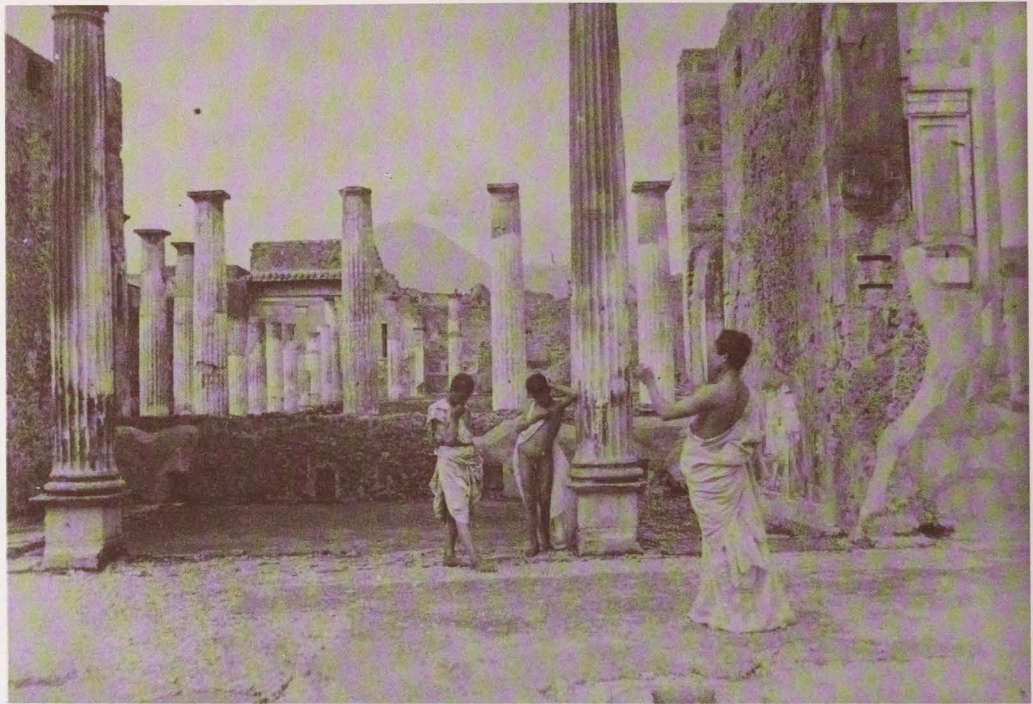
Despite much attention, Wilhelm von Gloeden has yet to win the appreciation or even the evaluation he deserves. The literature is still sketchy, and there has been only one previous attempt to situate his work in its contemporary context (Schiff 1979). Other problems, such as organizing and defining the *oeuvre*, have barely begun to be confronted. In time, the significance of this seemingly enigmatic figure will hopefully be understood and appreciated.

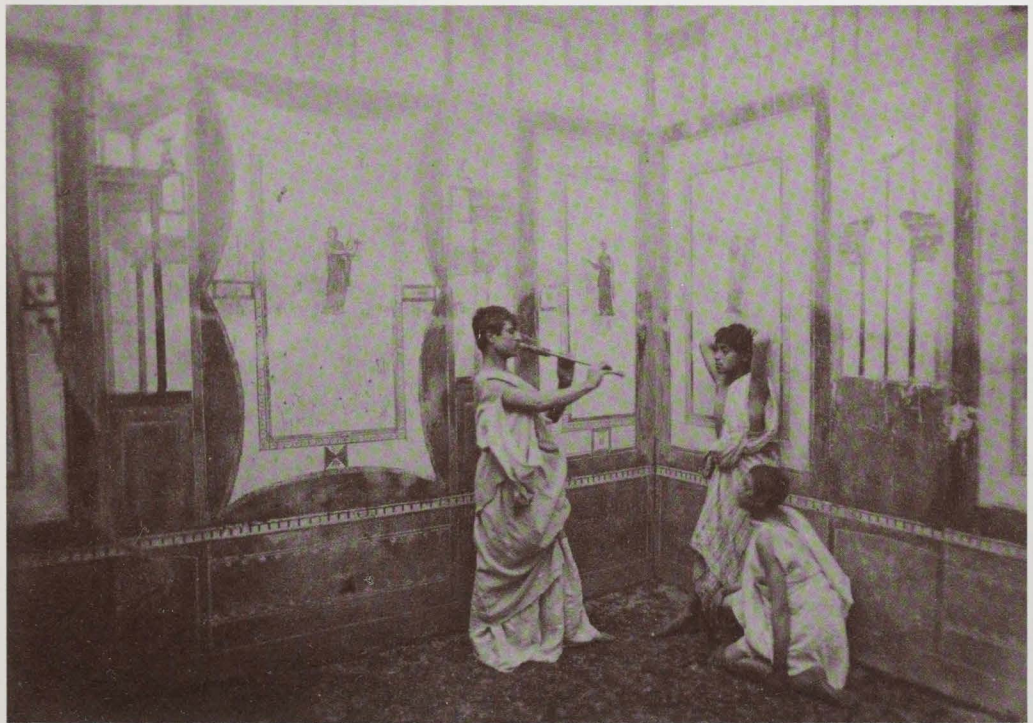
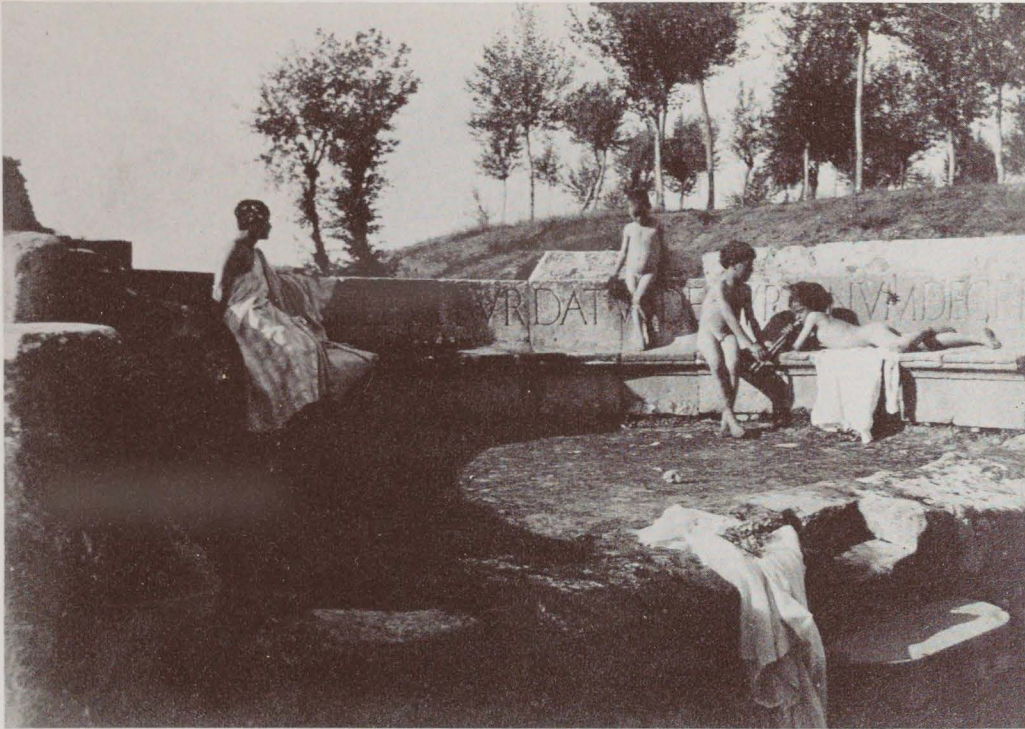
## References

- Barthes, Roland  
1978 Wilhelm von Gloeden. Naples: Amelio Editore.
- Day, F. Holland  
1897 Art and the Camera. *Camera Notes* (October 1).
- Jussim, Estelle  
1981 *Slave to Beauty: The Eccentric Life and Controversial Career of F. Holland Day—Photographer, Publisher, Aesthete*. Boston: Godine.
- Kertess, Klaus  
1980 Figuring It Out. *Artforum* (November).
- Leslie, Charles  
1977 *Wilhelm von Gloeden, Photographer. A Brief Introduction to His Life and Work*. New York: Soho Photographic Publishers.
- Lewis, Thomas S. W.  
1982—  
1983 *Brothers of Ganymede*. *Salamagundi* (Fall/Winter).
- Pater, Walter  
1901 *Greek Studies*. Vol. VII, p. 42. London: Macmillan (uniform edition).
- Peyrefitte, Roger  
1949 *Les amours singulières*. Paris: Le Livre de Poche (original edition, Flammarion).
- Rosen, Charles, and Henri Zerner  
1982 What Is, and Is Not, Realism? *New York Review of Books* (February 18).
- Schiff, Gert  
1979 *The Sun of Taormina*. *The Print Collector's Newsletter* IX(6):198-201.
- Swinburne, Algernon Charles  
1908 Simeon Solomon: Notes on his *Vision of Love* and Other Studies. (Reprinted from *Dark Blue* in *The Bibelot* XIV:9.)

**Wilhelm von Pluschow**





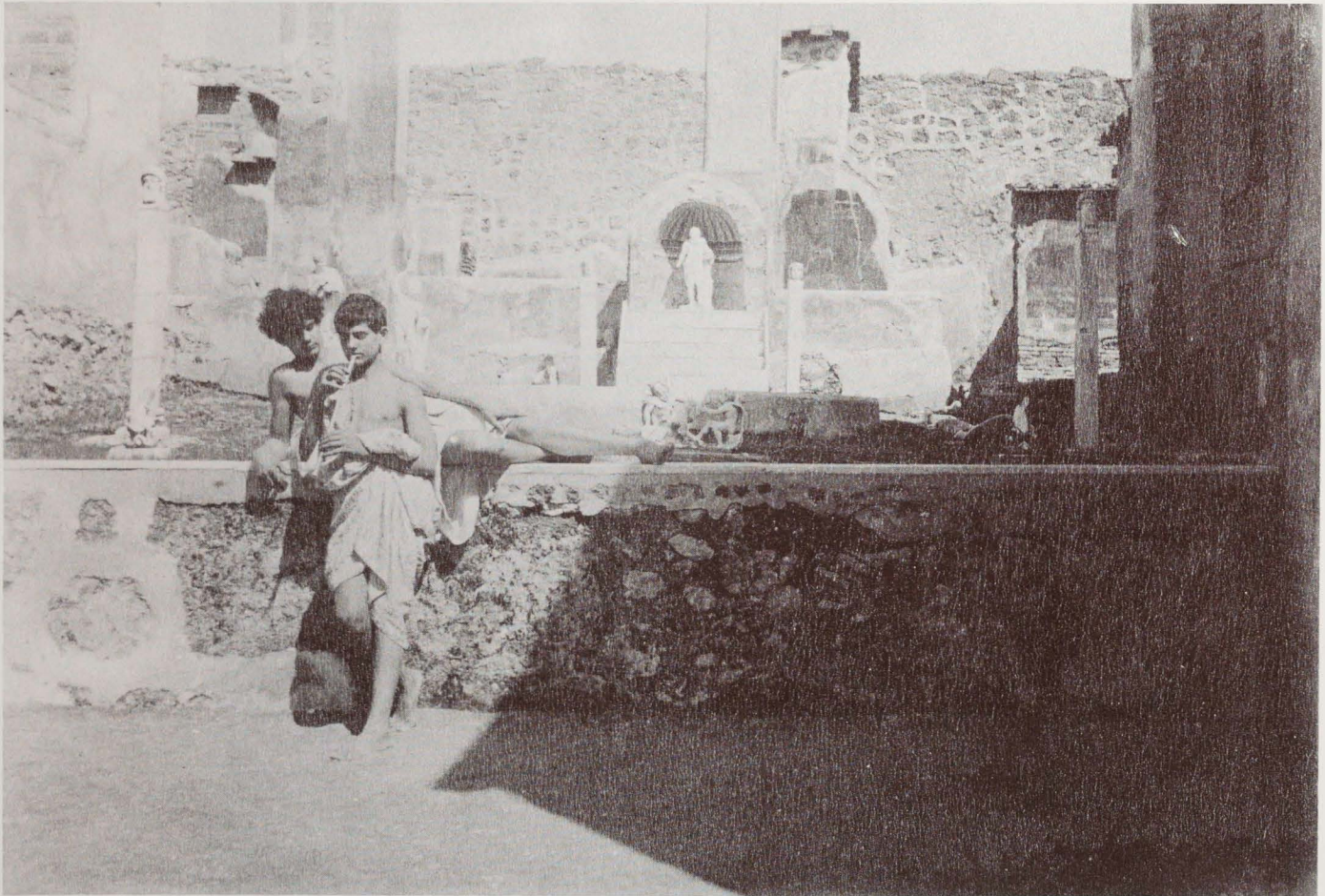






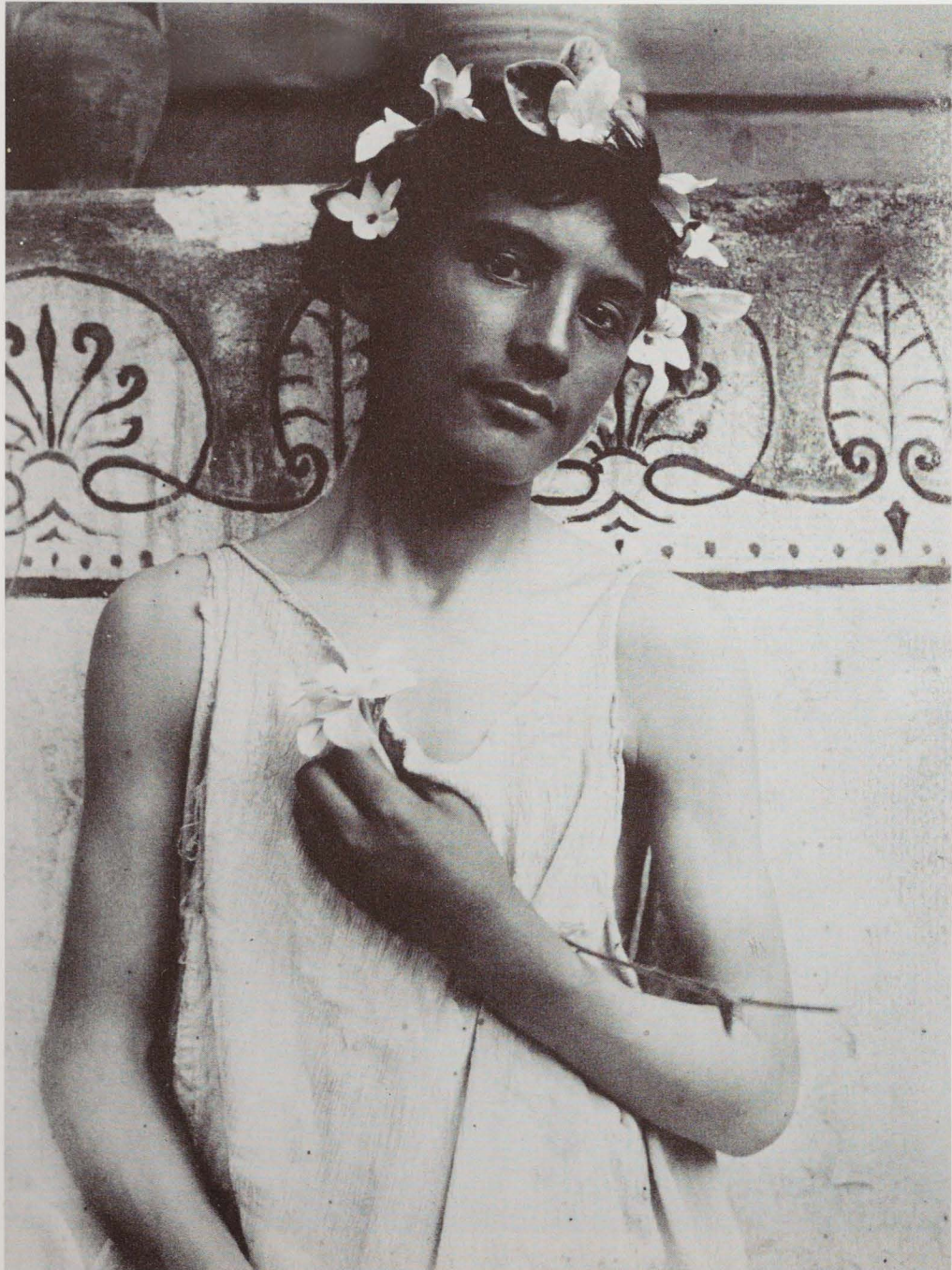




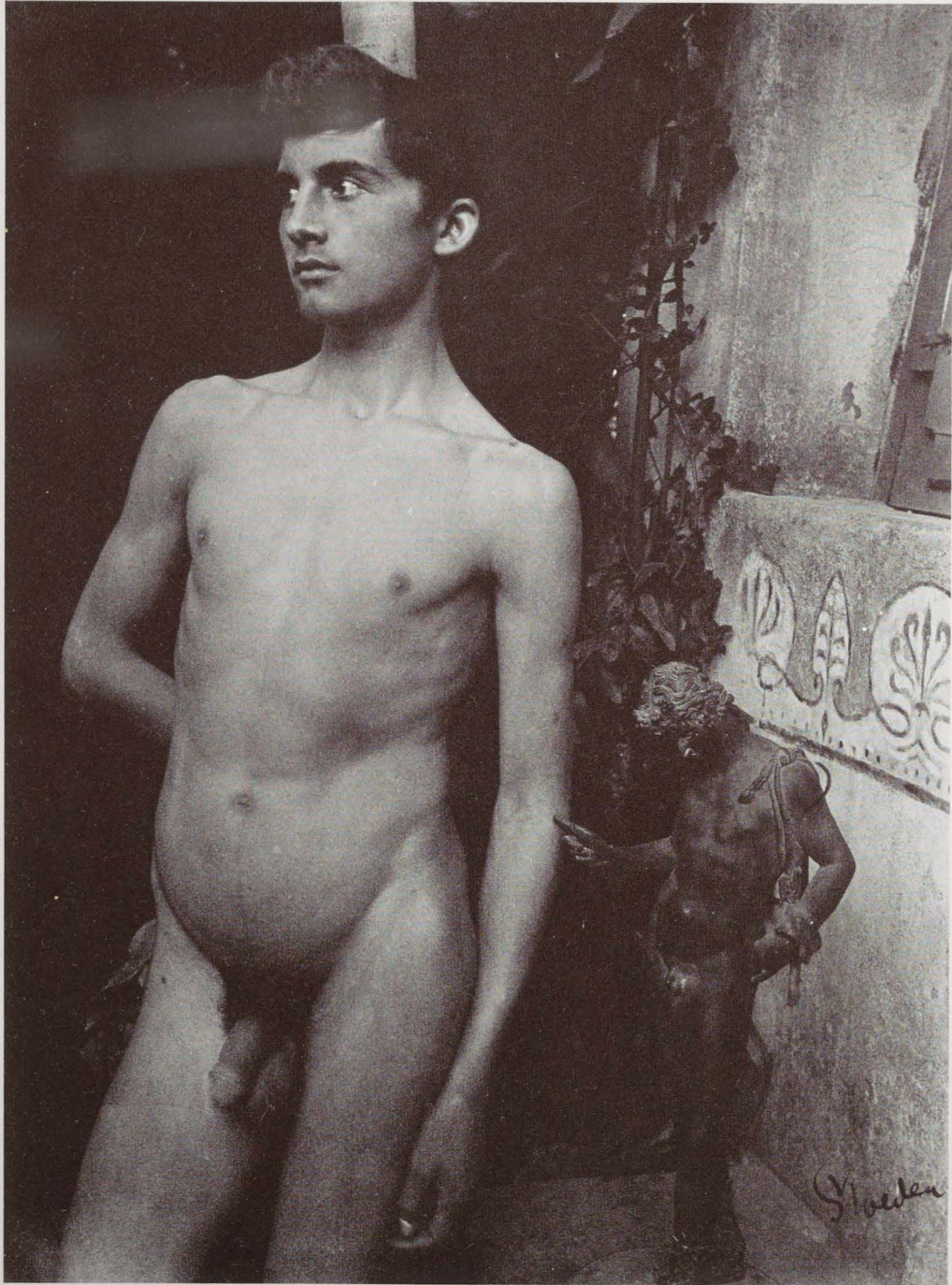


---

**Wilhelm von Gloeden**



















# Lesbian Photography—Seeing through Our Own Eyes<sup>1</sup>

JEB (Joan E. Biren)

We have been socialized to respect fear more than our own needs for language and definition, and while we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us. . . . The transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation and that always seems fraught with danger. . . . We fear the very visibility without which we also cannot truly live. . . . And that visibility which makes us most vulnerable is that which is also the source of our greatest strength.

—Audre Lorde<sup>2</sup>

In what follows, I write as a Lesbian photographer about Lesbian photography. I believe that Lesbian photographers are helping to create a new culture. We are transforming ourselves and the world in which we live by seeing and sharing the realities of our lives and visualizing the future. Lesbian photographers are making visible that which has been invisible.

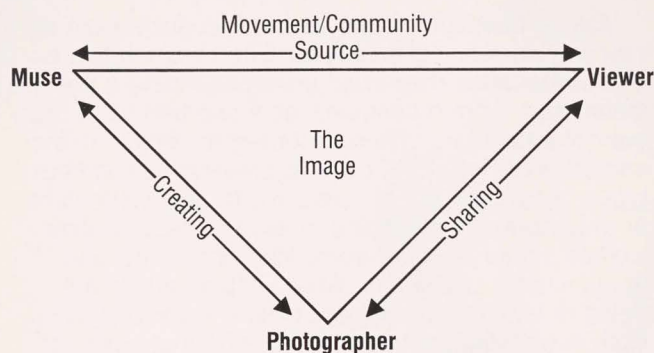
Existing male-defined images of Lesbians are completely false when measured against the realities of Lesbian lives. The viewer is assumed to be male and the portrayal is designed to reinforce his sense of power over us. Male images of pseudo-Lesbians create two stereotypes: Lesbians are either sick, perverted vampires and murderers (the bloodletters) or superromanticized plastic playmates (the bloodless). One stereotype makes us afraid to identify as Lesbians because we don't want to be "unnatural" and ugly. The other ultimately makes us feel inferior because we aren't (or do not forever remain) teen-aged, slim, blond, and blurry à la David Hamilton. Many Lesbians have identified with these images simply because they are accessible.

---

*JEB (Joan E. Biren) has been photographing within the Lesbian feminist movement for more than ten years and supports herself as a free-lance photographer. She taught herself photography after dropping out of a doctoral program at Oxford University. Her photographs have appeared in many Lesbian, feminist, and gay publications including The Furies, Off Our Backs, Gay Community News, Sinister Wisdom, and Our Right to Love. In 1979, JEB published a book of her photographs, Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians, the first book of its kind. Since then she has traveled extensively in this country with a slide/talk presentation, "Lesbian Images in Photography: 1850–1982" and has been conducting workshops for photographers.*

Making Lesbian images visible and accessible is one way of defining ourselves. Often women feel excluded because they insist on experiencing a positive statement, "I am a Lesbian," as if one had said, "You are not a Lesbian." Women sometimes object to the very idea of "labeling" as "just creating new stereotypes or boxes." But for Lesbians to define (to name or to picture) is not limiting or exclusionary of other women, is not creating some kind of "correct line" about what a Lesbian is. What Lesbian artists are doing is expanding the possibilities, enlarging our vision, suggesting new ways of looking that have not existed before—ways that affirm our loving and our lives. Adrienne Rich (1980:648) has offered the concept of "Lesbian existence," suggesting a presence throughout time and "our continuing creation of the meaning of that existence." I visualize this as a spiral of existence in which Lesbians continually shed male-identification as we move into a woman-centered world. Part of what propels us on this journey is what *Sinister Wisdom* has called "the Lesbian imagination in all women."<sup>3</sup> Lesbian definitions (as our seeing and our visions) will continue to evolve as we journey further into this new woman-identified existence.

Part of defining ourselves is the creation of a common language—oral, written, and visual. Lesbian photographers are most concerned with the visual vocabulary. This may be affected by race, class, age, and regional or other differences. Differences need to be acknowledged and appreciated. But something about those of us who have survived as women-loving women in a woman-hating world is the same, and something we are creating is the same. If we do not identify that "something," we will remain invisible. Lesbians cannot survive as a formless, faceless people who fear discovery so much that we are not visible—even to each other. Without a visual identity we have no community, no support network, no movement. Making ourselves visible is a political act. Making ourselves visible is a continual process.



Lesbians make visible some way in which they have freed themselves from patriarchal domination; then Lesbian photographers make these women visible in their images; then the images are made visible. All these things are in continual interaction, mutually validating each other and encouraging further movement into Lesbian existence. I have diagrammed these interactions as a triangle. In what follows I explore, first, the interaction between the viewer and the muse; then the photographer and the viewer; and, finally, the muse and the photographer.<sup>4</sup>

### The Viewer and the Muse

People ask me, "Why are there no feminine women in your book?" or "How about pictures of some straight, professional-looking women?" or "Where are the Lesbians at the office or playing bridge?" We all want to be validated by seeing ourselves reflected in images. At the same time, Lesbians have internalized our oppression, expressing it in our desire to "pass." Passing means giving no visual sign of being different from the dominant, straight culture. It is the visual signs which are so threatening to heterosexuals—the more blatant the sign, the more threatening it seems and the more forcefully it will be resisted. Anything that signals a moving away from the male-prescribed behavior for females is a sign. The most basic, of course, is existing in the world without a visible male "protector." Other signs can range from standing with your hands in your pockets or sitting with your legs apart to looking directly out from your eyes, growing your body hair, or wearing "dykey" clothes (usually durable, comfortable clothing whose use is supposed to be restricted to men). When Lesbians ask for images in which we look "undykey" because otherwise "someone might get the 'wrong' idea; might be discouraged from becoming a Lesbian; or might use the images 'against' us," we are censoring ourselves because of our own fear of recognition.

The visual appearance of Lesbians (what I sometimes call *The Look, The Stance, The Clothes*) is a combination of what already exists and has existed in our herstory and how Lesbians will be when we become even more liberated from male definitions. For example, if you are a woman in the city it is dangerous to take off your clothes when you are outside because men will probably attack you. In woman-controlled country spaces, it is safe for women to be nude. If I portray "too many nudes," it is because my image of Lesbians is a synthesis of how we are now and my vision of the future. To the extent that the viewer and the photographer share a common vision, the image communicates what the photographer wants it to communicate. If the viewer does not share the artist's vision, it is possible, as Arlene Raven (1977:51) has pointed out, that the image itself can force the viewer "to take a leap of consciousness out from the patriarchal mindset." In other words, how we see is affected by the differing perspectives along the road from victim to survivor (can you imagine little wooden signs of cameras posted at the scenic viewpoints along this road?), by how far we have traveled on our journey into woman-identified existence. Our perceptions change along with our appearance and the substance of our lives. We have a different way of seeing because we have a different way of being; and we have a different way of seeing because we have a different way of being. Lesbian images can help speed the transformation of our individual lives and the world by stirring our imaginations, by focusing on the aspects of Lesbian lives and looks that are different from male-dominated culture, and by celebrating these differences as the beginnings of a better world.

### The Photographer and the Viewer

We live in a world filled with images and, because of the camera, probably more images than ever before. Unfortunately, few people know how to "read" or experience visual images. The photograph is often regarded as proof that something exists. But all photographs reflect the subjective vision of their makers. There is no objective "way things look"; there are only different ways of seeing. How we see and how we represent our vision are both determined by, and are determiners of, our consciousness. Most people too often fall into the trap of accepting the point of view of the photographer as a "true" representation of the visible world only when the photographic image reflects the prevailing ideology. When the photograph reflects a different consciousness, one that challenges established values, then people call it "political" or label it "propaganda." But art and politics are not separable; nor art and propaganda. All art is

propaganda for some ideology. The photograph has already transformed our way of experiencing the world. All of us need to understand better how pictures can introduce another mode of vision into the world. My own process of seeing and photographing has been very affected by the existence or nonexistence of certain kinds of pictures.

When I first started photographing in 1970, I was a Lesbian who had never seen an affirming Lesbian image, so I began by making photographs of smiling Lesbians. I trained myself not to make pictures when women looked unhappy, because my idea of what was appropriate to photograph was influenced by the "happy heterosexual" images all around me. As our movement grew, joyful images of Lesbians were increasingly visible. Then I learned that we also needed and wanted to see the pain and struggle that are a part of Lesbian lives. My own way of seeing was transformed by being able to look at more images of our reality. This is why it is so important for Lesbian photographers to work on new and more effective ways of making our photographs accessible (including ways of financing our photography and distributing our images).

No photograph completely communicates any one thing exclusively; photographs give us the appearance of a moment in time, but they cannot narrate, cannot tell us about change. We, the viewers, fill in much of the meaning. We will take part of the meaning from the context in which we view the picture—reading a caption, looking at the surrounding images, noticing whether we see it in a museum, an ad for whiskey, or a Lesbian publication. The reliance of the photograph on the viewer or context for its meaning makes existing visual imagery even more important. What now exists is mostly male-defined. As Harmony Hammond (1977; 1978:261)<sup>5</sup> has observed, the work of Lesbian visual artists is not visible to one another, and this denies us "the possibility of developing work that acknowledges Lesbian experience as a creative source for art making and as a context in which to explore it." We need to enlarge the context for viewing Lesbian art by making our art and ourselves more visible to one another.

Currently most photography we look at is removed from the context in which it was made. Part of the definition of Lesbian photography that I am offering depends upon the photograph being viewed in a context "continuous with that from which the camera removed it" (Berger 1980:51), for example, in our homes, women's centers, and Lesbian bars and restaurants. In this way the photographer can be more certain of the meaning which will be assigned to the photographs and the use to which they will be put. The photograph will be comprehensible, as Joanne Kerr has explained, "because of the reference to

shared experience, rather than shared knowledge of artistic convention."<sup>6</sup>

Making images for non-Lesbian audiences forces Lesbian artists to make different images because we must rely so heavily on the common experience of art to communicate. But making images for Lesbian viewers allows Lesbian artists to share our life experiences through our art. As women share their new experiences with us, our images change. For example, in the last year or so I have had a chance to talk with and photograph fat Lesbians who were feeling good about their own bodies. This was a change which made me see fat women in a more affirming way. (I should also say that I subsequently gained weight and feel okay about it most of the time.) Knowing there is a community of women to view our work gives Lesbian photographers permission to create photographs which will never be encouraged by establishment art schools, critics, museums, photography magazines, or the general public.

Kerr suggests that feminist, as opposed to Lesbian, art tries to bring about social change by communicating women's experience, especially women's oppression (like violence against women), directly to the male-dominated culture. She continues: "When art specifically refers to and is inspired by women and their relationships with one another, the art can be defined as most especially 'Lesbian' and often speaks to a smaller and more specific audience."<sup>7</sup> I do not entirely agree with the implication that feminist art is more organizational (mobilizing action) and Lesbian art more educational (raising consciousness). I agree that Lesbian art is not made for large public audiences; it emerges as an affirmation of those who are struggling against the patriarchy more than as a direct reaction against the patriarchy itself. Lesbian photographers are not reporters to the rest of the world as much as we are recorders for those whom we photograph. They are the ones who use our images and are moved to action by them.

### The Muse and the Photographer

In Lesbian photography, where the muse is a woman, we strive for collaboration, not domination. This collaboration extends into something reciprocal, mutual, an exchange of inspirational energy. Photography has traditionally been used to objectify and violate women, so Lesbian photographers' vision is clouded by many photographic conventions used especially in portraying women's bodies. The words associated with photography are heavy with the uses to which it has been put: "load and shoot" the camera, "take" your picture, "capture" the image. The very word "photography" looks too much like "pornography" for

comfort. The camera, especially with a long lens, looks phallic. Lesbian photographers must work against this male definition of the photographic process as predatory. We can change the way we talk about what we are doing, helping ourselves to change the way we think about it: "make" a picture, "embrace" the muse, and so on. But we must also change the process.

A woman being photographed will choose how she presents herself based, in part, upon who the photographer is and how well they know and understand each other. If I expect a woman to trust me, to reveal herself to me, I have to be willing to reciprocate, to trust her with revelations of my own. This could be as simple as taking my clothes off if she is nude. Most often, though, I will try to explain why I am moved to make a picture with her, tell her what it is about her that I find attractive. Then, at some point before or after the actual photographing, we discuss the possible uses of the photographs and how much control she would like to maintain. It seems Lesbian photographers often assume that women don't want to be photographed rather than asking and giving them the choice. By encouraging this kind of dialogue, I hope that more rather than fewer images will result.

If the photographer plans to publish or exhibit the photographs, it is best to have a written agreement with the muse.<sup>8</sup> "Standard" release forms do not deal with the question of whether or not the "model" wishes to be identified as a Lesbian or what type of publications she would allow her photograph to appear in. Lesbian photographers have a responsibility to our muses never to place them in danger of losing their jobs, their children, their immigration status, or something of which we might not even be aware. Publishing or exhibiting photographs irresponsibly jeopardizes not only the muses' rights but the special trust that is growing among Lesbian photographers and women in the movement/community. The imperatives of sharing any particular image (even one's very best photographs) must be weighed carefully in a scale that is tipped toward the rights of the individual women involved.

In some "primitive" cultures, art forms are more valued for the activity involved in the process of creating than for the product. For example, the body state—the energy flow—achieved by the potter making a pot is just as important as having something in which to put porridge (Gina 1974:13–14). By reversing the male myth of the objective observer, seeing but not seen, present but not participating, Lesbian photographers may become emotionally involved while we are photographing. This is not a license to disrupt anything or intrude upon anyone. If we are acutely aware of a woman's feelings, we will probably act in a sensitive, caring way. If we pretend we are not photographing someone when we are, the distance we put

between us introduces the possibility of abuse. If we are oriented toward producing a "usable, professional" photograph, we may lose our inspiration and objectify our muse. Only by allowing ourselves to feel passionately in these exchanges are we, the photographers, transforming ourselves through the process of getting to know our muses. The energy that is exchanged between the Lesbian photographer and her muse becomes transformed into the image, and later the image radiates that same energy.

Although Lesbian photographers have made visible so much that has been invisible, I am amazed at how many images still simply do not exist—images of everyday, ordinary Lesbian lives. We need more of these images which can be so extraordinarily moving. Just as there is power in words, in naming, there is power in visual images, in being truly seen. Making Lesbian images is a way for Lesbians to empower ourselves.

### Acknowledgments

For me, making photographs is easier than writing about them. I am grateful to all the women who have previously written about Lesbian art and culture and to all the friends who have discussed Lesbian photography with me for aiding me in articulating my thoughts and feelings.

The title of this article comes, in part, from Susan Griffin's *Her Vision: Now She Sees Through Her Own Eyes*, which is the name of the fourth book in *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*, Harper Colophon Books, New York, 1978.



## Notes

- 1 This is the complete version of an article that was published in part in *The Blatant Image: A Magazine of Feminist Photography*, no. 1, 1981. The photographs are from a new, as yet untitled, book of Lesbian photographs by JEB now in progress; from *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians*, by JEB, published in 1979 (available for \$10 from Glad Hag Books, P.O. Box 2934, Washington, D.C. 20013, discreetly packaged); and from *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology*, edited by Evelyn Torton Beck (Persephone Press, 1982).
- 2 Audre Lorde, from her remarks at the 1977 Modern Language Association meeting, reprinted in *Sinister Wisdom*, no. 6, pp. 13 and 15.
- 3 *Sinister Wisdom* is available from P.O. Box 660, Amherst, MA 01004.
- 4 Although I am exploring the process from the perspective of a Lesbian photographer, it obviously applies to other Lesbian artists. In the model diagrammed here, the photographer could be thought of as the artist or creator; the viewer could be thought of as the audience or context; and the muse could be thought of as either the subject or content of the work. But I have never liked referring to the women in my photographs as my subjects, so I prefer muse. I was introduced to the concept of the muse in Arlene Raven and Ruth Iskin (1977).  
I have chosen to explore the interactions among Lesbian muses, photographers, and viewers. I am not unaware of the other possibilities: where, for example, the photographer and the viewer are Lesbians but the muse is not Lesbian, or the muse is Lesbian but the photographer and the viewer are not Lesbians. We could discuss which (if either) is a Lesbian photograph: the picture of a flower I made for my (non-Lesbian) mother's birthday present or male photographer Skrebneski's book cover portrait of Lesbian author Rita Mae Brown? But consideration of these questions is so new that I believe we will gain the most by focusing on the most clearly Lesbian situation first.
- 5 The entire issue of *Heresies*, no. 3 (Fall), 1977, is devoted to Lesbian art and artists.
- 6 See Kerr (1980:206), "a cultural Feminist document in the form of a doctoral dissertation." University of California, Irvine.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 216.

- 8 A sample release form. Your name and address at the top, then:

### PHOTOGRAPHER'S RELEASE FORM

PLEASE CROSS OUT THE PARTS THAT DO NOT APPLY.  
THANK YOU.

For valuable consideration received, I hereby give (your name) the absolute right and permission, with respect to the photographs that she has taken of me or in which I may be included with others:

- a) To copyright the same in her own name or any name that she may choose.
- b) To use, re-use, publish and re-publish the same in any medium for any purpose. This permission includes lesbian media, gay media, feminist media, and mass media.
- c) To state that I am a Lesbian if she so chooses.
- d) To use my name or nickname in connection with the photograph if she so chooses.
- e) To use the name of the city or place where the photograph was taken or where I live in connection with the photograph if she so chooses.

I hereby waive any right that I may have to inspect or approve the finished photograph or the use to which it may be applied and release (your name) from any and all claims, including claims for libel arising out of the use of the photographs.

(LEAVE SPACE HERE FOR OTHER AGREEMENTS  
TO BE WRITTEN IN)

I am over the age of twenty-one and have every right to contract in my own name in the above regard.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

PRINT Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

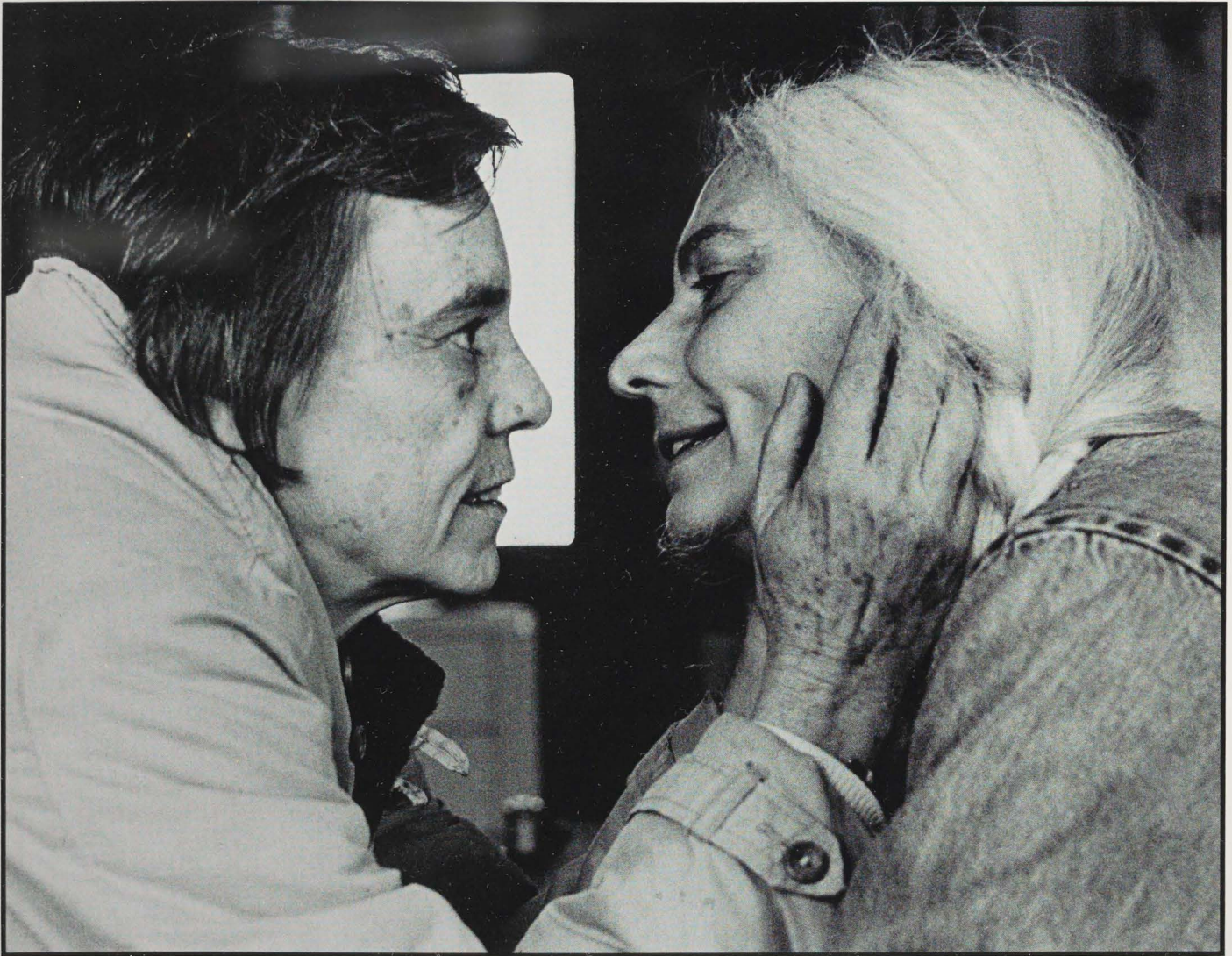
Phone: (Area Code) \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

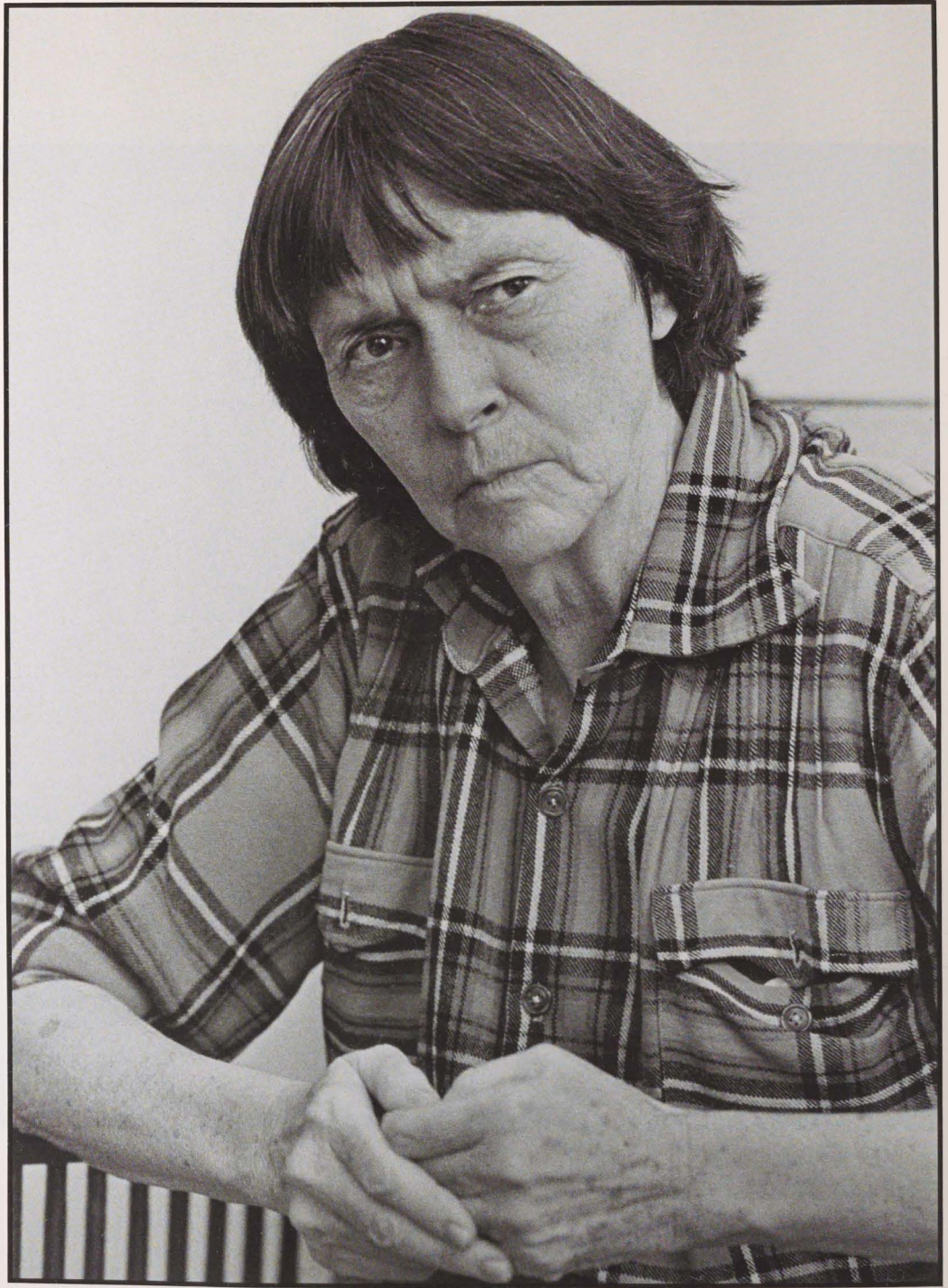
---

## References

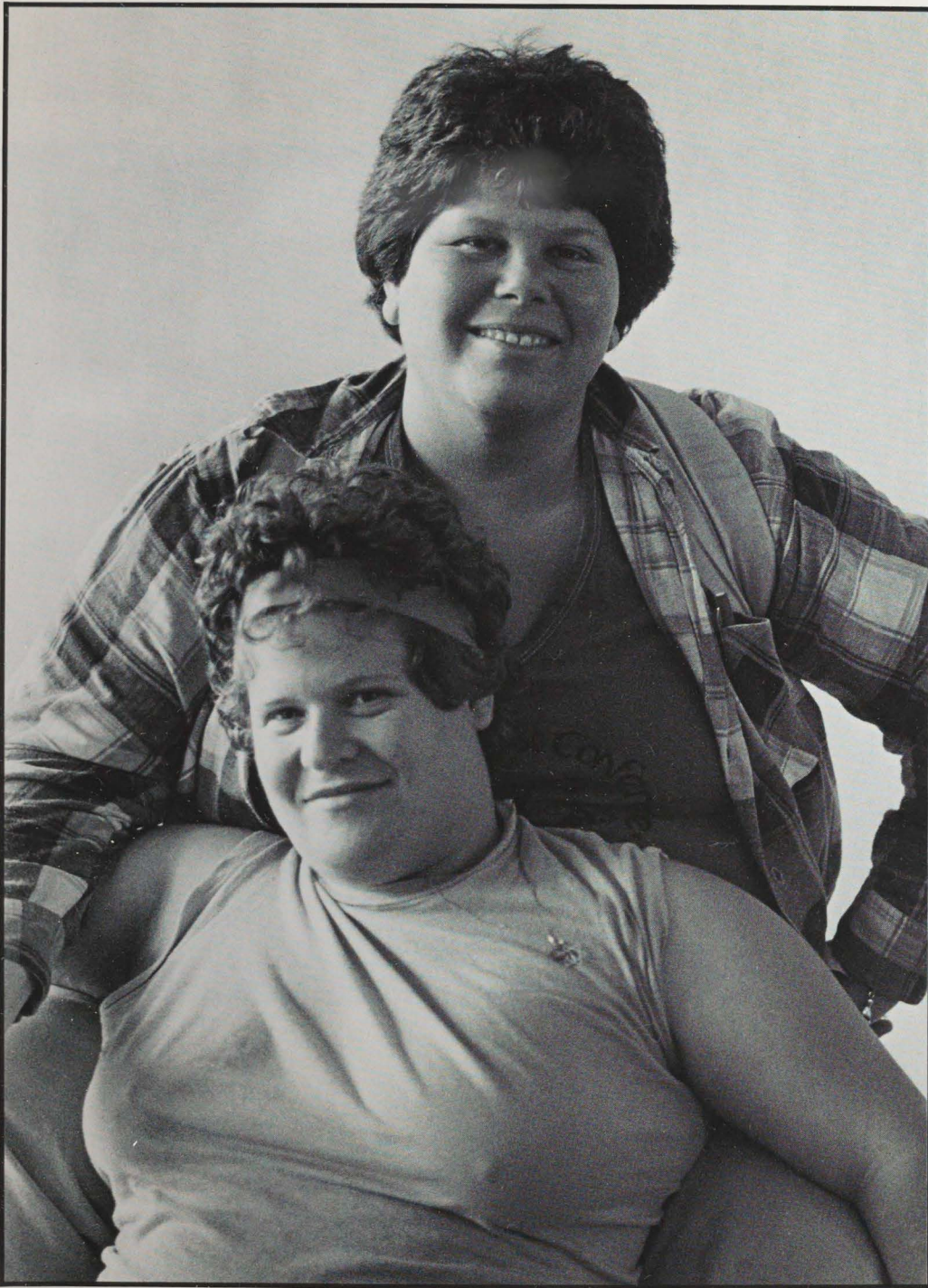
- Berger, John  
1980 Uses of Photography. *In* About Looking. New York: Pantheon.
- Gina  
1974 Rosie Rightbrain's Exorcism/Invocation. *Amazon Quarterly* 2(4). Also reprinted *in* The Lesbian Reader. Gina Covina and Laurel Galana, eds., Amazon Press, 1975.
- Hammond, Harmony  
1977 Class Notes. *Heresies*, no. 3 (Fall).  
1978 Lesbian Artists. *In* Our Right to Love. Ginny Vida, ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Kerr, Joanne  
1980 Art and Community: A Sociological Study of Contemporary Feminist Art. Unpub. diss.
- Raven, Arlene  
1977 Happy Birthday, America. *Chrysalis*, no. 1.
- ——— and Ruth Iskin  
1977 Through the Peephole: Toward a Lesbian Sensibility in Art. *Chrysalis*, no. 4.
- Rich, Adrienne  
1980 Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence. *Signs* 5:4 (Summer).



Kady and Pagan, New York, 1978. Copyright © JEB (Joan E. Biren), 1979; from *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians*.



Barbara, Florida, 1981. Copyright © JEB (Joan E. Biren), 1982.



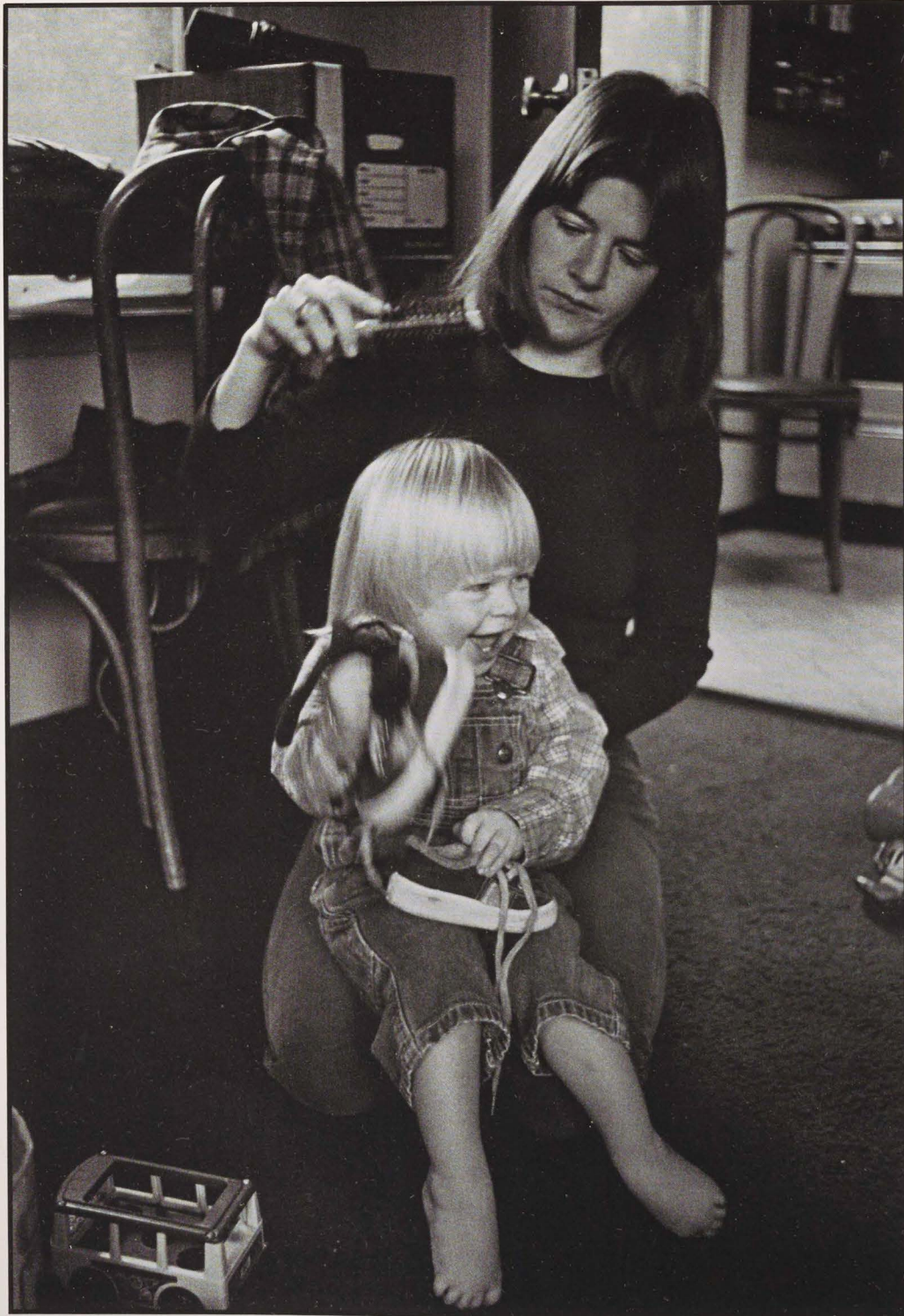
Leah and Judith (rear), California, 1982. Copyright © JEB  
(Joan E. Biren), 1982.



Pamella, New York, 1981. Copyright © JEB (Joan E. Biren), 1982.

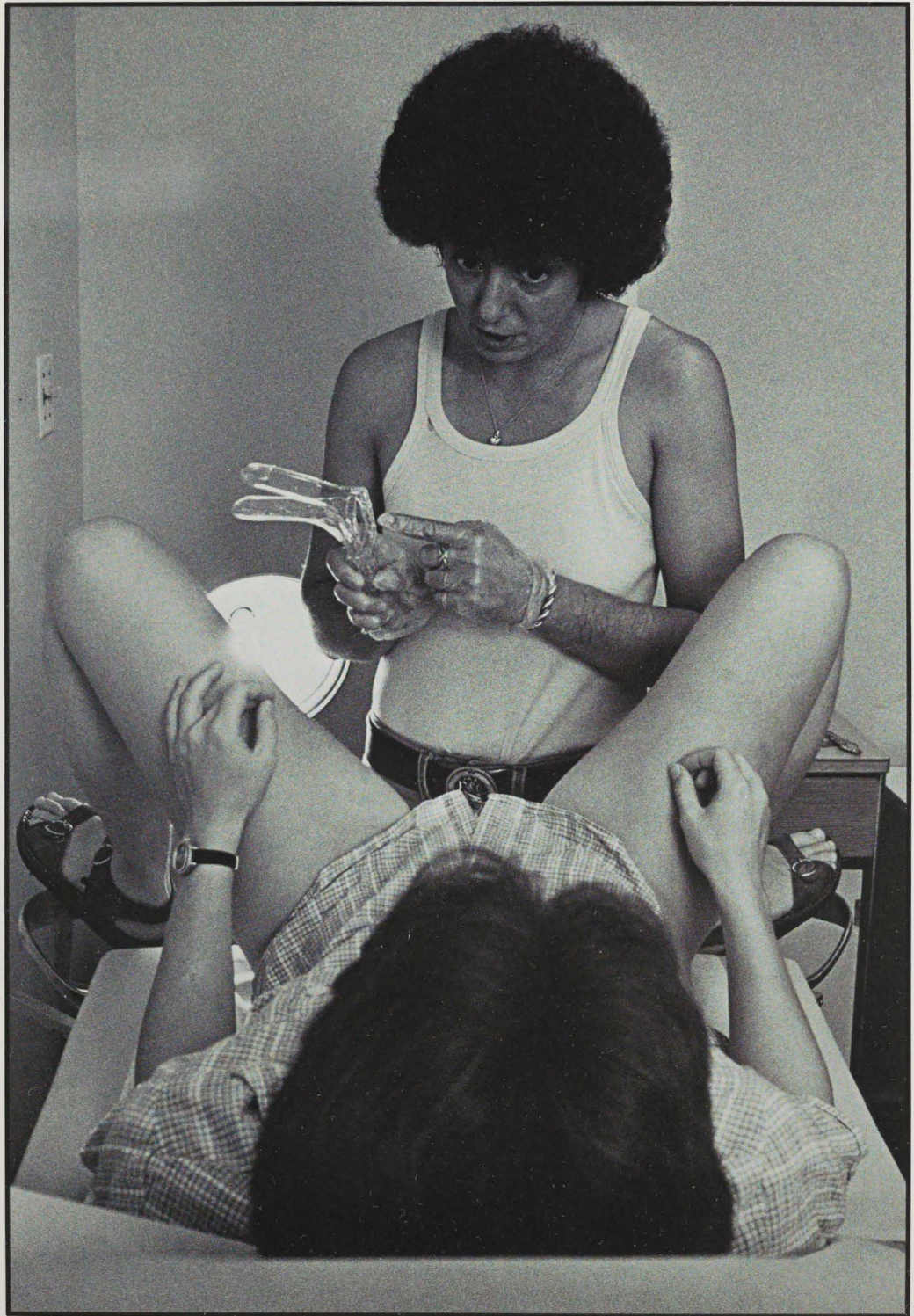


Rusty, Washington, D.C., 1979. Copyright © JEB (Joan E. Biren), 1979; from *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians*.



Makaela and Kater (rear), California, 1982. Copyright © JEB (Joan E. Biren), 1982.





Barb and Joanie (rear), Washington, D.C., 1979. Copyright © JEB (Joan E. Biren), 1981.



Jocelyn and Rachel, California, 1982. Copyright © JEB (Joan E. Biren), 1982; from *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology*.



Dana, Texas, 1980. Copyright © JEB (Joan E. Biren), 1981.



San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Freedom Day, 1980.  
Copyright © JEB (Joan E. Biren), 1981.

---

## Information for Authors

**Style.** Issues of the current volume should be consulted, along with the *Manual of Style* of the University of Chicago Press. We encourage the use of major subheadings and, where appropriate, second-level subheadings.

**Manuscript Preparation.** Manuscripts must be typed *double-spaced* (including abstract, quotations, notes and references cited) one side only on 8½ × 11 noncorrasable bond, with ample margins for editorial markings (at least one inch on all sides). Do not break words at the ends of lines. Retype any page on which complicated corrections have been made. The original and two copies must be submitted. Author should keep a copy.

**Footnotes.** Footnotes appear as "Notes" at the end of articles. Authors are advised to include footnote material in the text wherever possible. Notes are to be numbered consecutively throughout the paper and are to be typed on a separate sheet (double-spaced).

**References.** The list of references which accompanies an article should be limited to, and inclusive of, those publications actually cited in the text. References are not cited in footnotes but carried within the text in parentheses with author's last name, the year of original publication, and page—e.g. (Kroeber 1948:205). Titles and publication information on references appear as "References" at the end of the article and should be listed alphabetically by author and chronologically for each author. Write out the names of journals and other publications in full. Provide complete references following the style of recent issues for form of citation, punctuation, capitalization, use of italics, etc. References cited should be typed on a separate page (double-spaced). References not presented in the style required will be returned to the author for revision.

**Tables.** All tabular material should be part of a separately numbered series of "Tables." Each table must be typed on a separate sheet and identified by a short descriptive title. Footnotes for tables appear at the bottom of the tables and are marked \*, †, ‡, §, ¶, etc., according to standard usage. Marginal notation on manuscript should indicate approximately where tables are to appear.

**Figures.** All illustrative material, drawings, maps, diagrams, and photographs should be included in a single numbered series and designated "Figures." They must be submitted in a form suitable for publication without redrawing. Drawings should be carefully done with India ink on either hard, white, smooth-surfaced board or good quality tracing paper. Photographs should be glossy prints and should be numbered on the back to key with captions. All figures should be numbered consecutively and all captions should be typed together on a separate sheet of paper (double-spaced). Marginal notations on manuscript should indicate approximately where figures are to appear.

**Proofs.** Galley proofs or page proofs are sent to authors who are expected to check for typographic mistakes and errors in fact. No part of an article can be rewritten in proofs. Significant new data or an absolutely necessary comment may sometimes be added as a brief footnote. All changes and addenda submitted by the author on his corrected galley proofs are suggestions only and may be disregarded at the discretion of the Editor. The corrected proofs should be returned to the Editor within 48 hours of receipt. It will be impossible to make corrections not promptly received by the Editor.

**Reprints.** They will be supplied to authors who return with payment by the specified deadline reprint order forms mailed to them along with proofs.

### Editors:

Larry Gross  
Annenberg School  
of Communications  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Jay Ruby  
Department  
of Anthropology  
Temple University  
Philadelphia, PA 19122

