

**Queer Home Berlin?  
Making Queer Selves and Spaces in the Divided City, 1945-1970**

by

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## **List of Abbreviations**

BArch	Bundesarchiv Berlin (Federal Archives Berlin)
BMH	Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld (Federal Magnus Hirschfeld Foundation)
BStU	Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the Former German Democratic Republic)
CDU	Christlich-Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union)
FDGB	Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (Free German Union Corporation)
FFBIZ	Frauenforschungs-, Bildungs- und Informationszentrum (Center for Women's Research, Education, and Information)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
LAB	Landesarchiv Berlin (Berlin State Archives)
MHG	Magnus Hirschfeld Gesellschaft
ODF	Opfer des Faschismus (Victims of Fascism)
PHS	Polizeihistorische Sammlung Berlin (Historical Police Collection Berlin)
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)
SMB	Schwules Museum Berlin (Gay Museum Berlin)

SPD Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)

TKK Teilnachlass Kitty Kuse (Kitty Kuse Personal Papers)

## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines the everyday lives of queer Berliners from the end of the Nazi reign in 1945 through the city's Cold War division and to the onset of the gay and lesbian liberation movements in the early 1970s, offering a queer perspective on urban history, the history of sexuality and gender, and German and European history. Focusing on specific spaces – the home, bars, streets and parks, and prisons – it explores how these spaces facilitated and restricted the possibilities of living queer lives in the overwhelmingly conservative climate that in different ways characterized both German postwar states.

This study critically engages with the myth and historiography of queer Berlin. It traces key elements of what defined it in the Weimar Republic, such as a large subculture; the cooperative relationships among police, sexual scientists, and activists; and the contentious position of male prostitution and asks if and how these re-emerged after 1945. After a period of openness in the immediate postwar years, the West Berlin police began to repress queer nightlife in the mid-1950s and revoked its politics of tolerance toward “transvestites,” a category that included transgender subjectivities and public cross-dressers. Effeminate men, “transvestites,” and young men were policed most intensely. Despite this, queer Berliners continued socializing in public. In the 1960s, they started actively resisting state repression, controlling access to queer bars through codes and legally challenging police surveillance.

By privileging queer voices over those of state and medical authorities, with a focus on lesbian and transgender subjectivities, and attending to the role of non-normative gender for male queer subjectivities, the dissertation intervenes in English- and German-language

historiographies of queer Germany that are presently focused on the state's persecution of male homosexuality. With a theoretical toolkit informed by feminist, queer, and spatial theories, the study explores sources from the archives of the LGBTQ movements, such as personal narratives, publications of the homophile movement, fiction, photographs, and artworks, and state-produced files, for instance police reports, Stasi documents, and prisoner files. In the end, *Queer Home Berlin?* illuminates how the practices of making spaces queer were entwined with the practices of making queer selves, and vice versa.

The dissertation argues that the absences and imbalances of the archive and the law matter for queer German histories. The comparative paucity of sources on queer subjectivities from East Germany speaks of the different conditions for making queer publics in West and East Germany. The relative lack of documentation of lesbian lives is testimony to women's limited access to public spaces. The law's ignorance of female homosexuality did not stop the state from policing women's queerness, and the GDR's decriminalization of male homosexuality did not mean that queer men were liberated.

By exploring Berlin's queer(ed) spaces from the beginnings of the Cold War through the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the first decade of the city's complete division, the study also contributes to the historiography of Berlin as divided and entangled city. Its close examination of the meanings of the Wall for queer East and West Berliners suggests that the East German government harnessed homophobic discourses to distract its own citizens and the world public from its murderous border regime, highlighting an as yet unexplored dimension of the Berlin Wall and the political uses of homophobia in German history.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Let us remember those glittering ball nights we celebrated after the collapse of the disastrous Third Reich, in a sense in continuity of the year 1933. Hundreds of our friends crowded toward the Tefi ballroom when Mamita called them.<sup>1</sup>

A call to remember glittering ball nights seems like a fitting way to begin a dissertation on the history of queer Berlin. It was uttered in 1962 by an anonymous writer in the West German homophile magazine *Der Weg* in the piece “Mamita invites you in,” a text that was both obituary for Mamita and elegy for a carefree time that had since passed. It conjures the moment of liberation from the Nazis, when “hundreds of our friends” – the word “friend” was long used for other queer men and women – danced in celebration in the city’s resurrected queer ballrooms.<sup>2</sup> With its reference to the time before the Nazi ascent to power in 1933 and its bewailing of the loss of tolerance that Berlin had witnessed recently, the article sketches the temporal coordinates that frame this dissertation, too: the queer publics of the Weimar Republic, their destruction by the Nazis, the moment of freedom between the end of the war and the founding of the new German states in 1949, and the growing social conservatism that characterized the 1950s and early 1960s.

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<sup>1</sup> “Erinnern wir uns mal an jene rauschenden Ballnächte, die nach dem Zusammenbruch des unseligen Dritten Reiches gewissermaßen als Anschluß an das Jahr 1933 fröhliche Urstätt [!] feierten. Hunderte von unseren Freunden drängten sich nach den Tefi-Festsälen, wenn Mamita bitten ließ.” O.Z., “Mamita Läßt Bitten!,” *Der Weg* 12, no. 10 (1962). All translations in this dissertation are my own, unless another translator is given.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Hanna Hacker, *Frauen und Freundinnen: Studien zur "weiblichen Homosexualität" am Beispiel Österreich 1870 - 1938*, Ergebnisse der Frauenforschung 12 (Weinheim: Beltz, 1987). For the history of the word’s meanings in English queer history, see Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

The article “Mamita invites you in” also serves as a fitting opening to this dissertation because in its description of Mamita and Mamita’s perception by others, it introduces one of the key themes of this thesis: non-normative gender. The article continues as follows:

A keen waiter by trade, Mamita was the driving force for our resurrected social life. Since he preferred to document his homophile existence by almost exclusively wearing ladies’ clothing, he was named quite rightly. Of course, one can have different opinions about this unusual fact, but this friend deserves a fond memory despite much animosity. Mamita was deterred by nothing in congregating our dispersed and beaten little sheep, and he has re-awakened joy for life like almost nobody else among us.<sup>3</sup>

The anonymous writer describes Mamita as a cross-dressing “homophile” man whose “unusual” masculine femininity challenged many within the queer community, and who was subject to “much animosity.”<sup>4</sup> In the end, this “friend’s” charm won over everyone, however.

Even the custodians of the law put up with Mamita the way she was, and even the cynical critics would at the end laugh along with her. Because Mamita had humor and did not just make fun of others, but also herself. At her balls, she would stand on the flight of stairs as Grand-Dame and personally welcome all her dears; and then she would present the best show, too. The vaudeville program was quite something, and she herself was definitely the top act. She recited as Countess Strachwitz, she sang the Zarah Leander, and she danced the dying swan, and everyone convulsed with laughter.<sup>5</sup>

The writer, shifting between feminine and masculine pronouns, admires not only Mamita’s skills as a community organizer and her stamina in the face of hostilities, but also fondly remembers

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<sup>3</sup> “Seines Zeichens ein fleißiger Kellner, war Mamita die treibende Kraft für unsere wiedererstandene Geselligkeit. Da er es vorzog, sein homophiles Dasein dadurch zu dokumentieren, daß er fast nur Frauenkleidung trug, hatte er auch seinen Namen völlig zu recht. Man kann natürlich stehen wie man will zu dieser ungewöhnlichen Tatsache, aber diesem Freund gebührt trotz vieler Anfeindungen ein gutes Angedenken. Mamita ließ sich durch nichts beirren, unsere verstreuten und geschlagenen Schäfchen wieder zu sammeln und er hat wie selten einer von uns, die Lebensfreude wieder geweckt.” Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Later on, the article mentions that Mamita was also denigrated by a malicious campaign in the tabloids.

<sup>5</sup> “Selbst die Ordnungshüter fanden sich mit Mamita ab, wie sie nun mal war und selbst die zynischen Kritiker standen zuletzt als Lacher auf ihrer Seite. Denn Mamita hatte Humor und sie zog nicht nur andere gehörig durch den Cacao, sondern auch sich selbst. Bei ihren Bällen empfing sie höchstpersönlich als Grand-Dame an den Stufen zur Freitreppe alle ihre Lieben und bot dann auch das Beste. Das Varieté-Programm hatte sich meist gewaschen und sie selbst war allemal die Glanznummer. Sie deklarierte als Gräfin Strachwitz, sie sang die Zarah Leander und sie tanzte den sterbenden Schwan und alles bog sich vor Lachen.” Ibid.

her talent for entertainment: she performed classics like “The Dying Swan” from Tchaikovsky’s ballet, and German wartime favorites like Zarah Leander to great acclaim. The wistful memory of Mamita stands out sharply against the changed situation at the time of publication. The piece ends on the sad note that, a decade after Mamita’s famous balls, the “newly won freedom and tolerance” had given way again to “prohibition” and a “skewed morality.”<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the writer insists that “Berlin is still worth a trip, even if a stupid political conception has badly mutilated the city [...]”<sup>7</sup> This “stupid political conception” is the Cold War, of course, and the mutilation it has wrought on the city is the Berlin Wall, constructed one year before the article’s publication.

With Mamita, I invite you in to explore the subjectivities and spaces of queer Berlin between the end of Nazism through the solidifying division of the city and up until the beginnings of the gay and lesbian liberation movements of the early 1970s. Ballrooms and the Berlin Wall are two spatial coordinates that delimit this queer world; others include the home, bars, streets and parks, and prisons. The two major analytic threads that I pursue through these sites are *space* and *subjectivity*. Space refers to the material and immaterial sites whose meaning for queer Berliners was made through their own practices and the practices of those trying to control and suppress them, be they representatives of the state or fellow Berliners. Subjectivity refers to the processes of making the self: how queer Berliners understood themselves, their gender, sexuality, relationships with others and how they expressed themselves through styling their bodies, through gestures and movements, through having their photograph taken, or through writing.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> “Auch heute noch ist Berlin allemal eine Reise wert, wenn auch eine stupide politische Konzeption die Stadt arg verstümmelt hat [...]” Ibid.

This dissertation also asks about Berlin as a *place* that held considerable significance not only for the development of queer subjectivities and queer publics, but also for their destruction.

Mamita's obituary writer noted, for example, that "for the homophile person, Berlin was the heart and the hub, and the most diverse phases of human stirrings presented themselves here in inexhaustible abundance."<sup>8</sup> Did it become that again in the postwar years? Did queer Berliners recreate the rich nightlife that emerged at the beginning of the century? The article in *Der Weg* claimed that before the onset of a "skewed morality," even the police "put up with Mamita the way she was," a crossdresser or "transvestite" in the period's parlance. The text suggests that even after twelve years of Nazi terror, something remained of the cooperative relationship between queer activists, sexual science, and the police that characterized Weimar Berlin. And what did the city's position at the center of the emerging Cold War, and the "mutilation" of the Wall, mean for queer Berliners? In the following pages, I pursue these questions, situate the dissertation in its historical and historiographical contexts, lay out my theorization of key analytics, and explain my methodology.

First, who do I mean when I refer to queer Berliners? I use queer to describe people who found themselves outside the sexual or gender norms of their time because of their same-sex desires or practices or because they "perceived themselves and were perceived by their societies as gender nonconforming."<sup>9</sup> I understand it not as an essentialized identity, but as a term that can describe subjectivities whose same-sex desires or non-normative gender positioned them against, outside, or deviating from the norm. I follow historian Susan Stryker in using "queer" as an umbrella term that can do "the type of intellectual work" of describing "many different kinds of

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<sup>8</sup> "Auch für den homophilen Menschen war Berlin das Herz und der Knotenpunkt und die vielfältigsten Phasen menschlicher Regungen boten sich hier in unerschöpflicher Fülle dar."

<sup>9</sup> Genny Beemyn, "A Presence in the Past: A Transgender Historiography," *Journal of Women's History* 25, no. 4 (2013): 113.

people who came together in the same space for a common cause” having to do with sexual and gender self-determination.<sup>10</sup> At other times, they were put together in the same space of criminalization, medicalization, or stigma because of their same-sex desires and/or gender identities.

While “queer” is adequate and helpful for my project as an umbrella term, a varied terminology will describe the actors in the chapters that follow. Whenever possible, I use specific terms from my historical sources, including *Bubi*, *Freundin* and *Freund*, *Homophiler*, *Homosexueller*, *Lesbierin*, *Mäuschen*, *Schwuler*, *Strichjunge*, *Transvestit*, and *Tunte*. Part of the work of this dissertation is to disentangle the meaning that these terms held for their speakers. The multitude of terms has to do with the history to which this thesis seeks to add: that of sexuality and gender, in particular non-normative sexualities and genders, acting as central sites of societies’ negotiations of power, or, in Michel Foucault’s terms, “as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power.”<sup>11</sup>

There are so many words because there was so much talk: between bar acquaintances, friends, and lovers, in homophile magazines and in the mainstream press, between sexologists, doctors, psychologists and patients, among legislators, politicians, administrators, and police, between historians and their subjects. The different names speak of those who participated in the negotiations about non-normative genders and sexualities; the multiplicity of terms reflects the many voices that held a stake in these debates. When it is necessary to use one term for these many subjectivities, both for the sake of clear writing and because some of the processes and situations that I describe applied to many, if not all of them, I will use the term queer, although it

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<sup>10</sup> Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Emeryville, California: Seal Press, 2008), 23–24.

<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 103.

is anachronistic.<sup>12</sup> Beyond uniting diverse sexual subjectivities, queer does important analytical work for my thesis. Before discussing my theoretical framework, however, the next section offers a sketch of the myth and histories of queer Berlin.



Figure 1: Map of the Berlin districts before 2001. Wikipedia/Public domain.

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<sup>12</sup> “Queer” is particularly anachronistic for Germany, where it did not come into usage until the 1990s. It strikes me as a better analytic term than “homosexual” for three reasons: “homosexual” frequently comes up in the sources, most often as ascriptive term; it is often implied to refer to male persons predominantly, if not exclusively; and, of course, it does not describe anyone outside the gender binary, such as trans\* people.

## Berlin, Queer Eldorado? Myths and Histories

Berlin holds a mythical space in queer imaginations as “heart and hub,” a utopia where queer subcultures were allowed to flourish decades before anywhere else.<sup>13</sup> Since the 1970s, this popular image has been both undergirded and complicated by historical research. Early studies of queer Berlin came from scholars rooted in the gay and lesbian movements, such as U.S. historian Jim Steakley and West Berlin sociologist Ilse Kokula.<sup>14</sup> The 1984 student-initiated exhibition *Eldorado. Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin 1850-1950*, shown at the Berlin Museum and reviewed in newspapers across western Europe, was a milestone in charting the city’s meaning for queer history. Its catalogue laid the groundwork for the main lines of research until today: the city’s role for the new discipline of sexual science; the homosexual emancipation movement; and the queer publics manifested in the city’s nightlife, gay and lesbian literature, art, theater, film, Weimar-era magazines, and in everyday life from the Kaiserreich through the Nazi period.<sup>15</sup> *Eldorado* made a powerful case for Berlin’s special role as catalyst of a modern homosexual identity: that in the rapidly growing industrial metropolis and capitol of the German empire, a large queer subculture, the new discipline of sexual science, and a political movement for ending the criminalization of sex between men developed in close connection since the end of the nineteenth century and until the Nazi takeover in 1933.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Cultural productions that have contributed to this myth are, for instance, Christopher Isherwood’s memoir *Goodbye to Berlin; Cabaret*, the musical and films based on the memoir; or more recently, TV shows *Transparent* and *Babylon Berlin*.

<sup>14</sup> James Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany* (New York: Arno Press, 1975); Ilse Kokula, *Formen Lesbischer Subkultur*, (Sozialwissenschaftliche Studien zur Homosexualität 3) (Berlin: Verl. Rosa Winkel, 1983).

<sup>15</sup> Verein der Freunde eines Schwulen Museums in Berlin e.V., ed., *Eldorado: Homosexuelle Frauen Und Männer in Berlin 1850-1950. Geschichte, Alltag Und Kultur* (Berlin: Frölich & Kaufmann, 1984); Katalog der Ausstellung im Berlin Museum, 26.5.-8.7.1984.

<sup>16</sup> Historian Robert Beachy has recently renewed attention for this thesis in his book *Gay Berlin*. Annette Timm has noted that Beachy “builds on the previous insights of [Ralf] Dose along with that of James Steakley, Charlotte Wolff, Manfred Herzer, and Rainer Herrn [...]” Annette F. Timm, “Introduction: Sexual Publics and Sexual Citizenship from Hirschfeld to the Present,” in *Not Straight from Germany: Sexual Publics and Sexual Citizenship*

Since *Eldorado*, many Berlin-specific studies have explored the Kaiserreich and Weimar periods, focusing on the policing of queer spaces and subjects: the flourishing nightlife; the close collaboration between sexual scientists and activists for decriminalization and emancipation; the emergence of gay, lesbian, and transgender identities; the role of scandal in disseminating sexual knowledge; the world's first Institute for Sexual Science, founded in Berlin in 1919; and the diverse queer publics of the Weimar Republic. They have found that beginning in the 1880s and until the Nazi takeover in 1933, the Berlin police overwhelmingly tolerated queer nightlife, surveilling queer bars and balls, but not raiding them.<sup>17</sup> Since the first decade of the twentieth century, prompted by sexual scientists, police also issued *Transvestitenscheine* (transvestite passes) that served as official recognition that their bearer was known to cross-dress in public, mitigating their risk of being arrested for creating a public nuisance.<sup>18</sup> The city was home to a large and diverse queer commercial infrastructure, with bars and cafés catering to queer men and women as well as curious heterosexuals, to rich and poor, and to locals and tourists.<sup>19</sup> Historians of male prostitution added to this map the parks, streets, and train stations where men sold and bought sexual services.<sup>20</sup> Magnus Hirschfeld, his Institute for Sexual Science, and the Institute's

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*Since Magnus Hirschfeld*, ed. Michael T. Taylor, Annette F. Timm and Rainer Herrn (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 7, Footnote 2.

<sup>17</sup> Jens Dobler, *Zwischen Duldungspolitik Und Verbrechensbekämpfung: Homosexuellenverfolgung Durch Die Berliner Polizei Von 1848 Bis 1933* (Frankfurt: Verlag für Polizeiwissenschaft, 2008), 554; Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 83.

<sup>18</sup> Rainer Herrn, "'Ich habe wohl Freude an Frauenkleidern [...], bin aber deswegen nicht homosexuell.": Der Forschungsstand zum Transvestitismus in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus," in Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld, *Forschung im Queerformat*, 60; see also Herrn's monograph *Schnittmuster des Geschlechts: Transvestitismus und Transsexualität in der frühen Sexualwissenschaft*. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2005, as well as Katie Sutton, "From Sexual Inversion to Trans\*. Transgender History and Historiography," in *Was Ist Homosexualität? Forschungsgeschichte, Gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen Und Perspektiven*, ed. Florian Mildner et al. (Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> Mel Gordon, *Voluptuous Panic: The Erotic World of Weimar Berlin / Mel Gordon* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Feral House, 2000); Ilse Kokula, "Lesbisch Leben Von Weimar Bis Zur Nachkriegszeit," in *Eldorado: Homosexuelle Frauen Und Männer in Berlin 1850-1950. Geschichte, Alltag Und Kultur* (Berlin: Frölich & Kaufmann, 1984).

<sup>20</sup> Martin Lücke, *Männlichkeit in Unordnung* (Frankfurt a.M.: campus, 2008).

close connections to politicians and police have been particular foci of historical scholarship.<sup>21</sup>

Scholars interested in the making of the queer self have traced the dialectical emergence and dissemination of gay, lesbian, and transgender identities between everyday practices, sexological studies, and mass publications, both the scandalous reporting of newspapers and the publications of the rich queer publishing landscape of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>22</sup> Studying the many queer magazines of the Weimar Republic, they have analyzed debates about respectability, gender, sexuality, and citizenship that were fought over in their pages.<sup>23</sup>

What emerged from these myriad studies was the picture of a city that was no Eldorado, but that had indeed produced a diverse, if not uncensored, queer public: both discursively, through the publication and circulation of queer magazines, sexological journals, queer films and novels, and physically, through its bars, cafés, and ballrooms, its streets and parks, and through

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<sup>21</sup> See, for a small sample, Michael T. Taylor, Annette F. Timm and Rainer Herrn, eds., *Not Straight from Germany: Sexual Publics and Sexual Citizenship Since Magnus Hirschfeld* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017); Elke-Vera Kotowski and Julius H. Schoeps, eds., *Der Sexualreformer Magnus Hirschfeld: ein Leben im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft, Politik und Gesellschaft* Bd. 8 (Berlin-Brandenburg: BeBra Wissenschaft, 2004); Ursula Ferdinand, Andreas Pretzel and Andreas Seeck, eds., *Verqueere Wissenschaft? Zum Verhältnis Von Sexualwissenschaft Und Sexualreformbewegung in Geschichte Und Gegenwart*, Berliner Schriften zur Sexualwissenschaft und Sexualpolitik 1 (Münster: LIT, 1998); Ralf Dose, *Magnus Hirschfeld: The Origins of the Gay Liberation Movement* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> See, for instance, Rainer Herrn, “Ich habe wohl Freude an Frauenkleidern [...], bin aber deswegen nicht homosexuell.”: Der Forschungsstand zum Transvestitismus in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus,” in Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld, *Forschung im Queerformat.*; Sutton, “From Sexual Inversion to Trans\*. Transgender History and Historiography”; Lybeck, *Desiring emancipation new women and homosexuality in Germany, 1890-1933*; Tracie Matysik, “Beyond Freedom: A Return to Subjectivity in the History of Sexuality,” in *After the History of Sexuality: German Genealogies with and Beyond Foucault*, ed. Dagmar Herzog, Scott Spector and Helmut Puff (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); Andreas Pretzel, “Homosexuality in the Sexual Ethics of the 1930s: A Values Debate in the Culture Wars Between Conservatism, Liberalism, and Moral-National Renewal,” in *After the History of Sexuality: German Genealogies with and Beyond Foucault*, ed. Dagmar Herzog, Scott Spector and Helmut Puff (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); Norman Domeier, *Der Eulenburg-Skandal: Eine Politische Kulturgeschichte Des Kaiserreichs* (Frankfurt am Main, 2010); Rainer Herrn, *Schnittmuster Des Geschlechts: Transvestitismus Und Transsexualität in Der Frühen Sexualwissenschaft* (Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, Laurie Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Hanna Hacker, *Frauen\* und Freund\_innen. Lesarten "weiblicher Homosexualität", Österreich, 1870-1938* (Wien: Zaglossus e. U., 2015); Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany*, Monographs in German history v. 32 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011).; Stefan Micheler, *Selbstbilder Und Fremdbilder Der "Anderen". Männerbegehrende Männer in Der Weimarer Republik Und Der NS-Zeit* (Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2005); Heike Schader, *Virile, Vamps und wilde Veilchen: Sexualität, Begehren und Erotik in den Zeitschriften homosexueller Frauen im Berlin der 1920er Jahre* (Königsstein/Taunus: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 2004).

the Institute for Sexual Science, which served as a refuge as much as an intellectual and political hub.<sup>24</sup>

When the Nazis came to power in the spring of 1933, they immediately targeted the Institute, ravaging it, stealing its library, and burning much of it during the infamous book burnings on Opera Square.<sup>25</sup> They also shut down the queer bars and ballrooms, as well as the queer press.<sup>26</sup> The murder of the homosexual Nazi party member and storm trooper leader Ernst Röhm was the starting point for an intensified persecution of queer men, further legitimized through the tightening of §175 in 1935, which potentially made all expressions of love and desire between men punishable. Especially during the height of the campaign, from 1934 to 1936, but also until the end of the Third Reich, the criminal squad and Gestapo conducted frequent raids in bars and other meeting places, such as parks and public toilets.<sup>27</sup> The arrested men were registered and incarcerated at will. “Preemptive detention” [*Schutzhaft* or *Vorbeugungshaft*] allowed the Nazi authorities to imprison them without and beyond any court sentence.<sup>28</sup>

§175 did not extend to lesbian women, and the Nazis did not directly target them because they believed that unlike gay men, whose virility was lost to the state, lesbian women’s fertility

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<sup>24</sup> Laurie Marhoefer has recently stressed the limits of Weimar’s queer public, arguing that the “Weimar settlement on sexual politics” entailed keeping “immoral” sexualities out of the public sphere. Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*, 19. On the Institute as a refuge, see Rainer Herr, “Outside in - Inside Out: Topografie, Architektur Und Funktionen Des Instituts Für Sexualwissenschaft Zwischen Wahrnehmungen Und Imaginationen,” in *Metropolenzauber: Sexuelle Moderne Und Urbaner Wahn*, ed. Gabriele Dietze and Dorothea Dornhof (Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Günter Grau, ed., *Hidden Holocaust? Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany 1933-1945* (Chicago and London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1995); With a contribution by Claudia Schoppmann, translated by Patrick Camiller, 31–33.

<sup>26</sup> Grau, *Hidden Holocaust? Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany 1933-1945*, 26; Carola Gerlach, “Außerdem Habe Ich Dort Mit Meinem Freund Getanzt,” in Pretzel; Roßbach, *Wegen Der Zu Erwartenden Hohen Strafe*, 307; According to Manfred Herzer, shutdowns of queer bars had begun in 1932 under the reign of conservative Chancellor von Papen. Manfred Herzer, “Hinweise Auf Das Schwule Berlin in Der Nazizeit,” in *Eldorado: Homosexuelle Frauen Und Männer in Berlin 1850-1950. Geschichte, Alltag Und Kultur* (Berlin: Frölich & Kaufmann, 1984), 44.

<sup>27</sup> Andreas Pretzel and Gabriele Roßbach, eds., *Wegen Der Zu Erwartenden Hohen Strafe: Homosexuellenverfolgung in Berlin 1933-1945* (Berlin: Verl. Rosa Winkel, 1999) Kulturring in Berlin e.V., 56.

<sup>28</sup> Pretzel and Roßbach, *Wegen der zu erwartenden hohen Strafe*, 44.

would still be available to the *Volksgemeinschaft*.<sup>29</sup> This has led some scholars to postulate that lesbian women were not persecuted under Nazism, suggesting that their mention in memorializing efforts was historically incorrect.<sup>30</sup> In response, historian Laurie Marhoefer has convincingly argued that while the harassment, terror, and violence suffered by some lesbians for their queerness certainly warrants the term “persecution,” asking about the “risks” that lesbians and “transvestites” incurred because of their sexual and gendered deviance is a more productive scholarly endeavor.<sup>31</sup> To protect themselves from repressions through the state or their neighbors, some entered into protective marriages with gay men and changed their appearance for a more normatively feminine look, as historian Claudia Schoppmann has documented.<sup>32</sup> Some lesbian women were directly persecuted for their sexual deviancy under the label of “lesbian” or “asocial” and were deported to concentration camps.<sup>33</sup> In addition to the heightened risk of attracting the negative attention of the Nazi state, which could ultimately be deadly, lesbian women and “transvestites” also suffered the loss of the lesbian public of Weimar Berlin with its community institutions, nightlife, and publications.

Despite persecution and risks, queer Berliners continued socializing. Bars catering to gay men did so more covertly throughout the Nazi reign in some parts of the city, notably in the west, around Kurfürstendamm and Savignyplatz, and on and around Alexanderplatz, despite the 1933

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<sup>29</sup> Claudia Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade: Life Stories of Lesbians During the Third Reich*, with the assistance of translated by Allison Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 16.

<sup>30</sup> These scholars argued that “there is no historical proof that lesbian women were subject to individual persecution because of their sexual orientation during National Socialism.” Rainer Hoffschildt, Alexander Zinn, and et al, “Offener Brief: Denkmal Für Die Im Nationalsozialismus Verfolgten Homosexuellen,” accessed August 6, 2019, <http://www.cultpress.de/rosa-winkel/Offener%20Brief%20-%20Staatsminister%20Neumann%20100318.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> Laurie Marhoefer, “Lesbianism, Transvestism, and the Nazi State: A Microhistory of a Gestapo Investigation, 1939-1943,” *American Historical Review* 121, no. 4 (2016): 1169.

<sup>32</sup> Claudia Schoppmann, *Zeit der Maskierung: Lebensgeschichten lesbischer Frauen im "Dritten Reich"* (Berlin: Fischer, 1998); Claudia Schoppmann, “Zum Doppelleben gezwungen: Vermeidungs- und Überlebensstrategien lesbischer Frauen im 'Dritten Reich',” in Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld, *Forschung im Queerformat*.

<sup>33</sup> Claudia Schoppmann, “Elsa Conrad - Margarete Rosenberg - Mary Pünjer - Henny Schermann: Vier Porträts,” in *Homophobie Und Devianz: Weibliche Und Männliche Homosexualität Im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Insa Eschebach (Berlin: Metropol, 2012), 103.

closures and continuous raids.<sup>34</sup> Private circles of friends continued meeting throughout the Nazi era, too.<sup>35</sup> The lesbian club “Jolly Nine,” masked as a bowling club, organized queer balls where predominantly lesbian women, but also gay men and “transvestites,” gathered until at least 1940.<sup>36</sup>

The queer Berlin of the postwar decades has seen less research, but its contours have begun to emerge in exhibitions and studies. These studies have focused on the re-emergence of queer nightlife and its policing;<sup>37</sup> on the ambivalent figure of the “streetwalking boy,” young men selling sexual services;<sup>38</sup> and on the denial of justice or rehabilitation of gay victims of the Nazis, who instead faced continued criminalization and persecution.<sup>39</sup> There are no studies of

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<sup>34</sup> Carola Gerlach, “Außerdem Habe Ich Dort Mit Meinem Freund Getanzt,” in Pretzel; Roßbach, *Wegen der zu erwartenden hohen Strafe*, 307-313; 317-319.

<sup>35</sup> Karl-Heinz Steinle, *Der Literarische Salon Bei Richard Schulz* (Berlin: Schwules Museum, 2002).

<sup>36</sup> Dobler, *Von anderen Ufern*, 182–90; Rainer Herr, “‘Ich Habe Wohl Freude an Frauenkleidern [...], Bin Aber Deswegen Nicht Homosexuell.’: Der Forschungsstand Zum Transvestitismus in Der Zeit Des Nationalsozialismus,” in Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld, *Forschung Im Queerformat*, 63.

<sup>37</sup> The most comprehensive exploration of postwar queer nightlife in Berlin was the 2003/04 exhibition “mittenmang. Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin 1945 – 1969” at Schwules Museum, but no catalogue was published. The exhibition was curated by Karl-Heinz Steinle and Maika Leffers. Documentation of the exhibition is at the Schwules Museum archives. “Mittenmang: Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin 1945-1969.” Accessed October 17, 2017. <http://www.schwulesmuseum.de/ausstellungen/archives/2003/view/mittenmang-homosexuelle-frauen-und-maenner-in-berlin-1945-1969/>. Andreas Pretzel discusses bars as sites of homophile organizing in his book *NS-Opfer unter Vorbehalt: Homosexuelle Männer in Berlin nach 1945*. Berliner Schriften zur Sexualwissenschaft und Sexualpolitik. Berlin: LIT, 2002. In addition, bars were featured in the exhibitions on gay and lesbian Kreuzberg and Prenzlauer Berg. Jens Dobler, *Von anderen Ufern. Geschichte der Berliner Lesben und Schwulen in Kreuzberg und Friedrichshain* (Berlin: Bruno Gmünder, 2003), Jens Dobler, ed., *Verzaubert in Nord-Ost: Die Geschichte Der Berliner Lesben Und Schwulen in Prenzlauer Berg, Pankow Und Weißensee* (Berlin: Gmünder, 2009). Dobler has also published a comparison of two gay men’s biographies in early postwar West and East Berlin. Jens Dobler, “Schwules Leben in Berlin zwischen 1945 und 1969 im Ost-West-Vergleich.” In *Ohnmacht und Aufbegehren: Homosexuelle Männer in der frühen Bundesrepublik*. Edited by Andreas Pretzel and Volker Weiß, 152–63. Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2010. For sketches on particular bars, see the bar portraits by Karl-Heinz Steinle in Maneo, ed. *Spurensuche im Regenbogenkiez: Historische Orte und schillernde Persönlichkeiten*. Maneo-Kiezgeschichte 2. Berlin: Maneo, 2018, and Dobler, *Von anderen Ufern*. For an analysis of state regulation of them, see especially Clayton J. Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany: Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945 - 69*, Genders and sexualities in history series (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), and Jennifer V. Evans, *Life Among the Ruins: Cityscape and Sexuality in Cold War Berlin* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>38</sup> Jennifer V. Evans, “Bahnhof Boys: Policing Male Prostitution in Post-Nazi Berlin,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 4 (2003).

<sup>39</sup> Andreas Pretzel, ed., *NS-Opfer Unter Vorbehalt: Homosexuelle Männer in Berlin Nach 1945*, Berliner Schriften zur Sexualwissenschaft und Sexualpolitik (Berlin: LIT, 2002); Susanne Zur Nieden, *Unwürdige Opfer: Die Aberkennung von NS-Verfolgten in Berlin 1945 bis 1949* (Berlin: Metropol, 2003).

lesbian or transgender subjectivities or spaces in postwar Berlin. The paucity of scholarship on postwar queer Berlin stands in contradiction to the proliferation of historical work on gender and sexuality in the two German postwar states, which I outline in the following section.

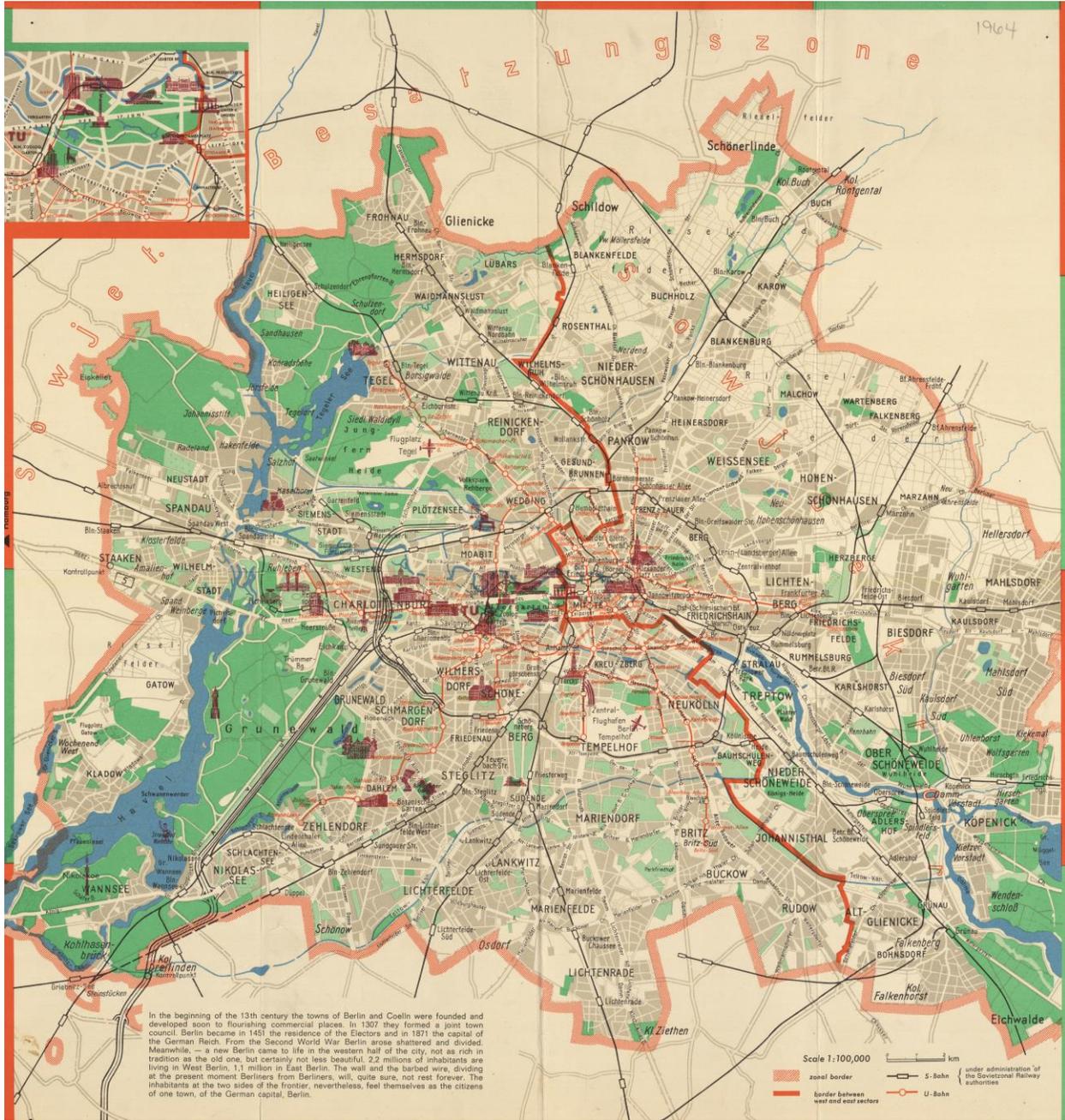


Figure 2. 1964 map of divided Berlin, published by the West Berlin tourist office. Clark Library Maps, University of Michigan.

## Sexuality and Gender in the Postwar Germanies

Sexuality, gender, and the family were central concerns in both German postwar states, the West German Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the East German German Democratic Republic (GDR), and despite the major political, legal, economic, and cultural differences, the two countries saw remarkably similar developments in this area in the 1950s and 1960s. In both East and West Germany, a sexual conservatism took hold in the 1950s, with both governments stressing the role of the family—conceived as married couple with children—in rebuilding their societies, with a focus on moral cleanliness and decency and, at times, intense persecution of those who deviated from the path of normalcy, whether same-sex desiring men, women seeking sex outside marriage, or rebellious youth, called “Halbstarke” or “Rowdies.”<sup>40</sup> Both countries shared the “homophobic consensus” coined by historian Susanne zur Nieden for the pre-1945 German states, even if this homophobia manifested quite differently in the two societies.<sup>41</sup> Both East and West Germany experienced “sexual revolutions” in that they witnessed massive changes in their citizens’ sexual mores.<sup>42</sup> These similar developments occurred despite major differences between the FRG and the GDR; they had different causes and happened in different ways. The two countries took alternate paths in regulating sexuality, and the debates were led by differing stakeholders in vastly disparate public spheres and competing economic systems. The

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<sup>40</sup> While studies on youth cultures in the early FRG and GDR have shown attention to gender and sexuality, their interest has been limited to cis genders, particularly cis masculinities, and heterosexual sexuality. See, for instance, Detlev Peukert, “Die ‘Halbstarke,’” *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 30, no. 4 (1984); Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Mark Fenemore, *Sex, Thugs, and Rock’n’roll: Teenage Rebels in Cold War East Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007).

<sup>41</sup> Susanne Zur Nieden, ed., *Homosexualität und Staatsräson: Männlichkeit, Homophobie und Politik in Deutschland 1900-1945* (Frankfurt/New York: campus, 2005), 7–8.

<sup>42</sup> I follow Josie McLellan, who insists that the changes in East Germans’ morality warrant the term “revolution” just as much as West Germans’, whereas Dagmar Herzog had termed the East German development as merely an “evolution.” Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9.

following section of the introduction outlines some of these major developments and interpretations.

The immediate postwar period has been described as one of violence, chaos, and crisis: the mass rapes of women at the hands of occupying soldiers, Soviet soldiers in particular, families broken up by death, flight, and imprisonment, and a crisis of masculinity as men returned home from the war with physical and psychological injuries.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, the years following German defeat are also remembered as a period of openness and possibility, when the end of the old and the not-yet of a new order made for realities beyond any traditional family models and allowed for hopes of a less restrictive future.<sup>44</sup> Historian Annette Timm has interpreted both those “individuals [...] demanding help in repairing the damage that the war had wrought on marriages and families” and those “openly flaunting nonmarital sexuality” as “reject[ing] the state’s interference in reproductive and sexual decisions.” She concludes that “one could also argue that they were displaying a desire to unlink sexuality and intimate relationships from reproduction.”<sup>45</sup> The absence of fathers and of the heterosexual couple changed everyday understandings of the family.<sup>46</sup> In the case of the “women families,” families headed by two women whose husbands were dead or in captivity, this postwar queer reality even became the subject of political debate in West Germany. During the deliberations for the West

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<sup>43</sup> On the “overdetermined” question of the rapes of German women by Soviet soldiers in the months before and after German capitulation see Atina Grossmann, “A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Occupation Soldiers,” *October* 72 (1995). Grossmann, who argues that the exact number of rapes “are hard to come by and unreliable,” and that a focus on numbers can play into a competition among victims, cites numbers ranging “from 20.000 to 100.000, to almost one million” women raped in Berlin. *Ibid.* 46.

<sup>44</sup> Whisnant, *Male homosexuality in West Germany*, 24.

<sup>45</sup> Annette F. Timm, *The Politics of Fertility in Twentieth-Century Berlin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 329–30.

<sup>46</sup> John Borneman, *Belonging in the Two Berlins: Kin, State, Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 132.

German rump constitution, the *Grundgesetz* or Basic Law, conveners considered expanding the definition of the family to include the “women families.”<sup>47</sup>

### *Similarities and Differences in the Legal Frameworks in East and West*

Hopes for a new beginning quickly faltered after the 1949 foundation of the two German states. Instead of protecting different existing families, the West German Basic Law favored a traditional family model and guaranteed the state’s “special protection” of “marriage and the family.”<sup>48</sup> As historians Robert Moeller and Kirsten Plötz have shown, gender roles and ideas of the family became increasingly rigid over the course of the 1950s. With a shortage of men, unmarried women were viewed with suspicion, and female couples, who had formerly been seen as inconspicuous as long as they did not display public affection, were increasingly understood as non-normative.<sup>49</sup> Married women were treated as second-class citizens, and were dependent on their husbands for permission to work and to open a bank account.

Both East and West Germany reintroduced the criminal code established during the late nineteenth century. Both countries also adopted some Nazi changes to the criminal law, though with important differences regarding sex between men. Under §175 of the criminal code, “fornication against nature between persons of the male sex or of humans with animals” had been prohibited under the Wilhelmine and Weimar German states.<sup>50</sup> In 1935, the Nazis changed the law, which beforehand had been interpreted as applying to insertive sex only, to the phrasing “a man who commits fornication with another man or lets himself be abused for fornication.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Kirsten Plötz, “Wo blieb die Bewegung lesbischer Trümmerfrauen?,” in Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld, *Forschung im Queerformat*, 74.

<sup>48</sup> “Grundgesetz Für Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” accessed July 31, 2019, [https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch\\_gg/englisch\\_gg.pdf](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_gg/englisch_gg.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> Kirsten Plötz, *Als fehle die bessere Hälfte* (Königstein/Taunus, Hannover: Helmer, 2005), 258.

<sup>50</sup> §175 in *Strafgesetzbuch Für Das Deutsche Reich* (1871).

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Ursula Meinhard, “Alles, Was Dem Volke Nützt, Ist Recht.: Urteile Der Berliner Gerichte,” in Pretzel; Roßbach, *Wegen der zu erwartenden hohen Strafe*, 99.

Now, all that was needed to prosecute a man was claiming that he had acted with “lecherous intent” [“wollüstige Absicht”].<sup>52</sup> The vague phrasing allowed for a much broader persecution of acts and even just gestures between men, including glances or brief touches.<sup>53</sup>

After German capitulation, Allied efforts to de-nazify German criminal law and reintroduce the pre-1935 version of §175 fell victim to Germany’s Cold War division. By 1948, these joint Allied efforts had ended, and it was up to German jurists to decide whether and how to criminalize homosexuality.<sup>54</sup> In 1951, the GDR reintroduced §175 in its old, less encompassing version.<sup>55</sup> While early drafts of a new socialist criminal code maintained the criminalization of sex between men, when it was passed in 1968, §175 was gone, though the new §151 introduced a different age of consent for sex between men or between women, thus continuing to criminalize certain same-sex relationships.<sup>56</sup> The numbers of men persecuted under §175 in East Germany had already dwindled since the late 1950s. The FRG, by contrast, kept the Nazi version of §175, prompting a contemporary to observe that for gay men in West Germany, “the Third Reich only ended in 1969.”<sup>57</sup> West German judges, many of them former Nazis, repeatedly denied that the law presented a Nazi injustice, and until the Great Criminal Law Reform of 1969, they sentenced 50,000 men under §175.<sup>58</sup> Both East and West Germany held on to the Nazis’ addition of §175a, which criminalized male prostitution as well as male sex with an

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<sup>52</sup> Ursula Meinhard, “Alles, Was Dem Volke Nützt, Ist Recht.: Urteile Der Berliner Gerichte,” in Pretzel; Roßbach, *Wegen der zu erwartenden hohen Strafe*, 99.

<sup>53</sup> Ursula Meinhard, “Alles, Was Dem Volke Nützt, Ist Recht.: Urteile Der Berliner Gerichte,” in Pretzel; Roßbach, *Wegen der zu erwartenden hohen Strafe*, 99.

<sup>54</sup> Pretzel, *NS-Opfer unter Vorbehalt*, 10.

<sup>55</sup> Pretzel, *NS-Opfer unter Vorbehalt*, 77.

<sup>56</sup> Moritz Vormbaum, *Das Strafrecht Der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, Jus Poenale 6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 378–79.

<sup>57</sup> Religious studies scholar Hans-Joachim Schoeps quoted by Dagmar Herzog. Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005), 94.

<sup>58</sup> Pretzel, *NS-Opfer unter Vorbehalt*, 10; Raimund Wolfert, “Zwischen den Stühlen - die deutsche Homophilenbewegung der 1950er Jahre,” in Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld, *Forschung im Queerformat*, 89.

underage partner, and prosecutions under this section were comparably high in the two German states.<sup>59</sup>

Apart from §175 and §175a, the laws against public nuisance, which remained largely unchanged since the nineteenth century, also affected deviant genders and sexualities. §183, “Public causation of a sexual nuisance,” punished those “who give a public nuisance by acting indecently” in both states with up to two years in prison or a fine, and additionally allowed for the withdrawal of civil rights.<sup>60</sup> §360 made “engaging in disorderly conduct” punishable by a fine of 150 Marks or imprisonment.<sup>61</sup> These laws remained in place in both German postwar states until the law reforms of the late 1960s, the new socialist criminal law codified in the GDR in 1968 and the West German Great Criminal Law Reform of 1969.

The GDR also created new laws that served to penalize deviance and police public space. The 1961 “Ordinance about the Limitation of Stay” and § 249 of the new criminal code, “Endangering Public Order through Asocial Behavior,” passed in 1968, allowed the state to prohibit citizens from entering certain areas as well as force them to work if they were found to be “workshy” [“arbeitsscheu.”] These laws were used against different groups who deviated from the socialist norm, in particular people who did not hold a steady job, rebellious youth, and

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<sup>59</sup> Klaus Berndt, “Zeiten Der Bedrohung: Männliche Homosexuelle in Ost-Berlin Und Der DDR in Den 1950er Jahren,” in *Konformitäten Und Konfrontationen: Homosexuelle in Der DDR*, ed. Rainer Marbach and Volker Weiß (Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2017), 25.

<sup>60</sup> “Oeffentliche Erregung eines geschlechtlichen Aergernisses. §183. Wer durch eine unzüchtige Handlung öffentlich ein Aergernis gibt, wird mit Gefängnis bis zu 2 Jahren oder mit Geldstrafe bestraft. Neben der Gefängnisstrafe kann auf Verlust der bürgerlichen Ehrenrechte erkannt werden. “ “§183.” In Ministerium für Justiz der DDR, ed., *Strafgesetzbuch Und Andere Strafgesetze* (Berlin: Deutscher Zentralverlag, 1951), 92; Eduard Kohlrausch and Richard Lange, eds., *Strafgesetzbuch Mit Erläuterungen Und Nebengesetzen*, 39th and 40th, Guttentagsche Sammlung Deutscher Reichsgesetze 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1950), 259. Guttentagsche Sammlung Deutscher Reichsgesetze 2. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1950. In 1969, disenfranchisement was struck out as part of the Great Criminal Law Reform in West Germany.

<sup>61</sup> “Mit Geldstrafe bis zu 150 Reichsmark oder mit Haft wird bestraft: [...] 11. wer ungebührlicherweise ruhestörenden Lärm erregt oder wer groben Unfug verübt.” “§360.” In Ministerium für Justiz der DDR, *Strafgesetzbuch und andere Strafgesetze*, 163–64; Kohlrausch and Lange, *Strafgesetzbuch mit Erläuterungen und Nebengesetzen*, 463–64.

women who sold sexual services.<sup>62</sup> Legal scholar Sven Korzilius has shown that the law targeted deviant sexualities more broadly: “[F]rom the perspective of the state authorities and the jurists, homosexuals and people suffering from sexually transmitted diseases bordered on ‘asocials.’”<sup>63</sup> Being convicted under the 1961 ordinance or the 1968 law could mean being sent to “labor education commandoes,” as well as prohibited from visiting certain areas – usually cities frequented by Western tourists. §249 allowed for prison sentences, too, and courts made frequent use of it throughout the existence of the GDR.<sup>64</sup>

### *Discourses about Sexuality*

In West Germany, the 1950s were hardly a period of silence on sexual matters, despite the prohibitive legal situation and the era’s sexual conservatism. As historian Dagmar Herzog has shown, the decade in fact evidenced a proliferation of discourses on sexuality. Herzog has famously interpreted West Germans’ desire for moral cleanliness as a way to distance themselves from sexual permissiveness in National Socialist Germany, and thus as a response to avoid dealing with German crimes.<sup>65</sup> Historian Sybille Steinbacher has further argued that the 1950s debates over sexuality represented the resurfacing of discourses of sexual morality, or

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<sup>62</sup> I use “women/men selling sexual services” rather than “prostitutes” because of the negative value judgment attached to “prostitution” and the stigma and criminalization linked to the occupation of “prostitute.” Historian Martin Lücke has pointed out that the term’s etymological roots mean “insult,” “debasement,” “debauchery.” Lücke, *Männlichkeit in Unordnung*, 29. I also follow historian Julia Laite, who has described her own writing praxis in this way: “[I] try to keep my use of terms varied, and endeavor to highlight the action or occupation of prostitution as often as possible. [...] It is my hope that this draws attention to the fact that prostitution was an occupation (or, perhaps, a lifestyle) for women, but certainly not their nameable and encompassing identity: it is fundamentally important to recognize the distinctions between doing prostitution and being a prostitute, and, of course, the difference between being a prostitute and being called one.” Julia Laite, *Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens: Commercial Sex in London, 1885-1960* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 26.

<sup>63</sup> Sven Korzilius, *"Asoziale" Und "Parasiten" Im Recht Der SBZ/DDR: Randgruppen Im Sozialismus Zwischen Repression Und Ausgrenzung* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 2005), 415.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 291-292, 301, 617-18. The number of sentences for §249 rose from around 4000 in the years after 1968 to 14.000 in 1973, in preparation of the World Youth Games, and 12.000 in 1982. At the end of the GDR, almost a quarter of prison inmates were incarcerated under §249. Thomas Lindenberger, “"Asoziale Lebensweise". Herrschaftslegitimation, Sozialdisziplinierung Und Die Konstruktion Eines "Negativen Milieus" in Der SED-Diktatur,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 31, no. 2 (2005): 247.

<sup>65</sup> Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 5-6.

*Sittlichkeit*, that emerged at the turn of the century.<sup>66</sup> Steinbacher has accordingly interpreted the postwar debates as a continuation of the struggle over the meaning and shape of modernity. West Germany's economic boom, the *Wirtschaftswunder*, allowed its citizens to participate in these debates as consumers, too, as historian Elizabeth Heineman has argued: purchasing erotica from mail-order catalogues like Beate Uhse, they became educated about different varieties of sex by the marketplace and "learning liberalism through sexuality."<sup>67</sup>

The picture of West Germany during the 1950s that emerges from these studies is complex. On the one hand, aspects of sexual repression remained in place during and beyond the 1950s, well into the 1960s, in fact: convictions of men for transgression of §175 continued to be high, and marriage rates soared to previously unknown levels, entrenching the "normal family" as dominant social model.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, ideas and attitudes about sex were changing rapidly, with 50% of West German households ordering erotica, whether self-help literature, contraceptives, toys, or sexual imagery, from mail order catalogues by the early 1960s.<sup>69</sup> Accordingly, what is often referred to as the "sexual revolution" of the late 1960s and early 1970s began much earlier in postwar West Germany and was, rather than "a sudden, fundamental overthrow of [...] sexual interests and behaviors, [...] a long-term, complicated process."<sup>70</sup>

In East Germany, changes in ideas about and practices of sexuality were similarly vast and followed a similar trajectory despite immense differences between the two political systems,

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<sup>66</sup> Sybille Steinbacher, *Wie Der Sex Nach Deutschland Kam: Der Kampf Um Sittlichkeit Und Anstand in Der Frühen Bundesrepublik* (München: Siedler, 2011), 15–16.

<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Heineman, *Before Porn Was Legal: The Erotica Empire of Beate Uhse* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 2, 7, 14.

<sup>68</sup> In the 1960s, the number of §175 sentences were up to four times that of the late Weimar Republic. Robert G. Moeller, "Private Acts, Public Anxieties, and the Fight to Decriminalize Male Homosexuality in West Germany," *Feminist Studies* 36, no. 3 (2010): 530; Plötz, *Als fehle die bessere Hälfte*, 255–56..

<sup>69</sup> Heineman quotes industry figures. Heineman, *Before Porn*, 17.

<sup>70</sup> Steinbacher, *Wie der Sex*, 10-11, my translation.

prompting some historians to speak of an “East German sexual revolution.”<sup>71</sup> In the socialist state, too, the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s were marked by sexual conservatism and a concern with deviant behavior, and the mid-to-late 1960s and 1970s characterized by a trend towards liberalization.<sup>72</sup> The place for sex in the GDR was within loving, long-term heterosexual relationships. Practices other than reproductive, monogamous sexuality were discouraged, with sexological handbooks condemning masturbation, anal sex, and sadomasochistic practices.<sup>73</sup> Despite the lack of a parliamentary democracy and a free public sphere, East German citizens were able to exert pressure on state policy through petitions, and the dictatorship was also responsive to practical needs, aware of the need to keep its population satisfied, and mindful of its international reputation.<sup>74</sup>

The situation for same-sex desiring East Germans was contradictory.<sup>75</sup> The GDR never persecuted sex between men with a zealotry comparable to West Germany, and the government abolished §175 in its 1968 criminal code; however, the same code contained the new §249, which criminalized “asociality,” and which was used against queer citizens. Additionally, the lack of a free public sphere meant that queer publications and organizations could not exist, severely hampering East Germans’ possibility to organize queer communities and live queer lives.

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<sup>71</sup> McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism*, 2.

<sup>72</sup> Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 185; Greg Eghigian, “Homo Munitus: The East German Observed,” in *Socialist Modern. East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, ed. Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 45–47; Jennifer V. Evans, “Repressive Rehabilitation: Crime, Morality, and Delinquency in Berlin-Brandenburg, 1945-1958,” in Wetzell, *Crime and Criminal Justice in Modern Germany*, 303–4.

<sup>73</sup> McLellan, *Love*, 90.

<sup>74</sup> McLellan, 13-14.

<sup>75</sup> Germanist Kyle Frackman has recently called the GDR’s stance toward homosexuality “persistent ambivalence.” While more studies of the socialist state’s dealing with its queer citizens are needed to reach any conclusion, “ambivalence” appears to me too benevolent a term. Kyle Frackman, “Persistent Ambivalence: Theorizing Queer East German Studies,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 66, no. 5 (2019).

*West and East German Attempts to Continue the Legacy of Weimar-era Sexual Science and Activism*

Both the FRG and the GDR saw attempts to re-establish the triad of sexual science, the state, and activism that had emerged in Weimar Germany. In both German postwar states, these efforts had limited success, although for different reasons. “From 1949 to 1969, the West German state left almost nothing undone to thwart aspirations for homosexual emancipation,” as historian Raimund Wolfert has put it.<sup>76</sup> In the GDR, the lack of a free public sphere meant that there could be no overt homosexual organizing or publishing. Although there was hardly a renaissance of progressive sexology, “the ongoing influence of progressive sex reform [...] played a significant role in tempering the sexual conservatism that characterized the early years of the Cold War,” as historian Erik Huneke has argued.<sup>77</sup>

In West Germany, the young medical doctor Hans Giese founded an Institute for Sexual Research in Frankfurt am Main in 1949. Its relationship to queer communities was much more ambivalent than Hirschfeld’s Institute had been, however. Early on, Giese and his colleagues expressed to the new state that sex between men of legal age should not be punishable.<sup>78</sup> But his expertise in the 1957 Federal Constitutional Court trial about the constitutionality of §175 confirmed the “social danger” presented by male homosexuals’ “seduction of minors” and “promiscuity.”<sup>79</sup> Giese also founded a new Humanitarian-Scientific Committee, and tried to

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<sup>76</sup> “Zwischen 1949 und 1969 ließ der westdeutsche Staat kaum etwas unversucht, um homosexuelle Emanzipationsbestrebungen zu vereiteln [...]” Raimund Wolfert, “Zwischen den Stühlen - die deutsche Homophilenbewegung der 1950er Jahre,” in Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld, *Forschung im Queerformat*, 87–88.

<sup>77</sup> Erik G. Huneke, “Morality, Law, and the Socialist Sexual Self in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1972” (Dissertation, History, University of Michigan, 2013), 44.

<sup>78</sup> Volkmar Sigusch, *Geschichte der Sexualwissenschaft* (Frankfurt a. M: campus, 2008), 392. See also Raimund Wolfert, *Homosexuellenpolitik in Der Jungen Bundesrepublik: Kurt Hiller, Hans Giese Und Das Frankfurter Wissenschaftlich-Humanitäre Komitee*, Hirschfeld Lectures (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2015).

<sup>79</sup> Burkhardt Riechers, “Freundschaft und Anständigkeit. Leitbilder im Selbstverständnis männlicher Homosexueller in der frühen Bundesrepublik,” *invertito. Jahrbuch für die Geschichte der Homosexualitäten* 1 (1999): 26. Giese’s expertise, which helped uphold §175, was an expression of his theory of homosexuality. He divided homosexuals into two groups, those who were “homosexually amiss,” but capable of being faithful and thus socially acceptable,

recruit Kurt Hiller, who had been a member of the original organization and one of the most important advocates for abolishing §175. But their cooperation was short lived due to their different political and scientific beliefs and life experiences. Giese, who went on to become the most influential sexologist in West Germany until the 1970s, disassociated himself with Hirschfeld's legacy.<sup>80</sup>

Homophile organizations and publications were founded in multiple West German cities in the late 1940s and early 1950s, part of the transnational homophile movement of the Cold War era.<sup>81</sup> Many of the magazines, such as *Der Freund*, *Freundschaft*, *Die Insel*, *Der Ring*, struggled to survive after the 1953 passage of the "Law against the Dissemination of Publications that Endanger Youth." The law prohibited the magazines from being displayed publicly, resulting in a dramatic drop in printed copies.<sup>82</sup> Only two magazines continued publishing into the late 1960s, Hamburg-based *Der Weg* and the Swiss trilingual *Der Kreis*.<sup>83</sup>

In East Germany, at least three men agitated to re-launch Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science and the Humanitarian-Scientific Committee shortly after the end of Nazism, the Berlin writer Willi Pamperin; Gerd Katter, whose campaign I discuss in the first chapter; and the Dresden psychiatrist Rudolf Klimmer.<sup>84</sup> Erik Huneke has offered an in-depth examination of Klimmer's efforts in this regard. He argues that despite Klimmer's failure to launch a progressive sexology in the GDR and the censoring of much of his research, he considerably

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and those who were promiscuous and thus "homosexually perverted." Sigusch, *Geschichte der Sexualwissenschaft*, 410–11.

<sup>80</sup> Sigusch, *Geschichte der Sexualwissenschaft*, 391.

<sup>81</sup> On the transnational homophile movement, see David S. Churchill, "Transnationalism and Homophile Political Culture in the Postwar Decades," *GLQ*, 2009.; Leila J. Rupp, "The Persistence of Transnational Organizing: The Case of the Homophile Movement," *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 4 (2011).

<sup>82</sup> The numbers dropped from 20.000 in 1952 to 5.000 in 1958. Riechers, "Freundschaft und Anständigkeit. Leitbilder im Selbstverständnis männlicher Homosexueller in der frühen Bundesrepublik," 20.

<sup>83</sup> Raimund Wolfert, "Zwischen den Stühlen - die deutsche Homophilenbewegung der 1950er Jahre," in Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld, *Forschung im Queerformat*, 90.

<sup>84</sup> Wolfert, *Homosexuellenpolitik in der jungen Bundesrepublik*, 14–15.

influenced the socialist state's sexual politics, including discussions to decriminalize homosexuality. Klimmer also managed to become part of international homophile and sexological networks, publishing articles in *Der Kreis* magazine and exchanging correspondence with the Kinsey Institute in the U.S.<sup>85</sup> But these accomplishments were hard-won against state censorship, colleagues' skepticism, and continuous disappointments, and they depended on "remain[ing] invisible."<sup>86</sup> Ultimately, the Weimar-era partnership of queer activists, sexologists, and state actors could not be revived in either German state.

### **Theorizing Space**

The spaces around which chapters are organized constitute some of the elements of the urban network that make up the city: homes and bars, streets and parks, police stations and prisons. They are specific locations where queer lives materialized. This dissertation argues that these spaces both formed queer lives and were formed by queer subjects. By zooming in on these sites, the contours of queer Berliners' agency become palpable, and the picture that emerges in a close-up view suggests that stigmatization and criminalization affected their lives but did not fully determine them. A spatial analysis of postwar queer Berlin both adds to and at times challenges a history that so far has been written primarily as a history of the criminalization and persecution of male homosexuality. Centering other subjectivities, such as those of transgender people and lesbian and queer women, and attending to spaces as sites of pleasure, not only pain, I advocate for an understanding of queer lives that encompasses the joys of living queerly as much as its dangers.

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<sup>85</sup> Huneke, "Morality, Law, and the Socialist Sexual Self in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1972," 68-69; 72; 156; 224-225.

<sup>86</sup> Huneke, "Morality, Law, and the Socialist Sexual Self in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1972," 225.

## *Queer(ing) Space*

We can turn to the etymology of the word “queer,” which comes from the Indo-European word “twist.” Queer is, after all, a spatial term, which then gets translated into a sexual term, a term for a twisted sexuality that does not follow a “straight line,” a sexuality that is bent and crooked. The spatiality of this term is not incidental. Sexuality itself can be considered a spatial formation not only in the sense that bodies inhabit sexual spaces, but also in the sense that bodies are sexualized through how they inhabit space. [...] Phenomenology helps us consider how sexuality involves ways of inhabiting and being inhabited by space.<sup>87</sup>

In this quote from her book *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed approaches the spatiality of queer sexualities through etymology. Her concern for how “bodies inhabit sexual spaces, but also [...] are sexualized through how they inhabit space” will be a recurring thread throughout this dissertation. Ahmed’s return to queer’s semantic origin directs readers to think about the metaphorical meanings of the terms used to describe spaces and the movement of bodies in them. It is a richly productive direction of thought for a queer urban history. Consider, for example, how she describes queer sexuality as “not follow[ing] a ‘straight line.’” All kinds of lines come to mind: lines drawn on city maps to represent streets, buildings, rail tracks; subway lines; the itineraries of city dwellers from sleep to school, work, leisure, and back. In German, one translation of the word for line, “Strich,” denominates the location of public commercial sex. “Auf den Strich gehen,” walking on the line, hence means selling sexual services in public space, and the “Strichjunge,” a figure that will be present in multiple chapters and that I have translated as “streetwalking boy,” is the name of a boy or young man offering them. Finally, lines can also be temporal. History is often represented as a horizontal line moving forward: a chronology. An alternative way to envision time is genealogy: tracing ancestral lines that are often represented

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<sup>87</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 67.

vertically, for instance in family trees. Queer historians have offered rich theorizations of time; I will return to them below.

Ahmed also points out that lines are produced reciprocally, a process that she calls the performativity of lines.

The relationship between “following a line” and the conditions for the emergence of lines is often ambiguous. Which one comes first? [...] Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created. The lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition.<sup>88</sup>

What Ahmed describes here connects two lines of thought that inform her queer phenomenology as well as my project. First, the notion that space is produced, as developed by theorists of space such as Henri Lefevre and Michel de Certeau. And second, the theorization of gendered and sexualized spaces by feminist and queer geographers, following the notion of gender as performance, often associated with Judith Butler.<sup>89</sup>

### *The Production of Space*

Henri Lefebvre has examined the production of space through both the everyday practices of a city’s inhabitants and planners’ and administrators’ conceptions of the city. He argues that space is socially produced through the triad of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces. The first two terms are helpful for the project that this dissertation undertakes. In Lefebvre’s theory, *spatial practice* designates city dwellers’ use of the built spaces of the city.<sup>90</sup> In my analysis, these are the spatial practices of queer Berliners as well as of

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<sup>88</sup> Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 16.

<sup>89</sup> Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial and Sara Brady, Third edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>90</sup> *Spatial practice* to him “embodies a close association [...] between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, ‘private’ life and leisure).” Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 38.

those who sought to control the radius of their everyday lives, such as the police and other state authorities. Lefebvre's *representations of space* include "the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers," all connected to the state and institutions of power.<sup>91</sup> These representations materialize in maps, in laws, or in rules for behavior in certain spaces such as public parks or trains. Lefebvre's term describes what I have designated state policy, for instance the laws governing sexuality and gender in the postwar German states, the regulation of public space in West and East Berlin, or the rules for appropriate behavior in bars.

Michel de Certeau, another French theorist of space, has examined cities as sites of the implementation of modern techniques of power, such as surveillance and discipline, and has emphasized city inhabitants' subversion of these techniques. His project is a direct response to Michel Foucault's analysis of the workings of power.<sup>92</sup> Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish*, analyzed power as working through multiple institutions of the state, such as social work, education, the military, or prisons, achieving its aims by disciplining individuals. This "carceral network" works through "systems of insertion, distribution, surveillance, observation," Foucault postulated.<sup>93</sup> De Certeau, by contrast, rejects the notion that discourses discipline all spaces. Instead, he stresses the practices of urbanites, who "insinuate[ ] themselves into a network of surveillance" and "constitut[e] everyday regulations and surreptitious creativities that are merely concealed by the frantic mechanisms and discourses of the observational organization."<sup>94</sup> Carving out "surreptitious creativities" of queer Berliners that are buried in the "frantic [...] discourses" of police reports will be a central part of my work in this dissertation, particularly

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 2011), 95.

<sup>93</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 304.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 96.

when I examine queer subjectivities that were directly policed by law enforcement. De Certeau further describes his project as

follow[ing] out a few of these multiform, resistance, tricky and stubborn procedures that elude discipline without being outside the field in which it is exercised, and which should lead us to a theory of everyday practices, of lived space, of the disquieting familiarity of the city.<sup>95</sup>

If de Certeau suggests following the line of practices rather than discourses, this will be my main avenue of inquiry, too, keeping in mind that these lines of analysis: discourses, practices, phenomenology and subjectivities, keep intersecting, and that their crossings make up the dense network of the city.

The De Certeau quote above offers yet another theoretical crossroads that informs this dissertation. De Certeau's emphasis on "multiform, resistance, tricky and stubborn procedures that elude discipline" is reminiscent of the *Eigensinn* that practitioners of German *Alltagsgeschichte*, the history of everyday life, have ascribed to historical actors. *Eigensinn* is the idea of a subjectivity that, despite being formed by the discourses of its historical moment, retains its ability to make its own sense of this moment, thus holding on to some degree of freedom to act even in the most trying of situations.<sup>96</sup> I will return to *Alltagsgeschichte* below; first, however, I will linger with spatial theory for a moment longer, contemplating feminist and queer geographers' theorizations of gendered and sexualized spaces.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Whereas the English term *agency* puts emphasis on self-determined acting, the German *Eigensinn* stresses self-determined cognition.

*Feminist and Queer Geographies: Theorizing Space as Gendered and Sexualized*

Geographers, particularly in the UK, have productively engaged the insights of feminism and queer theory about the construction of gender and sexuality for spatial theory. Doreen Massey has argued that

space and place, spaces and places, and our senses of them (and such related things as our degrees of mobility) are gendered through and through. Moreover they are gendered in a myriad different ways, which vary between cultures and over time. And this gendering of space and place both reflects and has effects back on the ways in which gender is constructed and understood in societies in which we live.<sup>97</sup>

In the same essay, Massey elaborates that feminist geography's object of analysis is "the construction of masculinity and femininity and the relations between the two."<sup>98</sup> While she clearly sticks to a binary notion of gender, those taking up her work have widened their analysis to include multiple performances of gender and sexuality. Gill Valentine, for instance, has described how heterosexuality is naturalized in public spaces through "repetitive performances of hegemonic asymmetrical gender identities and heterosexual desires [that] congeal over time [...]."<sup>99</sup> Those who "disrupt the 'normality' of heterosexual space by performing their desires in a way that produces (an)other space," she argues, are policed through public decency laws as well as "anxious straight citizens [who] don't wait for the police [...], rather they actively regulate it through aggression," and also through "more subtle omni-present regulatory regimes" such as "looks, whispers, and stares."<sup>100</sup> Valentine shows that despite this policing, non-heterosexual performances of gender identity and desire are also present in these spaces, but often remain

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<sup>97</sup> Doreen Massey, "Space, Place and Gender," in *Space, Place, and Gender*, ed. Doreen Massey, (University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 186.

<sup>98</sup> Massey, "Space," 189.

<sup>99</sup> Gill Valentine, "(Re)Negotiating the 'Heterosexual Street': Lesbian Productions of Space," in *BodySpace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Duncan (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 154. Valentine's essay is part of one of (at least) two volumes from the mid-1990s that explore geographies of gender and sexuality. See also David Bell and Gill Valentine, eds., *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>100</sup> Valentine, "(Re)Negotiating," 148-49.

unseen, either because they are blanketed by the sheer mass of performances of heterosexuality or because observers lack the perceptual literacy to notice them.

German feminist geography collective BASSDA, working directly with Doreen Massey, have advocated for using the term “queer” for spatial analyses of sexuality.

Queer, to us (unlike 'lesbian'), stressed the particularities of sexuality as a social category with its own spatiality while at the same time explicitly emphasising - and inviting - overlaps and dissonances with other social categories such as, importantly, gender.<sup>101</sup>

Consequently, they employ the notion of “queering spaces” in the sense of a “conscious disruption of coherent sex-gender performances in various kinds of spaces,” and thus as a deliberate method for “trying to understand the complex mechanisms of the everyday making and naturalisation of gendered and sexualised spaces.”<sup>102</sup>

While disruptions of coherent sex-gender performances are at the center of my analysis, too, my definition of queering spaces is broader. I am interested in sex-gender performances that became conspicuous. Often, these were not consciously, or at least not deliberately, disruptive. Rather than studying instances of space-queering to understand the naturalization of spaces as heterosexual, my primary aim is to trace the presence of queer subjectivities and to reconstruct how they created spaces for themselves momentarily and at times, lastingly.

### *Urban Histories Between Gay and Queer*

While the spatial theorists discussed above deal primarily with contemporary spaces, historians of gender and sexuality have explored the spatiality of queer subjectivities and subcultures in the past. George Chauncey’s *Gay New York* and Matt Houlbrook’s *Queer London*, for instance, offer

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<sup>101</sup> Bassda, “A Kind of Queer Geography/Räume Durchqueeren: The Doreen Massey Reading Weekends,” *Gender, Place & Culture. A Journal of Feminist Geography* 13, no. 2 (2006): 181.

<sup>102</sup> Bassda, 181.

queer urban histories dedicated to exploring the significance of gender for queer sexualities, though they limit their analyses to male queer worlds.<sup>103</sup> Chauncey, in his 1994 book about “a highly visible, remarkably complex, and continually changing gay male world,” sought to “restore that world to history, to chart its geography, and to recapture its culture and politics.”<sup>104</sup> Houlbrook, by contrast, writing in 2005, rejected the language of restoration and recapturing. “Rather than seeking to ‘rediscover’ a ‘hidden’ ‘gay’ culture,” he writes,

this book thus explores the historical production of diverse modes of sexual difference and “normality” and the ways in which these interpretive frameworks shaped how men understood their desires; their sexual, social, and cultural practices; and the urban lives they forged.<sup>105</sup>

In their differing approaches to writing histories of male queer urbanity, Chauncey and Houlbrook can be mapped onto two strands in the historiography of same-sex sexualities which Laura Doan has recently described as an ancestral history or genealogy, or “the history of us,” and a “critical queer history.”<sup>106</sup> Doan criticizes the former for its reliance on the identity concepts developed by sexology and its ethical impetus to use “history’s power to recover, rescue, or preserve traces of the marginalized, abject, hidden, and invisible.”<sup>107</sup> Chauncey’s project of restoring a lost world is an example of this strand.<sup>108</sup> A critical queer history, in Doan’s vision, would instead be “*uninterested* in recuperating or tracing queerness-as-being but nevertheless eager to exploit queerness-as-method,” which might be a circumscription of Houlbrook’s interest in “the historical production of [...] sexual difference and ‘normality.’”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>104</sup> Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*, 1.

<sup>105</sup> Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 8.

<sup>106</sup> Laura L. Doan, *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality, and Women's Experience of Modern War* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 60–61.

<sup>107</sup> Doan, *Disturbing practices*, 47.

<sup>108</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Doan, *Disturbing practices*, viii, italics in original.

Despite their diverging theoretical starting points, the two books share as core concerns a critical reading of sources that were produced by the authorities, an emphasis on the practices of queer men, and a nuanced analysis of the multiple and shifting gendered subjectivities of queer men. It is in these aspects that they have served as models for this study, too. As for positioning my dissertation in the ancestral or critical queer line of inquiry, it seems most accurate to say that it sits in between them, sometimes uncomfortably so.

### *Keeping Lesbian Subjectivities Invisible*

While both Chauncey's and Holbrook's studies pay close attention to the meanings of gender for queer men, neither of them analyzes queer women in the city. Recent studies of queerness and sexuality in Berlin ignore lesbian subjectivities and relationships and non-normative femininities, too.<sup>110</sup> This utter disinterest is devastating. Of course, it is true that "women's access to public space was more problematic," and that "lesbianism remained invisible in the law."<sup>111</sup> Despite women's more limited access to funds and public spaces, however, lesbian publics existed in these cities. Furthermore, private urban spaces warrant scholarly analysis, too, though researching them requires different methods and archives than examining public spaces. By disregarding the lives of urban queer women, these studies reproduce the state's (apparent) ignorance, leading to different kinds of unfavorable repercussions, all of which carry as their implicit message that queer women's lives do not matter. At the very least, such disinterest continues history's thundering silence about queer women; worse still, the lack of a legal prohibition of same-sex relationships between women has been taken as proof that they did not

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<sup>110</sup> Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York: Knopf, 2014); Jennifer V. Evans, *Life Among the Ruins: Cityscape and Sexuality in Cold War Berlin* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>111</sup> Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 10.

suffer from persecution.<sup>112</sup> In either case, queer urban histories without queer women are complicit in upholding an image of the city as a male-only space, and as a result, their analysis of the gendered experience of city life will remain insufficient. In my own analysis, I have attempted to privilege female voices and to be particularly attentive to lesbian subjectivities and to queer women's space-making practices even when their traces, particularly in public spaces, were fleeting.

### **Queer-Feminist Methods: Assembling A Queer Archive, Reading Queerly, Privileging Queer Voices**

To tell a story of queer Berlin that goes beyond same-sex loving men's victimization, I have employed a methodology consisting of three main threads: assembling a queer archive, reading queerly, and privileging queer voices over those of authorities. This methodology is indebted to feminist and queer scholars working in history, anthropology, performance studies, and neighboring disciplines, as well the German field of *Alltagsgeschichte*, everyday history. While not explicitly theorizing space or sexuality, *Alltagsgeschichte* has developed a sophisticated methodology for working with fragmented archives and telling the stories of those overlooked by traditional histories. Alf Lüdtke, one of the field's foremost practitioners, has described everyday history's core concern as examining "the forms in which people have 'appropriated' – while simultaneously transforming – 'their' world," an interest that this dissertation pursues in its focus

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<sup>112</sup> I discuss this at length above, in the section on Berlin as queer Eldorado. On a more general level, it is depressing that Magnus Hirschfeld's statement that "important aspects of the question [of homosexuality] have not found a generally accepted solution yet; indeed, one half of the whole matter, the homosexuality of woman, has only been treated very insufficiently so far for various reasons," still holds true after more than 100 years. Hirschfeld, Magnus. *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes*. Berlin: Louis Marcus Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1914, V-VI, my translation.

on queer space-making practices.<sup>113</sup> Lüdtkke also discusses the benefits of case histories for writing a history that preserves moments of ambivalence and allows for multiple and contradictory readings rather than making claims for a definite, all-encompassing account.

If ambivalences can be laid bare only by linking together a multitude of individual observations, or drawing on disparate sources and historical residua, then it is imperative to examine individual cases and their history. They provide far more than just local color, highlighting history as a process, as a plaiting of strands, a mosaic of (inter)actions. The “density” of life situations and contexts of action can be made vivid and palpable in the form of miniature. At the same time, refractions, secondary tones and undertones, hidden motifs, and results can also be probed. Moreover, the authors of miniatures demonstratively renounce any claim that they are trying to deal exhaustively with the multilayered structure of historical processes. Collages or mosaics can help make individual layers or nodes within societal “patchwork” structures three-dimensional and plastic.<sup>114</sup>

The quote comprises theoretical and methodological claims that are crucial to this dissertation.

Regarding a theory of history, Lüdtkke suggests an understanding of historical processes as “multilayered,” demonstrates a commitment to telling a partial story (in both senses of the word) rather than attempting to explain the totality of a period, and offers an approach to situations that presumes their ambivalence rather than looking for their “correct” meaning. Regarding methodology, he speaks to assembling “a multitude of individual observations, [...] disparate sources and historical residua” in a “collage or mosaic” rather than the systematic examination of a coherent body of sources. The next section describes how I went about assembling a mosaic for queer postwar Berlin.

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<sup>113</sup> Alf Lüdtkke, “Introduction: What Is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are Its Practitioners?,” in *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. Alf Lüdtkke (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 7.

<sup>114</sup> Lüdtkke, “Introduction: What is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are Its Practitioners?,” 21.

*Assembling a Queer Archive for Postwar Berlin*

Generations of queer historians have grappled with the problem of finding sources on queer subjectivities in the past. But the richness and diversity of queer historical scholarship attests that even if they were “hidden from history,” as an early groundbreaking volume of queer history proclaimed, queer lives did leave traces that perceptive researchers can find and from which they can construct histories.<sup>115</sup> Partly, these histories are preserved in the archives founded by activists in the gay, lesbian, and LGBTQ movements since the 1970s. But state archives, too, have significant holdings relevant to queer histories, though they are often not catalogued as such. Here, queer historians, like other scholars of marginalized communities, have found success by reading against the grain, or “reading queerly:” reading against the intent of those who authored and collected the documents. In the case of Berlin, the city’s Cold War division has created further challenges for the researcher. Two administrations produced two archives, and even though the city has now been reunited for thirty years, some records from East Berlin remain less accessible than those from West Berlin. The resulting archival imbalances structure this dissertation; I have attempted to make them visible throughout the chapters.

Privileging queer voices over those of the state was a methodological principle for me from the beginning of my research. Hence, I started building my archive by looking for sources produced and collected by queer Berliners themselves during or in the wake of the queer emancipatory movements of the second half of the twentieth century. In these movement archives, which queer activists created in reaction to the dearth of documentation or interest in state archives, I found oral history interviews, movement publications, and personal papers that included correspondence, calendars, diaries, memoirs, fiction, and personal photographs. The

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<sup>115</sup> Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey, eds., *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: NAL Books, 1989).

second half of my body of sources, such as West Berlin police records, court documents, and files of the East Berlin Stasi, was produced by the state. Whereas the first group of sources was produced from the perspectives of the people who made queer social spaces, the second was produced by the state actors who surveilled them, attempted to delimit them, and criminalized them. Because both German postwar states were concerned about the dangers that queer desires and subjectivities presented to what Dagmar Herzog has called “the fragility of heterosexuality,” they surveilled queer public spaces intensely and produced ample documentation of the process.<sup>116</sup>

At the same time, queer voices from the postwar decades are relatively scarce, for many reasons: the study of gay and lesbian history did not begin until the 1970s and 1980s in West Germany, and the 1980s in East Germany, with transgender history only emerging in the 2000s; intergenerational tensions between postwar queer Berliners and those socialized during the gay and lesbian liberation and rights movements; keeping “evidence” of queer lives during this period of continued criminalization of male homosexuality and widespread stigmatization of lesbian women and gender-nonconforming people was dangerous; and many aspects of everyday life, of producing queer spaces and making the self may have been perceived as trivial or unworthy of recording.

Additional imbalances in my archive stem from the fact that sources on West Berlin outnumber sources on East Berlin, and materials about sex between men, non-normative masculinities, and male-to-female trans people outnumber materials about sex between women, non-normative femininities, and female-to-male transgender subjects. Concerning queer-produced sources, the East-West imbalance has to do with the differences in gay and lesbian

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<sup>116</sup> Herzog, *Sex after fascism: memory and morality in twentieth-century Germany*, 64; Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after fascism: memory and morality in twentieth-century Germany*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005, 64.

activism and scholarship in West and East. Whereas activists in West Berlin started researching “their” history in the 1970s, and through the 1980s institutionalized it by founding archives, a museum, and workshops, East Berlin activists did not have access to publishing and other resources, though they began much of the same work in the 1980s. Of the movement archives that I visited – the Feminist FFBIZ Archives (Frauenforschungs-, Bildungs- und Informationszentrum), the Gay Museum, the Magnus Hirschfeld Society, the Spinnboden Lesbian Archives, the Kitty Kuse papers at Christiane von Lengerke’s home, the Lili Elbe Archive for Inter Trans Queer History, and the Archive of Other Memories of the Federal Magnus Hirschfeld Foundation – only the last two were *not* founded in pre-1989 West Berlin.<sup>117</sup> The West Berlin archives also collected materials from East Berlin, and some, like the Gay Museum, have significantly enlarged their GDR-related collections since German reunification. Nevertheless, they remain predominantly West German archives. As for East Berlin movement archives, the Robert Havemann Society, dedicated to the history of the opposition in the GDR, has records related to queer lives from the 1980s, but not before.<sup>118</sup> The Lila Archive in Meiningen, founded by East Berlin lesbian activist Ursula Sillge and dedicated to “preserving cultural artefacts relevant to women,” does not have personal papers of lesbian women.<sup>119</sup>

State-produced sources for East Germany remain difficult to access, even thirty years after German reunification. At the *Landesarchiv*, the archive responsible for collecting the records of the city of Berlin, police, court, and prison records from East and West Berlin are accessible and searchable via catalogue and finding aid. By contrast, at the Police Historical Collection Berlin [Polizeihistorische Sammlung Berlin], where archivist Jens Dobler pointed me

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<sup>117</sup> The Lili Elbe Archive for Inter Trans Queer History was founded in 2013. “Selbstbild Lili-Elbe-Archiv,” accessed August 7, 2019, <http://www.lili-elbe-archive.org/selbstbild.html>.

<sup>118</sup> Petra Söllner, Email to Andrea Rottmann, November 16, 2016.

<sup>119</sup> Ursula Sillge, Email to Andrea Rottmann, November 20, 2016.

to some crucial sources for West Berlin, the files from the East Berlin People's Police are not indexed at all. Since the archive relies on funding from the Association of the Friends of the Police Historical Collection, it has neither the staff nor the resources to make this happen in the near future.

At the Stasi archives, researchers cannot search the catalogue, and must instead rely on the archive's staff and trust that they know how to search for the issue at hand. In my case, the staff member assigned to me provided me with materials about gay men but claimed that there were no files about lesbian women for my period of interest, a result of the lack of the criminalization of sex between women, he explained. Late in my research, I met a documentary filmmaker from Leipzig, Barbara Wallbraun, who had come across Stasi files about lesbian women in Berlin in the 1960s. She was so generous as to share the relevant call numbers, which the archivist then pulled for me. This episode demonstrates just how damaging a criminalization-focused approach to queer history can be.

As for same-sex relationships between women, scarcity of sources is a problem that generations of lesbian historians have grappled with and productively engaged. Hanna Hacker noted in her 1987 study *Frauen und Freundinnen* [*Women and Girlfriends*] that “the wish to represent their ‘reality’ [that of women-loving women] requires a different method and a different language than the analysis of male-male dialogues.”<sup>120</sup> More recently, Martha Vicinus, summarizing different paradigms in lesbian history, has suggested “the usefulness of examining the ‘not said’ and the ‘not seen’ in order to discover women’s sexual lives in the past,” or, “[i]n

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<sup>120</sup> “Bindungen zwischen Frauen, Beziehungen zum eigenen Geschlecht, Dimensionen von Frauenliebe: Der Wunsch, ihre “Realität” darzustellen, erfordert eine andere Methodik und eine andere Sprache als die Analyse der mann-männlichen Dialoge.” Hacker, *Frauen und Freundinnen*, 93 See also her 2015 updated edition, Hacker, *Frauen\* und Freund\_innen. Lesarten “weiblicher Homosexualität”, Österreich, 1870-1938*.

other words, silence is not empty, nor is absence invisible.”<sup>121</sup> In my analysis, I have marked silences and described invisibilities; however, for postwar Berlin, lesbian lives did leave traces in both movement and state archives. In movement sources from the period, such as homophile magazines, there is a small yet significant lesbian presence. West Berlin lesbian activists of the 1970s and 1980s bridged generational differences, forming organizations that focused on older women, interviewing them for books and documentary films, and founding archives that collected their personal papers, thus creating a rich archive for the historian. But even in state archives, lesbian lives are present, despite the lack of an explicit criminalization of sex between women.<sup>122</sup>

### *Developing Terms for Research*

I approached all my archives with a broad research question, asking about the everyday lives of same-sex loving and non-normatively gendered Berliners in the period between 1945 and 1970.<sup>123</sup> From this broad question, I developed more precise research terms, often with the help of other historians and archivists.<sup>124</sup> At the movement archives, I looked at all available personal papers and oral histories from people who had lived in Berlin during my period of interest, in addition to homophile publications. At the *Landesarchiv*, archivist Bianca Welzing-Bräutigam

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<sup>121</sup> Martha Vicinus, “The History of Lesbian History,” *Feminist Studies* 38, no. 3 (2012): 574–75.

<sup>122</sup> Two recent German studies have innovatively researched the discrimination of lesbian women: Christiane Carri has analyzed psychiatric evaluations for the disenfranchisement of lesbian women during the Weimar Republic, and Kirsten Plötz has examined how judges in West Germany ruled on lesbian mothers in child custody cases. Christiane Carri, “Als Erstes Symptom Einer Gewissen Psychischen Abwegigkeit Ist Bei Ihr Selbst Ihre Homosexuelle Einstellung Zu Nennen.” *Diskurse Um Weibliche Homosexualität Aus Einem Entmündigungsgutachten Der Weimarer Republik*, *invertito. Jahrbuch für die Geschichte der Homosexualitäten* 17 (2015).

<sup>123</sup> I phrased this variously as “everyday lives of homo-and transsexual people in Berlin” because I assumed these terms would be more widely understood.

<sup>124</sup> Particularly helpful was a conversation with Kirsten Plötz as well as Christiane Leidinger’s systematic research guide for historical research on lesbian women in postwar West Germany. Christiane Leidinger, “Lesbische Existenz 1945-1969: Aspekte der Erforschung gesellschaftlicher Ausgrenzung und Diskriminierung lesbischer Frauen mit Schwerpunkt auf Lebenssituationen, Diskriminierungs- und Emanzipationserfahrungen in der frühen Bundesrepublik” (Landesstelle für Gleichbehandlung- gegen Diskriminierung, Fachbereich LSBTI, 2015).

helped me create a list of terms that described deviant sexual behavior and subjectivities, and that might have been used to police queer subjectivities, as well as the sections of the German criminal code relevant to policing gender and sexuality.<sup>125</sup> I then searched the police, prison, and court files for these terms, and looked through samples, probing deeper if I found material relevant to queer subjectivities.

### *Reading Queerly*

In my reading of sources produced by the authorities, notably police, Stasi, and court records, I have attempted to keep my focus on the self- and space-making practices of queer Berliners that can be found in many of these documents, even if they are often rendered through homophobic language and perspectives. Matt Houlbrook has described the “dissonance” in these sources, which make it possible for historians to reconstruct queer lifeworlds precisely *because* they recorded a breach in their functioning.<sup>126</sup> In my reading of police, Stasi, and court files, I follow Houlbrook’s understanding of these sources as embodying the contradictory nature of queer lives. Rather than only address queer men, however, I ask how the processes of making a place in the city worked differently for queer Berliners of different genders, and how class and age affected the possibilities and limits of different queer subjectivities.

### *Privileging Queer Voices: Oral Histories*

Oral histories present an important body of sources for this dissertation, and they have been an indispensable, though not unproblematic, source for queer histories of the recent past from the

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<sup>125</sup> This list included the terms “lesb,” for variations of lesbian, “homo,” for homosexual, “aso,” for asocial, “kuppelei,” the German legal term for procuration, “GeKra,” for sexually transmitted disease, “lid,” “erregung” and “grober unfug,” for causing a public nuisance, “unzucht,” the German term for fornication, “sittl,” for morality, “betrug,” for fraud, and the sections of the German criminal code relevant to policing gender and sexuality, §175, §180, 181, 181a, 183, 360, 327, and 361. As my research progressed, I searched these collections for other terms, too, notably “trans” for transsexual/transgender, and “strich” for streetwalking boys.

<sup>126</sup> Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 5–6.

beginning of the discipline.<sup>127</sup> In light of the challenges of the queer archive spelled out above – the scarcity of queer-produced traces of queer lives, the dissonance of receiving queer voices through the records of those who silenced them, the rarity of many aspects of everyday lives, including emotional and sexual practices, to be preserved in writing – oral histories have the potential to mitigate some of the imbalances of traditional archives and to go beyond what is traditionally deemed worthy of archiving. Historian Dorothee Wierling has argued that oral histories are most productive when they address private and personal issues.<sup>128</sup> In a similar vein, but speaking to queer history in particular, historian Nan Alamilla Boyd has pointed out the “ephemeral sex factor,” oral history’s capacity to show changing sexual practices “as the material basis for identity and community formation,” a factor in historical change to which most other sources do not have access.<sup>129</sup> Performance scholar E. Patrick Johnson stresses that “storytelling as a mode of communication is simultaneously a quotidian form of self-fashioning and theorizing,”<sup>130</sup> two practices that are at the heart of my inquiry: making the self, and making sense of the world of which the self is part.

Oral histories also come with significant challenges for doing queer history. Boyd describes, for example, how “it is nearly impossible for oral history or ethnographic narrators to use language outside the parameters of modern sexual identities.”<sup>131</sup> In her own oral histories

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<sup>127</sup> For a critical discussion of the use of oral history in U.S. queer history, see Nan A. Boyd, “Who Is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 2 (2008). For recent German queer studies based on oral histories, see Benno Gammerl, “Erinnerte Liebe. Was kann eine Oral History zur Geschichte der Gefühle und der Homosexualitäten beitragen?,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 35, no. 2 (2009); Maria Borowski, *Parallelwelten: Lesbisch-Schwules Leben in Der Frühen DDR* (Berlin: Metropol-Verlag, 2017). Other testimonies of the self (Selbstzeugnisse) such as diaries and memoirs come with similar as well as different interpretive problems.

<sup>128</sup> Dorothee Wierling, “Oral History,” in *Neue Themen Und Methoden Der Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. Michael Maurer, *Aufriß der Historischen Wissenschaften* 7 (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2003), 106.

<sup>129</sup> Boyd, “Who is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History,” 182.

<sup>130</sup> E. P. Johnson, “Put a Little Honey in My Sweet Tea: Oral History as Quare Performance,” *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 44, 3&4 (2016): 53.

<sup>131</sup> Boyd, “Who is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History,” 179–80.

with queer San Franciscans for the city's Gay and Lesbian Historical Society, she found that even though she did not ask about her narrators' development of gay and lesbian identities, they told her their coming out stories because "they understood that their histories were valuable as a 'gay and lesbian' product."<sup>132</sup> Narrators' knowledge of the purpose of their interviews for preservation in a gay and lesbian history archive not only prompted them to identify in the categories of that archive, but also made them self-censor parts of their life stories, specifically sexual practices. "Despite the best intentions and the lightest touch," Boyd concludes,

these oral histories are always offered up in relation to the larger gay and lesbian history project, always articulated around what the narrator thinks the researcher wants to hear, always structured around a certain historical desire for gay and lesbian political visibility.<sup>133</sup>

This is a problem for a queer history whose inquiry is directed not toward finding stable gay and lesbian identities in the past, but toward analyzing how the construction of normative and non-normative sexual subjectivities has changed over time.

Another example of the often-fraught relationship between oral histories and queer history comes from the Archive of Other Memories in Berlin, the source of most of the oral histories used in this dissertation. In a recent article, the archive's director Daniel Baranowski tells the anecdote of a woman who after much deliberation informed him that she did not want to give an interview.<sup>134</sup> The woman had read the archive's information materials and found that the experiences enumerated there, such as discrimination, violence, exclusion, hostilities, though they were also part of her own life, told a one-sided story of victimhood with which she did not want to be associated. While Baranowski ultimately convinced the woman that the archive

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<sup>132</sup> Boyd, "Who is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History," 188.

<sup>133</sup> Boyd, "Who is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History," 189.

<sup>134</sup> Daniel Baranowski, "Das Archiv Der Anderen Erinnerungen Der Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld: Voraussetzungen, Leitlinien, Schwerpunkte," *Jahrbuch Sexualitäten* 4 (2019).

explicitly sought to capture narrators' diverse and contradictory experiences, the episode demonstrates that besides reifying notions of identity, oral histories conducted for queer archives may also tend to emphasize stories of victimhood over stories of success. This may be particularly true for the Archive of Other Memories, which was founded as part of the German federal government's efforts to rehabilitate men persecuted under §175.<sup>135</sup>

Still, keeping these methodological challenges in mind, oral histories are crucial to this study. I quote extensively from five interviews from the Archive of Other Memories, as well as one interview that I conducted myself, and from oral history passages reprinted in published histories. In approaching these sources, I was most interested in how narrators talked about spaces in Berlin, what they meant to them and how they used them, and how narrators described their sexual and gendered subjectivities. That means that while I listened to the complete interviews, which often lasted multiple hours, I did not analyze the complete narrative, only the episodes that addressed Berlin specifically.

The interviews at the Archive of Other Memories are conducted by trained interviewers and recorded on video either on site at the Foundation or at the interviewee's homes. They are then transcribed, often, but not always by one of the interviewers. Researchers can access the video recordings and transcripts only on site at the Foundation. They can mark relevant passages from the interview on the transcript, and these excerpts are then sent to the researcher by email for further evaluation and interpretation. In the transcripts, the interviews are recorded literally, without editing. That means that they contain unfinished sentences, expressions that are not

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<sup>135</sup> The Archive of Other Memories, a growing collection of oral history interviews with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersexual and queer people (LGBTTIQ), began operating in 2013. It is part of the Federal Magnus Hirschfeld Foundation, founded in 2011 by the Department of Justice with the mission "to commemorate Magnus Hirschfeld, to promote educational and research projects, and to counteract the social discrimination of [...] LGBTTIQ people in Germany." Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld, "Über Die Stiftung," accessed June 29, 2019, <https://mh-stiftung.de/ueber-die-stiftung/>.

standard German, and regional dialect. Sometimes, gestures and mimics are also recorded in the transcripts. In my translations of quotes from these interviews, I have lightly edited the spoken language for better reading comprehension while trying to remain true to the interviewee's own language.

### **Chapter Overview**

The dissertation begins in the moment of Berlin's liberation from Nazism in early May 1945, as we follow lesbian Communist Hilde Radusch and her girlfriend Eddi Klopsch marching back from their rural hideout into the city center. The second chapter, "Between Memory and Hope: Queer Orientations in the Postwar Moment," examines Radusch's personal papers, as well as those of Gerd Katter, former patient of Magnus Hirschfeld's, and Eva Siewert's short story "Das Orakel" [The Oracle] as case studies of how lesbian and transgender subjects oriented themselves in the ruins of Berlin. In their narratives, orientation emerges as a spatial as well as temporal task. I bring to bear queer theorizations of memory and hope to analyze how queer Berliners' memories and hopes, as temporal orientations toward past and future, determined their efforts to make sense of their present.

Homes and practices of homemaking are at the center of the third chapter. Bringing together oral history narratives, self-portraits, and personal papers, I explore what challenges and opportunities the material realities of the postwar moment, particularly the lack of housing and the absence of men, held for queer Berliners. My analysis follows feminist theorizations of home as a space of resistance, and of homemaking as fundamental to the making of the self. In my discussion of queer practices of homemaking, I consider queer Berliners' living quarters, but also their bodies as important sites of creating a sense of self and belonging.

From the precarious privacy of the home, the fourth chapter moves into a semi-public space often called “second home:” the bar. Opening with party photos that were collected and captioned by the West Berlin police, this chapter examines bars as spaces of surveilled sociability. It discusses personal narratives of going out in (West) Berlin, and finding at the bars friends, lovers, and for some, a queer subjectivity, against the backdrop of police records that document constant surveillance, frequent raids, and the targeted persecution of those categorized by the police as “transvestites” or “streetwalking boys.” The chapter tracks changing reactions against this harassment, showing how bar-goers and owners both creatively subverted surveillance and fought it head-on during the 1960s. It also demonstrates the competing agendas of different authorities in regulating West Berlin’s nightlife, as morality began losing out to the mandate of marketing the isolated city to tourists. Finally, it discusses the impact that the division of the city’s public by the Wall had for queer East Berliners, who were mostly cut off from these spaces of sociability after August 1961.

Chapter five, “Passing Through, Trespassing, Passing in Public Spaces,” ventures out into the streets and parks of the city to examine what public spaces meant to queer Berliners, and how their presence in public was perceived and policed. In personal narratives and police records, streets and parks appear as spaces of seeing and being seen, of flirting, cruising, and sex, but also of slurs, name-calling, and assault, of surveillance and arrest. One major focus of the chapter is the policing of non-normative gender by authorities and by “regular” people. I examine an oral history account of an effeminate man who describes the difficult process of learning normative masculinity as well as a police file that documents a changing policy of regulating “transvestites” in West Berlin. Another focus of this chapter is “streetwalking boys,” who again emerge as central figures that attracted the police’s attention both for their public offers of sexual services and for crimes against their clients. In the chapter’s third part, I analyze

how the East German regime used the stigmatized figure of the streetwalking boy to detract attention from the violent death of Günter Litfin, the first person to be shot at the Berlin Wall. I argue that through Litfin's death, and the ensuing obliteration of his reputation, the Wall came to signify queer death for the city's queer community. From a distance, however, the Wall could also serve as template for erotic fantasies, as a short story from Swiss homophile magazine *Der Kreis* demonstrates.

The final chapter, "Bubis Behind Bars: Prisons as Spaces of Queer Possibility," examines queer inmates' experiences of incarceration in both East and West Berlin, with a focus on women's prisons. In oral history accounts and prisoner files, penal institutions emerge as sites that simultaneously regulated and accommodated queer subjectivities. The file of West Berlin prisoner Bettina Grundmann offers an opportunity to assess the possibilities and limits of prisoner agency. It also testifies to queer working-class subjectivities that are rarely found in movement archives. In these sources, prisons appear as spaces whose relatively isolated same-sex environment facilitated erotic relationships between women, turning a site designed to instill social norms into delinquents into a space of queer possibility.

## **Chapter 2: Between Memory and Hope. Queer Orientations in the Postwar Moment**

“Schöneberg – old home!” Hilde Radusch began her diary entry for May 8, 1945.<sup>136</sup> Her exclamation expressed her exhilaration at coming home and no longer having to hide after years of a precarious existence as a Communist. Having lived undercover in a garden shed in Prieros southeast of Berlin for the better part of the preceding year, she and her girlfriend Eddy Klopsch returned to the city on the very day that the German army capitulated. Though they were both weak from hunger and sickness, they had walked almost fifty kilometers, found a temporary home at a friend's apartment, registered with the district office, run into Communist comrades there, and even acquired their ration cards, all within two days. With these necessities taken care of, Radusch's next errand took her to the police station close to Alexanderplatz. Here, she sought the files that the authorities kept on her but realized that they had been burned.<sup>137</sup> Her search unsuccessful, she continued walking north to Pankow, where she had been told that the Soviet commander-in-chief resided. This turned out to be false information, and she turned around, walking south to her former apartment in the Mitte district. She found it partially destroyed by bombs but packed a steamer trunk on a handcart with her belongings and began her walk back to Schöneberg through the “completely wiped out city center – still burning. Dust; people are stealing whatever they can.”<sup>138</sup> When she arrived at her temporary home, she was feverish. Despite feeling “3/4 dead,” she left the apartment again the next morning, first to take her

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<sup>136</sup> Hilde Radusch Diary, FFBIZ, Rep 500, Acc. 300, I-6-1. alte Heimat

<sup>137</sup> Radusch diary, 181.

<sup>138</sup> Radusch diary, 182. Innenstadt völlig vernichtet - brennt noch. Staub, Leute stehlen was nur möglich.

girlfriend's place in line for bread, then to the Soviet commandant's office to give her report on the war's end as she had experienced it in Prieros.<sup>139</sup> Between describing her errands, Radusch made notes on the ruined cityscape she traversed, on the mood among the population, and on conversations about the political future that she had with other Communists. On May 10, her wartime diary ends with two questions: "Where should I report for work? What about an apartment of our own?"<sup>140</sup>

Despite the vast destruction of Berlin, Hilde Radusch remained remarkably oriented as she traversed the ruins of the city that she had long called home. Her account begins this chapter on queer orientations in the postwar moment. Feminist theorist Sara Ahmed, from whom I borrow the term *queer orientations*, has argued that "[o]rientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance, as well as 'who' or 'what' we direct our energy and attention toward."<sup>141</sup> Hilde Radusch directs her energy and attention to both her own and her girlfriend's physical survival and the making of a new political future. In her account, bread, work, an apartment, police files, and politics appear as equally urgent necessities in the immediate aftermath of the Nazi war. And her diary writing speaks of diverse, and conflicting, emotions: exhilaration, hope, but also exhaustion and worry about what the future would bring. She shared these feelings with many Berliners who had opposed the Nazis, and who were now eager to rebuild their lives, their city, and build a new politics, one that was

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<sup>139</sup> Radusch diary, 183.

<sup>140</sup> Radusch diary, 183. Wo soll ich mich zur Arbeit melden? Wie wird es mit der eigenen Wohnung?

<sup>141</sup> Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 3.

often – as in Radusch’s case – envisioned as a continuation of the progressive politics of the Weimar Republic.

Queer Berliners thus oriented themselves spatially, in the ruins of their city, as well as temporally. Exploring how they went about this task, I argue that their postwar present was determined by memory and hope, entangled temporal modes pointing at the past and the future. Queer critic José Esteban Muñoz has described memory and hope as the “then and there” to the “here and now” that is the present.<sup>142</sup> They are the temporally (“then,” in both its past and future meanings) and spatially (“there”) other that can serve as a critique of the present. In my discussion of queer sources from and about the postwar moment in this chapter, I will attend to how hope and memory figured in queer Berliners’ making sense of their here and now in different ways. As I will show, memories both traumatic and empowering shaped queer Berliners’ hopes for the future and affected how they constructed new lives for themselves: empowering memories of finding a place of belonging in leftist political organizations or the Institute for Sexual Science during the Weimar Republic, traumatic memories of being persecuted as a Communist, as Jewish or as a queer man by the Nazis, of losing loved ones to emigration, murder, or bombs, and of seeing one’s home and belongings reduced to ruins. These memories informed queer Berliners’ hopes for the future. For instance, individual memories of Magnus Hirschfeld and the Institute for Sexual Science led to various efforts to create a memorial site of what had been a queer home before Nazism.

Muñoz’ theorization of hope and memory is indebted to Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch. Bloch, Muñoz explains, distinguished two functions of hope: affect and methodology.<sup>143</sup> Hope can be productive as affect, as a positive emotional force that propels those who hope forward,

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<sup>142</sup> Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 29

<sup>143</sup> Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 4.

whereas its affective pendant, fear, holds people back. As methodology, hope's pendant is memory.

While Muñoz prioritizes hope over memory and is skeptical of “empiricist historiography and its denouncement of utopian longing,” Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed, in their study of gay memory after AIDS, explore the power of memory (“a socially transformative medium”) precisely for its empirical grounding in the past: because things have happened before they can happen again, they *are* possible, not merely utopian.<sup>144</sup> But they also locate memory's power in its creative and at times imaginary nature. Hence, what some critics deem the weakness of memories is a strength to Castiglia and Reed: the fact that they are not exact, stable renderings of an experience in the past, but instead change over time, responding to what the remembering person needs in the present.

Such creativity within memory is not pernicious but rather is the way humans order the world to achieve a sense of coherence and meaning. [...] We see these adaptations not as failures - as false memories - but as the core of *all* memories, which are always constructed and citational in ways that meet the need of the present.<sup>145</sup>

They describe memory further as “a process at once disruptive and inventive,” and suggest that “memories craft a world that stands as counterreality to the lacking of the painful present” and as such are “act[s] of resistance.”<sup>146</sup> Their valuation of remembering as political act is connected to their analysis of broader political processes that strive to “unremember” certain historical experiences, in their case, the AIDS crisis and gay life before AIDS. *Unremembering* is the

direct assault on particular memories and on the cultural act of remembering. Such attacks sought not to cohere an imagined national community but to undo the

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<sup>144</sup> Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 35;1; 17; Castiglia and Reed, *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past*, 11; 13.

<sup>145</sup> Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed, *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 11–12.

<sup>146</sup> Castiglia and Reed, *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past*, 12; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.

historical basis for communities that once seemed to offer radically new forms of social and sexual engagement.<sup>147</sup>

In the following, I will argue that queer Berliners in the postwar period were faced with a similar phenomenon of *unremembering*: the *unremembering* of the queer Berlin of the Weimar Republic, orchestrated most viciously by the Nazis, but also continued after the war. In light of the hostility faced by queer activists in the postwar period, the making-present of queer Weimar Berlin, both individually and in efforts to create a collective memory, was indeed an “act of resistance” and a vital practice of caring for the self.<sup>148</sup> However, the unremembering of the queer past was not a linear or universal process, but one dependent on the specifics of space and time. For instance, as I show below, in Kreuzberg, a working-class district with a long history of queer communities, the memory of Magnus Hirschfeld was officially celebrated in the early 1950s.

My discussion of queer memory and hope in the Berlin of the immediate postwar period focuses on subjects and interrogates sources that have previously received little attention: Eva Siewert’s short story “Das Orakel” [The Oracle], which grapples with the separation of two women as a result of Nazi racism; the personal papers of Hilde Radusch, an openly lesbian Communist; and the personal papers of Gerd Katter, a patient of Magnus Hirschfeld who sought to memorialize the sexual scientist in East Berlin in the first years after the war. Especially in my

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<sup>147</sup> Castiglia and Reed, *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past*, 2. The memories that they see unremembered are those of sexual liberation, its politics and practices of sex, sexual culture, communication and care among gay men. Since AIDS, they contend, these memories have come under attack not only from the religious right, but also from neoliberally tainted gay rights activists invested in gaining entry into the institutions of family (through gay marriage) and the military (through the revocation of “Don’t ask, don’t tell”). In their quest for recognition, they needed to erase memories of its unruly (promiscuous, unsafe, unpatriotic) past.

<sup>148</sup> Castiglia and Reed, *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past*, 11. On page 26, Castiglia and Reed link memory to Michel Foucault’s definition (in *The History of Sexuality*) of “*askesis*, a meditative self-transformation central to the care of the self.” They then point out the social aspect of memory: “But memory, as we’ve suggested, is also a collective practice, a social *askesis*, based not on identity or shared past experience but on a shared yearning (or different yearnings that find satisfaction in the same memory), including the yearning to belong.” 26-27.

discussion of collective memory, I am in conversation with historian Dagmar Herzog's pathbreaking findings about sexuality in the postwar period: that the immediate postwar years were a period of sexual liberality and of frequent public discussion of sexual matters, but that by the early 1950s, West German religious and non-religious commentators on the postwar "sexual crisis" displaced "attention away from the immorality of killing to the need for postwar sexual morality."<sup>149</sup> By distancing themselves from the Nazis' incitement of nonmarital, "Aryan," able-bodied, heterosexual sexuality on the one hand and continuing to embrace other parts of their sexual politics, such as eugenics, homophobia, and the association of Jewishness with sexual depravity, postwar commentators employed a "doubleness of identification and disidentification with Nazism" as a means to "manage the memory of the Third Reich."<sup>150</sup> As I show in this chapter, this "doubleness of identification and disidentification" is a feature of both postwar reactions to queer lives and politics *and* of queer politics themselves.

### **Trauma: Eva Siewert's "Das Orakel"**

Castiglia and Reed argue that "[l]oss is not synonymous with silence or absence or defeat; loss can be a starting point."<sup>151</sup> In her autobiographical short story "Das Orakel," published in 1946, Eva Siewert (1907-1994) works through the loss of her friend and, possibly, lover, Alice Carlé, in Auschwitz.<sup>152</sup> The story, a moving account of a queer relationship between two women

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<sup>149</sup> Herzog, *Sex after fascism: memory and morality in twentieth-century Germany*, 74, 76, 84, 98. Herzog and others such as Atina Grossmann, Elizabeth Heineman, Robert Kennedy, Sybille Steinbacher, and Josie McLellan have described the sexual situation of the postwar years, with its pressing problems of widespread rape at the hands of Allied, especially Soviet, soldiers, marital discord, and a *Frauenüberschuss* (surplus of women), and contemporaries' analyses of it, as well as the increasing sexual conservatism of both newly founded German states.

<sup>150</sup> Herzog, *Sex after fascism: memory and morality in twentieth-century Germany*, 84.

<sup>151</sup> Castiglia/Reed, *If Memory Serves*, 25, 26.

<sup>152</sup> Eva Siewert, "Das Orakel," *Der Weg. Zeitschrift für Fragen des Judentums* 1, no. 37 (1946): 5, accessed January 18, 2018, [http://mi.osz-louise-schroeder.de/Der\\_Weg/index.htm](http://mi.osz-louise-schroeder.de/Der_Weg/index.htm) Siewert, Eva. This publication is not to be confused with the homophile magazine by the same name. Raimund Wolfert has researched Eva Siewert's biography, her friendship with Kurt Hiller, and her relationship with Alice Carlé. Raimund Wolfert, "Eva Siewert (1907-1994): Kurt Hillers "Schwester Im Geiste" - "Wilde Freundschaft Für Sie Im Herzen Meines Hirns";" accessed January 18, 2018, [http://lesbengeschichte.de/bio\\_siewert\\_d.html](http://lesbengeschichte.de/bio_siewert_d.html). In February 2017, *Stolpersteine* were laid out for Carlé, her

persecuted by the Nazis, is both a starting point and an end point; a starting point for grappling with the years of persecution, separation, uncertainty, and death, and an end point to that uncertainty, the coming to terms with Alice's death through the process of writing. It is also a lucid contemplation of the problems of knowing and not-knowing under Nazism: what could be known about the fate of loved ones in hiding, what people could know about the Holocaust, what they might have known but did not want to know. Finally, by fictionalizing her own story and by leaving uncertain the nature of the relationship between the narrator and Alice, Siewert mourned and memorialized a relationship between two women considered illegitimate by most of her contemporaries. As historian Susanne zur Nieden has shown, the antifascists who took important positions in city government immediately after Berlin's liberation shared the German "homophobic consensus," and deprived both gay men and lesbian women whom the Nazis had persecuted of recognition and material help.<sup>153</sup>

"Das Orakel" appeared in a November 1946 issue of *Der Weg. Zeitschrift für Fragen des Judentums*.<sup>154</sup> *Der Weg* came out weekly beginning in March 1946, and it was meant to deal with "the Jewish problems of the present."<sup>155</sup> Its publishers envisioned it as both a medium to educate non-Jews and a forum for discussion in the Jewish community. They also addressed the "impressions" evoked by the years of persecution, "impressions [...] that cannot be struck from

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siblings and parents through an initiative of the Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft, Spinnboden Lesbenarchiv and the Schwules Museum. Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft e.V. "Im Gedenken an Alice Carlé und ihre Angehörigen." <http://magnus-hirschfeld.de/forschungsstelle/veranstaltungen-und-einladungen/stolpersteine-carle-2017/>. Most recently, the Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft has created a beautiful, multimedia website dedicated to Siewert's memory. Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft e.V. "In Erinnerung an Eva Siewert." Accessed July 5, 2019. <https://eva-siewert.de/>.

<sup>153</sup> For a contemporaneous example of the stigmatization of female same-sex relationships, see Susanne zur Nieden's analysis of the revocation of two Jewish women's Opfer des Faschismus [Victim of Fascism] recognition because of lesbian relationships in her book *Unwürdige Opfer. Susanne Zur Nieden, Unwürdige Opfer: Die Aberkennung von NS-Verfolgten in Berlin 1945 bis 1949* (Berlin: Metropol, 2003). On the German "homophobic consensus," see Zur Nieden, *Homosexualität und Staatsräson*, 6–7.

<sup>154</sup> The magazine's title translates as *The Path. Journal for Questions of Judaism*.

<sup>155</sup> "Der Weg." *Der Weg. Zeitschrift für Fragen des Judentums* 1, no. 1 (1946): 1. Accessed February 20, 2018. [http://mi.osz-louise-schroeder.de/Der\\_Weg/jg46nr1.pdf](http://mi.osz-louise-schroeder.de/Der_Weg/jg46nr1.pdf).

memory overnight,” thus including as part of their mission the dealing with traumatic memories.<sup>156</sup> Accordingly, among the weekly’s features were not only news of Jewish congregational life, advice for those who wanted to emigrate, and personal ads of Jewish Berliners mourning their dead, asking for information about missing relatives and friends, or seeking marriage partners. *Der Weg* also offered space for personal reflections on the years of persecution, testimonials, and literary explorations of Nazism and the Holocaust, most often in the form of poetry.

Siewert’s story “Das Orakel” appeared in the November 8, 1946 issue. Set between reprints of original documents about the *Reichspogromnacht* [November Pogroms, or Night of Broken Glass] of November 1938, short news dispatches, a longer piece detailing the question of postwar housing, and the personal ads section, it is set off as a fictional story through a number of layout and stylistic features: It fills a full page, its three columns not broken up by subheads. In contrast to the other pieces that surround it, its title does not describe a historical event (“The Night of Broken Glass,” “Die Kristallnacht”), a current problem (“Update on the Question of Housing,” “Der Stand der Wohnungsfrage”), or news item (“Tombstone robber was punished,” “Grabsteindieb wurde bestraft”). Instead, the title “Das Orakel” evokes ancient myth, the transcendental, and the sense of an unknown future – the latter a central theme of the story. The story begins with Pogrom Night:

At that point it became clear to us that staying meant risking our lives. Until November 9, 1938, the desire to emigrate had been a desire for freedom. Now it became a necessity. We had to save ourselves.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Siewert, “Das Orakel.” Damals wurde uns klar, daß Bleiben Lebensgefahr bedeutete. Bis zum 9. November 1938 war der Wunsch nach Auswanderung der Wunsch nach Freiheit gewesen. Jetzt wurde er zur Notwendigkeit. Es galt, sich zu retten.

Waiting anxiously for a possibility to emigrate together, the narrator and Alice seek out a fortune teller in the hope of gaining certainty. Her oracle tells them that the narrator will get away (“wegkommen”) first, then Alice, “very far away,” giving them cause for relief. It continues, however: they will then never see each other again. This oracle appears to have been mistaken when the pair find a sponsor in London who agrees to host them. But his letter comes late, in August 1939, and they do not manage to leave before war begins. Leaving is not as urgent for the narrator, who describes herself as “only ‘half.’” Alice and her sister, however, are fully Jewish according to the Nuremberg laws of 1935. When the narrator is imprisoned for anti-Nazi jokes and comments, a sympathetic guard lets Alice know that her friend leaves the prison in the mornings and returns at night from an outside work camp. Twice a week, Alice comes to the prison, standing on the other side of the street which is busy with shoppers.

Twice a week we greeted each other with our eyes. More could not happen. Even a smile or a nod meant the greatest danger for her and *Kellerstrafe* for me. During this time of special punishment, we could not have seen each other. [...] In this way, we always saw each other for six minutes. Precious minutes. We both knew of the other that we were alive.<sup>158</sup>

This precious contact is interrupted when the narrator’s work gets moved to a site within the prison, but Alice now sends weekly letters to keep in touch. She has gone underground and lives in a garden shed outside Berlin, and mutual friends serve as intermediaries for their mail exchange. Once her letters stop coming, the narrator is left with an agonizing ignorance about Alice’s whereabouts. When she is released from prison, she runs to Alice’s house, hoping that the sympathetic concierge (“She was considered a secret ally,” “Sie galt als heimliche Bundesgenossin”) might know something. But the whole block is in ruins. Her friends have

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid. Zweimal wöchentlich grüßten wir uns mit den Augen. Mehr durfte nicht geschehen. Schon ein Lächeln oder Nicken bedeutete schwerste Gefahr für sie und Kellerstrafe für mich. Man hätte sich in der Zeit dieser Sonderbestrafung nicht sehen können. [...] Auf diese Weise sahen wir uns immer sechs Minuten lang. Kostbare Minuten. Beide wußten voneinander, daß wir lebten.

found out that Alice and her sister were discovered and deported, probably to Auschwitz. This name has no meaning for the narrator, who consults an atlas to make sense of it. “I picked up the big atlas and looked for Auschwitz. So it was down there.” (“Ich nahm den großen Atlas vor und suchte Auschwitz. Dort unten also.”) Then, she asks around, getting dramatically different answers: one person tells her that those in Auschwitz don’t have it so bad, being only required to work on farms, another one says: “They are long dead.” (“Die sind längst tot.”) She refuses to believe it. In recurring dreams, Alice knocks on her door, asking her to hide her. When the war ends, the narrator inquires about Alice wherever she can, writing to search committees, going through lists, and contacting Alice’s brother in Tel Aviv. All her inquiries remain unanswered, however: “The oracle had fulfilled itself.” (“Das Orakel hatte sich erfüllt.”)

At the beginning, Siewert’s narrator is “wir,” the first-person plural. Yet, as soon as her characters are torn apart, the story is told from the perspective of an unnamed, single, first-person narrator. While their relationship is not described in any detail, and the narrator never refers to Alice by any other referent than her name, neither “Freundin” [(girl)friend] nor “Liebste” [dearest, love], it is evident that the narrative “wir” denotes the two of them. Their plan to emigrate together, the fact that they have their fortune told together, and their desperate hope that “[w]e would find each other again somehow. Some ship would depart one day that would carry one to the other” (“Wir würden uns schon wiederfinden. Irgendein Schiff fuhr doch eines Tages, das eins zum andern brachte”) leaves little doubt as to their coupledness.

The problems of knowing and not knowing, or not wanting to know, are major themes in the story. The narrator addresses them directly (“I do not know this to this day,” “We both knew of one another that we were alive,” “das weiß ich bis heute nicht,” “Beide wußten voneinander, daß wir lebten”) and indirectly, through the use of questions, the subjunctive, the flavoring particle “perhaps,” “vielleicht,” and through simile (“I became deaf like someone who is afraid

of hearing the truth.” “Ich wurde taub wie einer, der sich fürchtet, die Wahrheit zu vernehmen.”) Of course, her main concern is knowing about Alice’s whereabouts. As the two are separated, the insecurity about a future when they will be reunited turns into uncertainty about the other’s present. This uncertainty is not resolved in the end, as all inquiries about Alice’s fate fail to produce an answer. Nevertheless, the story ends with the narrator’s conviction that “the oracle had fulfilled itself:” She has lost all hope of seeing Alice again. Lack of knowledge also comes up in two other contexts. After Alice and her sister are discovered in their hideout in Berlin’s outskirts, the “clueless” landlord and landlady insist that they did not know that they were hosting Jews. When the narrator hears that they have likely been deported to Auschwitz, she can, with the help of an atlas, ascertain the geographic location of this place, but there is no way of knowing for her what significance this place holds for the sisters’ lives.

The theme of knowing/not knowing will have resonated with Siewert’s contemporary readers on multiple levels. As evidenced by the search ads printed two pages after “Das Orakel,” many of her readers were still uncertain about the fate of loved ones. As time passed with no word of them, survivors had to confront the mounting probability that they would never return.<sup>159</sup> Non-Jewish Germans, on the other hand, insisted that they had not known about the murder of the Jews, while survivors’ reports, documentary photographs and film, and the Nuremberg trials began demonstrating the shocking extent of the Nazi crimes, turning the worst presumptions into certainties that were even more dreadful.<sup>160</sup> In the story, Alice and the narrator turn to the supernatural to alleviate the terror of insecurity. Turning to the occult for signs of hope, or, as

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<sup>159</sup> See also Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 242.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.* 37-39.

Atina Grossmann has written, “to make the lost visible again,” may have been a common practice throughout these years of uncertainty and mourning.<sup>161</sup>

While Siewert fictionalized the story, it still bears many autobiographical traces. She was “half” in Nazi race categorization, having been born to a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father in Breslau in 1907.<sup>162</sup> Like the narrator in “Das Orakel,” she tried to leave Germany before the war. Like her narrator, she was imprisoned twice for jokes and critical comments about the Nazis. While little is known about her relationship to Alice Carlé, Carlé did sometimes stay overnight in Siewert’s apartment, where she felt safe. When Siewert was arrested, this hideout was no longer accessible to her. Alice and her sister Charlotte were arrested in August 1943, deported to Auschwitz, and murdered in the same year.

“Das Orakel” thus allowed Siewert to begin working through some of the traumatic events that she had experienced. Her use of the preterite and of temporal markers such as “back then” and “one day” as well as phrasings such as “Berlin lay in ruins back then” and “the war ended” create a temporal distance at odds with the date of the story’s publication, just one and a half years after the end of the war, when Berlin was still very much in ruins. By shifting the events back in time, Siewert distanced herself from the continuing pain of losing Alice. By conceding that the oracle had been fulfilled, she put an end point to the nagging uncertainty

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<sup>161</sup> Another example is provided by *Die Mörder sind unter uns*, DEFA’s first postwar production, filmed in the rubbles of Berlin. In the film, the optician Mondschein seeks information about the return of his son from fortune teller Timm, a neighbor of main characters Susanne Wallner and Dr. Hans Mertens. Timm falsely predicts their reunion. When a U.S. soldier delivers a letter announcing the son’s imminent return, Mondschein has already died. While the film remains silent on whether Mondschein is Jewish, his son’s service in the U.S. army might indicate his Jewishness.

<sup>162</sup> I owe all biographical information about Siewert to Raimund Wolfert’s article “Eva Siewert (1907-1994): Kurt Hillers ‘Schwester im Geiste.’” See note 17. As a young woman, Siewert trained as a soprano, but health problems prompted her to take up a career in journalism instead. After a year working for a German company in Teheran, Iran, her knowledge of languages and her skills as a speaker led to a job as chief editor and chief speaker for Radio Luxemburg, where she stayed until 1938. Fearing the outbreak of war, she returned to Berlin, where she had grown up, to apply for a visa to return to Teheran. She was denied a visa, however, was banned from work as a journalist as a “half Jew,” and was now stuck in Berlin.

about her fate, creating a closure that reality likely had not yet provided. Writing the story may thus have helped Siewert to orient herself in the present and to turn from the future she had imagined with Alice to a future without her. At the same time, “Das Orakel” is, of course, a memorial to Alice and to their relationship. Fictionalizing their story and leaving keeping readers in the dark about the exact nature of their friendship allowed Siewert to mourn her queer love.

### **Memorializing Magnus Hirschfeld and the Institute for Sexual Science**

In June 1947, an impassioned letter reached the desk of Anton Ackermann, head of the SED's [Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, Socialist Unity Party of Germany] cultural department and functionary of the *Kulturbund*, a forum for intellectuals and cultural workers.<sup>163</sup> The letter writer, who introduced himself as “cultural creator, member of the *Kulturbund*, and especially comrade and SED functionary,” was deeply upset that the new Germany had so far neglected to commemorate “an eminent man of German science,” a man who was also a “victim of fascism” and deserved recognition as “fighter for social reform and human rights, as a friend of the Soviet Union, [...] staunch pacifist.”<sup>164</sup> The man the writer wanted to see memorialized and commemorated was Magnus Hirschfeld, and his fervent advocate was Gerd E. Katter, a resident of Birkenwerder, a village just outside the northern Berlin city limits. Katter's campaign to honor Hirschfeld and to re-build his Institute for Sexual Science originated with his experience of the Institute in the Weimar Republic, a place that had he remembered as a place of belonging. Katter

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<sup>163</sup> Info on Ackermann from “Kurzbiographien Teilnehmer.” Bundeskonferenz des Kulturbunds 1947. BArch SAPMO DY DY 27/3484. The *Kulturbund*, founded in the summer of 1945 as an independent forum for intellectuals and cultural workers across the occupation zones, was in the process of changing into an organ ensuring the alignment of East German culture with the SED's political goals, leading to its prohibition in the Western sectors of Berlin in 1947. Bartsch, Udo. “Kulturbund.” In *Lexikon des DDR-Sozialismus: Das Staats- und Gesellschaftssystem der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*. Edited by Rainer Eppelmann et al., 361–62. Paderborn: Schöningh, 1996.

<sup>164</sup> Copy of letter from GK to Dr. Ackermann, Kulturbund, June 24, 1947. Gerd Katter Papers (GKP), Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft (MHG), Berlin. Kulturschaffender, als Mitglied des Kulturbundes, sowie insbesondere als Genosse und SED-Funktionär; einen bedeutenden Mann der deutschen Wissenschaft; Opfer des Faschismus; Kämpfer für Sozialreform und Menschenrecht, als Freund der Sowjet-Union, (...) entschiedener Pazifist.

was not the only one fighting to procure Hirschfeld his rightful place in German collective memory in postwar Berlin.<sup>165</sup> What makes his case particularly interesting are his motivation and his social standing. In contrast to other postwar activists for Hirschfeld's cause, he was neither a scientist nor an intellectual or politician, but rather a working-class man driven by his warm personal memory of Hirschfeld. The difficulties that he ran into shed light on the politics of memory in East Germany in the immediate postwar years. Before discussing his postwar activism, however, it is important to understand the prewar formation of his self, especially his encounter with sexual science, Magnus Hirschfeld, and the institute.

Katter was born in Berlin-Britz in 1910 and given the name Eva, but never felt at home in a female role.<sup>166</sup> As a teenager, Katter came across an article by Max Hodann, sexual scientist and colleague of Magnus Hirschfeld, and subsequently discovered the homosexual and transvestite magazines published by Radszuweit Verlag, which Katter bought at kiosks and hid at home.<sup>167</sup> Katter's parents, first unhappy about their child's gender nonconformity, soon became supportive.<sup>168</sup> Katter's father helped find an apprenticeship as a carpenter, a male profession. In the carpenter union's library, Katter found Hirschfeld's *Geschlechtskunde*, which contained

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<sup>165</sup> See Andreas Pretzel's work on the West Berlin *Gesellschaft zur Reform des Sexualstrafrechts*, Jens Dobler's work on the West Berlin *Bund für Menschenrecht*, later named *Dr. Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft*, and Erik Huneke's work on East German activist Rudolf Klimmer. Pretzel, *NS-Opfer unter Vorbehalt*, 287–339; Dobler, *Von anderen Ufern. Geschichte der Berliner Lesben und Schwulen in Kreuzberg und Friedrichshain*, 226–31; Jens Dobler, "Die Alte Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft," *Mitteilungen der Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft*, 39/40 (2008): 78–80; Huneke, "Morality, Law, and the Socialist Sexual Self in the German Democratic Republic, 1945–1972". Raimund Wolfert mentions East Berlin activist Willi Pamperin, who claimed to have founded a "humanitäres Komitee" in a letter to Kurt Hiller in July 1947. Wolfert, *Homosexuellenpolitik in der jungen Bundesrepublik*.

<sup>166</sup> According to a patient report by Magnus Hirschfeld and Felix Abraham, Katter was born in Berlin on March 14, 1910. Transcript of patient report for Eva Katter, March 5, 1929. GKP, MHG, Berlin. The following biographical information is from Katter's autobiographical account, written down for Ralf Dose of the MHG in 1988. Autobiographische Erzählung von Gerd Katter für Ralf Dose, October 5, 1988. GKP, MHG.

<sup>167</sup> Choosing a pronoun to refer to historical transgender subjects before their transition is a problem that I have not found a solution for, and that I believe transgender history has not addressed so far. "They/theirs" can lead to confusion on my readers' part. Since neither English nor German have come up with widely understood singular non-binary pronouns, I have decided to use only my subjects' last name until their moment of transition.

<sup>168</sup> When Katter's mother found this reading material, she reacted with shock, and Katter's refusal to wear the feminine clothes that she sewed led to a family crisis. But Katter's parents soon understood "dass irgendetwas geschehen müsse." Ibid. 9.

sections on homosexuality and transvestism. A communist acquaintance told Katter's parents about the Institute for Sexual Science, and an uncle who was a direct neighbor of sexual scientist Max Hodann put them in touch. In 1927, Katter visited the Institute for the first time, accompanied by Katter's mother. Remembering the friendly welcome, Katter described the experience as life-altering: "This meant the end of doubts and fears; I had nothing to fear from such friendly people."<sup>169</sup> For the following two years at least, Katter became a regular at the institute. Hirschfeld helped Katter procure a *Transvestitenschein*, a document identifying its bearer as known to the police to wear the clothing of the opposite sex. Holders could show it to the police to avoid being arrested for causing a public nuisance. In 1929, Katter applied to have his first name changed officially to Gerd, and he also underwent surgery, likely a mastectomy.<sup>170</sup> At the Institute, Katter met other teenage patients. He hung out with archivist Karl Giese, and even imagined a professional future for himself as his successor or assistant. "After all, my trade, though I practiced it with joy," – Katter was training to be a carpenter – "was not something that could satisfy my mind!"<sup>171</sup> Looking back on his years in the institute sixty years later, Katter called them "the most interesting of my life."<sup>172</sup> He met international visitors, "many Americans, English, and Japanese."<sup>173</sup> Even more meaningful to him were meetings with members of the

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid. 5. Damit war es für mich vorbei mit Zweifel und Ängsten, von so freundl. Menschen hatte ich nichts mehr zu befürchten.

<sup>170</sup> There are two alternative accounts of Katter's surgery. In his memoir, sexual scientist Ludwig Lévy-Lenz describes the case of a "16-year-old transvestian girl" who came to the Institute to have her breasts removed. "She had had the luck, she said, to find a job as apprentice to a carpenter, and it was only her breasts which prevented her from working like the other apprentices." Lévy-Lenz describes refusing to perform the surgery because of the patient's age, but having to remove the breasts after she injured them with a razor and lost a lot of blood. Katter was a carpenter's apprentice, and in a letter to Ralf Dose, he wrote of "ein Buch, dessen Autor ein enger Freund Hirschfelds war und welches mich merkwürdigerweise über Kairo erreichte (...) und in dem ich mich selbst, kurz erwähnt, sogar wiederfand." Letter GK to Ralf Dose, December 3, 1985. GK Papers, MHG Berlin. Interestingly, Katter does not mention this self-injury in his autobiographical account.

<sup>171</sup> Autobiographical account GK 7. War doch mein Handwerk, wengleich von mir mit Freude ausgeübt, doch nichts was mich geistig befriedigen konnte!

<sup>172</sup> Letter GK to Ralf Dose, December 3, 1985. GK Papers, MHG Berlin. die interessantesten meines Lebens.

<sup>173</sup> Autobiographical account GK 7. viel Amerikaner, Engl. u. Japaner

German parliament, who came to the Institute to learn about homosexuals first-hand as they discussed a reform of §175. Perhaps most importantly, he developed a close relationship with Magnus Hirschfeld, who, according to Katter, endearingly called him “Katterchen” and on one occasion even “my dear son.”<sup>174</sup> Hirschfeld’s role as paternal figure, and the institute’s significance as a place of safety, comfort, community and kinship, learning, and political engagement would motivate Katter’s postwar activism, and he cherished the memory of his time spent there into old age. In a way, he continued inhabiting the institute long after it was gone; and Hirschfeld provided orientation for him for decades beyond his death.

Little is known about Katter's life during National Socialism.<sup>175</sup> He worked for an insurance company during the war years and, following his passion for the stage, took private acting lessons.<sup>176</sup> After the war, he settled in Birkenwerder with his mother. It was from there, from the outskirts of Berlin, that he campaigned for a re-founding of the Institute for Sexual Science, and for the recognition and memorialization of Hirschfeld. Katter claimed that he had begun these efforts in 1945, but the earliest documentation is his letter to the *Kulturbund* dated June 24, 1947.<sup>177</sup> In his appeal, Katter constructed both himself and Hirschfeld as good socialists and antifascists. He stressed that he had actively fought for Hirschfeld's honor already during

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<sup>174</sup> Autobiographical account GK 6, 12. mein lieber Sohn

<sup>175</sup> Katter did not mention any difficulties with the Nazis because of his transsexuality. If his application for a name change was successful, he would not have had to re-apply for a *Transvestitenschein* and would likely not have had to deal with any authorities. For the Nazis' contradictory stance toward transsexuals, see Rainer Herrn, “Ich habe wohl Freude an Frauenkleidern [...], bin aber deswegen nicht homosexuell.": Der Forschungsstand zum Transvestitismus in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus,” in Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld, *Forschung im Queerformat*.

<sup>176</sup> According to Ralf Dose's memories of conversations with Katter in the 1980s, Katter lived in Kreuzberg and was employed at *Nordsternversicherung* close to Rathaus Schöneberg. Telephone conversation with Ralf Dose, September 14, 2016. Katter claimed to have studied acting in an acting studio in Schöneberg led by Anna Wüllner-Hoffmann, sister of famed tenor Ludwig Wüllner. He is mentioned as one of the actors performing at her private home in a short note in *Berliner Zeitung*, August 10, 1946, 3.

<sup>177</sup> Copy of letter from GK to Dr. Ackermann, *Kulturbund*, June 24, 1947. Gerd Katter Papers (GKP), Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft(MHG), Berlin. All quotes in this paragraph from the letter.

National Socialism.<sup>178</sup> By describing Hirschfeld as a “victim of fascism” and a “fighter,” Katter used the terms of the emerging socialist recognition categories for survivors of the Nazis. *Opfer des Faschismus (OdF)* [Victim of Fascism] was the official term for those survivors that were recognized as such by the state.<sup>179</sup>

Katter put particular emphasis on Hirschfeld's quality of being a “fighter:” he was a “fighter for social reform and human rights,” led the “fight against ignorance and mindlessness,” saved hundreds from suicide by giving them purpose as “fellow fighters,” was a “fighter for the truth,” in short, a “gigantic fighter.”<sup>180</sup> Constructing Hirschfeld as a fighter appeared as an especially promising rhetorical strategy because it echoed the *Opfer des Faschismus* distinction of “active fighters” and “passive victims,” with the latter less deserving of recognition and tangible help. But Katter also appealed to his readers’ national pride. He called Hirschfeld a “German hero,” famous around the world, where he stood “in the bright lights [...] of the world’s public.”<sup>181</sup> He asked, “what will the world think of us,” with no attention given to his memory three years after the end of Nazism. And he ended his letter with a warning penned by nobody less than the quintessential German poet, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: “Noble man! Woe the century that pushed you away! Woe the progeny that misjudges you!”<sup>182</sup> It is noteworthy that Katter stressed Hirschfeld’s Germanness, but remained silent on his Jewishness. Apparently, he

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<sup>178</sup> In his postwar letter to the *Kulturbund*, Katter mentioned and attached a letter he had sent to a newspaper during the Nazi reign, in response to a defamatory article about Hirschfeld. Unfortunately, that letter no longer exists.

<sup>179</sup> The *OdF* committee was initiated in May 1945 by a Communist survivor of the Nazi camps. It consisted of a main board on the city level, made up of prominent Communists, Social Democrats, and liberals, and of district branches tied to the district offices. It had a dual role as political body making decisions about who to acknowledge as victim of fascism, and as welfare department in charge of supplying survivors with food, clothes, housing, jobs, and compensation. Despite the representation of different political parties on its board, it was under Communist leadership from the beginning. Zur Nieden, *Unwürdige Opfer*, 28, 34-5, 14.

<sup>180</sup> Kämpfer für Sozialreform und Menschenrecht; Kampf gegen Unwissenheit und Gedankenlosigkeit; Mitkämpfer; Kämpfer für die Wahrheit; gigantischer Kämpfer.

<sup>181</sup> deutschen Helden; im grellen Scheinwerferlicht [...] der Weltöffentlichkeit; was soll das Ausland von uns denken;

<sup>182</sup> Edler Mann! Wehe dem Jahrhundert, das dich von sich stieß! Wehe der Nachkommenschaft, die dich verkennt!

did not believe that mentioning it would help his cause. Rather, it would have undermined his construction of Hirschfeld as “fighter,” as the OdF hierarchy denigrated the Jewish victims of the Nazis as “passive victims.”

Katter bolstered his appeal for Hirschfeld's recognition, and the continuation of his work, by finding prominent supporters for his endeavor. He contacted writers Friedrich Wolf and Arnold Zweig, Paul Krische, scientist and sexual reformer, Felix Bönheim, director of Leipzig's university hospital, Harry Damrow, chief press officer of *Berliner Rundfunk*, the East Berlin radio station, and member of the *Kulturbund's* Berlin leadership, among others.<sup>183</sup> They were all sympathetic to his concern, but at the same time, as merited antifascists, they now held important functions in the cultural and medical sectors and were all extremely busy. Krische reported that he had contacted newspapers to feature memorials to Hirschfeld in celebration of his birthday. Wolf promised that he would try to write a memorial for him in the magazine of the *Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes (VVN)* [Association of those Persecuted by the Nazis].<sup>184</sup> Damrow answered that he had contacted the federal leadership of the *Kulturbund* and would steer the attention of his station's cultural editors to Hirschfeld. Zweig, who had returned to Berlin from Palestine in October 1948, called Katter's letter one of the “most thanks-deserving events since my return to Germany.”<sup>185</sup> He cautioned him that Hirschfeld's rehabilitation would take some time, and he offered an explanation why nobody seemed interested in him.

You must realize that the public's attitude toward the memory and life's work of Magnus Hirschfeld is not only an act of sexual displacement [...] but in addition, it

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<sup>183</sup> Letters to GK from Friedrich Wolf, March 20, 1949, Arnold Zweig, September 2, 1949, Paul Krische, October 25, 1949, Felix Bönheim, October 1, 1949, Harry Damrow, June 3, 1948. Further support came from the VVN. Letter from the VVN signed by Karl Raddatz, September 12, 1948. GKP, MHG.

<sup>184</sup> In the 1946-1950 volumes of *Aufbau*, there are no articles dealing with Hirschfeld or sexual science.

<sup>185</sup> Wilhelm von Sternburg, *Um Deutschland Geht Es Uns. Arnold Zweig. Eine Biographie* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2004), 251; letter to GK from AZ Sept 2, 1949. dankenswertesten Ereignissen seit meiner Rückkehr nach Deutschland.

also represents a pause in dealing with the psychological side of social processes.<sup>186</sup>

Zweig thus read the German public's disinterest in Hirschfeld as an expression of German guilt for the Holocaust. Indeed, the resistance that Katter encountered can be explained as the result of an overlay of different discourses. By portraying him as a pacifist and an early friend of the Soviet Union, Katter had given good arguments to celebrate Hirschfeld as a hero for the new socialist Germany. But the Nazis' defamation of Hirschfeld as a Jewish pervert, built on an earlier identification of Jews and sexual liberalism, and sexual science as a Jewish science, continued to reverberate in the postwar era.<sup>187</sup> Hirschfeld's membership in the Social Democratic Party (SPD) would likely not have counted in his favor after the unification of the SPD and Communist Party (KPD), resulting in the creation of the Socialist Unity Party SED in the East, was rejected in the sectors controlled by the Western Allies. Additionally, many of the leading figures of the East German SED had adopted the reactionary sexual politics that they witnessed in exile in Stalin's Russia, despite the sexual progressivism of the German Communist Party during the Weimar Republic.<sup>188</sup> When a 1947 *Kulturbund* article called for the creation of "a new, clean, and decent life," "in the area of mind and culture, too," the terms appear to anticipate the East German state's emphasis on moral cleanliness and decency that became party policy in the 1950s.<sup>189</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that the prominent support for Katter's project failed to lead to a recognition of Hirschfeld through the *Kulturbund*. If Zweig, Damrow, or Wolf did

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<sup>186</sup> Letter from Zweig to GK, September 2, 1949, GKP, MHG. Sie müssen sich darüber klar sein, dass es sich bei dem Verhalten der Öffentlichkeit gegenüber dem Andenken und Lebenswerk Magnus Hirschfelds ja nicht nur um einen Akt der Sexualverdrängung handelt (...) sondern darüberhinaus um eine Pause in der Beschäftigung mit der psychologischen Seite gesellschaftlicher Vorgänge.

<sup>187</sup> Herzog, *Sex after fascism: memory and morality in twentieth-century Germany*, 4.

<sup>188</sup> Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5–7.

<sup>189</sup> Heinz Willmann. "Unsere Bundeskonferenz." Manuscript for *Aussprache* 3/4, 1947, BArch DY 27/3484, 17. *Aussprache* was a newsletter for members and friends of the *Kulturbund* Berlin. ein neues, sauberes und anständiges Leben, auch auf geistig-kulturellem Gebiet.

lobby for his memory, their efforts have left no traces in the archives.<sup>190</sup> If one of the *Kulturbund*'s Berlin district chapters organized a talk about Hirschfeld and the Institute for Sexual Science in 1948, as Harry Damrow vaguely remembered, it was not recorded.<sup>191</sup>

Framing Hirschfeld, and himself, as socialists, and the appreciation of his legacy as a task of the new, anti-fascist Germany did not keep Katter from appealing to possible partners in West Germany. In February 1951, he wrote to the West German periodical *Liebe und Ehe*.<sup>192</sup> This short-lived advice journal served as a forum for discussions of sex in and outside marriage, oscillating, as Dagmar Herzog has shown, between distancing itself from and reaffirming Nazi attitudes toward sex.<sup>193</sup> Here, Katter's request fell on deaf ears, however. The editor, Dr. Kaltofen, informed him that the new Institute for Sexual Science that had been founded in Frankfurt/Main sought to distance itself from Hirschfeld. He associated Hirschfeld with "extreme" positions in the debates about §175 and claimed that his ideas had been "misunderstood" and used as "license or justification," resulting in Hirschfeld becoming "a victim of his own, by all means sincere, efforts." The editor also voiced hesitations about the continuing validity of Hirschfeld's research, mirroring the distancing moves of leading West German sexologists.<sup>194</sup> Kaltofen's criticism of Hirschfeld remained imprecise.<sup>195</sup> In light of the

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<sup>190</sup> There is no mention of Hirschfeld or the Institute in the files of the federal and Berlin leadership of the *Kulturbund* for the years 1945-1950. BArch SAPMO DY 27 1593; 3893; 1882; 757; 3480; 3481; 3482; 3484; 1026; 1030; 907; 908; 909; 910; 911; 912.

<sup>191</sup> Letter from Damrow to GK, October 18, 1948, GKP, MHG. The annual report for the Berlin *Kulturbund* for 1946 records presumably feminist talks such as "Machen die Männer die Geschichte?" and "Die Frau als Trägerin praktischer Kulturarbeit," as well as talks devoted to individual artists and writers (Hesse, Rembrandt, Zola, Lord Byron, Heinrich Mann, Paul Zech, among others), but none to Hirschfeld or other sexual scientists. Jahresbericht 1946, BArch DY 27/3893.

<sup>192</sup> Brief von Dr. Kaltofen, Zeitschrift *Liebe und Ehe*, Regensburg, an GK, 8.2.1951. GK Papers, MHG Berlin.

<sup>193</sup> Founded in 1949, the Regensburg-based magazine was censored by the *Prüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Schriften* and ceased publication by the end of 1951. Herzog, *Sex after fascism*, 80-85.

<sup>194</sup> Sigusch, *Geschichte der Sexualwissenschaft*, 391.

<sup>195</sup> Since Alfred Kinsey's research was not published in German until a few years later, the scientific doubts that he referred to were likely those of Nazi sexology. Kinsey's volume on women's sexual behavior was translated into German in 1954, his report on men became available in German in 1955. However, Germans had known about Kinsey's studies for years, as magazines had reported his spectacular findings, and an array of summaries written in

violent destruction of Hirschfeld's Institute, and the Nazis' repeated defamation of him, the editor's suggestion that Hirschfeld himself was to blame for his demise was nothing but pure hostility. Kaltofen's response is an example of the continuity of Nazi attitudes in *Liebe und Ehe*. As Dagmar Herzog has shown, the magazine gave voice to antisemitic sentiment both implicitly, through the denigration of Freud and psychoanalysis, and through an explicit linking of Jewishness and sexual depravity.<sup>196</sup>

Gerd Katter was not alone in his efforts to memorialize Hirschfeld, of course. In Saxony, psychiatrist Rudolf Klimmer appealed to authorities and the *Kulturbund* to resume Hirschfeld's work and establish a sexological institute.<sup>197</sup> Homophile publications such as Switzerland-based *Der Kreis* periodically published commemorative pieces, often penned by Hirschfeld's friend and comrade-in-arms Kurt Hiller.<sup>198</sup> Hiller was himself active in West German efforts to continue Hirschfeld's work, though quickly disenchanted by the cautious politics of postwar sexologists.<sup>199</sup> In 1952, *Die Freunde*, another homophile magazine, reprinted a short note from the West Berlin night paper *nacht-depesche* on a commemoration held for Hirschfeld at

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understandable, non-jargon language were available at low cost in the early 1950s. Steinbacher, *Wie der Sex nach Deutschland kam*, 155–56, 163–65.

<sup>196</sup> Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*, 82–85.

<sup>197</sup> Huneke, "Morality, Law, and the Socialist Sexual Self in the German Democratic Republic, 1945–1972," 69–72.

<sup>198</sup> Hiller's tribute to Hirschfeld, written in the year of his death, and critically appraising his scientific and activist lifework, was reprinted in the June 1945 issue of Swiss homophile magazine *Der Kreis*. Kurt Hiller, "Der Sinn Eines Lebens. In Memoriam Magnus Hirschfeld," *Der Kreis* 13, no. 6 (1945). Three years later, Hiller followed up with a more personal appreciation of his friend in the pages of the same magazine. "Mir kommt neuerdings oft vor, als sei Hirschfeld vergessen; als wisse, durch die Schuld der ältern Generation, die jüngere fast nichts über ihn, sein Werk, seine Tat; dies negative Faktum ist der Ausdruck einer himmelschreienden Ungerechtigkeit," he wrote. And he offered ideas to alleviate this injustice: "Unlängst teilte mir Isenstein [Harald Isenstein, creator of a bronze bust of Hirschfeld that was thrown into the flames during the 1933 book burning in Berlin] aus Kopenhagen mit, daß er seinerzeit das Gußmodell seiner Hirschfeldbüste nach Dänemark zu retten vermochte und es verwahre. (...) Hirschfeld's Bronzebüste zu erneuern und wiederaufzurichten, ist ein schöner Gedanke; ein schönerer: seine drei, vier bedeutendsten Bücher (etwa: „Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes“, die „Transvestiten“, die „Geschlechtskunde“ in mehreren Bänden und die „Weltreise eines Sexualforschers“) neu aufzulegen; der schönste: sein Werk der Befreiung international und wirksamer noch, als es ihm gelang, trotz Tod und Teufel fortzusetzen." Kurt Hiller, "Persönliches Über Magnus Hirschfeld," *Der Kreis* 16, no. 5 (1948). Hiller, who died in 1972, saw at least one of Hirschfeld's activist causes become realized during his lifetime: the partial decriminalization of homosexuality in both German states in the later 1960s.

<sup>199</sup> On Hiller's postwar activism, see Wolfert, *Homosexuellenpolitik in der jungen Bundesrepublik*.

Kreuzberg's chamber music hall in Hallesche Straße in November 1951.<sup>200</sup> The event was organized by the *Adolf-Koch-Institut* and the *Bund für Körperkultur und Erziehung*, two Weimar-era organizations dedicated to working-class nudist culture and re-founded after the war, with the support of the Kreuzberg district office. Speakers were Kreuzberg mayor Willy Kressmann as well as former colleagues of Hirschfeld's from medical and activist circles.<sup>201</sup> The brief note gives no further information about the memorial, such as how large attendance was, or what speakers said. Still, the fact that it was sponsored by the district administration and held in a festive hall show that "unremembering" did not happen universally. In Kreuzberg, a working-class district that had been home to a queer subculture since the late nineteenth century, Hirschfeld was celebrated even in the early 1950s. Hallesche Straße, where the memorial took place, was in walking distance of the locations of bars and ballrooms that Hirschfeld had often visited and described in his works. The name change of the *Bund für Menschenrecht*, a prewar homosexual rights organization re-registered after multiple attempts at the Charlottenburg district office in 1951, to *Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft* may have been inspired by heightened attention to Hirschfeld's name after the Kreuzberg memorial. That first postwar group bearing Hirschfeld's name had its office, as well as an *Archiv für Sexualwissenschaft*, on Skalitzer Straße, also in Kreuzberg.<sup>202</sup> As with all other organizations dedicated to fighting the

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<sup>200</sup> "Gedenkfeier für Magnus Hirschfeld." *Die Freunde* 2, no. 1 (1952): 28.

<sup>201</sup> Kressmann, an SPD member forced by his own party to give up the mayor's office because of his idiosyncratic views of the Cold War and the right way to deal with the GDR, is identified in the piece as a member of the *Liga für Menschenrechte*. The journalist may be describing the *Bund für Menschenrecht*, a Weimar homosexual rights organization that was re-founded in West Berlin after the war. On Kressmann, see R.B. "Der Fall Willy Kressmann: Die Berliner SPD sagte sich von ihrem Querkopf los." *Die Zeit*, December 7, 1962. <http://www.zeit.de/1962/49/der-fall-willy-kressmann>. Other speakers were Hans Graaz, Hildegard Wegschneider, and Adolf Koch. Adolf Koch, a medical doctor who had led the movement for a proletarian body culture in the Weimar Republic, had worked for Hirschfeld at the Institute for Sexual Science in the 1920s. There, he met Graaz, then director of the Institute's eugenics department, who would later serve as medical director of Koch's *Körperkulturschule*, founded in 1924. In 1945, Koch re-established his *Institut für Körperkultur* in Kreuzberg's Hasenheide park. Georgieff, Audrey. *Nacktheit und Kultur: Adolf Koch und die proletarische Freikörperkultur*. Wien: Passagen Verlag, 2005, 84; 121.

<sup>202</sup> Dobler, *Von anderen Ufern. Geschichte der Berliner Lesben und Schwulen in Kreuzberg und Friedrichshain*, 226–31.

criminalization and stigmatization of homosexuality, its traces disappear by the end of the 1950s, however.

Despite the efforts by Katter, Klimmer, Hiller, and others, Hirschfeld and the Institute for Sexual Science remained lost to German memory, both East and West, until the 1980s, a long-term result of the Nazis' destruction of the Institute and the discipline of sexual science more generally and the active *unremembering* after the war.<sup>203</sup> In 1970, the West Berlin postal office denied a request to memorialize Hirschfeld through a stamp. The office claimed – falsely – that the sexual scientist had not been known to the general public.<sup>204</sup> Research and commemoration of Hirschfeld and the Institute only took off in the 1980s. In 1982, a group of young West Berliners active in the gay and lesbian movements founded the Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft (MHG), dedicated to researching Hirschfeld, the Institute, and German sexual science, and in 1986, Charlotte Wolff, who had studied medicine and enjoyed the queer nightlife in Weimar Berlin, published her Hirschfeld biography.<sup>205</sup> Katter, who was still living just outside East Berlin, heard about the MHG on a West Berlin radio station in 1985. He immediately wrote to them, evading possible censorship by giving his letter to a friend who took it to West Berlin. Katter understood the MHG's efforts as a continuation of his own,

[t]o bring into being, or rather resurrect in honor of the humanist Magnus Hirschfeld and to the benefit of those people who he cared for, an institution that will finally close the gap that had emerged since his expulsion from Hitler's

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<sup>203</sup> On the Nazis' effects on German sexology, see Sigusch, *Geschichte der Sexualwissenschaft*, 271–75. Sigusch concludes, "Sexual science will never be able to recover from the blow it was dealt by National Socialism." Ibid. 375.

<sup>204</sup> Johannes Werres, "Bundespost Berlin hält Magnus Hirschfeld für „wenig bekannt“." *Der Weg* 20, no. 228 (1970): 59–60.

<sup>205</sup> James Steakley's 1975 *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany* covered Hirschfeld, of course, but it was not translated into German. Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*. The foundation of the Magnus Hirschfeld Society was one of multiple initiatives and developments in gay and lesbian history in West Berlin in the late 1970s and 1980s, among them the foundation of the Lesbenarchiv Spinnboden, events with women who had witnessed the city's queer subculture in the Weimar Republic (among them Charlotte Wolff), the exhibition Eldorado at Berlin Museum in 1984, the subsequent founding of the Schwules Museum, the making of documentaries on Kitty Kuse and Hilde Radusch etc. Charlotte Wolff, *Magnus Hirschfeld: A Portrait of a Pioneer in Sexology* (London: Quartet Books, 1986).

Germany and the shattering of the Institute, which he had generously given to the German state.<sup>206</sup>

His own efforts had failed, he thought, “through the lack of a respective mandate from a non-existing responsible authority” – an adequate analysis given the lack of a free public sphere in the GDR and the difficulties that the nascent gay and lesbian organizations faced in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>207</sup> Katter’s life-long quest to memorialize Hirschfeld was finally successful when he recorded his memories and donated his papers to the archives of the MHG.<sup>208</sup> Sharing the shelves with the books and magazines that were so important to his self-making as a young person, and with the personal papers of others who inhabited the space of the institute and made that queer world, they have, in a way, returned home.

### **Purged from Political Power Because of Sexual Orientation? Hilde Radusch and Eddy Klopsch**

The beginning of this chapter saw Hilde Radusch and Eddy Klopsch making their way from the countryside through the outskirts into the city center, seeking to be part of the reorientation of German politics after fascism. The following section examines how their queerness affected Radusch’s ability to partake in the project of building a socialist Germany. To reconstruct the couple’s lives in the postwar years, I draw primarily on Hilde Radusch’s extensive papers, which include calendars, housekeeping books, correspondence, unpublished manuscripts, and photo albums. Like Katter’s story, that of Hilde Radusch and Else “Eddy” Klopsch survives because of

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<sup>206</sup> Letter GK to Ralf Dose, December 3, 1985. GK Papers, MHG Berlin. [Z]u Ehren des Humanisten Magnus Hirschfeld, und zum Wohle der Menschen, denen seine Sorge galt, eine Institution ins Leben zu rufen, bzw. wieder auferstehen zu lassen, die endlich die Lücke schliesst, die seit seiner Vertreibung aus Hitler-Deutschland und der Zerschlagung des Instituts, das er grosszügig dem Staat zur Verfügung gestellt hatte, entstanden war.

<sup>207</sup> durch das Fehlen eines entsprechenden Auftrages einer fehlenden zuständigen Stelle

<sup>208</sup> Katter himself was no longer fit to travel, but West Berliners were free to visit East Berlin and the GDR since 1972, and members of the MHG visited him at home. On the lifting of travel restrictions, see Roger Engelmann, ““Die Mauer Durchlässiger Machen”: Die Politik Der Reiseerleichterungen,” in *Die Mauer: Errichtung, Überwindung, Erinnerung*, ed. Klaus-Dietmar Henke (München: dtv, 2011), 221.

the work of West Berlin activists. In this case, however, Hilde Radusch herself was among the activists who founded gay and lesbian archives. In 1978, she helped create the *Frauenforschungs-, Bildungs- und Informationszentrum* (FFBIZ) in West Berlin. She donated parts of her personal papers during her lifetime, and upon her death in 1994, the FFBIZ became Radusch's archival home.<sup>209</sup> I triangulate her personal papers with the couple's Victim of Fascism [*Opfer des Faschismus*] files at the *Landesarchiv*, as well as the historiography on Communist power consolidation in postwar Berlin. What emerges in my reading of these sources is a deeply precarious life endangered by economic hardship, hostility, and threats of violence. Radusch's papers also demonstrate, though, how these two middle-aged women stubbornly pursued a dignified livelihood, withstanding continued hostility and not shying away from long exchanges with the authorities.

Else "Eddy" Klopsch and Hilde Radusch experienced the end of the war in their garden plot in the village of Prieros, southeast of Berlin. After returning to the city, they first found temporary refuge in a sublet, but they could soon move into their own apartment in Schöneberg – a privilege they likely enjoyed because of Radusch's Communist merits.<sup>210</sup> Born in 1903 into a family devoted to the German emperor, Hilde Radusch became a leftist as a young adult. At age eighteen, she entered the Communist Youth, where she not only found her political home, but also her first girlfriend. After training as an after-school children's caretaker, she joined the ranks of Weimar Germany's new female white-collar workers as the prototypical *Fräulein vom Amt* in

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<sup>209</sup> Through the care with which she collected her personal papers and her activism as an elderly woman in West Berlin's lesbian movement in the 1970s, Radusch is one of the most well-known personas of the city's lesbian history. On her comprehensive papers, see Scheidle, Ilona. "Ein Kleinod der Frauen-Lesbengeschichte." <https://www.boell.de/de/2014/07/14/hilde-radusch-ein-kleinod-der-frauen-lesbengeschichte>.

For publications about Radusch, see, for instance, Schoppmann, Claudia. *Zeit der Maskierung: Lebensgeschichten lesbischer Frauen im "Dritten Reich"*. Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1993; Biermann, Pieke, and Petra Haffter. *Muss es denn gleich Beides sein?*, 1986 (TV-Dokumentation); current biography project by Ilona Scheidle.

<sup>210</sup> Registration forms in HR Papers. FFBIZ Rep. 500, Acc. 300, 2,3, 46.

1925, operating switchboards. As a worker, she also served in the union of the postal service and as a representative for the Communist Party on the Berlin Mitte District Council from 1929-1932. Because of the latter function, the Nazis arrested her in April 1933 and sent her to jail for six months. After her release, she continued performing some underground party work, but stopped because she was, according to her own estimation, “conspicuous and unfit for clandestine work.”<sup>211</sup> She survived the rest of the Nazi reign doing various clerical jobs.

Hilde Radusch and Eddy Klopsch’s relationship began in 1939, when Radusch moved from her former home district Schöneberg to a new apartment in Mitte. Klopsch lived in the same building, and the two became friends and then quickly girlfriends.<sup>212</sup> Looking back, Radusch recalled Klopsch's mention of *Damenklub Violetta*, a lesbian social group active until 1933 as the shibboleth that allowed them to know each other's queerness and thus made their relationship possible. Much less is known about Klopsch than about Radusch, and most of what little can be reconstructed is based on Radusch’s papers. Klopsch was born in Berlin on May 12, 1906, likely with a heart deficiency.<sup>213</sup> As a young woman, she worked in a tobacco factory, but at age 22 she had to stop because of her disability.<sup>214</sup> In the early 1940s, the two women ran a cheap lunch restaurant in Mitte. In 1944, a friend of Klopsch's informed her of Radusch's imminent arrest in the course of the *Aktion Gitter*, the concerted arrest of former representatives from non-nationalist parties in the national, state, and city parliaments on August 22. From then

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<sup>211</sup> Da ich ein auffälliger Mensch bin, und für konspirative Arbeit ungeeignet, ferner dauernd beobachtet wurde, liess ich diese Arbeit im Interesse der Anderen sein. Lebenslauf HR, Landesarchiv Berlin (LAB) C Rep 118-01 Nr. 6693.

<sup>212</sup> Meldeschein in personal papers.

<sup>213</sup> HR’s eulogy at EK’s memorial ceremony. Box 4.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

on, Radusch, soon joined by Klopsch, hid on their garden plot southeast of Berlin, where they experienced the arrival of the Red Army.

Back in the city in May 1945, Radusch quickly found work in her old neighborhood of Schöneberg, heading the *Opfer des Faschismus* department in the district office. Her life-long political work for the Communist Party served as her entrance ticket to the job.<sup>215</sup> Her task was to help those who had survived the Nazi prisons and concentration camps, or an underground existence like herself, to survive and get compensation for what they had suffered. Within months, however, Radusch's work for the OdF led to conflicts with the party. In late November, its Berlin leadership summoned her to appear in front of a “control commission.”<sup>216</sup> On January 1, 1946, she was asked to appear before another investigation committee “to resolve a number of questions.”<sup>217</sup> The day of the meeting, January 7, 1946, marks the end of her membership in the Communist Party, after almost 25 years. Just five days later, she quit her position with the Schöneberg OdF department.<sup>218</sup> But Radusch left neither her party nor her job voluntarily. A series of letters, pencil-written in clumsy handwriting, detail the reasons for her termination, painting a messy picture of postwar greed, political intrigue, and vicious misogyny. In an undated letter that is part of Radusch's OdF file, a Heinz S. writes to his unnamed comrade:

Ms. Radusch had to leave too, after all, because she treated all four parties in the same way and rejected Jure's order to give everything to those with a KPD membership.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> The *OdF* committee was initiated in May 1945 by a Communist survivor of the Nazi camps. It consisted of a main board on the city level, made up of prominent Communists, Social Democrats, and liberals, and of district branches tied to the district offices. It had a dual role as political body making decisions about who to acknowledge as victim of fascism, and as welfare department in charge of supplying survivors with food, clothes, housing, jobs, and compensation. Despite the representation of different political parties on its board, it was under Communist leadership from the beginning. Zur Nieden, Susanne. *Unwürdige Opfer: Die Aberkennung von NS-Verfolgten in Berlin 1945 bis 1949*. Berlin: Metropol, 2003, 28, 34-5, 14.

<sup>216</sup> Schreiben der KPD Bezirksleitung Gross-Berlin, 27.11.1945, FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, 39, 16.

<sup>217</sup> Schreiben der KPD an HR vom 1.1.1946, FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, 39, 16.

<sup>218</sup> Diary entries for January 7, 12, HR's 1946 diary, FFBIZ Rep 500 Acc 300, 5, 2.

<sup>219</sup> 3seitiger Brief an Genosse Sidow/Genosse Mai von Heinz Schwatert (?), der auch den Brief an HR im FFBIZ schrieb. HR OdF dossier, LAB C Rep 118-01 Nr. 6693. All spelling and grammar mistakes left in place. Die Frau

In a second letter to his comrade M., Heinz S. further reveals:

Comrade. I can no longer stand being seen as a rascal in your eyes therefore I make a confession to you. [...] Before Christmas Jure, Binz, Krüger, Steinfort said. How do we get rid of Radusch she is too smart and dangerous as a broad I give 100 cigars and 5 jackets if somebody helps us. I was there and asked what one would have to do. I was then told take out a few bills and a package from the desk directly in front of the door to the right in Room I. They said after Christmas all will be put back inside. However in the meantime I found that that was not done but you and Ms. Radosch were kicked out of the office.<sup>220</sup>

Heinz S. wrote a similar letter to Hilde Radusch herself, kept in her personal papers, in which he identified himself as a Social Democrat.<sup>221</sup> Though none of the letters are dated, he likely wrote them in late February or early March 1946, when the U.S. military administration filed a lawsuit against Schöneberg mayor Gerhard Jurr (misspelled Jure in the letters) and other Communists.<sup>222</sup>

In this third letter, afraid to be implicated in the lawsuit, Heinz S. pleads with Radusch to save

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Radusch musste ja auch deshalb gehen weil sie alle 4 Parteien gleich behandelt hat und die Anordnung von Jure auf K.P.D. Ausweis alles zu geben zurückgewiesen hat.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid. Genosse. Ich halte es nicht mehr länger aus in euren Augen als Lump da zu stehn ich mach deshalb dir ein Geständnis. [...] Vor Weihnachten sprach Jure, Binz, Krüger, Steinfort. wie kriegen wir die Radosch raus die ist uns als Weib zu klug und gefährlich ich gebe 100 Zigarren und 5 Jacken wenn uns einer hilft. Ich war gerade dabei und fragte was man da tun mus. Darauf wurde mir gesagt aus Zimmer I. ein paar Rechnungen und ein Päckchen aus den Schreibtisch gleich vor der Tür rechts raus holen. Sie sagten mir nach Weihnachten wird alles wieder reingelegt. Ich habe aber indessen festgestellt das es nicht gemacht wurde sondern sie und Fr. Radosch aus dem Amt flogen.

<sup>221</sup> Anonymous letter to HR, FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, 4, 400, 8-12.

<sup>222</sup> The reasons for Radusch's dismissal are difficult to untangle because it coincided with the escalation of tensions between the Berlin SPD and KPD and between the Soviet and American occupation leaders. Since the Red Army had liberated Berlin, the city was under Soviet administration from May until July 1945. When the Western Allies moved into the districts designated in the London protocols, they were faced with an administration already staffed. In Schöneberg, the American occupiers found a district administration dominated by Communists and Social Democrats. Their suspicion of a communist supremacy culminated in the city's first postwar political trial against two Schöneberg communists, among them the above mentioned Gerhard Jurr. Returning from ten years of imprisonment in the Brandenburg jail in May 1945, Jurr was instrumental in rebuilding the KPD in Schöneberg, and soon was appointed as the party's district leader. In February 1946, he drafted a letter to his KPD comrades who were working at Bezirksamt Schöneberg. He asked them to confer with the Berlin KPD leadership before hiring somebody for a new position to found party councils in the different district departments, and to forward any directives coming from the Allied military government to the party leadership. The letter fell into the hands of the American officer in charge, who had Jurr and a number of other KPD members arrested and put on trial for alleged contempt of the U.S. military administration in Berlin, as well as communist conspiracy. Jurr and Wilhelm Kammermeier, another former Brandenburg inmate who was working at the Bezirksamt, were sentenced to years in prison, but quickly pardoned because of widespread criticism of the trial. Zur Nieden, 27; Heimann, Siegfried. "Politisches Leben in Schöneberg/Friedenau in den ersten Jahren nach Kriegsende." In *Weiterleben nach dem Krieg. Schöneberg/Friedenau 1945-6*. Edited by Susanne Zur Nieden and Helga u. E. Schönknecht, 68–79. Bezirksamt Schöneberg von Berlin, Kunstamt, 1992, 72; Krenn, Karl J. *Krenn's Berlin-Chronik, 1945-1950*. Berlin: trafo, 2009, 118, 125.

his skin by not testifying in the trial. His letters offer two explanations for her termination: when distributing goods in her OdF job, she refused to favor her comrades. She was thus an obstacle to enrichment. To get rid of her, the local clique of Communist and Social Democrat men arranged for the theft of valuables and documents from her office.<sup>223</sup> The theft, and the likely indictment for embezzlement, rapidly ended what had appeared as a promising post-war career in city administration.<sup>224</sup> At the same time, S. also writes that Radusch “as a broad” had become “too smart and dangerous.” The phrasing does not leave much room for doubt: Radusch’s gender was perceived as a menace; she directly threatened male power.

In an oral history interview she gave in 1979/80, Radusch herself gave an additional reason for her resignation from the Communist Party.

Yeah, as long as you collaborate with the Communists, helping them with their work etc., everything is splendid. But back then, when I quit, I was told, well, yeah, we would let you join again if you promise to let your girlfriend go. [I] thumped the table with my fist, said, My girlfriend is none of your business, and handed in my membership book myself.<sup>225</sup>

In Radusch’s memory, it was her relationship with Eddy Klopsch, then, that made her unbearable for the party. She does not say here what her comrades had against her girlfriend specifically – if it was something she did or was, or rather their relationship that they objected to.<sup>226</sup> Heinz S.’s plea letter to Radusch speaks to this question, however. He writes,

You’ve been wanted dead for a long time but your girlfriend did not leave your side and once when she threw somebody out they noticed unforeseen forces in her that woman must have some kind of training because otherwise she could not

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<sup>223</sup> In the FFBIZ letter, S. gives more details on his theft: he took 4.000 M and a few bills.

<sup>224</sup> Two later anonymous letters to HR speak of an indictment for embezzlement. Drohbrieff an HR und EK, Box 4.

<sup>225</sup> Radusch, Hilde. Oral-History-Interview mit Annemarie Tröger. 1979/80. FFBIZ. Audiodatei, bearbeitet von Christian Fink. Ja, solange man mit den Kommunisten mitarbeitet, ja, und ihnen hilft bei der Arbeit undsoweiter, ist alles wunderschön. Aber als ich damals ausgetreten bin, da hat man mir gesagt, nun ja, also, wir würden dich ja auch wieder aufnehmen, wenn du uns versprichst, dass du deine Freundin laufen lässt. Hab mit der Faust auf den Tisch gehauen, hab gesacht, Meine Freundin geht euch gar nichts an, hab mein Parteibuch selbst eingereicht.

<sup>226</sup> According to historian Claudia Schoppmann, Radusch was expelled from the Party “on account of her relationship with a woman.” Schoppmann, *Zeit der Maskierung*.

throw a strong man into the air like paper after that one was afraid when she was present [...] <sup>227</sup>

According to Heinz S., Radusch might long be dead had it not been for her girlfriend, whose constant presence and physical strength protected her. This comes as a surprise given Klopsch's fragile health – the heart defect that she was born with, her later disability. What is more, she was about a head length's shorter than Radusch, who herself was only 5 feet 4 inches (1.62m) tall [Figure 3].<sup>228</sup> It appears, then, that in their case, being visible as a queer couple created a

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<sup>227</sup> Anonymous letter to HR, FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, 4, 400, 8-12. All spelling and grammar mistakes left in place. Man wollte sie ja längst umbringen aber ihre Freundin wich ja nicht von ihrer Seite und als sie mal jemand raus warf bemerkten sie an ihr ungeahnte Kräfte die Frau muss irgendeine Ausbildung haben denn ein schwerer Mann wie Papier in die Luft werfen könnte sie sonst nicht seitdem fürchtete man sich wenn sie dabei war (...)

<sup>228</sup> In her 1986 passport, Radusch's height is given as 162cm. HR Papers, Box 2, FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300.

presence that made it harder to attack them. For them, their openly lived relationship was a safeguard, not a hazard.



*Figure 3: Hilde Radusch and Eddy Klopsch at Tiergarten, 1939. Hilde Radusch Papers, FFBIZ Berlin.*

## **Conclusion**

After Hilde Radusch was ousted from her job and the party, the couple struggled to survive. In the next chapter, I turn to their practices of home-making, examining their efforts to support themselves and each other financially as well as emotionally. The making of queer homes both literally, in a city with a dramatic lack of housing and in a polity that prohibited many kinds of

non-marital cohabitation, and metaphorically, in and through the body and verbal and iconic practices of representing the self, will be questions that guide my explorations.

Before I move on, how did hope and memory figure in the postwar orientations of the queer Berliners I have examined in this chapter? While the end of Nazism was a relief for all three, Eva Siewert, Gerd Katter, and Hilde Radusch approached the postwar moment with vastly different hopes. Eva Siewert found her hope of reuniting with her friend/lover Alice disappointed. As the uncertainty about her whereabouts turned into the knowledge of her murder in Auschwitz, she fictionalized her memories of their relationship. Through writing, she mourned her queer love and created a memorial for Alice. In this time when the Victims of Fascism bureaucracy regarded Jewish victims of the Holocaust as secondary, and lesbian Holocaust survivors as unworthy of recognition and support, Siewert's story was indeed an "act of resistance."<sup>229</sup>

Gerd Katter's efforts to memorialize Magnus Hirschfeld and to re-establish an Institute for Sexual Science were fueled by his personal memories of the man who felt like a father to him and the place that had felt like a home. His memorializing work was directly tied to the making of his self in the late Weimar Republic. If he could not succeed against the forces of *unremembering* that were at work in both German states well into the 1970s, he found a form of queer community again in the 1980s, with the historian-activists of West Berlin's Magnus-

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<sup>229</sup> Susanne zur Nieden has shown that the OdF revoked sisters' Hertha S. and Edith F. OdF recognition in 1946, arguing that their lesbian relationships damaged the reputation of Victims of Fascism. Zur Nieden, *Unwürdige Opfer*, 126–30.

Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft. Katter's archival homecoming is a rare example of queer history transcending the Berlin Wall.

Hilde Radusch's hopes of taking on an important role in the political reconstruction of Berlin were shattered by her comrades, who bullied her out of her position of district leader for the Victims of Fascism committee and expelled her from the Communist Party. In her expulsion from politics, her openly lived sexual orientation played out in different ways: It may have been used as libel against her, but her and Eddy Klopsch's presentation as a couple also protected her from abuse or violence. After her involuntary departure, Radusch had to reorient her life, which until this point had been guided by her devotion to the socialist cause. She withdrew from party politics for more than two decades and only returned to political activism in the 1970s, when the lesbian movement created the space for articulating, and publishing, her desire.

Several themes emerge from this chapter: how personal memories of the Weimar Republic and the Nazi years shaped queer Berliners' postwar experience and their visions for the future; how their energies devoted to remembering the queer publics of Weimar were met with strong counterefforts to unremember; and finally, how queer archives have resurfaced and reinscribed these lines of queer cultural work and political activism. They will run as continuing threads through the following chapters.

### Chapter 3: Making Queer Homes

Then came [...] September. Then I met a guy. Near the Gedächtniskirche. That was on the street, though. He must either have been at the Zoo and not gotten any. Or he'd been elsewhere and not gotten any. Anyways: Our glances met. Faithful as we are. Smiles. And then we were a couple all at once. Where do we go? [I] say: We can't do it at mine. I live in a hotel. In Neukölln. And the bars, we can't do anything there. [...] He says: We can't do it at mine either. I have a sublet. I say: Typically Berlin. Everyone's got a sublet. Yes, he says: That's how it is. You won't get an apartment here. Look around you: It's all destroyed.<sup>230</sup>

An encounter on the street, an exchange of glances, a smile, and Klaus Born had found his first sex partner in West Berlin, where he had moved in August 1965, as soon as he had turned twenty-one. But while they both instantly knew *what* they wanted from each other, the question was *where* they could do it. The quote from an oral history interview from the Archive of Other Memories illustrates Berlin's difficult housing situation, and how it affected sex between men.<sup>231</sup> Twenty years after the war had ended, parts of the city were still in ruins, even in the very center of the city's western districts, by the Gedächtniskirche. Transient or short-term accommodation, such as hotel rooms or sublets, did not provide the privacy for intimate encounters between men.

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<sup>230</sup> Klaus Born, interview by Michael Bochow, and Michael Jähme, December 5, 2013, Archiv der anderen Erinnerungen. Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld. Berlin; Transkription Dennis Nill. In my translation, I try to transmit Born's diction. He renders conversations in direct speech and at times uses elements of Berlin dialect. To convey the colloquial tone of the conversation, I translate his frequent use of "ja" as filled word as "yeah" or "well," not as the affirmative answer word "yes." "Dann war [...] September. Dann hab ich einen kennengelernt. So in der Nähe von der Gedächtniskirche. Das war auf der Straße aber. Der muss entweder er war am Zoo gewesen sein – hat nichts gekriegt. Oder er war sonst wo her – nichts gekriegt. Jedenfalls: Die Blicke gewesen, von uns beiden. Treu wie wir so sind. Gelächelt. Waren dann auf Male ganz schnell 'n Paar. Wo gehen wir hin? Sag: Bei mir geht's nicht. Ich wohn in einem Hotel. In Neukölln. Und die Kneipen, ja, da könn' wir auch nichts machen. (...) Sagt er: Bei mir geht's auch nich. Ich wohne zur Untermiete. Ich sag: Typisch Berlin. Alles wohnt hier zur Untermiete. Ja, sagt er: Das is' aber so. Du kriegst keine Wohnung hier. Kuck mal hier: Is' doch alles kaputt."

<sup>231</sup> Those looking for sex outside marriage faced similar problems, of course, as sex outside marriage, and the provision of a space for non-marital sex were criminalized in both German until the reform of criminal law in 1968 (GDR) and 1969 (FRG).

In this chapter, I turn to notions of home and domestic practices among queer Berliners in the postwar period as well as to the practicalities of housing and to the affective work of making a *Zuhause*, or, in a more old-fashioned term, a *Heim*.<sup>232</sup> What homes were queer Berliners envisioning, and building? What challenges did they face in making actual homes – in living by themselves, with a partner, or in other constellations? And what were metaphorical homes that they aspired to (re-) build? Did the offers for belonging made by the authorities in West and East, materialized in large-scale construction of public housing, hold any significance for queer Berliners?

I suggest ‘home’ as a productive concept to study queer lives in postwar Berlin for two reasons. First, home's ideological inscription as the site of familial reproduction, as a peaceful haven from a menacing world, and as a female space opposed to a male public space all make it a preeminent site for any study of gender and sexuality, “normal” or “deviant.” Second, the close etymological relationship of *Heim* [home] and *heimelig* [cozy, homely] to *heimlich* [secret, clandestine] appears promising in this period in which queer lives were often lived *heimlich*, meaning both in the privacy of people’s homes *and* hidden.<sup>233</sup>

Feminist thinkers have long critiqued the notions of home as a safe space of belonging and of rigid boundaries between private and public. Some have discarded the usability of home for the feminist project altogether, arguing that the home’s function as site of women’s nurturing of men and children deprives women of subjectivity at the same time as it makes that very

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<sup>232</sup> Both terms mean “home.”

<sup>233</sup> Sigmund Freud has famously tracked the etymology of the word “unheimlich” in his essay “Das Unheimliche” [The Uncanny.] Setting out from the assumption that “unheimlich”[uncanny] is the opposite of “heimlich, heimisch, vertraut,” [homely, familiar] he found that the ambivalence of “heimlich” as the “Vertraute[ ], Behagliche[ ]” *and* the “Versteckte[ ], Verborgengehaltene[ ]” leads to the incorporation of “unheimlich” in “heimlich.” Sigmund Freud, “Das Unheimliche (1919),” in *Studienausgabe*, ed. Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards and James Strachey IV, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1982).

subjectivity possible for men.<sup>234</sup> Others, however, rejecting the conceptualization of homes as spaces outside politics, have stressed the home's significance as a space of resistance, and have made the case for homemaking to be considered as fundamental to the making of the self. Writing about African American women's participation in black liberation, theorist bell hooks has pointed out "the primacy of domesticity as a site for subversion and resistance."<sup>235</sup> In a society that is hostile to black lives, she argues, the privacy of a home, however precarious it is, is crucial to a dignified survival, and the nurturing and love that happen inside its walls, whether for the self or for others, cannot be underestimated as radical politics. Despite the different historical situations and oppressive systems at stake (U.S. slavery and racial segregation v. homophobia in postwar Berlin), hooks' insistence on "the importance of homeplace in the midst of oppression and domination" takes us into a productive direction for considering the home as a political space for queer lives.<sup>236</sup>

Homemaking as crucial to processes of making the self has been conceptualized by political theorist Iris Marion Young. In her in-depth analysis of feminist critiques of home, she argues that housework consists not only of the tedious, repetitive, and never-ending chores of cleaning, cooking, etc. It also consists of homemaking, which she defines as "the activities of endowing things with living meaning, arranging them in space in order to facilitate the life activities of those to whom they belong, and preserving them, along with their meaning."<sup>237</sup> Understood in this way, homes can serve as "the material anchor for a sense of agency and a shifting and fluid identity."<sup>238</sup> It is these aspects of the queer home that will be at the center of

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<sup>234</sup> For a discussion of this line of feminist critiques of the home, see Iris M. Young, *On Female Body Experience: Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>235</sup> bell hooks, "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance," in *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 2015), 48.

<sup>236</sup> hooks, "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance" in *yearning*, 43.

<sup>237</sup> Young, *On Female Body Experience: Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays*, 140–41.

<sup>238</sup> Young, *On Female Body Experience: Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays*, 149.

my analysis in this chapter: their function as environments whose shape is expressive of their inhabitants' subjectivities, and which can empower them for their movement in a hostile world outside the home.<sup>239</sup>

However, my investigation of queer home-making practices will also attend to another key insight of feminist inquiries of the home, the inherent instability of the boundaries between inside and outside, private and public.<sup>240</sup> In the previous chapter, Hilde Radusch's papers have given me the opportunity to discuss leftist politics as queer orientation. In this chapter, I return to them for an in-depth case study of a lesbian couple's domestic life in West Berlin. What emerges in their papers, I argue, is both the significance of home as a space of nurturing and recovery and of the mutual constitution of sexual selves, *and* the porosity of its walls, which could not keep misogyny and homophobia completely outside. With its documentation of Hilde Radusch's efforts to maintain access to Eddy Klopsch's grave, their case further highlights the precarity of queer homes even beyond death.

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<sup>239</sup> Recent publications in gender and sexuality studies have continued feminist inquiries as well as pushing beyond them, exploring domesticities and the home as concept and lived reality. A recent collection on *Gender and Sexuality at Home*, for instance, brings together analyses of the home as a key site of constructing and maintaining heteronormativity with studies of processes of queering the home, and tracing homeliness beyond the home. Queer scholars in the collection question their own field's focus on "exceptional sites" such as bars and clubs, cruising spots, marches or festivals at the expense of quotidian spaces, stressing instead "the role of the politics of domesticity in social change, the subversive possibilities of the home and the continued significance of a home-space for self-worth and well-being." They highlight the diverse home-making practices of lesbian women, trans men and women, and gay men. Elsewhere, scholars have honed in on the home as a site to find historical subjects who fall between these categories, such as married women in the mid-century U.S. who created space for lesbian affairs in their marital homes. Brent Pilkey et al., eds., *Sexuality and Gender at Home: Experience, Politics, Transgression* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 6–7.; Andrew Gorman-Murray, "Que(E)Ring Homonormativity: The Everyday Politics of Lesbian and Gay Homemaking," in Pilkey et al., *Sexuality and Gender at Home*, 151; Alice T. Friedman compares Janet Flanner with Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas in Alice T. Friedman, "F the U-Haul: Janet Flanner's Paris and the Varieties of Lesbian Domesticity," in Pilkey et al., *Sexuality and Gender at Home*; Laura Marshall discusses how British trans men's homes act as both castle and cell for them in Laura Marshall, "Castle and Cell: Exploring Intersections Between Sexuality and Gender in the Domestic Lives of Men with Trans Identities and Histories," in Pilkey et al., *Sexuality and Gender at Home*; in the same volume, Matt Cook and Matt Smith analyze gay men's domestic practices. Lauren Gutterman has examined the lesbian desires of 160 wives in the mid-century U.S. in her article "The House on the Borderland." Lauren J. Gutterman, "'The House on the Borderland': Lesbian Desire, Marriage, and the Household, 1950-1979," *Journal of Social History* 46, no. 1 (2012).

<sup>240</sup> See, for instance, Bonnie Honig, "Difference, Dilemma and the Politics of Home," in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Behabib (Princeton, 1996).

The chapter also explores “home” beyond its meaning of built place of dwelling. In my discussion of painter Toni Ebel’s work to create a queer home in socialist East Berlin, I foreground the body as home, theorizing gender as a way of inhabiting the body. Like Gerd Katter, Toni Ebel had transitioned under Magnus Hirschfeld’s care in the late Weimar Republic, but she pursued a different path navigating the politics of the developing socialist state and making a queer *Zuhause* in the postwar East. Her self-portraits offer an opportunity to explore the subjectivity of an elderly socialist transgender woman in the early GDR.

Klaus Born’s rendering of his conversation with a man on the streets of West Berlin, figuring out where to go for sex, opened this chapter. His anecdote directs us to the material reality of domesticity in postwar Berlin, where the physical and psychological devastations of Nazism and war made homes inherently unstable. Before delving into the case studies of Toni Ebel and Hilde Radusch/Eddy Klopsch, I will thus outline the housing situation in the city, its ramifications for notions of kinship, and its consequences for queer Berliners.

### **The Housing Situation in Berlin 1945-1970**

In May 1945, one third of Berlin’s prewar apartments were uninhabitable, destroyed by the Nazis’ plans for turning the city into their imperial capital Germania, allied bombs, and the battle of Berlin in Spring 1945. Only a quarter of the apartments that existed in 1939 were left undamaged, all others were in need of repair.<sup>241</sup> The population had shrunken, too, through the Nazis’ exiling, deportation, and murder of the city’s Jewish population, civilians killed by bombs or leaving town to escape the bombings, and the death or war imprisonment of German soldiers. After 1945, refugees from formerly German or German-occupied regions in Russia, Poland, and

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<sup>241</sup> Wolfgang Ribbe, *Berlin 1945-2000: Grundzüge Der Stadtgeschichte* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2002), 91.

Czechoslovakia flocked into the city in great numbers.<sup>242</sup> While the Soviet city commander issued a prohibition to move to Berlin and attempted to steer refugees to other parts of Germany, they continued to arrive in Berlin and stayed, often in camps that had previously housed forced laborers, or in makeshift accommodation such as the British *Nissenhütten*.<sup>243</sup> These huts had a floor area of forty square meters and were often shared with a second party, the occupants separated only by a thin wall.<sup>244</sup>

The housing problem was urgent, but building materials were hard to come by, the city administration did not have the necessary funds in the first years after the war, and state-administered programs for urban planning and public housing did not begin until after the foundation of the two German states in 1949.<sup>245</sup> As a consequence, most households were home not to a nuclear family, but to women and children, more distant relatives, or people not related at all. As Kirsten Plötz has shown, this reality found its way into the debates over the *Grundgesetz* [Basic Law, rump constitution] for West Germany. Female-female couples raising children together were so prevalent that there was discussion of including these families, *Frauenfamilien* [women families], in the *Grundgesetz*' protection of families – a radical, if ultimately unsuccessful challenge to prevailing ideas of family and the ideology of the nuclear family that would become dominant in West Germany in the 1950s.<sup>246</sup> In East Berlin, large

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<sup>242</sup> In Berlin, 25 percent of the population were refugees, or *Umsiedler*. Borneman, *Belonging in the Two Berlins*, 129.

<sup>243</sup> Wolfgang Ribbe, "Wohnen Im Geteilten Berlin: Stadtplanung, Architektur Und Wohnverhältnisse Während Des Kalten Krieges Im Systemvergleich," in *Konfrontation Und Wettbewerb: Wissenschaft, Technik Und Kultur Im Geteilten Berliner Alltag (1948-1973)*, ed. Michael Lemke (Berlin: Metropol, 2008).

<sup>244</sup> Uwe Carstens, "Die Nissenhütte," in *Schleswig-Holsteinische Erinnerungsorte*, ed. Carsten Fleischhauer and Guntram Turkowski (Heide: Boyens, 2006), 92. The private documentation "Nissenhütten – Wellblechbaracken in Berlin" offers a wealth of information on these makeshift huts. Frenzel, Uwe. "Nissenhütten – Wellblechbaracken in Berlin." Accessed July 23, 2017. <http://www.nissenhuetten.de/>.

<sup>245</sup> Michael Lemke, *Vor Der Mauer. Berlin in Der Ost-West-Konkurrenz 1948 Bis 1961* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 2011), 403.

<sup>246</sup> Kirsten Plötz, "Wo blieb die Bewegung lesbischer Trümmerfrauen?," in Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld, *Forschung im Queerformat*, 74. For a fictional treatment of postwar *Frauenfamilien*, see Elke Heidenreich's short story "Die schönsten Jahre." Elke Heidenreich, *Die Schönsten Jahre* (Hamburg: rowohlt, 2009).

households accommodating various parties – close as well as distant family members and non-related occupants – remained the predominant reality for residents into the late 1960s.<sup>247</sup> In West Berlin, funds became available for public housing from the federal government and the U.S. in the mid-1950s, and construction of apartment buildings moved ahead faster than in East Berlin, where the development of heavy industry and representative architecture took precedence over housing.<sup>248</sup> At the same time, in West Berlin, too, “[f]ew Berliners lived in nuclear-family households before the mid-fifties, and thereafter the numbers increased but incrementally over time.”<sup>249</sup> In sum, Berlin’s housing situation remained extremely tense well beyond the founding of the two German states. Privacy was a luxury, not the norm for most of the city’s inhabitants. And most Berliners, whether they resided in East or West Berlin, did not live the nuclear family model throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

### *The Housing Situation of Queer Berliners*

What did the shortage of housing mean for queer men and women? While a lack of privacy affected most middle- and working-class Berliners, its repercussions varied immensely. Working-class men living in hotels, in sublets, or communal accommodation could not bring other men to their home. This was the case for the afore-mentioned Klaus Born, but also for Fritz Schmebling, who like Born had moved to West Berlin from West Germany because of its reputation as a gay haven.<sup>250</sup> As a skilled laborer, he was able to escape military conscription in exchange for committing to two years of work in West Berlin, an opportunity that he took gladly as soon as he was twenty-one, in the early 1960s. The job that the West German employment

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<sup>247</sup> Borneman, *Belonging in the Two Berlins*, 131.

<sup>248</sup> Ribbe, *Berlin 1945-2000*, 94–96.

<sup>249</sup> Borneman, *Belonging in the Two Berlins*, 205.

<sup>250</sup> Fritz Schmebling, Interview by Michael Bochow, and Karl-Heinz Steinle. January 24, 2015. Archiv der anderen Erinnerungen. Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld. Berlin.

office found for him came with accommodation in a *Nissenhütte* in Spandau. Because of its lack of privacy, Schmebling, like Born, had little choice but to pursue sex outside the home. I will pick up their narratives in my discussion of public spaces in chapter four.

In personal ads in pen-pal services such as Berlin's *Amicus Briefbund*, same-sex love and friendship were sometimes sought in combination with accommodation. *Amicus Briefbund* was a monthly list of pen-pal ads, published since 1948 with the permission of the American military command.<sup>251</sup> Its name, *Amicus*, was Latin for friend, a term long understood to signify a same-sex partner and used concurrently in Weimar-era queer publications such as *Freundschaft* or *Die Freundin*. The publisher described its purpose in words that sounded neutral to the ignorant but were well understood by the list's intended subscribers.<sup>252</sup> While ads came from across postwar Germany, Berliners placed the majority, and most of them resided in the western sector.

In its February 1950 issue, one man from Berlin's east sector placed an ad in search of a "long-term friendship," adding, "I would be thankful for a job and accommodation."<sup>253</sup> In the same issue, three men and one woman from the city's west mention in their ads that they own an home, promising a higher sense of privacy for the same-sex encounters they sought. In June 1951, Hamburg homophile magazine *Die Freunde* called on its readers to give the editors notice of available rooms to help those "friends" who had to start from scratch after being subjected to a

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<sup>251</sup> Martin Knop was the publisher of *Amicus-Briefbund*. Its office was located on Nollendorfplatz and patrons were invited to stop by during office hours. *Amicus Briefbund* ceased publication in 1953. *Amicus-Briefliste 2/1950*. SM\*B; Bastian Schlüter, Karl-Heinz Steinle and Andreas Sternweiler, *Eberhardt Brucks. Ein Grafiker in Berlin* (Berlin: Schwules Museum, 2008), 162.

<sup>252</sup> As the publisher explained, the *Briefbund* was for those seeking "aufrichtige Kameradschaft" [honest camaraderie] and "gleichgesinnte[ ] Menschen," [like-minded people] "auch über Zonen- und Ländergrenzen hinweg" [also across zonal and country borders.] He promised an end of loneliness to those in want of „reiner Freundschaft, wertvoller Lebenskameradschaft," [pure friendship, valuable life camaraderie] and appealed to those who wanted to be particularly cautious and did not want to be recognized right away ("sich auch nicht gleich zu erkennen geben wollen.") Subscribers looking for others who shared their hobbies or for business partners were welcome to post an ad, too, though. *Amicus-Briefliste 2/1950*.

<sup>253</sup> "Dauerfreundschaft; Für Betätigung und Wohnung wäre ich dankbar." *Amicus-Briefliste 2/1950*. SM\*B. Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality*, 70.

lawsuit or even prison time for a violation of §175.<sup>254</sup> The same magazine collected addresses for temporary stays around Germany and Europe, including not just the big cities, but also mid- and small-sized towns.<sup>255</sup>

By contrast, female couples living together were generally less conspicuous, even a “respectable part of society,” which tolerated possible intimacies between women – as long as they did not publicly show or speak about them.<sup>256</sup> As seen above, many households consisted of two women raising their children together in their husbands’ absence. The perception of female couples began to change in West Germany, however, as conservatives established marriage as the only legitimate model of cohabitation over the course of the 1950s and into the late 1960s.<sup>257</sup> In the following, I discuss two examples of lesbian love relationships in a *Frauenfamilie*. The first is the relationship of Käthe “Kitty” Kuse and Ruth Zimmer. Käthe “Kitty” Kuse is a well-known figure of Berlin lesbian history. Of the same generation as Hilde Radosch, she too participated in the activism of elderly women in West Berlin’s lesbian movement in the 1970s, befriended a group of young lesbian activists, and was the subject of oral history interviews, publications and documentaries in the 1980s.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> “Die Freunde sprechen zum Freund.” *Die Freunde* 1, no. 2 (1951): 16. SMB.

<sup>255</sup> “Die Freunde sprechen zum Freund.” *Die Freunde* 1, no. 4 (1951): 21.

<sup>256</sup> Kirsten Plötz, “Wo blieb die Bewegung lesbischer Trümmerfrauen?,” in Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld, *Forschung im Queerformat*, 74. Plötz’ suggestions that same-sex relations were tolerated as long as they were not named is confirmed by Benno Gammerl’s oral history project with gay men and lesbians who situate themselves either inside the gay liberation movement or at a distance from it. Benno Gammerl, “Mit von der Partie oder auf Abstand? Biografische Perspektiven schwuler Männer und lesbischer Frauen auf die Emanzipationsbewegungen der 1970er Jahre,” in *Rosa Radikale: Die Schwulenbewegung der 1970er Jahre*, ed. Andreas Pretzel and Volker Weiß (Hamburg: Männerschwarm-Verl., 2012). In his article on lesbian experiences in Nazi Berlin, Samuel Huneke discusses the case of a landlady who did not take offence at her renters’ lesbian relationship. Samuel C. Huneke, “The Duplicity of Tolerance: Lesbian Experiences in Nazi Berlin,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 54, no. 1 (2019): 45.

<sup>257</sup> Plötz, *Als fehle die bessere Hälfte*, 255–58.

<sup>258</sup> Kuse was a co-founder of the group L 74 (Lesbos 1974) in 1974 to provide a space for “older, working homosexual women,” working or retired women who did not feel at home in the student-dominated Lesbenaktionszentrum (LAZ). An oral history with her was featured in the 1984 Eldorado exhibition and catalogue, and she is one of the women portrayed in Ilse Kokula’s 1986 *Jahre des Glücks, Jahre des Leids*. Christiane von Lengerke and Tille Ganz made a documentary about her in 1985. In 2016, on her birthday, a memorial stone was set for her at the St. Matthäus cemetery in Schöneberg, within walking distance to her childhood home. Ilse Kokula,

Born in Schöneberg in 1904, Kuse had lived in lesbian relationships since the 1920s.<sup>259</sup> Through the Weimar and Nazi years, she worked as a typist and accountant. After the war, she continued her education, got her *Abitur* [high school diploma] and enrolled at Humboldt University for a degree in economics.<sup>260</sup> Her education and her membership in SED and *Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* [FDGB, the state-sponsored union in the GDR] became the basis for a stellar career in East Berlin, and Kuse earned extremely well by the early 1950s, making more than four times the median income.<sup>261</sup> In 1952, while recovering from a breakdown at Weissensee hospital, she met Ruth Zimmel, another patient and a refugee from East Prussia. Born in 1911, she had worked in retail and, after her marriage to merchant Richard Zimmel, in his grocery store, whose direction she took over when he was drafted into the army. When Zimmel met Kuse, she was married, but she divorced her husband in the same year, and she and her two daughters moved in with Kuse, whose income supported the whole family.<sup>262</sup> While Kuse lost her well-paying job when the family moved to West Berlin in 1955, she and Zimmel remained a couple until 1970.

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*Jahre Des Glücks, Jahre Des Leids: Gespräche Mit Älteren Lesbischen Frauen. Dokumente*, 2.th ed. (Kiel: Frühlings Erwachen, 1990), 31. Christiane von Lengerke et al., *Käthe (Kitty) Kuse. 17. März 1904 - 7. November 1999* (1985/1994). Her papers are kept by her friend Christiane von Lengerke, who kindly gave me access to them at her home.

<sup>259</sup> Kuse had gone by a male name, Fritz Förster, for parts of her teens. In her late twenties, she had even begun the process to get a *Transvestitenschein* – to pass as male when going dancing with her girlfriend, she explained in hindsight. Kokula, *Jahre des Glücks, Jahre des Leids*, 25–26.

<sup>260</sup> Prüfungszeugnis Sonderreifepfprüfung Humboldt-Universität, 2. April 1947, Diplom der Humboldt-Universität, 1. Juni 1951, Teilnachlass Kitty Kuse (TKK).

<sup>261</sup> She joined the SED in July 1946, as well as the Freie Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (FDGB), the GDR's umbrella union, where she served as treasurer. Leiter des Notaufnahmeverfahrens in Berlin, Aufenthaltserlaubnis für Käthe Kuse, January 26, 1957, TKK. She worked in different agencies in East Berlin: the *Zentralverband der Deutschen Industrie*, later *Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission*, from 1946 until 1950, then in the *Regierungskanzlei* of the GDR, then the *Patentamt* from 1951 until 1954, where she held leadership positions, and finally the *VEB Forschungs- und Entwicklungsbetrieb für Turbinen und Transformatoren* from January until September 1955. Letter from Kuse to her father, February 7, 1946, TKK. Lebenslauf Käthe Kuse, late 1950s/1960s, Arbeitsvertrag im Amt für Erfindungs- und Patentwesen, 1. September 1951, Zwischenzeugnis Amt für Erfindungs- und Patentwesen, 31.3.1953, TKK. In 1951, Kuse earned DM 1210 at the VEM Transformatoren. Zeugnis der VEM Transformatoren, 20. Oktober 1951, TKK. According to Wikipedia, the median income in the GDR was DM 265,25 in 1950, meaning that she made 4.5 times the median income. In 1955, the median income in the GDR was DM 432. Statistisches Amt der DDR, “Durchschnittseinkommen in der DDR, 1949-1989.” Statista, access January 25, 2017.

<sup>262</sup> After her husband had returned from war imprisonment, they had moved in with her parents in Berlin-Lichtenberg. Lebenslauf Ruth Wilhelmine Dorothea Zimmel, July 25, 1957, TKK. Her mother died in 1949,

In Kuse's large collection of photos, there is a black-and-white one that shows Ruth Zimmel and her daughters in what appears like a joyous, carefree moment.<sup>263</sup> It is dated for 1952, the year that Kuse and Zimmel met. Just off the center of the image is Zimmel, shown from the chest upward, her head turned slightly to the right, smiling broadly, if somewhat awkwardly, her eyes looking directly at the photographer. She is wearing a striped shirt or dress buttoned up to the collar. In front of her, to her left and her right, are her daughters, also visible from the chest upward, sitting on her lap or on chairs. The older one, ten years old at the time, is at Zimmel's right. She is looking directly at her sister, also with a broad smile, showing the photographer her profile. She wears a light-colored dress with big decorative buttons. The younger girl on Zimmel's left, four years old, beams at her mother, her profile just barely visible to the beholder. A white round-edged collar tops her checkered dress. The image is taken on a sunny day outside a house whose wall and a window with a curtain form part of the background. A tall object made of wicker, reminiscent of a beach chair, is in the left background.

In the gazes and smiles that the photographed subjects direct toward each other and the camera, and in their body postures, turned toward one another, the children's arms touching their mother's upper body, the photo exudes lightheartedness, intimacy, and trust. The combination of sunlight and wicker evokes association of the beach, and their casual but trim dresses suggest Sunday outfits. In these qualities, the photo appears as an exemplary family snapshot. The lack of a second parent does not hamper the impression of familial bliss; rather, it is a common feature of such images, since one of the parents is often behind the camera. Whether that was Kitty Kuse in this instance or not, her inclusion of the photo in her personal papers suggests that

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followed by her father in 1951. In 1952, she divorced her husband, who died in 1954. Biographische Skizze Zimmel-Fischer für Zuzugsgenehmigung, Rückseite Antragsformular, Vorgang Zuzug West-Berlin KK, TTK.

<sup>263</sup> I have not been able to contact Zimmel's daughters to ask them if they agree with the publication of their image. Therefore, I cannot reprint it, but try to include it through a detailed description.

the scene represented something important to her: that her role as parent and, at least for a while, family provider was a significant part of the life story that she decided to leave to posterity.

A second example of a lesbian relationship in a *Frauenfamilie* comes from an anecdote that Christine Loewenstein shared in a 2018 oral history interview for the Archive of Other Memories. Her narrative demonstrates how the inconspicuousness of *Frauenfamilien* depended on keeping signs of a lesbian relationship within the home.<sup>264</sup> Loewenstein was born in 1946 or 1947 and grew up in the Johannisthal district in Berlin's south-east. When discussing how she realized that she herself was attracted to women, Loewenstein begins to explain that she did not know any lesbian women in her childhood, but quickly corrects herself:

I did not know any lesbian, I mean, that's not entirely true, but in my childhood, in my youth, that term did not really exist. The word did not exist either. I heard it from my husband, well, my boyfriend at the time. ... It was funny, we were visiting my friend [...], we are going out, and then he says: "Well, boy, since when, since when has your mother been lesbian?" And we [gesticulates] did not know at all, how, what. And then it turned out that the mother of my friend was living together with her girlfriend. And it was quite obvious, but I did not see, we both did not see it. She herself [Loewenstein's friend] did not see it. They had a real, a, a, a marital bed [Ehebett], with nightstands left and right, and were both sleeping there and were clearly one of those traditional lesbian couples. The wife [Frau] always a bit with suits, her with the skirt. And we did not ... We did not know that. We did not have a word for that. And that's why, if you don't have a word, you can't bring things into your consciousness, either, right. And therefore, that was not a way for me either.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Interview with Christine Loewenstein. Archiv der Anderen Erinnerungen, Berlin. 2018.

<sup>265</sup> Loewenstein interview. Weil ich, ich kannte auch keine lesbischen, das heißt, das stimmt nicht ganz, aber in meiner Kindheit, in meiner Jugendzeit gabs diesen Begriff eigentlich nicht. Es gab auch das Wort nicht. Das hab ich von meinem Mann, also von meinem Freund damals gehört, so lesbisch. Ja der ... Das war ganz witzig, dass wir mal bei meiner Freundin zusammen zu Besuch waren, mit ihm, also als er noch da zu Besuch kam, da sagt ... Gehen wir raus, und da sagt er: „Naja, Mensch, seit wann, seit wann ist denn deine Mutter lesbisch?“ Und wir {{gestikuliert}} wussten überhaupt nicht, wie, was. Und dann stellte sich raus, dass die Mutter von meiner Freundin mit ihrer Freundin zusammenlebte. Und das war ganz offensichtlich, aber ich habs nicht ges... Wir habens beide nicht gesehen. Sie selber hats nicht gesehen. Die haben richtig son, son, son Ehebett mit rechts und links Nachttisch gehabt und haben beide da geschlafen und waren ganz klar so traditionelles Lesbenpaar. Die Frau immer so bisschen mit Anzügen, sie mit m Rock. Und wir habens nicht ... Wir kannten das nicht. Wir hatten dafür kein Wort. Und deswegen, wenn man kein Wort hat, kann man ne Sache auch nicht sich ins Bewusstsein holen, ne, so. Und deswegen war das auch kein Weg für mich.

Loewenstein explains her and her friend's inability to see the nature of the women's relationship with a lack of words. They did not know the word "lesbian," and this ignorance meant they did not see that the two women embodied lesbian subjectivities and (ostensibly) had a sexual relationship, or at least furnished their home like a married couple. Once Loewenstein's boyfriend introduces the term, the pieces fall into place: the women's embodiment of a butch-fem couple (suits and skirts), their sharing a bed. It seems to me, though, that the key moment in the teenagers' understanding of the women's relationship is their entering the family's home: it is right after their visit, after they leave the house that the boyfriend blurts out his question. It is seeing their shared household, in particular the "marital bed with nightstands left and right," that lets him know that the two women are "lesbian." In other words, seeing the inside of their *Heim* brought their *Geheimnis* into the open.

Loewenstein's anecdote is hence an apt example of Sara Ahmed's notion that bodies "are sexualized through how they inhabit space."<sup>266</sup> It shows, too, that the home, even its most intimate parts, often is not completely sealed off or private, but rather porous. The theme of the porosity and precarity of home will return in my discussion of Eddy Klopsch and Hilde Radusch' homemaking work in this chapter's third section. First, though, I shift my focus from the postwar realities of housing and their implications for queer or queered kinships to the affective work of making a place of belonging, turning to the efforts of painter Toni Ebel to create a bodily, emotional, and political home in East Berlin.

### **Making a Queer *Zuhause* in East Berlin: *Neue Menschen* Between Bodies and Politics**

I am finding it really hard to transmit a proper image of the well-known Berlin painter Toni Ebel through the printed word alone. To do that, one would have to be able to show how despite her 76 years, this singular little woman with the snow-white hair moves through her pretty atelier apartment at Strausberger Platz

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<sup>266</sup> Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 67.

quick as a fox; would have to describe the inimitable grace with which she handles her working tools; would have to convey how in conversation, she cannot stay seated in her chair for even a minute, but without pause must haul things over to illustrate her narrative ([in thick Berlin accent:] No, no, you don't have to believe me anything. What I'm telling you I'll have to prove, too.) Most of all, one would have to be able to relay her deep bass voice, which really doesn't fit the petite little woman. One would have to...<sup>267</sup>

At a loss to find the adequate words to portray the painter Toni Ebel, the *Neue Zeit* journalist simply let Ebel speak for herself. The rest of the article consisted of a long quote from her, delivered in her thick Berlin accent. In 1958, the 76-year-old Ebel had arrived at home after a tumultuous, precarious life. In postwar East Berlin, she found recognition as an artist and a woman. The SED had given her a “pretty atelier apartment” in East Berlin's flagship housing project on Stalinallee, and the journalist who portrayed her described the “inimitable grace” of her femininity. After a lifetime of wandering and struggle for belonging, Ebel appears to have become *heimisch* in her body, art, and politics as an old woman. Her late success had to do with a life-long loyalty to socialism, but also with the fact that her art fit neatly into the demands of Socialist Realism, which rose to dominance in the GDR's cultural politics early on.

Ebel was born in Berlin in 1881.<sup>268</sup> Ebel received some training in a Berlin art school, but left the city for Munich and its art academy after running into trouble at school and at home.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Kei. ““Een Besuch bei Toni Ebel.”” *Neue Zeit*, February 9, 1958. Es fällt wirklich schwer, allein mit dem gedruckten Wort ein rechtes Bild von der bekannten Berliner Malerin Toni Ebel zu vermitteln. Man müsste dazu zeigen können, wie diese einzigartige, kleine Frau mit den schlohweißen Haaren sich trotz ihrer 76 Jahre wieselflink durch ihre hübsche Atelierwohnung am Strausberger Platz bewegt; müsste die unnachahmliche Grazie beschreiben, mit der sie bei der Arbeit ihr Werkzeug handhabt; müsste wiedergeben können, wie sie im Gespräch auch nicht eine Minute auf ihrem Stuhl sitzen bleiben kann, sondern ununterbrochen immer wieder etwas herbeischleppen muß, um ihre Erzählung zu illustrieren (Nee, nee, du mußst mia jarnischt glauben. Wat ick dia erzähle, muß ick ooch beweisen.) Man müsste vor allem ihre tiefe Baßstimme übermitteln können, die eigentlich so gar nicht zu der zierlichen, kleinen Frau passt. Man müßte...

<sup>268</sup> Herrn, *Schnittmuster des Geschlechts*, 203. Herrn quotes an unpublished article by Ralf Dose.

<sup>269</sup> Biographical info from Ebel's OdF applications. She applied twice for OdF status, once in October 1945, then again in June 1947. In her 1947 application, Ebel gave an absorbing autobiographical account. Antrag Toni Ebel vom 28.10.1945 und vom 23. 6. 1947. LAB C-Rep 118-01, Nr. A 14093. In the autobiographical account in her later application, Ebel mentions being recognized as “Rassenverfolgte” by the Hauptausschuss Opfer des Faschismus. It is unclear why she had to re-apply. All quotes from her autobiographical account unless cited otherwise. In her autobiographical account, Ebel wrote of getting in trouble because of her “sozialistischen Ideen” and a “Zerwürfnis im Elternhause.” According to Rainer Herrn, Ebel left Berlin and their family because of their homosexuality.

From there, Ebel moved to Rome, continuing to study painting and beginning to exhibit their first works in 1901. In Italy, Ebel met “my (boy)friend,” and the two moved to Paris, and then traveled extensively, visiting “half the world, so to say, [...] Spain, Africa, America, Holland, England etc.”<sup>270</sup> After the friend’s death, Ebel moved back to Germany, living in Berlin, Munich, Dresden and Hamburg, but did not feel at home anywhere: “nothing worked out socialized much in socialist circles could not feel at home.”<sup>271</sup> Ebel thus left anew, returning to America in 1912. In 1914, before the outbreak of the First World War, Ebel crossed the Atlantic again, settling in Berlin. During the Weimar years, Ebel worked as a technical drawer and continued to be involved in leftist politics. In 1929, Ebel suffered a major nervous breakdown and was left incapacitated for work. A year later, Ebel met “my (girl)friend,” who was working for Magnus Hirschfeld and introduced them.<sup>272</sup> This new friend was Charlotte Charlaque, a trans woman who had had sex reassignment surgery around 1930.<sup>273</sup> Ebel became Hirschfeld's patient, too, and soon felt better: “My state improved and I was a frequent guest at the Institute the Sanitätsrat [Hirschfeld] bought some of my paintings too also I met Dr. Hodan [!] there and other great personalities.”<sup>274</sup> Following Charlaque, Ebel had sex reassignment surgery in 1932.<sup>275</sup>

At the beginning of the 1930s, Ebel and her girlfriend felt the changing political atmosphere very quickly. Charlaque was Jewish and Ebel converted to Judaism, and the two were verbally abused by Ebel’s neighbors.<sup>276</sup> They emigrated to Czechoslovakia, but after the

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<sup>270</sup> meinen Freund, sozusagen die halbe Welt, (...) Spanien, Afrika, Amerika, Holland, England u.s.w.

<sup>271</sup> es glückte mir nichts verkehrte viel in sozialistischen Kreisen konnte mich nicht heimisch fühlen.

<sup>272</sup> meine Freundin

<sup>273</sup> Raimund Wolfert, “„Sage, Toni, Denkt Man so Bei Euch Drüben?“ Auf Den Spuren Von Curt Scharlach Alias Charlotte Charlaque (1892 -?) Und Toni Ebel (1881-1961),” accessed February 2, 2017, [http://www.lesbengeschichte.org/bio\\_charlaque\\_d.html](http://www.lesbengeschichte.org/bio_charlaque_d.html).

<sup>274</sup> Ebel, Biografische Erklärung. [M]ein Zustand besserte sich und ich ging in dem Institut ein und aus auch kaufte der Sanitätsrat Bilder von mir auch lernt ich dort Dr. Max Hodan [!] und andre große Persönlichkeiten kennen [...].

<sup>275</sup> Wolfert, “Sage, Toni.”

<sup>276</sup> Ebel, Biografische Erklärung.

German army occupied the country, Charlaque was arrested and about to be sent to the Theresienstadt camp. Since she had American citizenship, she was able to emigrate, however, and left Lisbon for New York in May 1942.<sup>277</sup> Ebel remained in Czechoslovakia, protected by her “Aryan” passport, which she had been issued in Brünn despite her conversion to Judaism. After the liberation of Czechoslovakia, Ebel returned to Berlin, first staying with her half-sister and living off a small pension paid by the city of Berlin. She registered with the *Kulturamt der Bildenden Künste* [City Office of Fine Arts] and sent in some drawings for an exhibition as early as fall 1945. Though physically and emotionally exhausted, she displayed confidence about soon going back to her work with new energy: “As time passes, I will have oil colors again and will joyously create anew.”<sup>278</sup> Indeed, Ebel regained her spirits and productivity quickly. She joined the *Kulturbund*, the mass organization of cultural workers founded with the intention of a “democratic regeneration of Germany,” in March 1946, and the *Schutzverband Bildender Künstler* [Association of Fine Artists] in September.<sup>279</sup> In December, a still life of hers was featured in an exhibition.<sup>280</sup> The following spring, she became a member of the FDGB and the SED, and a May exhibition of SED artists featured two Ebel still lifes, described by a journalist as “the artistically most valuable piece of the exhibition.”<sup>281</sup> In 1951/2, the exhibition *Künstler schaffen für den Frieden. Deutsche Kunstausstellung* [Artists Create for Peace. German Art Exhibition], a show that brought together artists from across the two German states, featured

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<sup>277</sup> She settled in New York, living in poverty. Her traces disappear in 1947. Wolfert, “Sage, Toni.”

<sup>278</sup> Lebenslauf Toni Ebel, beigelegt zum ersten Antrag OdF als rassistisch Verfolgte. 29. Oktober 1945. LAB C-Rep 118-01, Nr. A 14093. Mit der Zeit werde ich auch wieder Oelfarben bekommen und werde mit Freuden von neuem Schaffen.

<sup>279</sup> Fragebogen Toni Ebel 23.6.1947.

<sup>280</sup> G.T. “Weihnachtsausstellungen in Berlin.” *Neues Deutschland*, December 15, 1946.

<sup>281</sup> G.T. “Kleine Kollektivausstellung.” *Neues Deutschland*, May 9, 1947, 5. das künstlerisch Wertvollste der Ausstellung

Ebel's painting "Zerreit den Gestellungsbefehl [Tear Up the Draft Card.]"<sup>282</sup> The *III. Deutsche Kunstschau* [III. German Art Show] in Dresden in 1953 included a self-portrait, lauded by a critic as a prime example for the path from the "conventional bourgeois portrait to the portrait of the new man," a development accompanied by a return to the "solid technique of the elders."<sup>283</sup> Ebel's realist style clearly fit well with the GDR's turn to Socialist Realism as the only appropriate style of art to conceive the new kind of person needed in the new *Arbeiter- und Bauern-Staat* [Workers' and Farmers' State]. In celebration of her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1956, a solo exhibition at Alter Marstall in Mitte district showed fifty of her works, all created after 1945, and some already in possession of private and public collections, among them the collection of the *Zentralkomitee*, the GDR's governing body: Ebel's art had arrived at the center of power in the GDR.<sup>284</sup> She received recognition specifically as a woman artist. In March 1957, she was honored as either a co-founder or an active member of the *Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands* [Democratic German Women's Association, DFD.]<sup>285</sup> In 1960, her work was included in the exhibition *Frauenschaffen und Frauengestalten in der bildenden Kunst* [Women's Creativity and Women Figures in Fine Art] at Berliner Pavillon on Unter den Linden boulevard.<sup>286</sup> In the last years of her life, Ebel had thus become at home in her city, her work, and her gender.

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<sup>282</sup> Verband Bildender Knstler im Kulturbund zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands (Ed.) "Knstler schaffen fr den Frieden. Deutsche Kunstausstellung: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museumsbau am Kupfergraben," Berlin, December 1, 1951-January 31, 1952.

<sup>283</sup> Karl R. Dderlin, "Kunstschau Des Ganzen Deutschland," *Neue Zeit*, March 15, 1953. konventionellen Brgerportrt zum Bildnis des neuen Menschen hin; solide Technik der Alten

<sup>284</sup> Georg Kaufmann, "Die Malerin Toni Ebel: Zu Einer Ausstellung Anlsslich Ihres 75. Geburtstages," *Neues Deutschland*, November 10, 1956.

<sup>285</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*. "Hundert Berlinerinnen ausgezeichnet," March 6, 1957.

<sup>286</sup> Elmar Jansen, "Knstlerinnen, Mtter, Arbeiterinnen: Die Ausstellung "Frauenschaffen Und Frauengestalten in Der Bildenden Kunst";" *Neue Zeit*, March 8, 1960.

### *Self-Portraits*

Ebel's self-portraits offer an opportunity to examine her embodiment and representation of femininity. A newspaper clipping from 1949 or 1950 shows a photograph of Ebel looking at her self-portrait [Fig. 1].<sup>287</sup> The live Ebel is shown on the right. Her white hair is made up in a bun, held in a hairnet. She is wearing glasses and earrings, possibly pearls. She has donned a long, checkered winter coat tapered at the waist, and a skirt or dress underneath it. A purse appears slung around her shoulder, her hands are crossed, and she is holding a felt hat. She is looking into the eyes of her likeness on canvas, who is standing in profile, her head turned outside of the painting, toward the observer. In her self-portrait, Ebel is wearing a long white painter's smock and has a paint brush in her left hand, a color palette in her right hand. Despite her turn toward the beholder, the artist gives an impression of quiet immersion. In the painting, her femininity is established through her long white hair and the long, large smock, whose vertical creases are evocative of a women's dress and hide her figure. The live Ebel is dressed conservatively, in typical fashion for a woman of her age and class. With the practical hairnet, her hair bun, the pearl earrings and the long coat in unobtrusive colors, she looks like a picture-book grandmother.

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<sup>287</sup> Newspaper clipping in Künstlerdokumentation Toni Ebel, Mappennr. 751, Zentralarchiv Preussische Museen.



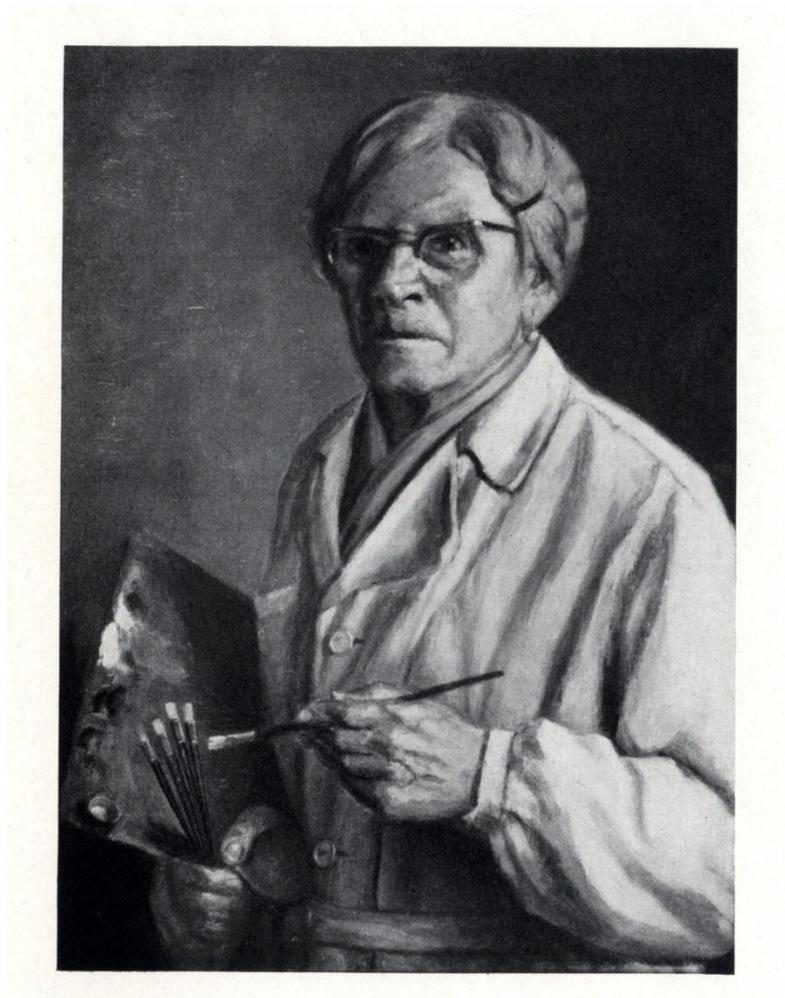
Figure 4: Toni Ebel looking at her self-portrait. 1949 or 1950.  
Source unknown. *Künstlerdokumentation Toni Ebel*, Mappennr. 751.  
Zentralarchiv Preussische Museen.

A 1959 calendar image features another Ebel self-portrait, showing her from the hips up [Fig. 2].<sup>288</sup> Again, she is in her painter's smock, brushes and color palette in hand. This smock, however, is rather close-fitting, and as only its upper half is in the frame, it resembles a jacket rather than a dress. She poses in half profile and looks directly at the observer. The left half of her face and body are lit quite dramatically, set off against the dark background. Whereas the right half of her face is in the shadow, her eye indiscernible, her left eye looks directly at the

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<sup>288</sup> Calendar sheet in *Künstlerdokumentation Toni Ebel*, Mappennr. 751, Zentralarchiv Preussische Museen.

observer in an intent gaze. Her left hand holds a paintbrush; she is caught in the middle of painting. Her white hair is parted and held in place with a hair pin. It is likely held together in a bun, but because Ebel is standing in half profile, it is not visible. While her hairdo and earrings signal femininity, her face, chest, and hands, and the uniform of her paint smock appear androgynous. In this self-portrait, Ebel offers a more ambivalent representation of her gendered self.



*Figure 5: Toni Ebel, Self-Portrait, 1959. Oil Painting, 70x50cm. Reproduction in Jahresweiser durch alte und neue Kunst 1961 - Aufbau Verlag, Berlin. Deutsche Malerei - 20. Jahrhundert. Künstlerdokumentation Toni Ebel, Mappennr. 751.*

When Ebel died in June 1961, she was poor: her sister had to apply for financial help to pay for her burial.<sup>289</sup> She may also have died with a broken heart, as she and her girlfriend Charlotte Charlaque may never have been able to reunite. Nevertheless, in the last decades of her life, she had succeeded in making a home for herself in three central aspects of her life: her body, her art, and her politics.

### **Hilde Radusch and Eddy Klopsch: Making a Lesbian Home**

After Hilde Radusch had been ousted from her job in the Schöneberg district office and shut out from the nascent socialist postwar order, she and Eddy Klopsch struggled to make ends meet and not despair. The materials that Radusch left behind in her personal papers allow for a reconstruction of their day-to-day efforts to get through an economically, physically, politically, and spiritually difficult time. They also document the couple's relationship practices and speak of lesbian subjectivities in mid-century Berlin. Finally, they show the instability of a notion of home as private, secure, and separate from the public sphere and its power struggles.

#### *Getting By, Not Getting Hurt*

After Radusch left the Communist Party and lost her job in the OdF office, she and Eddy Klopsch struggled to survive, making ends meet just barely through a mix of temporary city jobs, small business ventures, writing gigs, and compensation and pension benefits. They lived on the verge of poverty well into the late 1950s, and Eddy Klopsch died sick and poor in 1960, just 53 years old.

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<sup>289</sup> Aktennotiz Todesdatum Toni Ebel, Antrag auf Sonderunterstützung von Luise Langfort, geb. Ebel. LAB C-Rep 118-01, Nr. A 14093.

As soon as Radusch was out of her OdF job, in February 1946, the couple applied to open a restaurant, then began peddling with waste glass and scrap metal.<sup>290</sup> Beginning in May 1946, they ran a second-hand store in Mitte. For two and a half years, business was good – they even hired an employee – and the store provided their income despite what appears was continuous harassment by Radusch’s former comrades.

Indeed, two anonymous letters in Radusch’s papers show that the threats against the couple did not cease after she left the party and her job at the OdF district office in Schöneberg. Presumably written in 1947-48, these letters threaten the couple’s lives openly. Like the letters discussed above, they are written in pencil, in clumsy handwriting, and in colloquial language, disregarding spelling or punctuation rules. They were delivered to their home address by hand.<sup>291</sup> One letter writer makes a brutal, sexualized threat, its graphically violent language recalling the mass rape of Berlin women at the end of the war. The letter writer postulates “[w]e are still in charge and Nobody will change that here,” and who is meant by “we” is clarified in the second letter.<sup>292</sup> “Those who become an inconvenience will be finished no matter how we are still in charge and not broads.”<sup>293</sup> The two women are threatened precisely because they endanger male power. Moreover, Radusch's abuse as “cranky old woman. Hysteric and moody” is a stereotypically gendered insult: a colloquial reference to the medicalization of outspoken or otherwise conspicuous women as “hysteric,” and more generally to women’s alleged inability to

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<sup>290</sup> Schreiben von EK und HR: Antrag auf Pacht eines Rasenstreifens am Bahnhof Grunewald, Schreiben des Bezirksamts Prenzlauer Berg betr. Verpachtung Großküche, Waren-Eingangsbuch Ambulanter Handel. HR Papers, FFBIZ, Rep 500, Acc 300, Box 9.

<sup>291</sup> The envelopes bear no stamps, but instead, one says “Durch Boten” and the other has a delivery note attached to it reading “Nur vor 7 sonst nach Eintreten der Dunkelheit reinstecken.” Anonymous letter to HR and EK, FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, 4, 400, 1-3, 4-5.

<sup>292</sup> Anonymous letter to HR and EK, FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, 4, 400, 4-5. Noch bestimmen wir und ändern wird es hier Niemand”

<sup>293</sup> Anonymous letter to HR, FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, 4, 400, 1-3. Unbequeme werden erledigt gleich auf welche Tour noch bestimmen wir und nicht Weiber.

control their emotions, in contrast to men's sober, level-headed demeanor.<sup>294</sup> The fact that the letter was delivered by hand, as evidenced by the lack of a stamp on the envelope and the delivery instructions, "Drop off before seven only otherwise after dusk," suggests that the writer had observed Radosch and Klopsch and knew their everyday rhythm.<sup>295</sup> Their home was clearly not safely remote from outside intrusion.

Radosch and Klopsch thus continued to fear the Schöneberg Communist clique, but also more generally the SED. Radosch made notes in her 1947 daily calendar about a man who ostensibly shadowed them.<sup>296</sup> In 1948, their store was broken into six times in a period of six months, and they noticed intensified surveillance. Their complaints to the police did not lead to arrests.<sup>297</sup> In November of that year, Klopsch wrote down a conversation that she overheard in the hallway in front of their store, between two men who were apparently assigned to harm them.<sup>298</sup> The following two weeks, they were constantly observed, and they took the summons for "personal consultation" sent to them by the Mitte Housing Office as a signal to leave the Eastern sector head over heels.<sup>299</sup> They deregistered their store and returned to Schöneberg in the American sector in November 1948, where they went back to peddling for a few months.<sup>300</sup> In 1951, Radosch found employment for six months in the West Berlin senate's emergency

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid. "verschrobene Alte. Histerich [sic] und launenhaft"

<sup>295</sup> Anonymous letter to HR and EK, FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, 4, 400, 4-5.

<sup>296</sup> Calendar entries for Oct 12 and 13, 1947. Box 5.

<sup>297</sup> Schreiben des Oberstaatsanwalts Berlin-Mitte bzgl. HRs Anzeige gegen Frau Agnes Reuscher, 4.8.1948; Schreiben des Oberstaatsanwaltes Berlin-Mitte: Einbruch Januar 1948, 3. April 1948, Box 9, 41.

<sup>298</sup> Gedankenprotokoll von überhörter Unterhaltung von zwei Spitzeln, Box 9.

<sup>299</sup> Schreiben an das Wirtschaftsamt Schöneberg mit Antrag auf ambulantes Gewerbe, Box 9; Schreiben vom Bezirksamt Mitte an Firma Klopsch & Radosch zum Einfinden im Wohnungsamt, 29.11.1948. persönliche Rücksprache

<sup>300</sup> Handschriftliche Notiz Einbruch 24./25.1.1948, Notiz Einbruch 15.3.48, Notiz Einbruch 13. Mai 48, Notiz 5. Einbruch zum 9.7.48, 6. Einbruch 17./18.7.48, Schreiben vom Bezirksamt Mitte an Firma Klopsch & Radosch zum Einfinden im Wohnungsamt 29.11.1948. HR Papers FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, Box 9; Briefentwurf an SPD, 8.1.1949, Box 8; Briefentwurf an Entschädigungsamt 7.11.1949, Box 4; Notiz „Gewerbe abgemeldet“, Box 9, 34.

program for municipal workers.<sup>301</sup> Four years later, the same program took her on again for six months.

Another source of income was financial compensation for health damage and career obstacles resulting from Radusch's activism against the Nazis, but these payments were always precarious, too. Already in March 1948, during a revision of all OdF benefit recipients, Radusch's status as OdF had been revoked, though she was allowed to keep an enhanced ration card.<sup>302</sup> Her incarceration had been too short and she could not prove that her relocation to Prieros had been motivated by imminent arrest rather than fear of allied bombings, the committee argued. In 1948, as a consequence of the escalating Cold War and the growing separation between East and West Berlin during the Berlin Blockade of 1948, the OdF committee ceased to be responsible for West Berlin, with an *Amt für politisch-religiös Verfolgte* (PRV-Amt) [Office for the Politically and Religiously Persecuted] instead taking on victims of Nazi persecution there.<sup>303</sup> Here again, Radusch was denied recognition for many of the same reasons as in East Berlin. She appealed the decision successfully, being granted a one-time compensatory sum of 870 DM, appealed again and received another 500 DM, still less than she believed to be adequate.<sup>304</sup> From January 1953, she was granted a monthly disability pension in the amount of 135 DM for the rheumatism she suffered as a result of Nazi persecution, allowing the couple a somewhat stable existence, albeit in poverty.<sup>305</sup> This pension was cancelled in February 1954, however, because the Senator for Work and Welfare found "the occupational

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<sup>301</sup> Unterlagen zu verschiedenen Beschäftigungen im Notstandsprogramm für Angestellte, FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, Box 8.

<sup>302</sup> Dossier OdF, HR Papers, FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, Box 9. See also Radusch's OdF file at Landesarchiv Berlin. LAB C Rep 118-01 Nr. 6693.

<sup>303</sup> Zur Nieden, *Unwürdige*, 83.

<sup>304</sup> Recognition as PrV, January 4, 1952, Settlement March 20, 1952, FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, Box 9.

<sup>305</sup> Notification about disability pension, December 4, 1952, FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, Box 9.

disability no longer extant,” according to her latest medical exam.<sup>306</sup> Radusch appealed, and nine months later, the PRV-Amt again confirmed her rheumatism, though to a lesser degree, reducing her disability pension to 60 DM. Radusch’s struggle for compensation dragged on until 1963, when the PRV-Amt Berlin granted her a final redress of 24.570 DM for “career damage” suffered as a result of Nazi persecution.<sup>307</sup>

*Everyday Practices of Homemaking/Everyday Practices of Lovemaking*

How did Eddy Klopsch and Hilde Radusch cope with these challenging years of financial insecurity, political disillusion and constant threats? Radusch’s calendars and some love letters written by Klopsch document how they experienced this difficult time, and how the couple structured their everyday lives. Brief jottings in Radusch’s calendars concern her mood, her and Klopsch’s health, their economic situation, work, political and personal events, and the weather. The drama of her resignation from the Communist Party and her OdF job at Bezirksamt Schöneberg in early 1946 becomes palpable despite the brevity and soberness of many of the notes: 7.1. “quit KPD,” 12.1. “quit OdF wailed to Hagen,” 16.1. “last day Hauptstraße 19 Balke takes over,” 18.1. “bed,” 19.1. “bed,” 20.1. “sorted out all OdF stuff,” 5.2. “drank.”<sup>308</sup> Her frequent dentist appointments (20.2. “1 tooth filled,” 11.3. “dental treatment,” 30.4. “11:30 teeth,” 31.5. “first tooth pulled,” 5.6. “3:30 getting tooth pulled,” 6.6. “10:45 dentist,” 21.6. “picked up teeth”) indicate the health cost of the physical and psychical strains that Radusch endured at the time.

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<sup>306</sup> Beschied des Senators für Arbeit und Sozialwesen über Einstellung der Rentenzahlung, 20.2.1954. HR Papers FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, 9.

<sup>307</sup> Vergleich zw HR und dem Entschädigungsamt wg. Schaden im beruflichen Fortkommen. HR Papers FFBIZ Rep 500, Acc 300, 9.

<sup>308</sup> [ausgetreten aus KPD]; [gekündigt Hauptausschuss Hagen angejammert]; [letzter Tag Hauptstr 19 Balke übernimmt]; Bett; Bett; Alles OdF aussortiert; Gesoffen; 1 Zahn plombiert; Zahnbehandlung Kopf gewaschen; 1/2 12 Zähne; 1. Zahn gezogen; 1/2 4 Zahn ziehen; 3/4 11h Zahnarzt; Zähne abgeholt

Forwarding to 1949, when the couple had relocated to West Berlin, the year began with a joyous event, the celebration of their ten-year anniversary on January 7. Hard times notwithstanding, the “neat celebration” boasted “coffee, torte, cake, schnapps / cigarettes, head cheese, tomato salad, potato salad, tea.”<sup>309</sup> To afford the party, Radusch had sold her mother’s necklace and two skirts. At the end of the week, she notes “did not work at all / just walked around for the celebration on the 7<sup>th</sup> and spent money.” Despite this pessimist bottom line and a toothache, she records “good mood” on most days.<sup>310</sup>

As the year continued, there was little occasion for good moods, however. After hastily giving up their store in Mitte, they needed new jobs in Schöneberg, especially once Radusch lost her status as OdF in May 1949, and was not recognized as a Politisch-Rassisch Verfolgte (PrV, persecuted for political or racist reasons) by West Berlin’s PRV-Amt.<sup>311</sup> Radusch wrote articles for newspapers and the radio ( the British-controlled NWDR, the U.S.-controlled RIAS), but most were not published. They continued to sell valuables to get by, received a small amount of welfare, and sometimes friends helped them out, too. The two took turns being sick and depressed, as testified by notes such as “E sad” (January 19, 20), “Quite desperate” (January 25), “Vati [dad] heart” (January 22), “E gall and heart” (January 28, 29), “desperate, toothache” (February 1), “E crying” (March 21, 22), “E gall” (March 25-26), “Everything too much for E” (April 15), “E rails against everything” (April 16), “E heart attacks/falls asleep during breakfast and cries from pain” (June 27.)<sup>312</sup> Accordingly, Radusch’s weekly summaries for 1949 remained deeply pessimist: “no money, no prospects” in week four, “no prospects” in week five, week 12

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<sup>309</sup> nette Feier; Kaffee, Torte Kuchen, Schnaps / Zigaretten, Sülze, Tomatensalat, Kartoffelsalat, Tee.

<sup>310</sup> nichts gearbeitet / nur fürs Fest am 7. rumgelaufen u Geld ausgegeben; good mood

<sup>311</sup> Einschreiben an HR vom Magistrat, endgültige Aberkennung des OdF-Status, 4.5.1949; Schreiben des Magistrats, Abteilung für Sozialwesen, warum HR nicht als PrV anerkannt werden kann, 12.7.49, Box 9.

<sup>312</sup> E traurig; Ziemlich verzweifelt; Vati Herz; E Galle + Herz; verzweifelt, Zahnschmerzen; E weint; E Galle; E alles zuviel; E schimpft auf alles; E Herzanfalle/schläft ein beim Frühstück und weint vor Schmerzen

“no prospects,” week 13 “no money,” week 18 “no rent for May,” and in week 32, “The year progresses and nothing gets better.”<sup>313</sup>

The couple’s 1950 housekeeping book sheds light on their economic situation five years after the war had ended. Monthly expenses ranged from about 190 M (November) to 260 M (December), with the biggest chunk of their budget going to rent (114 M) and food (between 55 and 80 M). Other sizable positions were light (14 M), the newspaper (7 M), tobacco (6 M), and public transport (between 4 and 10 M). Housekeeping was Eddy Klopsch’s responsibility, whereas Radusch checked the book, often adding laudatory comments such as “a commendation for good economizing. Vati” or “Oh how thrifty! One extra kiss! Vati.”<sup>314</sup> Cleaning the apartment was a duty shared between “Mutti” and “Vati.” Their choice of gendered terms of endearment, “Mutti” and “Vati,” suggests that the couple embodied gendered roles, with husbands as breadwinners and wives responsible for keeping the books on domestic expenses. In their relationship, Radusch, the “Vati,” appeared in public – getting involved in party politics, writing for magazines, looking for wage jobs. Klopsch’s fragile health kept her from work outside the home. At the same time, as seen in the previous chapter, when it mattered, her physical strength was superior to Radusch’s, and “Mutti,” not “Vati,” protected their bodily integrity.

Some pieces in Radusch’s papers inspire reflections on the couple’s love life. In rare letters to Radusch, Klopsch sometimes called her “my sweet chappie.”<sup>315</sup> For her birthday one year, she asked “Vati” for “10000000 sweet little kisses everywhere, and where they can’t be

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<sup>313</sup> 1947 calendar in HR Papers. FFBIZ Rep. 500, Acc. 300, 1-5-3. kein Geld, keine Aussichten; keine Aussichten; keine Aussichten; kein Geld; keine Miete für Mai; Das Jahr vergeht nichts wird besser.

<sup>314</sup> Housekeeping book, HR papers, FFBIZ Rep. 500, Acc 300, 395. ein Lob für gutes Wirtschaften. Vati; Oh wie sparsam! Ein Kuss extra! Vati;

<sup>315</sup> Mein liebes süßes Kerlchen, 1945/46; Für mein süßes Kerlchen, 19.11.1947; Box 4.

applied right now, later on” as well as “So much love that Mutti doesn’t know where anymore,” adding “How? Sweetly, Vati must know how it’s best done.”<sup>316</sup> In another note, “Mutti” asked the “sweet man of the house” for a follow-up examination, and “the family doctor” reported his diagnosis: “healthy on both cheeks and most of all in the middle.”<sup>317</sup> Frequent “x” markings in Radusch’s calendars, sometimes preceded by the letter “E” or “H,” likely documented their sex, possibly their orgasms.<sup>318</sup> The fact that Radusch made these notes – if indeed they record their sexual encounters – shows that sex was important to her, something she wanted to track and keep in her memory. During these years of physical weakness and pain from hunger and sickness, of emotional turmoil and financial and political instability, sex may have been especially significant for Radusch as an assurance of her body’s continued ability to give and receive pleasure. The calendar markings structure a time otherwise characterized by material want as one of simultaneous sexual fulfillment.

#### *Final Home Denied (Eddy’s Death)*

Eddy Klopsch died in March 1960 in their home in Staaken. She had designated her girlfriend to take care of her funeral and final affairs.<sup>319</sup> Radusch sought to bury her in her own mother’s grave on Sophien Cemetery in Mitte, the cemetery that was also the final home of many members of the Klopsch family. She organized Klopsch’s incineration and a memorial ceremony at Wilmersdorf Krematorium, where she held the eulogy. She then had her neighbor, a pastor, inquire with the cemetery about the possibility of re-dedicating Radusch’s mother’s grave to

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<sup>316</sup> Wunschzettel, Box 4. 10000000 süsse Küsschen überall hin wo es jetzt nicht geht nachträglich; Soviel Liebe das Mutti nicht mehr weiß, wohin; Wie? recht süß, das muss Vati wissen wie man das am Besten macht;

<sup>317</sup> An den Süßen Hausherrn, Box 4. Süßen Hausherrn; der Hausdokter; gesund auf beiden Backen und am meisten in der Mitte.

<sup>318</sup> 1946 and 1949 calendars in HR Papers. FFBIZ Rep. 500, Acc. 300, 1-5-4. For instance, in January 1946, 13 days are marked with an “x,” 7 in February 1946, 12 days in January 1949, and 14 in February 1949.

<sup>319</sup> Willenserklärung EK, 20.8.1958; Vollmacht 24.8.1959, Box 4.

accommodate Eddy and, after her own death, herself. The pastor's letter stated that Klopsch had "no relatives apart from her friend, Frau Radusch."<sup>320</sup> This was not true – Eddy's sister, Hertha Kaufmann, was alive and living in East Berlin. The two were not on good terms, however. The cemetery's administrator wrote back a week later, informing the pastor that Klopsch's ashes would be buried next to the ashes of her deceased husband, Otto Klopsch, and that all fees had been paid by Klopsch's sister Hertha Kaufmann.<sup>321</sup> Dismayed, Radusch tried to mobilize the West Berlin media for her cause. She wrote to the *Tagesspiegel* daily paper, "Out of hate I have been deprived of the ash urn of my deceased (girl)friend."<sup>322</sup> In her letter, she described their life together as well as their agreement to be buried together, and the power of attorney letters that they had written for each other. Klopsch's spiteful sister had neither held a memorial service nor installed a gravestone, she continued. The *Tagesspiegel* declined to cover the story, and had no advice for Radusch, either. She herself came up with a way to fulfill her girlfriend's wish, however. Even if Eddy could not be buried with her, she could be memorialized in the way the two of them had devised. She commissioned a stonemason to add Eddy Klopsch's name and life dates to her mother's tombstone, and, because she believed she would not live much longer, to add her name and birth date, too.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Letter from pastor to Verwaltung des Sophienfriedhofs, March 25, 1960, Box 4. ausser ihrer Freundin, Frau Radusch, keine Angehörigen.

<sup>321</sup> Letter from the II. Sophien-Kirchhof, April 2, 1960, Box 4. From a death notice in Eddy Klopsch's papers in the HR collection, it is apparent that Otto Klopsch was Eddy's father, not her husband. Whereas Radusch had apparently claimed that Eddy had no relatives, Eddy's sister Hertha Kaufmann had suggested that she had been married. The matter was complicated by the fact that the necessary papers were no longer in Berlin due to the war.

<sup>322</sup> Letter draft to *Tagesspiegel*, April 8, 1960, Box 4. Man hat mir aus Hass die Aschenurne meiner verstorbenen Freundin gestohlen.

<sup>323</sup> Letter to Steinmetzmeister Carl Krause, April 25, 1960.

## Conclusion

This chapter has brought together narratives and images of diverse queer subjects to explore how queer Berliners went about making homes in the postwar years, literally and figuratively. I set out from feminist theorizations of the home as a site of resistance for oppressed people, of the nurturing of the self and beloved others, as a space that is substantial to the making of the self, but also a space that is never separated, but very much bound up with the world that surrounds it. In postwar Berlin, the conditions for making homes were difficult, with privacy a rare luxury. But at the same time, the absence of many male heads of households and the presence of extended family or strangers in the home collapsed the nuclear family model, creating new realities of kinship. One of these were *Frauenfamilien*, and in my discussion of this wide-spread family model, I have shown how the postwar moment created queer possibilities: for women previously married to men to enter into long-term relationships with a woman, and for women who had been in relationships with other women all their lives, to take on parenting responsibilities.

In my examination of the personal papers of Eddy Klopsch and Hilde Radusch, the home, and the practices of homemaking, emerged as crucial sites of constituting lesbian subjectivities. In their terms of endearment for each other, *Mutti* and *Vati*, and their distribution of tasks, such as housekeeping and earning income, they embody a model of butch-fem relationship known from both German prewar lesbian cultures and contemporaneous ones in the United States. Their calendars and letters reveal sex as an important practice of sustaining the self, one for which their home provided a private space. At the same time, the threatening letters that were delivered to their house demonstrate that their home was not a safe haven, that the violence of postwar politics did not stop at their door. Though less dramatic, the years of pleading for recognition and restitution with different bureaucratic authorities equally endangered their home's security.

East Berlin became home to trans woman Toni Ebel after a lifetime of wandering and exile. In contrast to Hilde Radusch, her long support for socialism was not challenged by postwar socialist politics; instead, it contributed to her success in finally feeling *zuhause* in her home city toward the end of her life. Whereas Radusch and Klopsch were constantly in financial hardship, Ebel, while poor, did not have to worry about making ends meet. The state provided for her: she was given a brand-new apartment in the city's most prestigious housing project. Her femininity was not questioned in public, but rather celebrated as an example for the socialist *Neue Mensch*, and her art was hailed as the adequate expression of the new era.

The chapter opened with Klaus Born's story of having to find a space for sex because his home did not provide it. For queer Berliners like him, who lived in hotels, sublets, or other accommodations without privacy, the place where they slept did not offer many of the qualities of a home spelled out at the beginning. Not only was sex impossible there; their accommodations were also not *heimelig* enough to serve as spaces for sociability among friends. To return to Iris Marion Young's definition of homemaking, the agency of queer Berliners like Klaus Born did not have a material anchor in a home. For a sense of empowerment, for sociability and for sex, they thus often had to make space elsewhere. The next chapters will hence turn to spaces outside the home that accommodated queer Berliners, beginning with one often described as a "second home:" the bar.

## Chapter 4: Surveilled Sociability: Queer Bars

The photos in the album have captured moments of what looks like a fabulous party: a table raising their champagne glasses in a toast, big smiles directed at each other and the camera (*Figure 6*), a pair of dancers embracing each other while holding on to a bottle (*Figure 7*), and what might be a flirting scene, crashed by a goofy-looking third person (*Figure 8*).



Figure 6. Polizeihistorische Sammlung Berlin.

A handwritten sign on the wall indicates the party's occasion and location. "To celebrate the third anniversary of Boheme, Tuesday October 25, 1955, we're presenting a fashion show! [...] You're warmly invited by Willy Lorenz."<sup>324</sup> The occasion, hence, was the third anniversary of the *Boheme* bar, situated on Lausitzer Platz in the district of Kreuzberg. The space of the bar looks crowded and cozy. The dark wood paneling and flowered wallpaper, lit by lamps hanging from the ceiling and installed on the walls above the tables, together with the flower-patterned tablecloths on the wooden tables, make for a rustic *Heimeligkeit*, or coziness (*Figure 6*).

Taken at various points of the evening, the photos show guests enjoying drinks and conversation, swaying to the music of the jukebox, crowding the dancefloor, competing for the prize for the best ballroom dancers, clapping to a dance performance by a couple in drag (*Figure*

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<sup>324</sup> "Zum 3jährigen Bestehen der Boheme Dienstag den 25.10.55 zeigen wir Ihnen eine Modenschau! [...] Es ladet herzlich ein Willy Lorenz." In this chapter, I follow the spelling of bar's own spelling of "Boheme" without an accent.

9), watching a solo dancer in exoticized drag (*Figures 10 and 15*), and participating in a beauty contest (*Figure 11*).



*Figure 8. Polizeihistorische Sammlung Berlin.*



Bild 13: Ebenfalls Gäste.  
Die männlichen Personen sind bekannte Zuhälter

*Figure 7. Polizeihistorische Sammlung Berlin.*



Bild 16: Tanzvorführung Homosexueller.  
Beide Tänzer zeigen sich in der Öffentlichkeit  
nur in Frauenkleidern

*Figure 10. Polizeihistorische Sammlung Berlin.*



*Figure 9. Polizeihistorische Sammlung Berlin*



*Figure 11. Polizeihistorische Sammlung Berlin.*

These scenes of buoyant sociality, of a carefree-looking evening spent in a place where everybody felt very much at home, were *not* arranged by bar owner Willy Lorenz as a keepsake to leaf through in later years. They were *not* kept in a cabinet in a private home to reminisce with friends or family. Instead, it was a police officer in West Berlin who carefully glued them into an album, supplied them with captions, and stored the album in the police archives (*Figure 12*).

The album's location stands in tension with the familiarity, even intimacy, between camera and subjects suggested by the images. What does it mean that this testimony to queer exuberance is found in the archives of an institution that played a key part in surveilling, shutting down, and sanctioning the very scenes displayed in its pages?

The tension that the *Bohème* photo album embodies, I argue in this chapter, is precisely what characterizes the space of the queer bar in postwar Berlin: play *and* persecution, sociability *and* surveillance, dancing *and* detention.<sup>325</sup> In the

following pages, I will describe these dynamics as they changed over the period of the two-and-a-half decades after the war. I will do so by highlighting the practices of space-making that different actors who held a stake in queer bars engaged in. As I will show, queer bar goers and the West Berlin police were only two players in a large cast of characters, which included the West Berlin city government and district offices, newspapers, bar owners, as well as West Berlin's tourism office, which had an acute interest in marketing the city's nightlife as the most thrilling this side of the Iron Curtain. At least until 1961, the Stasi, the East German secret police, also kept an eye on West Berlin's bars, both to control its own queer citizens and to gather information about "the class enemy," whether represented by West Germans or members of the Allied forces.

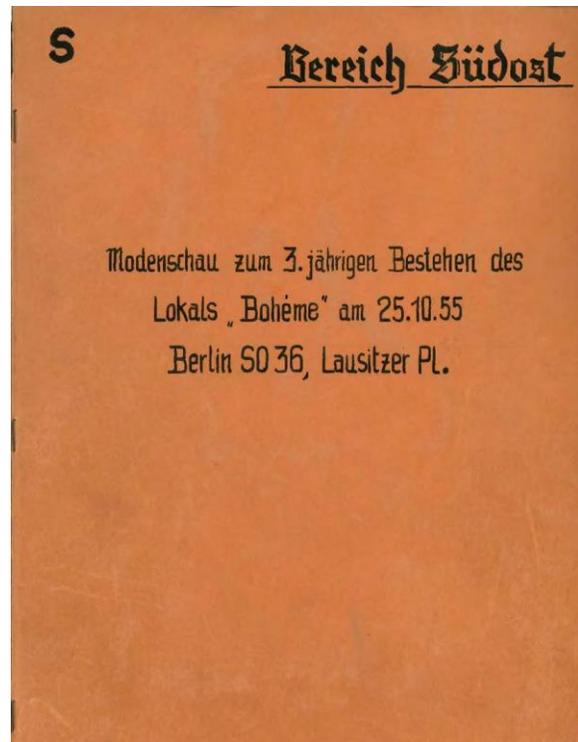


Figure 12. Cover of the photo album. Polizeihistorische Sammlung Berlin.

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<sup>325</sup> See also Matt Houlbrook's observation about the "dissonance" of the archives of persecution discussed in the introduction.

My analysis of queer bars will attend to three layers of meaning-making: queer Berliners' space-making practices, state policy, and discourses that were anchored in and around the bars. As in the other chapters, my first interest will lie in the practices of space-making and the meaning that these spaces held for queer Berliners of different genders. As spaces long identified as nodes of deviant sexualities and criminality by the police and the state more generally, queer bars are a key site to study the regulation of same-sex sexuality *and* gender "deviance." State policy is thus a second guiding interest in this chapter, and I will attempt to chart the dynamics of bar regulation in West and East Berlin, though the scarcity of sources for the latter will make for an imbalanced account.<sup>326</sup>

In charting the dynamics of everyday practices and surveillance, I return to Michel de Certeau's theorization of spatial practices. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, he describes the

singular and plural practices which an urbanistic system was supposed to administer or suppress, but which [...] far from being regulated or eliminated by panoptic administration, have reinforced themselves in a proliferating illegitimacy, developed and insinuated themselves into a network of surveillance, and combined in accord with unreadable but stable tactics to the point of constituting everyday regulations and surreptitious creativities that are merely concealed by the frantic mechanisms and discourses of the observational organization.<sup>327</sup>

As I will show, queer bar patrons and owners engaged in manifold "singular and plural practices" of queer space-making. Simply by patronizing and running queer bars, they ensured their continued existence. By conversing and flirting, drinking and dancing, crossdressing and performing in drag, they created a different, queer, mode of sociability. They confronted the regulations of the "urbanistic system" of police and city administrators by generating their own "everyday regulations and surreptitious creativities," controlling access to queer bars through

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<sup>326</sup> For East Berlin, the source material is too limited to engage in a microanalysis that could lay bare how multiple actors negotiated East Berlin's bars. But oral histories, memoirs, and Stasi files allow at least a tentative account of their location and characteristics.

<sup>327</sup> Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 96.

visual, verbal, and aural codes: drawn curtains, passwords to be whispered, or bells to be rung. And these creative tactics can indeed be found in the “discourses of the observational organization,” the police, who “frantic[ally]” recorded their observations at the bars. Lastly, the chapter’s third conceptual layer are discourses: of homosexualities, deviant genders, prostitution, asociality, juvenile delinquency. The multitude and diversity of discourses woven into the sources on queer bars are testimony to their centrality to the topography of postwar Berlin. After a review of how queer bars have figured in the existing scholarship, the chapter returns to the first postwar decade. The following section focuses on the second half of the 1950s, when more prohibitive police policies appear to have replaced an earlier laissez-faire approach to queer bars. The construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 defines the rest of the period of analysis: it meant that East Berliners could no longer go out to West Berlin’s bars, but it also meant that West Berlin became further isolated. This changed the significance that nightlife had for the city’s economy, and it eventually led to West Berlin’s becoming a playground for alternative lifestyles, such as student communes, radical politics, and a growing queer subculture.

### **Queer Nightlife in Berlin before 1945**

In the history of homosexualities, the bar has played a pivotal role as one of the spaces understood to be crucial in the formation of a homosexual identity. Historians Jeffrey Weeks, John D’Emilio and others have linked the emergence of a homosexual identity to the dramatic socioeconomic changes brought about by industrial capitalism, which released individuals from their families as they moved to the cities to work in factories. The rapidly expanding cities, they argue, provided the conditions for a homosexual subculture to form: large numbers of people

with unfulfilled sexual needs, and anonymity. Urban taverns, pubs and bars thus became places of congregation for men looking for sex with men.<sup>328</sup>

For Berlin, Magnus Hirschfeld and other contemporary observers have documented that at least since the second half of the nineteenth century, a large number of restaurants and bars existed where men, and to a lesser extent, women, socialized and found same-sex partners; around the same time, a queer ball culture also emerged.<sup>329</sup> The Berlin police kept a close watch on these queer sites, ensuring that no “overtly sexual behavior” occurred, but from the mid-1880s on, and through the Weimar Republic, it did not raid them.<sup>330</sup> This policy changed even before the Nazis came to power, however. In 1932, the newly appointed police president declared a campaign against “Berlin’s immoral nightlife,” prohibited queer dances, and soon ordered the shutdown of many of the city’s known queer bars.<sup>331</sup> In 1933, the Nazis continued the bar closures, and those that were not shut were in danger of being raided by police.<sup>332</sup> Nevertheless, queer socializing in bars did not disappear completely. Patrons sought out new locales, and some queer bars may have survived through the end of the Nazi reign, as historians have suggested

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<sup>328</sup> I follow Gayle Rubin’s account here. Gayle Rubin, “Studying Sexual Subcultures: Excavating the Ethnography of Gay Communities in Urban North America,” in *Out in Theory: The Emergence of Lesbian and Gay Anthropology*, ed. Ellen Lewin and William L. Leap (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002). She refers to John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” in *Powers of Desire*, ed. Ann Snitow and et al (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), as well as Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Quartet Books, 1977).

<sup>329</sup> See Magnus Hirschfeld’s chapter on “Community Life and Meeting Places of Homosexual Men and Women.” Magnus Hirschfeld, *The Homosexuality of Men and Women*, Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes. English (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000). German original: Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes*. Berlin: Louis Marcus Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1914. See also Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 58–64.

<sup>330</sup> Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 58. Jens Dobler has written about the close cooperation between the Institute for Sexual Science and the Berlin police, which included lectures about “transvestites” for police officers. Jens Dobler, “Zum Verhältnis Der Sexualwissenschaft Und Der Homosexuellen Emanzipationsbewegung Zur Polizei in Berlin,” in *Verqueere Wissenschaft? Zum Verhältnis Von Sexualwissenschaft Und Sexualreformbewegung in Geschichte Und Gegenwart*, ed. Ursula Ferdinand, Andreas Pretzel and Andreas Seeck, Berliner Schriften zur Sexualwissenschaft und Sexualpolitik 1 (Münster: LIT, 1998), 335.

<sup>331</sup> Wolfgang Theis and Andreas Sternweiler, “Alltag Im Kaiserreich Und in Der Weimarer Republik,” in *Eldorado: Homosexuelle Frauen Und Männer in Berlin 1850-1950. Geschichte, Alltag Und Kultur*, ed. Verein der Freunde eines Schwulen Museums in Berlin e.V. (Berlin: Frölich & Kaufmann, 1984), 73.

<sup>332</sup> Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 244; Pretzel and Roßbach, *Wegen der zu erwartenden hohen Strafe*, 20.

was the case in other German cities, such as Hamburg, Munich, and Frankfurt.<sup>333</sup> Even during the Nazi era, then, queer bargoers demonstrated “surreptitious creativities” in keeping semi-public queer socializing alive, escaping the supposedly “panoptic administration” of the Nazi state.

After the end of the war and Nazism, queer nightlife quickly reemerged in Berlin, despite continuities in the police force.<sup>334</sup> Historian Jennifer Evans has described “burgeoning and competing homosexual subcultures that came back into view after the war and despite the police regulation and morality enforcement in the 1950s and 1960s,” summarizing detailed studies by historians Jens Dobler, Andreas Pretzel, and Karl-Heinz Steinle.<sup>335</sup> Centers of queer nightlife were located in the West Berlin districts of Schöneberg, Charlottenburg, and Kreuzberg, as well as along East Berlin’s Friedrichstraße, though historians agree that East Berlin had much less to

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<sup>333</sup> John C. Fout, “Homosexuelle in Der NS-Zeit: Neue Forschungsansätze Über Alltagsleben Und Verfolgung,” in Jellonek; Lautmann, *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle*, 169. On queer nightlife in Cologne and Hamburg, see also Kristof Balsler, *Himmel und Hölle: das Leben der Kölner Homosexuellen 1945-1969*. Köln: Emons, 1994; Centrum Schwule Geschichte. *Himmel und Hölle: 100 Jahre schwul in Köln*. Köln: 2003; Cornelia Limpricht, Jürgen Müller, and Nina Oxenius, “*Verführte*” *Männer: das Leben der Kölner Homosexuellen im Dritten Reich*. [Köln]: Volksblatt, 1991; Bernhard Rosenkranz and Gottfried Lorenz, *Hamburg auf anderen Wegen: Die Geschichte des schwulen Lebens in der Hansestadt*. Lambda Edition, 2006.

<sup>334</sup> The head of Berlin’s Nazi-era “Homosexuals Department” within the criminal squad was re-hired in 1946 as head of the vice squad. Pretzel and Roßbach, *Wegen der zu erwartenden hohen Strafe*, 70.

<sup>335</sup> The most comprehensive exploration of postwar queer nightlife in Berlin was the 2003/04 exhibition “mittenmang. Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin 1945 – 1969” at Schwules Museum, but no catalogue was published. The exhibition was curated by Karl-Heinz Steinle and Maika Leffers. Documentation of the exhibition is at the Schwules Museum archives. “Mittenmang: Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin 1945-1969.” Accessed October 17, 2017. <http://www.schwulesmuseum.de/ausstellungen/archives/2003/view/mittenmang-homosexuelle-frauen-und-maenner-in-berlin-1945-1969/>. Andreas Pretzel discusses bars as sites of homophile organizing in his book *NS-Opfer unter Vorbehalt: Homosexuelle Männer in Berlin nach 1945*. Berliner Schriften zur Sexualwissenschaft und Sexualpolitik. Berlin: LIT, 2002. In addition, bars were featured in the exhibitions on gay and lesbian Kreuzberg and Prenzlauer Berg. Dobler, *Von anderen Ufern. Geschichte der Berliner Lesben und Schwulen in Kreuzberg und Friedrichshain*, Dobler, *Verzaubert in Nord-Ost*. Dobler has also published a comparison of two gay men’s biographies in early postwar West and East Berlin. Jens Dobler, “Schwules Leben in Berlin zwischen 1945 und 1969 im Ost-West-Vergleich.” In *Ohnmacht und Aufbegehren: Homosexuelle Männer in der frühen Bundesrepublik*. Edited by Andreas Pretzel and Volker Weiß, 152–63. Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2010. For sketches on particular bars, see the bar portraits by Karl-Heinz Steinle in Maneo, ed. *Spurensuche im Regenbogenkiez: Historische Orte und schillernde Persönlichkeiten*. Maneo-Kiezgeschichte 2. Berlin: Maneo, 2018, and Dobler, *Von anderen Ufern*. For an analysis of state regulation of them, see especially Whisnant, *Male homosexuality in West Germany*, and Evans, *Life among the ruins: Cityscape and sexuality in Cold War Berlin*.

offer in terms of queer nightlife (*Figure 13*).<sup>336</sup> The existing studies have explored the functions of queer bars as places for conversation, flirting, dancing, and picking up sex partners; as sites of queer cultural production, be it cabaret, box fights, or drag shows; and as meeting spots for homophile organizations. What is missing from these studies are two things: first, an analysis of the development of the bars over time, taking into account the different actors involved in the making and unmaking of these queer spaces. How did Berlin's status as Cold War capital influence state policy toward queer bars? What possibilities did bar owners and bar goers have to evade or resist these policies? And second, while some of the studies mention bar patrons' gender as an important factor in the way that police dealt with them, it is not a central analytic, and the evidence remains anecdotal.<sup>337</sup> As in the other chapters, I argue that gender centrally determined whether queer Berliners could live their lives free from harassment and is thus a crucial component of any analysis of queer bar culture.

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<sup>336</sup> See Jens Dobler, "'Den Heten Eine Kneipe Wegnehmen'," in *Verzaubert in Nord-Ost: Die Geschichte Der Berliner Lesben Und Schwulen in Prenzlauer Berg, Pankow Und Weißensee*, ed. Jens Dobler (Berlin: Gmünder, 2009); Evans, *Life*, 170-71.

<sup>337</sup> Jens Dobler cites writer Peter Jürgen Fabich, who recalled „dass die Polizei mit mehreren Transportern vor dem Lokal auffuhr und die "Tunten" einkassierte, während er selbst - rechtzeitig von Elli gewarnt - über den Hinterhof flüchtete." "Ein Neuanfang, der keiner war." In *Von anderen Ufern*, 236. Jennifer Evans claims that "sometimes the more raucous and ornate the party, the better the chance of evading the police gaze. Kisses on the cheek, over-the-top-posturing, and camp shielded revelers from suspicion while providing cover for expressions of desire and feeling," but offers no evidence. Her statement that "in the years leading up to the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969, it was not a crime to be gay, nor to operate a gay bar. It was unlawful to cruise and flaunt one's masculinity, whether effeminate, tough, leather, or transsexual" equally comes without evidence. Evans, *Life*, 174-5, 179.



## The Early Postwar Years: “Resurrected Social Life”

The photos from Boheme bar’s three-year anniversary capture a specific moment, place, and mode in postwar queer social life in West Berlin: the end of what was almost a decade of relatively carefree bar-going and, more generally, rebuilding of a queer public in Berlin; a dense network of queer bars in a small pocket of West Berlin’s Kreuzberg neighborhood; and a mode of working-class social life that reached across sexualities. In East Berlin, queer bars re-opened and thrived in the immediate postwar period, but were shut down in the early 1950s, likely because party leaders regarded queer commercial spaces in the GDR’s capital as incompatible with the project of building a socialist morality.<sup>338</sup>

Looking back on the time just after the end of the war, a writer in West German homophile magazine *Der Weg* addressed readers in 1962, “[I]et us remember those glittering ball nights we celebrated after the collapse of the disastrous Third Reich, in a sense in continuity of the year 1933. Hundreds of our friends crowded toward the Tefi ballroom when Mamita called them.”<sup>339</sup> The author declared Mamita as “the driving force for our resurrected social life. [...] Mamita was deterred by nothing in congregating our dispersed and beaten little sheep, and he has re-awakened joy for life like almost nobody else among us.”<sup>340</sup> Mamita is identified in the article as a cross-dressing “homophile” man whose masculine femininity challenged many within the queer community, and who was denigrated by a malicious campaign in the tabloids. Shifting

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<sup>338</sup> On the project of fashioning a new socialist morality as part of creating the “New Socialist Person” in the 1950s, see Eghigian, “Homo Munitus: The East German Observed”; Jennifer V. Evans, “Repressive Rehabilitation: Crime, Morality, and Delinquency in Berlin-Brandenburg, 1945-1958,” in Wetzell, *Crime and Criminal Justice in Modern Germany*.

<sup>339</sup> „Erinnern wir uns mal an jene rauschenden Ballnächte, die nach dem Zusammenbruch des unseligen Dritten Reiches gewissermaßen als Anschluß an das Jahr 1933 fröhliche Urstätt [!] feierten. Hunderte von unseren Freunden drängten sich nach den Tefi-Festsälen, wenn Mamita bitten ließ.“ O.Z. “Mamita läßt bitten!” *Der Weg* 12, no. 10 (1962): 461–62.

<sup>340</sup> „die treibende Kraft für unsere wiedererstandene Geselligkeit. (...) Mamita ließ sich durch nichts beirren, unsere verstreuten und geschlagenen Schäfchen wieder zu sammeln und er hat wie selten einer von uns, die Lebensfreude wieder geweckt.“ Ibid. 462.

between feminine and masculine pronouns, the writer admires not only Mamita's skills as a community organizer and her stamina in the face of hostilities, but fondly remembers her talent for entertainment, too.

At her balls, she would stand on the flight of stairs as Grand-Dame and personally welcome all her dears; and then she would present the best show, too. The vaudeville program was quite something, and she herself was definitely the top act. She recited as Countess Strachwitz, she sang the Zarah Leander, and she danced the dying swan, and everyone convulsed with laughter.<sup>341</sup>

The wistful memory of Mamita conjured in the article stands out sharply against the changed situation ten years later. The piece ends on the sad note that a decade after Mamita's famous balls, the "newly won freedom and tolerance" had given way again to "prohibition" and a "skewed morality."<sup>342</sup> Still, the city's rich ball culture continued at least into the early 1950s, as advertisements in Berlin's same-sex pen pal newsletter *Amicus-Briefbund* document. In its February 1950 issue, readers were invited not just to the three weekly ball nights at *Mamita's Ballhaus im Wiener Grinzing*, Fasanen-Straße 78, but to an additional nine other balls in locations in Moabit, Neukölln, Kreuzberg, Schöneberg, and Steglitz.<sup>343</sup> In March, dancers could choose between a "Great Spring Festival" at Kreuzberg's *Fürstenau* and Schöneberg's *Kleines Eldorado bei Gerda Kelch*, a "Spring Awakening Under Real Blossoms" at Schöneberg's *Kleist-Casino*, a "Bad Boys Ball" at Charlottenburg's *Bart*, a "Great Mask Ball" at Neukölln's *Delmonico*, a "Ladies' Opening Ball" at Kreuzberg's *Imperial*, or the "House Ball" at *Thefi* and *Kleines Eldorado*. There was just plain dancing at *Delmonico* and *Bart* every night, Sunday afternoon "Tea Dance" at *Kleist-Casino*, "Varied Nights" Wednesdays and "Glee and Gaiety"

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<sup>341</sup> Bei ihren Bällen empfing sie höchstpersönlich als Grand-Dame an den Stufen zur Freitreppe alle ihre Lieben und bot dann auch das Beste. Das Varieté-Programm hatte sich meist gewaschen und sie selbst war allemal die Glanznummer. Sie deklarierte als Gräfin Strachwitz, sie sang die Zarah Leander und sie tanzte den sterbenden Schwan und alles bog sich vor Lachen. Ibid. 462

<sup>342</sup> "Mamita lässt bitten!"

<sup>343</sup> *Amicus-Briefbund* 2/1950. Schwules Museum\* Archives.

Sundays at *Fürstenau*, fashion shows at *Kleines Eldorado* and *Imperial*, open stage cabaret Thursdays at *Delmonico*, and “Elite-Evenings” at *Kleist-Casino* and *F13*.<sup>344</sup>

The advertisements show that some bars catered to particular groups of patrons, such as women or an older crowd. In 1950, “Ladies’ Nights” were offered on all week nights: Mondays and Wednesdays at *Casa Tulenda* in Moabit, Thursdays at *Fürstenau* or at *Kathi und Eva im Grinzing*, Fridays at Kreuzberg’s *Bier-Bar*, Saturdays at *Imperial* and later at *Fürstenau*, too.<sup>345</sup> *Lotti und Bobby in der Wittenbergklaus*e advertised equally “For the Lady – For the Gentleman,” and Mimi of *Die Bohème* at nearby Nollendorfplatz welcomed women Tuesdays and Fridays.<sup>346</sup> A bar on Kreuzberg’s Friesenstraße, *F 13*, advertised as “Treffpunkt der alten Freundschaft” (variably “Treffpunkt der alten Freunde,”) indicating both its origin in the earlier, possibly pre-war location *Oase* on Grünstraße/Jakobstraße and the older age of its customers.<sup>347</sup> *Zum Grünen Anker* at Nollendorfplatz billed “Social Nights for Young and Old,” signaling that older patrons were welcome, too.<sup>348</sup> Two years later, in 1952, some of the same bars still advertised in *Amicus-Briefbund*, and new ones had arrived on the scene, too. Live music and dance, long hours and “solid prices” continued to be among the attractions most frequently praised. *Mamita’s Ballhaus* was still in operation.<sup>349</sup> Around the same time, Mamita took over a corner bar on Kreuzberg’s Lausitzer Platz, just across the square from *Boheme* bar.<sup>350</sup> Indeed, Mamita was among the guests at *Boheme*’s third-anniversary festivities. She is announced on a poster advertising the

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<sup>344</sup> Amicus-Briefbund 3/1950. Schwules Museum\* Archives.

<sup>345</sup> Amicus-Briefbund 2-8/1950.

<sup>346</sup> Amicus-Briefbund 5 and 7, 1950.

<sup>347</sup> Amicus-Briefbund 2/1950.

<sup>348</sup> Amicus-Briefbund 5/1950.

<sup>349</sup> It was now located in Lutherstraße in Schöneberg, moving from Fasanenstr. in Charlottenburg. Amicus-Briefbund 3/1952.

<sup>350</sup> Mamita is said to have died in a car crash. Dobler, *Von anderen Ufern*, 252. Mamita is identified as the keeper of the pub at Lausitzer Platz 1 in a Stasi file, too. Arrest report, Nov 4, 1953, BStU 1030/58.

event in the pub (*Figure 6*) and may be among the participants of a fashion show that formed part of the evening's entertainment (*Figure 11*).<sup>351</sup>

It is not just the image of Mamita, however, that warrants returning to *Boheme* bar. The photo album documents a mode of neighborhood sociality across sexualities, an atmosphere of familiarity and coziness that is also described in another source speaking of the Kreuzberg bar scene of the 1950s, Peter Thilo's unpublished novel *Ein Igel weint Tränen aus Rosenholz oder Die Kulturluftschiffer Berlins aus der Sicht des Bodenpersonals betrachtet [A Hedgehog Cries Tears of Rosewood or The Cultural Air Skippers of Berlin Seen From the Perspective of the Ground Personnel]*.<sup>352</sup> Thilo wrote the manuscript in 1995 and donated it to the Gay Museum, suggesting its "archival interest."<sup>353</sup> The novel narrates the life of Karl Simon, born in 1931 and living in Berlin since 1946, his coming out as a gay man, his education and his career in West Berlin's cultural administration. After some disappointments with men whom he found through personals in the homophile magazines, 21-year-old Karl decides to look for love in the bars. He

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<sup>351</sup> What is striking about *Figure 6*, too, is the posture of the person sitting at the table in the very righthand side of the photo. Shot in profile, this patron is covering their face with their right hand. They might be pushing their hair back, or wiping tears of laughter, or they might be hiding their face. Despite most guests' apparent comfort with the camera, not everyone may have trusted the photographer. Though it is unlikely that the pictures were taken by a police officer, even a plain-clothed one, some patrons may not have wanted to be identified in the company of underworld characters.

<sup>352</sup> Peter Thilo, *Ein Igel weint Tränen aus Rosenholz oder Die Kulturluftschiffer Berlins aus der Sicht des Bodenpersonals betrachtet*. Roman, 1995, Schwules Museum, Berlin.

<sup>353</sup> Peter Thilo, *Brief ans Schwule Museum betr. Teilnachlass*. May 14, 2000. Schwules Museum, Berlin. The manuscript reads like Thilo's autobiography. Kreuzberg poet Günter Bruno Fuchs, himself a regular at the bars in this part of Kreuzberg, dedicated a poem to Peter Thilo, suggesting that they were friends and that Thilo knew the Kreuzberg bar scene from his own experience. Günter Bruno Fuchs, *Gemütlich summt das Vaterland. Gedichte, Märchen, Sprüche und allerhand Schabernack*. München and Wien: Hanser 1984, 161.

makes his first visit to Skalitzer Platz, where “on each of the four corners, there was a pertinent bar.”<sup>354</sup>

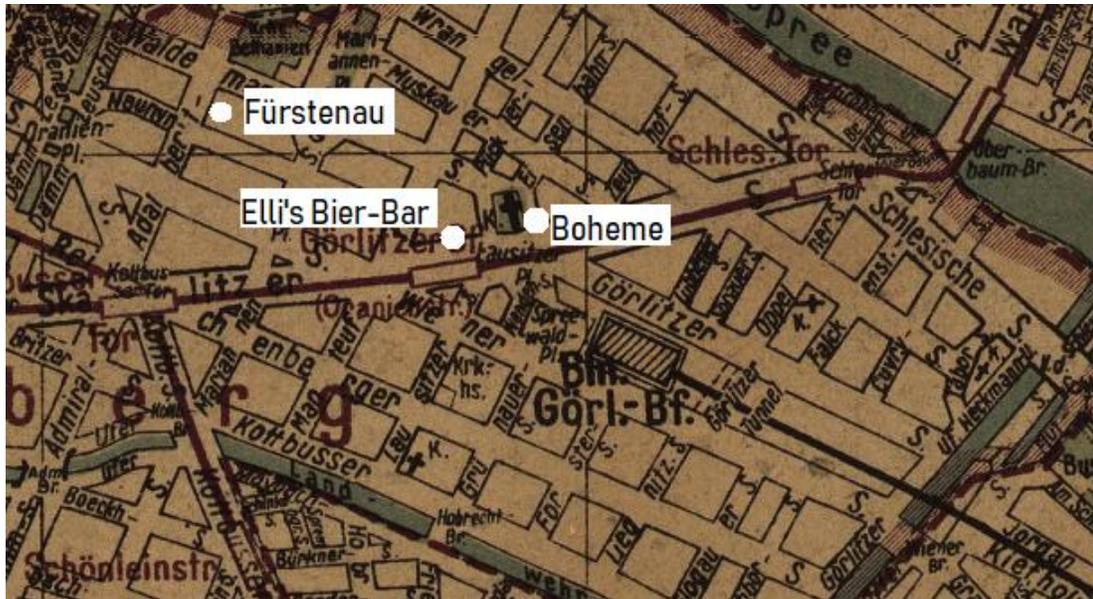


Figure 14. Detail: Kreuzberg bars.

The bar on the southeastern corner, the location of Boheme bar, is his first destination. In the narrator’s description of the outside and inside of the bar and the scene he finds inside, further practices of queer space-making become visible.

Like most bars of this kind, it was only furnished with a neon beer sign on the outside, but those in the know recognized it by the curtains drawn in the windows, which made it impossible to peek inside. Karl felt shy, he did not know what to expect, but since he had made a plan to go for direct contacts now, he entered. It was dim, everything was bathed in reddish light which reflected the thick red curtains and the red wallpaper. The place was half full, men of different ages were sitting at some of the tables, making an impression of being old acquaintances. There were men sitting at the bar, mostly younger ones, who appeared to have come there only to drink beer. [...] They seemed friendly, peaceful, and bored. [...] What Karl did not know was that bars of this kind only get crowded around midnight. Those who come around this time, shortly past nine, don’t come for adventures of any sort. They want to drink beer and talk to acquaintances. [...] Karl felt that he was in the wrong place. It was too cozy here, people didn’t stray, they stayed.<sup>355</sup>

<sup>354</sup> „An jeder der vier Ecken gab es damals ein einschlägiges Lokal (...)“ Thilo, *Ein Igel*, 199.

<sup>355</sup> „Jetzt ging Karl erst einmal in das Lokal an der südöstlichen Ecke, wie die meisten Lokale dieser Art, nach außen nur mit einer Bierreklame versehen in Leuchtschrift, dem Kenner verriet es sich durch die zugezogenen Vorhänge

Thilo's description of the bar describes a moment different from the photos, an early weeknight at the bar. Nevertheless, both archival finds transport a familiar and cozy atmosphere. In Thilo's manuscript, it is the warm red color of the curtains, wallpaper and light that contributes to this coziness. Curtains in the windows protect patrons, all men, from outside gazes, thus ensuring the privacy necessary to create a relaxed, familiar mood: the bar's *Heimeligkeit* depends on keeping the identities of its patrons *geheim*, secret. At the same time, the curtains serve as marker for those "in the know" that the bar caters to queer patrons. They hence have a double function; they both conceal and unveil.

Returning to the photos of the bar in the police album, features of its interior design, such as the floral pattern of wallpaper and tablecloths, the wood paneling and wooden doorframes, also help create this impression of a rustic, petty-bourgeois sociality. In addition, though, it is the relationship between photographer and subjects that suggests familiarity. The big smiles directed at the camera show that the photographer was no stranger to *Boheme*. An undercover officer may have been among the bar's frequent guests. Alternatively, the pictures may have been sold to the police, or seized during a raid or house search.

In a way, in its incorporation of queer space-making practices, of the categories of sexual science, and of police surveillance, the album stands for a resurfacing of the familiarity between queer Berliners, sexologists, and the police that characterized Berlin at the beginning of the

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vor den Fenstern, die einen Einblick von außen unmöglich machten. Karl war verlegen, er wußte auch nicht, was auf ihn zukommen würde, aber da er sich vorgenommen [!] hatte, sich nun für Direktkontakte zu entscheiden, trat er ein. Es war dämmerig, alles in ein rötliches Licht getaucht, das die dicken roten Vorhänge und die rote Tapete reflektierte. Es war halbvoll, an einigen Tischen saßen Männer unterschiedlichen Alters, sie unterhielten sich und machten den Eindruck, sich schon länger zu kennen. An der Bar saßen auch Männer, meist jüngere, die den Eindruck machten, nur zum biertrinken [!] hergekommen zu sein. (...) Sie wirkten freundlich, friedlich und gelangweilt. (...) Was Karl nicht wußte, war, daß Lokale dieser Art immer erst gegen Mitternacht voll werden. Wer um diese Zeit, kurz nach neun, kommt, kommt nicht wegen irgendwelcher Abenteuer. Sie wollen Bier trinken und mit Bekannten reden. (...) Karl hatte den Eindruck, am falschen Ort zu sein. Hier war es zu gemütlich, die Leute gingen bekannt, nicht fremd.“ Ibid. 199-200.

century, almost half a century later. The police classified same-sex sexuality, gender transgression, and commercial sex together, and the list of sexually deviant characters described in the captions of some photos – identifying guests as “homosexuals,” (*Figure 9*) “homosexual transvestite,” (*Figures 10 and 15*), “prostitutes,” “bar girls,” and “pimps,” (*Figure 7*) – partly relies on the language invented by sexology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>356</sup>

*Bohème* bar can also serve as an example for a variety of practices of queer space-making. It was run by an allegedly gay man who provided a space of low-key relaxation for an all-male after-work crowd as well as for a glittering party for patrons of mixed genders and ages.<sup>357</sup> The party’s program included two different dance performances. The two dancers captured in *Figure 9*, in matching gowns, ribbons on their heads and necks, and high heels, have clearly carried the audience along: the seated guests appear to be clapping in the rhythm of the music, their faces beaming, while the host overlooks the scene, his gaze toward dancers and photographer showing pride. The night’s other drag performance featured a dancer in an outfit that wildly combines non-European, or simply imagined styles: a headpiece with a feather, heavily made-up eyes and a bindi, creole earrings, a band around the neck, a band of bananas on top of a shiny bra top and a straw skirt, painted fingernails, and the rest of their body unclothed

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<sup>356</sup> “Bild 1-12: Gäste des Lokals “Bohème,” “Bild 17-21: Tanzvorführungen eines homosexuellen Transvestiten,” and “Bild 23-28: Bewerberinnen um den Titel der “Miss-Bohème” (Prostituierte und Anämiermädchen.)” [second “n” struck through by hand in original] “Bild 13: Ebenfalls Gäste. Die männlichen Personen sind bekannte Zuhälter,” “Bild 16: Tanzvorführung Homosexueller. Beide Tänzer zeigen sich in der Öffentlichkeit nur in Frauenkleidern” and “Bild 31: Der homosexuelle Wirt stellt die Siegerin dem Publikum vor.”

<sup>357</sup> The host is characterized as “homosexual” by the police in the album.



Figure 15. *Polizeihistorische Sammlung Berlin.*

(*Figures 10 and 15*). Rather than just the dancer's take on a racialized and sexualized "exotic" femininity, the banana skirt is also a reference to Black performance artist Josephine Baker, who had performed in Berlin during the 1920s. Postwar drag performers hence drew on femininities popular during Nazism, such as the actress Zarah Leander, as well as earlier divas that represented the cosmopolitan moment of Weimar Germany, such as Josephine Baker. The police captioned the photo "Dance performance by a homosexual transvestite."<sup>358</sup>

On the album's last page is a glued-in envelope full of photographs of a group of gangster who went by the name *Sparverein West*.<sup>359</sup> The fact that these two groups of photographs were archived together, those depicting the patrons of *Boheme* and those showing the members of *Sparverein West*, suggests that the police were interested in the bar as a hang-out of organized crime as well as illegitimate sexuality. West Berlin's burgeoning queer nightlife as documented in these photos, in advertisements, articles, and Thilo's manuscript was soon disturbed as police began not just surveilling, but also raiding bars.

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<sup>358</sup> In Germany, the term "transvestite," coined by Hirschfeld in 1910 to distinguish cross-dressers from homosexuals, remained the predominant term to describe "not just cross-dressing, but a range of cross-gendered characteristics and desires" into the late 1960s. Since the 1920s, it was also used as self-identification by some cross-gendered individuals. Katie Sutton, "From Sexual Inversion to Trans\*. Transgender History and Historiography." In *Was ist Homosexualität? Forschungsgeschichte, gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen und Perspektiven*. Edited by Florian Mildenberger et al., 181–203. Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2014, 185-186, 192.

<sup>359</sup> According to the archivist, these photos show members of Sparverein West. Personal communication with Jens Dobler.

In East Berlin, authorities began shutting down queer nightlife even earlier, as I discuss in the following section.

### *Bars in East Berlin in the Early Postwar Years*

Bars in East Berlin did not advertise in *Amicus-Briefbund*, though East Berliners read the paper, as their ads in the personal ad section attest. But according to Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, the transgender museum curator, collector, and activist from East Berlin, “transvestite” and “homosexual bars” re-opened in the Soviet-controlled part of the city after the war had ended. “The old audience was back all of a sudden, since many did, after all, manage to survive. And the prostitutes, of course, they were back again, too.”<sup>360</sup> The East Berlin police kept track of queer bars, listing “pederast and gay broad bars” among other “sketchy bars” in their precinct guidebooks, a tool for police work.<sup>361</sup>

The pub *Mulackritze* in the Scheunenviertel neighborhood in Mitte had catered to a queer clientele throughout the Nazi period and continued to do so in the postwar period.<sup>362</sup> In her memoir, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf describes in great detail how the new owners, Minna Mahlich and her husband, were harassed by the district office within months of taking over the bar.<sup>363</sup> She cites Mahlich’s rendition of a district office employee asking her to no longer serve “hookers, lesbians, and gays.” When she did not comply, Mahlich lost her *Opfer des Faschismus* pension

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<sup>360</sup> “Transvestitenlokale” and “Homosexuellenkneipen” re-opened in the Soviet-controlled part of the city after the war had ended. “Das alte (...) Stammpublikum war ja plötzlich wieder da, nicht, denn es hatten ja doch etliche auch überlebt. Und die Prostituierten natürlich, die waren ja dann auch wieder da. Transcription of interview with Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, conducted on July 27, 1995. Nachlass Charlotte von Mahlsdorf 1b, Schwules Museum, Berlin.

<sup>361</sup> LAB C Rep 303 Nr. 128. Wegweiser durch den Revierbezirk enthält „35. Lokale, zweifelhafte, a) Lokale mit weiblicher Bedienung, b) Päderasten- und schwule Weiberlokale, c) andere zweifelhafte Lokale“

<sup>362</sup> Charlotte v. Mahlsdorf, *Ich bin meine eigene Frau*. München: dtv, 1995, 141. The bar’s interior is now visible in Mahlsdorf’s *Gründerzeitmuseum* in the Berlin district of Mahlsdorf.

<sup>363</sup> In the oral history interview in her personal papers at Schwules Museum, von Mahlsdorf claims possession of files about the *Mulackritze*, possibly from the district office. That would explain the great detail she offers about dates related to the pub.

and her bar license.<sup>364</sup> Though both were reinstated after Mahlich's brother, the Belgian Résistance fighter Max Levinthal, intervened, the bar could only continue until 1951, when the police irrevocably withdrew *Mulackritze's* license as part of a clean-up of the area. Von Mahlsdorf claims that another thirty-one bars in the Scheunenviertel were shut down.<sup>365</sup> Cleansing the area of queer bars may have been a policy result of the SED's turn toward a restrictive sexual morality in the early years of the GDR.<sup>366</sup> In the same year, 1951, the East Berlin radio station *Berliner Rundfunk* laid off eight men because as "homosexuals" they were prone to attending queer bars, which, according to the staff report's author, only existed in West Berlin.<sup>367</sup> In this case, SED officials worried primarily that homosexuals, long considered unreliable citizens because of their transnational networks, would connect with "biologically congeneric individuals" from the other side of the Iron Curtain.<sup>368</sup> The report author's insistence that no such meeting places existed in East Berlin was wishful thinking rather than fact; certainly, the statement shows that queer bars were not wanted in the socialist capital. The shutting down of queer bars on East Berlin's Friedrichstraße in the 1960s and 1970s may have been caused by a similar concern for presenting a clean socialist city. Both areas,

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<sup>364</sup> Mahlsdorf. *Ich bin*. 145.

<sup>365</sup> In 1961, after the Wall had been erected, the *Mulackritze* building was expropriated and then razed to make way for apartment blocks in 1963. Ibid. 146-147.

<sup>366</sup> Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 7; Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after fascism: memory and morality in twentieth-century Germany*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005, chapter 5.

<sup>367</sup> "As is well known, bars and meeting places for this category of human exist only in West Berlin. Biologically congeneric individuals from Rias [the U.S.-led West Berlin radio station], the NWDR [the British-led radio station], or other circles, including employees of the western occupation powers, meet there." „Bekanntlich existieren Lokale und Treffpunkte für diese Kategorie von Menschen nur in Westberlin. Dort treffen sich biologisch Gleichgeartete aus dem Rias, dem NWDR oder sonstiger Kreise einschliesslich der Mitarbeiter der westlichen Okkupationsmächte.“ Rechenschaftsbericht für das I. Quartal 1951, March 31, 1951, DRA Babelsberg, Schriftgutbestand Hörfunk: HA Personal, Personalstatistiken und -analysen.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid. In the very first years of the new socialist state, *Berliner Rundfunk's* human resources were controlled directly by the Ministry for State Security. Maral Herbst, *Demokratie und Maulkorb: Der deutsche Rundfunk in Berlin zwischen Staatsgründung und Mauerbau*. Berlin: VISTAS Verlag, 2002, 69. On gay men as unreliable citizens, see, for instance, Manfred Herzer, "Schwule Widerstandskämpfer Gegen Den Nationalsozialismus. Neue Studien Zu Wolfgang Cordan, Wilfried Israel, Theoder Haubach Und Otto John," in Jellonek; Lautmann, *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle*.

Scheunenviertel and Friedrichstraße, would see massive construction projects after the construction of the Berlin Wall.<sup>369</sup>

### **A Dramatic Change in West Berlin in the 1950s**

In West Berlin, too, the “newly won freedom and tolerance” reminisced about in the Mamita article in *Der Weg* did not last forever. The first reports of West Berlin police raids on queer bars appear in the homophile magazines in the fall of 1954, and they continue into the late 1960s. On September 18, 1954, the West Berlin police raided three Neukölln bars, checking the IDs of all patrons present and registering everyone on a list. *Der Weg* reported on the incident in its November 1954 issue and reprinted brief articles from the boulevard paper *B.Z.* and the left-leaning daily *Der Telegraf*, which had both criticized the raid and especially the lists, suggesting that the practice was considered unusual.<sup>370</sup> The *Telegraf*'s evening edition, the *nacht-depesche*, voiced what can be read as the strongest critique of the raids.<sup>371</sup> The article's author used the term “persons of same-sex sentiment” to describe the bar guests, indicating sympathy for and, possibly, familiarity with the homophile cause.<sup>372</sup> The author then devoted more than half of the article to a direct quotation of a protest letter written by a “Kreuzberg citizen” who was subjected

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<sup>369</sup> Jens Dobler, “Schwules Leben in Berlin zwischen 1945 und 1969 im Ost-West-Vergleich.” In *Ohnmacht und Aufbegehren: Homosexuelle Männer in der frühen Bundesrepublik*. Edited by Andreas Pretzel and Volker Weiß, 152–63. Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2010, 161f. Dobler describes the “displacement” of the Friedrichstraße bars from the mid-1950s on. However, my sources suggest that many of the bars were open at least until the early 1960s, and Dobler has suggested the same elsewhere. Teresa Tammer cites a Stasi informant in 1976 complaining about the shut-down of “Mocca Bar” at Hotel Sofia on Friedrichstraße and its replacement with an “Intershop” catering to western tourists. The statement suggests that appealing to Western visitors was one factor in the displacement of queer bars from central East Berlin. Teresa Tammer, “Verräter Oder Vermittler? Inoffizielle Informanten Zwischen Staatssicherheit Und DDR-Schwulenbewegung,” in *Welche "Wirklichkeit" Und Wessen "Wahrheit"? Das Geheimdienstarchiv Als Quelle Und Medium Der Wissensproduktion*, ed. Thomas Großbölting and Sabine Kittel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 115.

<sup>370</sup> “Berlin: Belästigung durch die Polizei.” *Der Weg* 4, no. 10 (1954): 356–57. The reprinted articles were: “Die gefährliche Molle.” *Telegraf*, reprinted in *Der Weg* 4, no. 10 (1954): 357; and “Großbrazzia in sechs Lokalen.” *B.Z.*, reprinted in *Der Weg* 4, no. 10 (1954): 356.

<sup>371</sup> *nacht-depesche*. “Seltsames Vorgehen der Kripo.” September 20, 1954.

<sup>372</sup> “gleichgeschlechtlich empfindende Personen.”

to the raid. The man, who had – self-confidently, if unsuccessfully – asked the police officer who was registering him to reveal his identification number, argued from a perspective of democratic citizenship. He criticized the raids as an attack on German democracy, comparing them both to Nazi methods and to the practices he imagined to be in place in communist East Berlin.<sup>373</sup> As the journalist did not comment on the letter, the letter writer’s opinion came across as the newspaper’s to the reader. Such direct critique of police action against queer people on the first page of a widely read newspaper is remarkable. The fact that the raid was so widely reported on, and the critical assessment of the police across different newspapers, speak for the novelty of the practice: it is likely that the 1954 raid in Neukölln was the first post-war raid on a queer bar. The West Berlin police thus broke with the long-standing policy of surveilled tolerance of queer nightlife that the city’s police had followed from the 1880s until the end of the Weimar Republic.<sup>374</sup>

*Police Pretense for Raiding: The “Streetwalking Boy Plague”*

The critical press coverage of the raids affected police rhetoric, but not practice. In 1955, Wolfram Sangmeister, director of West Berlin’s detective squad (*Kriminalpolizei*, or *Kripo*) from 1952 to 1969, rejected raids as an inappropriate measure during a press conference on §175 and crimes committed by “streetwalking boys,” teenagers or young men who sold sexual services to men.<sup>375</sup> The press conference was covered in almost all West Berlin newspapers, signaling a strong public interest.<sup>376</sup> The conference’s immediate occasion was the successful

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<sup>373</sup> “Methoden (...) aus dem ‘Tausendjährigen Reich’,” “jenseits des Brandenburger Tores.”

<sup>374</sup> Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 83.

<sup>375</sup> For dates of Sangmeister’s direction of the Kripo see Förderkreis Polizeihistorische Sammlung Berlin e.V., ed. *Berliner Kriminalpolizei von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*. Berlin: Selbstverlag, 2005, 10. H.W. ““Der Kurier”, Berlin, meldet: Männliche Prostitution stellt die Kriminalpolizei vor Neuland.” *Der Ring* 1, August (1955): 173–74. The German term used is “Strichjungenunwesen.”

<sup>376</sup> Brief aus Hauptpflegeamt an Frau Kay, gez. i.A. Kirchhoff, Betr. Artikel in “Der Abend” vom 2.7.55: “Arbeitshaus für Strichjungen.” B Rep 013 Nr. 502.

investigation of the murder of a 65-year-old homosexual man, who had died at the hands of a 26-year-old “streetwalking boy.” The case was one of eight murders of homosexual men investigated by the police in West Berlin since 1948. Sangmeister presented himself as a proponent of decriminalizing sex between adult men but took a tough stance on “streetwalking boys.” He pledged to prosecute them and mentioned the possibility of sending “repeat offenders” and “incurable cases” to the workhouse.<sup>377</sup>

Despite Sangmeister’s claim that these “streetwalking boys” were “uncharted territory” for the police, the figure of the male prostitute had occupied a central position in discourses around deviant sexuality since the turn of the twentieth century, as historian Martin Lücke has shown.<sup>378</sup> Sexual scientists, legal professionals working on a reform of German sexual law, homosexual emancipation activists, and social workers were all concerned with “streetwalking boys.”<sup>379</sup> Often, sexual scientists described them as particularly effeminate, distinguishing them from more respectable, conventionally masculine homosexuals.<sup>380</sup> Since 1909, all efforts at reforming Germany’s sexual laws singled out men engaging in same-sex sex “for profit:” men selling sexual services, but also men of legal age who had sex with male minors or who abused “a dependency resulting from a service or work relationship.”<sup>381</sup> These cases were described as “qualified homosexuality” and distinguished from “simple homosexuality,” or consensual, non-commercial same-sex relationships between men of legal age. The bills for a reformed sex law created a hierarchy between male prostitutes and the men purchasing their services: whereas the latter continued to be understood and punished as “simple homosexuals,” “streetwalking boys”

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<sup>377</sup> “wiederholt auftretende und unbelehrbare Strichjungen.” H.W. ““Der Kurier”, Berlin, meldet: Männliche Prostitution,” 174.

<sup>378</sup> Martin Lücke, *Männlichkeit in Unordnung*. Frankfurt a.M.: campus, 2008.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid. 17-18.

<sup>380</sup> Lücke cites Ulrichs, Krafft-Ebing, Bloch and Hirschfeld as describing streetwalking boys as effeminate.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid. 115-116.

were to receive much more severe penalties. These suggestions for legal reform, drawn up by legal professionals in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany, served as the basis for the Nazis' changes to §175 and introduction of §175a in 1935. As discussed in the first chapter, West Germany kept both laws until 1969, whereas East Germany adopted §175a, but brought back the Weimar-era version of §175.

The “increasing demonization of streetwalking boys” described by Lücke continued in the postwar era, as Jennifer Evans has shown. For the immediate postwar era, she has described a shift in attitudes toward “streetwalking boys” from “endangered victims” of the wartime and postwar disruptions to family life – hunger, homelessness, becoming orphans, parental neglect – to “capricious villains” who presented a danger to national renewal in both East and West.<sup>382</sup> The two states employed ideologically different understandings of “streetwalking boys,” but both “inherit[ed] a similar strand of pre-1945 criminology, especially Lombrosian-inspired analysis of prostitution as passive asociality.”<sup>383</sup>

But authorities also understood the “streetwalking boy” phenomenon as rooted in problems particular to the postwar moment and the city’s division. In reaction to Sangmeister’s press conference on “streetwalking boys,” an employee of West Berlin’s youth services office explained that a quarter of the “streetwalking boys” that were known at the office lived in East Berlin. For those under age eighteen, the office contacted their parents, sometimes successfully stopping them from returning to West Berlin. Another 25 percent of the known “streetwalking boys” were homeless, however. “We cannot take care of them because they are East-West-

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<sup>382</sup> Evans uses the terms “call boys” and “rent boys,” but I have found “streetwalking boys” a better translation because it carries the association with public space inherent in the German “Strichjunge.” Jennifer V. Evans, “Bahnhof Boys: Policing Male Prostitution in Post-Nazi Berlin.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 4 (2003): 605–36, 608.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.* 635. According to Evans’ analysis court files, being caught as a “streetwalking boy” usually led to prison time in West Berlin, and to a juvenile workhouse in East Berlin. The West Berlin files are from the mid-1950s. Evans does not give dates for the East Berlin files.

migrants and in part unrecognized refugees, or they have not continued their process at the refugee office,” they explained.<sup>384</sup> Rather than refugees from formerly German areas in central and eastern Europe as in the immediate postwar years, the refugees described here were East German citizens fleeing the GDR. Their number increased over the 1950s as the East German economy increasingly lagged behind its West German counterpart, and as the GDR further curtailed its citizens’ political rights and freedom of movement. Consequently, the East-West divide continued to serve as explanation for “the problem of streetwalking boy activity.” A 1960 West Berlin police statement claimed,

the not insignificant rise in the number of streetwalking boys [can] be tracked back in large parts to the so-called currency differential and the refugee misery. Apart from the streetwalking boys who have their residency in the Soviet-occupied district [of Berlin] or the Soviet-occupied zone [of Germany], among those working as streetwalking boys are also such male persons who have come to Berlin as alleged refugees, but who have been denied admission according to the Federal Law for Provisional Accommodation [...]. According to police experience, streetwalking boys are almost always workshy and only interested in an effortless “breadwinning.” When it comes to “earning” money without effort, many of them – animated by the milieu they have chosen and freed of the natural inhibitions – do not shrink back from murder or other violent crime. This is proven by the number of such crimes committed by streetwalking boys in Berlin in the past few years.<sup>385</sup>

The “currency differential” mentioned here refers to the unequal value of West and East Mark, and more generally to the economic disparity between West and East Berlin.<sup>386</sup> In West Berlin,

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<sup>384</sup> Brief aus Hauptpflegeamt, July 21, 1955, B Rep 013 Nr. 502.

<sup>385</sup> Vermerk zu Widerspruch eines als “Strichjunge” zwangsgestellten und erkennungsdienstlich behandelten Mannes. Senator for the Interior. B Rep. 004 Nr. 3805. das nicht unbeträchtliche Ansteigen der Zahl der Strichjungen zu einem erheblichen Teil auf das sogenannte Währungsgefälle und die Flüchtlingsnot zurückzuführen ist. Neben den Strichjungen, die ihren Wohnsitz im SBS oder in der SBZ haben, betätigen sich als Strichjungen auch solche männlichen Personen, die als angebliche Flüchtlinge nach Berlin gekommen sind, denen jedoch die Aufnahme nach dem Bundesnotaufnahmegesetz verweigert wurde (vgl. Schramm, Das Strichjungenunwesen, Sonderdruck des Bundeskriminalamtes Wiesbaden, 1959.) Strichjungen sind nach den polizeilichen Erfahrungen fast immer arbeitsscheu und nur an einem mühelosen „Broterwerb“ interessiert. Wenn es darum geht, mühelos Geld zu „verdienen“, schrecken viele von ihnen – durch das von ihnen gewählte Milieu animiert und von den natürlichen Hemmungen befreit – weder vor einem Mord noch vor sonstigen Gewaltverbrechen zurück. Das beweist die Anzahl der Verbrechen dieser Art, die in den letzten Jahren in Berlin von Strichjungen begangen worden sind (vgl. Schramm, a.a.O., S. 100ff).

<sup>386</sup> One West Mark was worth between four and six East Mark. Despite the unfavorable exchange rate, and despite prohibitions to possess the Western currency, East Berliners frequently shopped in the West, simply because many

“streetwalking boys” were hence seen primarily as East Germans who profited from the porousness of the city’s division, whether out of need or greed. Both sources stress the refugees’ lack of state recognition, and their unclear resident status further made them suspicious. “Streetwalking boys” mobility made them suspect in the eyes of East Berlin authorities, too, as I will discuss in the next chapter. The construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 would stop the mobility of people, services and goods that had characterized the city since 1945, rendering its Cold War division concrete. In neither East nor West Berlin did it end the presence of “streetwalking boys,” proof that the explanations above had fallen short. Returning to Michel de Certeau’s notion of spatial practices, authorities in East and West Berlin found that rather than shielding their respective parts of the city off from “streetwalking boys,” the Wall led to a “proliferating illegitimacy” of young men selling sexual services.

#### *Police Raids: From Preparation to Outcomes*

Despite *Kripo* director Sangmeister’s acknowledgement of the inefficacy of raids in fighting the “streetwalking boy plight,” the West Berlin police continued raiding queer bars into the late 1960s.<sup>387</sup> The meticulous police documentation of the raids of three bars in Schöneberg and Kreuzberg in the fall of 1957 makes it possible to reconstruct how raids were prepared and conducted and what outcome they had. On the night of Saturday to Sunday, October 26-27, under the direction of Sangmeister and an officer from the regular police force (*Schutzpolizei*, or

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things were not available in East Berlin. Ribbe, *Berlin 1945-2000*, 118–20; Lemke, *Vor der Mauer. Berlin in der Ost-West-Konkurrenz 1948 bis 1961*, 346.

<sup>387</sup> The German term used is “Strichjungenunwesen.” Streetwalking boys were characterized as the source of all evil not just by the police, but also by many gay men, as continuing discussions in homophile magazines show. This had partly to do with the disproportionately high number of gay men murdered by male prostitutes and the continuing problem of blackmail, but also with ideas about seduction, both of teenagers by older men and vice versa. The harsh judgment on streetwalking boys as “incorrigible” (“nicht mehr zu bessern”) and the police’s brutal suggestion of putting them in work camps led to protest within the homophile readership, too. See, for instance, issues 1 and 3, 1952 of *Die Insel*, and 4/1953 in *Der Weg*.

*Schupo*), over one hundred officers came down on the popular *Amigo-Bar* in Schöneberg, where between 180 and 250 patrons were enjoying a night out.<sup>388</sup> Just two weeks later, on the weekend of November 9-10, the vice department and *Schutzpolizei* raided Kreuzberg's *Elli's Bier-Bar* on Skalitzer Straße.<sup>389</sup> And another two weeks later, on the night of November 21-22, the same happened at *Robby-Bar* in Schöneberg.<sup>390</sup>

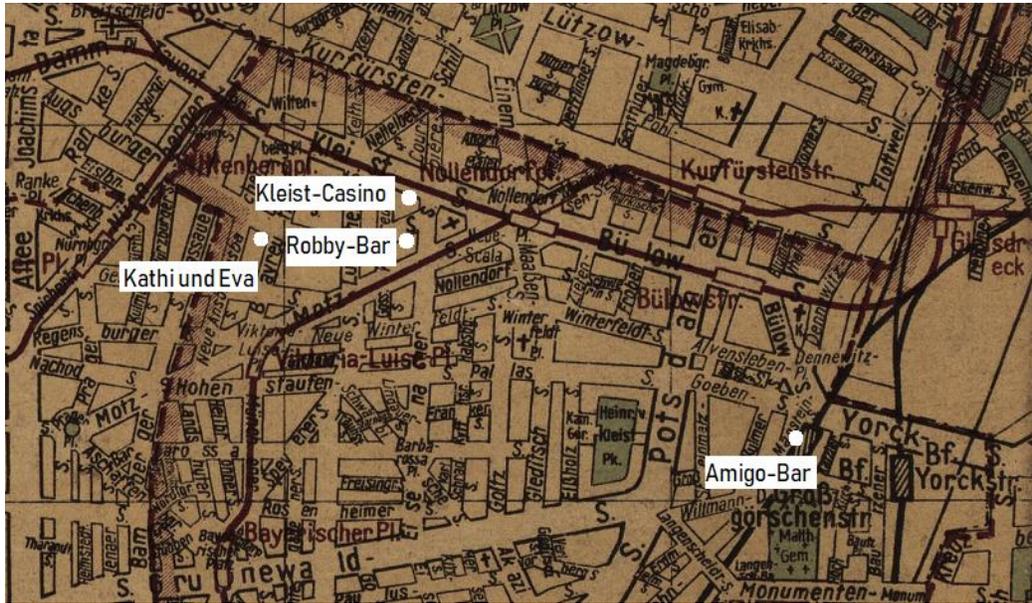


Figure 16. Detail: Schöneberg bars.

The police intensified the fight against the “streetwalking boy plight” in November of that year, with police department E I (S), usually responsible for robberies and break-ins, taking

<sup>388</sup> *Der Abend* reported the number of patrons as 180, *nacht-depesche* as 200, *Der neue Ring* as 250. *Der Abend*. “Großrazzia in Schöneberg.” October 28, 1957; *nacht-depesche*. “Eine geheimnisvolle Großrazzia.” October 28, 1957; SS. “sind wir wieder einmal soweit? Ungeschminkter Tatsachenbericht von großen Berliner Kesseltreiben gegen “homophile Lokale.” *der neue ring* 1, no. 12 (1957): 17–19. The bar advertised itself as “internationale Herrenbar” and “Tanzpalast für den verwöhnten Geschmack” in homophile magazine *Der Weg*. “Anzeige “Amigo-Bar.”” *Der Weg* 7, no. 7 (1957).

<sup>389</sup> Thirty-three patrons were taken to the *Landeskriminalamt*, where fourteen were found guilty of crimes, though only seven could be brought before a judge to receive arrest warrants. *nacht-depesche*. “Sittendezernat hatte unruhiges Wochenende.” November 11, 1957; “sind wir wieder einmal soweit?” *der neue ring* 1.

<sup>390</sup> *nacht-depesche*. “Berlin: Razzia der Kripo.” November 22, 1957. Five Kriminalbeamte and 40 Schutzpolizisten raided the bar. Half of the patrons present were taken to the *Landeskriminalamt*, but of those 35, only three could be proven to have been involved in criminal acts, and for only one of them was the evidence strong enough to be presented to a judge. The officer in charge of the raid explained the lack of success with the particular character of the bar. Many of its patrons were young male prostitutes already known to the police, he said, who were savvy in dealing with the cops and would only admit to crimes when caught in the act.

over raids and patrols, whereas the vice squad, M II 2, took care of interrogations.<sup>391</sup> Patrols toured bars that were known as meeting spaces for non-conforming people of different sorts: rebellious youth, women selling sexual services and their clients, male homosexuals, “streetwalking boys,” lesbian women and “transvestites.” Sometimes, professionals involved in state efforts to regulate sexuality and control juveniles, such as judges and district attorneys, joined the officers.<sup>392</sup> Journalists were also at times taken for a tour of the city’s nightlife. For instance, a French cameraman came along on a 1959 patrol of bars in Charlottenburg, Schöneberg and Kreuzberg.<sup>393</sup> The patrols thus served multiple functions. They kept law enforcement informed on the clientele and character of bars and ensured that owners and patrons remained aware that they were under observation. As tours of the underworld for select visitors, they also played into the city’s reputation as Europe’s nightlife capital, simultaneously penalizing, participating in, and thus also generating the spectacle. Finally, in their enumeration of conspicuous individuals, of the “homosexuals,” “streetwalking boys,” “transvestites,” “prostitutes,” and “lesbian women,” the officers created and reinforced a typology of sexually suspicious personalities.

In preparation for the 1957 raids on queer bars, officers noted the license plates of cars that were parked in front of the establishments, documenting their owners’ data in the files. They observed what kind of crowd gathered in the bars, what patrons were doing, and at what time of

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<sup>391</sup> Vermerk Zuständigkeit Bekämpfung der Strichjungen. 01.11.1957. PHS Berlin 55.25. Organizational map of the West Berlin police, 1965, PHS Berlin.

<sup>392</sup> Report on patrol, October 27, 1957. PHS Berlin, 1956.08. It also dutifully recorded the behavior of the homosexuals: “Die Homosexuellen tanzten dort eifrig nach einer Kapelle, bzw. nach der Musikbox. Interessant ist, dass einer der Homosexuellen, der uns nicht kannte, den Landgerichtsrat Lutter zum Tanz aufforderte.” The report remains silent on whether the judge accepted the offer.

<sup>393</sup> Patrol report, June 8, 1959, PHS Berlin, 1956.08. „Lokalprostituierte und Strichjungen;“ “2 lesbische Frauen und einige Prost. mit Freiern.”

the night places were busiest.<sup>394</sup> With this information collected, meticulous action plans for the raids were written and sketches of the bars' interiors drawn, complete with exits, windows (barred or not), music box, toilets, and tables and chairs [Figure 17]. The “Xs” show where officers were to be positioned to stop patrons from fleeing.

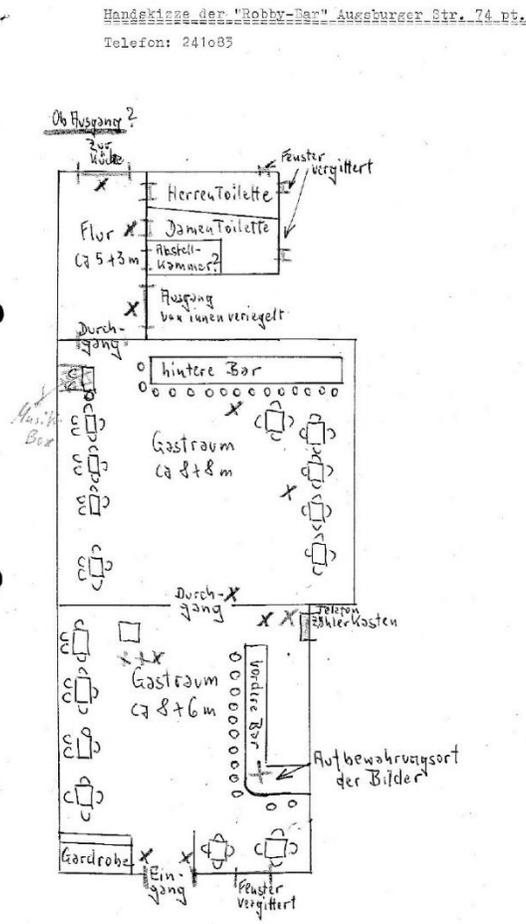


Figure 17. Police map of Robby Bar. Polizeihistorische Sammlung Berlin.

The raids were conducted by a handful of officers from the detective squad and dozens of regular policemen, as well as a small number of female officers (*Weibliche Kriminalpolizei*, WKP). *Schupos* blocked all exits and moved into the bar, immediately detaining those suspected of

<sup>394</sup> “Strichjungen” and “2 der dort üblichen Transvestiten.“ Patrol reports Elli’s Bier-Bar November 1 and November 5, 1957, PHS; Patrol report of Robby-Bar November 14, 1957, PHS.

being “streetwalking boys” and, sometimes, “transvestites.”<sup>395</sup> They were escorted to the police vans that were waiting outside right away and then driven to the State Office of Criminal Investigations (*Landeskriminalamt*). All other guests were shoved toward the back of the bar. Officers sat down at a table and controlled the patrons’ IDs. They checked them against their records (*Fahndungsbuch*) and wrote down names, birth dates, addresses, and sometimes occupations.

The lists from the fall 1957 raids at *Elli’s Bier-Bar* in Kreuzberg and *Robby-Bar* in Schöneberg give insight into who patronized these bars, even if they lack those identified as “streetwalking boys” or “transvestites” by police. Thirty-four individuals were recorded at the raid at *Elli’s*.<sup>396</sup> Most guests were from the immediate neighborhood (fourteen from SO36) or from areas nearby (six from other parts of Kreuzberg or Neukölln). Patrons also came from other central West Berlin districts (seven from Charlottenburg, Wilmersdorf, and Schöneberg) and from the outskirts (Tegel, Reinickendorf, Lichtenrade, and Britz). An East Berliner and a man from Bonn were also at the bar that night. The thirty-two men and two women ranged in age from 23 to 62 years, though most were in their thirties. Most of them were craftsmen, blue- and white-collar workers, and businessmen, but among the crowd were also a civil servant and a journalist, as well as three men “without profession.”

At *Robby-Bar*, the crowd was more international. The raid yielded information on twenty-two German men between the ages of 25 and 64, many of them visiting from West Germany, others from across West Berlin, with one East Berliner in attendance, too. The fifteen

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<sup>395</sup> The plan of action for the raid on *Elli’s Bier Bar* features “Sofortige Zwangsstellung der anwesenden Strichjungen” with a handwritten addition “+ Transvestiten.” No such addition can be found on the plan for the raid on *Robby-Bar*.

<sup>396</sup> List of individuals controlled during the raid at *Ellis-Bierbar*. Nov 11, 1957. The list includes three band members. PHS Berlin.

foreigners at the bar, “Americans, English, Austrians, Brazilians, Italians” were asked for identification, but then let go without documentation of their names. Whereas *Elli’s* served mostly working-class and petty-bourgeois locals, then, *Robby-Bar* in Schöneberg was popular with tourists from West Germany and abroad.

While all the bars raided catered overwhelmingly by cisgender men, women, both cisgender and transgender, were often also among the guests. Female customers were dealt with in contradictory ways. An article about the raid on *Amigo-Bar* in October 1957 in *der neue weg* notes that women were given particular scrutiny.<sup>397</sup> Female officers examined the gender identity of a female patron and the bar owner’s wife. The article does not give details on how the examination went about, but its description of the procedure as “tactless” and “embarrassing and bureaucratic” suggests that the women had to undress or were patted down so that police could determine that they were not “transvestites.” Officers singled out “transvestites” and young men suspected of being “streetwalking boys” directly and put them in police vans that were waiting in front of the bars. By contrast, a police report of a 1958 raid on *Kleist-Casino* notes that tables occupied by mixed groups were left alone.<sup>398</sup> It appears, then, that it was not a normatively gendered appearance alone, but rather the semblance of heterosexuality that could protect patrons at a queer bar from police attention.

With their massive police presence, these raids did not go unnoticed by the public. Police files and reporting have recorded immediate reactions to the raids, as well as bar owners’ efforts to cut their losses from the negative press. At *Elli’s Bier-Bar*, two patrons protested against police taking down their names. According to the police officer in charge, the raid was

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<sup>397</sup> “sind wir wieder einmal soweit?” *der neue ring* 1. „Taktlos” and “peinlich-bürokratisch”

<sup>398</sup> Report on raid on Robby-Bar and Kleist-Casino, March 10, 1958, PHS.

conducted in a generally calm atmosphere. Outside the bar, however, the atmosphere was far from quiet.

In front of the bar a large crowd of people, several hundred persons, had congregated, and they openly proclaimed their approval of the police action. Only one male person tried to cause unrest. This person was arrested, however. [...] After the action was finished, a group of officers remained close to the bar for security reasons, as the bar owner had expressed her worries that an “upset crowd might storm and demolish her bar after the police have left!” No incidents occurred, however.<sup>399</sup>

Hundreds of people congregating in front of the bar, voicing their approval for the raid – the bar owner certainly had reason to be worried. It is unclear from the officer’s narrative whether the male individual trying to cause unrest echoed the crowd’s sentiment, or whether he expressed frustration or anger with the police. The report does not explain, either, why the crowd approved of the raid. Were they upset with the bar’s clientele for its queerness, or was *Elli’s* simply too noisy? According to the police, complaints “from residents” had led to their previous raid on *Amigo-Bar*, suggesting that neighbors were another actor in struggles around queer spaces.<sup>400</sup> Even if the West Berlin press was often critical of the raids, there were also newspapers whose homophobic reporting contributed to hostile attitudes toward queer bars. The *7 Uhr Blatt am Sonntag Abend*’s coverage of the raid at *Elli’s* was titled “Fight the Vice,” and its report mixed images of crime and disease to create an impression of imminent threat at the hands of “streetwalking boys.”<sup>401</sup>

The Berlin detective squad has declared a massive fight against the “streetwalking boy” vice, which has been spreading in our city like a foul plague and has become a

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<sup>399</sup> KK Klose, Report on raid at *Elli’s*, Nov 11, 1957. PHS. “Vor dem Lokal hatte sich eine große Menschenmenge von mehreren hundert Personen angesammelt, die offen ihre Sympathie für die polizeiliche Aktion bekundeten. Lediglich eine männliche Person versuchte Unruhe zu stiften. Diese wurde jedoch zwangsgestellt. (...) Nach Schluß der Aktion wurde sicherheitshalber eine Gruppe Schutzpolizei in der Nähe des Lokals gelassen, da die Wirtin Besorgnisse äußerte, eine „aufgebrachte Menge könne nach Abzug der Polizei ihr Lokal stürmen und demolieren!“ Zu Zwischenfällen ist es jedoch nicht mehr gekommen.”

<sup>400</sup> *Der Abend*. “Großrazzia.”

<sup>401</sup> “Kampf dem Laster. Razzia in Kreuzberg.” *7 Uhr Blatt am Sonntag Abend*, November 10 1957, volume 11, Nr. 45a, clipping in police files, PHS.

nourishing ground for multiple other crimes. After a notorious meeting place of these elements, who are mostly workshy and adverse to any orderly life, was raided just two weeks ago in Schöneberg, the police struck last night in Kreuzberg.<sup>402</sup>

The article did not mention the bar's name, but its description as "bar on Skalitzer Straße that is known as a meeting place of homosexual circles" left little doubt as to which establishment was meant.<sup>403</sup> It is thus not surprising that the owner of *Robby-Bar*, raided two weeks after *Elli's*, pleaded with the officer in charge to inform the press only in a factual manner, if at all, and asked for confirmation of his "exemplary and correct" behavior –his cooperation in a smooth and quiet raid.<sup>404</sup> Indeed, the report notes that, in contrast to the events at *Elli's*, not a single guest at *Robby-Bar* protested against having their information recorded.

Despite the enormous effort undertaken by the police, the success of the raids, purportedly conducted to arrest "streetwalking boys," was questionable. The police carted off those patrons who were detained at the beginning of the raids to the State Office of Criminal Investigations, where they interrogated and photographed them and took their fingerprints, even if they could not make any charges against them.<sup>405</sup> Once personal information was on record in the "pink lists," it could be used in any arising court case, and it was accessible to federal and city governments.<sup>406</sup> Of the around one hundred individuals arrested in the three raids, only six seem to have been sentenced.<sup>407</sup> All of them were residents of East Berlin or the GDR, and at

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<sup>402</sup> "Die Berliner Kriminalpolizei hat dem „Strichjungen“-Unwesen, das in unserer Stadt wie eine üble Seuche ständig um sich greift und zu einem gefährlichen Nährboden zahlreicher anderer Verbrechen geworden ist, den Großkampf angesagt. Nachdem erst vor 14 Tagen in Schöneberg ein berüchtigter Treffpunkt der meist arbeitsscheuen und jedem geordneten Leben widersätzlichen Elemente ausgehoben worden war, schlug die Polizei in der vergangenen Nacht in Kreuzberg zu." Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> "Gastwirtschaft in der Skalitzer Straße, die als Verkehrslokal homosexueller Kreise bekannt ist" Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> "vorbildlich und korrekt" KK Klose, Report on the raid of November 21/22, 1957, Nov 22, 1957, PHS.

<sup>405</sup> *nacht-depesche*. "Eine geheimnisvolle Großrazzia."

<sup>406</sup> Whisnant, *Male homosexuality*, 30.

<sup>407</sup> 37 were temporarily detained at Amigo-Bar, 33 at Elli's, and 35 at Robby-Bar. *nacht-depesche*. "Sittendezernat hatte unruhiges Wochenende." November 11, 1957; *nacht-depesche*. "Berlin: Razzia der Kripo." November 22, 1957; *nacht-depesche*. "Erfolglose Nachtjagd unseres Kripochefs." *nacht-depesche*, October 29, 1957; On the sentences: File memo M II 2, Nov. 29, 1957, PHS.

twenty-three to thirty-nine years of age, they could not clearly be characterized as streetwalking boys. The sources give no hint on why, in this case, only East Germans were sentenced. Did the West Berlin court, like the SED, fear contacts between gay men from the East and the West? The six men were convicted to prison sentences between two and four weeks, with three years of probation during which they were prohibited from visiting the bar where they had been arrested, or, in one case, even all homosexual bars in West Berlin. The raids brought no progress in the investigations of the murders of five homosexual men. In the press, the position of the bar owner was again given precedence, whereas the police's failure was cause for gleeful comment. "No success for chief cop during nightly hunt," *nacht-depesche* titled about the raid on *Amigo-Bar*.<sup>408</sup>

The bar owner was quoted as saying,

Why do they give me a permit first and then ruin my business with such methods. It is known that I cater to homosexuals, but I make sure that streetwalking boys cannot take up space in my bar by letting in only members or their acquaintances.<sup>409</sup>

The statement highlights the tremendous risk that bar owners took, and it demonstrates the uncoordinated and at times contradictory policies of different state authorities. The district office had given the bar a permit without regard to its clientele, but the police raided. Whereas *Amigo-Bar*'s owner distanced his bar from "streetwalking boys," the owner of *Robby-Bar* explained that with the "streetwalking boys" gone, the other guests stopped coming, too, resulting in severe damage to his business.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> *nacht-depesche*. "Erfolglose Nachtjagd unseres Kripochefs." *nacht-depesche*, October 29, 1957.

<sup>409</sup> "Warum gibt man mir erst eine Konzession, um mit derartigen Methoden mein Geschäft zu ruinieren. Es ist bekannt, dass bei mir Homosexuelle verkehren, aber ich Sorge dafür, daß sich Strichjungen in meinem Lokal nicht breitmachen können, da von mir nur Klubmitglieder oder deren Bekannte eingelassen werden." Ibid. The reporter for the *nacht-depesche* noted, too, that the director of the police department's vice squad had not been informed about the raid, suggesting that animosities or competition within the police department may have played into the decision to raid the bars.

<sup>410</sup> Streifenbericht E I (S) über Lokale in C-burg, Schöneberg, Xberg, 25.3.1958. PHS Berlin.

Massive raids were the most spectacular and scary form of police surveillance. Throughout his service as chief of West Berlin's detective squad, Sangmeister asserted that their purpose was not the persecution of homosexuals, but only the crackdown on "streetwalking boys" and progress in murder investigations of homosexual men. The outcome of the raids – bar patrons arrested on the grounds of §175 – belied his claim, however. The raids endangered bar patrons' and owners' livelihoods. They demonstrated police power and created a climate of constant risk. Despite these severe restrictions, queer Berliners continued going out, enjoying the coziness and conversation, the dancing and flirting with others from near and far that West Berlin's bars offered.

#### *Youth Attacks on Bars*

Police raids did not present the only disturbance of queer sociality at the bars. While the angry crowd in front of *Elli's* dispersed in the night of the raid, three weeks later, the bar was attacked by a group of about fifteen youth who beat up patrons and destroyed furniture.<sup>411</sup> A similar attack is described in Peter Thilo's novel manuscript, too. In the late 1950s, protagonist Karl, now a law student, rewards himself for having studied hard by paying *Elli's* a visit, a place that he appreciates because of its patrons' non-normative gender:

After being surrounded by all the conforming students at university [...], Karl wanted to be among homosexuals again who affirmed their sexuality and who had gaily made themselves at home in it. That was not true for Karl; he no longer had to hide at home, but in the presence of his fellow students, he could not even inconspicuously wiggle his butt or speak in a nelly way, not even for fun. Here at *Elli's*, a nelly demeanor of different varieties was the custom.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Police report about attack on *Elli's* on November 29./30, 1957. Report Vorfälle im Zusammenhang mit Homosexualität, September 9, 1958. PHS Berlin. Az. 2 Ju Js 207.58.

<sup>412</sup> Thilo, *Ein Engel*, 335. "Karl wollte nur, nach all den angepassten Studenten, mit denen er in der Uni (...) zu tun hatte, wieder einmal unter Homosexuellen sein, die ihre Sexualität bejahten und die sich heiter darin eingerichtet hatten. Das traf nun zwar für Karl nicht zu, er brauchte sich zwar zu Hause nicht mehr verstecken, aber in der Gegenwart seiner Kommilitonen durfte er nicht einmal unauffällig mit dem Hintern wackeln oder tünftig sprechen, wenn auch nur zum Spaß. Hier bei *Elli* war tünftiges Gehabe in den verschiedenen Windstärken gang und gäbe."

Karl and his friend find a table and begin drinking when noise from the entrance commands their attention. While most guests flee to the back of the bar room and hide behind sofas and under tables, Karl joins the “four waiters in their white jackets” who “tried barring the entrance to a group of new guests.”<sup>413</sup> These new guests, Karl finds out soon, are “a kind of rocker- or biker-gang, clad in leather, at first sight six or eight strong figures” who were “not well-intentioned toward the homosexuals.”<sup>414</sup> The “rockers” fight the waiters and bar patrons with bar stools and ransack the bar area by throwing bottles, glasses, and ashtrays against the mirrored shelves. Karl, hit in the head with a bar stool for the third time, faints and awakes in his own blood. The bar owner, Elli, anxious to return to business as usual, rejects his plea to call the police, an ambulance, or a taxi. Stabilized by his friend, Karl walks to a nearby hospital where his cut is stitched, and then takes the subway back to his home in the suburb of Dahlem. The next day, the doctor prescribes multiples weeks of rest. The light-hearted narrative voice contradicts the violence captured in this episode and the terror that Elli’s guests must have felt. Elli herself is portrayed as a no-nonsense businesswoman whose concern lies with the reputation of her bar rather than her guests’ well-being. The episode further demonstrates the risks that queer bar-goers took upon themselves for a night out.

Again, these risks were distributed unevenly; those whose gender was non-normative, the effeminate men and “transvestites,” were in danger, whereas normatively masculine men had less to fear. Episodes recounted in two oral history interviews demonstrate this range of experiences. Whereas effeminate Orest Kapp felt terror at the sight of groups of youth on his way to or from a bar, conventionally masculine Fritz Schmebling had the privilege of passing as

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<sup>413</sup> Ibid. 335.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

one of them and then returning to the bar that his friends had disrupted, even making it his regular joint.

Teenage Orest Kapp and his friends would go to bars in Schöneberg where he met “really sweet men, often still boys,” for instance at *Trocadero* and later *Black Molly*.<sup>415</sup> But the way to the bar was dangerous, and before entering, Kapp took precautions:

You could never let yourself be seen on the streets. Especially not alone. And when you saw a group of youths, you’d best make yourself scarce. And at the bars that we went out to, there were bells, and you’d never go inside without checking if anyone is watching you.<sup>416</sup>

By contrast, Fritz Schmebling’s normative masculinity made for an entirely different bar-going experience. Schmebling came to West Berlin in 1963, a few days after his twenty-first birthday, to explore the city’s gay subculture. A carpenter, he had taken the opportunity to commit to two years of employment in West Berlin in exchange for evading the mandatory military service.<sup>417</sup>

Asked by the interviewer if he identified as “homosexual” when he moved to Berlin, Schmebling responds:

No... That makes you a pansy, and end of story! But I never felt like the female part. Until today I can make very little of that. [laughs] Maybe that has to do with my trade, too, I don’t know. A craftsman remains a craftsman, right?<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> Ibid. “hab dann in den Kneipen immer sehr sehr liebe Männer kennengelernt und Jungs meistens noch”

<sup>416</sup> Orest Kapp. Interview by Andreas Pretzel, and Janina Rieck. October 15, 2014. Archiv der anderen Erinnerungen. Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld. Berlin. “[I]ch hab Freunde gefunden, wir hatten viel Sex und das war ganz okay, aber es war gefährlich. Ähm, man durfte sich auf der Straße niemals blicken lassen. Alleine schon gar nicht. Und wenn man ’ne Gruppe Jugendlicher sah, dann hat man sich am besten verdrückt. Und in den Kneipen, in die wir dann gingen, da waren dann so Klingeln, und ähm, man ging auch nie rein ohne vorher zu gucken, ob irgendjemand zusieht.”

<sup>417</sup> Fritz Schmebling. Interview by Michael Bochow, and Karl-Heinz Steinle. January 24, 2015. Archiv der anderen Erinnerungen. Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld. Berlin.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid. Bochow: Als Sie dann nach West-Berlin gezogen sind, haben Sie sich dann schon als, damals hat man ja noch nicht „schwul“ gesagt, als „homosexuell“ definiert? Schmebling: Ne... Dann bist de halt ’ne Tunte, aus! Ich hab mich aber nie als weiblichen Part, hab ich mich nie jefühlt. Bis heute nicht, kann nix damit anfang’n. (lacht) Vielleicht hängt des och mit mein’ m Beruf zusammen, ich weiß nich. Handwerker bleibt Handwerker, ne? Kein Feingeist.

Schmehling hence did not identify as a “homosexual” because to him, the term signified femininity, and effeminacy remains strange to him to this day. His masculinity, which he links to his trade here, allowed him to pass for straight among his colleagues. His first experience of a gay bar then came as part of a group of young men – a clique – seeking to “go on a rampage” in a gay bar during a Saturday night tour of the red-light district of Potsdamer Straße.

I had a few colleagues at the company where I worked as carpenter. They said, Ooh, Saturday we’ll explore Potsdamer [Straße.] Well, I said, ok, good, I’ll come, right? Well and so you got to know the different establishments. Watched the ladies who think they’ll get ahead quicker by walking slowly. And then one of them said, now let’s go to Winterfeldtplatz to a gay bar and go on a rampage. Ok, why don’t you go along, at least you’ll know where to go. So we went into the old *Trocadero* and, (ahem,) well, you misbehaved a little bit, tipped beer into the ashtray, turned the ashtray on its head, etc. Then they kicked us out. We continued back towards Potsdamer [Straße] and I somehow split, said, I’m done for today. So I walked back to Winterfeldtplatz, knocked on the door, thinking, let’s see if they let me in. An older gentleman opened the door and said, I thought that you weren’t one of them. And he let me in. From then on, this *Trocadero* was my starting point.<sup>419</sup>

In Schmehling’s narration, causing a stir at a gay bar is part of an evening of fun for a group of young tradesmen on a night out in West Berlin’s red-light district: visiting “different establishments” – the term could refer to bars or to brothels – going “on a rampage” at a gay bar, and then returning to Potsdamer Straße, whether to continue drinking or to purchase sexual services from one of the streetwalkers. Compared to the violence at *Elli’s* described by Peter Thilo, the disturbances Schmehling mentions – creating a mess by tipping over beer-soaked

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<sup>419</sup> Ibid. Wir waren also och so ´n paar Kollegen bei dieser Firma, bei der ich angefangen habe als Schreiner. Die hab´n dann mal jesagt, ouh, Samstag mach´n wir mal ´n Zug durch die Potsdamer. Na, ich sage, gut, ok, ich geh mit, nich? Na und dann hat man so verschiedene Etablissements kennen gelernt. Hat dann die Damen betrachtet, die denken, durch langsames Gehen schneller vorwärts zu kommen und da sagt dann eener von den Kerlen, jetzt jeh´n wir mal an den Winterfeldtplatz in ´ne schwule Kneipe und dann mach´n wir Bambule. Ok, da gehst de mal mit, weest de wenigstens, wo de hingehen musst. Also wir sind reingekommen in das alte *Trocadero* damals und (äh) naja, man hat sich dann also bisschen daneben benommen, hat Bier in den Aschenbecher gekippt, den Aschenbecher umgedreht und und und. Dann sind wir rausgeschmissen worden. Wir sind dann wieder Richtung Potsdamer jezogen und ich hab dann irgendwie mich abgesetzt, sach, ich mag nich mehr. Bin also zurückgegangen zum Winterfeldtplatz, hab da an der Tür wieder jepocht, denk, mal seh´n, ob se mich rinlassen. Macht dann ´n älterer Herr auf und sagt, det hab ich mir jedacht, dass du nich zu den´n jehörst! Und hat mich rinjelaassen, mhm. Fortan war dieses *Trocadero* für mich der Anlaufpunkt.

ashtrays – appear benign, like a prank. But to someone like Orest Kapp, who was a regular guest at *Trocadero* and whose effeminacy would have made him a “pansy” in Schmebling’s eyes, the group’s disruption of the familiar space of the gay bar would have been terrifying. Schmebling’s normative masculinity allowed him to pass for straight among his colleagues. While his entry to the world of gay bars came as part of a group of hostile youths, the fact that he was let back in suggests that he did not play a leading role in the disturbances, and that the experienced older doorman claimed to be able to distinguish his normative masculinity from heterosexuality.

### *Memories of Going Out in West Berlin*

As seen in the patron lists from *Elli’s* and *Robby-Bar*, East Berliners could be found in West Berlin bars, but in small numbers. Going out in the West was attractive, but expensive. Rita “Tommy” Thomas, a dog groomer born in Berlin-Weissensee in 1931, had friends in West Berlin. She and her girlfriend Helli [Figure 18] spent their Friday and Saturday nights exploring the bars. In an oral history interview, Tommy remembers exchanging five Ostmarks for one Westmark, which made for a frugal nightlife experience:

We were pretty spartan, we maybe ordered one schnapps and one lemonade, and held on to that all night. While the others drank wine. Or we drank a bottle of wine, not a bottle, a glass. When there were a few of us, a bottle and then everyone got a glass. So as I said, you could have a conversation there. And that was a lot. That was pretty good.<sup>420</sup>

Tommy describes holding on to one drink over the course of an entire evening but follows up with the remark that talking to other patrons at the bar was a lot already. Her lack of means

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<sup>420</sup> “[D]a ham wa ziemlich spartanisch, also wir ham uns denn vielleicht een Schnaps bestellt und ne Brause, und da 'n janzen Abend dran jesessen [...]. Die andern ham ja Wein jetrunken und allet, aber. Oder wir ham ne Flasche Wein jetrunken, nee, 'ne Flasche nich, 'n Glas. Wenn wa mehrere warn 'ne Flasche und jeder hat denn 'n Glas abbekommen. Also it war nich so dass man sich da, man konnte sich, wie jesagt, unterhalten. Und dit war schon viel. War schon janz jut.” BMH. Interview mit Rita Thomas, “Tommy”. 19.11.2016. Interviewteam: Babette Reicherdt, Karl-Heinz Steinle, Kamera und Ton: Katharina Rivilis, Transkription: Janina Rieck.

affected her experience of queer nightlife, but it did not exclude her from queer sociality.

Tommy was introduced to her first queer bar, *Bei Rudi* in Schöneberg, by friends.

Well, somebody said, I don't know who it was, some acquaintance or so, I met a lot of people, after all. Why don't you come along! So I went along and looked around. That was the first time I was in a club like that. I just looked, yeah. There was dancing there, too, but I was too strange still, and I was also very young.<sup>421</sup>

Tommy describes having “come along and looked around” in the club, then repeats that she “only looked,” being “too strange” to join in the dancing during her first visit at a queer bar, as well as being “very young.” But later, when she had become familiar with queer nightlife, she continued to be a talker rather than a dancer. She describes the typical course of an evening at a lesbian bar as follows: “You sat down and talked some and drank some and maybe made a date.”<sup>422</sup> *Bei Rudi* was named after its owner, a woman whose elegant masculinity impressed Tommy. “Rudi was wearing a tie, and always a suit, and always had red lips, and ran the show.”<sup>423</sup> Rudi later took over *Fürstenu*, a club in the backyard of Adalbertstraße 21 in Kreuzberg.<sup>424</sup> This bar became Tommy and Helli's regular haunt, an integral part of their everyday life, as her narration makes clear.

Then I got another garden, at Storkower Straße, at Oderbruchkippe. So I continued running the dog salon, and looking after the animals, all the ducks and chickens, three ducks and three chickens, not so many. And in the evenings we always went out to number 21. Adalbertstraße 21. There was dance in the evening, at eight p.m. there was dance, and some coziness, you could talk to others. Most of the time there were women there only, no men.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> “Ja, äh, da hat jemand jesacht, also ick weeb nich mehr, wer dit war, irgendwie Bekannte oder so, ick hab ja viel Leute kennenjerlert, äh: Komm doch mal mit! Jo, und da bin ich mitjegangen und habe dort mal mich umjeguckt. Da war ick det erste Mal da in so 'nem Club. Hab nur jeguckt, ja. Die ham da och jetantz und so, aber da war ick noch zu fremd, da war ick och noch sehr jung.” Ibid.

<sup>422</sup> “[M]an hat sich hinjersetzt und jeredet und wat jetrunken und vielleicht sich noch verabredet.” Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Rudi war och mit Schlips und Kragen, und immer im Anzug, ja, und hatte immer rote Lippen, und hat da den Laden jeschmissen. Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> Rudi is named as an owner of *Fürstenu* in *Von anderen Ufern*. “Kreuzberg tanzt.” In *Von anderen Ufern*, 252.

<sup>425</sup> Also hab ich n andern Garten jekriegt, in ne Storkower Straße, an ne Oderbruchkippe. Und da hab ick weiter also den Hundesalon gehabt und die Tiere versorgt, da hat ich auch die ganzen Enten und Hühner, drei, drei Enten und drei Hühner, also nich so viel so groß. Und denn sind wir immer abends sind wir weggegangen zum, zur 21. Das



Figure 18. Helli and Tommy in the 1950s. FFBIZ Berlin.

In Tommy's narration, going out is as regular a feature of her everyday life as her work as dog groomer, and her care for her garden and animals. She also remembers *Eldorado*, where her Charlie Chaplin costume once won the first prize at a masquerade ball, and *Kathi und Eva* in Schöneberg, where an all-women band played for dancing late at night. *Bei Rudi* and *Kathi und Eva* were women-

only in her memory, though it is unclear in the interview

whether these spaces were exclusively female all the time or just for one night. *Fürstenau* and *Kathi und Eva* were also remembered by Renate, an older lesbian woman interviewed in the 1980s.<sup>426</sup> Renate and her girlfriend Klara, both born in the 1920s, were a working-class couple living in Spandau, a western suburb. They worked heavy manual labor jobs, as *Trümmerfrauen* [women who helped clear the ruins after the Second World War], welder, and turner, but were also out of work for longer periods of time. Nevertheless, they made their way downtown to visit a queer bar now and then.

I learned of the bars from acquaintances, after the war. There was the bar in Adalbertstraße, in Kreuzberg, by the Wall. It had an upper floor where the heteros were. Everybody took the same entrance. On the lower floor, it belonged to two girls who were a little older already. You should have seen them! That was around '60. We went along with a co-worker once. It was like this: back then, they were all still coming from East Berlin. They sat there in suits, tailcoats, smoking fat cigars. There was a round table, a kind of regulars' table. Then there was a dancefloor, not located separately, but by the entrance. An all-male band was playing on the dancefloor. [...] Suddenly a girl was peeking through the door. They were fighting. Every so often there are pretty intense scenes of jealousy! We only went there twice because I did not like it so much. Then we'd always go to Fuggerstraße, there was a bar there, "Eva and ..." They had a music box. What I did not like so much about it was, to be

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war die Adalbertstraße 21. Da war Tanz abends, naja, abends um achte war Tanz, und da war 'n bisschen Jemütlichkeit, konnte man sich mit andern unterhalten. Meistens, da warn nur Frauen, keine Männer.

<sup>426</sup> Ilse Kokula, "Wir Leiden Nicht Mehr, Sondern Sind Gelitten!" *Lesbisch Leben in Deutschland* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1987), 115–17.

honest, that there were rich women there. We could not consume anything there, after all. We did always drink our martini, though. Then the two of us talked, but you did not get in touch with others there. It was so upper-class, we couldn't really keep up. And it was pretty much the same on Goethestraße.<sup>427</sup>

In Renate's account, class divisions across lesbian bar spaces become apparent. *Firstenau*, situated in the heart of proletarian Kreuzberg and very close to the zonal boundary, is popular with East Berliners and masculine women wearing suits and dress-coats and smoking cigars. The direct sequence of these two groups in her narration – East Berliners, masculine women – may express that women from East Berlin frequently adhered to a style of female masculinity that is known from photographs of 1920s lesbian bar culture.<sup>428</sup> Fights between women, caused by jealousy, were not uncommon according to Renate. This, too, evokes historical precedent: in his 1914 description of homosexual community life, Magnus Hirschfeld had described women's bars as “more rowdy” than men's.<sup>429</sup>

By contrast, *Kathi und Eva* in Schöneberg catered to a wealthy audience. In Renate's narrative, her and Klara's poverty prevented the couple from socializing with other patrons: it was so “upper-class” that they “couldn't keep up”. Still, she says they “always” came here, and “always” drank their martini, suggesting that despite the class difference, they were regulars at

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<sup>427</sup> Ibid. 115-16. “Durch Bekannte habe ich nach dem Krieg von den Lokalen erfahren. Da war das Lokal in der Adalbertstraße, in Kreuzberg an der Mauer. Oben war noch ein Stockwerk, da waren dann die Heteros. Alle gingen durch den gleichen Eingang. Unten gehörte es zwei Mädchen, das waren auch schon ältere Kaliber. Die hätten ihr erleben müssen! Das war so um 60. Mit einer Kollegin sind wir mal mitgegangen. Das war so, da kamen sie damals alle noch aus Ostberlin. Die saßen da, in Anzügen, mit Fracks; dicke Zigarren geraucht. Es gab einen runden Tisch, so eine Art Stammtisch. Dann war da ein Tanzsaal, der war nicht separat, sondern am Eingang. Im Tanzsaal haben Männer gespielt, eine Männerkapelle. [...] Plötzlich guckte ein Mädchen durch die Tür. Da haben die sich in der Wolle gehabt. Es spielen sich dann und wann ganz schöne Eifersuchtsszenen ab! Da waren wir nur zweimal, weil mir das nicht gefallen hat. Dann sind wir immer in die Fuggerstraße, da war eine Bar, "Eva und ..." Die hatten eine Musikbox. Es hat mir insofern nicht gefallen, weil dort - ganz ehrlich - reiche Frauen waren. Wir konnten da ja nichts verzehren. Wir haben zwar immer unseren Martini getrunken. Dann haben wir uns beide unterhalten, aber mit anderen bist du da nicht in Kontakt gekommen. Das war so vornehm, wir haben da praktisch nicht mithalten können. Und in der Goethestraße war es ziemlich dasselbe.”

<sup>428</sup> For instance, photo of a lesbian club from Hirschfeld's *Geschlechtskunde*, 1931, reprinted on cover of Dobler's *Von anderen Ufern*.

<sup>429</sup> Hirschfeld, *The homosexuality of men and women*, 787.

*Kathi und Eva*. The place on Goethestraße that Renate describes as similar to *Kathi and Eva* was likely the lesbian bar *Inconnue*, discussed later in this chapter.

Hans-Joachim Engel, born in 1935 and a resident of East Berlin since the late 1950s, was aware of queer bars in East Berlin, but they were not of interest to him. “Before the Wall was built, I never went out in the East. Because what was I supposed to do there?” he put it, suggesting that bars in East Berlin had little appeal, at least to him.<sup>430</sup> Engel’s first experience of a gay bar was the *Kleist-Casino*, one of West Berlin’s most popular and most long-running bars. He described this visit, most likely in 1958, in ambivalent terms.

It was strange, we met at Kleist-Casino, and, well, I was so shocked there after all, and he was the only one who came up to me, he came up to me in a really nice way, and so I, well, dancing was exaggerated, but, in any way, we made a date for the following Saturday at Kleist-Casino. So I dressed up and made myself look pretty, and he showed up, too, but nothing happened. I mean, we had a good conversation, we were entertained, all of that. [...] And it was almost lights out, and I say, what now? [The other man said:] I know a café that’s open a little longer. But I wanted something else entirely. [...] So I said, listen. What’s going to happen now, my place or yours. And he hesitated briefly, then said, well, we can go to my place. In Rudow.<sup>431</sup>

Like Tommy, Engel did not feel comfortable during his first visit to a queer bar: he expresses his shock, though without vocalizing what exactly was shocking to him. Nevertheless, his night was a success, as he met a “nice” man, and the two made a date at *Kleist-Casino* for the following

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<sup>430</sup> “Also ich bin ja vor dem Mauerbau im Osten nirgends hingegangen. Weil, was sollt ich da?” The quote is from my own interview with Hans-Joachim Engel, Berlin, October 4, 2017. Mr. Engel was one of Maria Borowski’s interviewees for her dissertation. Maria Borowski was extraordinarily generous in not only letting me access some of her interview transcriptions (with the consent of her interviewees), but also putting me in touch with Hans-Joachim Engel. Mr. Engel in turn was so generous to meet with me on multiple occasions and share his memories. My sincere thanks go to him. Maria Borowski’s dissertation is published as *Parallelwelten: Lesbisch-schwules Leben in der frühen DDR*. Berlin: Metropol-Verlag, 2017.

<sup>431</sup> My own interview with Hans-Joachim Engel, Berlin, October 4, 2017. “Das war ganz komisch, wir haben uns kennengelernt im Kleist-Casino, und, äh, ich war ja so schockiert da, und es war der einzige, der ran kam, der kam so nett ran, und dann hab ich mich also, tanzen war ja übertrieben, aber auf alle Fälle, und da haben wir uns verabredet für nächsten Sonnabend im Kleist-Casino. Und dann aufgeschmückt und schön gemacht und so, und der kam auch, und da passierte aber nichts. Also, wir haben uns da gut unterhalten, gut amüsiert, alles, was weiß ich. [...] Und es war dann fast schon Schluß, und sag ich, ja, was ist denn nun, ja, ich kenn noch ein Café, das hat noch länger auf, und, ich wollt ja ganz was andres. [...] Hab ich gesagt, pass mal uff. Was passiert denn jetzt, zu dir oder zu mir. Und dann hat er ein bisschen gezögert, meint naja, wir können ja zu mir. Ja, Rudow.”

weekend. They hit it off, and when the night drew to a close, Engel self-confidently asked his date: “Your place or mine?” After a night spent together at the other man’s apartment in Rudow, a suburb in the city’s southeast, Engel would find out that his lover was a West Berlin police officer. The two kept dating until the Wall separated them permanently.<sup>432</sup>

### **The 1960s: The Wall, Continuing Raids, and a Growing Resistance Among Bar Owners**

In her oral history interview, Tommy, the East Berlin dog groomer, describes returning home to Friedrichshain from a night out at the Kreuzberg bar *Bei Rudi* in the early morning hours of a weekend night in August 1961.

That night we were out in West Berlin, at Rudi’s, Adalbertstraße. And early in the morning, around one, two, we got to the border at Oberbaumbrücke. [...] There were some policemen standing around there, and we chatted with them, a little drunk as we were (points to her head). And then the policeman said, Well, if you cross now, then you’re over there. And will never be allowed back here. Think about that. [...] Well, we did not have the intention [to stay in the West.] I had all my animals here in the garden, and Helli [her girlfriend]. [...] The West Berlin police said: You can cross, but then you can’t come back. They were informed already. Well, and since then, we could not come to West Berlin. That was the last day. One doesn’t mourn after things, then, after all, we had our life here. Only that, a little bit, the going out, because we did not have that here, we did miss that a little bit, right?<sup>433</sup>

At Oberbaumbrücke, the bridge over the Spree river that connects Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain, Tommy, her girlfriend Helli, and a mutual friend were stopped by West Berlin police, who cautioned them that if they crossed now, they would never be able to return to West Berlin. It

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<sup>432</sup> After the fall of the Wall, Engel reconnected with this former boyfriend, who still performs as *Travestiedame* for his friends. Engel interview, October 4, 2017.

<sup>433</sup> BMH. Interview mit Rita Thomas, “Tommy”. 19.11.2016. Interviewteam: Babette Reicherdt, Karl-Heinz Steinle, Kamera und Ton: Katharina Rivilis, Transkription: Janina Rieck, Auslassungen in eckigen Klammern von Andrea Rottmann. In dieser Nacht warn wir drüben, bei Rudi, Adalbertstraße. Und wir kommen, früh morgens natürlich, ne, früh morgens um ein, zwei, kommen wir an die Grenze [...] Oberbaum sind wa rüber, [...] und da stehen Polizisten, da ham wa uns unterhalten, hatten ´n kleenen (zeigt zum Kopf) Dröhnung drin, und da sagt der Polizist: Also wenn se jetzt rüber jehn, denn sind se drüben. Also Sie dürfen nie mehr hierher. Überlegen sich dit. [...] Naja, wir hatten ja nich die Absicht, [...] ick hatte meine Tiere hier alle im Garten, ja, und mit Helli und. [...] Bloß die West-Polizei hat jesagt: Sie können rüber, aber kommen nich mehr hierher. Die warn schon informiert. Na, und seitdem kamen wa nie wieder rüber. Dit war der letzte Tach. Naja man, so trauert man och nich nach, wir hatten ja hier unser Leben. Bloß dit ´n bisschen, dit Weggehen, weil wa dit hier nich so hatten, hat uns jefehlt ´n bisschen, ne.

was the early hours of August 13, 1961, and the GDR had begun sealing off the border to the West and building the Berlin Wall. Tommy had her garden and animals in East Berlin, which is why she and Helli had “no intention” to stay in the West, as she puts it in retrospect. Using the impersonal pronoun “one,” she concludes that there was no point in mourning what had been: “One doesn’t mourn after things, then, after all, we had our life here.” But her next sentence suggests that the transition to life behind the Wall was not so smooth and painless after all. “Only that, a little bit, the going out, because we did not have that here, we missed that a little bit,” she continues. Despite her repeated use of the diminutive “a little bit,” the lack that Tommy felt, suddenly unable to spend her weekend nights in the company of other lesbian women in queer public spaces, becomes palpable here.

Hans-Joachim Engel found himself having to make the same decision: staying in the West or going home to the East, forever? He was dating the West Berlin police officer, but his main employment as a decorator was in East Berlin. He had recently married a pregnant friend who needed a father for her child, and the three shared an apartment in Stalinstadt. Since the baby was born, Engel helped provide for the child, taking on odd jobs in West Berlin to have some Westmark to buy “*Penaten* baby lotion, bananas, and what else you need as a young father.”<sup>434</sup> In August 1961, he was working night shifts as a reception clerk at a friend’s guesthouse in West Berlin. On Saturday, August 12, he was out at an artists’ bar on Kurfürstendamm when he received the news from West Berlin actors returning from their performance at East Berlin’s variety theatre *Friedrichstadtpalast*. Staying in the West was not an option for him, however.

I would not have stayed there. First off, I had family. And then I explained to everyone, this will last four weeks, maybe, then they’ll wall us in around Berlin, and then the Saxons can’t flee anymore and that’s that. Because in Berlin, nobody fled to

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<sup>434</sup> Engel interview, Oct 4, 2017. “*Penaten-Creme, Bananen und was man so eben als junger Vater braucht.*”

the West. People could visit their grandma every day, and you could work a little bit in the West, you know. The farmers sold eggs in the West, etc. Well, that was it [...]. That was that famous night.<sup>435</sup>

“First off, I had family,” Engel explains – he had married his friend and helped provide for the baby. He also did not expect the city’s division to be permanent. The everyday reality of the divided, but entangled city, where visiting the other part for leisure or work remained common despite the escalating Cold War, had become so entrenched as to appear normal and unchangeable. When prompted if the separation from his West Berlin boyfriend was not painful, Engel responded,

That is the only thing [that was painful], otherwise it did not really affect me much. I’m not sure why, I had a good job, I had a circle of friends here. I still had all my family. [...] I had to return, come hell or high water. And you had to console yourself, whole families were torn apart, I mean, that was sad, too, but, [...] And, I don’t know, for me that was also, the first year, [I thought] still, that can’t work for long. A few people thought that. [...] And then I have to say, we were on the Island of the Blissful. We had Western radio, Western television, we were up to date. When I visited my friends in Dresden, [they were living in the] Valley of the Clueless.<sup>436</sup>

Engel here weighs the pain of separation from his boyfriend against that of others whose “whole family” was divided by the Wall. By contrast, he had “a good job” and “a circle of friends” in East Berlin, and, “during the first year,” he held on to the belief that “this” – the Wall – “could not work for long.” And in contrast to his friends in Dresden, who were living in the “Valley of

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<sup>435</sup> Engel interview, Oct 4, 2017. Ich wäre auch nicht da geblieben, erstens hatt ich ja Familie, und ich hab allen erklärt, das dauert vielleicht vier Wochen, dann mauern sie uns ein rund rum Berlin, und dann können die Sachsen nicht mehr abhauen und denn ist jut. Denn in Berlin ist ja keiner abgehauen nach dem Westen. Die konnten ja jeden Tag Oma besuchen und man konnte im Westen auch bissel arbeiten gehen oder, was weeiß ich. Die Bauern haben Eier verkauft im Westen oder so. Nich. Na, und das war's, dann hab ich mir meine Dollar eingerahmt, und die hingen dann bestimmt zehn Jahre an der Wand. Das war's. Ja. Das war diese berühmte Nacht.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid. Das ist das Einzigste [was schmerzhaft war], ansonsten hat mich das eigentlich gar nicht tangiert. Ich weiß gar nicht warum, ich hatte vernünftige Arbeit, ich hatte hier einen Freundeskreis. Ich hatte noch die ganze Familie. Und, öh, weiß ich nicht. Ich musste zurück auf Biegen und Brechen. Und dann musste man sich damit trösten, dass ganze Familien auseinandergerissen waren, also, ich mein, das war auch traurig, aber, so, nicht. [...] Und ich, weiß ich nicht, also, für mich war das auch, das erste Jahr immer noch, das kann ja nicht lange gut gehen. [...] Es waren mehrere, die so gedacht haben. [...] [U]nd dann muss ich sagen, wir waren ja auf der Insel der Glückseligen. Wir hatten West-Funk, wir hatten West-Fernsehen, wir waren ja auf dem Laufenden. Und wenn ich meine Freunde in Dresden oder so besucht hab, Tal der Ahnungslosen, ja.

the Clueless,” he had access to Western radio and television and was “up to date.” At least in retrospect, then, Engel soon accommodated himself with the new situation. Whereas for Tommy, the Wall meant being shut off from public spaces of lesbian sociality until a small activist queer scene developed in East Berlin ten years later, Engel now discovered that there were gay bars in East Berlin, too. For a while, he became a regular at *City-Klause* and *Esterhazy-Keller*, both in immediate vicinity to the Friedrichstraße train station, where all of East Berlin’s queer venues in the 1960s were congregated.

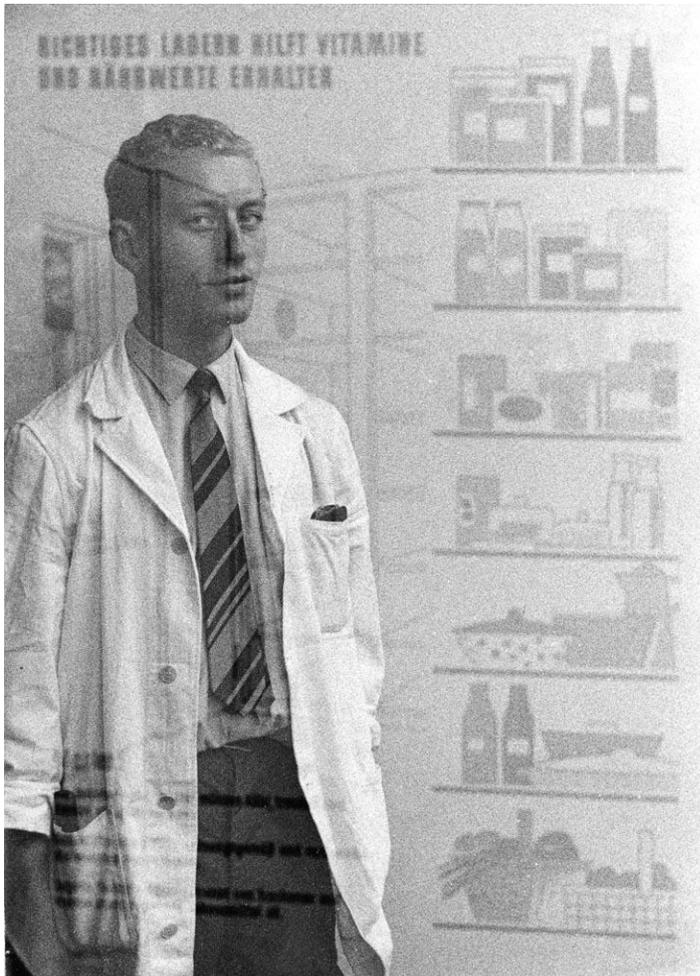


Figure 19. Hans-Joachim Engel photographed by Mark B. Anstendig at his job as decorator. Courtesy of the artist.

### *Queer Bars in East Berlin in the 1960s*

*City-Klause*, a small venue run by an Austrian, served as a workman’s pub during the day. Engel remembers the men working at the hauling companies around Friedrichstraße going there for breakfast. At night, the entrance was barred off, and a doorman controlled access. Its interior as described by Engel, four tables and a bar complete with a *Hungerturm*, a glass cabinet showcasing sandwiches, was reminiscent of traditional Berlin pubs such as the *Mulackritze* preserved in Charlotte von Mahlsdorf’s *Gründerzeitmuseum*.<sup>437</sup> One of the four tables was the regulars’ table, where, according to Engel, a rich fish monger held court with her circle of young gay men, “a real pansy club” that spent their summer vacation together in Ahrenshoop, on the Baltic coast.<sup>438</sup> Engel does not elaborate the relationship between the fish monger and the young effeminate men, but his phrasing that “she had at least five or six” suggests that they may have worked as “streetwalking boys” for her. Stasi informant “Franz Moor” reported on female-led

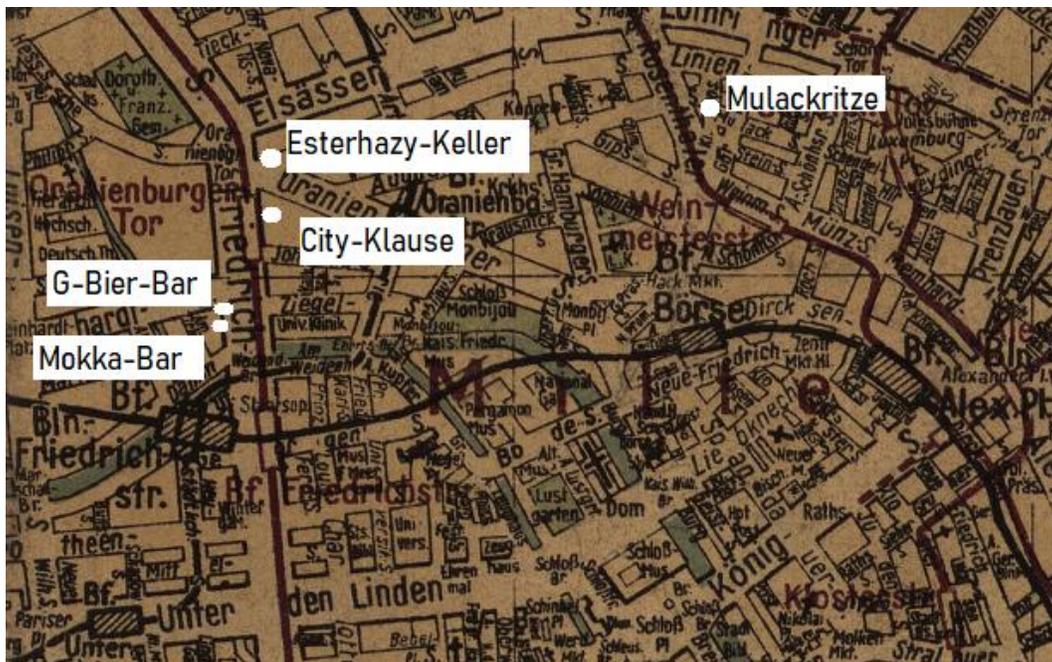


Figure 20. Detail: Bars in East Berlin.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid. Eine Dame herrschte da, Fischhändlerin, die regierte diesen Stammtisch irgendwie. Und hatte ihre Jungs da alle. Und die zogen dann im Sommer alle zwei Wochen nach Ahrenshoop. Aber richtig Tuntclub.

male prostitution at *City-Klaus* and the nearby *Esterhazy-Keller* in February 1961. He described two women, allegedly “former lesbian girlfriends,” running a streetwalking boy business that doubled as the spy ring “Ring of the Nibelung.” In his report, “Moor” writes that the men were to report on their tricks’ “political views,” and that they were working for the “MfS,” the Stasi ministry.<sup>439</sup> Their job thus appears to have been spying on fellow GDR citizens primarily, not on Westerners.

Another bar that Hans-Joachim Engel remembered was the *Mokka-Bar* in the Sofia House, also on Friedrichstraße. This bar was run by “two ladies” as Engel recalls. He describes it as a “transit” place, where “you’d meet one another” but then move on.<sup>440</sup> Lesbian Stasi informant “Maria Jahn” mentioned *Mokka-Bar* as “the meeting spot for lesbian women” in a report from 1967.<sup>441</sup> Next to *Mokka-Bar*, there was the *G-Bier-Bar*, which “Jahn” described as “meeting place for homosexuals and lesbians.”<sup>442</sup> According to historian Jens Dobler, all queer bars on Friedrichstraße, with the exception of *Mokka-Bar*, had to close by the end of the 1960s for unknown reasons.<sup>443</sup> *Mokka-Bar* itself was shut down in the mid-1970s to make way for an *Intershop*, a store where high-quality products that were generally not available for purchase in the GDR could be bought with Western currency.<sup>444</sup> Clearing Friedrichstraße of queer bars may thus have been motivated by the dual goals of presenting visitors with a respectable facade of the Cold War front city and with using the prime location, just a short walk from the central transit station of Friedrichstraße, to generate much-needed Western currency for the GDR economy.

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<sup>439</sup> BStU Gh 90/78 A, 111, 125-6. „ehemals lesbische Freundinnen“, „Nibelungenring.“

<sup>440</sup> Und dann gab es nachher dann nachher die Mokka-Bar im Haus Sofia. Da waren zwei Damen drin. Das war auch so Durchgangsverkehr, aber nicht hundert Prozent, aber man traf sich sag ich mal so.

<sup>441</sup> BStU BV FfO AIM 412/70, Band P, 173-74.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

<sup>443</sup> Dobler, “Den Heten eine Kneipe wegnehmen,” 167.

<sup>444</sup> Teresa Tammer cites a Stasi informant in 1976 complaining about the shut-down of “Mocca Bar” at Hotel Sofia on Friedrichstraße and its replacement with an “Intershop” catering to western tourists. Tammer, “Verräter oder Vermittler? Inoffizielle Informanten zwischen Staatssicherheit und DDR-Schwulenbewegung,” 115.

### *Limiting Police Access to Bars in West Berlin*

Though police raids continued in West Berlin through the decade, bar owners began protecting their businesses in the 1960s, countering the harassment in twofold ways: introducing physical barriers to control access to their bars, and challenging the legality of the raids.<sup>445</sup> What is more, as West Berlin's isolation from West Germany solidified over the course of the 1960s and the city became a center of student unrest and political protest, the consensus on keeping checks on the city's queer subculture, if there had ever been one, eroded. The police, different levels of city administration and the city's tourist office now all pursued different interests in regulating nightlife.

Even in the late 1940s, bargoers in some queer bars had to ring a bell to be allowed entry.<sup>446</sup> As seen above, this practice was no protection from violent thugs or police raids, but it served at least as a modest obstacle to disruptions. State authorities tolerated the practice until the 1960s, when bar owners began shutting police out. The first record of concerns about a bar restricting police access is from 1960, when the Senator for the Economy inquired with the police president if a bar owner could lock his doors while guests were present inside.<sup>447</sup> The inquiry was prompted by a Schöneberg host who had lost the dancing license for his bar and now opened his doors only upon knocking. The police replied cautiously that “the facilitation of surveillance alone” would not be enough to force a host to keep doors open, but that “indecent acts committed in the closed bar” would provide a valid reason.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> *Der Weg*'s March 1965 issue again mentions raids in Berlin, allegedly conducted to arrest “Strichjungen” and thus prevent the murder of homosexuals. Argo, Jack. “Flickwerk und Stümperei.” *Der Weg* 15, no. 3 (1965): 52–53.

<sup>446</sup> Akantha. “Berlin tanzt!” *Der Kreis* 17, September (1949): 8-10, 22.

<sup>447</sup> Schreiben des Senators für Wirtschaft und Kredit an den Polizeipräsidenten, September 2, 1960. LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7802. The host owned a bar on Augsburgstr. 5. The file gives no indication of whether the bar catered to a queer audience or not.

<sup>448</sup> “Nur zur Erleichterung der Überwachung wird ein Gastwirt zur Offenhaltung des Schankbetriebes während des Ausschanks nicht angehalten werden können. Im Einzelfall mag es jedoch möglich sein, ihn dazu durch Auflagen nach §11 des Gaststättengesetzes zu zwingen, weil (...) b) in der abgeschlossenen Schankwirtschaft Handlungen

In 1963, the Neukölln bar *Jansa-Hütte* came under police scrutiny for keeping its doors shut. Frequent police patrols – two or three times a week – often found the bar closed, or if open, access was limited by a sign on a door reading “private party.” On the occasion of a “Japanese lampion celebration,” a patrol report noted “male patrons in women’s clothing,” and unknown guests were turned away by the owner himself. Summoned to the precinct, twenty-two-year-old owner Peter Raudonis explained that he kept the bar closed because it was a meeting place for homosexuals.<sup>449</sup> In the report to the district office, the police expressed their concern that “by consciously making his bar a meeting place for homosexuals,” Raudonis was promoting indecency, and they proposed to run another background check of the owner.<sup>450</sup> They also noted that a youth center had just opened in the bar’s immediate vicinity and suggested that the bar might thus run counter to public interest. *Jansa-Hütte* remained open under Raudonis’s direction, however. It does not reappear in the police files until 1967, indicating that the young bar owner’s self-confident stance toward police surveillance had been successful.

### *The Rowdy Commission*

By the mid-1960s, protecting one’s patrons and one’s own livelihood from police raids by installing bell and light systems had become a widely followed practice of West Berlin bar owners.<sup>451</sup> They doubled as protection from police and homophobic bullies, warning customers

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vorgenommen werden, die gegen die Sittlichkeit verstoßen.” Antwort Polizeipräsident an Senator, September 13, 1960, LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7802.

<sup>449</sup> Polizeipräsident in Berlin, Aktennotiz Schankwirtschaft in Berlin 44, Jansastr. 11, Erlaubnisträger: Peter Raudonis, 24.10.1963; LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7802. Ibid. Information in a Stasi file suggests that *Jansa-Hütte* was under the direction of a homosexual owner from 1954-1958, too. BStU Gh 90/878 A, 178.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> West Berlin tabloid B.Z. wrote: “Vor einigen Tagen erteilten die Wirtschaftsabteilungen der Bezirksämter Inhabern verschwiegener Bars und Nachtlokale neue Konzessionsauflagen. (...) Dieser Schlag gegen allzu diskrete Etablissements war von langer Hand vorbereitet worden. Ein Sprecher des Wirtschaftssenators erklärte gestern der BZ: “Die Sittenpolizei hatte sich an uns gewandt. Sie hatte immer häufiger Schwierigkeiten bei der Ausübung ihrer Pflichten.” (...) In einigen Fällen war das Warnsystem perfekt: Lokalbesucher wurden durch Lichtsignale alarmiert, die der Druck auf den Klingelknopf auslöste.” B.Z. “Razzia ohne Voranmeldung.” February 16, 1967. Newspaper clipping in LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7802.

inside of possible danger. The police's frustration about hampered surveillance combined with two other factors that led to a heightened concern with "indecent" and crimes associated with queer bars among authorities. Ultimately, this concern resulted in the formation of a "Rowdy Commission" in city government and a massive, multiple-year campaign against queer bars, as well as other bars considered hosts of deviance. Apart from bar owners' securing of doors, two elements contributed to this campaign: First, West Berlin's description as a homosexual haven in the West German press, which led to worries about the city's reputation among police and some city officials. Second, a series of violent incidents at West Berlin bars prompted police and Senate to take action against bar owners considered "irresponsible" and blamed for allowing crime to happen, or, worse, for promoting it.

The ensuing exchanges over regulating the city's nightlife, negotiated between the police, different agencies in city government, and the city's tourism office in the "Rowdy Commission," demonstrate competition over who could control nightlife. If the proponents of an unrestricted nightlife prevented some, though not all, of the suggested regulations, this had less to do with a Berlin tradition of *laissez-faire*. Rather, West Berlin's geographical isolation, and its separation from many of the city's major sights by the Wall, meant that its infamous nightlife was a precious part of its economy, an asset that the city could not afford to lose through the imposition of stricter regulations.<sup>452</sup> However, queer bars did not enjoy such freedom, but rather suffered more intense surveillance as a result of closer cooperation between police, Senate, and district offices.

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<sup>452</sup> The argument that nightlife was an important economic asset in a city that lacked other attractions was not new. For instance, it was used against stricter policing of *Die goldene Reitbahn*, a bar rumored to be host to sexual encounters, in a 1952 meeting of the city's bar council, where a representative of the Senate Department of Traffic and Business claimed that such nightspots were necessary because the city had nothing to offer culturally. Schankbeirat, Protokoll vom 22. 7. 1952, LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 6976.

In a 1965 issue, national weekly *Der Spiegel* described West Berlin as a “meeting place” of homosexuals, citing as evidence the 12,000 men registered as homosexuals by the West Berlin police since 1948, half of whom resided in West Germany.<sup>453</sup> This kind of unwanted press attention contributed to the formation of a commission meant to improve communication between the different authorities involved in licensing and surveilling bars, bringing together representatives of the police and different departments of the Senate, West Berlin’s city government.<sup>454</sup> The naming of the commission as “Rowdy Commission” suggests a primary concern with juvenile delinquency, specifically rioting groups of youth, which had come to the attention of authorities in both West and East Germany since the mid-1950s, often under the designation *Halbstarke*.<sup>455</sup> The incidents that immediately triggered the commission’s formation, however, paradoxically were instances of sexual violence perpetrated by heterosexual men against women and “transvestites.”<sup>456</sup> In one of the cases, a man abducted an eighteen-year-old woman on the street, dragged her into his car, took her to the Schöneberg bar *Crazy Horse* and raped her there. Then, he and a group of other men continued to another bar, *Black Molly*, where

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<sup>453</sup> “Treffpunkt Berlin.” *Der Spiegel*, no. 34 (1965): 49.

<sup>454</sup> “In jüngerer Zeit sei bei der Bekämpfung des Strichjungenwesens und durch die planmäßige Überwachung von Gaststätten mit kriminogenen Ausstrahlungen ein Ansteigen der mit Gaststätten in Verbindung stehenden Kriminalität festgestellt worden.” Protokoll Vorbesprechung der ersten Sitzung der Rowdy-Kommission/2. Runde, January 18, 1966, LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7803-7804.

<sup>455</sup> The designation “2. Runde” and the date noted in the archival file, “1959/1966,” suggests that there was a first effort to deal with delinquent youth in the late 1950s. Since the mid-1950s, youth who embraced American pop culture and who visibly and audibly dissented from bourgeois respectability, variously called “rowdies” or “Halbstarke,” had occupied psychologists, politicians and police in both West and East Germany. On “Halbstarke,” see Detlev Peukert, “Die “Halbstarke”.” *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 30, no. 4 (1984): 533–48; Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000; Kaspar Maase, “Establishing Cultural Democracy: Youth, “Americanization,” and the Irresistible Rise of Popular Culture.” In *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*. Edited by Hannah Schissler, 428–50. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001; Diethelm Prowe, “The “Miracle” of the Political-Culture Shift: Democratization Between Americanization and Conservative Reintegration.” In *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*. Edited by Hannah Schissler, 451–58. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001; Fenemore, *Sex, Thugs, and Rock’n’Roll*.

<sup>456</sup> According to the police, “Crazy Horse” had been transitioning to a hangout of “homosexuals, *Strichjungen* and transvestites” in recent months. Protokoll über die 1. Sitzung der Rowdykommission 2. Runde, inkl. Beschreibung der Vorfälle, die zum Senatsbeschluss führten, February 15, 1966. LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7803-7804.

they violently forced a present “transvestite” to accompany them to one of the perpetrators’ apartments.

In the commission’s meetings, the police repeatedly complained that district offices, whose economic departments oversaw bar licensing, did not respond to their reports about irresponsible bar owners who allowed, or even promoted, criminal or indecent behavior in their establishments. One measure to be taken against the “excesses” was the reintroduction of a curfew in the city.<sup>457</sup> Early on, a near consensus was formed between the police and representatives of different Senate departments – the departments of the Interior, Justice, Youth, and Sport, Health, and Finances – to follow this path, albeit with “generous exceptions.”<sup>458</sup> The single committee member to disagree was the Economy Department’s representative, who argued that “introducing a curfew ran counter to Berlin’s metropolitan character and might lead to a ‘purification’ of Berlin’s nightlife.”<sup>459</sup> Within a few months, however, this economic argument gained force, and at an October 1966 meeting of the commission, the tide had turned against limitations on nightlife. Reintroducing a curfew or prescribing brighter bar lighting ran counter to Berlin’s status as “*Weltstadt*,” or cosmopolitan city, representatives of the Senate’s Economy Department insisted.<sup>460</sup> They were backed by the city’s tourism office, whose representative strongly advised against restrictions. She explained that the lack of a curfew had had increased tourism: Travel agencies no longer complained about the “unsatisfactory Berlin

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<sup>457</sup> “Excesses,” or “Auswüchse,” was a term used by the police president to describe the reasons for the formation of the “Rowdy-Kommission.” In a letter to the Senator for the Economy, he wrote of “in den Jahren 1965 und 1966 in immer stärkerem Umfange in Erscheinung getretenen Auswüchse in Schanklokalen.” Schreiben PolPräs an Senator für Wirtschaft re: Verbesserungsvorschlag Bearbeitung von Anträgen auf Schankerlaubnis, May 12, 1969. LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7802.

<sup>458</sup> Protokoll 3. Sitzung der Rowdy-Kommission/2. Runde. April 12, 1966. LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7803-7804.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid. “ORR Roesel trug die Auffassung seines Hauses vor: (...) f) Die Einführung einer Sperrstunde sei mit dem Großstadtcharakter Berlins nicht vereinbar; sie würde möglicherweise zu einer „Purifizierung“ des Nachtlebens in Berlin führen.”

<sup>460</sup> Protokoll Besprechung Senat, Bezirksämter, Polizei zur Bekämpfung des Rowdytums in Schanklokalen. October 21, 1966. LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7803-7804.

nightlife.”<sup>461</sup> She was concerned, however, about visitors getting caught up in a raid, and asked to be informed of so-called *Schwerpunktlokale*, focus bars.<sup>462</sup> This was the police term for bars that they considered hotbeds of crime, “bars patronized exclusively or predominantly by asocials and criminals, and which have garnered attention for an accumulation of criminal offenses.”<sup>463</sup> At the meeting, the police distinguished these “focus bars,” which required tight regulation, from the city’s nightlife more generally, which they claimed they had no intention to curtail. Among the “focus bars” were “*Homo-Lokale*,” “homo bars,” and the attending officers pointed out the “special problem” presented by “the homosexuals.” They gave no explanation of why this group was particularly problematic, but only stated that the number of “homosexuals” had risen significantly, as well as that of “transvestites,” who now made up “50% of service staff” in some bars. The city occupied a leading position in the number of “homo bars.” The officers also described the protocol for changes in the ownership of queer bars: the new owners were informed in writing of the behaviors that were considered “*polizeiwidrig*,” “contrary to police regulations:” “kissing, hugs” as well as “close dancing.”<sup>464</sup> The police representatives further explained that they informed the districts’ Economy Departments – the only authorities capable of imposing restrictions – of criminal incidents happening at bars and of untrustworthy bar owners, but that these briefings frequently remained without response.<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> “solche Schankwirtschaften (...), in denen ausschließlich oder überwiegend Asoziale und Kriminelle verkehrten und die durch eine Häufung von Straftaten aufgefallen seien.” Ibid.

<sup>464</sup> “Bei einem Inhaberwechsel in Schankbetrieben, in denen Homosexuelle verkehren, würde dem Betriebsnachfolger schriftlich von der Kriminalpolizei mitgeteilt, was bei dem Verkehr der Gäste untereinander (z.B. Küssen und Umarmungen) und beim Tanzen (z.B. eng aneinander gedrücktes Tanzen) als polizeiwidrig angesehen werde.” Ibid. A similar, though even more detailed list of prohibited behaviors was sent to Elli of Elli’s Bier-Bar in 1965 by Police Chief Sangmeister himself. Cited by Jens Dobler in *Von anderen Ufern*, 235-7.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid.

*Discursive Strategies: Bars v. Authorities*

While the Senate ultimately declined to reintroduce a curfew, the meetings of the “Rowdy Commission” did have the effect of improved communication between police, Senate, and district offices. Furthermore, they resulted in a streamlined effort to tighten regulation of the “focus bars,” in some cases forcing bar owners to uninstall bell systems and give police complete access to bars again.<sup>466</sup> In November 1966, the Senator for the Economy wrote to the district departments for the economy, providing a list of “focus bars” and “bell bars,” and asking district authorities to require bar owners to uninstall their bell or light systems and guarantee access to their bars. In Charlottenburg, for instance, the Senator noted three bars patronized chiefly by “homosexuals, lesbians, and streetwalking boys,” who presented a “danger for decency” for the other guests and staff.<sup>467</sup> The police continued sending district offices updated lists of “bell bars” throughout the following years, prompting the Senator to clarify to the district offices that only those “bell bars” that presented “moral dangers” to guests and staff could be required to reverse their entry restrictions.<sup>468</sup> District offices, in turn, asked the owners of these bars to take down the bell and keep their doors open. If they did not comply, they could be issued tickets of up to 500 Marks.<sup>469</sup> Some bar owners fulfilled the provision immediately, but many did not, instead

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<sup>466</sup> “Nachtleben soll gesäubert werden... in Berlin.” *Der Kreis* 35, no. 7 (1967): 11.

<sup>467</sup> “In diesen Schankbetrieben verkehren ausschließlich oder überwiegend Homosexuelle, Lesbierinnen und Strichjungen. Die Betriebe unterliegen deswegen der ständigen und besonderen Überwachung durch die Kriminalpolizei. (...) Der Schutz der Gäste und des Personals gegen sittliche Gefährdungen und die Überwachung des Schankbetriebes auf eine polizeigemäße Betriebsführung, insbesondere wegen der der in diesen Schankbetrieben verkehrenden Personen, ist jedoch nicht in dem erforderlichen Umfange gewährleistet, wenn die Eingangstür von innen verschlossen und Einlaß nur auf Klingel- oder Lichtzeichen oder gegen Vorzeigen der polizeilichen Erkennungsmarke gewährt wird.” Schreiben des Senators für Wirtschaft an Bezirksämter, Abteilung Wirtschaft, 17.11.1966, LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7799-7800.

<sup>468</sup> “die ihnen vom polizeipraesidenten zugeleiteten mitteilungen sind nur dann geeignet, auflagen im sinne meiner o.g. verfuegung zu begruenden, wenn derartige auflagen zum schutz der gaeste und des personals gegen sittliche gefaehrdungen, insbesondere wegen der in den schankbetrieben verkehrenden personen und (oder) wegen der in den jeweiligen schankstaetten bereits festgestellten missstaende zulaessig sind.” Fernschreiben Senator für Wirtschaft an Bezirksämter von Berlin, Abt. Wirtschaft, February 2, 1967. LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7802.

<sup>469</sup> B.Z. “Razzia ohne Voranmeldung.” February 16, 1967. LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7802.

filing a formal appeal, hiring a lawyer, or just ignoring the new demand. The owner of the Schöneberg bar *Black Molly* explained to the patrolling cop that “he must be a new officer who did not know yet that the vice squad had nothing against closed doors.”<sup>470</sup> Peter Raudonis, owner of *Jansa-Hütte* in Neukölln, told a patrolling officer that “he was not willing to comply with the district office’s demand to take down the bell and keep the bar open.”<sup>471</sup> Raudonis hired a lawyer who protested the provision, involving the Senator for the Economy, too.<sup>472</sup> Gerda Ritzhaupt, owner of *Weinrestaurant Ritzhaupt* in Charlottenburg, engaged in lengthy negotiations with the district office, which in turn consulted with the police to determine if it should grant the bar an exception. The police reply revealed the thin ground on which the police were treading, relying on assumptions, hearsay, and observation of behaviors that were not illegal to construct the “moral danger” necessary to impose the no-bell provision.

The above-mentioned restaurant continues to be a meeting place of homosexual persons where male guests socialize predominantly. *Despite repeated controls and observations, no culpable behavior could be found* in the bar itself. During a control on October 12, 1967, a detective heard by way of conversation that a drunk transvestite *supposedly* undressed on September 17, 1967. During another observation on December 5, 1967, the detectives *merely* noted that they were “sized up” by the older men present who were sitting at the bar, in the same way that is common in other bars where homosexuals socialize when younger, yet unknown male guests enter. During another observation on December 12, 1967, the detectives observed two male guests leaving the bar together, *making the impression* of a homosexually inclined couple. [...] Another male guest at the Ritzhaupt was recognized as a homosexual looking for a partner by one of the detectives. During the time of observation, men were repeatedly found dancing to recorded music, too. Even if these *perceptions do not yet present culpable acts*, they do justify the *suspicion* that homosexuals also come to “Ritzhaupt” to look for a partner. For this

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<sup>470</sup> “Herr K. erklärte gegenüber dem Polizeibeamten, daß er wohl ein neuer Beamter sei und deshalb nicht wisse, daß die Sittenpolizei gegen verschlossene Türen nichts einzuwenden habe.” Schreiben Polizeipräsident an Bezirksamt Schöneberg, 2.11.67. LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7802.

<sup>471</sup> Bericht des R214 über Jansa-Hütte, July 7, 1967. LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7802.

<sup>472</sup> Durchschrift Polizeipräsident an das Bezirksamt Neukölln betr. Klingelbars im Bezirk Neukölln, January 25, 1967; Berichte des R214 über Jansa-Hütte, March 20, 1967 and July 7, 1967; Schreiben PolPrä an Senator für Wirtschaft zur Jansa-Hütte, February 19, 1968. LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7802. The outcome of this dispute is unknown, unfortunately.

reason, it would be unavoidable to examine carefully if the incontestable restriction should be rescinded with the possibility of creating a precedent.<sup>473</sup>

The use of the subjunctive, of words such as “impression” and “perception” and modifiers that indicate limitations, such as “despite,” “even if,” “however,” or “merely” demonstrates clearly that the police had no reliable proof for the moral dubiousness of *Ritzhaupt Weinstube*. But the “suspicion” that the bar was frequented by homosexuals who looked for sex sufficed for the intense scrutiny shown by the police. The district office eventually followed the police’s recommendation, charging Ritzhaupt a penalty of 300 Marks.

The Schöneberg bars *Le Punch* and *Pink Elephant*, which had also appealed the no-bell provision, were equally unsuccessful. In the case of *Le Punch*, the police could point to the bar’s listing in the homosexual travel guide *Eos-Guide* as incriminating evidence. In addition, the rejection letter of *Le Punch*’s appeal gave a long list of police observations to prove that the bar’s owner, by controlling access to the bar via a bell “had made it possible for the persons socializing there to give in to their abnormal inclinations.”<sup>474</sup> The observations included a

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<sup>473</sup> Antwort PolPräs an BA Charlottenburg, January 22, 1968. My italics. B Rep 020 Nr. 7802. “Das oben bezeichnete Lokal ist nach wie vor ein Treffpunkt homosexueller Personen, in dem im wesentlichen männliche Gäste verkehren. Trotz wiederholter Kontrollen und Observationen konnte ein strafbares Verhalten in dem Lokal selbst nicht festgestellt werden. Bei einer Kontrolle am 12.10.67 wurde gesprächsweise von den Kriminalbeamten gehört, daß sich am 17.9.67 ein betrunkenener Transvestit ausgezogen haben soll. Bei einer anderen Observation am 5.12.67 wurde durch die Kriminalbeamten lediglich festgestellt, daß sie von anwesenden älteren Männern, die an der Bar saßen, „abschätzig taxiert“ wurden, wie es in vergleichsweise anderen Lokalen, in denen Homosexuelle verkehren, gleichfalls üblich ist, wenn jüngere männliche Gäste kommen und noch unbekannt sind. Bei einer weiteren Observation am 12.12.67 beobachteten die Kriminalbeamten, daß zwei männliche Gäste gemeinsam das Lokal verließen, bei denen es sich dem Eindruck nach um ein homosexuell veranlagtes Pärchen handelte. (...) Ein anderer männlicher Gast im „Ritzhaupt“ wurde von einem Kriminalbeamten als partnersuchender Homosexueller wiedererkannt. Während der Beobachtungszeit wurde auch festgestellt, daß wiederholt Männer nach Schallplattenmusik tanzten. Diese Wahrnehmungen sind zwar noch keine strafbaren Handlungen, begründen jedoch den Verdacht, daß auch in dem Lokal „Ritzhaupt“ Homosexuelle zur Partnersuche weilen. Aus diesem Grunde wäre es unumgänglich, genau zu prüfen, ob die unanfechtbare Auflage aufgehoben werden soll und damit möglicherweise ein Präzedenzfall geschaffen wird.”

<sup>474</sup> Die Wirtin “hat ... durch die vor ihr getroffene Maßnahme den dort verkehrenden Personen ermöglicht, ihren abartigen Neigungen nachzugeben und Männerbekanntschaften zu schließen, zumindest aber hat sie diesen polizeiwidrigen Zustand geduldet.” Zurückweisung des Widerspruchs der Wirtin des “Le Punch” gegen die ihr erteilte Auflage, September 21, 1967. LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7802.

familiar range of activities that were mostly not illegal: men dancing with men and women with women, men kissing men and women kissing women, the presence of “transvestites,” and in one case a young man masturbating an older one under the table.<sup>475</sup>

Even after West Germany reformed its homosexuality law in 1969, legalizing sex between men over twenty-one years of age, authorities did not stop their surveillance. In 1970, West Berlin’s police president assured the Senator for the Economy that he would continue to inform the district offices of queer bars that restricted police access through a bell and welcomed men under twenty-one. It seems very likely that this practice applied to most venues.<sup>476</sup>

Lesbian women, despite not being threatened by §175, were part and parcel of the group of people considered criminal and dangerous because of their sexuality. In a police memo on the legal grounds of conducting bar patrols from the late 1960s, the customers necessitating police controls are described as follows:

From experience, we know that some bars serve as gathering points for homosexuals, lesbians, streetwalking boys, and other asocial or criminal people. These bars thus pose dangers to public safety and order, because they are often the origin or scene of criminal acts, and in addition give cause for police measures in terms of health and vice authorities.<sup>477</sup>

Consequently, police surveillance extended to bars that were patronized primarily or exclusively by queer women. In 1967, the police informed the Charlottenburg district office, which was responsible for licensing bars in its district, that the bar *L’Inconnue* “has been known as a meeting place of lesbian women since around 1960.”<sup>478</sup> Recently, the new, female bar owner had restricted access through a bell, and the female bouncer only let policemen in after they showed

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<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

<sup>476</sup> Letter from police president to Senator for the Economy, April 2, 1970. B Rep 020 Nr. 7802.

<sup>477</sup> Rechtsgrundlagen für die Durchführung polizeilicher Kontrollen in Gast- und Schankwirtschaften, insbesondere in den sog. Klingelbars. LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7802.

<sup>478</sup> Letter from police president to Charlottenburg district office, November 2, 1967. LAB B Rep 020 Nr. 7803-7804.

their badge. Once inside, the bar owner requested that police identify themselves and explain the reasons for their visit. The women running the bar thus stood up to the intrusions by the police, holding law enforcement accountable rather than cooperating in the surveillance. The letter continued that although

women's homosexuality is not punishable per se, [...] we cannot rule out that criminal acts might be perpetrated by this circle of people either. [...] The possibility exists indeed that women or girls who may be wanted or underage can be found in a bar of this character, too.<sup>479</sup>

Despite the frequent use of the conjunctive form here and the officer's concession that "no observations of this kind have been made so far," the district office did not seem to doubt the necessity of continued police patrols of *L'Inconnue*. Surveillance of the bar continued even beyond the decriminalization of male homosexuality.<sup>480</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Bars were important sites of queer space-making throughout the postwar period. In West Berlin, despite intense repression efforts by the police, queer Berliners could pick among a diverse landscape of nightlife haunts to socialize, dance, and be entertained. Bars catered to different patrons specified by age, class, and gender, with those addressing a higher-class crowd and/or gay or straight tourists located in Schöneberg and Charlottenburg. Kreuzberg was a hub of working-class queer bars whose traditional, turn-of-the-century interiors appealed to diverse crowds.

In East Berlin, a small number of bars along Friedrichstraße catered to gay men and, to a lesser extent, lesbian women. State policy toward queer bars went through phases of tolerance and repression. In the Scheunenviertel in the early 1950s, the district office actively shut down

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<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

<sup>480</sup> Letter from police president to Charlottenburg district office, Dec 12, 1969, B Rep 020 Nr. 7803-7804.

queer bars. During the 1950s and 1960s, the bars on Friedrichstraße catering to queer crowds were left alone. They were, however, under surveillance by Stasi informants, often queers themselves whose homosexuality had been used to pressure them into the job. The Stasi also actively used these spaces to recruit additional informants.

In West Berlin, after a brief period of toleration, the police conducted raids on queer bars from the mid-1950s until the end of the 1960s. The rationale for the raids shifted from a campaign against the “streetwalking boy plague” to a concern about the bars’ role as places of “indecent” and “crime.” As I have shown, the association of queerness and criminality extended beyond those affected by §175, legitimating the surveillance of lesbian bars, too. In their treatment of queer bar patrons, West Berlin police differentiated by gender performance and age. Men who looked like they might be under-age were suspected of being “streetwalking boys,” and they and “transvestites,” cross-dressing men or transgender women, suffered the most direct form of police harassment.<sup>481</sup> For all others, the raids functioned “as deterrent,” as Clayton Whisnant has put it. Everyone present at a queer bar during a raid was registered on a “pink list,” their (suspected) homosexuality now at the hands of all kinds of state authorities, with unforeseeable consequences for careers and personal lives.<sup>482</sup>

But these sources also demonstrate that queer bargoers and bar owners were not discouraged by the massive repression they faced. Patrons spoke up during raids and expressed their anger to journalists whose reporting was often sympathetic to their cause. Bar owners restricted access to their venues, protecting their customers from police and thugs, and sought

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<sup>481</sup> Jennifer Evans’ assessment that “in the years leading up to the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969, it was not a crime to be gay, nor to operate a gay bar. It was unlawful to cruise and flaunt one’s masculinity, whether effeminate, tough, leather, or transsexual” thus needs modification. In my sources, there is no evidence that “tough” and “leather” masculinities attracted police attention. Rather, it was effeminate masculinities and transgender femininities – “Transvestiten” – that suffered most from police persecution. Evans, *Life*, 179.

<sup>482</sup> Whisnant, *Male homosexuality*, 30.

legal help in their dealings with the police and district offices. These practices can indeed be described with Michel de Certeau as the “multiform, resistance, tricky and stubborn procedures that elude discipline without being outside the field in which it is exercised.”<sup>483</sup> Finally, the documents also show that over the course of the 1960s, an economic discourse took precedence over the moral one, as some in West Berlin’s administration argued for queer bars’ value as draws for tourists.

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<sup>483</sup> Certeau, *The Practice*, 96.

## **Chapter 5: Passing Through, Trespassing, Passing in Public Spaces**

Oh beloved Guy, you are the only one for whom I have shed tears. In Lugano and here in Berlin. The tears came into my eyes as I saw you drive off in the omnibus, and I was glad that I could keep my countenance on the S-Bahn at least. Here at home I cannot anymore. And Mutti always wants to know if I want something to eat instead of leaving me alone.<sup>484</sup>

Eberhardt Brucks to Guy Morris, December 18, 1949

When we kissed yesterday in the waiting room and in front of the omnibus, it became terrifically clear to me again. When I saw you disappear in the omnibus, I could no longer hold the tears back.<sup>485</sup>

Eberhardt Brucks to Guy Morris, December 19, 1949

My love, I dreamt of you again last night. We were sitting in a restaurant and eating. All at once you took your hand and stroked mine which was lying on the table, all the people were looking at us and when I saw everyone looking at us, I took your head toward me and kissed you on the mouth. – It was so wonderful to feel your mouth again that it made me overjoyed.<sup>486</sup>

*Eberhardt Brucks to Guy Morris, January 16, 1950*

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<sup>484</sup> Eberhardt Brucks, Letter to Guy Morris, December 18, 1949, December 18, 1949, SM\*B. Oh geliebter Guy, Du bist der einzige Mensch um den ich Tränen vergossen habe. In Lugano und hier in Berlin. Die Tränen kamen mir in die Augen als ich Dich im Omnibus wegfahren sah und ich war froh, dass ich wenigstens in der S-Bahn meine Fassung bewahren konnte. Hier zu Haus kann ich es nicht mehr. Und Mutti will immer wissen ob ich etwas zu essen haben möchte, anstatt mich allein zu lassen.

<sup>485</sup> Eberhardt Brucks, Letter to Guy Morris, December 19, 1949, December 19, 1949, SMB. Als wir uns gestern im Wartesaal und vor dem Omnibus küssten wurde es mir noch einmal unheimlich klar. Als ich Dich im Omnibus verschwinden sah konnte ich die Tränen nicht mehr zurückhalten.

<sup>486</sup> Eberhardt Brucks, Letter to Guy Morris, January 16, 1950, January 16, 1950, SMB. Liebling ich habe heute Nacht wieder einmal von Dir geträumt. Wir sassen in einem Restaurant und assen. Auf einmal nahmst Du deine Hand und streicheltest die meine die auf dem Tische lag, alle Leute guckten uns an und als ich alle uns ansehen sah, nahm ich Deinen Kopf an mich und küsste Dich auf den Mund. - Es war so wunderbar wieder Deinen Mund zu fühlen dass ich dadurch überglücklich wurde.

The heartbreak of saying goodbye to one's lover at the bus station; the need to keep the tears and the sadness at bay until reaching the privacy of one's home, where one's concerned but clueless mother won't even leave one alone; the joy of reuniting with the lover, if only in a dream; daring to kiss farewell in the anonymous space of the station; and celebrating a kiss in the imagined public of a restaurant in his dream: Eberhardt Brucks' letters to his American lover Guy Morris speak of the realities and fantasies of queering public spaces in postwar Berlin.<sup>487</sup> They serve as a passionate and poetic introduction to some of the themes of this chapter, which will examine how queer Berliners perceived the city's public spaces, how they moved in them, how their movements and actions were shaped by laws and policing, and how they subverted public spaces' intended uses, queering them for their own purposes. Some of these spaces, like streets and train lines, are transitory, avenues of movement and connection. Others, such as squares, parks, and train stations, are stationary, islands of rest, bringing the busy traffic to a halt. In the city's queer topography, these spaces take on meaning beyond their primary functions. They are spaces not only of seeing and being seen, spaces of flirting, cruising, and sex, but also of slurs, name-calling, and assault, of surveillance and arrest.

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<sup>487</sup> Brucks and Morris had met in Lugano in Switzerland in 1948, where Brucks, a thirty-year-old visual artist and native Berliner, was spending a year to recover from a liver illness. Guy Morris, a car sales representative of the same age, was in Europe for work. The two fell in love, and reunited in Berlin in 1949, where Brucks was sharing an apartment with his mother in the suburban district of Lankwitz in the city's southwest. The letters were sent when Morris, after a carefree, passionate period spent together in Berlin, had to go home to New York and his wife for the holidays. While they were apart, they exchanged letters of love and longing, which Brucks collected and bequeathed to Berlin's Gay Museum as part of his voluminous collection of artworks, correspondence, magazines, and his apartment. On Eberhardt Brucks, his life and collection, see the catalogue of the 2008 exhibition "Eberhardt Brucks" at Schwules Museum Berlin. Bastian Schlüter, Karl-Heinz Steinle, and Andreas Sternweiler. *Eberhardt Brucks. Ein Grafiker in Berlin*. Berlin: Schwules Museum, 2008, 149. In another letter to Morris, Brucks writes, "Es wäre schön wenigstens mit einem anderen Menschen über unsere Gemeinsamkeit, Leben und Schlafen sprechen zu können. Wirklich von Dir und mir erzählen zu können, aber es gibt keinen Menschen dem ich es anvertrauen könnte und es ist vielleicht besser so. Wer könnte eigentlich alles verstehen, nicht einmal die Mutti und von den andern erscheint mir niemand in der Lage zu sein so wie wir empfinden zu können und nur wer einmal sein Herz ohne jede Einschränkung verschenken konnte wird in der Lage sein sich uns adäquat zu fühlen." Brucks, Eberhardt. Letter to Guy Morris, December 22-23, 1949. SMB.

While Berliners of all genders passed through the city's public spaces, my analysis in this chapter is limited to the experience and policing of cis men and transgender women. In the oral histories I used, gay men frequently mention public spaces as important sites, but they hardly come up in the narratives of the interviewed women. And police records about the patrolling and raiding of public spaces focus on "homosexuals," "streetwalking boys," and male-to-female "transvestites," making no mention of lesbian women or female-to-male "transvestites." Women who sold sexual services to men were heavily policed, and they often appear side by side with other sexual deviants in police records. While many of them may have had relationships with other women, limited time does not allow me to integrate sources on female prostitution in my analysis.<sup>488</sup>

In Eberhardt Brucks' letters, the station appears as site of a romantic farewell between lovers. In the literature on queer Berlin this space is more commonly associated with anonymous, sometimes commercial sex between men. These aspects are explored in detail by historian Jennifer Evans, who in her analysis of sexual sites in postwar Berlin has described the changing meaning of train stations from being "part of Nazi genocide ... [to] sites of transit to places of combat and sexual transgression."<sup>489</sup> Stations as cruising grounds for men looking for sex with other men are recorded in police and Stasi files, as well as in gay men's oral history accounts. Recall, for instance, Klaus Born, whose anecdote of meeting a man on the streets of West Berlin, but having nowhere to take him, introduced the second chapter. Born, who was born in 1944,

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<sup>488</sup> Andrew I. Ross has suggested that historians' separation of male homosexuality and female prostitution, two phenomena that authorities have archived together, is an expression of "overreliance on the modern sexual identity categories that serve as our point of departure." He suggests that "instead, we should approach the archive without identifying with it in order to formulate a vision of the past that may or may not reflect our own sexual organization." While Ross draws his conclusion from his work on Paris in the nineteenth century, it may be relevant for 20<sup>th</sup> century Berlin, too. Andrew I. Ross, "Sex in the Archives: Homosexuality, Prostitution, and the Archives De La Préfecture De Police De Paris," *French Historical Studies* 40, no. 2 (2017).

<sup>489</sup> Evans, *Life*, 103. See also her article on "Bahnhof Boys."

moved to West Berlin from his native Westphalia on August 28, 1965. For him, tales of the city passed along from other gay men had turned West Berlin into a metonym for a worry-free gay sexuality. A trained electrician, he quickly found a job and was put up by his employer in a hotel in the Neukölln district.

Then came [...] September. Then I met a guy. Near the Gedächtniskirche [Memorial Church]. That was on the street, though. He must have been at the Zoo and not gotten any. Or he'd been elsewhere and not gotten any. Anyways: Our glances met. Faithful as we are. Smiles. And then we were a couple all at once.<sup>490</sup>

An encounter on the street, an exchange of glances, a smile, and Klaus Born had found his first sex partner. What is implied in his narration is that “Zoo” refers to West Berlin’s train station, named Berlin Zoologischer Garten or, abbreviated, Zoo, and that the station was one of the main cruising grounds for gay men.<sup>491</sup> “He had not gotten any” hence refers to sex: the other man had not found a sex partner yet. In Born’s narration, both men immediately understand the meaning of the glances and smiles they exchange. Their communication moves quickly to determining a place to have sex.

Where do we go? I say: We can’t go to mine. I live in a hotel. In Neukölln. And the bars, well, we can’t do anything there. (...) He says: We can’t go to mine either. I have a sublease. I say: Typical Berlin. Everyone’s got a sublease. Yeah, he says: But that’s how it is. You can’t get an apartment here. Take a look around: Everything’s destroyed. ((breathes in)) Well, what are we going to do? Well, I know a nice parking lot. There’s no lights there. Nobody can peep in. And it’s nice and large and empty. And there aren’t any cars there. Ok, fine. Let’s do it. Kantstraße. (...) So we drove onto it. It was really dark. He switched the lights off

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<sup>490</sup> Klaus Born, interview by Michael Bochow, and Michael Jähme, December 5, 2013, Archiv der anderen Erinnerungen. Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld. Berlin; Transkription Dennis Nill. In my translation, I try to transmit Born’s diction. He renders conversations in direct speech and at times uses elements of Berlin dialect. To convey the colloquial tone of the conversation, I translate his frequent use of “ja” as filled word as “yeah” or “well,” not as the affirmative answer word “yes.” “Dann war (...) September. Dann hab ich einen kennengelernt. So in der Nähe von der Gedächtniskirche. Das war auf der Straße aber. Der muss entweder er war am Zoo gewesen sein – hat nichts gekriegt. Oder er war sonst wo her – nichts gekriegt. Jedenfalls: Die Blicke gewesen, von uns beiden. Treu wie wir so sind. Gelächelt. Waren dann auf Male ganz schnell 'n Paar.”

<sup>491</sup> Zoo train station, though no longer a stop on transregional train lines, continues to serve as a site for commercial sex between men. Recently, Rosa von Praunheim has explored its role as site of sexual transactions between men. Rosa von Praunheim, *Die Jungs Vom Bahnhof Zoo* (2011).

on Kantstraße already, though. Says, I [know] this by heart. I know exactly where to park. And above it, the S-Bahn passed by.<sup>492</sup>

Born's account sketches out some of the coordinates of gay sex in West Berlin in the 1960s.

Twenty years after the war had ended, parts of the city were still in ruins, even in the very center, by the Gedächtniskirche and the Zoo. This meant a lack of housing: "You can't get an apartment here. [...] Everything's destroyed." Transient accommodation, such as hotel rooms or sublets, did not provide the privacy needed for intimate encounters. At the same time, the ruined cityscape opened up uninhabited spaces that could be used for short get-togethers, such as the dark parking lot in between busy Kantstraße and the *S-Bahn*. Born's partner demonstrated knowledge of the site ("I [know] this by heart") and the necessary precautions, as he switched off the lights before entering the parking lot.

Then we groped each other some. And then some more. Yeah, and then we put the seats right. So that you can fuck properly. Well, and then the fucking began. Then we were really going at it, yeah. And then the next shock came. All of a sudden big flashlights went on in four spots. Four spots. ((breathes in)) I could not say anything. Right? So how about you stop the fucking first, I heard somehow. Ok, and now come out. Then we had to get dressed first. We were naked in there after all. We were doing it! Yeah. What were these? [They] were cops. Police. ((breathes in)) [...] And then he had to lock the car and leave it there. And then we had to go along. These cars were standing on the street already. (...) These cars with the bars. And then [we] were shoved in there. I did not know why. I really did not know why. And then we were driven to Keithstraße. (...) That's where that criminal building is [the LKA]. Yeah, so drove in there. I was crying. I did not know what to do. I did not, did not know why I was there. I just did not know. Right? For me that was a perfectly normal thing to do it. Yeah. And then it started. You have this and that. Section 175. You are temporarily detained. You do not have a permanent residence. I say: Yes I do, I live at Hotel Süden. You can ask there. That is not a permanent residence. Your ID says Benninghausen. Well, and

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<sup>492</sup> Wo gehen wir hin? Sag: Bei mir geht's nicht. Ich wohn in einem Hotel. In Neukölln. Und die Kneipen, ja, da könn' wir auch nichts machen. (...) Sagt er: Bei mir geht's auch nich. Ich wohne zur Untermiete. Ich sag: Typisch Berlin. Alles wohnt hier zur Untermiete. Ja, sagt er: Das is' aber so. Du kriegst keine Wohnung hier. Kuck mal hier: Is' doch alles kaputt. ((einatmen)) Ja, was machen wir denn da? Ja, ich kenn' nen schönen Parkplatz. Da is' keine Lampe. Da kann keiner reinkucken. Und der is' schön groß und frei. Und es is' kein Auto da. Na, is gut. Machen wir doch. Kantstraße. (...) Jedenfalls sind wir darauf gefahren. Der war wirklich dunkel. Der hat aber schon in der Kantstraße das Licht ausgeschaltet. Sagt er: Ich dat auswendig. Ich weeß genau wo ich mir hinstellen hab'. Und oben fuhr die S-Bahn lang.

then the next car had already arrived. (...) And in there were others that they had picked up, of course. (...) And then we were off to Moabit.<sup>493</sup>

Rather than the sexual paradise he had envisioned, Klaus Born's first sexual encounter in West Berlin led him directly to prison. Moabit, the West Berlin district just north of Tiergarten, housed the city's prisons, and the district name was used synonymously with them. Born's narration presents a spin on the well-rehearsed story of young queers coming to the big city to find, variously, sex/love/community/themselves. Despite a troubled youth as an out-of-wedlock war orphan who had suffered psychological, physical, and sexual abuse growing up, Born had perceived his sexual encounters with other men in his hometown as "perfectly normal." It was in West Berlin, a purported haven of gay sex, that he was first confronted with the culpability of his erotic desires. Ironically, his Westphalian acquaintances who had raved to him about Berlin's supposed liberality had also warned him about the danger of punishment and: "[In] West Germany you've got to watch out. [I]n Berlin you don't have to watch out at all."<sup>494</sup> When the flashlights abruptly disrupted his encounter with the stranger, he was caught by surprise, in shock and clueless as to what was happening. Only at the police station did he learn that §175 was the reason for his arrest. The events following Born's arrest will be discussed in the next chapter. For

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<sup>493</sup> Dann ham' wir so'n bisschen rumgefummelt. Und noch 'n bisschen rumgefummelt. Ja, dann haben wir die Sitze richtig hingebraucht. Damit man richtig Bumsen kann. Ja, und dann ging das Bumsen los. Dann war'n wir so richtig schön dabei, ja. Und dann kam der nächste Schock. An vier Stellen große Taschenlampen ging auf Male an. Vier Stellen. ((einatmen)) Ich hab nichts sagen können. Nich? Ja, dann hört mal erst auf da mit dem Bumsen, hab ich irgendwie wat gehört. So, und dann kommt mal raus. Dann mussten wir uns erstmal anziehen. Wir waren ja nackig dadrin. Wir waren bei der Nummer! Ja. Was waren das? Waren Bullen. Polizei. ((einatmen)) Ja. Dann stand ich wieder da. Bei der Polizei. Ja. ((einatmen)) Und dann musste er den Wagen abschließen und stehen lassen. Und dann mussten wir mitkommen. Dann stand / standen auf der Straße schon die Wagen da. (...) Diese Autos mit den / mit den Gittern. Diese Kastenwagen. Und dann da reingeschubst worden. Ich wusste nich warum. Ich wusste wirklich nich warum. Und dann wurden wir zur Keithstraße gefahren. (...) Da is ja dieses Kriminalgebäude. Ja, da rinngefahren. Ich hab geheult. Ich wusste nich was ich machen sollte. Ich wusste / wusste gar nich warum ich da bin. Ich wusste es einfach nich. Nich? Für mich war das was ganz Normales wenn man da 'ne Nummer schiebt. Ja. Und dann ging das auf Male los. Sie haben so und so. Ja. Paragraf 175. Sie sind vorläufig festgenommen. Sie haben ja keinen festen Wohnsitz. Ich sag: doch, ich wohn' im Hotel Süden. Könn'se doch fragen. Das ist kein fester Wohnsitz. In Ihrem Ausweis steht was von Benninghausen. Ja, dann stand schon der nächste Wagen da. Auch so n Ding. Und da waren natürlich noch mehr, die sie eingesammelt haben. Von, von andern Sachen. Oder was weiß ich. Und dann durften wir da rein. Und dann ging's nach Moabit.

<sup>494</sup> Westdeutschland musste aufpassen. Hier / in Berlin / brauchste gar nich aufpassen.

the discussion of public spaces that is the subject of this chapter, Born's narrative introduces two of the contrasting meanings and possibilities that the West Berlin streets could hold for a same-sex desiring man: quick, anonymous sex, on the one hand, and police persecution, on the other.

A third aspect comes up in another oral history interview from the same archive, conducted in 2014 with Orest Kapp. His narrative highlights how non-normative gender presentation attracted attention in public spaces, and what the consequences could be. Kapp moved to West Berlin from West Germany in the late 1950s, when he was in his late teens, after a devastating stay at a psychiatric hospital where electroshocks were used to "cure" him of his homosexuality. In the interview, he describes his life in Berlin: "I found friends, we had a lot of sex and that was quite okay, but it was dangerous. You could never let yourself be seen on the streets. Especially not alone."<sup>495</sup> Later in the interview, Kapp elaborates what "never let[ting] *yourself* be seen on the streets" meant: changing his gender performance by learning to be a "man," that is to appear to be normatively masculine.

Well, the time [...] in Berlin, [...] it was always a catastrophe. You had to be cautious to not, by any means, move in a wrong way, walk, or talk in a wrong way. (-) It cost me **years**, at least five, six years it cost me, that I would act **manly** (-) that I would walk a **manly** stride (-) that I would make **manly** motions (-) that I would have manly conversations (-) that I would pass as a **man** in a pub or bar. (-) Yes, that was my great, my absolute must, my great must. That's what I **must** do, that's what I must achieve, then I can survive.<sup>496</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> Kapp, Orest. Interview by Andreas Pretzel, and Janina Rieck. October 15, 2014. Archiv der anderen Erinnerungen. Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld. Berlin. "[I]ch hab Freunde gefunden, wir hatten viel Sex und das war ganz okay, aber es war gefährlich. Ähm, man durfte sich auf der Straße niemals blicken lassen. Alleine schon gar nicht.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid. Ja, also die Zeit vorher in Berlin [...], es war nur Katastrophe immer. Man musste nur aufpassen, sich ja nicht falsch zu bewegen, zu gehen, zu sprechen. (-) Und es hat mich, es hat mich **Jahre**, wenn nicht, mindestens fünf, sechs Jahre hat das mich gekostet, dass ich mich **männlich** verhalte (-) dass ich **männlichen** Schrittes gehe (-) dass ich männliche Bewegungen mache, dass ich mich männlich unterhalte (-) äh, so dass ich auch in irgendsoner Pinte oder so einer Kneipe glatt durchgehe als **Mann** (-) Ja, das warn meine große, mei-, meine absolute Muss, das war mein großes Muss. Das **muss** ich tun, das muss ich schaffen, dann kann ich überleben."

Kapp here enumerates the requirements for passing as a “man,” a learning process that took him “five, six years:” to “act manly, [...] walk a manly stride, [...] make manly motions, [...] have manly conversations.” His narration deconstructs in acute precision the work of performing normative masculinity as encompassing the whole body (motions) and mind (conversations), as an effort that demanded a total re-learning of physical and social skills. His explanation of the process offers an eloquent vernacular illustration of what Judith Butler has theorized as the performative constitution of gender. In her essay “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” Butler writes,

[G]ender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.<sup>497</sup>

In Kapp’s enumeration of the steps necessary for becoming a “man,” normative masculinity becomes visible exactly how Butler describes gender: a stylized repetition of acts, of bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds. His agitation at recapitulating these efforts is visible in the transcription of his narration. Words that he stresses are printed in bold, and short breaks in his speech caused by him drawing fresh breath before describing another step of this labor of transformation, are indicated by bracketed dashes. In her essay, Butler also notes that “[p]erforming one’s gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect [...]” If the painstaking work of becoming a “man” was an indirect punishment for Orest Kapp’s non-normative masculinity, he was also faced with a more obvious punishment. Asked by the interviewers if he was ever insulted in the streets, Kapp again addresses his enactment of gender and sexuality.

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<sup>497</sup> Butler, Judith. “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory.” In *The Performance Studies Reader*. Edited by Henry Bial and Sara Brady. Third edition, 214–25. London and New York: Routledge, 2016, 215. Italics in original.

Yes, when you could discern it, back then during the first years, that I am *gay*, I did look it [look *gay*], that's why I learned to become a man then, after all, in my motions, and generally. Yes, you were confronted with that, especially when it was cliques, about four to six persons, they enjoyed doing that. Yes, I am afraid of that to this day [...].<sup>498</sup>

The terror he experienced when groups confronted him in public thus haunts Orest Kapp into the present, more than five decades later. The tales of terror and joy, romance and thrill, pleasure and powerlessness relayed by Kapp, Klaus Born, and Eberhardt Brucks have served as an introduction to the main threads running through this chapter: Berlin's public spaces as sites of sex, of police surveillance and persecution, of violence at the hands of homophobic thugs, and as sites of transgressing normative gender. In the following, I first juxtapose the oral testimony with records of the West and East Berlin police as well as the Stasi, attending to moments of connection and disjuncture between a queer phenomenology of public spaces, their legal framework, and authorities' as well as Berliners' practices of policing queer gender and sexuality.<sup>499</sup> Second, I return to the Berlin Wall and its significance for the city's queer public. Beyond separating relationships and cutting off East Berliners from West Berlin's bars, I argue that through the case of Günter Litfin, the first person to be shot dead at the Wall, the Wall came to signify death to queer East Berliners. By contrast, it served as a thrilling erotic fantasy for West German and Swiss readers of the homophile magazine *Der Kreis*.

## **Sex in Public**

When you'd been in the city on the weekend and eventually had to ride back to Spandau, for me there was the last tram at Kantstraße, the [line] 75 and the [line]

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<sup>498</sup> Ibid. "Ja, ja, wenn man mir angesehen hat, noch damals die ersten Jahre, dass ich eben gay bin, ja, das hat man ja mir angesehen gehabt, deswegen hab ich ja auch gelernt denn Mann zu werden, ja, in meinen Bewegungen. Und überhaupt allgemein. Ja, man hat, man ist drauf angesprochen worden, vor allen Dingen, wenn es dann Cliquen waren, so bis vier Personen bis sechs Personen oder so, ja, die haben das mit Vergnügen gemacht. Ja, ich habe heute noch Angst davor [...]."

<sup>499</sup> This phrasing borrows from Joey Gamble's reading of a draft of this chapter. Multiple parts of this dissertation are indebted to his astute and generous mind.

76. And I would always make another stop at the Charlottenburg courthouse, where there is a wonderful wooden cottage.<sup>500</sup>

The stop at the “wonderful wooden cottage” by the Charlottenburg courthouse was a beloved part of Fritz Schmebling's weekend routine in the early 1960s, a last moment of pleasure before he returned to his home and his job as a carpenter in suburban Spandau. Like Klaus Born, Schmebling had moved to West Berlin from West Germany because of its reputation as a gay haven as soon as he turned twenty-one. As a skilled craftsman, he was able to escape military conscription in exchange for committing to two years of work in West Berlin, an opportunity that he gladly seized. The job the West German employment office found for him came with accommodation in a *Nissenhütte*, a quickly built hut constructed after the war to alleviate the housing crisis. The huts had a floor area of forty square meters and were often shared with a second party, the two occupants separated only by a thin wall, and so offered little privacy.<sup>501</sup> Schmebling, like Klaus Born, thus had little choice but to pursue sex outside the home. *Klappen*, public toilets sought out for gay sex, were fixed points not just on his, but on many gay men's mental maps of the city, regular stops on their movements to and from work and leisure. It seems ironic that Schmebling's fondly remembered cottage was in close proximity to the courthouse, the site where men were prosecuted, publicly shamed, and often sentenced to time in prison. This vicinity did not seem to hamper his pleasure, however. He relates an unexpected encounter at his favorite *Klappe*:

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<sup>500</sup>Fritz Schmebling. Interview by Michael Bochow, and Karl-Heinz Steinle. January 24, 2015. Archiv der anderen Erinnerungen. Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld. Berlin. “Wenn man dann am Wochenende in der City war und musste dann irgendwann mal wieder nach Spandau fahren, da war also für mich immer so die vorletzte Straßenbahn (äh) in der Kantstraße die 75 und die 76. Und dann hab ich jedes Mal noch mal so ´n Halt gemacht am Amtsgericht Charlottenburg, da ist ein (schwärmt) wunderbares Holzhäuschen.”

<sup>501</sup> Photos of the *Nissenhütten* in Spandau, where Fritz Schmebling was living, can be found on Uwe Frenzel's Nissenhütten website. Frenzel, Uwe. “Nissenhütten – Wellblechbaracken in Berlin.” Accessed July 23, 2017. <http://www.nissenhuetten.de/>. See also Carstens, Uwe. “Die Nissenhütte.” In *Schleswig-Holsteinische Erinnerungsorte*. Edited by Carsten Fleischhauer and Guntram Turkowski, 90–95. Heide: Boyens, 2006.

One night I was standing in there, thinking, maybe something else will come around, maybe not. All of a sudden, the door opens, a cop comes in, in a white traffic coat. I packed mine in when he said, leave it out, we're doing it together. [laughs] Now my heart started pounding. I'm thinking, is this a real cop? It was a real cop. [laughs] The last tram was gone, of course. I had to walk over to Otto-Suhr-Allee, of course, where the tram to Hakenfelde was. And then I hitchhiked from Hakenfelde to Heerstraße at night. [laughs] So it goes when you're greedy. [laughs] That was one of my experiences that have really stuck with me.<sup>502</sup>

The sight of a “real cop” made Schmebling's heart pound. Whether from sexual excitement, from fear, or both, the episode had a happy end as the policeman was looking for sex, not an arrest. Of course, not everyone was so lucky.

*Klappen* were not only sites of fleeting sexual encounters. Sometimes these turned into lasting relationships: Klaus Born met his partner of thirty-five years at a *Klappe* on Sophie-Charlotte-Platz in Charlottenburg. *Klappen* were monitored closely by the police, who patrolled them and often conducted raids. Unless police caught the men during sex, they could not arrest them. They did, however, record their personal information and took them to the precinct where they were instructed about the laws governing public toilets.<sup>503</sup> The legal basis for this temporary detention was §15 of the *Polizeiverwaltungsgesetz* [Police Administration Law], which postulated that persons could be taken into police custody “to relieve a disturbance of public

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<sup>502</sup> Ich steh eines Abends drinne, denke, vielleicht kommt noch wat, vielleicht kommt nix mehr. Uff eemal jeht die Türe uff, kommt ´n Bulle rin, so im weißen Verkehrsmantel. Ick mein´n einjepackt, da sacht er, lass draußen, wir mach´n des zusammen. (lacht) Jetzt hab ich erst mal Herzklopfen jekriegt. Ich denke, is des jetzt ´n echter Bulle? Es war ´n echter Bulle. (lacht) Meine letzte Straßenbahn war natürlich weg (lacht). Ich musste dann natürlich rüber laufen in die Otto-Suhr-Allee, und da fuhr die Straßenbahn nach Hakenfelde. Und dann bin ich von Hakenfelde nachts noch bis in die Heerstraße jetrampt. (lacht) So geht ´s, wenn man gierig is. (lacht) Es war eins von meinen Erlebnissen, die sehr, sehr haften geblieben sind.

<sup>503</sup>“Die dort in verdächtiger Weise angetroffenen Personen werden, soweit sie nicht direkt bei einer strafbaren Handlung (wechselseitiger Onanie) betroffen werden, zur Dienststelle bestellt und belehrt.” Kriminalpolizei W.-B. Sittlichkeitsdelikte, Stellungnahme zur öffentlichen Bedürfnisanstalt am Reuterplatz, January 16, 1956, 33.05 1, PHS.

safety or order that has already occurred or to fend off an imminent danger, if no other measures can be taken.”<sup>504</sup>

If they were discovered having sex in public, men could be prosecuted under §175 as well as §183. This section, titled literally “[p]ublic causation of a sexual nuisance,” criminalized those “who cause a public nuisance by acting indecently.”<sup>505</sup> This is what happened to Orest Kapp, who at age seventeen was caught having sex with a friend and arrested by the West Berlin police. The place of arrest is unclear in the interview; since Kapp frequently had sex in public toilets, it may well have been a *Klappe*.

That was when I got caught with the friend (--), when we, well, I don’t want to go into detail, let’s just say, when we were behaving sexually. And, well, yeah, the policemen were not very friendly. [...] I got blows on my belly, got an arm, an elbow rammed into my belly, or, hm, my head was pushed down and then pushed back with the knee, it was not very friendly with us. They showed us, hm, exactly what they thought of us, what we were, as I keep remembering it: you faggot, what are you doing. Hm, you ought to, you ought to be executed, you ought to be gassed, you, all the things they told me I ought to be.<sup>506</sup>

After being abused by the police, Kapp spent months in jail, then had his trial, and was finally let go because he was underage. I return to his experience in prison in the following chapter.

Though he was arrested only once, he faced repeated abuse by the police, often during raids of

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<sup>504</sup> §15b) cited by Jens Dobler: “[Z]ur Beseitigung einer bereits eingetretenen Störung der öffentlichen Sicherheit oder Ordnung oder zur Abwehr einer unmittelbaren bevorstehenden polizeilichen Gefahr, falls die Beseitigung der Störung oder die Abwehr der Gefahr auf andere Weise nicht möglich ist.“ Dobler, *Von anderen Ufern*, 236.

<sup>505</sup> “Öffentliche Erregung eines geschlechtlichen Aergernisses. §183. Wer durch eine unzüchtige Handlung öffentlich ein Aergernis gibt, wird mit Gefängnis bis zu 2 Jahren oder mit Geldstrafe bestraft. Neben der Gefängnisstrafe kann auf Verlust der bürgerlichen Ehrenrechte erkannt werden.“ “§183.” In *Strafgesetzbuch mit Erläuterungen und Nebengesetzen*. Edited by Eduard Kohlrausch and Richard Lange. 39th and 40th, 259. Guttentagsche Sammlung Deutscher Reichsgesetze 2. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1950.

In 1969, disenfranchisement was struck out as part of the Great Criminal Law Reform.

<sup>506</sup> Kapp interview. Das war damals, als ich da mit dem Freund zusammen überrascht wurde (--), wie wir uns, naja, ich will nicht ins Detail gehen, sagen wir einfach, wie wir uns sexuell verhalten hatten. Und äh, ja, die Polizisten waren nicht sehr freundlich. [...] Ich habe also Bauchschläge gekriegt, so den Arm, den Ellenbogen in den Bauch gerammt gekriegt, oder, äh, mein Kopf wurde runtergestoßen und dann mit 'm Knie wieder zurückgestossen, es war nicht sehr freundlich mit uns. Sie haben uns also, äh, genau gezeigt, was sie von uns dachten, was wir sind, eben, so wie ich immer wieder darauf komme ist: du schwule Sau, was machst du da. Äh, du gehörst, gehörst hingerichtet, du gehörst vergast, du-, was hat man mir nicht alles gesagt, was ich gehöre.

public toilets. “The police provoked us, after all. Yeah, they wanted us to fight back or to talk back, and then they would, they would show us their power,” he remembers.<sup>507</sup>

*Klappen* could be found throughout the city. Those known to be cruising grounds were also regular stops of police patrols in East and West Berlin.<sup>508</sup> Train stations, where thousands of people crossed paths everyday, provided innumerable opportunities for sexual encounters with strangers. They were also crucial workspaces for men (and women) selling sexual services, which put them at the center of the police’s attention. As seen above, the Zoo train station represented a central node for anonymous sex between men in West Berlin. But stations of regional transit, where the S- and U-Bahn stopped, were also regularly patrolled. The East Berlin police focused their attention on Mitte district, particularly the Friedrichstraße, Nordbahnhof, and Alexanderplatz stations and the public toilets on Neuer Markt in immediate vicinity of Alexanderplatz.<sup>509</sup>

*Pleasure and danger in public space: “Streetwalking boys,” thugs, and homophobic violence*  
Jennifer Evans has offered an in-depth analysis of train stations and their policing in postwar West and East Berlin. In particular, she has examined stations as the workspace of “streetwalking boys,” who, she has argued, occupied a both central and precarious position in postwar discourses. Evans rightly stresses the vilification of “streetwalking boys” who faced the scorn of both state authorities and homophile activists. However, some of the “streetwalking boys” were at the same time perpetrators, mugging their clients, blackmailing them, and sometimes

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<sup>507</sup> Ibid. [D]ie Polizei hat uns halt eben provoziert. Ja, sie wollte, dass wir uns wehren oder dass wir widersprechen oder so, und dann haben sie eben ihre, ihre Macht ge-, gezeigt [...].”

<sup>508</sup> In a 1957 file note, the following sites are mentioned for regular patrol: “Toilette Reichsbahndirektionsgebäude, Volkspark Wilmersdorf, Bahnhofstoilette S Gesundbrunnen (Bahnsteig), Hinterwand U-Bahn Innsbrucker Platz, S Steglitz, Düppelmarkt Steglitz, Preußenpark Wilmersdorf.” Vermerk der E I (S) über zu kontrollierende Toiletten bei Nachtstreifen, November 5, 1957, 55.25, PHS.

<sup>509</sup> VP Berlin, Quartalsbericht für das I. Quartal 1951, April 10, 1951, C Rep 303 Nr. 131, LAB; VP Berlin, Analyse über die Cliquenbildung im demokratischen Sektor von Gross-Berlin, February 28, 1952, C Rep 303 Nr. 137, LAB.

murdering them. Part of what makes it so tricky to interpret them is their overlap with gangs of male youth and young men known as juvenile delinquents, *Halbstarke*, *Rocker*, or rowdies, whose violence in the streets and, as seen in the previous chapter, in bars, was at times directed against queers. A connected reason for their analytical elusiveness is that authorities used both homophobic and non-homophobic rhetoric to justify their persecution. Police wanted them off the streets and far from the stations because their presence damaged public space's respectable and heteronormative appearance, but they also arrested them to prevent violence against gay men.

*"Streetwalking boys" in East Berlin*

This entanglement of different persecutory motifs is demonstrated by a 1952 report from the East Berlin criminal squad. The report noted that in the year's first quarter, two out of a total of three murder victims had been homosexual men. It continued,

In the Mitte precinct (station hall Friedrichstraße train station) the streetwalking boy activity has again emerged as focus area. Two massive raids were conducted, though with the goal of determining the murderers of homosexuals. Simultaneously, however, streetwalking boys could be given over to the [respective] working group for intense examination [...]. Resulting from these operations, measures were prepared to cleanse the train station of streetwalking boys before May 1 [...].<sup>510</sup>

Hence, the stated goal of resolving murders allowed for massive policing and the "cleansing" of public space. The measures alluded to here are spelled out in the report for the following quarter. Every night in April 1952, police patrolled the station from 8pm to midnight. They claimed that this intense surveillance resulted in a decline in blackmail and muggings.<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> VP Berlin, Quartalsbericht für das I. Quartal 1952, 1952, C Rep 303 Nr. 132, LAB. "In der VPI/K Mitte (Bahnhofshalle Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse) hat sich die Strichjungentätigkeit wiederum als Schwerpunkt herauskristallisiert. Es fanden zwei Großrazzien statt, die allerdings das Ziel haben, die Mörder an Homosexuellen zu ermitteln. Gleichzeitig wurden aber mit diesen Aktionen Strichjungen der Arbeitsgruppe C 4 Mitte zur intensiven Prüfung übergeben. Aus diesen Einsätzen resultierend wurden Massnahmen vorbereitet, um in Verbindung mit der Trapo bis zum 1. Mai den Bahnhof von Strichjungen zu säubern."

<sup>511</sup> VP Berlin, Quartalsbericht für das II. Quartal 1952, 1952, C Rep 303 Nr. 132, LAB.

Homophobic attacks at the hands of young men were often committed in groups. In 1952-53, a group of nine persons aged 16 to 22 committed “50 crimes, such as robberies and predatory blackmail” in a nine-month period.<sup>512</sup> A police report noted that “in ca. 90 cases, the accused have engaged in homosexual activities. It was in this context, then, that the predatory blackmail occurred, too.” Members of the group had thus blackmailed the men with whom they had sex. The phrasing “engaged in homosexual activities [homosexuell betätigt]” shows that the definitional line between homosexuality and commercial sex among men could sometimes blur in police parlance. East Berlin police recorded “streetwalking boys” variously under prostitution and juvenile delinquency, suggesting that apart from their lingering in public spaces that were meant for rapid transition, it was young people’s banding up in cliques that made them conspicuous to authorities. Indeed, the East German government moved to codify the criminalization of both these aspects within the next decade and a half in laws targeting “asocials” and “rowdies.”

In 1957, a group of eight males, four of them minors, robbed gay men in the city’s Eastern and Western sectors by acting as “streetwalking boys” at the Zoo, Lehrter, and Friedrichstraße stations. In the report on their crimes, the East Berlin police described their actions and linked their criminality to “asociality:”

All the accused admit to having robbed homosexuals [...] by acting as streetwalking boys, luring the “johns” into ruins or remote spots, and then, depending on the situation, through blows or other force stealing the wallet, rings, or watches. This incidence is a typical example where the formation of a gang occurs through the association of asocial youths.<sup>513</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> VP Berlin, Bericht über die Arbeit der Untersuchungsabteilung PdVP Berlin, May 7, 1953, C Rep 303 Nr. 137, LAB. Im Bezirk Mitte ist eine 9-köpfige Bande im Alter von 16-22 Jahren angefallen. Dieser Bande konnten 50 Straftaten, wie Raub und räuberische Erpressung nachgewiesen werden. Die Tatzeit erstreckt sich von Mitte 1952 bis März 1953. In ca. 90 Fällen haben sich die Beschuldigten homosexuell betätigt. In diesem Zusammenhang kam es dann auch zu den räuberischen Erpressungen.

<sup>513</sup> VP Berlin, Besonderheiten in der Cliquenbildung in den VP-Inspektionen, May 2, 1957, C 303 Nr. 26, LAB. Sämtliche Beschuldigte sind geständig [...] Homosexuelle [!] ausgeraubt zu haben, indem sie sich als Strichjungen

In their reports, police forces in both East and West Berlin forged a connection between “streetwalking boys,” juvenile delinquents, and “asocials.” As seen in the previous chapter on bars, the West Berlin police deployed the term “asocial” to describe sexual deviants into the late 1960s. Recent studies on “asociality” have shown how the term took on a dramatically different legal meaning in the East and West German states, though. Initially, it functioned “as a self-evidently and unreflectively used umbrella term for people with a lifestyle that deviated from the norm of the majority [...] in East and West.”<sup>514</sup> But in West Germany, the term “asociality” never entered the books, and the acts and attitudes associated with it in §361 of the criminal law – vagrancy, begging, homelessness, “idleness,” being “workshy,” and prostitution – were decriminalized in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>515</sup>

In the GDR, however, “asociality” and “rowdyism” were theorized as “the socially other inside the GDR” and codified in criminal law in the 1960s.<sup>516</sup> The 1961 “Ordinance about the Limitation of Stay” and § 249 of the new Criminal Code, “Endangering Public Order through Asocial Behavior,” passed in 1968, allowed the state to prohibit citizens from entering certain areas as well as force them to work if they were found to be “workshy.” These laws were used against different groups who deviated from the socialist norm, in particular people who did not hold a steady job, defiant youth, and women selling sexual services. “Prostitution” was explicitly mentioned in §249. While “streetwalking boys” are not mentioned in the laws or the scholarly literature, “from the perspective of the state authorities and the jurists, homosexuals and people

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ausgaben, die “Freier” in Ruinen oder abgelegenen Stellen lockten und sie dann je nach Situation durch Schläge oder durch anderen Zwang die Geldbörse, Ringe und Armbanduhr entwendeten. Dieser Vorfall ist ein typisches Beispiel, wo aus Zusammenschließungen von asozialen Jugendlichen eine Bandenbildung entstehen kann.

<sup>514</sup> Lindenberger, “Asoziale Lebensweise”. Herrschaftslegitimation, Sozialdisziplinierung und die Konstruktion eines “negativen Milieus” in der SED-Diktatur,” 230.

<sup>515</sup> Korzilius, *“Asoziale” und “Parasiten” im Recht der SBZ/DDR*, 1.

<sup>516</sup> Lindenberger, “Asoziale,” 238.

suffering from sexually transmitted diseases moved into the vicinity of ‘asocials.’”<sup>517</sup>

“Streetwalking boys” and conspicuous queers thus were likely also targets of these laws. Those who were convicted under the 1961 ordinance or the 1968 law could be sent to “labor education commandoes,” as well as prohibited from visiting the GDR’s “Windows to the West,” East Berlin and the convention city Leipzig, where they might encounter Western visitors. §249 allowed for prison sentences, too, and courts made frequent use of it throughout the existence of the GDR.<sup>518</sup> An in-depth examination of how these “asociality laws” were used to penalize queer subjectivities, while beyond the scope of this dissertation, would address larger questions of how normalcy and deviance were constructed in the GDR.

### *Homophobic Violence in West Berlin’s Public Spaces*

As seen in the previous chapter, groups of young men attacking queer bars, harassing and at times severely injuring patrons and staff, as well as causing significant material damage, made going out in the purported queer paradise a risky pleasure. West Berlin police, while very much invested in persecuting queers and curtailing the formation of a queer public, also kept records on homophobic crimes.

The criminal squad in 1958 listed eleven “incidents in connection with homosexuals” over a fourteen-month period, nine of them in squares and parks in the West Berlin district of Wilmersdorf, all committed by youths, usually in groups.<sup>519</sup> The number is not small, given that

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<sup>517</sup> Korzilius, *"Asoziale" und "Parasiten" im Recht der SBZ/DDR*, 415

<sup>518</sup> Ibid. 291-292, 301, 617-18. The number of sentences for §249 rose from around 4000 in the years after 1968 to 14.000 in 1973, in preparation of the World Youth Games, and 12.000 in 1982. At the end of the GDR, almost a quarter of prison inmates were incarcerated under §249. Lindenberger, “"Asoziale Lebensweise". Herrschaftslegitimation, Sozialdisziplinierung und die Konstruktion eines "negativen Milieus" in der SED-Diktatur,” 247

<sup>519</sup> Kriminalpolizei West-Berlin Referat E1 Raub Einbruch, Bericht betr. Vorfälle im Zusammenhang mit Homosexuellen, September 10, 1958, 55.25, PHS. The sites mentioned are Hohenzollernplatz, Olivaer Platz, Volkspark Wilmersdorf, and Preußenpark.

many men who were assaulted did not notify the police, because doing so made them vulnerable to prosecution. Indeed, in the brief descriptions of the incidents, it is evident that even when police investigated homophobic crime, the criminalization of homosexuality meant that its victims were always equally under scrutiny. For instance, the fact that attackers were often arrested on scene, sometimes after their victim had cried out for help, suggests that police were in the immediate vicinity, surveilling the park. The descriptions of incidents often make note, too, of a *victim*'s previous arrests on site, or their status of being "so far unfamiliar" to the police. Suggesting that a victim was homosexual may also have worked as a strategy of defense for the youths' crimes. In one case, seven youths who "brutally" beat up a man and tried to rob him claimed that he was "homosexual." The report of the incident notes "investigations are still ongoing," raising questions as to who and what was being investigated, the thugs or their victim. Finally, one of the accounts describes the victim as a "homo," a clearly derogatory term.

### **Trespassing the Borders of Normative Gender**

Orest Kapp's traumatic memories of having to "become a man" and facing violent threats from groups of youth have illustrated the dangers that effeminate men faced in public spaces in the 1950s and 1960s in West Berlin. Despite these dangers, other men consciously used elements of feminine style and performance to draw attention to themselves. A man interrogated by the East Berlin Stasi in 1955 explained,

To meet men, I applied make-up, penciling over my brows, rouging my lips with a lipstick, and undulating my hair, so that when I visit a bar in this made-up state, or go for a walk, I become conspicuous as a homosexual.<sup>520</sup>

While this man appears to have limited his use of feminine style to modifying his head, others cross-dressed completely, donning women's clothing, too. Cross-dressing in public carried

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<sup>520</sup> Vernehmungsprotokoll, July 19, 1955, MfS AU 309/55 Bd. 2, BStU.

considerable risks, however. In the oral history interview quoted above, Klaus Born told interviewers about his acquaintance Manuela. After his incarceration and trial for §175, Born had lost his accommodation, the hotel room in Neukölln. During the following year, he lived “underground,” as he put it, “hopping from bed to bed.”<sup>521</sup>

Then I met someone, her name was Manuela. I stayed with her for a whole two months even. I always had to look out for her, though. Because she was frequently out of luck. She always got beaten up, very often, because she walked around in drag all the time.<sup>522</sup>

The interviewer clarifies if Manuela was “a man who walked around as a drag queen,” and Born confirms.<sup>523</sup> He explains that she worked “as a transvestite” in bars, among them the well-known *Chez Nous*. The two thus helped each other out. Manuela gave the homeless Born a place to stay, and he used his normative masculinity to protect her from street violence.

### *The End of Transvestite Passes*

Crossdressers could also run into trouble with the law. Wearing the clothing of the other gender was not forbidden, but causing a public nuisance was punishable in Germany under §183 and §360 of criminal law. Both sections originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued to be effective in this form until the postwar era. §183, “Public causation of a sexual nuisance,” punished those “who give a public nuisance by acting indecently” with up to two years in prison or a fine of up to 500 Marks, and additionally allowed for the revocation of civil rights.<sup>524</sup> §360 made “engaging

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<sup>521</sup> Ibid. Ja, und dann hab ich unge- / nich ganz ein Jahr ungefähr im Untergrund gelebt. Dann hab ich versucht - weil ich ja kein Geld mehr hatte - im Untergrund heißt: Ich hab vom einen Bett zum andern gehüpft, so. War aber 'ne schöne Zeit. War geil. ((lacht))

<sup>522</sup> Born interview. “Dann hatt' ich mal eine kennengelernt. Manuela hieß die. Bei der hab ich / () schlappe zwei Monate sogar gewohnt. Ich musste aber immer auf die aufpassen. Weil, die hatte immer Pech gehabt. Die wurde immer zusammengeschlagen. Sehr oft. Weil sie immer im Fummel rumgeloofen is'.”

<sup>523</sup> Born interview. Interviewer: “Ich, ich wollt grad sagen: 'n Mann der als Transe rumgelaufen is'.”

<sup>524</sup> “Oeffentliche Erregung eines geschlechtlichen Aergernisses. §183. Wer durch eine unzüchtige Handlung öffentlich ein Aergernis gibt, wird mit Gefängnis bis zu 2 Jahren oder mit Geldstrafe bestraft. Neben der Gefängnisstrafe kann auf Verlust der bürgerlichen Ehrenrechte erkannt werden.“ “§183.” In *Strafgesetzbuch mit Erläuterungen und Nebengesetzen*. Edited by Eduard Kohlrausch and Richard Lange. 39th and 40th, 259.

in disorderly conduct” punishable by a fine of 150 Marks or imprisonment.<sup>525</sup> These laws remained in place in both German postwar states until the reforms of the late 1960s, the new socialist criminal law codified in the GDR in 1968 and the West German Great Criminal Law Reform of 1969. Crossdressers could hence run into problems if they became conspicuous in public: that is, if they failed to pass. As early as 1910, Magnus Hirschfeld had addressed this question, and following his proposal, the Berlin police had issued *Transvestitenscheine*, “transvestite passes,” to crossdressers. These stated that their bearer was known to the police to wear the clothing of the other sex, and included their photograph in their everyday, “transvestite” appearance.<sup>526</sup> Part of the cooperation between sexual scientists, activists, and police, this reinforced the notion that public order depended on the gender binary. At the same time, this practice also acknowledged that gender could be separate from the body, that the body that people were born with might not correspond to the gender they felt they belonged to. As I show in the following pages, the West Berlin police stopped issuing *Transvestitenscheine* around 1960.

The transvestite passes, which other German cities had adopted during the Weimar years, continued to be issued in Berlin well into the Nazi period.<sup>527</sup> For postwar East Berlin, historian Ulrike Klöppel has shown that the authorities continued to issue transvestite passes into at least the second half of the 1950s.<sup>528</sup> In West Berlin, the police continued the policy throughout the

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Guttentagsche Sammlung Deutscher Reichsgesetze 2. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1950. In 1969, disenfranchisement was struck out as part of the Great Criminal Law Reform.

<sup>525</sup> “Mit Geldstrafe bis zu 150 Reichsmark oder mit Haft wird bestraft: [...] 11. wer ungebührlicherweise ruhestörenden Lärm erregt oder wer groben Unfug verübt.” “§360.” In *Strafgesetzbuch mit Erläuterungen und Nebengesetzen*. Edited by Eduard Kohlrausch and Richard Lange. 39th and 40th, 463–64. Guttentagsche Sammlung Deutscher Reichsgesetze 2. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1950.

<sup>526</sup> Rainer Herrn, *Schnittmuster des Geschlechts: Transvestitismus und Transsexualität in der frühen Sexualwissenschaft*. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2005, 65-66.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid. 165. Rainer Herrn, “Ich habe wohl Freude an Frauenkleidern [...], bin aber deswegen nicht homosexuell.”: Der Forschungsstand zum Transvestitismus in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus,” in Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld, *Forschung im Queerformat*, 60.

<sup>528</sup> Ulrike Klöppel, *XXOXY Ungelöst: Hermaphroditismus, Sex Und Gender in Der Deutschen Medizin: Eine Historische Studie Zur Intersexualität* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010), 551–52. In the East Berlin police files at LAB, I have found no further mention of *Transvestitenscheine*.

1950s, but then discontinued it in the 1960s, as a file at the Historical Police Collection suggests.<sup>529</sup> In the early 1950s, “wearers of women’s clothing” who were “known and registered with the police” could be issued a confirmation that included their photo in female attire.<sup>530</sup> The case of a Kreuzberg “transvestite,” F. Krüger, gave occasion to the police to come up with a policy for issuing regular identity cards to crossdressers. The police administrative department II, in charge of issuing passports and ID cards, collaborated with the criminal squad. The local precinct had confiscated Krüger’s identity card. When applying for a substitute, Krüger asked to include their portrait in women’s clothing because their old identity card, which had their portrait in male appearance, “caused trouble.”<sup>531</sup> The dissimilarity between Krüger’s photo and live appearance was likely the reason why the police seized the ID card in the first place. Police department II reported that Krüger had “refused to cut his hair short just so that photos for the preliminary ID card could be made; further he was no longer in possession of men’s clothing.” The officer in charge followed Krüger’s argumentation, noting to his colleagues at the detective squad that “his objections [...] cannot readily be denied.” He thus suggested to indeed go along with Krüger’s wish to include a photo in female attire, and to add a note stating

This Identity Card is only valid in connection with the confirmation issued by the Police President, Department K, from [date], that the holder of this Identity Card is known and registered as a wearer of women’s clothing.

The detective squad agreed, noting that since the “tiresome matter” had led to disagreements in the past, and so welcomed a lasting solution to the issue.

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<sup>529</sup> PHS D K.KK Bd. 1. Searching for “trans\*” in the East Berlin People’s Police files at Landesarchiv did not produce any results. The People’s Police files at the Historical Police Collection are not searchable or accessible.

<sup>530</sup> Schreiben der Abteilung II an den Leiter der Abteilung K, Polizeipräsident West-Berlin, 10. Juni 1950, PHS D K.KK Bd 1.

<sup>531</sup> Schreiben der Abteilung II an den Leiter der Abteilung K, Polizeipräsident West-Berlin, 10. Juni 1950, PHS D K.KK Bd 1.

Two years later, in 1952, an inquiry from the Munich police prompted the West Berlin police to explicate the procedure in more detail.<sup>532</sup> A Munich “transvestite” had informed the local police of Berlin’s *Transvestitenschein* practice, and the Bavarian officers were curious to learn more, apparently unaware that Munich police had issued them during the Weimar Republic.<sup>533</sup> In their response, the West Berlin detective squad explained that “transvestites” could apply for an identity card with their photo in female attire with the detective squad. Their statement was recorded at the police station, and they had to have a doctor’s statement, which they had to pay for themselves.<sup>534</sup> If the doctor found that the person was a “pure transvestite, and there is no danger of him practicing a deviant sexual inclination [...] in public (suspicion of homosexuality),” the confirmation could be issued.<sup>535</sup>

Sexologists during Nazism used the notions of “pure” and “impure” transvestitism to differentiate heterosexual “transvestites” on the one hand from homosexual “transvestites” and crossdressing male prostitutes on the other.<sup>536</sup> While the terms were of Nazi origin, the distinction itself was not; rather, it was a key feature of sexological theories of transvestitism as well as discourses among “transvestites” since the beginning of the century.<sup>537</sup> In addition to the continued use of Nazi terminology, the phrasing in the letter (“practicing a deviant sexual inclination [...] in public”) suggests that the police amalgamated concepts of homosexuality and male prostitution. The West Berlin police further explained to their Munich colleagues that “his

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<sup>532</sup> Schreiben des Polizeipräsidiums München an das Polizeipräsidium Berlin, 9. Juni 1952, PHS D K.KK Bd 1.

<sup>533</sup> Rainer Herrn, ““Ich habe wohl Freude an Frauenkleidern [...], bin aber deswegen nicht homosexuell.”: Der Forschungsstand zum Transvestitismus in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus,” in Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld, *Forschung im Queerformat*, 60.

<sup>534</sup> Response to Polizeipräsidium München, 20. Juni 1952, PHS D K.KK Bd 1. The response also mentioned that the practice continued a policy followed by the Berlin police until 1942.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

<sup>536</sup> Herrn, ““Ich habe wohl Freude,” 61.

<sup>537</sup> Herrn, *Schnittmuster*, 59, also Sutton, Katie. “From Sexual Inversion to Trans\*. Transgender History and Historiography.” In *Was ist Homosexualität? Forschungsgeschichte, gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen und Perspektiven*. Edited by Florian Mildener et al., 181–203. Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2014, 192.

[the applicant's] outward appearance in women's clothing must not give cause to a public nuisance."<sup>538</sup> Hence, in order to get the recognition that the *Transvestitenschein* represented, transvestites had to perform a seamless version of normative femininity before the authorities; they had to be able to pass to get a pass.

In 1960, the West Berlin police changed this practice. An inquiry to the detective squad from police department II B, in charge of passport matters, relayed that recently, three passports had been issued to "persons of male sex who appear in female clothing and hairstyles."<sup>539</sup> The writer continued,

In my opinion, for reasons of public order, only such passport photos should be used that correspond to the personal information recorded in the passport and indicating the sex, for instance the first name, the profession. On the other hand, one could demand for reasons of identification that the photographs show the passport holder in the garb and look that he usually appears in. I have presented these questions to the Senator for the Interior who is interested in the position that the criminal squad and the Federal Criminal Police Office, respectively, take in this matter. One would also have to entertain the question whether persons of female sex should be allowed to bring photographs showing them in male clothing. Do you have any experience in how far men have tried to evade a penalty for a violation of §175 by using female clothing?

The writer distinguished between the upholding of public order and an effective identification, two interests that had previously been understood as related, if not identical. Whereas the practice of issuing *Transvestitenscheine* was based on the understanding that public order depended on the possibility of the state to identify people in public space, the writer argued that public order did not so much rely on the congruence of outward appearance and the ID photograph, but instead on the concurrence of the photograph with the markers of gender that the document contained, "first name" and "profession." In passing, we thus learn that identity cards and passports at the time did not record their holders' sex. Also, the three people whose passports

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<sup>538</sup> Response to Polizeipräsidium München, 20. Juni 1952, PHS D K.KK Bd 1.

<sup>539</sup> Letter to police president, April 13, 1960, PHS D K.KK Bd 1.

prompted the inquiry apparently did not apply for a name change to go by gender-neutral names, as was often the case.

How did the criminal squad respond to this inquiry? Interestingly, the file contains two versions of the reply. The first one proposes a continuation of the transvestite pass policy, noting that cases of persons crossdressing in order to escape criminal persecution “are rare and do not give occasion to special measures.”<sup>540</sup> But then, the person in charge, likely criminal squad director Wolfram Sangmeister, had a change of mind. The second version of the response expresses agreement that the photographs in passports should correspond to the “personal information noted in the passport and indicating the gender, as well as the description of person.”<sup>541</sup> Further, should a search for a transvestite occur, “identification would not be hampered because the circle of transvestites is generally known” and the police could “fall back on photographs displaying the transvestites in their everyday garb and look.” The police hence kept a comprehensive register of transvestites. Though the second version of the letter also acknowledged that crossdressing to escape criminal persecution was a negligible phenomenon, it concluded with reinforcing the necessity for police control. Proclaiming that “[i]t is, however, a fact derived from experience that transvestites essentially only wear the clothing of the other sex to camouflage their homosexual practice [Tätigkeit],” the letter again amalgamated transvestitism, homosexuality, and male prostitution. Evidently, a half century after Magnus Hirschfeld had differentiated these “sexual variations,” and after decades of police practice in accordance with his recommendation, the West Berlin police ignored this prewar sexological insight, whether willfully or not.<sup>542</sup>

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<sup>540</sup> Briefentwurf Mai 1960, PHS D K.KK Bd 1.

<sup>541</sup> Alternativer Briefentwurf Mai 1960, PHS D K.KK Bd 1.

<sup>542</sup> Hirschfeld described transvestitism not as an illness, but as a sexual variation. Herrn, *Schnittmuster*, 65.

Since the file only contains the drafts of the two letters, it is unclear which one was sent in reply to the passport department's inquiry. The crime squad did, however, ask the Federal Criminal Police Office to put the matter on the agenda for the upcoming meeting of the working group of the directors of the Federal and State Criminal Offices [*Bundes- und Landeskriminalämter*].<sup>543</sup> An excerpt from the minutes of that meeting suggests that the inquiry, prompted by the three passports issued to West Berlin transvestites, had far-ranging consequences. Not only did the discussants agree that passport photographs should correspond to their holders' sex: "a person of male sex must be pictured as man, a person of female sex as a woman."<sup>544</sup> The group also made a recommendation for changing the design of future identification documents, noting that "[a]dditionally it would be desirable if in the future, forms for passports and identification cards would designate a category for stating the person's sex." Correspondence from various State Criminal Offices from the 1970s shows, however, that states continued to pursue their own policies regarding photographs in passports, suggesting that the push for a unified federal policy was not successful.<sup>545</sup>

In summary, the *Transvestiten* file from the West Berlin police attests to a continuation of the Berlin police practice of issuing transvestite passes into at least the early 1950s. Throughout the 1950s, police even issued passports with photographs that showed their bearers in their everyday, "transvestite" presentation. This liberal policy depended on "transvestites'" seamless performance of heterosexual femininity, however, demonstrating the long-lasting effects of early sexologists' differentiation between heterosexual and homosexual "transvestites," taken up by

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<sup>543</sup> Police President in Berlin, Department K. Letter to the Federal Criminal Office. PHS Berlin.

<sup>544</sup> Zu Punkt 5 der Tagesordnung: Ausstellung von Reisepässen - Verwendung von Lichtbildern bei Transvestiten. Excerpt from minutes of the meeting of the working group of the leaders of the state and federal criminal offices. Historical Police Collection Berlin.

<sup>545</sup> These are all in file PHS D K.KK Bd 1. at the Historical Police Collection Berlin.

Nazi sexology as “pure” and “impure” transvestitism. The West Berlin police’s change in transvestite policy after 1960, from a tolerance dependent on passing to a disavowal of “transvestite” subjectivities, is in line with the development toward a more repressive queer bar policy, and the particularly intense policing of “transvestites” in bars seen in the previous chapter.

### **The Wall: Dividing the City’s Queer Public**

When the GDR constructed the Wall on August 13, 1961 and over the following days and weeks, queer East Berliners were sealed off from West Berlin’s queer public. As seen in the previous chapter, the Wall separated couples such as Hans-Joachim Engel and his boyfriend. It also cut off bar-goers like Tommy and Helli from their beloved queer bars. The loss that this separation entailed remains largely unspoken in their testimony. Their silence in remembering lost love and sociability may express more than the difficulty to remember and speak about a painful period in their own lives. That the construction of the Wall was an especially traumatic event for queer East Berliners is suggested by the case of Günter Litfin, the first person to be shot dead by GDR border troops while trying to escape to the West. Litfin’s love for men, used by the East in order to vilify him as a criminal, was not mentioned in Western coverage of his death, and in fact remains unacknowledged to the present.

#### *Günter Litfin: The Wall as Queer Trauma*

Günter Litfin was born in 1937 and grew up in Weissensee district in Berlin’s north-east.<sup>546</sup> After completing an apprenticeship as a tailor, he worked for a custom tailor close to the Zoo train station in West Berlin while continuing to live in Weissensee. He was thus one of the thousands

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<sup>546</sup> Christine Brecht, “Günter Litfin,” in *Die Todesopfer an Der Berliner Mauer 1961-1989*, ed. Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam and Stiftung Berliner Mauer (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2009), 37.

of *Grenzgänger*, border crossers, Berliners who resided in one part of the divided city but worked in the other.<sup>547</sup> When East Berlin authorities increasingly harassed border crossers, he rented an apartment in Charlottenburg district in West Berlin. He put off registering with West Berlin authorities, however, so as not to be counted as *republikflüchtig*, as the GDR termed its citizens who fled to the West. Leaving the country without a permit was a crime that could carry up to three years in prison.<sup>548</sup> Those deemed “refugees of the Republic” were hence subject to arrest when returning to the GDR; registering in West Berlin would have meant that Litfin could no longer visit his family in Weissensee in East Berlin. When the border was closed on August 13, 1961, Litfin was in Weissensee with his family. On the afternoon of August 24, 1961, he attempted to cross the border by swimming through the Spree river between the Friedrichstraße and Lehrter Bahnhof S-Bahn stations, close to where the city’s main train station is located today. He was spotted by the East Berlin police, however, who fatally shot him in the head.<sup>549</sup>

Dieter Berner has shown how the East Berlin press used Litfin’s homosexuality to vilify him as a criminal and to detract attention from its murderous border regime.<sup>550</sup> At first, East Berlin newspapers printed only a brief report by the People’s Police, which claimed that “a person persecuted for criminal deeds” had ignored multiple demands to give themselves up to the People’s Police. The report stated – inaccurately – that the person had fallen into the water after being hit by an aimed shot and had probably drowned.<sup>551</sup> A week after Litfin’s death, however, the East Berlin press felt compelled to report in more detail. On August 29, East Berlin border

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<sup>547</sup> Until the construction of the Wall, 53.000 East Berliners worked in the West, and 12.270 West Berliners in the East. Ribbe, *Berlin 1945-2000*, 120.

<sup>548</sup> This was regulated in the 1954 Passport Law (“Passgesetz”) and the 1957 Changed Passport Law (“Passänderungsgesetz”). Vormbaum, *Das Strafrecht der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, 212–13.

<sup>549</sup> Brecht, “Günter Litfin,” 37.

<sup>550</sup> Berner, Dieter. “Wie die SED-Propaganda das Stigma Homosexualität zum Rufmord an einem Maueropfer benutzte.” *Capri*, no. 4 (1990): 38–40, 38.

<sup>551</sup> *Neue Zeit*. “Warnung mißachtet.” August 25, 1961. Quoted in Berner, “Wie die SED,” 38.

police had shot and killed another refugee who had also tried to escape by swimming, and West Berlin newspapers had reported widely on his death, printing photographs of his failed flight.<sup>552</sup> The East German government hence was under tremendous pressure to justify the killing of the refugees.

In reaction, East Berlin newspapers mixed Stasi knowledge of Litfin's persecution under §175 in West Berlin, neighborhood talk of his effeminate masculinity, and discourses of predatory homosexuality and "workshy" "streetwalking boys." Combined with the site of his attempted flight and murder in the vicinity to the Friedrichstraße train station, widely known as a location of male prostitution, the result was toxic. *Berliner Zeitung* titled *Front City Press Turns Criminal Into Hero*:

One does not even shy away from playing up politically [...] a criminal with a history of multiple offences who was caught doing criminal deeds by our detective squad in the proximity of Friedrichstraße train station on August 24. This workshy element, who was widely known under his moniker 'Puppe' [doll] among homosexual circles in West Berlin, and who had been looking for victims in democratic Berlin since August 13, had tried to resist his arrest through the People's Police, jumped into Humboldt harbor, and died in the process...<sup>553</sup>

Immediately after Litfin's death, the Stasi collected information about him in the Weissensee neighborhood that was home to his family. Neighbors stated that he had been known as "Puppe," doll, in their neighborhood, a term long used to designate effeminate gay men. They shared their estimation that Litfin was "homosexually inclined because he has not had a closer connection to any girl so far."<sup>554</sup> They told the Stasi that Litfin often went out by himself, and that neighbors

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<sup>552</sup> Berner, "Wie die SED," 40.

<sup>553</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*. "Frontstadtspresse macht Kriminelle zu Helden." August 31, 1961. Quoted in Berner, "Wie die SED," 38-39, my translation. "Man scheut dabei auch nicht zurück, einen mehrfach vorbestraften Kriminellen, der am 24. August von unserer Kriminalpolizei in der Nähe des Bahnhofs Friedrichstraße bei verbrecherischen Handlungen ertappt wurde, in der nötigen Weise politisch hochzuspielen. Dieses arbeitsscheue Element, das unter dem Spitznamen 'Puppe' in homosexuellen Kreisen in Westberlin sehr bekannt war und seit dem 13. August im demokratischen Berlin nach Opfern Ausschau hielt, hatte sich seiner Festnahme durch die Volkspolizei zu widersetzen versucht, war in den Humboldt-Hafen gesprungen und dabei ums Leben gekommen..."

<sup>554</sup> Ermittlungsauftrag Litfin, Günter. August 25, 1961. BStU MfS ZAIG Nr. 526.

would then gossip that he was going on a “doll stroll” (“Puppentour”). Litfin had not become “suspicious in this regard” in the neighborhood itself, though. Another Stasi report dated August 31, 1961 and addressed to Erich Honecker, who was at the time the SED Central Council’s Secretary for Security, repeated this information but added that Litfin had been incarcerated under §175 in West Berlin in 1957/58.<sup>555</sup> This report’s emphasis, however, was on Litfin’s membership in the youth group of the local chapter of the illegal Christian Democratic Union (CDU), his participation in a trip organized by its educational foundation, and his parents’ long-term involvement in the CDU.

The Stasi was correct about Litfin’s prosecution for §175 in West Berlin. His name comes up in the prisoner file of Hans-Ulrich H., who was arrested in August 1957 under the suspicion of having established a “traitorous relationships” with the Stasi and the East German labor union FDGB over a period of two years.<sup>556</sup> H. was arrested and incarcerated for both treason and transgression of §175 in 1957. The arrest warrant for the latter crime accused H. of sex with Litfin on multiple occasions in the summer of 1957.<sup>557</sup> The file also contains a note that H. was to be brought before court in November 1957 to testify in the criminal case against Günter Litfin and others.<sup>558</sup> While the file thus documents that Litfin was arrested and brought before court under §175, it does not confirm his incarceration.

If the West Berlin court found Litfin guilty of having had sex with a man, the denotation of Litfin as a “criminal” that the *Berliner Zeitung* used was factual, illustrating once more the power of §175 to turn a consensual sexual encounter into a crime that ruined reputations. Since

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<sup>555</sup> BStU MfS ZAIG Nr. 510.

<sup>556</sup><sup>556</sup> LAB B Rep 069 Nr. 307.

<sup>557</sup> Ibid.

<sup>558</sup> Schreiben des Generalstaatsanwalts beim Landesgericht an Jugendstrafanstalt Plötzensee, Nov 9, 1957, LAB B Rep 069 Nr. 307.

Litfin's attempt to escape was a crime, too, it was not wrong that he was "caught doing criminal deeds."<sup>559</sup> However, the phrasing "committing criminal deeds in the vicinity of the Friedrichstraße train station" combined with the adjective "workshy," the moniker "doll," and the claim that Litfin had been popular with "homosexual circles" in West Berlin mobilized images of a "streetwalking boy" looking for clients. The article failed to mention Litfin's employment at the West Berlin custom tailor. Finally, the claim that he "had been looking for victims in democratic Berlin since August 13" reinforced the idea of homosexuals as dangerous criminals preying on the innocent.

In light of the international attention that Litfin's death attracted – *Life Magazine* printed a photo of his lifeless body being dragged out of the water, for instance – East Berlin media further escalated its rhetoric.<sup>560</sup> The newspaper *Neues Deutschland* compared West Berlin efforts to memorialize Litfin with the Nazis' celebration of Horst Wessel, a young SA leader who was shot by a Communist in 1930. It thus insinuated both West Germany's fascist character and the equal depravity of Litfin's homosexuality and Wessel's alleged work as pimp.<sup>561</sup> And a year later, when a memorial stone was set for Litfin at the western side of Humboldt harbor, commentary on GDR television again drew on the Horst Wessel comparison. Television host Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler showed footage of the memorialization ceremony from a West German station in his weekly show, *Der schwarze Kanal* (The black channel), a propaganda

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<sup>559</sup> Brecht, Christine. "Günter Litfin: Chronik der Mauer: Todesopfer." Accessed April 26, 2019. <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/todesopfer/171441/litfin-guenter?letter=L&todesopfer-jahre=-1&text-name=&show-all=>.

<sup>560</sup> LIFE Magazine, Sept 1, 1961, 37.

<sup>561</sup> Dr. K. "Mordhetze aus der Frontstadt." *Neues Deutschland*, September 2, 1961. Quoted in Berner, "Wie die SED," 39. Horst Wessel, a young SA leader, was shot in his Berlin apartment by a man who was both a Communist and a pimp on January 14, 1930, and died from the injuries. His death was immediately characterized as political murder by the NSDAP, whereas the KPD portrayed it as a deadly conflict between pimps. Wessel was dating a woman who offered sex for pay. According to Daniel Siemens, it is impossible to confirm or eliminate the pimp thesis. Daniel Siemens, *Horst Wessel: Tod und Verklärung eines Nationalsozialisten*. München: Siedler, 2009, 27, 106.

program that contrasted western footage of current problems in West German society with images of GDR success.<sup>562</sup> Schnitzler described the site as a “memorial for a professional homosexual.” In case viewers had not yet caught on to the insinuation, he continued, “That’s what this Litfin was. He was living on our side and had his worksite at Zoo train station.”<sup>563</sup> Again, his audience would have understood his mention of the Zoo station as a code word for commercial sex between men.

The case of Günter Litfin helps explain East Berliners’ silence about the meaning of the Wall. “For the SED propaganda, the physical extermination of the refugee was not enough, he also had to be eliminated in reputation and in the public’s consciousness,” as Dieter Berner wrote.<sup>564</sup> Put another way, just weeks after its construction, the Wall came to signify queer death in multiple ways: the death of a queer man as well as the death of queer sociability. As seen in the bar chapter, by cutting off queer bargoers from West Berlin bars, the Wall isolated queer East Berliners, who took years to recover a queer social life. Through the vicious defamation of Günter Litfin in the East German public sphere, the Wall also became associated with a notion of homosexuality as utterly shameful: as commercial, as criminal, and as predatory. I will return to Günter Litfin, and the lasting effects that the SED’s defamation had for his memorialization even beyond the fall of the Wall, in the conclusion.

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<sup>562</sup> GDR television recorded West German programs as a reservoir for counterpropaganda, and *Der schwarze Kanal* had primary access to the recordings. Dittmar, Claudia. *Feindliches Fernsehen: Das DDR-Fernsehen und seine Strategien im Umgang mit dem westdeutschen Fernsehen*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2010, 200-201. More on *Der schwarze Kanal* in Caspar, Helmut. *DDR-Lexikon: Von Trabi, Broiler, Stasi und Republikflucht*. Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2009, 70-72.

<sup>563</sup> Schnitzler, Karl-Eduard v. Sendemanuskript *Der Schwarze Kanal*, 27.8.1962. Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv Babelsberg, <http://sk.dra.de/grape/seite6.htm>. “Tja wir hatten ja mit einem gewissen Horst Wessel schon mal einen Zuhälter als „Nationalheld“. Warum nicht jetzt ein Denkmal für einen Berufs-Homosexuellen. Das war nämlich dieser Litfin. Er wohnte bei uns + hatte seinen Arbeitsplatz am Bahnhof Zoo.”

<sup>564</sup>

*The Wall as Queer Erotic Fantasy: "Behind the Wall"*

While the Wall came to signify queer death, it also served as a queer erotic fantasy in a short story published in homophile magazine *Der Kreis* in 1963.<sup>565</sup> The trilingual magazine featured articles in German, French, and English, and was published in Zurich in Switzerland and read worldwide. The story, titled "Behind the Wall," met with strong reactions from readers. Some rejected it as irresponsible kitsch, others appreciated that the author had treated the heavy subject with a light hand. The discussion of the two-page story filled ten pages over three issues of the magazine.

The story is the account of Michael, a West German of unknown age, who visits East Berlin on a Saturday in the winter of 1962. Michael knows Berlin: "[H]e wanted to take a peek behind 'The Wall,' visit all the familiar sites that had once endeared Berlin to him."<sup>566</sup> He arrives in East Berlin by S-Bahn, going through border controls at Friedrichstraße train station. While waiting in line to have his passport checked and get a day permit, he makes eye contact with a young officer. The officer is patrolling the waiting line, picking out "old people and those who he saw were about to collapse" for immediate passport controls.<sup>567</sup> When he passes Michael, the officer

paused for a moment and looked at him in a way that was simultaneously reflecting and examining. That attracted attention – he noticed it himself, blushed and hastily continued. Michael himself had held the glance and had seen a restlessness in the other's eyes that he did not know how to interpret yet.<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>565</sup> Volker. "Hinter der Mauer." *Der Kreis* 31, no. 1 (1963): 8–9.

<sup>566</sup> "Michael kam aus Westdeutschland zu Besuch nach Berlin und wollte einmal einen Blick hinter ‚Die Mauer‘ tun, einmal all' die bekannten Stätten aufsuchen, die ihn einst Berlin so lieb gewinnen ließen." Ibid. 8.

<sup>567</sup> "Alte Leute und solche, denen er ansah, dass sie nahe am Umfallen waren." Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> "Bei Michael verharrte er einen Augenblick und schaute ihn sinnend und zugleich prüfend an. Das fiel auf – er bemerkte es selbst, errötete und ging hastig weiter. Michael selbst hatte diesem Blick standgehalten und in den Augen seines Gegenübers eine Unruhe bemerkt, die er noch nicht zu deuten wusste." Ibid. 8.

Once he has passed border controls, Michael walks “the paths that were familiar to him.”<sup>569</sup> These appear to be limited to Unter den Linden, on which he walks all the way to Brandenburg Gate. The boulevard is almost completely empty of people or cars and Michael feels “an unusual chill that hurt.”<sup>570</sup> At Brandenburg Gate, which was integrated into the Wall, he turns around, “walking back the whole avenue past the rebuilt State Opera to Palace Square.”<sup>571</sup> He then visits Café Bukarest, situated just minutes from Palace Square, where “mellifluous violin music welcomed him.”<sup>572</sup> At this wine bar, Michael reencounters the officer, and they begin a conversation that becomes more relaxed as they evade the issue of politics and “they realized neither of them was trying to spy on the other.”<sup>573</sup> Michael then asks the officer to join him at the opera, and they see a performance of “La Traviata.” During the performance, the officer’s hand reaches for Michael’s, and they once again exchange glances.

The story then jumps ahead to the two of them walking slowly on Unter den Linden toward Friedrichstraße train station, where Michael will catch the S-Bahn back to West Berlin and the officer will begin his night shift. The narrator explains that Michael knew that their relationship would not last:

Over there was a wall that prevented that, and maybe there was even more there; but they had not talked about that. They had only lived the moment in the shadows of a ruin; more had not been granted to them.<sup>574</sup>

Hence, beside the Wall, here trivialized by the use of the indeterminate article as just *a* wall, there might have been other obstacles to Michael and Eberhard’s – the officer is now named –

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<sup>569</sup> “die ihm vertrauten Wege”

<sup>570</sup> “eine ungewohnte Kühle, die wehtat.”

<sup>571</sup> “Am Brandenburger Tor machte er einige Aufnahmen und ging dann die ganze Allee zurück, vorbei an der wiederaufgebauten Staatsoper zum Schlossplatz.”

<sup>572</sup> “Einschmeichelnde Geigenmusik empfing ihn.”

<sup>573</sup> “bis sie merkten, dass keiner den anderen aushorchen wollte” Ibid. 9.

<sup>574</sup> “Dort war eine Mauer, die das verhinderte, und vielleicht war da noch mehr; aber darüber hatten sie nicht gesprochen. Sie hatten nur im Schattendunkel einer Ruine dem [!] Augenblick gelebt; mehr war ihnen nicht vergönnt gewesen.” Ibid. 9

continued relationship, such as an existing boyfriend or a wife. But this is never mentioned. All that time allows is quick sex in a ruined building, presumably not far from Unter den Linden. Before they get to Friedrichstraße station, they say their goodbyes. The boulevard is empty, facilitating a tender farewell: “All alone they were standing on the walking path between the linden trees” – the two rows of linden trees in the middle of the street that give the boulevard its name – “and were holding hands. Gently, Eberhard took Michael’s head between his hands and tenderly kissed him on the mouth. ‘Let us never forget this hour,’ he added.”<sup>575</sup> The story ends with Michael hurrying toward his hotel along West Berlin’s Kurfürstendamm boulevard, which is “illuminated bright as daylight” and “flushed with traffic,” whereas “Eberhard began his control walk along the Wall.”<sup>576</sup> The remaining space on the page is filled with a schematic illustration of a wall (Figure 21).

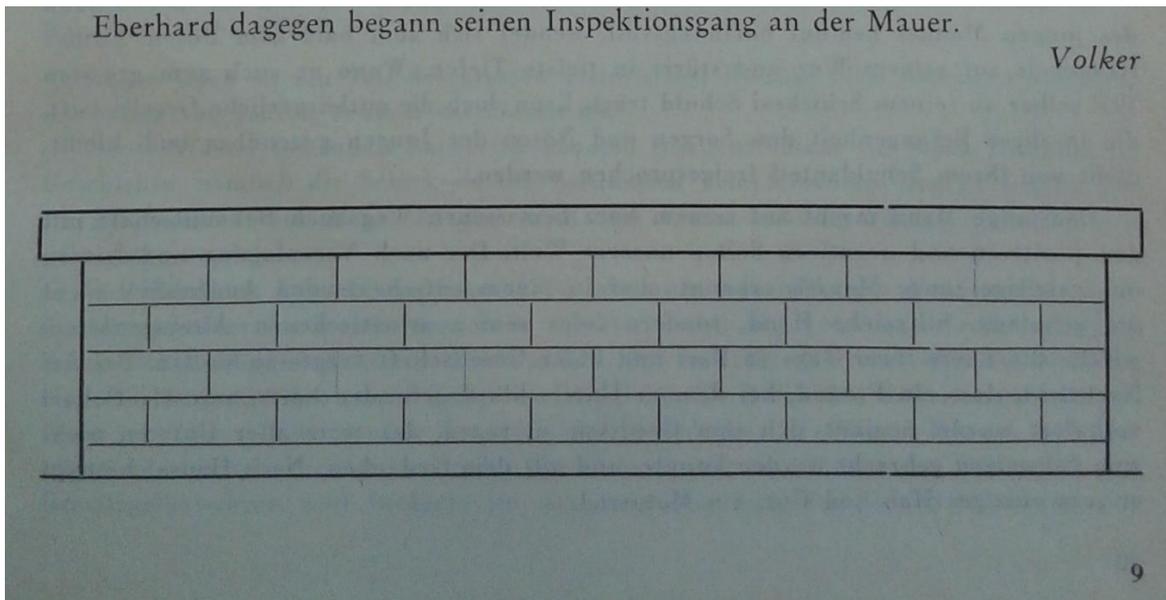


Figure 21. Wall illustration from "Behind the Wall."

<sup>575</sup> “Ganz allein standen sie auf dem Gehweg zwischen den Linden und hielten sich an den Händen. Behutsam nahm jetzt Eberhard Michaels Kopf zwischen seine Hände und küsste ihn zart auf den Mund. ‚Lass uns diese Stunde nie vergessen!‘, sagte er dann noch.” Ibid.

<sup>576</sup> “Gegen 22 Uhr passierte Michael die Kontrollstelle, und eine halbe Stunde später eilte er über den taghell erleuchteten, verkehrsdurchfluteten Kurfürstendamm in Westberlin seiner Hotelpension zu. Eberhard dagegen begann seinen Inspektionsgang an der Mauer.” Ibid.

The goodbye scene between Eberhard and Michael is reminiscent of the farewell between Eberhardt Brucks and Guy Morris which introduced this chapter: a kiss in public, rendered in melodramatic tone. Volker, the story's author, represented the two parts of the divided Berlin as different, but not too much so, and the Wall as an obstacle that could easily be overcome, at least for a West German; it is not a deadly barrier but a brief delay for a young man promenading through the city's public spaces. The humane treatment he receives from the young border officer and the experience of being checked out by him gives the wait at the border a new meaning. In the story, East Berlin appears as a succession of landmarks within a half mile radius of Friedrichstraße, sights that would have been easily recognizable to *Der Kreis*' readership. And while West Berlin's bright lights and traffic signal modernity, the backwardness of East Berlin, expressed in its emptiness, darkness, and the ruins, makes possible the intimacy between officer Eberhard and visitor Michael.

Critical readers of the story took offense at its poor style, pointing out that the formulaic melodrama had missed the very real drama that the Wall had brought and signified for queer Berliners. "A 'Wall-tearjerker' with the undertone 'They aren't that bad after all,' decorated with a cute construction kit wall," summarized reader Horst from West Berlin. His scathing critique of the story opened and set the frame for the intense debate that followed between readers, editor, and author.<sup>577</sup> In his letter to the editor, which was as long as the story itself, he offered trenchant comments on the stylistic and substantial problems of "Behind the Wall."

The whole story shows that the "Eastern Wanderer" has barely made an effort to engage with the human tragedy of the Wall. He has merely tried for the facades: Unter den Linden – Café Bukarest with the mellifluous violin music – State Opera – and, what coincidence, the young officer! He, too, pardon me, the facade of a probably attractive-looking man. Neither did our "Eastern Wanderer" look behind the scenes, not those of the representative of the Eastern gentlemen [the SED party leaders], either, because – they did not talk about politics. Not about

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<sup>577</sup> Horst. "Ein Fehlgriff der Redaktion?" *Der Kreis* 31, no. 3 (1963): 6–7.

humanity, either, because certainly, the “shadows of the ruin” where they later “lived the moment” was already casting its shadows before them, obscuring everything else.<sup>578</sup>

The superficial description, Horst argued, makes not only for poor style. To get across what the author had failed to grasp by not going beyond appearances, he polemically continued the story.

Certainly Michael did not consider that good Eberhard, after they parted at 21.45, theoretically and also very practically, by virtue of his order, might have, already at 22.05 when he began his control walk, shot down a human being, who possibly, just as coincidentally, might have been one of us, and whom a stronger bond than a Saturday afternoon romance might have given the strength and the courage to flee over the Wall. To flee to his West Berlin boyfriend, who after all cannot go to East Berlin for a café and opera visit.<sup>579</sup>

Horst hence insisted on the reality of the divided Berlin in response to Volker’s fantasy of a queer encounter between West and East outside the political. As West Berliners, neither Horst nor the “West Berlin boyfriend” he imagined could visit East Berlin in 1962/63. Visits only became possible in December 1963 with the first of the *Passierscheinabkommen*, the treaties that allowed West Berliners to come to East Berlin for a brief time. Horst also confronted “Behind the Wall” with the reality of the Wall as queer death. His description of “one of us” being killed by a border guard while trying to flee to his longtime/committed boyfriend in West Berlin can be read as a possible reference to the case of Günter Litfin. As a West Berliner, Horst might have known Litfin personally; at least it is likely that queer West Berliners were aware of the SED’s smear campaign against Litfin and would have discussed it with friends. In his letter, Horst does not refer to Litfin directly, however. Indeed, the following sentences suggest that he may be referring to another case.

The gunned down man was a soldier and was guarding the Wall, he was separated from his boyfriend on August 13, 1961, he no longer had the strength to endure

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<sup>578</sup> Ibid. 6.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid. 7.

the separation and he no longer wanted to live “the moment” over and over again.<sup>580</sup>

The change in grammatical mood, from subjunctive to indicative, may signify a change in genre from fiction to non-fiction. The definitiveness of the simple past implies truthfulness; the letter’s tone shifts from the polemical to the authentic, maybe even autobiographic. Was this soldier Horst’s boyfriend? Is he telling his own story? Horst brings back “Officer Eberhard,” the fictional figure from the story, in the next sentence, returning in his epistolary account to the story. But historical reality surfaces again in the final sentence, when he describes Eberhard as “the murderer of a human whose only ‘crime’ consisted of having dreamt, since August 13, 1961, of once again being kissed gently and tenderly by his boyfriend [...]”<sup>581</sup> The word “crime,” I posit, can be read as a direct reference to the vilification of Günter Litfin as a “criminal” engaging in “criminal deeds” by GDR media. The multiple layers of reference in Horst’s letter, expressed in varying registers of grammar and voice, destabilize the fictional framework of the story and make historical reality shimmer through the fictional facade of “Behind the Wall.”

Horst also addresses historical reality directly. Referring to the publisher’s location in Switzerland, far away from East-West tensions, he writes,

Certainly, it is difficult to grasp the problem of the Wall comprehensively from Zurich; just how hard it is can be gauged by the fact that not even the West Germans succeed in it, as the mindless example of the story shows. [...] Believe me, there must be thousands of cases where couples of friends [Freundespaare] were separated by this deed of impotence by a hated regime, just like families, marriages, fiancés and all scales of human bond were recklessly torn apart.<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>580</sup> Ibid.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid.

The reactions to Horst's letter were split, with some readers enthusiastically agreeing with him, and others, including the publisher and author, reading his response as tainted with Cold War fury, failing to engage with his criticism, and displaying a remarkable naiveté. "Why should he [the young officer] shoot right away? Normally, we especially are not so trigger-happy, here as there," reader Klaus from Geneva wrote, postulating a gay exceptionalism of peacefulness.<sup>583</sup> He believed that the story, because it was "not drenched in hate," could show readers that there were "people 'over there', too, who sense and feel like humans [...]."<sup>584</sup> Author Volker shared Klaus' incomprehension over Horst's outrage. "Why turn a story into a drama, a coincidental encounter of two young people into a political problem right away?" he asked.<sup>585</sup> He was concerned "not with the facade, but with the purely human," he claimed. His response ended with the call, "Let us not look at the uniform, but through it!"<sup>586</sup> That suggestion was gladly taken up by editor Rolf, who found it adequate to extend such a generous ignorance of uniforms to those who had worn them less than two decades earlier.<sup>587</sup>

It is as utterly wrong today to see in an officer of the Eastern police only a henchman of the regime as it was wrong during the Thousand-Year Reich to see a sadist devoted to Hitler in every bearer of an SS uniform. We know today that some – certainly not enough – let themselves be roped in in order to be able to prevent some of the monstrous, and did so, too.<sup>588</sup>

To Rolf, the concern that the officer in the story had shown for the old and infirm waiting in line at the border was proof enough that he would not coolly execute the command to shoot illegal border crossers. He could find no fault with the story whose singular point he described as "the

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<sup>583</sup> Klaus. "Letter to the editor." *Der Kreis* 31, no. 4 (1963): 4.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

<sup>585</sup> Volker. "Response to Horst's letter to the editor." *Der Kreis* 31, no. 4 (1963): 5.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid.

<sup>587</sup> "Rolf" was the pseudonym of Karl Meier, long-time publisher of *Der Kreis*. Hubert Kennedy, *Der Kreis/Le Cercle/The Circle: Eine Zeitschrift Und Ihr Programm*, Bibliothek rosa Winkel (Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 1999).

<sup>588</sup> Rolf. "Response to Horst's letter." *Der Kreis* 31, no. 4 (1963): 5.

vital spark of eros stopping before no border and no wall and no ‘enemy,’” and he reproached critics for wanting to “attach such heavy weights to everything.”<sup>589</sup>

Despite his disagreement with the critics, editor Rolf gave them more room in the pages of his magazine. In the May 1963 issue, discussion took up another three pages, taking up the space normally devoted to a short story. Reader Rolf C. rejected the editor’s talk of “heavy weights,” instead repeating Horst’s point that the story’s triviality was incompatible with its subject’s gravity. “What is demanded here is solely the right relation of topic and form of discussion,” he wrote. “It is also called tact.”<sup>590</sup> He saw no contradiction between his call for keeping the right measure and his own juxtaposition of the walled-in GDR with the Nazi concentration camps. “The Wall has created the most modern KZ, and we would find a schmaltzy portrayal of human episodes in a Nazi KZ unbearable today,” he suggested by way of comparison.

Horst from West Berlin, whose letter sparked the discussion, responded to his critics and addressed their resistance against imagining the border guard as killer. He pointed out that those who became officers in the People’s Police did so voluntarily and enlisted for a minimum of ten years, suggesting their ideological commitment to the GDR. He denied that being “one of us” made anyone less trigger-happy and reminded readers that demonstrating kindness to the old and infirm in front of an audience of West Germans and foreigners was a gesture embraced by the “great dictators,” too.<sup>591</sup> But editor Rolf continued to be unmoved by arguments about the inadequacy of the story, insisting that it “neither could nor wanted to grasp or artistically shape the ground of the Berlin Wall in its whole breadth and depth, but only show a small adventure

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<sup>589</sup> Ibid.

<sup>590</sup> Rolf C. “Letter to the editor.” *Der Kreis* 31, no. 5 (1963): 6–7.

<sup>591</sup> Horst. “Letter to the editor.” *Der Kreis* 31, no. 5 (1963): 7–8.

and a quiet cheerfulness that had strayed into the ruins.”<sup>592</sup> This was his final word, wrapping up the discussion once and for all: he stood by his opinion that printing “Behind the Wall” had been the right decision.

“Behind the Wall” and the heated debate it elicited show a clash of everyday experiences and fantasies of the Berlin Wall and of Berlin as a queer space. As the story’s critics pointed out, the Wall served as mere decoration in this narrative, East Berlin as mere facade for telling a titillating tale of quick sex with a man in uniform. The reluctance to imagine gay men in uniform as murderers and the readiness to grant them superior, benevolent motifs for joining both oppressive regimes apparent in many of the readers’ responses is disturbing to the contemporary reader. Perhaps even more shocking is the casual use of the Nazi concentration camps as simile for the walled-in GDR, which was, however, a feature of much Western reporting on the Wall.<sup>593</sup> Whereas the Nazi comparisons remained unchallenged in *Der Kreis*, the story’s treatment of sex was met with ample comment. In its tame, yet comparatively explicit mention of the sexual encounter – multiple readers mentioned that the sex scene took up an unusually central place in the narrative – and its more pronounced description of public tenderness between men, the story reinforced Berlin’s image as a haven for queer love. More than fifteen years after the war ended, the city’s ruins remained part of the “moral geography of danger and desire” articulated by Jennifer Evans.<sup>594</sup> As the responses to the story and its critique by West Berliner Horst demonstrate, the lethal reality of the Wall for queer East Berliners could easily be ignored by the magazine’s West German and Swiss readership, which appears to have been unaware of Günter

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<sup>592</sup> Rolf. “Ein Nachwort zur Diskussion.” *Der Kreis* 31, no. 5 (1963): 11.

<sup>593</sup> Marion Detjen, “Die Mauer,” in *Erinnerungsorte Der DDR*, ed. Martin Sabrow (München: C.H.Beck, 2009), 396.

<sup>594</sup> Evans, Jennifer V. *Life among the ruins: Cityscape and sexuality in Cold War Berlin*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 19-20.

Litfin's case. At the same time, multiple readers asked whether the magazine had subscribers in East Germany, conveying genuine interest in the situation of their Eastern "comrades," a term often used to express community with other homosexuals. Editor Rolf did not answer this question, and East German voices were not represented in the discussion, suggesting that there were no East German subscribers beyond medical professionals and institutes.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter set out to examine how queer Berliners perceived the city's public spaces, how they moved in them, how their movements and actions were shaped by laws and policing, and how they subverted public spaces' intended uses, queering them for their own purposes. In gay men's oral histories, stopping at *Klappen* for anonymous sex emerged as a beloved routine, albeit one whose thrill came with the danger of violence, arrest, and incarceration. "Streetwalking boys," many of whom worked in public spaces, appear as ambivalent and contradictory figures in this chapter. Authorities' desire to cleanse public space of signs of sexual deviance and commercial sex meant that they were heavily policed. At times, a man's presence in a space known for male prostitution was enough to be arrested. The GDR's formalized persecution of individuals whose lifestyle did not conform to socialist ideals of work and family through the law may have affected "streetwalking boys," too. But "streetwalking boys" could be perpetrators as much as victims, robbing, blackmailing, physically hurting, and even killing the men who purchased their services.

Free passage through public spaces was predicated upon a normative performance of gender: to pass as a man, queer Berliners could not be effeminate, but had to pick up the gestures, movements, language of normative masculinity. To pass as a woman, "transvestites" had to perform a seamless version of normative femininity. In West Berlin, police recognition of

“transvestite” subjectivities ended in 1960 at the latest, as the practices of issuing *Transvestitenscheine* and passports that showed their bearers in their “transvestite” appearance were abolished.

In 1961, the construction of the Wall materialized Berlin’s border and ended the porousness that had characterized the inner-city division since the beginning of the Cold War. It broke apart the queer public that had existed up to this point in the postwar city, despite the economic inequalities and political and legal differences in East and West. When the SED regime’s violent enforcement of the new order hit a gay man as its first victim, and it then leveraged homophobic prejudice to legitimize his killing, the Wall came to signify queer death to queer Berliners.

Even beyond the end of the GDR, the SED’s defamation had lasting effects for the memorialization of Günter Litfin. His portrait on the *Chronicles of the Wall* website, a project by three major federal institutions documenting the history of the Wall and commemorating its victims, mentions neither his homosexuality nor East German media’s homophobic abuse for propagandistic purposes.<sup>595</sup> The website stresses his family’s membership in the CDU and their Catholicism, accompanied by Litfin’s first communion photograph (Figure 22). His sense of fashion is mentioned, too, not without the addition that this “corresponds to his profession” as tailor.<sup>596</sup> This portrayal of Günter Litfin as a Christian, conservative young man whose impeccable appearance was expression of his professional ethics and his good upbringing continues the efforts of his brother Jürgen Litfin, three years his junior, who until his death in

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<sup>595</sup> Brecht, Christine. “Günter Litfin: Chronik der Mauer: Todesopfer.” Accessed April 26, 2019. <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/todesopfer/171441/litfin-guenter?letter=L&todesopfer-jahre=-1&text-name=&show-all=>. The project is a cooperation of the Federal Foundation for Political Education, the public radio station Deutschlandfunk, and the Center for Contemporary History Potsdam.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid. “Er ist, wie es seinem Beruf entspricht, modebewusst, kleidet sich betont elegant und träumt davon, Theaterschneider zu werden.“

2017 made it his life's work to commemorate his older brother. In 2003, he opened a memorial to his brother and the other victims of the Wall in a former guard tower close to the site of Günter's attempted escape.<sup>597</sup>

www.chronik-der-mauer.de/en/victims/180480/litfin-guenter?lette

CHRONIK DER MAUER

Homepage Chronicle **Victims at the Wall**

## Victims at the wall

Zurück zur Übersicht

Günter Litfin, photo: ca. 1960 (Photo: private)

Günter Litfin Memorial cross for Günter Litfin at the Reichstag building in Berlin, 2005 (Photo: Hans-Hermann Hertle)

**Günter Litfin**  
 born on **January 19, 1937**  
 shot dead on **August 24, 1961**  
 in the Humboldt Harbor near Charité Hospital at the sector border between Berlin-Mitte and Berlin-Tiergarten

**It was just after 4 p.m. when Günter Litfin began his attempt to reach West Berlin by fleeing between the Friedrichstrasse and Lehrter train stations. According to reports from the East Berlin police, he crossed Charité Hospital grounds and climbed over a wall bordering the bank of the Spree River when members of the transport police discovered him.**

Günter Litfin: First communion (photo: ca. 1947)

Günter Litfin was born in Berlin on January 19, 1937 and lived in the city district of Weissensee. He grew up during the Second World War and later experienced the country's reconstruction and the gradual division of the city. His father Albert worked as a butcher and in 1945 helped found the local CDU district chapter, which his wife Margarete also joined. The four sons were baptized Catholic and attended the St. Joseph School in Berlin-Weissensee. The family was clearly rooted in a milieu that was not supportive of the East German government and its mission to 'establish socialism'. [1] The sons continued to maintain this attitude as adults: In 1957 Günter Litfin and his younger brother, Jürgen, joined the West Berlin CDU, which unlike the CDU block party in East Germany, existed illegally in the eastern part of the city. [2]

After completing an apprenticeship as a tailor, Günter Litfin got a job in a West Berlin tailor workshop. He was fashion conscious, dressed elegantly and dreamed of becoming a costume maker for the theater. At first the young man commuted daily from his parents' apartment in Weissensee to his job near the Bahnhof Zoo. But 'border-crossers,' as people who worked in the West and lived in the East were called, were under increasing pressure in East Germany. To avoid conflict

Figure 22. Screenshot of the commemorative page for Günter Litfin on the Chronicles of the Wall webpage. May 6, 2019.

<sup>597</sup> Ibid. 145.

In his 2006 memoir, Jürgen Litfin remembers his brother and their relationship, Günter's death, and the repercussions for him and his family. Growing up, the brothers Günter and Jürgen had been close. Jürgen's pride in his brother shines through in his account of Günter's "excellent work and courteous nature," his tailoring work for well-known actors, "his good manners," "good looks, tall (182 cm), slender, dark hair and dark eyes," his "warm, outgoing manner."<sup>598</sup> Günter supported his brother and his parents financially, and the brothers also socialized together, going on bike tours and out to dance. In this context, Jürgen Litfin mentions "my brother's girlfriend (...) Monika."<sup>599</sup> At the same time, he also describes that Günter had to endure "derisive criticism" on the streets of Weissensee for his elegant wardrobe.<sup>600</sup> Whereas Günter appears as an exceptionally well-dressed, well-mannered heterosexual man in Jürgen's characterization, the sneering comments that he suffered for his looks hint at the fragility of this image of heterosexual masculinity, and at Jürgen's awareness of it.

The day after Günter's shooting, without knowing what had happened, Jürgen was interrogated for hours by the Stasi.<sup>601</sup> His questioners confronted him with two contradictory theories about his brother which he both describes as "slander:" that Günter was homosexual, and that he had sexually harassed a female nurse at the Charité hospital.<sup>602</sup> When Jürgen returned home, he found his mother in despair. Their apartment had been turned upside down and partly destroyed by Stasi agents who had not bothered to inform her about the reasons for their search. The two of them only learned of Günter's violent death the following day, when the West Berlin

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<sup>598</sup> Litfin, Jürgen. *Tod durch fremde Hand: das erste Maueropfer in Berlin und die Geschichte einer Familie*. With the assistance of Annette Vogel. Husum: Verlag der Nation, 2006, 50-51.

<sup>599</sup> Ibid. 53.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid. 48-49.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid. 69-70.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid. 69-70.

television news reported on it. The family was then forced to keep quiet about the circumstances of Günter's passing.

After the fall of the Wall, Jürgen Litfin worked ceaselessly to rehabilitate his brother and get justice for him. He tried to find out more about the course of events that led to his brother's death, in particular the identities of the policemen who shot him. In this context, he renders the content of the Stasi report to Erich Honecker. He mentions how the report maligned the family for their CDU membership, but omits its reference to his brother's alleged homosexuality and incarceration in West Berlin. In the reprint of the report that is included in the text, the respective lines are blackened.<sup>603</sup>

In light of the traumatic connection between his beloved brother's death and the state's vicious homophobic defamation, it is understandable that Jürgen Litfin's glossed over all hints of Günter's homosexuality. But the result is a misrepresentation of Günter Litfin. He was not only a Catholic and a political conservative, but, very likely, he also loved men. His brave attempt to flee the GDR, I would suggest, was motivated also by a need to be among friends and lovers in West Berlin, and to partake in West Berlin's queer public, not only by his political leanings and his wish to continue his professional success. In addition, Jürgen Litfin's refusal to even entertain the possibility of Günter's homosexuality perpetuates the very homophobia expressed so heinously by GDR media. By uncritically following his account, official commemorations such as the *Chronicles of the Wall* participate in upholding a silence that signifies the shamefulness of queer love.

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<sup>603</sup> Ibid. 124-125.

## Chapter 6: Bubis Behind Bars: Prisons as Spaces of Queer Possibility

“Prisoner file Grundmann, Bettina (lesbian).”<sup>604</sup> This single result came up when I was searching for sources on female queer Berliners at the *Landesarchiv Berlin*, the archive in charge of collecting Berlin’s legislative and executive paper trail, and typed “lesb” and my period of interest, 1945-1970, into the computer.<sup>605</sup> The catalogue entry also listed the crimes for which Grundmann was imprisoned in 1960s West Berlin: perjury and fraud. When the file arrived in the reading room and I opened it, Grundmann was looking at me on the folder’s inside cover, self-confidently, if not with a whiff of arrogance, hair cut short in an accurate crew cut, dressed in a light-colored men’s shirt. A classic black-and-white mugshot, the three head shots attached to the folder caught Grundmann in profile and frontal view.<sup>606</sup> What I saw was a handsome, masculine-presenting young woman who did not appear intimidated by the camera. In her carefully groomed masculinity, she seemed the epitome of what scholars of mid-century lesbian

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<sup>604</sup> Name changed. The German term used is “Lesbierin.”

<sup>605</sup> “Lesb” was not the only search term I used, but it was the first. Practitioners of LGBTQ histories have developed many creative strategies to uncover evidence of queers and queer behavior in a past that called them by different names or preferred not to mention them at all. My work is indebted to all of them. More directly, I would like to thank archivist Bianca Welzing-Bräutigam for meeting and discussing research strategies for sources on lesbian women and female queerness, as well as Christiane Leidinger, who has compiled a systematic guide for historical research on lesbian women in postwar West Germany. Christiane Leidinger, “Lesbische Existenz 1945-1969: Aspekte der Erforschung gesellschaftlicher Ausgrenzung und Diskriminierung lesbischer Frauen mit Schwerpunkt auf Lebenssituationen, Diskriminierungs- und Emanzipationserfahrungen in der frühen Bundesrepublik” (Landesstelle für Gleichbehandlung- gegen Diskriminierung, Fachbereich LSBTI, 2015).

<sup>606</sup> Since German archival law prohibits the reproduction of person-related documents during their lifetime and ten years beyond their death, or, if the date of death is unknown, one hundred years after their birth, I cannot show the photos here. The resulting blank space is all the more lamentable since their own picture was of utmost importance to Grundmann, as we will see below. Email communication with Landesarchiv Berlin, December 2017.

subcultures in the United States have called a butch.<sup>607</sup> As I continued looking through the thick documentation, it quickly became apparent that the archivist's decision to label Grundmann a lesbian reflected her unabashed and declarative verbal and embodied presentation as a butch lesbian in court, prison, and in her everyday life. The file promised a window onto an openly lived lesbian working-class life in 1960s West Berlin, and thus access to a form of lesbian subjectivity rarely preserved in the LGBTQ movement archives. Since Grundmann's was a prisoner file, I wondered, too, what it would have to say about the criminalization of queer lives beyond §175, and if it might provide an answer, or at least clues, to the vexed question of how state discrimination affected lesbian subjectivities.

However, as I became further engrossed in the documents, what came to the fore, more than anything else, was the space of the prison as a site of queer possibility. Intercepted messages between Grundmann and other prisoners described a richly erotic life behind bars. Hence, the file suggested the prison as an important, but largely ignored location of lesbian histories. To be sure, in postwar Germany, prisons were sites of the criminalization, degradation, and disenfranchisement of queer men sentenced for §175 and §175a, a history that itself is under-researched and that I can only briefly touch upon. But, as Grundmann's file indicates, prisons were also sites where same-sex and queer romantic, erotic, and sexual encounters took place. Further, in her file the prison emerges as a site where prisoners' romances, sexuality, kinship, and self-styling clashed with the normative gender ideologies that governed prison life. Intercepted love notes, the documentation of Grundmann's appearance, and her exchanges with prison authorities suggest that she and other prisoners embodied masculine (butch) and feminine (fem) genders, expressed through dress, hairstyle, names, and relationship roles. These

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<sup>607</sup> Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

documents also paint a picture of the prison as a site that allowed some room for negotiation, self-expression and self-determination, even though the prison authorities isolated prisoners, severely curtailed their freedom, and imposed normative ideas of what constituted proper femininity. As I will show, Grundmann expended great energy to keep up her masculinity in prison. Indeed, the documents in her file suggest that by taking care of her butch self through attending to the body and engaging in erotic relationships, Grundmann held on to her dignity during incarceration.

In this chapter, I argue that the prison is both: a site where queer subjectivities, such as Grundmann's butch lesbianism, testimony to the criminalization of working-class queer subcultures; *and* a space whose relatively isolated same-sex environment facilitated expressions of gender and erotic relationships beyond the or counter to the heterosexual norm. In this way, the prison is a site in which the everyday practices of queer Berliners subverted the intentions of the institution, turning a site designed to inculcate social norms into a space of queer possibility. The chapter's overwhelming focus will be on women's prisons. This is a result of the rich sources I found on them, Grundmann's file most importantly. The detail about queer subjectivities and everyday life in prison that they contain had no parallel in the sources I identified on men's prisons and men imprisoned under §175.<sup>608</sup> Their experiences can only be touched upon in a brief excursus on queer men in prison.

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<sup>608</sup> I have decided to mostly bracket the analysis of men's prisons as queer spaces because of the richness of my sources on women's prisons. The detail about queer subjectivity and everyday life in the prison that they contain was not matched by the sources I found on men's prisons and men imprisoned under §175 (oral histories, reports from homophile magazines, and archival sources.)

## Theorizing Prison Sex and Butch-Fem Subjectivities in the Mid-Twentieth Century

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault argues that the modern prison is one institution among others in a carceral “network” that disciplined individuals by surveilling them.<sup>609</sup> As such, he argued, the prison was a central agent of “the normalizing power,” which sought to produce useful individuals by creating “a new form of ‘law’: a mixture of legality and nature, prescription and constitution, the norm.”<sup>610</sup> Connecting prisons more specifically to sexual norms, historian Regina Kunzel, in her history of sexuality and prisons in the United States, *Criminal Intimacy*, suggests that the prison’s location at the margins of society makes it a particularly well-suited site for examining the instabilities and anxieties that structure broader society. Discourses about prison sex might thus illuminate the construction of norms of gender and sexuality.<sup>611</sup>

One way to subject the social process of normalization and the categories of identity and experience defined as normal to historical scrutiny it is to examine responses to what might be considered their border problems. Sex among prisoners constituted one such problem that threatened to erode the border of heterosexuality. Efforts to evacuate prison sex of its corrosive meaning for the broader culture, at times intense, expose the framing beneath the edifice of heterosexuality at a key moment in its construction.<sup>612</sup>

Kunzel’s thesis is based on her analysis of sociological studies of U.S. prison populations from the mid-twentieth century. German authorities’ reactions to sex in prison may be equally insightful for the making of sexual norms in Germany, especially as the postwar years in the two Germanies were characterized by what researchers have termed “fragile heterosexuality” and a

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<sup>609</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and punish*, 297-8; 306.

<sup>610</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and punish*, 304; 231.

<sup>611</sup> Regina Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 8.

<sup>612</sup> Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy*, 9.

“desperate search for normality.”<sup>613</sup> Rephrasing Kunzel’s words, the postwar years in Germany also were a “key moment” in the construction of “the edifice of heterosexuality.”

Kunzel is also attentive, however, to the practices of constructing the gendered and sexual self embraced by prisoners, and the presence of butch-fem subjectivities in mid-century prisons.

“Populations of women’s as well as men’s prisons were drawn disproportionately from the working class, and the increasing importance of butch-femme dynamics and gender signification began to be apparent in women’s prisons beginning in this period as well,” she writes.<sup>614</sup> Kunzel cites the scholarship of Elisabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis, who, in their magisterial oral history study, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, carve out the social and sexual practices of the butch-fem subculture that emerged in the U.S. in the 1940s. The authors made a forceful argument for the political significance of these subjectivities.

Butches defied convention by usurping male privilege in appearance and sexuality, and with their fems, outraged society by creating a romantic and sexual unit within which women were not under male control. At a time when lesbian communities were developing solidarity and consciousness, but had not yet formed political groups, butch-fem roles were the key structure for organizing against heterosexual dominance. They were the central prepolitical form of resistance.<sup>615</sup>

Following Kennedy and Davis, I will argue in my analysis of the Grundmann file that the practices of butch self-fashioning were key to preserving queer dignity, not just under the

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<sup>613</sup> I am referring to Dagmar Herzog’s chapter titles *The Fragility of Heterosexuality* and *Desperately Seeking Normality*. Herzog, *Sex after fascism: memory and morality in twentieth-century Germany*. The U.S. studies of prison society have no equivalent in Germany, where prisons as social spaces have been largely ignored by both history and sociology. Psychologist Thomas Barth claims that his 2010 study of “relationships and sexuality of imprisoned men in the German penal system” is “the first German study to record data about the relationships and sexuality of imprisoned men.” Thomas Barth, “Relationships and Sexuality of Imprisoned Men in the German Penal System - a Survey of Inmates in a Berlin Prison,” *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 35 (2012): 153. Barth’s claim is substantiated by Nicola Döring’s 2006 article on sexuality in prisons. She states, “Aktuelle Studien, die den Umgang mit Sexualität speziell in bundesdeutschen Justizvollzugsanstalten rekonstruieren, fehlen.” Nicola Döring, “Sexualität Im Gefängnis: Forschungsstand Und -Perspektiven,” *Zeitschrift für Sexualforschung* 19 (2006): 330.

<sup>614</sup> Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy*, 121.

<sup>615</sup> Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, 6.

conditions of imprisonment, but also more generally during the intensely homophobic 1950s and 1960s.

In my examination of prison records and memories of prison life shared in oral history interviews, my focus, as in the other chapters, will be on practices of queer space-making. My first question will thus be: What did inmates do in prison? A second, following question will be: How did they themselves understand what they were doing and who they were? In a third step, I ask: How did those who held power over them, namely court officials and prison administrators, understand what the prisoners were doing and who they were? I will thus attempt to connect practices (what people were doing), subjectivities (how they understood what they were doing and who they were), and discourses (how others understood what they were doing, who they were, and what the repercussions of that were), in the hope of arriving at an understanding of the prison that spotlights queer agency while remaining mindful of the very real deprivations, degradations, hostilities, and violence inflicted on queer prisoners. The chapter begins with a short excursus on the prison experiences of Orest Kapp and Klaus Born, two gay men whose memories of queer life in West Berlin have informed multiple previous chapters. Then, I turn to women's prisons, outlining the development of women's prisons in East and West Berlin and discussing sources on same-sex relationships and lesbian subjectivities behind bars.

### **Excursus: Queer Men in Prison in West Berlin**

Because only sex between men was prohibited by law, incarceration as punishment for queer sex affected only those identified by the law as men, which included male-to-female "transvestites," as seen in the previous two chapters. Excerpts from the oral history interviews of Orest Kapp and

Klaus Born highlight aspects of queer men's experience in prison which warrant exploration in greater depth, especially because prison time was a feature of many queer men's lives.<sup>616</sup>

No statistics exist for the incarceration of queer Berliners under §175 in the postwar years.<sup>617</sup>

However, according to historian Jens Dobler, 758 men were convicted under §175 in Berlin (East and West) between 1945 and 1948 alone. Statistics of the sentences given to men in West Germany under §175 or §175a between 1950 and 1969 show that 75% received a prison term.<sup>618</sup>

With the prosecution for §175 intensifying dramatically in West Germany over the 1950s and into the 1960s, it seems likely that thousands of men were imprisoned in West Berlin prisons for having sex with other men until the reform of the law in 1969. In East Berlin, the numbers were likely much lower. Incomplete statistics show that between 1949 and 1959, at least 202 men and male youth were sentenced under §175 and §175a.<sup>619</sup> But as seen in the previous chapter, the GDR's laws targeting "asocials" were likely also used against queers. East Berlin's men's prisons thus warrant an in-depth examination as sites that played a significant role for queer men.

Orest Kapp, whose description of the painstaking process of learning normative masculinity I discussed in the previous chapter, was "surprised with a friend" by the West Berlin

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<sup>616</sup> Because of limited space and time, I cannot discuss further aspects and sources. In particular, I had hoped to discuss a Stasi file that shows how §175 and §175a intersected with long-established stereotypes about homosexuals as unreliable citizens that were updated for the Cold War context. BStU MfS AU 309/55 Bd. 2. documents the heartbreaking case of Gerhard B., who spent much of his young life imprisoned by different postwar authorities. The interrogation records and court sentences in the file show how the criminalization of male prostitution, postwar poverty, and the lack of a support network and stable housing could result in multiple years of imprisonment in the mid-1950s climate of Cold War hysteria. Gerhard B.'s case also highlights another, darker aspect that Berlin held for queers. The flipside of the mobility between East and West that characterized the city until the construction of the Wall in 1961 was the suspicion of espionage harbored by authorities in both parts of the city, suspicions that may have particularly affected Berliners who were already conspicuous, such as the highly mobile "streetwalking boys."

<sup>617</sup> Email to author from Rainer Hoffschilt, October 30, 2018.

<sup>618</sup> Rainer Hoffschilt, "Statistik der Kriminalisierung und Verfolgung homosexueller Handlungen unter Männern durch Justiz und Polizei in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von der Nachkriegszeit bis 1994" (Hannover, 2016), [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a1/BRD\\_Paragraph\\_175\\_StGB\\_Statistik\\_1945-94%2C\\_Hoffschilt\\_2016.pdf](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a1/BRD_Paragraph_175_StGB_Statistik_1945-94%2C_Hoffschilt_2016.pdf), 7..

<sup>619</sup> Berndl, "Zeiten der Bedrohung," 21.

police when he was seventeen, in the late 1950s.<sup>620</sup> In the interview, he does not specify what they were caught doing, but he was arrested for causing a public nuisance and for §175, suggesting that he and his friend had sex in a public space. While Kapp was ultimately not convicted, he spent three months in custody. He was “ashamed to be in prison, especially as a homosexual,” and told acquaintances that he was jailed for “something criminal.”<sup>621</sup> In custody, he had sex for safety,<sup>622</sup> as he explains to the interviewers:

Interviewer: Did you have problems in custody?

Orest Kapp: Hm, I did not, thank God, because the boss of my cell, where I was, well, the boss, he took me under his wing, to put it this way, yeah. So I was his sex partner. But in return, the others spared me.<sup>623</sup>

By incarcerating him for consensual sex with a friend, the state thus subjected teenage Orest Kapp to a situation in which he had to choose between acting as sex partner to the cell’s “boss” or being exposed to the advances of other inmates.

Twenty-one year old Klaus Born’s arrest during his first sexual encounter in West Berlin, with a man he met in the vicinity of the Zoo station in 1965, also led him into custody, but his experience there was different from Orest Kapp’s. Born was put in a single cell and was not allowed to have any contact with other prisoners. In the oral history interview, he describes the deprivations of life in prison.

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<sup>620</sup> Orest Kapp, interview by Andreas Pretzel, and Janina Rieck, October 15, 2014, Archiv der anderen Erinnerungen. Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld. Berlin. “Das war damals, als ich da mit dem Freund zusammen überrascht wurde (--), wie wir uns, naja, ich will nicht ins Detail gehen, sagen wir einfach, wie wir uns sexuell verhalten hatten.”

<sup>621</sup> Ibid. “Und ich hab dann immer, ich hab mich natürlich geschämt im Gefängnis zu sein, vor allen Dingen als Homosexueller, also hab ich immer gesagt, ich hab, äh, irgendwas Kriminelles getan und bin denn in U-Haft gekommen.”

<sup>622</sup> Sex for safety is one of the motivations enumerated by scholar of prison sexuality Brenda V. Smith. The others are sex for pleasure, trade, procreation, freedom, transgression, and love. Brenda V. Smith, “Analyzing Prison Sex: Reconciling Self-Expression with Safety,” in Solinger et al., *Interrupted Life*, 114–16.

<sup>623</sup> Orest Kapp, interview by Andreas Pretzel, and Janina Rieck “Janina Rieck: Hatten Sie Probleme in der Untersuchungshaft? Orest Kapp: Äh, Gott sei Dank nicht, denn der Boss von der Zelle, wo ich war, äh, war eben der Boss, und der hat mich unter seine Fittiche genommen, sagen wir mal so ausgedrückt, ja. Ich war also sein Sex-Partner. Aber dafür bin ich von den anderen verschont geblieben.“

And then I had my room in the uppermost floor. A so-called solitary cell. There was nothing in there. There was the bed, a table, a small chair and the pit toilet. And that was it. And a little bit of water. [breathes in] [...] So I was inside. A week. Two weeks. Three weeks. It must have been [...] seven, eight weeks. How long exactly it was? I don't know. [breathes in] [...] And in the time I was inside. I had no music. I had nothing to read. I had nothing to write. Nothing. I wasn't allowed to do anything either. It was like a, how do you say? Hm, hm, it was a solitary confinement. [...] The only thing I was allowed to do. I was allowed to. Everyday. For ten minutes. With two men. One in front. One behind. In a certain distance. To go for a round in the yard downstairs. And then I could go back upstairs. But I could not come too close to the two. I might have infected them, after all. To become gay. Right?<sup>624</sup>

In the transcript, Klaus Born's repeated pausing to breathe is noted, and the frequent full stops register his chopped narration, indicating that these memories are hard for him to express. He enumerates the things he did not have (music, things to write and read) in order to illustrate how he suffered from the lack of occupation and contact that his solitary confinement entailed. The only contact he describes occurs during his court rounds, and during these instances, prison staff prescribed a mandatory physical distance between him and the men walking in front and behind him, whether these were guards or other prisoners. Born sarcastically renders prison staff's pathologizing rationale for this distance, which likely explains his solitary confinement, too: they pathologized him as infectious.

Continuing his narration, Klaus Born describes how he appropriated this pathologizing language and turned his court trial from a spectacle meant to shame him into an unashamed praise of sex between men.

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<sup>624</sup> Und dann ging's nach Moabit. Und dann in der obersten Etage hab ich dann mein Zimmer gehabt. Eine so genannte Einzelzelle. Es war nichts drin. Es war nur das Bett, ein Tisch, ein Stühlchen und das Plumpsklosett. Und das war's. Und 'n bisschen Wasser da. ((einatmen)) [...] Jetzt hab ich dadrin gesessen. Eine Woche. Zwei Wochen. Drei Wochen. Das waren bestimmt (beinahe?) sieben / ich würde sagen: Sieben, acht Wochen. Wie lang das jetzt genau war? Ich weiß es nich. ((einatmen)) [...] Und in der Zeit wo ich dadrin war. Ich habe keine Musik gehabt. Ich hab nichts zu lesen gehabt. Ich hab nichts zu schreiben gehabt. Nichts. Ich durfte auch nichts machen. Es war wie ein / wie sagt man das? Ähm, äh, war 'ne Einzelhaft. [...] Dat Einzigeste was ich machen durfte. Ich durfte jeden Tag zehn Minuten. Mit zwei Mann. Einer vorne. Einer hinten. Einen bestimmten Abstand. Zum Ausgang. Und zwar einen Rundgang machen. Unten. Und dann durft' ich wieder rauf. Ich durfte aber nicht zu nah an die zwei kommen. Ich hätte die ja anstecken können. Das sie schwul werden. Nich?

And then the trial came. Then I said to him, [...] Then why do I go to trial? I'm going to make them all sick! Won't they all get sick when I get up there. No, not there. That's a court. It will sentence you, after all. Ah, ok. Hm. Well, anyway, [...]. Now I am in the dock. And I look in the back. That was a large room. Then two school classes come in there. [...] They were to listen to this so that they would not get sick. Right? So that they know how it is when you lead a gay life. When you practice §175. So when you go through with it. Yeah. Then they listened to all of that. I explained it to them close and hot [brühwarm], what we did and how it was so beautiful, too. I said: It was wonderful. And then all of a sudden the lamps go on and we are dis-, disturbed. That probably did not suit them either.<sup>625</sup>

In his narration, Klaus Born appears as strong and self-confident. He is aware of the efforts to pathologize him but does not let himself be affected by them. Instead, by naively asking if his presence during the trial won't infect the other people present, he demonstrates the absurdity of the idea that his homosexuality might be contagious. During the trial, when he became aware of his audience of high school students, he appropriates the courtroom as a stage that was meant to cast him as a shameful criminal. He "explains" to the students "close and hot," so likely in vivid and detailed language, what he and the other man did, and how "wonderful" it felt. In his rendering of his statement in court, the state's intervention comes across as a disturbance: it is not he and his sex partner who disturb public order, but the state that disturbs a "beautiful" encounter between two people. In this narration, decades after his trial, Klaus Born thus rhetorically turns the state's weapons against itself.

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<sup>625</sup> Und dann kam auf Mal, das mit der Verhandlung. Dann sagte ich zu dem, sagte ich: Wissen Sie. Warum komm ich denn dann zur Verhandlung? Ich mach' die doch alle krank. Die werden doch jetzt alle krank, wenn ich da oben hinkomme. Da nicht. Da is' ein Gericht. Das verurteilt dich ja. Achso. Hmm. Naja, jedenfalls [...] Jetzt sitz ich da auf der Anklagebank. Dann kuck ich so nach hinten. Das war'n großer Raum. Dann kommen zwei Schulklassen da rein. [...] Die durften sich das anhören auf Grund deswegen, damit sie nicht krank werden. Ja? Damit sie wissen, wie das is', wenn man schwules Leben führt. Wenn man den Paragraphen 175 anwendet. Also durchzieht. Ja. Dann durften sie sich das alles anhören. Ich hab denen dat brühwarm erklärt, was wir gemacht haben und wie dat so schön war, auch. Ich hab gesagt: Es war wunderbar. Und dann kommen auf Male die Lampen da und dann werden wir dabei be- / ge-, gestört. Das hat die wahrscheinlich auch nich gepasst.

## The Women's Prisons in East and West Berlin

Guided by different visions of society, the two German states developed different ideas about penal law and practice. In both East and West Germany, however, penal law in the first years after 1945 was almost identical to the Reich Penal Code of 1871. The purpose of punishment was retribution for the committed crimes.<sup>626</sup> In West Germany liberal understandings of criminality, which stressed environmental influences, soon gained ground over the biological determinism that had dominated the immediate post-Nazi period. As a result, society's protection from the criminal and the latter's rehabilitation became additional reasons for punishment.<sup>627</sup> Through incremental changes, prisoners were given more rights, and in 1961, the West German justice ministers passed the Federal Penal and Prison Order, introducing rules that applied to prisons throughout West Germany.<sup>628</sup>

In East Germany, the judicial system was marshalled for the goal of building socialism. The law thus served to penalize East Germans for behavior that was seen as against the socialist state and society.<sup>629</sup> Responsibility for the penal system was taken away from the judicial system and shifted to the executive branch. Putting the *Volkspolizei*, the People's Police, in charge in 1951 ensured a repressive penal system, necessary in part to control the growing number of political prisoners.<sup>630</sup> East German prisons were often in poor physical condition, a third of them located in 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings. They were crowded, and prisoners were subject to "cruel and

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<sup>626</sup> Petra Gödecke, "Criminal Law After National Socialism: The Renaissance of Natural Law and the Beginnings of Penal Reform in West Germany," in Wetzell, *Crime and Criminal Justice in Modern Germany*, 271; Thomas Krause, *Geschichte Des Strafvollzugs: Von Den Kerkern Des Altertums Bis Zur Gegenwart* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 1999), 89.

<sup>627</sup> Kai Naumann, *Gefängnis Und Gesellschaft: Freiheitsentzug in Deutschland in Wissenschaft Und Praxis 1920-1960* (Berlin: LIT, 2006), 213-219, 228, 257.

<sup>628</sup> Bundeseinheitliche Straf- und Vollzugsordnung. Naumann, *Gefängnis und Gesellschaft*, 256.

<sup>629</sup> Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat: Geschichte Und Strukturen Der DDR 1949-1990* (Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau, 2013), 524.

<sup>630</sup> Christine Steer, *Eingeliefert Nach Rummelsburg: Vom Arbeitshaus Im Kaiserreich Bis Zur Haftanstalt in Der DDR* (Berlin-Brandenburg: BeBra Wissenschaft, 2018), 44.

arbitrary treatment by prison staff,” with no access to courts, and petitions to SED party functionaries their only remedy.<sup>631</sup>

The prison at Barnimstr. 10 in Berlin’s central Mitte district served as the city’s women’s prison since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>632</sup> In 1945, it came under the control of the occupying Soviet troops. As the city’s division became tangible during the Berlin crisis of 1948, the prison inmates from West Berlin were transferred to the former military prison in the West Berlin district of Moabit.<sup>633</sup> In East Berlin, the prison at Barnimstraße continued to serve as the women’s prison until it was torn down in 1974.<sup>634</sup> After the split of the city’s penal system, the East Berlin judiciary introduced penal reforms designed to alleviate everyday life behind bars and give prisoners more control over their incarceration.<sup>635</sup> With the East Berlin police’s taking over the penal system in 1951, these attempts were cut short, however, as rehabilitative approaches to punishment were driven out in favor of a more authoritarian, militarized regime.<sup>636</sup>

### ***Bubis Behind Bars in East Berlin***

East Berlin dog groomer Tommy, whose memories of going out to queer bars in West Berlin were discussed in previous chapters, did time in the late 1940s or very early 1950s for unlawful possession of a gun.<sup>637</sup> Of her thirteen-month sentence, she spent ten months in the juvenile wing of the women’s prison at Barnimstraße. In her 2016 oral history interview for the queer *Archive of Other Memories*, Tommy talked about her imprisonment as a young butch woman. In her

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<sup>631</sup> Krause, *Geschichte des Strafvollzugs*, 90.

<sup>632</sup> Claudia von Gélieu, *Frauen in Haft: Gefängnis Barnimstraße. Eine Justizgeschichte* (Berlin: Elefant Press, 1994), 24.

<sup>633</sup> Claudia von Gélieu, *Barnimstraße 10: Das Berliner Frauengefängnis 1868-1974* (Berlin: Metropol, 2014), 258.

<sup>634</sup> Gélieu, *Frauen in Haft*, 107.

<sup>635</sup> Gélieu, *Barnimstr. 10*, 265.

<sup>636</sup> Gélieu, *Barnimstr. 10*, 281.

<sup>637</sup> Tommy did not remember her exact age. She was sentenced to a *Jugendstrafe* and was thus not of legal age at the time of sentencing. In the GDR, the legal age was lowered from 21 to 18 on May 22, 1950. Tommy was born in 1931, hence her incarceration occurred before 1952.

narration, she strings together different aspects of prison life in rapid sequence. I quote from this document at length to convey a sense of her own voice:

[T]hen they transferred me to Barnimstraße, Barnimstraße 10. There was a block upstairs, on the first or second floor, first floor, that was all juveniles. One of them had killed her mother. But everyone was juvenile, under 18, or had just turned 18. I was coming down and they were just having their free hour, and they saw me downstairs and called to me from upstairs: Hey, send the *Bubi* to us up here. Because back then people used to say *Bubi* and *Mäuschen*. And well, I had to, if I wanted to or not. But it was a good time. It was like a kindergarten (shakes her head). There were pretty women there, too. And once when we had our free hour, with one of them I got along really well, and we said, we'll celebrate our engagement here now. And there were ten of us, not more, ten or twelve, we walked around the prison yard arm in arm, and they followed. And so we celebrated our engagement, more for a joke, really. And the guards, they were [that was?] strange too, they'd give them nicknames. One of them had a silver tooth in her mouth, and they'd call her *Blechezahnubi* [tin tooth Bubi], and the other one was called *Fräulein Fuchs* [Miss Fox]. And, well then I was in a cell, she [another prisoner] always wanted to make out, and I did not like that so much. There were three of us in the cell, and I asked for a single cell. And then when I did get a single cell, I wrote. I only ever wrote. The guard said I was like Chopin, that's what she said. I wrote and wrote, and I wrote a poem, on the original jail paper. And then there was a pretty social worker, too, they [social workers] would come every two weeks to inquire about us. What did they want to inquire about? Jail is jail. So you could talk with her a little bit (shrugs her shoulders). Well, talk about what? How it was there? It wasn't bad after all. I had a good time there. Can't complain.<sup>638</sup>

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<sup>638</sup> My translation of the interview transcript. Rita "Tommy" Thomas. Interview by Karl-Heinz Steinle, and Babette Reicherdt. November 19, 2016. Archiv der anderen Erinnerungen. Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld. Berlin; Transkription Janina Rieck. The original quotation in German: "[U]nd denn bin ick überführt zur Barnimstraße, Barnimstraße 10. Da war ein, äh ein Block oben, im zweiten oder im ersten Stock, ersten Stock, da warn allet Jugendliche. Da war och eene bei, die ihre Mutter umgebracht hat. Und naja, aber jugendlich noch, unter 18 alle, ja, oder gerade 18. Und da kam ick runter und die hatten gerade Freistunden, und die ham mich da unten jesehn und da ham die von oben jerufen: Hey, schick den Bubi zu uns nach oben. Ja, weil früher ham se immer jesacht Bubi und Mäuschen, wa. Und naja, ick musste ja nun, ob ick wollte oder nich. Dit war aber eine lustige Zeit. Dit war wie 'n Kindergarten da (schüttelt den Kopf). Da waren och hübsche Frauen drin. Und denn hatten wa Freistunde gehabt, und mit de eene hab ick mich gut verstanden, die, ham wa jesagt, wir feiern jetzt Verlobung hier. Und da war't unjefähr so zehn, mehr war et nich, zehn oder zwölf, wir sind denn einjehakt in ne Freistunde rund rum jelaufen auf 'n Hof, und die hinterher. Und da ham wa Verlobung jefeiert, aus Quatsch mehr, wa. Hm. Und die, naja die Wärter, die da warn, das das äh warn och komisch, die eene, da ham se immer Spitznamen jegeben. Die eene, die eene Wärterin hatte so 'nen silbernen Zahn hier so im Mund (zeigt auf ihren Mund), und da ham se jesacht zu den immer Blechezahnubi, ja, und die andere hieß Fräulein Fuchs. Naja, und denn äh war dit so, (20 min) dass ich in 'ne in 'ne Zelle, hm, naja, die wollte da immer Knutschen und so, und det fand ick nich so jut. Ja. Nee. Und da war ick zu dritt mit in 'ne Zelle, und da hab ick jesacht: Ick möchte 'ne Einzelzelle. Ja. Und denn ham se det jemacht, bin ick in 'ne Einzelzelle jekomm, ick wollte aber, ja. Und da hab ick dann jeschrieben. Ick hab nur jeschrieben. Da hat die jesacht, die k- k- eene Wärterin, ick bin wie Chopin, ja, sacht se, und dass sie, äh, ick hab nur jeschrieben, ick, ick, und da hab ick dit Jedicht och jemacht, da jeschrieben, uf Originalpapier vom Knast noch. Und dann war ma 'ne 'ne

In Tommy's narration, the prison emerges as a space that was marked by the articulation of queer subjectivities and romantic ceremonies of bonding (if only "for a joke") between prisoners. Immediately upon her arrival, she is called out as *Bubi* by other prisoners. This calling-out is a recognition of her masculinity, possibly of her queerness, and it places her in the space of the prison: she is sent "up to us here," to the group that recognized her as one of their own. Tommy does not elaborate who this group consisted of, if it was all *Bubis*, masculine-presenting women, or both *Bubis* and *Mäuschen*, masculine- and feminine-presenting prisoners. These queer subjectivities do not apply to inmates only, but also to two guards the prisoners nicknamed "Tin Tooth Bubi" and "Miss Fox." *Bubi* has been known as term for masculine, same-sex desiring women since at least the turn to the twentieth century, and historians of Weimar queer cultures have described gender-differentiated lesbian couples of *Bubis* and *Mädis* or *Bubis* and *Damen*.<sup>639</sup>

Tommy divides the prison space into inside – the cells and corridors – and outside, the courtyard. The outside is where flirtation and the engagement ceremony happen. The cells are ambiguous spaces in Tommy's narration: in the joint cell where she is first placed, she experiences unwanted sexual advances. When she is granted her wish to be put in a single cell, that cell becomes a space of introspection and creativity. The guard's comment that Tommy was "like Chopin" in her incessant writing is a compliment, and in the interview as well as in

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´ne hübsche Fürsorgerin, wir hatten ja och, die kamen dann alle 14 Tage mal und ham sich erkundigt. Na wat wolln se sich erkundigen? Knast is Knast. Und da konnte man mit der ´n bisschen reden. (zuckt mir den Schulter) Ja, wat ´n reden? Wie it da war? Also it war ja nich schlecht. Also ick hab da ´ne jute Zeit verlebt. Kann nich klagen. Hm."

<sup>639</sup> In his 1904 book *Berlins Drittes Geschlecht*, Hirschfeld mentioned *Bubis* among the "less beautiful nicknames of female urnings." "Weniger schöne Spitznamen weiblicher Urninge sind Bubi, Rollmops, Kümmelfritze und Schinkenemil." Magnus Hirschfeld, *Berlins Drittes Geschlecht: Herausgegeben Und Mit Einem Nachwort Versehen Von Manfred Herzer* (Berlin: Verlag rosa Winkel, 1991), Mit einem Anhang: Paul Näcke, Ein Besuch bei den Homosexuellen in Berlin, 90. On *Bubis* as well as female masculinity more broadly, see also Marhoefer, "Lesbianism, Transvestism, and the Nazi State: A Microhistory of a Gestapo Investigation, 1939-1943"; Marti M. Lybeck, *Desiring Emancipation New Women and Homosexuality in Germany, 1890-1933*, SUNY series in queer politics and cultures (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014) Sutton, *The masculine woman in Weimar Germany*; Kirsten Plötz, "Bubis Und Damen: Die Zwanziger Jahre," in *Butch Femme: Eine Erotische Kultur*, ed. Stephanie Kuhnen (Berlin: Querverlag, 1997).

personal conversations about her time in prison, she always displayed a sense of pride.<sup>640</sup> Given that Tommy came from a working-class family, did not receive formal education beyond high school, and spent her life working as a dog groomer, her intense writing in prison stands out in her life story. The opportunity to write appears to have contributed much to Tommy's experience of her prison stay as "a good time." The single cell that she occupied served as a "room of one's own," and the time away from everyday life afforded her a chance for reflection that she likely did not have otherwise.

Later in the interview, the interviewers returned to the terms *Bubi* and *Mäuschen* Tommy had used:

*Interviewers:* You just mentioned that back then, people would always say *Bubi* and *Mäuschen*.

*Tommy:* Yes, yes, that's how it was, there were many before us, after all. I met someone once, who was, she told me this, she said: That's a hard time, when you enter there, I was *Mäuschen* once, too. So I say: What's that? And she says: Well, *Mäuschen* is the woman and *Bubi*, well, the guy, the little guy. And that's how I know that, yes, *Bubi*.

*Interviewers:* And was it always a combination of *Bubi* and *Mäuschen* or were there couples of *Mäuschen* and *Mäuschen* or *Bubi* and *Bubi*?

*Tommy:* Yes, yes, yes.

*Interviewers:* Those existed too?

*Tommy:* Yes, those existed, too, you didn't catch on to it so much. And most often those who were a little strict, back then you could really distinguish them, you would notice – you'd simply notice, pretty much. Well, they had short hair, I always had an Elvis haircut, a little longer here (points to the left and right sides of her head, by her ears), and combed to the back. And I had a suit made for myself. I bought cloth, had a custom-tailored suit made. And on the pictures, I

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<sup>640</sup> I had the privilege of meeting Tommy in the summer of 2017. Many thanks to Karl-Heinz Steinle for introducing me to her and her girlfriend, Helli.

wear a trench coat, on most Sundays I would, during the week I had to work after all, so it wasn't possible.<sup>641</sup>

Again, several aspects in this excerpt from Tommy's narrative are striking. She learned the terminology of *Bubi* and *Mäuschen* from another woman who warns her of the "hard time" awaiting her. Since Tommy's elaboration of what a *Bubi* was moves away from the prison context to her everyday life in Berlin, it is not quite clear what entry the other woman was referring to ("when you first enter there.") Is she referring to prison and a gendered organization of prison subculture into *Bubis* and *Mäuschen*? Scholars studying women's prisons in 19<sup>th</sup> century France and in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century United States have found prisoner subcultures organized by gendered same-sex relationships and by family entities, and *Bubi* and *Mäuschen* may be the mid-century German equivalent of these gendered same-sex relationships.<sup>642</sup> But Tommy's interlocutor may also have been referring to styles of female femininity and masculinity in lesbian subculture more broadly. Since both terms are diminutives, they may refer to young people foremost, a possibility that is also suggested by her specification that *Bubi* was "the little guy." Tommy's description of her own haircut as an "Elvis haircut" shows that

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<sup>641</sup> Tommy interview by Steinle/Reicherdt, Nov 19, 2016. German original: "X: Du hast gerade gesagt, dass es damals immer hieß, Bubi und Mäuschen.

Rita Thomas: Ja, ja, dit war so, et jab ja vor uns schon viele und ick mal jemand je- kennengelernt, die war, die die hat mir dit erzählt, die sagt: Dit is 'ne schwere Zeit, wenn du da äh reinkommst, ick war och mal Mäuschen. Da sag ick: Wat ist dit. Und da sagt se: Naja, Mäuschen is die Frau und Bubi, naja, der Kerl, der kleene Kerl. Und daher weeiß ich dit, ja, Bubi.

X: Und gab's immer die Kombination Bubi und Mäuschen oder gab's auch äh Kombination aus, also dass Mäuschen mit Mäuschen zusammen war oder Bubi mit Bubi?

Rita Thomas: Jaja, jaja, ja.

X: Gab's auch?

Rita Thomas: Jaja, it jab auch, da hat man dit nich so mitjekrieht. Und meist so die so 'n bisschen streng warn, früher warn die ja wirklich also auseinanderzuhalten, ziemli- dit hat man jemerkt, dit hat man einfach jemerkt, ziemlich. Naja, die hatten denn kurze Haare, ick hatte so 'ne Elvis-Frisur immer, mit so bisschen hier länger (zeigt auf ihre rechte und linke Kopfseite, Richtung Ohren), und hinten 'n Schwalbenschwanz. Und da hab ick mir 'n Anzug machen lassen. Hab ick mir Stoff jekauft, hm, 'n Anzug machen lassen, nach Maß. Und da hab ich ja auf Bildern, 'nen Trenchcoat hat ick meistens an, sonntags, in de Woche musst ick ja arbeiten, da jing et nich, oder. So."

<sup>642</sup> Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy*, 111–12; Patricia O'Brien, "The Prison on the Continent," in *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society*, ed. Norval Morris and David J. Rothman (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 206–9.

American models of rebel masculinity were attractive to masculine queer women in East Germany, too.

Contrary to what we may imagine as a difficult time of deprivation, the prison emerges as a space of play and privacy in Tommy's memory: "a kindergarten" full of "pretty women" where engagements were celebrated "for a joke" and where a young working-class person could be compared to the creative genius of a Chopin. Tommy's time at Barnimstraße prison likely fell into a comparatively comfortable period in 1949-1950: the worst material want of the postwar years had been overcome, the prison was no longer overcrowded with women incarcerated for petty crime, prostitution, and other postwar criminality, and the socialist authorities experimented with new, more liberal approaches to penal justice.<sup>643</sup> Returning to prison's role as an institution of normalization, Tommy's incarceration occurred during an in-between period when the chaos, uncertainty, and openness of the postwar years had not yet hardened into the full-blown articulation of Socialist morality that the early years of the GDR would produce.<sup>644</sup> These circumstances probably contributed to the "good time" that Tommy had at Barnimstraße prison. While the takeover of the penal system by the People's Police in 1951 meant a return to order and discipline as the foremost goals of prison administration, this did not bring queer transgressions of this order to a complete stop.<sup>645</sup> Instead, as I discuss in the following section, the prison continued to be a site of queer possibility in the 1950s and 1960s, despite the authorities' efforts to penalize queer relationships. More than that, the sources also suggest the inherently political nature of living an openly lesbian life in a homophobic society like the GDR.

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<sup>643</sup> Géliu, *Barnimstraße 10*, 265-266.

<sup>644</sup> See the literature on the GDR discussed in the introduction, in particular the works by Josie McLellan and Erik Huneke.

<sup>645</sup> Géliu, *Barnimstraße 10*, 273.

*Penalizing Lesbian Relationships at Barnimstraße prison in the 1950s and 1960s*

As historian Claudia von Gélieu has found, in 1954 and 1955, multiple prison guards at Barnimstraße were let go because of “lesbian disposition” and “lesbian relationships with prisoners.”<sup>646</sup> The socialist authorities judged these incidents to be an “expression of the class enemy’s activities in our penal departments.”<sup>647</sup> Gélieu suggests that in these cases, homosexuality may have been the real grounds for dismissal, or it may have served as a label to get rid of employees who were not considered politically reliable.<sup>648</sup> Either way, it appears that relationships between guards and inmates could not be tolerated because such relationships transgressed the border between criminal and normal and destabilized prison order.

In the mid-1960s, the Barnimstraße prison saw an influx of women incarcerated under §249 of the new penal code, in which the GDR formalized its criminalization of “asocials,” including people deemed “workshy” as well as prostitutes, as discussed in the previous chapter. Lesbian relationships among these women, many of whom were younger than twenty-five, were stressed in the prison’s files. The authorities enumerated same-sex relationships as one proof among others of these women’s moral ineptitude and anormality.<sup>649</sup> Even if the sparse mention of queer sex and subjectivities in the files does not allow for far-ranging conclusions, it seems that when they *were* mentioned, it was as an indication of immorality and deviance in conflict with the norm of the “decent,” productive, heterosexual socialist persona described by scholars of the early GDR.<sup>650</sup>

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<sup>646</sup> The German file memo speaks of “lesbischer Veranlagung” and “Beziehungen lesbischer Art zu Strafgefangenen.” Gélieu, *Barnimstr.* 10, 278.

<sup>647</sup> „Ausdruck der klassengegnerischen Aktivitäten in unseren SV-Dienststellen.“ Ibid.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid. 290-91.

<sup>650</sup> Huneke, “Morality, Law, and the Socialist Sexual Self in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1972,” 36.

In her book, Géliou includes excerpts from her interview with Beatrice Kühne, who was imprisoned in Barnimstraße in 1970-71 because of her plans to flee the GDR. Kühne's moving account offers detailed descriptions of prison life, including sex and relationships among prisoners:

*Géliou:* There are supposed to have been many prostitutes and “asocials” incarcerated at Barnimstraße. Is that true?

*Kühne:* I don't know about that. But sex did play a role. Masturbation was not spoken about but tolerated among the prisoners. And there were lesbian relationships. I was together [in a cell] with a criminal [Géliou and Kühne distinguish prisoners between “politicals” and “criminals”], and she had a partner, a woman. That was well-known. They had shared a cell and fallen in love but had been separated very quickly. That was a huge drama. They met in secret, exchanged gifts. Among prisoners that was consensus. I think that kind of thing was quite frequent. First-hand I only know it about this woman, a very pretty, rebellious woman. She lived that openly. That's not to be taken for granted in the GDR. In a way, she was an oppositionist [Oppositionelle], too.<sup>651</sup>

According to Kühne, lesbian relationships were not tolerated by prison administrators, but were accepted by the other prisoners. In the case she relates, the involved women were not isolated, as had been the practice at the prison during Nazism, but they were separated. Kühne voices respect for her cellmate living “that” openly, which she describes as extraordinary for the GDR. Indeed, Kühne even states that by openly living her same-sex love, her cell mate “was an oppositionist, too.” Her comment destabilizes the distinction between political and criminal prisoners, recognizing the political nature of an openly lived queer life in a homophobic society such as the GDR.

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<sup>651</sup> Géliou, *Barnimstraße 10*, 302. My translation.

## Relationships Among Prisoners in the West Berlin Women's Prison

After Berlin's penal system was divided in 1949, the former military prison in Moabit, an ensemble of turn-of-the-century brick buildings, became home to West Berlin's women's prison.<sup>652</sup> The complex continued to house the city's female prisoners until 1985, when a new facility opened in Plötzensee, a district in northern Berlin. Dr. Gertrud Siemsen, who had been prison librarian at Barnimstraße prison, served as the women's prison's director from 1953 until 1972.<sup>653</sup> Two files from the West Berlin women's prison speak to the institution as a space of queer possibility, documenting relationships between imprisoned women, inmates' gender presentation, sexual practices, as well as prison authorities' reaction to same-sex relationships and gender deviance. The first one, titled "Special incidents: Secret messages," and dated from 1958, contains messages sent among inmates and intercepted by prison staff. The second one is Grundmann's file, which introduced this chapter and which I will discuss at length below.

In the summer of 1958, staff at the prison intercepted a message from "Strolch" (rascal, tramp, thug) to "Mammi" (mommy), also referred to as "Lisa."<sup>654</sup> Because the word "Strolch" is grammatically masculine, I will use he/him pronouns for Strolch. Across three pages, front and back, Strolch expresses his emotions for Mammi and other prisoners, reminisces about a former relationship with a woman in an East German prison, and makes suggestions for a rendezvous, as well as plans for their time "outside," after release. In the first sentences of the letter, Strolch describes Mammi/Lisa and himself in gendered terms. Mammi/Lisa is "resolute" and makes

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<sup>652</sup> Harald Reissig, "Militärgefängnis/Justizvollzugsanstalt Für Frauen Lehrter Str. 60/61," in *Tiergarten: Teil 2: Moabit*, ed. Helmut e. a. Engel, *Geschichtslandschaft Berlin - Orte und Ereignisse 2* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1987), 329; 336.

<sup>653</sup> LAB finding aid B Rep 65 Nr. 70, Justizvollzugsanstalt für Frauen. Siemsen's personal papers are archived at Landesarchiv Berlin, but are not accessible to research. Email from archivist Dr. Martin Luchterhandt, LAB, August 21, 2018.

<sup>654</sup> LAB Rep. 65 Nr. 70. The authorship of the letter is unclear, and none of the prisoner files for the prisoners mentioned in the file are archived.

Strolch feel “safe and sound.” “Nevertheless,” Strolch does not conceive of himself as a “hen-pecked husband.”<sup>655</sup> While he describes his love for Mammi/Lisa as “warm and trustful,” their relationship is also sexual:

Lisa, how about we find each other corporeally Sunday night (tomorrow) at ½ 9 (each on their own)? Why do you want to hit me for that??? That you are 100% as sensual in the erotic, I do believe, a woman like you!!! But I have studied since my 15th year and I know “the school of love.”<sup>656</sup>

Here, Strolch suggests that the two masturbate simultaneously at a set time, each on their own. Later in the letter, he writes out his fantasy of performing cunnilingus on Mammi/Lisa. The two also made plans for sex beyond writing. If they could manage to be permitted to play chess together, “we’ll play once or twice, until they [prison staff] are sure [that they are really playing chess and not doing anything illicit], and then I will take advantage of the opportunity, you can believe that,” he assures her.<sup>657</sup>

Strolch’s comments on another prisoner, Ingrid, may be indicative of gender and/or family roles in the Moabit prison in the 1950s. “I’ve grown fond of Ingrid, too, but differently, as if it were my boy,” he writes.

That doesn’t mean I see her as a boy, but she is also “Sagittarius,” like Peter. You are right, she doesn’t know what’s going on in front of her. She is a child still. And I won’t teach her that anymore. Once I tried everything, but because I didn’t really make headway and she wanted to keep her “personal self,” it only cost me pain and nerves and I gave up. And now there is less strife between us, too. It’s better this way. And now I have you, after all.<sup>658</sup>

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<sup>655</sup> German quotation: „Meine süße, gute Mammi. Dein Strolch ist so stolz auf Dich, Du verwöhnst mich so, meine Lisa! Bei Dir werde ich auch draußen geboren sein. Du bist resolut, das gefällt mir. Ich bin trotzdem kein Pantoffelheld!“

<sup>656</sup> „Lisa, wie wäre es denn, wenn wir uns Sonntag Abend (morgen) um ½ 9 körperlich (jeder für sich) finden würden? Warum willst Du mich denn hauen deshalb??? Daß Du 100% so sinnlich bist in der Erotik, daß glaube ich, eine Frau wie Du!!! Aber ich habe seit meinem 15. Jahr studiert u. kenne „die Hohe Schule der Liebe“.“

<sup>657</sup> Wenn Du es schaffst, mit dem Schach spielen, dann werden wir ein- zweimal spielen, bis die sicher sind, dann nehme ich die Gelegenheit wahr, das kannst Du glauben.

<sup>658</sup> Ingrid ist mir auch ans Herz gewachsen, aber anders, als wenn es mein Junge wäre, deshalb sehe ich aber in ihr keinen Jungen, nur (?) sie ist auch „Schütze“ wie Peter. Du hast schon recht, sie weiß nicht, was neben ihr läuft. Sie ist noch ein Kind. Und ich lehre es sie nicht mehr. Ich habe einmal alles versucht, aber weil ich nicht richtig

The passage is sandwiched between Strolch's professions of love for Mammi/Lisa, suggesting that Ingrid was a romantic interest at one point, too. Strolch's language here is vague. He describes Ingrid as young and clueless, as a "boy," but also uses "she"-pronouns. He tried educating her once, he says, but was not successful. She resisted his advances, stressing her wish to keep her "personal self." What proposals or demands did Strolch make that led to this statement? The phrasing suggests that they were not simply negotiating a relationship, but that Ingrid felt pressured to change her very self. Strolch may have tried to initiate Ingrid into the prison's system of gendered relationships. As mentioned above, studies of women's prisons in 19<sup>th</sup> century France and in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century United States have found prisoner subcultures organized by gendered same-sex relationships and by family entities. The same may also have been true for German prisons.

What did the West Berlin prison administration make of this evidence of sex between prisoners? In a file memo, the prison director, Dr. Gertrud Siemsen, noted how she dealt with the letter. Guards had found not just this one, but three secret messages, and Siemsen felt that they were fake messages sent with the aim of being discovered. Whoever sent them, she thought, wanted their alleged author to be punished, and possibly wanted to mess with a relationship between prisoners. "I have found out that by sending many secret messages to Binder, Simon aims to create the impression that they are in a relationship, possibly to make her lose her appointment or just to undo her friendship with Giesen and win her over," Siemsen writes.<sup>659</sup> In reaction, she summoned all prisoners involved to her office, those on whom the messages were

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vorwärts kam und sie ihr „persönliches Ich“ behalten wollte, kostete es mich nur Leid u. Nerven u. dann gab ich es auf. Und nun gibt es auch weniger Krach zwischen uns. Ist besser so. Und nun habe ich ja Dich.

<sup>659</sup> "Ausserdem habe ich erfahren, daß Simon anscheinend alles darauf ablegt, durch zahlreiche Kassiber an Binder den Eindruck zu erwecken, sie seien liiert, um sie auf diese Weise evtl. auch von ihrem Posten oder vielleicht nur aus ihrer Freundschaft mit Giesen zu lösen und für sich zu gewinnen." File memo Dr. Siemsen, LAB B Rep 65 Nr. 70.

found as well as their alleged authors and addressees. In her file memo, she recorded her lecture to them in indirect speech. She had told prisoners

that secret messaging may not be a pleasure for us, though some may think so, but it also does not shock us. The content was always simply telling of its authors and possibly addressees. I had no intention to take care of their dirty business for them and serve as handmaid for their revenge. Neither did I have the intention to deal with the messages in detail to figure out who had written them; if secret messages were found on someone directly, however, they would be punished. What is more, secret messaging was childish since they had enough opportunity to talk to each other in their free time and in the recreation room. Subsequently I reminded them that any business among prisoners is forbidden.<sup>660</sup>

There is much here to untangle. First, it is apparent that Siemsen knew about sexual relationships between prisoners. The way she talks about them is matter-of-fact, not derogatory, and the sources do not suggest that prison administrators interfered with these “friendships.” Second, Siemsen’s statements in her lecture to the involved prisoners are contradictory. Her stated disinterest in the messages is belied by her remark that they do “not shock” prison administration: clearly, she was aware of their sexual content. Her suggestion that prisoners could communicate freely during their free time was unfair: under the watch of guards and other prisoners, inmates had no privacy to connect. There is some tension, too, between this ostensible freedom of communication and Siemsen’s reminder about the prohibition of “any business among prisoners.” While “Geschäfte” most commonly means “business” in the sense of the exchange of goods, its meaning is somewhat ambivalent, leaving the possibility that Siemsen was also referring to sexual relations.

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<sup>660</sup> “Darin habe ich gesagt, daß das Kassibern zwar kein Vergnügen für uns sei, was vielleicht manche glaubten, aber uns auch nicht schockiere. Der Inhalt sei immer nur kennzeichnend für die Verfasser und evtl. auch für die Adressaten. Ich hätte aber auch nicht die Absicht, ihre schmutzigen Geschäfte für sie zu erledigen und als Handlanger für ihre Rache zu dienen. Ich hätte auch nicht die Absicht, mich eingehend mit den Kassibern zu beschäftigen, um dadurch herauszubekommen, wer sie geschrieben habe, aber wenn allerdings unmittelbar Kassiber bei jemand gefunden werden, würden diese bestraft werden. Überdies sei die Kassiberei kindisch, denn sie hätten genug Gelegenheit, bei Freizeitstunde und Freizeitraum miteinander zu sprechen. Im Anschluß daran wies ich noch einmal darauf hin, daß jegliche Geschäfte der Gefangenen untereinander verboten sind. (...)” Ibid.

*The Grundmann file*

Eight years after this incident, in April 1966, Bettina Grundmann arrived at West Berlin's women's prison. Grundmann had been found guilty of lying about the identity of her son's father and of fraudulently receiving alimony from another man who she claimed was the father, Walter Fern.<sup>661</sup> Grundmann and Fern had met on a suburban train in Berlin in April 1959 and had gone on a few dates together. In January 1960, Grundmann gave birth to a son, Hans. Since Fern disputed his fatherhood, her home district office in the West Berlin neighborhood of Kreuzberg, acting as the legal guardian of the child, filed a suit against him. In the court proceedings, Grundmann testified that she and Fern had had sex once, and that Fern was the only man she had slept with during the possible period of her child's conception. She added that she "was a lesbian before having sex with the accused, and I am one again now. Through my relationship with the accused, I tried finding my way back to normal sex."<sup>662</sup> The court, believing Grundmann's testimony, sentenced Fern to pay a monthly alimony of 70 Mark. He appealed the sentence, however, and the court ordered an analysis of Fern's blood groups to determine whether he could be ruled out as the father. The first analysis had ambivalent outcomes, with the expert concluding that Fern could not be ruled out as father.<sup>663</sup> A second test, an analysis of the haptoglobin types of the blood, found that Fern's fatherhood was "highly unlikely."<sup>664</sup> A third analysis, conducted by a different expert, confirmed the results of the second one, concluding, "Hence, on the grounds of the haptoglobin types, it is apparently impossible that the defendant Walter Fern is the father of the child Hans Grundmann." Note the shift in wording between the second and third

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<sup>661</sup> All names are changed. Sentence of the Schöffengericht Tiergarten, December 10, 1964. Copy in Grundmann's inmate file. LAB B Rep 065 Nr. 120.

<sup>662</sup> „Ich bin vor dem Verkehr mit dem Beklagten Lesbierin gewesen und auch heute wieder. Ich habe versucht, durch die Beziehung mit dem Beklagten wieder zum normalen Verkehr zu finden.“ Ibid.

<sup>663</sup> The expert analyzed the blood characteristics A-B-O, M-N, C-c, D and E-e. He concluded that Fern could not be ruled out as father.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid.

expert assessments, from Fern's fatherhood being "highly unlikely" to the more definite, but still somewhat ambiguous "apparently impossible." Fern was let go; instead, Grundmann was now put in the dock. The court found that she had deliberately given a false oath: the blood test had shown that Fern's fatherhood was "completely impossible."<sup>665</sup> Thus, the court turned the ambiguity of the expert assessments into definite fact. Judge and jury did not believe that Grundmann and Fern had had sex at all, since Fern denied this and they had no doubts about his credibility. Her deliberation in lying was proven by her lesbianism, they argued: "Since she always had lesbian tendencies, she cannot have forgotten about an intercourse."<sup>666</sup> The court hence could only imagine "intercourse" as heterosexual sex. They also found her guilty of attempted fraud by trying to make Fern pay alimony for her child. Grundmann was sentenced to the minimum sentence for perjury, one year of penitentiary, and she was stripped of her civil rights for a duration of two years, as well as declared incapable of taking an oath.

Grundmann appealed her sentence. In its opinion, the appeals court reconstructed the events, again stressing the credibility of Fern's testimony. The court praised his "calm and factual account," which it found further strengthened by his statement that he did not have sex with Grundmann because he was contemplating to marry her.<sup>667</sup> The judges differed with the first court in their estimation of Grundmann's personality, however. They pointed to her youth – she had been twenty-three when she became pregnant – and claimed that at the time, "she had

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<sup>665</sup> Ibid.

<sup>666</sup> „Da sie stets lesbisch veranlagt war, kann sie einen Geschlechtsverkehr nicht vergessen haben.“ Ibid.

<sup>667</sup> „Dieser Sachverhalt beruht auf [...] den Erkundungen des Zeugen [...], an dessen Glaubwürdigkeit die Kammer auf Grund seiner ruhigen und sachlichen Darstellung keine Zweifel hatte. Der Zeuge hat sein Verhalten damit erklärt, daß er daran gedacht habe, die Angeklagte zu heiraten, daß er aber vor einer Eheschließung grundsätzlich mit der Angeklagten nicht habe geschlechtlich verkehren wollen, obwohl ihm dies nach der Sachlage nicht schlechthin ausgeschlossen erschienen sei. Diese Ausführungen des Zeugen haben den Glauben der Kammer an seine Aufrichtigkeit noch verstärkt.“ Sentence of the Landgericht Berlin, November 23, 1965. Copy in Grundmann's inmate file. LAB B Rep 065 Nr. 120.

not yet succeeded in finding a stable place in the human community.”<sup>668</sup> They also described her “significant life difficulties” “resulting from her lesbian tendencies.”<sup>669</sup> These factors were counted as mitigating circumstances, and the court concluded that her “senseless stubbornness” was “less an expression of a criminal tendency than an inner insecurity and inhibition.”<sup>670</sup> The court thus lowered her sentence from penitentiary to regular prison. Since Grundmann had both “financially hurt and emotionally disappointed” Fern, “who had felt empathy for her,” the court believed that her sentence needed to be “palpable” and thus upheld the length of imprisonment.<sup>671</sup> It also stripped her of her civil rights and prohibited her from taking an oath during this time.

The two court sentences give some insight into contemporary understandings of lesbianism, as well as the social values that guided the courts’ decisions. Both Grundmann herself and members of the courts understood female homosexuality as biologically determined. They use the term “Lesbierin” – old-fashioned for “lesbian” – or speak of her “lesbian disposition” or “tendencies” or her being “lesbianly inclined.” There is no suggestion that Grundmann should undertake therapy or in other ways change her homosexuality. The court does not elaborate what kind of “significant life difficulties” Grundmann faced because of her “lesbian tendencies,” whether they assumed or knew, for instance, that she had been ostracized by classmates, kicked out by her parents, or suffered in other ways. But clearly, the difficulties

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<sup>668</sup> “es war ihr noch nicht gelungen, einen festen Platz in der menschlichen Gemeinschaft zu finden.” Ibid.

<sup>669</sup> “Auf Grund ihrer lesbischen Veranlagung hatte sie erhebliche Lebensschwierigkeiten.” Ibid.

<sup>670</sup> “Ihre sinnlose Halsstarrigkeit, die sie in diesem Verfahren gezeigt hat, ist nach Ansicht der Kammer weniger der Ausdruck einer kriminellen Veranlagung als vielmehr einer inneren Unsicherheit und Gehemmtheit.” Ibid.

<sup>671</sup> „Bei der Strafzumessung hat das Gericht strafscharfend berücksichtigt, daß die Angeklagte den Zeugen F., der für sie Mitgefühl empfunden hatte, wirtschaftlich geschädigt und menschlich enttäuscht hat. Die Strafe mußte deshalb für sie fühlbar sein. Sie war in derselben Höhe, in der das angegriffene Urteil zu einer Zuchthausstrafe verurteilt hatte, erforderlich, aber auch ausreichend, um den Strafzweck zu erreichen.“ Ibid.

that she must have talked about in her testimony affected the members of the second court, who demonstrated empathy in their decision to count them as mitigating factors for her sentence. While Grundmann's lesbianism was understood as inborn, her crimes were not. The court's evaluation of her actions as "less an expression of a criminal tendency than an inner insecurity" signals the shift in postwar criminological thought from biological determinism to an emphasis on environmental factors, in Grundmann's case, society's homophobia.<sup>672</sup>

Whereas we can thus judge the court's attitude toward homosexuality as cautiously progressive, its estimation of Walter Fern's character reveals its attachment to conservative ideas of gender and sexuality. The court's praise of his "calm and factual account" values an unemotional demeanor associated with maleness, especially as it is contrasted with Grundmann's "inner insecurity and inhibition" and her "senseless stubbornness." Fern rose even further in the court's estimation when he claimed that he had not pursued sex with Grundmann "despite this not appearing impossible in the situation," because he had entertained the idea of marriage with her. He thus cleverly let Grundmann appear as a woman of loose morals, painting himself, by contrast, as an upright citizen who would not sleep with a woman he intended to marry before the wedding. In light of this moral framework, it is not surprising that the courts ignored the different medical assessments regarding his paternity.

### *A Butch Behind Bars in West Berlin*

On April 22, 1966, Grundmann arrived at the women's prison in Tiergarten district. Just under one year later, on April 14, 1967, she was released early after serving two thirds of their time.<sup>673</sup>

The prisoner file contains documentation of her belongings, lists of visitors who came to see her,

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<sup>672</sup> Naumann, *Gefängnis und Gesellschaft*, 213-219, 228, 257.

<sup>673</sup> Personalblatt, Kleiderzettel, Beschluss über bedingte Haftzeitentlassung, LAB B Rep 065 Nr. 120.

petitions she filed to the warden or prison director, staff reports about her behavior, and intercepted correspondence to family as well as to other incarcerated women. What emerges from the documents is the image of a self-confident butch who skillfully negotiated her life in prison, and who lived a richly queer life behind and beyond bars.

At the time of incarceration, Grundmann was twenty-nine years old. Born in Berlin to a single mother, she had grown up in a foster family since infancy. After high school, she continued to attend vocational school, and had then worked in a variety of unskilled jobs.<sup>674</sup> Her son, born in January 1960, was living with her foster parents in the West Berlin working-class district of Kreuzberg. Grundmann was sharing an apartment in Wedding, another West Berlin working-class district, with her girlfriend, who is noted as “next of kin” by a prison official on Grundmann’s inmate sheet.<sup>675</sup>

Grundmann took good care of her masculinity in prison, both by attending to her body and by engaging in romantic relationships with multiple women inside and outside. Upon admittance, she had to exchange her butch outfit, a black leather jacket, men’s shirt, a pair of navy-colored pants, and black shoes, for prison garb, which included dresses, work aprons, an underskirt, but no pants.<sup>676</sup> She was allowed to continue smoking her pipe, and her girlfriend provided her with hairstyling product during visiting hours. Six weeks after entering the prison, Grundmann wrote to the prison director, asking about haircuts for inmates: “Some are really in need of one, including me. I already feel quite scruffy around my head,” she explained.<sup>677</sup> The

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<sup>674</sup> Personalblatt E, Lebenslauf, April 25, 1966, *ibid.*

<sup>675</sup> Personalblatt A, *ibid.*

<sup>676</sup> Kleiderzettel für Hausmutter. *Ibid.*

<sup>677</sup> “Einige haben es wirklich nötig und ich auch. Ich komme mir nämlich um meinen Kopf, schon reichlich ungepflegt vor.” Letter from Grundmann to Siemsen, June 1, 1966. LAB B Rep 065 Nr. 120.

request was heeded, though the director noted, likely just to herself, “Actually, I find G’s hair just right – and shorter would be less beautiful!”<sup>678</sup>

Grundmann was assigned to a single cell.<sup>679</sup> The prison director stressed that Grundmann was “a jack of all trades, looking for contacts constantly. [...] Unfortunately, it is impossible to allow her much community.”<sup>680</sup> Indeed, Grundmann made good use of the opportunities that free time or visits to the doctor offered for connecting with other prisoners, as intercepted messages in her file demonstrate. Two and a half months into her confinement, a prison guard caught Grundmann with a secret message to another inmate, Sabine Rasinne. The message included a photo of Grundmann at a younger age, which she had managed to smuggle into her cell by claiming that it showed her six-year-old son.<sup>681</sup> Though reprimanded, the two continued exchanging love notes until another inmate snitched on them. The snitch also told prison authorities that she had seen them kissing in the bathroom during a visit to the prison doctor. The letter from Rasinne that was found on Grundmann further illuminates the eroticism and the butch-fem dynamics of their relationship. Rasinne conjures up the memory of her arrival in prison “in high heels, the tight light-blue costume, and super blonde hair,” an emblem of hyperfemininity.<sup>682</sup> She informs Grundmann, or rather “Dieter,” as Grundmann signed the letters, of her progress on the collars she is making for him, not without adding, “You’ll have to make

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<sup>678</sup> “Ich finde G’s Haare eigentlich genau richtig – und kürzer wäre weniger schön! Aber gelegentl. kann dann wie bespr. Haareschneiden stattfinden!”

<sup>679</sup> Separating lesbian prisoners was the practice at Barnimstraße women’s prison during the Nazi era. Géliou, *Frauen*, 60. In the 1970s, Judy Andersen, who like her lover Marion Ihns was imprisoned for hiring an assassin to murder Ihns’ husband, was isolated from other prisoners in a West German prison for a period of four years. Monne Kühn, “Haut der geilen Männerpresse eine in die Fresse”: Itzehoer Prozess-Protest 1974,” in *In Bewegung Bleiben: 100 Jahre Politik, Kultur Und Geschichte Von Lesben*, ed. Gabriele Dennert, Christiane Leidinger and Franziska Rauchut (Berlin: Querverlag, 2007).

<sup>680</sup> Blattnummer 21-225, 21.6.1966. Ibid.

<sup>681</sup> Blattnummer 30-32, 6.-8.7.1966. Ibid.

<sup>682</sup> “D. erzählte, wie ich mit meinen Stöckelschuhen dem engen hellblauen Kostüm u. superblonden Haaren durchs U.G. getippelt bin.”

up later for all the things I'm sewing and embroidering here for you."<sup>683</sup> And by mentioning the music that she is listening to on the radio, she creates a mental space of sensuality:

Now they're playing 'Nur wenn Du bei mir bist' [Only when you're with me] That part is so beautiful, 'Wunderschön ist das Leben seitdem Du mich geküßt' [Life is so beautiful since you kissed me] Remember that time in remand prison? Hopefully we can continue that soon without being disturbed. You can't imagine how much I look forward to that.<sup>684</sup>

Despite the short duration of their relationship, Rasinne and Grundmann clearly developed a passion that they even could enjoy physically, at least once. Their affair ended after they were discovered. The prison director instructed staff that Grundmann was to be led to all medical appointments separately from now on, "so that she cannot connect with others on her way to the doctor or while waiting."<sup>685</sup>

Grundmann's relationship with her girlfriend outside prison ended during this affair. When she moved out of their shared apartment, Grundmann, afraid that she might take more than belonged to her, applied for prison furlough. The application was denied, but the director offered that Grundmann could go accompanied by a chaperone and dressed in prison garb. Grundmann rejected this compromise, explaining that she was known in their neighborhood as "Mr. Grundmann." Apparently, then, even in some areas of her everyday life that went beyond intimate relationships, Grundmann passed as a man.

Now single both inside and outside the prison, Grundmann asked "Granny" – the name she referred to her foster-mother by – to visit her "friendships."<sup>686</sup> In case "Granny" could not

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<sup>683</sup> "Das mußt Du später alles mal wieder gut machen, was ich hir [!] so für dich nähe u. sticke."

<sup>684</sup> "Gerade wird gespielt „Nur wenn Du bei mir bist“ Die Stelle ist so schön, Wunderschön ist das Leben seitdem Du mich geküßt. Weißt Du noch im U.G.? Hoffentlich [!] können wir das bald ungestört weiterführen. Du glaubst garnicht, wie ich mich darauf schon freue."

<sup>685</sup> „[Grundmann] wird jedoch nicht mit den anderen zusammengeholt, sondern erst, nachdem alle übrigen zur Vorführung beim Arzt waren und wieder zurück sind, wird sie nachträglich dem Arzt vorgestellt, so daß sie auf dem Weg zum Arzt und beim etwaigen Warten keine Verbindung mit anderen aufnehmen kann.“ Note from Siemsen to prison staff, October 17, 1966.

<sup>686</sup> "Oma, Du schreibst auch, du könntest im Moment nicht zu meinen Freundschaften fahren."

visit them now, she was to “write a letter there right away and include the last passport photo you have of me. Please, Granny, it’s urgent and I promised,” Grundmann added.<sup>687</sup> Though the “friendships” are not further specified, the photos suggest that these were other women in whom Grundmann had an interest. It is important to remember that all correspondence in the prisoner file did not make it out of the prison. In the case of this letter, Grundmann’s description of prison life as “subordination with almost military drill” may have contributed to censorship, but it is also possible that the director was actively sabotaging Grundmann’s relationships with women outside.<sup>688</sup>

Grundmann’s flirtations with other prisoners continued throughout the period of her incarceration. In spring of 1967, Grundmann, writing again as “Dieter,” messaged with Nadja Werner, whose discharge from prison was imminent. Dieter had big plans for their reunion in freedom. “At any rate I’m looking forward to a life with you,” he wrote.<sup>689</sup> The discovery of this letter cost Grundmann access to radio, television, and the recreational room up to the day of Werner’s discharge, effectively separating the two. A card from Werner after her dismissal was not delivered to Grundmann because former inmates were prohibited from contacting those still in detention. When Grundmann herself was released from prison prematurely in April 1967, the reunion with Nadja Werner apparently did not come to pass. Instead, a week after being released, Grundmann wrote to the court asking for permission to write to yet another inmate. The letter explained that in prison, she had “befriended a young woman whose engagement no longer exists, and who is also not interested in its maintenance. Because she will move in with me

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<sup>687</sup> “[S]chreibe gleich einen Brief dorthin und steck das letzte Paßbild was Du von mir hast mit rein. Bitte Oma, es eilt und ich habs versprochen.”

<sup>688</sup> “Aber hier ist das kein einordnen, sondern ein unterordnen mit fast kommißartigem Drill.”

<sup>689</sup> Jedenfalls freue ich mich auf ein Leben mit dir!!!

immediately after her discharge to live with me.”<sup>690</sup> The court forwarded the letter to the prison director, who rejected Grundmann’s request, not without noting that she had “several irons in the fire” and scolding her for already having attempted to contact two inmates clandestinely.<sup>691</sup>

Grundmann’s queerness elicited different reactions from prison authorities, ranging from acceptance to paternalism to pathologization. Upon admittance, Grundmann’s girlfriend was noted as next of kin in prison documentation, suggesting that the administrator adopted a matter-of-fact approach to their relationship. In correspondence to the state attorney, the prison director described Grundmann as “having a lesbian disposition” in a relatively neutral manner of speaking.<sup>692</sup> Both director and chaplain come across as accepting of Grundmann’s relationship with her girlfriend. When they were still together and Grundmann applied for furlough to facilitate the girlfriend’s inclusion in the rental contract for the apartment they shared, the chaplain supported her request “in the interest of her own rehabilitation.”<sup>693</sup> However, the same chaplain pathologized Grundmann when he claimed that “[she] stands outside the community legally, too, because of her sexual abnormality” in another document.<sup>694</sup> And the director’s insistence that she could not allow Grundmann much contact with others, though stated with regret, meant isolation. Grundmann lived in a single cell and was assigned to perform needlework by herself, rather than work in an out-of-prison setting or with others.<sup>695</sup>

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<sup>690</sup> Ihre Verlobung besteht nicht mehr, und an einer Aufrechterhaltung dieser, ist Sie auch nicht mehr interessiert. Da Sie nach Ihrer Entlassung sofort zu mir zieht, um mit mir zu leben. Frau T. und ich bitten beide das Hohe Gericht, um die Erlaubnis einander schreiben zu dürfen. Wir möchten den Kontakt zu einander nicht abreißen lassen. Und wollen dabei aber den geraden Weg gehen. Also nichts inoffizielles tun. Was zu Ärger führen würde.

<sup>691</sup> Grundmann hat ausserdem mehrere „Eisen im Feuer“ (Werner, entlassen, Kurzbein)

<sup>692</sup> Bettina Grundmann ist lesbisch veranlagt.

<sup>693</sup> Im Interesse ihrer eigenen Resozialisierung würde auch ich es für richtig halten, dass die Freundin (...) entweder in den Mietvertrag eintritt oder in ihm aufgenommen wird. Ein Urlaub von drei Tagen wird befürwortet.

<sup>694</sup> Durch ihre sexuelle Abartigkeit steht sie auch rechtlich ausserhalb der Gemeinschaft.

<sup>695</sup> Grundmann’s work supervisor noted that they “would accomplish much more if tasked with physical work (yard or external job).” However, she added, “She would immediately take advantage of working in a community to exchange letters.” G. würde weit mehr leisten wenn sie mit einer körperlichen Arbeit (Hof- oder Außenkdo) beschäftigt werden könnte. Diese Arbeit in der Gemeinschaft würde sie sofort zum Kassibern ausnutzen.

Prison administrators' stance toward Grundmann's female masculinity was ambiguous. The assessment forms filled out by guard and work supervisors described Grundmann as "boyish" and repeatedly as "self-confident," but did not comment on her butchness pejoratively.<sup>696</sup> The director's comment on Grundmann's hair – "shorter would be less beautiful" – may express an aesthetic ideal of longer rather than shorter hair for women, but it also betrays her appreciation of Grundmann's looks. Grundmann herself altered prison garb to make it more masculine by buttoning a self-made collar on the shirts, and her petition to have a hairdresser come in and cut inmates' hair was successful, suggesting that prisoners were allowed some freedom to modify their appearance.

### *The Meanings of Photos in Prison*

In Grundmann's prisoner file, photos time and again emerge as objects of contention. House rules prohibited the possession of photos showing the prisoners themselves.<sup>697</sup> This prohibition affected Grundmann significantly, and she expended great energy to subvert it. As discussed above, when first admitted to prison, Grundmann brought in some pictures of herself at a younger age, duping prison staff by claiming that they showed her son. Giving her portrait as a token of love to the women she was interested in clearly was an important romantic practice for Grundmann. Being deprived of her own picture thus was a cause of great unhappiness and anger, as a letter to Grundmann's family demonstrates which was held back because of its "tone."<sup>698</sup>

Received your dear mail with great thanks [...] today. [...] Now there are two drops of bitterness in the letter. First, that Papa is so sick and has to go to the hospital. Second, I did not get the images of Bettina. [Note that Grundmann is referring to themselves by using their given first name rather than the first person possessive pronoun.] That makes me so upset, and again underlines the injustice here. [...] But I do not see why others may have family photos on which they are

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<sup>696</sup> burschikos, selbstbewusst

<sup>697</sup> House rules of the women's prison, December 1967. LAB B Rep 065, Nr. 71.

<sup>698</sup> "Angehalten wegen Ton."

depicted, too, just “Grundmann” can’t. And then they say that I have a big mouth. Even though all I want is to be treated like others. I am trembling from suppressed anger, I can hardly write.<sup>699</sup>

Grundmann understood well that it was partly her butchness that the prison sought to discipline.

In March 1967, she asked the prison director for two photos to send to her hospitalized father.

Grundmann describes the photos as “pictures from the fifties, in which I wear women’s clothing.”<sup>700</sup> Her wish was granted, but the photos were put into the letter on its way out by the censoring official, not given to her in the cell.

## Conclusion

In *Criminal Intimacy*, historian Regina Kunzel describes how American sociologists, studying women’s prisons in the mid-twentieth century, found same-sex relationships the central feature of prisoner society, but were not alarmed by these findings. They understood the gendered organization of both male and female prisons as adaptation to the deprivations of prison life and thus not as a subversion of heterosexuality.<sup>701</sup> However, relationships formed in prison sometimes lasted beyond incarceration, as Grundmann’s example shows. Despite the prison director’s intense efforts to break off all contact between Grundmann and other inmates, her persistence eventually won. Six years after her dismissal, in 1973, she was in a relationship with a woman she had met in prison, Monika Kurzbein. That Kurzbein and Grundmann had become a couple is suggested by another prisoner file – again, Grundmann’s, making for a bittersweet end

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<sup>699</sup> “Mit herzlichem Dank (...) heute Eure liebe Post erhalten. (...) Nun hat der Brief zwei Wermutstropfen. Erstens, das Papa so krank ist, und ins Krankenhaus soll. Zweitens, habe ich nicht die Bilder von Bettina bekommen. Das empört mich derartig, und unterstreicht wieder mal, die Ungerechtigkeit hier im Hause. (...) Aber ich sehe nicht ein, warum andere Fam.Bilder haben dürfen, wo Sie selbst auch drauf sind, nur „Grundmann“ nicht. Und dann heißt es ich habe eine große Klappe. Obwohl ich nur möchte, das man mich wie andere behandelt. Ich zittere so vor unterdrücktem Zorn, das ich kaum schreiben. (...) Und Ihre Erziehungsmethoden können Sie sich ersparen, ich bin keine 18 u. kein Fürsorgezögling. Alle Welt mokiert sich hier wenn man etwas sagt, aber keiner sieht ein das man provoziert wird. Und die Hausordnung gehört genauso in die Mottenkiste, wie das ganze Strafgesetzbuch!”

<sup>700</sup> zwei Aufnahmen von mir, aus den 50.er Jahren. Auf denen ich Damengarderobe trage.

<sup>701</sup> Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy*, 127.

to her story.<sup>702</sup> In November 1973, she had to return to prison for ten days, doing time because she could not pay a 100 DM fine for theft.<sup>703</sup> In this file, Kurzbein is recorded as “next of kin.” For Grundmann and Kurzbein, the possibility of queerness in prison had resulted in a long-lasting relationship.

The limited sources available for the West and East Berlin women’s prisons in the years between 1945 and 1970 paint an ambivalent picture of the meanings of prison spaces for queer Berliners. They were sites of romantic, erotic, and sexual relationships between women. Even if their same-sex relationships were not criminalized, lesbian women and transgender people can be found in prisons. They were also locations where butch-fem subcultures were significant, either as a feature of the organization of prison life or as an important category of inmates’ subjectivities.

Prisons facilitated queer relationships: Inmates flirted with each other nonverbally, for instance by blowing kisses, and verbally, by chatting during free time and by exchanging notes. Sometimes, they flirted with guards or social workers, too. They formed romantic relationships, sent each other love notes and their portraits, and created shared romantic moments by listening to love songs, imagining that their partners were present, or reminiscing about past moments of intimacy, and writing about it. Girlfriends on the outside sent mail, visited, and provided the everyday necessities of a queer woman, for instance hairstyling product. Inmates participated in rituals of romantic bonding, such as engagement ceremonies. They had virtual sex, sending each other scripts for oral sex or making dates for mutual, though separate masturbation, and they used rare private moments for kissing, and probably for doing other pleasurable things with their

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<sup>702</sup> Prisoner file Bettina Grundmann, LAB B Rep 065 Nr. 121.

<sup>703</sup> Personalblatt A.

bodies, too. They made plans for a life together after their time in prison, which sometimes worked out, and sometimes did not.

Prisons were also spaces of non-normative gender expression. Inmates overcame the restrictions imposed by prison uniforms, making adjustments to them to make them more masculine (or feminine, presumably). They petitioned for haircuts and engaged in gendered practices such as smoking pipes. In their relationships, they adopted female or male nicknames, using the fitting pronouns, too. Both Tommy's memories of "Bubis" and "Mäuschen" in East Berlin and the intercepted messages from the West Berlin prison can be read as indicative of a gendered organization of women's prisons.

Despite these possibilities for and realities of queer life and love, prisons were far from utopias. Inmates categorized as lesbians were sometimes isolated. Cellmates known to have developed intimate relationships with each other were separated. Exchanging notes with other prisoners was forbidden and punished with loss of free time and entertainment. Released inmates were not allowed to keep in touch with girlfriends they had made inside. Since pre-existing same-sex relationships were accepted by West Berlin prison administration, authorities may have been concerned about the corrupting influence that the same-sex environment of the prison might have on inmates imagined to be heterosexual. Despite the widespread understanding of homosexuality as biologically determined, they may also have harbored fears of lesbians seducing heterosexual women as evoked by the stereotype of the aggressive "prison lesbian" of "Women in Prison" films.<sup>704</sup> Indeed, another conclusion from this chapter concerns the images of queer women in prison. Theorist Ruby Tapia has noted in her scholarship on incarcerated

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<sup>704</sup> Estelle B. Freedman, "The Prison Lesbian: Race, Class, and the Construction of the Aggressive Female Homosexual, 1915-1965," in *Feminism, Sexuality, and Politics: Essays*, Gender and American culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Daniela Sannwald, "Der Frauenknast Als Sündenpfuhl: Maria Schmidts Videokompilation "Die Pfoten Bleiben Über Dem Laken",," *Frauen und Film*, 58/59 (1996).

women in the present-day U.S. that “what the public ‘has’ of images of women’s incarceration is largely fictional and spectacular, most often transmitted by women-in-prison films.”<sup>705</sup> In my discussion of the prisoner file of Bettina Grundmann, I have shown that her likeness was of utmost importance to her, and that giving her portrait to women she was interested in was a crucial romantic practice for her. The prison’s prohibitive picture policy thus appears as a central aspect of curtailing inmates’ subjectivities and instituting normalcy. My inability to show Grundmann’s photo, while grounded in the archive’s concern for the privacy of the lives of the archived, continues this absence of images. Ruby Tapia describes her work as “walk[ing] a thin and fraught line between rendering the prison as a machine of dehumanization and filling in the gaps in discourses about the prison with representations of the fighting, living, and loving that women practice and redefine in the face of this dehumanization.”<sup>706</sup> It is my hope that this chapter’s descriptions and analyses of the “fighting, living, and loving” of women in the prisons of postwar Berlin have not only shown the dehumanization that these spaces inflicted on queer Berliners, but can also go a little ways toward rehumanizing them.

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<sup>705</sup> Ruby C. Tapia, “Profane Illuminations: The Gendered Problematics of Critical Carceral Visualities,” *PMLA* 123, no. 3 (2008): 686.

<sup>706</sup> Ruby C. Tapia, “Certain Failures: Representing the Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States,” in Solinger et al., *Interrupted Life*, 2.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

At first glance, the chapters of this dissertation have followed a sequence from inside to outside, or from private to public: from queer Berliners' inner orientations in the postwar moment, memory and hope, to their homes, to the semi-public space of bars, the public spaces of streets and parks, and finally to prisons, often imagined as spaces outside the realm of everyday life. My analysis has shown, though, that the borders between private and public were porous, that politics reached into everyday lives, and that queer Berliners significantly shaped their environment in even the most disciplinary spaces. In other words, there was an ongoing tension between queer *Eigensinn* and disciplinary efforts by state and non-state actors, as the relationship between queer space-making and its control as well as suppression were constantly re-negotiated.

The chapter on homes demonstrated that the single-family home was an anomaly, not the rule, for the first or even the first two decades after the war, as Berliners shared their homes with distant relatives or strangers, making for an inherently queered domesticity. Those fortunate enough to get an apartment of their own found its privacy jeopardized too, however. The case of Hilde Radusch and Eddy Klopsch showed that the postwar struggles for political power did not end at the doorstep of the private home but were carried inside through anonymous threat messages.

The bar chapter highlighted how queer Berliners socialized and danced in queer bars despite the risks of thug attacks and police raids. They formed queer semi- publics that were accessible to those who knew how to read the bars' outside visual markers, and what codewords

to whisper to the doormen. In West Berlin, police surveillance and repression of this kind of queer space-making intensified from the mid-1950s through the end of the 1960s. Effeminate men, transgender patrons, and young men suspected of being “streetwalking boys” were targeted especially, but the police also sought to curtail lesbian bars.

The following chapter showed that presenting one’s gender in a non-normative way in the public spaces of streets and parks carried substantial risk for effeminate men and transgender Berliners. Oral history testimony illuminated the privileged position of masculine gay men, who could both pass as heterosexual and simultaneously partake in queer spaces, and the painstaking work that effeminate men undertook to learn to perform a normative masculinity. Documents from the West Berlin police archives showcased how the police’s dealings with “transvestites” who became conspicuous in public shifted significantly from the late 1940s to the 1960s, from a continuation of Weimar-era tolerance toward a restrictive policy, as police precincts stopped issuing *Transvestitenscheine* around 1960.

In my examination of what the Berlin Wall signified for queer Berliners in East and West, contradictory meanings emerged in my readings of oral histories, contemporary East Berlin press coverage, and a short story from Swiss homophile magazine *Der Kreis*. East Berliners Hans-Joachim Engel and Rita “Tommy” Thomas downplayed the significance of the Wall for their lives even though it literally cut through them, severing Engel from his West Berlin boyfriend and Tommy from her weekend routine of socializing at West Berlin’s queer bars. In my discussion of Günter Litfin’s violent death at the Wall, I disentangled Litfin’s queerness from the East German regime’s vilification of him as a criminal “streetwalking boy.” Whereas the loss of sociability and Litfin’s case are examples of the grim reality that the Wall constituted for queer East Berliners, in the short story “Behind the Wall” it appeared as a screen

for Western erotic fantasies that depended on the willful preclusion of the political realities. The story described a Wall that was guarded by benign, attractive soldiers who protected an East Berlin described as a succession of Prussian landmarks and ruins that made ideal spaces for quick sexual encounters between the West German visitor and the East German soldier.

If the chapter on public spaces stressed how the East and West German states, through laws, police practices, and the physical containment of the Berlin Wall disciplined queerness, the following chapter on prisons found considerable room for expressing queer subjectivities and relationships in these most directly disciplinary institutions. In my examination of women's prisons in East and West Berlin at different moments in postwar history, they emerge as sites that at times facilitated queer relationships, but at other times penalized them. Queer inmates challenged the institution's heteronormative mission, expressed in clothing rules and work assignments that mirrored predominant ideas of gendered labor. They claimed space for butch and fem subjectivities and pursued a rich erotic life with other inmates as well as women outside prison. In my discussion of inmates' photos, these appeared as important materializations of queer subjectivity that prison leadership controlled aggressively.

Space rather than time has been my main analytic through most of the chapters, perhaps surprisingly for a historical study. While I contend that my analysis has produced tangible results concerning one of the key categories of historical inquiry, continuities and ruptures in time, synthesizing these alone would give short shrift to the larger methodological and theoretical endeavor that I have pursued in this dissertation. In the following, I briefly return to central elements of the dissertation's theoretical and methodological framework to reflect on how they change our understanding of queer German history.

What has perhaps been the argumentative thread that connected all chapters is the importance of gender as an analytic category for studying queer lives in the twentieth century. Attending to differently gendered queer subjectivities expands and complicates notions of what it meant to desire others of one's own sex, or to embody a non-normative femininity or masculinity. For instance, my analysis has shown that gender was an important organizing principle in some lesbian relationships in the mid-century, and that in some cases, such as Bettina Grundmann's, a lesbian woman's female masculinity was recognized by her neighbors, who addressed Grundmann with a male title. My discussion of police raids in bars has demonstrated how the intersections of gender and sexuality, as well as age, could make for vastly different outcomes of a night spent socializing in a queer bar. Laurie Marhoefer's suggestion to ask about the risks incurred through sexual and gendered deviance rather than about persecution may hence be as productive for histories of male homosexuality as for those of female homosexuality and "transvestitism."<sup>707</sup>

Secondly, and as importantly, I have argued in this study for a history that privileges queer-authored sources and juxtaposes them with those of state authorities and other social actors, such as the press, for a critical account of queer everyday lives. In terms of methodology, that has meant assembling an archive from queer self-narratives, publications, photographs, artworks, and documents created by state authorities. It has also meant being attentive to absences, to point out imbalances, willful and unconscious silences in the historiography, in archival indexing orders, and in the sources themselves. What comes to the fore in such a history is a city whose queer residents did not allow their lives to be defined by repression. Instead, as I have shown, their complex lives encompassed pleasures and dangers, sometimes simultaneously; sex in private and in public; friends and fiends; dancing and detention; desires, dreams, and disappointments;

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<sup>707</sup> Marhoefer, "Lesbianism, Transvestism, and the Nazi State: A Microhistory of a Gestapo Investigation, 1939-1943," 1169.

tragedies and triumphs of love; sociability and loneliness; failed and successful fights. Thankfully, these lives are not lost to history. We can find them in the archives and bring them into our present.

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Stasi Archives

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Gh 90/78 (Franz Moor)

Gh 90/878 A

1030/58 (Mamita)

MfS ZAIG Nr. 510 (Litfin)

MfS ZAIG Nr. 526 (Litfin)

BV FfO AIM 412/70 (Maria Jahn)

MfS AU 309/55 Bd. 2

Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (DRA) (German Radio Archives), Potsdam

Historisches Archiv. Bestand Hörfunk: HA Personal des Berliner Rundfunk

FFBIZ Frauenforschungs-, Bildungs- und Informationszentrum (Center for Women's Research, Education, and Information), Berlin

Hilde Radosch Personal Papers

Kitty Kuse Personal Papers, Private Archives Christiane von Lengerke, Werder

Kitty Kuse Personal Papers

Landesarchiv Berlin (Berlin State Archives)

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