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Insiders and Outsiders on the Gay Community in Weimar Berlin

The visibility of Berlin's gay population began following 1871, when Paragraph 175 of the German penal code outlawed sex between males. The implementation of this statute triggered fervent activism from German homosexuals and scientists fighting for its repeal. By the 1920s, Berlin was viewed as an international "gay capital," a hotspot for homosexual tourists and other figures seeking to engage with the thriving queer culture that existed there. According to Robert Beachy, Berlin was uniquely suited to become a global epicenter of homosexual culture after the Great War, due to the intersection of advocacy efforts by scientists and self-identified homosexuals, lax police enforcement of anti-sodomy laws, and the relatively free press which facilitated public debate of homosexual acceptance¹. Though advocacy played a major role in the community's visibility, other important factors contributed to the establishment of a thriving gay scene in Berlin. David Prickett argues that Berlin's gay community also gained notoriety from scandalous news accounts of male prostitution and exciting stories of gay venues². Queer spaces grew in notoriety not only among Berlin citizens, but also with sex tourists capitalizing on hyperinflation and cheap travel to see the nightclubs, bars, and other venues mentioned in

¹ Beachy, Robert. "The German Invention of Homosexuality." *The Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 4 (2010): 804.

² Prickett, David James. "Defining Identity via Homosexual Spaces: Locating the Male Homosexual in Weimar Berlin." *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture* 21, no. 1 (2005): 135.

salacious accounts by non-German writers such as Christopher Isherwood and the French novelist Willy.

By the 1920s, Berlin's gay community enjoyed a global spotlight, yet tourist accounts of the community focused largely on nightlife and entertainment—such as bars and nightclubs—and did little justice to the ongoing challenges faced by queer Germans in their everyday lives. Within the gay community, conflicting ideals and understanding of gay identity led to infighting between proponents of the scientific perspective advanced by Magnus Hirschfeld and those of the hyper-masculinist perspective championed by Adolf Brand. Moreover, attacks on gay Berliners' perceived femininity or immorality emerged from across the political spectrum. As the Nazi Party rose to power, leftist criticism of their acceptance of Ernst Röhm's open homosexuality prompted party leadership to change their stance to one that was aggressively homophobic. The newly-adopted anti-homosexual position of the Nazi Party led to a police crackdown on gay spaces and a series of mass-arrests of gay men after the party took power in 1933, leading to the end of Berlin's visible gay culture until the end of the Second World War.

This paper will assess the factors that contributed the rise of Berlin's gay community to global prominence, the infighting and external attacks faced by gay Berliners, and the responses of the Berlin's public and tourist writers to the community's increased visibility. The goal of this work is to demonstrate that the global spotlight on Berlin's gay community did little to aid the struggles faced by its members, and may have contributed to political persecution that led to its destruction in subsequent years. By focusing on the notoriety of gay nightlife and spectacle, tourists called attention to scenes that challenged traditional gender norms as they seemed to ignore the challenging work of advocacy within the gay community and its growing divisions and opponents.

Though modern terminology such as the acronym “LGBTQ” is inclusive of different identities represented in the queer spectrum, such comprehensive terms did not exist in the time period being analyzed. Robert Beachy discusses the evolution of terms identifying homosexuals in Germany in his book, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity*. According to Beachy, early discussions referred to men who had sex with men simply as “sodomites,” and attributed this behavior to perversion or moral failings rather than an innate sexual desire. By the beginning of the twentieth century, self-identified homosexuals and medical professionals began developing new terms identifying gay men as members of a distinct sexual category. The word *Urning*, meaning a gay man, was invented by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, a lawyer and prominent gay activist for use in his advocacy efforts. The word “homosexuality” was also invented around this time and began to spread through European languages³. Another sexual identity term invented in the twentieth century was “transvestite,” which was coined by Magnus Hirschfeld to describe cross-dressing individuals he met while studying Berlin’s gay community. Beachy notes that Hirschfeld did not argue that transvestites were an entirely separate gender identity, because many of the cross-dressers he met were actually heterosexual⁴.

A variety of secondary sources discuss queer Berlin at length, but it is important to note the disproportionate representation of male homosexuality in these works. Of the scholarly sources consulted while writing this paper, many focused extensively on gay men and offered limited analyses of the experiences of lesbians, bisexuals, or transvestites living in Berlin during this time period. One possible explanation for this problem is that modern historians located more primary sources relating to gay men than those concerning other sexual minorities. If gay males were the most visible members of Berlin’s queer community in the 1920s, then there

³ Beachy, Robert. *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015: 6.

⁴ Beachy, Robert. *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015: 88.

would be more documentation of their experiences in the form of news stories, journal entries, photos and other sources. Since there was not sufficient secondary literature available to discuss other sexual minorities at length, this paper focuses on “gay Berlin,” instead of the city’s queer community as a whole. The relative lack of secondary source representation of queer Berliners other than gay men presents a compelling topic for future research, and also highlights a continuing problem of diversity in scholarly discussions surrounding sexual minorities.

Several secondary works referenced in this paper emphasized the significance of queer spaces in Weimar Berlin. In *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity*, Robert Beachy argues that the availability of gay venues such as nightclubs and cabarets, as well as the widespread male prostitution and lax police enforcement at these spaces, made Berlin a desirable destination for sex tourists seeking to explore the gay scene that existed there. In his review of *Gay Berlin*, Geoffrey Giles commends the originality of Beachy’s chapter on sex tourism and male prostitution. Giles also points out that Robert Beachy’s inclusion of tourist writers in this chapter strengthens his overall argument about the international significance of Berlin’s gay scene⁶.

David James Prickett also discusses the importance of gay venues. Prickett’s analysis is unique from Beachy’s in that it examines gay spaces as examples of other factors affecting the community, such as conflicting notions of gay identity, the complex legal status of homosexuality in Berlin, and the fascination of mainstream Germans with gay cultures⁷.

Laurence Senelick is another modern writer who focuses on queer spaces in his work, but his article argues that gay theatre revues interacted with the larger German community by

⁵ Beachy, Robert. *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015: 188.

⁶ Giles, Geoffrey. "Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity by Robert Beachy." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 24, no. 3 (2015): 512.

⁷ Prickett, David James. “Defining Identity via Homosexual Spaces: Locating the Male Homosexual in Weimar Berlin.” *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture* 21, no. 1 (2015): 134-5.

performing shows that promoted increased tolerance and decriminalization of homosexuality⁸. Senelick's work stands out from others discussed due to its focus on gay theatre, as well as its analysis of the gay theatre revue as an instrument of advocacy for tolerance of homosexuality.

The relationship between the German media and Berlin's gay community is also extensively discussed in modern historical analyses. In "The German Invention of Homosexuality," Robert Beachy credits the free German press and an engaged mainstream middle class with increasing the visibility and support of German homosexuals⁹. The free German press may have made more mainstream citizens aware of homosexuality, but the media also facilitated further attacks on the gay community. In "The Homosexual Scare and the Masculinization of German Politics Before World War I," Norman Domeier discusses the Eulenberg Scandal, and the writings of Maximilian Harden and others, as examples of the German public tying sexual scandals to perceived larger problems in German society¹⁰. Domeier's work disagrees with Beachy's in that it points to the media coverage of homosexuality as a cause for further attacks on the gay community, rather than an outlet for advocates and supporters. David James Prickett's argument in his 2005 article agrees with that of Norman Domeier. Prickett contends that press accounts of gay Germans and their meeting spaces, "not only further marginalized the male homosexual, but also intensified the mainstream notion that the male homosexual was a criminal."¹¹

Advocacy for acceptance of homosexuality in Germany increased dramatically after the passage of Paragraph 175 forbidding same-sex relations between men. The text of the original

⁸ Senelick, Laurence. "The Homosexual Theatre Movement in the Weimar Republic." *Theatre Survey* 49, no. 01 (2008): 5-35.

⁹ Beachy, Robert. "The German Invention of Homosexuality." *The Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 4 (2010): 804.

¹⁰ Domeier, Norman. "The Homosexual Scare and the Masculinization of German Politics Before World War I." *Central European History* 47, no. 04 (2014): 737.

¹¹ Prickett, David James. "Defining Identity via Homosexual Spaces: Locating the Male Homosexual in Weimar Berlin." *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture* 21, no. 1 (2005): 135.

statute simply read, “An unnatural sex act committed between persons of male sex or by humans with animals is punishable by imprisonment; the loss of civil rights might also be imposed.”¹² Robert Beachy employs the example of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs to demonstrate how gay German men responded to this law by publicly declaring their homosexuality and advocating for tolerance of their community¹³. Beachy’s decision to use Ulrichs as an example drew criticism from Geoffrey Giles, who pointed out that Ulrichs’ efforts began in Munich and not in Berlin¹⁴. However, Beachy describes how Ulrichs spent time in Berlin and viewed the city as a place better suited than most for him to engage with the gay community, emphasizing Ulrichs’ work as relevant to analysis of Berlin’s gay subculture¹⁵. Advocacy for tolerance of homosexuality also came from communities of psychological and medical professionals who applied science-based reasoning to argue that the gay identity was distinct and innate. The most prominent activist in this wing of the homosexual community was Magnus Hirschfeld, the founder of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee (*Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee* or *WhK* in German).

At the founding of the *WhK* in 1897, Magnus Hirschfeld outlined a plan to combine “media-savvy activism with modern medical scholarship to ameliorate the plight of German homosexuals.”¹⁶ By the 1920s, the Scientific Humanitarian Committee was well-known in the Berlin gay community and in the larger German public, due to their fervent propaganda efforts and the publications produced by Hirschfeld and others calling for acceptance of homosexuality.

In a 1926 article titled *Sexual Catastrophes*, Magnus Hirschfeld states, “It is therefore a fact that homosexuality is an inborn condition, that is, a matter of constitution. Typical initial

¹² Johannson, Warren, and William Perry, trans. *Paragraph 175*. 1871.

¹³ Beachy, Robert. *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015: 3-41.

¹⁴ Giles, Geoffrey. "Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity by Robert Beachy." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 24, no. 3 (2015): 511.

¹⁵ Beachy, Robert. *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015: 10.

¹⁶ Beachy, Robert. *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015: 86.

symptoms are demonstrable in homosexuals as early as the seventh and eighth, indeed, even in the third and fourth year of life.” He goes on to argue, “The criminal prosecution of homosexuality is based on the fundamental juridical principle that legitimate interests are to be defended against violation. But what interests are violated by a homosexual act?” Hirschfeld closes his article by saying, “Once, however, the essence of homosexuality has been recognized, it is the obligation of every fair-minded person to speak out for the elimination of an injustice that already produces more victims and claims by the hour.”¹⁷

After World War I, Hirschfeld turned his attention to homosexuality in the military. The *WhK* put out a call for stories from veterans of their own experiences with the military and morals. The goal of this research was to demonstrate how Paragraph 175 affected soldiers and officers during the Great War, and prevented otherwise perfectly qualified troops from serving their country due to innate sexual characteristics. What Hirschfeld discovered was that many gay men enlisted in the German army for a variety of reasons. Some men were caught up in a wave of nationalistic pride that led them to enlist despite being forbidden to do so by Paragraph 175. Others served for darker reasons—in one passage, Hirschfeld quotes a soldier who enlisted with the intent of dying in battle to bring honor to his family.

It is my greatest wish to get into the field as soon as possible and to meet an honorable death for otherwise I will be compelled later on to make an end of my rotten life due to my homosexual tendencies for which I am not at all responsible. It is better that my mother should be able to say, ‘My Fritz died a heroic death for his Fatherland,’ than that people should say, ‘So! A suicide, eh?’¹⁸

This soldier’s thoughts demonstrate the continuing divisions among gay Germans concerning whether or not their identity was a source of shame. It is evident that “Fritz” saw no

¹⁷ Hirschfeld, Magnus. "Sexual Catastrophes, 1926". In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg, 700-1. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

¹⁸ Hirschfeld, Magnus. *The Sexual History of the World War: In Collaboration with World-famous Physicians, Scientists and Historians*. New York: Falstaff Press, 1937: 128.

future for himself as a gay man, and viewed death as his only option to escape the dishonor of living with his sexuality. “Fritz” example is also significant because it shows how values of nationalism were intertwined with discussions of sexuality in twentieth century Germany.

Magnus Hirschfeld’s activism reached a new milestone in March 1919, when he founded the *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* (Institute for Sexual Science) in Berlin. According to Robert Beachy, the Institute for Sexual Science was the first organization in the world of its kind, and provided sexual and mental health services to Berliners of all sexual identities. Hirschfeld sought to establish sexology as a respected medical profession, and brought a network of doctors and psychiatrists to the Institute to collaborate on research and participate in conferences¹⁹. In a 1929 address to the Third International Congress for Sexual Reform on a Scientific Basis, Magnus Hirschfeld divided the study of sexology into four topics: sexual biology, sexual pathology, sexual ethnology, and sexual sociology, and described the responsibility of sexologists to improve sexual ethics by basing them on science rather than morality²⁰.

Another key factor in the rising visibility of “gay Berlin” before 1920 was the media environment in which German homosexuals were discussed. Robert Beachy, Norman Domeier, and David James Prickett all discuss the importance of the mainstream media in their works about homosexuality in Germany. In his monograph, Beachy highlights several examples of publications by Hirschfeld directly calling for acceptance of homosexuality, and expresses surprise that these writings were published at a time when many pornographic materials were still being censored in Germany²¹. Gay Germans could even post personal advertisements in

¹⁹ Beachy, Robert. *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015: 160.

²⁰ Hirschfeld, Magnus. “The Development and Scope of Sexology, 1930.” In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg, 708-10. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

²¹ Beachy, Robert. *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015: 88-91.

newspapers. The French novelist Willy describes several examples of such ads where the authors, under the guise of seeking a roommate or friend, would ask for a same-sex companion. “As an Easter wish... a 25-year-old man, the son of honorable parents, is looking for a long-term friendship with a mature gentleman, who, like him, loves nature and everything that is intellectually beautiful.”²² These advertisements are interesting because they show that attitudes towards homosexuality in Germany were relaxed enough that gay Berliners could discreetly seek out partners in public forums, but not so much that they could publicly identify themselves as homosexuals without fear of repercussions.

In his 1921 article, Kurt Hiller directly challenged the right of the German government to regulate its citizens’ sexualities.

The state may not interfere with the individuals within its compass in the expression of their particularity, in the manifestation of their individuality. It may not interfere with them in the shaping of their lives nor in their activities and arrangements even in cases of extreme deviation from the “norm”—unless the activity of the individual collides with the interests of another individual, a grouping of other individuals, or perhaps of the whole, the society²³.

Hiller’s essay is an example of a controversial statement regarding sexual morality, as well as one about the overreach of the German government, that was allowed to run in the mainstream press seemingly without trouble. The intersection of sexuality and politics in German mainstream media is a theme repeated in Wilhelm Reich’s 1932 article, “Politicizing the Sexual Problems of Youth.” Reich appeals to his readers to be more open when talking about sex, and argues that bourgeois morality restricts sexual liberty and the overall freedoms of the proletariat²⁴. The ability of sources such as these to be printed and distributed publicly indicates

²² Willy. *The Third Sex*. Translated by Lawrence R. Schehr. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007: 21.

²³ Hiller, Kurt. “The Law and Sexual Minorities, 1921.” In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg, 696. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

²⁴ Reich, Wilhelm. “Politicizing the Sexual Problems of Youth, 1932.” In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg, 324. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

the openness of the German state to political challenges in the press. These writings also demonstrate a willingness of the German people to discuss sexuality and debate homosexual acceptance in a public forum.

Though the unrestricted German media facilitated the spread of ideas of homosexual acceptance, it also increased public scrutiny of gay Berliners. In 1906, German journalist Maximilian Harden published several articles accusing several friends of Kaiser William II of being homosexuals. Now known as the Eulenberg scandal, this event marks a turning point in the relationship between the German media and Berlin's homosexual community. Robert Beachy argues that the Eulenberg scandal was the first time the entire German public was exposed to the idea of an innate homosexual identity²⁵. This event also showed how invasive and embarrassing a public trial around homosexuality could be for those involved. Details of the intimate relationships and private lives of the accused were brought before the court as Harden tried to prove the homosexuality of the Kaiser's friends. Norman Domeier argues that the Eulenberg scandal also had the effect of shifting German public support against gay men by tying homosexuality to passivism, and blaming the sexualities of the Kaiser's friends for Germany's perceived non-masculinity in foreign policy before World War I²⁶.

Several organizations advocating for the rights of sexual minorities grew in Germany in the twentieth century. According to Robert Beachy, the reputation of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee was harmed by the Eulenberg scandal, but the controversy still generated more coverage of the committee's advocacy efforts and theories on homosexual acceptance²⁷. The League for Human Rights, an advocacy organization focused on German lesbians, advertised

²⁵ Beachy, Robert. *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015: 139.

²⁶ Domeier, Norman. "The Homosexual Scare and the Masculinization of German Politics Before World War I." *Central European History* 47, no. 04 (2014): 739.

²⁷ Beachy, Robert. *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015: 140.

meetings, dances, and other events in a lesbian-specific magazine, *Die Freundin*²⁸. Other homosexual press sources, such as Adolf Brand's *Der Eigene*, were also circulated at this time.

The forthright activism of Hirschfeld and other homosexual advocates, the open media discourse around homosexuality, and the widespread public interest in the Eulenberg scandal all helped to bring Germany's gay community to national prominence by the beginning of the Weimar Era in 1919. "Gay Berlin" reached international notoriety after this time, due to an influx of sex tourists seeking to take advantage of the hyperinflation of German currency facilitating cheap travel, as well as the variety of gay bars, cabarets, and other venues described in travel guides and other written works.

Christopher Isherwood was an English novelist who moved to Weimar Berlin to spend time with the gay community there. When writing about his experiences in his books, *The Last of Mr. Norris* and *Goodbye to Berlin*, Isherwood strongly hinted to readers that the narrator of these works was actually himself. However, the author chose to obscure the narrator's sexuality in these works in order to avoid outing himself upon the books' publication²⁹. In *The Last of Mr. Norris*, the narrator recounts his adventures in Berlin's nightlife and even describes a visit to a brothel. Though the narrator's own sexuality is not addressed, Isherwood describes meeting a friend, "Arthur Norris," who later admits to being a sexual masochist and enjoying pornography³⁰. This short story illustrates the excitement felt by sex tourists as they explored Berlin's sexual underground, as well as the diversity of people whom the tourists may find there. However, Isherwood's narrative focuses largely on venues and parties, and does little to

²⁸ League for Human Rights. "Appeal to All Homosexual Women, 1929." In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg, 704-5. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

²⁹ Isherwood, Christopher and Armistead Maupin. *The Berlin Stories. The Last of Mr. Norris. Goodbye to Berlin*. 1954: Introduction.

³⁰ Isherwood, Christopher and Armistead Maupin. *The Berlin Stories. The Last of Mr. Norris. Goodbye to Berlin*. 1954: Chapter 3.

acknowledge other aspects of Berlin's gay community, such as advocacy efforts, the infighting over conflicting ideals of masculinity and gay identity, or the relationship between the media and the community at this time.

After a stay in London, Isherwood returned to Germany in 1932 and observed the rapid changes taking place as a result of the economic collapse and the rise of the Nazi Party. Set in 1930, Christopher Isherwood's book *Goodbye Berlin* focuses on several people the narrator meets who are targeted by the Nazis for persecution. Some of the characters described by Isherwood in this story include a gay couple he befriended, as well as a wealthy Jewish family for whom the narrator worked as an English tutor. Near the end of the story, the narrator learns his Jewish friend has presumably been murdered by the Nazis, forcing the rest of his family to flee to France. The book closes in 1933, as the narrator and some friends travel around Berlin one last time to visit some of their favorite venues that will soon be destroyed by the Nazis. Isherwood's tone in this work is much darker than in *The Last of Mr. Norris*. The author expresses remorse for the Germany he loved, and specifically mentions the destruction of queer spaces that took place after the Nazis took power in 1933³¹. Gay venues still play an important role in this work, however Isherwood's narrative in *Goodbye Berlin* is much more informative about the growing persecution of homosexuals in Germany, and expresses his feelings as a tourist about losing the freedom to embrace his sexuality that Berlin once offered him.

Another author who traveled to "gay Berlin" and reported his findings to overseas readers is the French novelist Willy. In his book *The Third Sex*, Willy describes his journeys to several gay capitals of Europe and the communities he met in a comical, condescending manner.

Translator Lawrence R. Schehr points out in his introduction that Willy may have needed to

³¹ Isherwood, Christopher and Armistead Maupin. *The Berlin Stories. The Last of Mr. Norris. Goodbye to Berlin*. 1954.

employ such a harsh tone in his work in order to make his writing palatable to heterosexual readers who may otherwise have found his depictions of the community offensive. According to Schehr, this homophobic tone might actually have helped Willy expose his readers to new ideas about homosexuality. The translator refers to this work as “the first gay Baedeker,” indicating that Willy’s text could be viewed as a homosexual-centered travel guide to Europe³².

Willy’s work also stands out in that it is by far the most comprehensive tourist account of the experiences of the gay community in Berlin. This is especially intriguing considering Willy was a heterosexual man offering an outsider’s perspective on the gay community. Christopher Isherwood, an actual gay man who lived in Germany for several years, offered much less detail than Willy about important aspects of the gay experience in Berlin. Isherwood and Willy both emphasize the nightlife and gay venues they visited, but Willy’s narrative of “gay Berlin” goes beyond the party scene and seeks to analyze the social, scientific, and legal standings of the community as well. For example, Willy discusses Magnus Hirschfeld and the Scientific Humanitarian Committee at length³³, while Isherwood does not mention these topics once.

One possible explanation for the differences in these narratives is the style the writers employed. Isherwood’s works are framed more as fiction, while Willy’s book was more intended to be a work of investigative journalism. It makes sense for Willy’s analysis to be more comprehensive, as his stated goal was to inform readers of the experiences of gay Europeans, while Isherwood’s purpose was geared more towards entertaining his audience and subtly advocating for acceptance of homosexuality. Isherwood’s own sexuality may also have limited his narrative, as he had to be careful not to out himself while writing his works. As a straight

³² Willy. *The Third Sex*. Translated by Lawrence R. Schehr. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007: x-xi.

³³ Willy. *The Third Sex*. Translated by Lawrence R. Schehr. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007: 17-24.

man visiting the community simply to write about it, Willy had the freedom to discuss what he saw in the gay community without fear of being accused of homosexuality.

Curt Moreck is another writer who contributed to tourist narratives on Berlin's underground nightlife. Moreck's writings on "depraved" Berlin encouraged tourists to seek out the hidden clubs and other venues available throughout the city³⁴. In her analysis of Moreck's work, Camilla Smith argues that this guide to "depraved" Berlin was one of many travel guides from this time period that focused on the exciting and salacious stories of Berlin nightlife. The book was even formatted similarly to the Baedeker pocket travel guides, which were popular in the twentieth century. However, Moreck's book is unique from other guides because it offered over fifty pages of commentary solely on gay and lesbian hotspots. According to Smith, Moreck presented his discussion of homosexual nightlife alongside that of the mainstream tourist attractions in order to invite readers to participate in the debates surrounding homosexuality that were taking place in Weimar Berlin³⁵.

The coverage of homosexual topics by the mainstream media, advocacy groups, gay publications, and tourist narratives made homosexuality one of the biggest subjects for debate in 1920s Berlin. Tamagne and Seberry argue in their work, *History of Homosexuality in Europe, Berlin, London, Paris 1919-1939*, that homoerotic themes spilled over into areas of mainstream German society, such as sports and single-gender educational and physical fitness clubs. This phenomenon is exemplified in Surén's "Man and Sunlight, 1935." In his article, Surén views exercising in the nude as not only beneficial to the individual, but also necessary to the health of

³⁴ Moreck, Curt. "We Will Show You Berlin, 1930." In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg, 563-4. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

³⁵ Smith, Camilla. "Challenging "Baedeker" Through the Art of Sexual Science: An Exploration of Gay and Lesbian Subcultures in Curt Moreck's "Guide to 'Depraved' Berlin (1931)."" *Oxford Art Journal* 36, no. 2 (June 1, 2013): 231-2.

the entire nation. “Training in the nude with members of one’s own sex must be recognized as essential. This is in contrast to nudism among both sexes—only the right kind of people should assemble for such purpose lest pure motives be misunderstood and sullied.”³⁶

According to Tamagne and Seberry, another unfortunate consequence of increased homosexual visibility was an increase of attacks on the perceived moral wrongdoings of gay Germans. Religious leaders published attacks on the gay community, and some churches even went so far as to “declare war” on the spread of homosexuality. Attacks from the German government also increased in the late 1920s. In 1928, many homosexual publications, including *Die Freundin*, were registered as “pornographic and dirty writings.”³⁷ In the early 1930s, as the Nazi Party rose to power, their political opponents targeted Ernst Röhm on account of his open homosexuality. Kurt Tucholsky, a supporter of homosexual acceptance, defended Röhm in a 1932 article. “I consider these attacks against the man improper. Anything is good enough to use against Hitler and his people.”³⁸

Though Adolf Hitler and Nazi leadership were originally ambivalent towards homosexuality in their ranks, increasing attacks of Röhm from across the political spectrum led Hitler to change the party stance on gay Germans to one that was aggressively homophobic. After the Nazi Party took power in 1933, the Institute for Sexual Science was raided, thousands of books relating to homosexuality burned, and tens of thousands of German homosexuals were arrested and sent to concentration camps. In less than fifteen years, Berlin’s gay community, the first global epicenter of gay culture, was forced back underground and the visibility of gay

³⁶ Surén, Hans. “Man and Sunlight, 1925.” In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg, 678. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

³⁷ Tamagne, Florence and Alice Seberry. *History of Homosexuality in Europe, Berlin, London, Paris 1919-1939*. New York: Algora Publishing, 2007: 1-5.

³⁸ Tucholsky, Kurt. “Röhm, 1932.” In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg, 678-9. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

Germans was destroyed until after the Holocaust. Even after escaping concentration camps, many German homosexuals were ashamed to admit their identities and tell their stories. Untold numbers of queer Berliners, their identities and their stories, were erased from history.

The intersection of fervent activism, an unrestrictive press, and tourist attention made Berlin uniquely suited to become the world's first gay capital. By 1920, Berlin was home to many gay rights organizations, queer publications, and nightlife venues and other spaces where homosexuals could express their identities safely. The massive visibility generated in Berlin's gay community aided activist efforts by spreading their ideas and theories, but it also hurt the community as a whole by provoking further attacks on their identities and their liberties. By the 1930s, attacks on homosexuals in the Nazi ranks forced the party to become aggressively homophobic, leading to the eventual destruction of Berlin's gay community and their near-complete loss of visibility for decades to come. The story of "gay Berlin" is relevant in modern discussions of LGBTQ inclusion because it demonstrates how massive visibility can be both helpful and hurtful to the queer movement. Berlin is also a haunting reminder that the progress of the homosexual movement is never truly secure, and within a matter of decades the entire community's visibility can be destroyed for years to come.

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