

Hubert Kennedy

Selected Gay Book Reviews

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The Advocate, no. 302 (2 Oct. 1980): 21–22.

Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century

by John Boswell

The University of Chicago Press

hardbound, xviii+424 pp., \$27.50

This will likely be the most important book on homosexuality published this year. John Boswell's long-awaited survey of attitudes toward homosexuality during the first thirteen centuries of Christianity furnishes the evidence to support his claim, made to gay groups across the country for several years, that the severe moral condemnation we experience today dates only from about the 13th century. But Boswell does more than merely point out that attitudes have changed; he convincingly demonstrates that many arguments Christians have used to support their homophobic views are based on mistranslations and misinterpretations of their own Scriptures. All future writers on the subject must take into consideration this pioneering historical work on social attitudes toward gay sexuality.

The book is in four sections. The first, "Points of Departure," not only sets the stage historically, with a discussion of the widespread acceptance of gay sexuality in Greece and Rome, but also sets out the problems of studying social history. In particular, Boswell's decision to use the modern term "gay" in a discussion of an earlier period will probably set the pattern for future writers; but his rejection of "homophobia," on semantic grounds, will probably have no more effect than similar arguments have had against the use of "homosexual." (His statement that the now-nearly forgotten term "Urning" was "popular among gay male writers" in the early 19th century is a rare slip; it was coined by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs in the 1860s.)

"The Christian Tradition" discusses scriptural passages dealing with homosexuality and the role of Christians in the Roman Empire. Boswell concludes: "Not only does there appear to have been no general prejudice against gay people among early Christians;

there does not seem to have been any reason for Christianity to adopt a hostile attitude toward homosexual behavior.” But if prejudice was not general, there were individual Church Fathers who severely condemned homosexuality, and it was their opinion that eventually became the official justification for the oppression of gay people.

“Shifting Fortunes” includes the early Middle Ages and the urban revival, which led to a flowering of gay literature in the period 1050–1150, a century that saw tolerance of gay people in the highest places of Church and State. Here, and in an appendix, Boswell gives charming excerpts from the poetry of the period (some of it published for the first time).

The following two centuries, discussed in “The Rise of Intolerance,” saw a continual increase of hostility toward homosexuality, culminating in the argument against its “naturalness” by the philosopher-theologian Thomas Aquinas, whose writings became the touchstone of orthodoxy for the centuries to follow.

Throughout the book Boswell is careful to point out that the reasons people gave to justify their hostility to gay people were usually not its cause. He is particularly effective in the case of the usually logical Aquinas: “It is difficult to see how Aquinas’s attitudes toward homosexual behavior could even be made consonant with his general moral principles, much less understood as the outgrowth of them.” Just what the reasons were for the rise in hostility to gay people is not clear. Only in the case of Aquinas does Boswell mention the possibility of a dialectic in which the justification becomes, in turn, a cause: “The positions of Aquinas and other high medieval theologians regarding homosexuality appear to have been a response more to the pressures of popular antipathy than to the weight of the Christian tradition; but this is not to suggest that the *Summa* itself did not affect subsequent attitudes.”

In exploring the “social topography of medieval Europe” Boswell modestly contents himself with “the belief that he has at least posted landmarks where there were none before and opened trails on which others will reach destinations far beyond his own furthest advance.” He has surely done both of these; seldom has previously unexplored territory been so thoroughly posted all at once, and Boswell demonstrates that he has the historical skill and, above all, the linguistic ability to do it. He displays a mastery of Arabic, Greek, Hebrew and Latin never before seen in a study of homosexuality, and he

proves how necessary this is. For example, in an appendix treating “Lexicography and Saint Paul” he leaves no doubt that the ambiguous term “arsenokoitai” cannot have referred to gay people, although all English versions of the Bible (the word occurs in I Cor. 6:9 and I Tim. 1:10) cite homosexual behavior.

Linguistic considerations have, for the most part, been kept in footnotes and appendices. The general reader will appreciate the book without them. The scholarly apparatus is there, however, and forms an invaluable part of the book. Future scholars will, no doubt, reach “destinations beyond his furthest advance,” and they will as surely have to thank Boswell for “posting the landmarks.” Such a rational discussion can only lead to a greater understanding and therefore acceptance of gay people, and for that reason the book is doubly welcome.

—Hubert Kennedy

The ADVOCATE, No. 307 (December 11, 1980), p. 45–46

Homosexuality and Liberation: Elements of a Gay Critique

by Mario Mieli, translated by David Fernbach

Gay Men's Press, 27 Priory Avenue, London N8 7RN, England
paperbound, 247 pp., \$8.95

Mario Mieli first became involved in the gay movement in London's early Gay Liberation Front. On his return to Italy in 1972 he helped organize the *Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano* (Italian Revolutionary Homosexual United Front), whose acronym was later fused into the name *Fuori!* (Come out!) This organization continues to play a leading role in the Italian gay movement although Mieli criticizes its federation with the Radical party as "reformist" and "counter-revolutionary."

Mieli is both activist and theoretician, and the appearance in 1977 of his *Elementi di critica omosessuale* (of which the book under review is a translation) was especially significant, for it had been accepted as a university thesis and was published by Einaudi, one of the most respected publishing houses in Italy. This may also explain the book's comprehensive nature, for in it, as Mieli points out in his original preface, he discusses six themes: (1) He confronts antigay commonplaces from the viewpoint of the mature gay liberation movement; (2) he traces the history of the social repression of homosexuality; (3) he insists on the universality of homoerotic desire (i.e., it concerns not just a minority, but is present in all individuals); (4) he sees homosexuality as a bridge from the common perception of "normal" to a higher and deeper dimension of existence; (5) he underscores the importance of gay liberation within the framework of human liberation; and (6) he sees the goal of liberation as the freeing of the total erotic potential of each individual.

All translation is difficult, and it is especially so where idiomatic expressions such as "queen," "queer," etc. are involved. This translation is altogether excellent. But the translator should have told us that parts of the original were omitted (by my count, about 14%). Some omitted passages are of interest mainly to Italians; all references to Hegel

and a number of quotations from Marx are left out. They probably won't be missed, although I regret the loss of the passage from Dante's *Inferno*, where Dante was cruised by the "sodomites." (Mieli has a young reader ask, "You mean they cruised in the Middle Ages?" "Of course, darling," he replies.)

Mieli's book was recommended to me recently by a lesbian professor at the University of Siena as "the best Italian discussion of homosexuality." She and I were comparing the gay and women's movements in Italy and the U.S., and she wondered at the willingness of American Catholics to cooperate with the Church, adding, "Our American sisters do not know what it is like, living only 200 kilometers from the Pope in Rome." It is interesting that in the introduction to his English translation, David Fernbach, too, calls attention to "the hold of the Catholic Church, that great apparatus of sexual repression," as being a significant difference in "the political and cultural context in which the Italian gay movement developed and that context in the English-speaking countries."

Fernbach also points out that "a further important difference between Italy and the English-speaking world is the position of psychoanalysis." There is an even sharper difference in the U.S. than in Britain, since psychoanalysis here is firmly entrenched in the psychiatric establishment and is predominantly clinical. Hence the strong hostility toward it of the American gay movement. This has not been the case in France and Italy, where, as Fernbach notes, "feminists, in particular, saw in Freudian theory a weapon for understanding and challenging the social construction of femininity."

Jim Steakley warned in 1979: "English and French feminists and gay liberationists have long since entered into a theoretical dialogue with Freudianism which we can ignore only at our peril." Mieli's book is an excellent introduction to this dialogue.

—Hubert Kennedy

The ADVOCATE, May 15. 1980

The Unmentionable Vice: Homosexuality in the Later Medieval Period

by Michael Goodich

Ross-Erikson, 629 State St., Santa Barbara, CA 93101

softbound, 182 pp., \$6.95

In two articles in the *Journal of Homosexuality* in 1976, Michael Goodich briefly sketched the close connection between heresy and sodomy in 13th-century secular and ecclesiastical law. Now, in *The Unmentionable Vice*, he has elaborated that sketch into a full-scale study of homosexuality in Europe, from the 11th to the early 14th century. The result is a masterfully researched and fascinating picture of the period during which the Catholic Church consolidated its consequent moral condemnation of homosexual acts.

Although the Council of Ancyra had treated sodomy as a crime as early as 314 A.D., at the beginning of the 11th century there was no uniform legislation on the subject. Indeed, it seems to have been regarded as primarily a non-Christian vice. Thereafter, more and more attention was given to sexual nonconformity. While less concern was shown in remote areas, "urbanized Europe . . . seems to have been populated by a throng of religious puritans on the lookout for sexual deviance."

With the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), "a more militant, aggressive phase opened in the history of the Catholic Church." The penalties for conviction of sodomy continued to be strengthened, and the Inquisition was developed as a means of hunting down heretics and sodomites. The Dominican Order was largely instrumental here, the Fathers acting as inquisitors as well as founding lay confraternities with the twofold purpose of worshipping the Virgin and of exterminating heresy and that "evil filth" (sodomy).

One of the most interesting parts of this book is the lengthy appendix giving the verbatim report of the trial for heresy and sodomy of Arnold of Verniolle in 1323. By his own confession, Arnold committed sodomy with several young men, whose testimony is also included. The distance between theoretical views and actual practice is shown by the

apparent ease with which he met his partners, despite the severe legal penalties. (Arnold was eventually sentenced to life imprisonment in chains, on a diet of bread and water.)

Nor does Goodich neglect to place these attitudes within the economic and social structures of the times, and there are forceful parallels with the history of more recent times. “The kind of social ferment prevalent in the 13th century was as likely to breed the same kind of repressive mass movements so common to the 20th century that direct much of their energies toward the eradication of aberrant life-styles.”

In his introduction, Goodich briefly discusses the rise of the modern homosexual emancipation movement in 19th-century Germany. Here, relying on a secondary source, he incorrectly identifies the pseudonymous Numa Praetorius as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (who used the similar pseudonym Numa Numantius); but in treating the medieval period, Goodich displays a firsthand knowledge of his sources, to which he gives full and precise references. I hope other scholars will join him in this investigation, for “a mass of such material remains still in manuscript.” We will remain grateful to Goodich for his scholarly and pioneering work. It is an invaluable contribution to the recovery and understanding of gay history.

—Hubert Kennedy

The Advocate, Issue 379 (27 Oct 1983)

Literary Visions of Homosexuality

edited by Stuart Kellogg

The Haworth Press

hardbound, 184 pp., \$18.95

The Journal of Homosexuality has continued its excellent series of special issues with one of literary criticism (of which this book is the hardbound edition), and it is among the best.

In his "Introduction: The Uses of Homosexuality in Literature" Stuart Kellogg sees "four reasons why an author might treat the phenomenon of homosexuality": Arcadian, political, sociological, psychological. Byrne R. S. Fone expands on the first of these in "This Other Eden: Arcadia and the Homosexual Imagination," using excellent illustrations mainly taken from English and American authors. It is notable that all but one of the dozen articles in this collection treat works written originally in English.

For those who read E. M. Forster's *Maurice* as a charming, if somewhat dated, plea for tolerance, Robert K. Martin's "Edward Carpenter and the Double Structure of *Maurice*" will be an eye opener. Martin exhibits Forster's carefully structured contrast of two ways of understanding homosexuality: the elitist view of his Cambridge University days and the more democratic view that resulted from his meeting with Carpenter.

Edmund White briefly gives personal impressions and favorite quotations from Merrill's 560-page ouija trilogy in "The Inverted Type: Homosexuality as a Theme in James Merrill's Prophetic Books," in which "great work" he again finds the gay sensibility that, as Fone wrote, "seems to be so real to all of us who engage in the pursuit of gay history, but which so often seems difficult to define precisely."

It is hard to believe that Louis Crompton's "*Don Leon, Byron, and Homosexual Law Reform*" will be merely one chapter in a longer work on Byron, for it seems so complete in itself. With impeccable scholarship Crompton unravels the mysteries of the

anonymous poem *Don Leon*, carefully placing it among contemporary discussions of English law reform.

In his book *Playing the Game: The Homosexual Novel in America* Roger Austen described Charles Warren Stoddard (1843–1909) as the “gayest of the gay.” In “Stoddard’s Little Tricks in *South Sea Idyls*” Austen further reveals how Stoddard “played the game”—and got away with it.

If, after these essays, there could still be doubts about the existence of a gay sensibility, Richard Hall’s personal experience, resulting in “Henry James: Interpreting an Obsessive Memory,” should remove them forever, for it allowed Hall to uncover Henry James’ incestuous interest in his brother William, a revelation now accepted by Leon Edel, the foremost Jamesian scholar.

Incest is also clearly a topic in the novel discussed by Don Merrick Liles in “William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*: An Exegesis of the Homoerotic Configurations in the Novel.” Liles suggests, however, that “an understanding of the full range of the potentialities of human love provides a far richer appreciation of Faulkner’s awesome achievement.”

Seymour Kleinberg relates several themes in “*The Merchant of Venice*: The Homosexual as Anti-Semite in Nascent Capitalism.” Gays have long found Shakespeare’s play of interest: In 1874 the gay rights pioneer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs wrote to a friend that at the end of Act II, Scene 9, he found remarkable “how ardently the servant describes the beauty of a charming young love-envoy, a mere messenger”; Kleinberg’s insight goes far beyond.

Even more than Forster’s *Maurice*, Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) has been dismissed by critics as a plea for tolerance of homosexuality. Coupling this work with her earlier novel *The Unlit Lamp* (1924) in “The Lesbian Hero Bound: Radclyffe Hall’s Portrait of Sapphic Daughters and Their Mothers,” Inez Martinez reveals a more basic theme in Hall’s writing: the role of egoistic individualism in the development of a complete human being. Martinez notes that Hall had read Ulrichs and other writers on homosexuality, but believes that Hall’s “rendering of the psyche in her two lesbian novels has little to do with what she read or what she had her characters

read.” Indeed, according to Una Troubridge the inspiration for *The Unlit Lamp* came one evening as she and her lover Hall, known as “John,” saw in a hotel dining room

a small wizened old lady and an elderly woman who was quite obviously her maiden daughter. . . . She fussed for several minutes round the old lady . . . before she herself attempted to sit down. And John said to me in an undertone: ‘Isn’t it ghastly to see these unmarried daughters who are just unpaid servants and the old people sucking the very life out of them like octopi.’

The importance of egoism, then, is negatively shown by the “trap Hall’s lesbian heroes cannot escape.” Martinez concludes: “In the tension between self and other they lack the courage to choose self, and although Hall does not condemn them, she does not spare them the consequent loss of personality and love.”

In “An Essay in Sexual Liberation, Victorian Style: Walter Pater’s ‘Two Early French Stories’” Richard Dellamora concentrates on the revised first chapter of Pater’s *The Renaissance* to show that, contrary to a common view, Pater not only did not back away from his earlier criticism of Victorian religious beliefs and social mores, but attempted “a rapprochement between Christianity and eros that was very much his own.”

Finally, in “To Love a Medieval Boy” Thomas Stehling evaluates the work of three authors who sought to do just that, in Latin, in the “long if sparse tradition of medieval homosexual poetry,” and makes some interesting comparisons with the much more plentiful heterosexual poetry.

This is an important book; editor Kellogg and the *Journal of Homosexuality* are to be congratulated for having persuaded such a distinguished group of writers to contribute to a journal not usually given to literary criticism. Gay sensibility has never been given such a boost, and I predict that several of the articles—certainly Martinez’s essay on Radclyffe Hall—will result in new interpretations and contribute to the development of many readers’ own gay insights.

—Hubert Kennedy

The Advocate (San Mateo, California), Issue 365 (10 January 1984)

Alan Turing: The Enigma

by Andrew Hodges

Simon and Schuster

hardbound, 587 pp., \$22.50

This is more than just the first full-length biography of a gay mathematician. In a masterpiece of scientific writing, mathematical physicist Andrew Hodges—best known to gay readers as co-author of the wonderful pamphlet *With Downcast Gays*—tells the story of one of the major mathematicians of our century, and one who developed a high level of consciousness about his gay identity.

Alan Turing (1912–1954) was, in a real sense, the “father” of the modern computer. In a paper written in 1936 he described a theoretical “universal machine” (which has passed into scientific literature as a “Turing machine”) and used it to show that not every mathematical problem is “solvable,” thus answering a question posed by the mathematician David Hilbert at the close of the 19th century. By 1945 Turing had independently conceived its realization as the modern computer. That is, he had arrived at the automatic digital computer with internal program storage. In the meantime he had been the top mathematical consultant in the British cryptological effort in World War II, and in particular was in charge of breaking the U-boat secret codes for the first half of the war, thereby contributing as much as any individual to the Allied victory in the Atlantic.

The general public could hardly have understood Turing’s early mathematical achievement; during his life they never heard about his war effort, for it was never mentioned by him or anyone else. (Many of the documents used by Hodges remained “classified” for some 30 years after the war.) To add to this silence, his part in developing the computer was written out of the history books: “Already by 1950, Alan Turing was an un-person, the Trotsky of the computer revolution.”

A graduate and fellow of King’s College, Cambridge University, Turing had worked independently. The one person able to completely appreciate his early mathematical

results was the American logician Alonzo Church, who had simultaneously arrived at very nearly the same goal. Turing then decided to study under Church at Princeton University, where he was a fellow for the years 1936–38 (and where he received a Ph.D., with a dissertation on a topic suggested by Church). He returned to the United States twice: for several months in the winter of 1942–43 as higher liaison between Britain and the United States, and again to attend a computer conference at Harvard University in January 1947. In a classic paper of 1950, reprinted as “Can a Machine Think?,” Turing proposed a test to answer this question and gave a penetrating analysis of what it means “to think.”

In 1950, two years after receiving an appointment at Manchester University, Turing moved into his own house in a village 10 miles away. It was burglarized in 1952 by an acquaintance of a young man with whom he was having an affair. When Turing’s friend told him who might have robbed him, Turing reported this to the police, who were able to match fingerprints with those taken from Turing’s home. The police then returned to question him further, apparently about the burglary, but in reality about the sexual relationship with his friend, which Turing made no effort to hide. The two were then charged with “gross indecency.” On conviction the younger man was put on probation; Turing was required to submit to a year’s “scientific” treatment with female hormones, which had the effect of making him impotent and causing him to grow breasts. Later he seemed to be making a comeback, but in 1954, shortly before his 42nd birthday, Turing died after biting into an apple he had coated with cyanide.

When Hodges began, this project in 1978, he wished to set a high standard in writing about gay people in the past as well as to “give an account for the general reader of what mathematics is about, and why people care about it.” He has succeeded on all counts and along the way has unraveled, as much as seems humanly possible, the “enigma” that was Alan Turing. (“Enigma” was, also, the name of the machine used by the Germans to encode secret messages.) The reader is taken step by step through the process of deciphering codes, with careful descriptions of the mathematics and machines used. Turing’s role in developing the computer (and lest we forget, Britain, not America, did it first) is a fascinating—and previously untold—story. Hodges restores Turing to his rightful place. He also traces Turing’s later concentration on problems at the borderline of

mathematics-chemistry-biology, resulting in the important paper “The Chemical Basis of Morphogenesis” (1952).

But Hodges is perhaps at his best in integrating all of this into the development of Turing as a gay man and freedom-seeker, from his first real love in secondary school and early questioning of authority to his final struggles to preserve his personal integrity. Turing allowed no one to be a close friend who would not accept his homosexuality, and he did not hesitate to disclose this even to his co-workers at one of the most secret operations of the war. But he was denied the personal freedom that was essential to him.

The book concludes with a thorough and penetrating analysis of the social, psychological and political climate that acted to deny him his freedom. Unable to speak of his wartime experience, denied (for reasons no doubt related to the rise of McCarthyism in the United States) a role in the further development of the computer, and persecuted by a State determined to take even his sexuality away from him, Turing saw his sphere of personal freedom shrink until there was no longer room for him to think, to feel, to live. That this was so is laid out by Hodges for all to see. That it *will* not be seen by many is shown in the *New York Times Book Review*, where the otherwise deeply appreciative Douglas R. Hofstadter still said that Alan Turing “brought about his own downfall.”

Alan Turing: The Enigma is the first serious synthesis of mathematical and gay-liberation insights and does indeed set a new standard in writing about gay people in the past. It is the moving story of a man with a brilliant mind, who refused to deny his feelings, in a search to understand—and live—true life.

—Hubert Kennedy

The ADVOCATE, No. 460, 25 Nov 1986, pp. 62–64

A Matter of Time: Gay History (And a Life) in the Making

About Time: Exploring the Gay Past

by Martin Bauml Duberman

Gay Presses of New York

hardbound, 400 pp., \$25.95 (paperback, \$10.95)

It is a truism among gay historians that the American gay movement did not begin with the Stonewall riots in New York in 1969. But that event was significant and, in the jacket blurb of this book, is recognized as the start of the “modern Gay Liberation movement.” With the modern era also came renewed efforts to bring to light the record of gay existence in earlier periods. The results have been astonishing—most notable, perhaps, being the monumental collection of documents published by Jonathan Ned Katz in his *Gay American History* (1976) and *Gay/Lesbian Almanac* (1983). Martin Bauml Duberman, in addition to a distinguished career as professor of history, wrote a regular column in the *New York Native* in the years 1981 through 1983 in which he published similar documents, uncovered in his visits to various archives, along with his own incisive comments. A selection of these articles, along with excerpts from other publications not readily available, as well as several previously unpublished manuscripts, make up a bit more than half of the present volume.

Most of the documents treat male homosexuality; almost all directly concern the American situation. The oldest dates from 1820. Their variety and wealth cannot be discussed here, but some of the new material should be mentioned: An essay on Walt Whitman includes evidence of his homosexuality apparently unknown to Whitman scholars. An anonymous letter of 1948 to a Philadelphia psychiatrist describes the joys of men and boys loving one another. (Rather oddly, Duberman reads this as “a rhapsodic special interest plea.” Elsewhere, when a Dr. Bieber dismisses as special pleading Duberman’s own defense of gays in general, Duberman replies: “It is surely time to ask

whether gay women and men might not themselves qualify as ‘experts’ on their own lives.”)

One of the most interesting selections is from the correspondence of Alfred Kinsey in 1951–1956 with a European businessman, who described his own experience and observations of homosexuality in several countries of Southern Europe and North Africa. Duberman tried to retain “the special charm” of the rather poor English of Mr. X, but here a bit more editing would have been helpful. For example, when Mr. X wrote, in describing the Nazi concentration camps, “Sometimes 175 were all put together, sometimes they were deliberately separated. . . .,” it should be noted that he was not counting the men, but rather naming them by the number of the law (Paragraph 175 of the German penal code, concerning homosexuality) under which they were convicted. All together this is a fascinating collection.

But Duberman is not only a historian of the gay movement, he has made history in it. Most of the second half of this book documents that role. Here is a decade of gay activism, from his keynote speech at the founding conference of the Gay Academic Union in 1973 to his presentation speech on awarding a certificate of merit to Black & White Men Together at the seventh annual Lambda Legal Defense Fund dinner in 1982. In between are articles, half of them from the *New York Times*, with penetrating insightful observations on such topics of the day as *Consenting Adult* (the hook), the Matlovich trial, Anita Bryant, and Masters and Johnson. This is the most valuable part of the book, for the articles were selected—perhaps written—with an eye to their continuing interest.

In a final “coda,” Duberman quotes extensively from his personal diary of 1956–57, with some comments on rereading it in 1981. Here are the embarrassing, poignant and altogether touching details of trying to cope with the oppression of that horrible period in American life. Our admiration for the scholar turns to affection for the man.

This is a rich collection with something for all who are interested in our gay past. For scholars, the “cautionary tales” of the hazards of doing gay research furnish valuable tips; for history buffs there are unexpected and delightful revelations: and for theoreticians involved in, say, the current controversy over essentialist vs. constructionist theories of homosexuality there is a large dose of uncommon good sense. Read *About Time* and put it on your shelf for reference.

THE ADVOCATE, Issue 491, FEBRUARY 2, 1988

THE DOCTOR OF SEX

Magnus Hirschfeld

Bio Provides Unfocused Portrait of a Gay Pioneer

Magnus Hirschfeld: A Portrait of a Pioneer in Sexology

by Charlotte Wolff

Quartet Books

hardbound, 496 pp., 37.50

The first known gay rights organization, the Scientific Humanitarian Committee (SHC), was founded in Berlin in 1897 by Magnus Hirschfeld, who remained its president until 1929. In 1919 he also established Berlin's Institute for Sexual Science, which became the first internationally recognized center for research and documentation of homosexuality. Thus it is surprising that the first biography of this remarkable pioneer has only now been published.

According to its statutes, first published in 1907, the aim of the SHC was "research into homosexuality and allied variations, in their biological, medical, and ethnological significance as well as their legal, ethical, and humanitarian situations."

The SHC hoped "to change public opinion about homosexuality by publications, scientific talks, and popular lectures." Its first task, however, was the collection of signatures to a petition urging a revision of Germany's antihomosexual law.

This law, known since 1871 as Paragraph 175, had been held over from the Prussian penal code when Germany was unified. The SHC petition asked for the decriminalization of all homosexual acts and suggested an age of consent of 16. The petition had an impressive list of signatures when it was first presented, unsuccessfully, to the German legislature in 1897. Thereafter, the repeated presentation of the petition and the ongoing collection of new signatures became a constant task of the SHC.

The son of a respected medical doctor in Kolberg (a town on the Baltic Sea), Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) became a practicing medical doctor in 1896 following completion of his medical studies in Berlin and a long journey that took him in 1893 to Chicago, where he visited an older brother. He paid for his trip by reporting for a German newspaper on the Columbian Exhibition, then celebrating the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America. Hirschfeld used a pseudonym for his first publication on homosexuality in 1896, but thereafter all publications were under his own name. He never publicly stated, however, that he was homosexual.

A prolific writer (a recent bibliography of his writings, compiled by James D. Steakley, lists more than 500 items), Hirschfeld was also a tireless lecturer and organizer. In 1919, the year he founded the Institute for Sexual Science, he also advised on and appeared in the film *Anders als die Andern (Different from the Others)*, which he hoped would help bring about a reform of Paragraph 175. Long thought to have been destroyed by the Nazis, the film has, in part, been found, and it has been shown in recent years at gay film festivals.

Two years later, Hirschfeld helped organize in Berlin the first International Conference for Sexual Reform Based on Sexual Science. This in turn led to formation of the World League for Sexual Reform, which sponsored four more international conferences. The last of these was in 1932 in Brno, Czechoslovakia, where Hirschfeld arrived following a world tour that began in 1930 with a trip to the United States. As a Jew, a homosexual, and an advocate of sexual reform, Hirschfeld was particularly despised by the Nazis and therefore never returned to Germany. After an unsuccessful attempt to reestablish the Institute for Sexual Science in Paris, Hirschfeld settled in Nice, where he died in 1935 on his 67th birthday.

One of the most important contributions made by Hirschfeld and the SHC was the publication of the *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen (Yearbook for Sexual Intermediates)* from 1899 to 1923. This journal provided an outlet for the publication of positive views of homosexuality and remains an important source for the history of that period. Despite its accomplishments, however, the SHC met with opposition from other homosexuals regarding both scientific theory and the practical efforts toward legal reform.

In 1898 Hirschfeld edited a new edition of the writings of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895), inventor of the so-called third-sex theory of homosexuality, which Hirschfeld then developed into his own *Zwischenstufentheorie* (theory of sexual intermediates). According to this theory, the male homosexual would display, to a greater or lesser degree, feminine characteristics. And Hirschfeld did not hesitate to appear in court as an expert witness to testify, according to his observation of physical characteristics, whether a particular person was homosexual.

Many men who considered themselves entirely masculine objected to this view, and in 1903 a group that included many bisexuals and boy lovers was separately organized, primarily among supporters of the journal *Der Eigene*. (The name means “self-owner.” Begun in 1896 as an anarchist journal, it became openly homosexual in 1898 and lasted into the 1930s, making it the first successful gay journal.) Some of this group were also members of the SHC, where their opposition to Hirschfeld’s views led to a secession in 1907. That attempt to form a rival committee quietly faded the following year, however, with the death of its principal supporter and amid the uproar of public accusations of homosexuality in the German court, which also brought setbacks to the original SHC.

The story of the SHC and Hirschfeld’s role in it has been traced at some length here, probably because of its interest to gay readers. It was, however, not the primary interest of the late Charlotte Wolff (she died in October 1986 at age 86), as evidenced by the omissions and the large number of errors in this, her last book. For example, she states four times that the antihomosexual Paragraph 175 was changed in 1929. It was not. The first change in the law occurred in 1935 when, under the Nazis, it was made even stricter. After World War II, the Nazi law remained in effect during the antigay Adenauer government in West Germany and was not revised there until 1969, when an age of consent was set at 21 (lowered to 18 in 1973).

In an earlier book, *Love Between Women* (1971), Wolff noted that in the 1920s, when she was a student of medicine in Berlin, Hirschfeld’s Institute for Sexual Science “was the center of research on homosexuality, and I can trace my first attempts to understand lesbianism back to those early days.” In her later biography of Hirschfeld, however, she admits that she never met him or visited the institute, and only 50 years later did she become interested in his life and work.

Wolff clearly admired her subject, however, especially for his support of the women's movement of his time (although she thinks he did not go far enough in his claim for the equality of the sexes). Wolff prefers the opinion voiced by Hirschfeld's colleague Johanna Elberskirchen, saying of her: "She was right, in my view, to consider woman the superior sex."

Wolff also disagrees with Hirschfeld's theory of the biological nature of homosexuality, although her own theory of homosexuality accepts the findings of the infamous East German endocrinologist G. Dörner. Wolff writes that "a disorder in the development of the sex glands in foetal life alters permanently an eroticizing zone, seated in the hypothalamus.... This disorder produces male responses in a female and the opposite in a male individual" (*Love Between Women*, p. 42). Wolff's preference for the constitutional approach was reinforced through her studies of hand traits and gestures, which she pursued over a period of nearly 20 years, from the 1930s into the 1950s. Nevertheless, her own "mosaic theory of lesbianism" also includes such psychoanalytic statements as "To be the object of another woman's love is the primary aim of all lesbians, who (unconsciously) seek nothing else but emotional incest with their mother" (*Love Between Women*, p. 69).

These philosophical differences with Hirschfeld intrude into the present book, and it is often difficult to know whether Wolff is presenting Hirschfeld's views or her own. Nevertheless, the book does accomplish her goal "to write a portrait of him, and not a photographic account of every jot and tittle of his life and work." As she notes after reporting her interview with an acquaintance of Hirschfeld: "Accurate accounts and factual communications all too often miss the essence of remembrance—to evoke the presence of a person no longer among the living."

Readers who agree with these ideas and do not require accurate accounts and factual communications may enjoy the book, for it does indeed present a vivid portrait of Hirschfeld. But those seeking to understand the history of the period and, in particular, the course of the gay movement will be disappointed. The level of scholarship is low, and the many inaccurate statements are confusing and misleading. Although topics for further investigation may be suggested, few references are given for following them up.

The most conspicuous absence in this study of Hirschfeld is the lack of any discussion of Hirschfeld's hands, given Wolff's several books on the subject and her belief that "the hand is one of the most useful guides to the diagnosis of the constitutional tendencies of man" (*The Hand in Psychological Diagnosis*, 1952, p. 86). That, however, is probably how she arrived at her description of Magnus Hirschfeld as "a man of voluptuous sensuousness and highly sexed"; she gives no other evidence for this statement.

It has been said that the great get the biographers they deserve. Not so. Our Magnus deserves better.

–Hubert Kennedy

THE ADVOCATE, Issue 543, January 30, 1990

Survivor's Saga

The Franz Document

by Joseph Itiel

San Francisco: Orchid House
paperback, 300 pages, \$12.95

Franz von Hofstadt was still in high school in Vienna when Austria was annexed by Germany in 1935. The profound upheaval this caused in his life overshadowed the personal problem of his awakening sexual concerns. Yet the process of coming to terms with his homosexuality remains at the heart of this lively and very readable first novel.

Franz's 15-year odyssey—the story ends in 1950—takes him from school in Austria to a concentration camp in Germany, where he is accused of being one quarter Jewish (he is), an anarchist (he isn't), and homosexual (he's unsure). Released through his father's Nazi connections, he spends the war years in language school in Switzerland. Afterward, he returns to occupied Vienna and later travels through India, Thailand, and the Philippines. The story ends as he is sailing from Manila toward a promising future in the United States.

Along the way, he meets and learns from an astonishing array of colorful personalities, including a strong-willed Jehovah's Witness in the concentration camp, a determined Zionist in Switzerland, his own opportunistic father, an Indian swami, and a compliant and loving callboy in Manila. Above all, he draws strength from his warm, hardworking, and wise grandmother.

The author, who now resides in San Francisco, was born in Vienna and has traveled extensively. His fascinating cast of characters is apparently drawn from real life. No doubt there is much in the novel that reflects his own experiences. Still, this is not a coming-out novel. The central character's homosexuality is a recurring theme, but its

importance is as a touchstone for the various personal adjustments Franz makes in order to flourish—and sometimes just to survive—in a less-than-perfect world.

The odds seem stacked against Franz, but with a little help from his friends, he not only survives but, by the end of the novel, gains in strength and judgment. Full of life, warmth, and humanity, *The Franz Document* is heartily recommended.

—Hubert Kennedy

The James White Review, Issue 48 (summer 1996): 20–21.

The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864–1935), Revised Edition

by John Lauritsen and David Thorstad

ISBN: 0-87810-041-5, Ojai, CA: Times Change Press, 1995, 127 pp., \$9.95

MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE that the gay rights movement began with Stonewall in 1969, though it is a cliché among those a bit more knowledgeable that this is not the case. In Chicago, for example, they fondly recall Henry Gerber’s short-lived Society for Human Rights of 1924, while in Los Angeles they recall, some more fondly than others, Harry Hay and the Mattachine Society (1951). To broaden their horizon, and for all who care about our movement, Lauritsen and Thorstad’s book should be required reading. It furnishes solid evidence of a flourishing gay movement, particularly in Germany, beginning more than a century before Stonewall, and it puts the history of that movement in perspective, showing how it is relevant to our own time.

The first homosexual rights organization, the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, was formed in Berlin in 1897 by a group led by the doctor Magnus Hirschfeld, who remained the most prominent figure in the movement until it was crushed in Germany by the Nazis in 1934. (Hirschfeld died in exile in France the following year.) But Hirschfeld was aware that his was not the very beginning of the homosexual rights movement. This was represented – indeed it was nearly a one-man movement – by the lawyer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, who was the first person in modern times to publicly speak out for homosexual rights as a self-acknowledged homosexual. In the years 1864–79, he published a series of booklets treating biological, social, philosophical, and legal aspects of homosexuality. Hirschfeld saw his work as a continuation of that of Ulrichs, whom Lauritsen and Thorstad rightly regard as the “grandfather of gay liberation” (7).

Another early notable was the Austro-Hungarian writer and translator Karoly Maria Kertbeny (or Karl Maria Kertbeny, as he gave his name when writing in German), who published two anonymous open letters to the Prussian minister of justice in 1869 in which he defended homosexual behavior (and coined the term “homosexual”). The occasion

was the debate on a new penal code for the North German Confederation. Like Ulrichs's similar efforts, Kertbeny's letters had little practical effect, as the strict Prussian antihomosexual law was taken over into the penal code of the new German Empire as § 175. With this number, it remained in the code, with various revisions, until it was repealed in 1994. (Not mentioned by Lauritsen and Thorstad, this repeal apparently took place after their revision.) It should be noted, however, that § 182, "Sexual Abuse of Juveniles," was reused at the same time, with the practical result that a gender-neutral law has set the age of consent in Germany at sixteen.

The authors give considerable attention to the multifaceted role played by Hirschfeld, including, for example, his founding in 1919 of an Institute for Sexual Science, whose purpose was both scientific research and practical teaching and advising on sexual subjects (marriage counseling, etc.). The Institute housed a vast collection of published and unpublished research materials. All this was systematically destroyed by the Nazis in 1934, when they made a public display of book-burning in Opera Square in Berlin. This, of course, was just the beginning of the campaign against homosexuals in Germany, as § 175 was strengthened in 1935 and thousands of homosexuals were sent to concentration camps, many after having served court-ordered sentences, as "protective custody" (to protect the public). There is an ominous parallel here to the current call in the United States for permanent imprisonment of persons convicted of "child molestation."

Although the Scientific Humanitarian Committee was the most important, there were other groups involved in the German homosexual rights movement. The authors discuss the role of the Community of the Special, led by Benedict Friedlaender and the publisher Adolf Brand, whose periodical *Der Eigene* (The Self-Owner) began in 1896 as an anarchist journal in the direction of the philosopher of egoism Max Stirner, but was openly homosexual from 1898. This was the first successful gay journal; it lasted, with interruptions mostly due to police censorship, until 1930. (Brand's house was raided and material was seized by the Nazis, but he was not personally molested; he died during an Allied bombing in 1945.)

Close to the Community of the Special, but not a member, was the anarchist writer John Henry Mackay, who, under the pseudonym Sagitta, led a one-man campaign,

beginning in 1906, for the recognition of man-boy love. His efforts were quickly crushed by the state, when his writings were declared obscene and ordered destroyed by court order in 1909. The omission of Mackay from Lauritsen and Thorstad's book is probably explained by the fact that his *Sagitta* writings were forbidden by the Nazis and were not reprinted until 1979, i.e., after the original edition of this book in 1974; the revisions in the present edition are mostly limited to correcting the few errors of the original. I also miss any mention of the Swiss Heinrich Hössli, whose writings defended homosexual love as early as 1836. Hössli had little direct influence, but was repeatedly recalled in the long-running (1932–67) trilingual gay Swiss journal *Der Kreis*.

The role played by the political left, particularly by the Social Democrats in Germany, is rightly stressed by the authors. The early Soviet Union was also favorable to sexual reform, though this was later betrayed by Stalin, as the former czarist antihomosexual law was reintroduced in 1934. In England, before the Oscar Wilde trials, the socialist Edward Carpenter was lecturing and writing on topics inspired by Walt Whitman. In the United States, the most outspoken defender of homosexual rights was the anarchist Emma Goldman, before her deportation to Soviet Russia in 1919.

Although, as the authors write, “much of the history of the early homosexual rights movement involved debate over theoretical and scientific questions” (51), they give little space to this debate, concentrating instead – rightly, I think – on the political debate. It is the strength of this book that the political analyses are carefully and closely reasoned. What's more, they are presented in a very accessible way. Academics will note the lack of precise references, but the scholarship is solid throughout the book, and there is a bibliography for readers interested in following up the authors quotations and arguments.

In a chapter that makes the material more personal, there are brief sketches of five authors whose writings had an impact, four of them already mentioned here: Ulrichs, Hirschfeld, Whitman, and Carpenter. The fifth, Sir Richard Burton, is known as the translator of the *Arabian Nights*. Shortly before his death he was preparing an annotated translation, with a preface on homosexuality, of an Arabic erotic classic. He told a friend. “I have put my whole life and all my lifeblood into the *Scented Garden*, it is my great hope that I shall live by it. It is the crown of my life.” It was not to be. After his death, in an act all too typical of losses to the gay cause (and scholarship), “Burton's wife, a

fanatical Roman Catholic, burned the manuscript of *The Scented Garden*, and also destroyed the personal journals Burton had faithfully kept every day for over forty years” (89).

The original edition of this book holds up very well, but the authors have taken advantage of research published since 1974 to correct the few errors of the original, for example, the exaggerated number of homosexuals in Nazi concentration camps, though their estimate of “tens of thousands” still seems somewhat high; the latest research in Germany suggests a maximum figure of 15,000. A couple of minor errors remain: the real name of the painter Il Sodoma is Bazzi, not Razzi; and the Community of the Special was founded in 1903, not 1902. Some new material has been added: an afterword, of course, and, importantly, the complete 1928 gay rights speech of the activist Kurt Hiller. It is forceful and astonishingly relevant today. In commenting on the role that homosexuals could play in society, he said:

But before homosexuality can be assigned this positive and even sublime role in the state, which corresponds to its particular character and at the same time is of service to the state, we must first carry out a negative, liberating, and humanitarian action directed against the worst injustice: that the public outlawry, under which this variety suffers, must be abolished in all countries. To be sure, it is not just the penal code that is involved, but it is the penal code that must be dealt with first. (112)

The authors point up how relevant this is in their afterword. “It is significant that now, twenty-five years after Stonewall, half of the states in the United States still have statutes on the books that make it illegal for two consenting males, alone by themselves, to have sex with each other” (102). They decry the direction that the movement has taken since Stonewall:

Today, the gay movement seems to be giving up its liberationist vision in favor of assimilation into the dominant society. In its zeal to attain respectability, the gay movement has promoted coupledness as a gay ideal, and agitated for the legal recognition of gay marriage. Receiving spousal benefits seems more important than

getting rid of Judeo-Christian sodomy laws or recognizing that pederasty has been a feature of male sexuality in Western culture since the time of the ancient Greeks. (103)

The original edition also appeared in translation in Spain, Germany, and Italy. This new edition is most welcome. I can only add my hope to that of the authors, “that reissuing this book might help to refocus attention on some fundamental issues” (103).

—Hubert Kennedy

Journal of Homosexuality 36(1) (1998): 119–127

Die soziale Konstruktion des homosexuellen Nationalsozialisten: Zu Genese und Etablierung eines Stereotyps (The social construction of the homosexual Nazi: On the origin and establishment of a stereotype)

by Alexander Zinn

Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997. 247 pp.

In his introduction Alexander Zinn writes: “It is known to only a few contemporaries that male homosexuality was brought into an essential connection with German National Socialism since 1933 through the publicity produced abroad by the German-language exile press” (11). This connection became “common knowledge” internationally in the 1930s and 1940s, but not in Germany. The reason for this was perhaps that “the German exile press in the phase of the dissemination and establishment of [this stereotype] had the slightest influence on the German public.” But, Zinn adds: “In contrast to this, the idea of some kind of association between homosexuality and National Socialism appears, especially in the USA, to have come to such a consolidation that it is widespread today” (11).

This perhaps explains the furor raised by the publication of the homophobic book *The Pink Swastika: Homosexuality in the Nazi Party* (Lively and Abrams 1977). As absurd as its arguments are, they could call not only on the widespread homophobia in the United States, but also on the connection, however vaguely understood or articulated, between homosexuality and Nazism. Indeed, *The Pink Swastika* articulated it for them, as it provided a new twist to the old propaganda; whereas in the 1930s the Nazis were branded by the exile press as homosexuals as a means of discrediting them, the new version sought to discredit homosexuals by branding them as Nazis. But how did this idea come about? How was the stereotype of the “homosexual Nazi” formed? This is the subject of Alexander Zinn’s exemplary study.

The concept was propagated and gained wide acceptance in a relatively short period of time in the early 1930s. By 1935 the connection had been made so firmly that the

stereotype of the homosexual Nazi persisted despite the increasing evidence of the antihomosexual persecution by the Nazis. At this point the exile press simply kept silent. As Zinn notes (“bitterly,” according to Hans Joas in his preface [6]), “The persecution of homosexuals in itself was not a theme for most of the exile periodicals” (174).

Excerpts from Zinn’s book were published two years earlier (Zinn 1995), but a book on “homosexual Nazis” had already appeared five years before that (Meve 1990), a work that Zinn somewhat lightly dismisses: “Jörn Meve . . . has already investigated the literary assimilation of the theme, so that it is easy to dispense with this aspect by referring to Meve’s book” (20). Meve’s much smaller book does, however, cover some of the same territory as Zinn’s. But if Zinn’s book is not the first on the subject, it is far more thorough, more concentrated in its presentation, and has a solid theoretical foundation.

Zinn’s book is based on a close study of nineteen German-language periodicals of various political directions, published outside Germany in the years 1933–1937, that are “exile periodicals” in the sense that they were “either founded by German emigrants themselves or decisively shaped by their collaboration” (21). To these are added three more periodicals of interest for his theme, one of which, the *Schweizerisches Freundschafts-Banner* in Zurich, was clearly not an exile periodical. It is only briefly mentioned in Zinn’s study, but is of special interest as the only one of the periodicals studied that could be described as a homosexual periodical. According to Zinn: “Since the *Freundschafts-Banner* was indeed probably the only existing German-language homosexual periodical in the time period investigated, it is likely that it was received by the majority of the homosexual emigrants surely on the basis of its monopoly” (21). This conclusion seems to me doubtful, considering the limited distribution of the periodical.¹

1. It began in 1932 as an eight-page hectographed biweekly with the title *Freundschafts-Banner*. After a brief hiatus, it resumed in 1933 as *Schweizerisches Freundschafts-Banner* (Swiss Friendship Banner). It was a monthly from 1937, when the name was changed to *Menschenrecht* (Human Rights). This is not mentioned by Zinn, nor that the name was changed again in 1943 to *Der Kreis* (The Circle), the name under which it is best known and which it kept until its demise in December 1967, making it one of the longest running homosexual periodicals.

During the 1930s the paper was sold openly and by subscription, but never enough to support it. It was primarily financed by Anna Vock, a lesbian who several times lost her jobs because of denunciations

As background, Zinn sketches the homosexual emancipation movement in Germany in the first third of the twentieth century. This excellent presentation includes the position of the various political parties vis-à-vis homosexuality, especially the socialist and communist parties and, of course, the National Socialist party. The role of homosexual organizations is also described, including the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (WhK; Scientific Humanitarian Committee), the Bund für Menschenrecht (BfM; League for Human Rights), and the Gemeinschaft der Eigenen (GdE; Community of Self-Owners). Founded in 1897 by Magnus Hirschfeld and others, the WhK was the first such organization ever.² The BfM was often mentioned in connection with the Nazis since Ernst Röhm was a member. Zinn attributes to the much smaller GdE the tactic of “outing” prominent homosexuals, but his can hardly have been their general policy, since the only example he gives was, by his admission, “the first (and last) attempt” (29).³

The first step in the creation of the stereotype of “the homosexual Nazi” was taken already in 1931 with the revelation of Röhm’s homosexuality. He was attacked with classic homosexual clichés as a seducer of youth. Zinn notes of this first stage in the process: “Although already in 1931, with the traditional homosexual stereotypes of the *homosexual seducer of youth* and *homosexual cliques*, two essential elements of the stereotypical picture of the exile press were introduced into the discourse on homosexual Nazis, at this point in time it did not come to an essential connection of these motives

in the tabloid press. In January 1935 the number of subscribers was 116 (Trüeb 1988, 41n11). From 1939, it was sold only by subscription; in 1942 the number of copies printed of each issue was 200 (Löw 1988, 157); it could hardly have exceeded that number in the 1930s. By contrast, the exile periodicals investigated by Zinn published thousands of copies (23).

2. The centenary of its founding was marked in Berlin by the exhibition “100 Years of Gay Liberation,” in connection with which there was a series of conferences, lectures, film and video showings, and live performances (Goodbye).

3. The “outing” of von Bülow by Adolf Brand, leader of the GdE (the example given by Zinn), was not Brand’s only “outing” (see Oosterhuis 1991, 6); it was certainly Brand’s policy. But Zinn has confused the GdE with the Secession des WhK (Secession of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee), which was founded in 1907 and marked a withdrawal of collaboration from the WhK. Zinn also falsely gives the date 1902 as the year the GdE was founded (35). This might be considered a misprint, if 1902 did not appear so persistently in the literature. The correct year is 1903. “The GdE arose on 1 May 1903 in Berlin. . . .” (Brand 1925, 1; see also Oosterhuis 1991, 4).

with National Socialism” (200). But his came shortly after the assumption of power by the Nazis (on 20 January 1933): the burning of the Reichstag building by the Dutchman Marinus van der Lubbe furnished material for intense propaganda from both sides.

The antifascist view was presented in the famous *Brown Book*, which first appeared in August 1933 and was translated into at least nineteen languages—over half a million copies were printed (61). In it, for example:

Through a skillful arrangement they suggested in the end a picture of the character of van der Lubbe that had to lead him by a downright necessity to the Berlin Reichstag building on 27 February 1933. A decisive importance accrued to the *discovery* of van der Lubbe’s homosexuality thereby, for it grounded its connection with National Socialism and thereby became the hinge and pivot of the theory. (64)

Without genuine proof, they simply declared van der Lubbe to be a tool of the Nazis and, furthermore, a homosexual. He was even declared to be a “*Lustknabe* of Ernst Röhm” (200).⁴ Zinn notes that “the establishment of a homosexual connection between Röhm and van der Lubbe was not merely a random shot, but was a conscious manipulation. The recourse to the cliché of the seducer of youth was not selected by chance. . . . The imposing success of the *Brown Book* presentation lent to it a character of certainty; it was not seriously doubted by the exile press” (201).

The “Night of the Long Knives” (30 June 1933), which resulted in the murder of Röhm and other Nazi party functionaries, marked a turning in the tactic of the Nazis regarding homosexuals to one directly aimed at accomplishing their long-term strategy of eliminating homosexuals. For a long time the exile press gave no credence to the stated antihomosexuality of the Nazis and continued the attack, adding now the obvious accusation of hypocrisy. They saw in the “Röhm-Putsch” a confirmation of their earlier reports of the homosexuality of Nazi officials. And the propagation of the image of the homosexual Nazi intensified following the revision of the Soviet law in 1934 to explicitly

4. *Lustknabe* is an old-fashioned word for a young male sex partner, often a prostitute.

include an antisodomy paragraph:⁵

Following the change in the Soviet attitude toward homosexuality, there was a clear increase in the attempts, not only to demonstrate the homosexuality of the whole Nazi leadership, but also a genuine connection between fascism and homosexuality. (100)

Furthermore, the mass arrests of homosexuals did not come about until the beginning of December 1934. A centralized compilation of “all persons who have been in any way homosexually active” was ordered by the Berlin Gestapo on 24 October 1934 (126). As a result of the first raids on homosexual bars in Berlin, hundreds were arrested and taken directly to concentration camps.

Still, the exile press was reluctant to accept news of these arrests, in part because it was so accustomed to connecting homosexuality and Nazis and in part because the official German press was forbidden to report the arrests. There were two reasons for this last, according to Zinn: (1) the Nazis feared public reaction and (2) a number of Nazis were among those arrested and they did not want to confirm the views of the exile press. Indeed, the exile press had intensified its “homosexual Nazi” propaganda in view of the upcoming plebiscite in the Saar on 13 January 1935.⁶ The imposing result of the plebiscite—over 90% voted for annexation by Germany—had the result, on the one hand, that the Nazis saw acceptance of their antihomosexual campaign, whereas, on the other,

5. That this was missing from the Soviet penal code does not mean that homosexuality was really tolerated, as Simon Karlinsky (1998) has noted:

When the new Soviet code appeared in 1922, it did not criminalize male homosexuality, but the code’s promulgation was immediately followed by two show trials of homosexuals. . . .

These cases illustrate something that most people fail to understand about the Soviet system of jurisprudence—that it arrogated to itself, from the beginning, the power to punish people no matter what the laws say.

6. The Saar had been a protectorate of the League of Nations after World War I, which provided a plebiscite in 1935 with three choices: (1) return to Germany, (2) go to France, or (3) keep the status quo. The exile press agitated for keeping the status quo.

the exile press began to see the futility of this line of attack.

With the continued reports of arrests of homosexuals in Germany, the exile press had to recognize the antihomosexual motive and that they could no longer use the “homosexual = Nazi” equation as an instrument of anti-Nazi propaganda—unless they were able to support it by the discovery of the homosexuality of ever more and ever higher Nazi officials: the already established connection demanded that this be done—and so it was. The identification was often based on the slimmest of homosexual clichés, especially effeminacy. Rudolf Heß, for example, was described as “Frau Hitler,” and if the author, as Zinn notes, “not once said what he meant, the desired impression must have been left with the reader: Heß was apparently homosexual and possibly even had a homosexual relationship with Hitler” (117).

The strengthening of § 175 of the penal code, the antihomosexual paragraph, by the Nazis on 28 June 1935 should have convinced even the most obtuse that the attacks on homosexuals were an expression of Nazi hatred and not excuses for politically motivated acts—but by now the psychiatrists were at work, seeing fascism as a result of suppressed homosexuality and extending the equation: Homosexuality = sadism = fascism. Thus the stereotype of the homosexual Nazi continued. Indeed,

In order to give a delayed rationalization of the stereotypical homosexual picture of the exile press at least for the years 1933–1935, various exile authors continued to make homosexuals responsible for the rise to power of the National Socialists. (195)

My summary of the “origin and establishment” of the stereotype is obviously one-sided, for surely there were protests against it even in the exile press. Yes, but they were few and far between. As could be expected, the homosexual *Schweizerisches Freundschafts-Banner* (Zurich), in an article by “a Karl Pfenninger” in an “(exile) journalistic wrap-up of the murder of Röhm” criticizes the low journalism that “‘again for the thousand-and-so time’ equates homosexuality ‘with depravity, bestiality, scum of humanity’” (123). Zinn seems to leave open the possibility that Karl Pfenninger was a

German exile, but in fact this was a pseudonym used by the Swiss Karl Meier.⁷

Magnus Hirschfeld, too, objected to the tactic of using the stigma of homosexuality to tarnish Nazis. But even he seemed to be influenced by the propagation of the connection between homosexuality and fascism. In an article in the exile paper *Pariser Tageblatt*, following the murder of Röhm, he wrote:

Hitler may have created for himself by his sharp action against the homosexual youth leaders, by “walking over corpses,” a new group of opponents that exceeds the Jews of Germany in numbers. These same “Urnings,” who could not praise Hitler enough for his tolerance regarding Röhm and company, and therefore went over to his camp in droves, now feel themselves hard hit and disappointed. (1934, quoted by Zinn, 111)⁸

Zinn speculates that this may reflect Hirschfeld’s bitterness over the fact that those whose rights he had defended had made no opposition to the destruction of his life work. But Zinn adds:

At any rate, it plainly shows with what vehemence the connection between homosexuality and National Socialism constructed in the exile discourse had on the protagonists of the homosexual emancipation movement. The idea that homosexuals had gone over to the Nazis “in droves” was doubtless due to Hirschfeld’s accommodation of the exile discourse. (112)

7. Karl Meier (1897-1974) did editorial work for *SFB/Menschenrecht* from 1935 and was editor of *Der Kreis* from 1943 until 1967. He used several pseudonyms, but finally settled on “Rolf,” by which name he was known throughout the years of *Der Kreis*. As an actor, he toured the German provinces in 1924–1932, and he wrote two brief essays for Adolf Brand’s *Der Eigene* (Berlin). In Zurich, Meier starred in the antifascist cabaret Cornichon, 1934–1947. He later continued work as actor and director in radio, stage, and film. (For a brief biography, see Salathé 1996.)

8. “Urning” was an earlier term for “homosexual.” With “walking over corpses” Hirschfeld was ironically recalling the proposed emancipationist tactic of “outing” prominent homosexuals—a tactic he objected to.

The sharpest reaction came from Klaus Mann, the homosexual son of the novelist Thomas Mann, in December 1934 in a brief article, “Die Linke und ‘das Laster’” (The left and ‘vice’), in which he also criticized the new Soviet antisodomy law:

Have the Marxists forgotten that the dogma and type of the “leader” [Führer] that we are fighting above all are also essentially determined by economic facts? And that Hitler—who for that matter is certainly more hotly and hysterically loved by petit bourgeois women than by soldierly or effeminate men—did not come to power because “German youth is homosexually contaminated,” but rather because Thyssen paid and because paid lies confused starved brains. (quoted by Zinn, 152)⁹

As Zinn comments: “Klaus Mann attentively followed the exile discourse on the homosexual Nazi without falling under its spell. In contrast, say, to Hirschfeld, he refused to recognize even the slightest connection between homosexuality and fascism” (152).

Alexander Zinn is an active journalist. This may help explain his clear insight into the working of the exile press as well as his lively presentation. But his academic background also comes through, especially in the last section of his book in which he presents a model sociological-theoretical analysis of the construction of the stereotype of the homosexual Nazi.

Flaws in the work are minor indeed; I twice noted the citation of works not listed in the references. But that is probably not Zinn’s fault, as it is certainly not his fault that the book lacks an index. On the plus side, I appreciate very much the inclusion in the footnotes of over forty thumbnail biographical sketches. They help the reader to identify the numerous actors in the story. The book sheds further light on a dark period of human history and is a long step in the deconstruction of a persistent stereotype that has been too long with us.

—Hubert Kennedy

9. The Thyssen ironworks and mining concern was one of the largest in Germany.

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Sodom und Gomorrha: Zur Alltagswirklichkeit und Verfolgung Homosexueller im Mittelalter (Sodom and Gomorrah: On the daily reality and persecution of homosexuals in the Middle Ages)

by Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller

Hamburg: MännerschwarmSkript Verlag, 1998. 216 pp.

The long period called Middle Ages, roughly, the thousand-year period of European history from AD 500 to 1500, continues to yield up its secrets, and in the forefront of its scholars disclosing the history of homosexuality is Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller. His book *Sodom und Gomorrha* brings together a collection of six of his essays previously published in the years 1986 to 1995, which have been reworked into a unified presentation. To them he has added the conclusions of a 1997 seminar with the title “Same-Sex Unions in the Middle Ages?” which was, as the title suggests, prompted by John Boswell’s book *Same-Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe* (1994). The result is a valuable and authoritative account of its subject.

To make the essays understandable to all, as well as to meet scholarly demands, Hergemöller adopted a “new form of presentation.” In the text there are no references to notes; instead, all sources and references to the literature are put into an appendix (of 34 pages) that is ordered according to chapter and key words. Thus, according to him, the book can “serve not only as a reader, but also as a scholarly reference work” (8). Whether this idea will be followed by other authors remains to be seen. I can only report on the “reader”; for me, it worked very well.

The first chapter discusses questions of terminology. The various terms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that reflect theories of same-sex behavior, from “Urning” to “gay” and “schwul,” all have a common foundation, namely, they “concern persons with independent inclinations and behavior, who differ in essential, not accidental form from those persons who, with regard to the erotic and sexual, are predominantly interested in persons of the other sex” (16). Intriguingly, Hergemöller

suggests in passing that through the current deconstruction this conception “has begun to totter and will hardly survive the entry into the third millenium” (16). But the point he makes here is that this view is excluded from the natural law view of the Middle Ages: “The dichotomy that dominated the medieval ‘discourse’ on sexuality, namely the dichotomy of ‘nature’ and ‘against nature’ differs fundamentally from the current dichotomy ‘homosexual’ and ‘heterosexual’” (34). Nevertheless, Hergemöller concludes that in discussing same-sex behavior, it is preferable to sever the term homosexuality from its theoretical baggage and apply it “as the common comprehensive term for historically provable forms of same-sex behavior” (36).

Of course the Middle Ages had various designations for homosexuality. Four are discussed: (1) *vitium sodomiticum* (the sodomitic crime), (2) *vitium contra naturam* (the crime against nature), (3) Ketzerei (heresy), and (4) *peccatum mutum* (the silent sin). It is noted that the noun *sodomia* as a general term for homosexual acts occurs rather late in the sources, near the end of the fourteenth century. The term *sodomita*, for the man committing such acts, was used already in 1025.

The second chapter gives a brief summary of the relevant criminal laws from the Roman republic to the Prussian states, from a law of 186 BC to the promulgation (after 80 years of preparation) of the *Allgemeines Landrecht für die Preußischen Staaten* in 1794. Although the earliest laws condemned homosexual rape, for example, there was no universal legal condemnation of same-sex acts until after Constantine the Great recognized the Christians. The beginning of repression began with a law of Constantian and Constantius in 342: “We order the law to reach out, to arm the right with the avenging sword, so as to eradicate the infamous with exquisite punishments.” And Hergemöller adds: “So as to emphasize the exorbitance of the case was added, ‘it brings no benefit to know anything of this crime’ (*quod non proficit scire*)” (38).

The penalizing of “sodomites” was widened by the emperor Justinian in two novellas of 538 and 559. Hergemöller points out three ways that this was done: “First, they formulated a causal connection between ‘against nature’ and natural catastrophes. . . . Second, they designated same-sex behavior as ‘demonic’ and thereby introduced the medieval strategy of demonization. . . . Third, they opened the way to a basically unlimited discretionary scope of interrogation, torture, and killing of the accused” (40).

In the Christian West there was a legal duality of church and secular spheres. But the thirteenth century brought essential changes in the theory and practice of criminal laws with the institution of the Inquisition. With the allowing of torture by papal bull in 1252 (Innocent III's *Ad extirpanda*),

this was viewed as the best method to force “truthful” statements. In the inquisitional persecution and murder of “sodomites,” Jews, and “witches,” church and state basically worked closely together in the late Middle Ages. . . . In principle no limit was set to the fantasy of the authorities. In Augsburg clerics were hanged in oversized bird cages and given over to a lingering death by starvation (1408), in Venice the “perpetrators”—mostly adolescents—had their eyes gouged out or their hands hacked off. . . . In Florence between 1432 and 1503 more than 10,000 persons were accused of sodomy, of whom 2,000 were executed. (43–44)

For the Holy Roman Empire the method of execution was codified by emperor Karl V in 1532 in § 116 of the *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina* (“death by fire according to the common custom”). In the following centuries, death by fire for sodomites was continued in various laws, for example, as late as the Bavarian Criminal Code of 1751. The Prussian code of 1794, mentioned above, was one of the earliest to abandon this form of punishment. Hergemöller concludes this chapter rather laconically: “Only toward the end of the eighteenth century was the criminal law able to sever its theological ties and recognize the economical advantage that accrued to the state from forced labor” (49).

The third chapter, “Homosexual Daily Life in the Middle Ages,” touches on the constructionist versus essentialist controversy. Although Hergemöller several times suggests that more research into archives needs to be done, enough individual instances have been uncovered to indicate that some individuals appeared to be self-aware homosexuals and that there were subcultures. The bishop of Paris, for example, seemed to be aware of this when he wrote in 1230, “It is customary that the sodomites stretch out their sexual parts (*virilia ostendere*), and this is the sign by which they recognize each other” (55). This statement may or may not have been based on an actual situation in

Paris, but as Hergemöller comments, “It shows that the bishop viewed the sodomites, not as separate figures, but as observable groups who had at their disposal an internal code of gestures and signals” (56). Hergemöller then discusses several examples of “homosocial arrangements” and, in a separate section on “Essence and Construction,” finds many points of contact between the two in relation to the Middle Ages. He sums up:

According to the state of today’s knowledge and sources the phenomenon of everyday homosexual practice in the Middle Ages may perhaps be paraphrased: There can be no doubt that, especially in the late medieval cities pre- and early forms of daily homosexual culture and lived reality developed that show astonishing analogies and parallels to the homosexual subculture of later epochs. (77)

At the least, this would seem to relativize Foucault’s famous statement placing the birth of homosexuality in the second half of the nineteenth century: “The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.” Nevertheless, as Hergemöller writes:

On the other hand, the whole Middle Ages was dominated by an attribution of strangeness inimical to sodomites that was based on the dichotomy between “nature” and “against nature.” . . . The idea of a “third sex” or an “independent category,” which was developed in the nineteenth century in the interplay between “Urnings” and medical doctors—and which can today already be viewed as a relic of the historical past—was of course completely unknown and unthinkable in the Middle Ages. (77)

The fourth chapter has as its starting point John Boswell’s last book *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (1994), whose title Hergemöller finds misleading in two ways: “The work is 95% concerned with East Roman, Byzantine, and Church Slavic texts; it includes no Latin—not to speak of ‘premodern’ (late medieval)—sources” (81). But he notes that Boswell was the first to recognize the significance for church history and

sexual history of the “sacred couples” among the martyrs—and he gives us a list of about 160 such pairs. He further states that “it belongs to the indisputable merits of Boswell to have rediscovered those texts that speak of a ceremonial union between two religious order brothers” (92). It is unclear how extended this “brother-making” (*adelphopoiesis*) was. At any rate, so Hergemöller: “There is thus no talk of eroticism and sexuality in the adelphopoiesis texts; still it was probably the abhorrence of sexuality that moved the Byzantine church to put a stop to this practice in the High Middle Ages and which hindered from the beginning a corresponding institutionalization in the West” (94).

The next two chapters deal with the relatively well documented situation in two cities of the late Middle Ages, Cologne and Venice. In 1484 the city council of Cologne, the largest urban center in the Holy Roman Empire north of the Alps, formed a secret commission of thirteen men to undertake a systematic investigation of the “unspeakable silent sin.” A great part of the original documents are preserved in the Cologne city archives, but only fragments were known before they were printed in 1987 by Hergemöller. His transcription is included here (and I confess to being unable to read even the printed version). They show some interesting contrasts. Whereas one investigation was begun on the complaint of a pastor who claimed to have learned in the confessional of the “serious, unspeakable silent sin,” the theologians who were asked for advice (probably members of religious orders), expressed “the theory that speaking about the ‘silent sin’ would already produce irreparable consequences” (103). Nevertheless the city fathers proceeded with the investigation, and the documents give details that sound strikingly familiar. For example, a young man named Jacob, but called “the simpleton,” complained to neighbors of the pain in his rear as a result of the wine merchant Kruysgin’s actions. One witness reported that he saw Jacob being led into Kruysgin’s house, and when he came out ‘the simpleton’ told him that Kruysgin had stuck his ‘zerss’ in his rear, after he had rubbed ‘his thing’ with spit, saying, ‘Careful, it should go in all right now.’ Of course Kruysgin denied everything. Alas, the conclusion of the affair is not documented. Hergemöller assumes (considering all the available documents) that Kruysgin was convicted and sentenced to a severe punishment.

In this chapter Hergemöller draws a half dozen conclusions from the documents. I find especially interesting:

(3) The sources further give a certain impression of the development of a sexually specific language and communication. The words recorded in the minutes of 1500—*zerrs*, *zapell*, *arss*, *knuffen*—and the various sentences in direct speech that are interspersed indicate that at this time a commonly understandable vernacular of everyday terms was beginning to develop that was free from the Latin vocabulary of scholastic and humanistic learning. (120)

(6) Finally the affair sheds a peculiar, ambivalent light on the role of the church dignitaries. . . . Whereas in the processes against heretics and witches the two spheres [church and secular] mostly cooperated closely and took part together in the interrogations, in the sodomite processes no presence of religious dignitaries can be established. (122–123)

Already in 1418 in Venice the ruling council of the Ten (*Dieci*) had established a secret commission of four men, the Night Lords (*Signori di Notte*), which was supposed to “completely wipe out and destroy the evil of the sodomites, so that none would dare to commit it, not even to call it by name” (147). The extensive documents show that they took their job very seriously.

The church was not directly involved, for “sodomy was considered an official crime, so that it was in the public interest to prosecute it.” And indeed the public was forced to collaborate:

So as to intensify the cooperation of the populace, after several unsuccessful initiatives, on 7 January 1467 all barbers, “surgeons,” and doctors (*Physici*) were required, on penalty of being forbidden to practice their profession, to immediately report all observations of injured backsides that they had found on men or women: “*si medicant aliquem masculum vel feminam, qui habeant posteriorem partem fractam pro sodomicio.*” (150)

Torture was commonly used in interrogations and, as Hergemöller suggests:

The bodily torments apparently served not only to extract the “truth” from the accused, but also to give all those summoned a kind of basic punishment and thus achieve a general political intimidating and terrorizing effect. (150)

In reading the documents, Hergemöller also got the impression that the torture and crippling punishments served to satisfy hidden sadistic needs of the commission members. This is suggested, for example, by the case of a man convicted of falsely accusing his neighbors of sodomy. The doge gave the first suggestion for punishment, that the man be exposed for a day in St. Mark’s Square, then be taken by bark to Murano while a crier described his crime, and there have his nose and tongue cut off, his forehead be branded three times and each of his knees once “so that no one would believe him again.” Two councilors proposed that he have his hand cut off in Venice along with his nose, and that one eye be gouged out. Two of the Ten thought it better to have both eyes gouged out in Murano. A final suggestion was that he be hanged over pointed prongs until he died. Hergemöller explains: “They were probably thinking thereby of a hanging apparatus by which the weight of the condemned man would slowly press the erect spikes into him” (151).

The usual capital punishment was “death by fire” preceded by beheading. In 1464 it was proposed that sodomites not be beheaded first, but be burned alive, “since, as is well known, God also showered fire and brimstone over the flourishing cities Sodom and Gomorrah,” but the proposal was defeated by a narrow majority. Hergemöller estimates that 70 such executions were carried out in the fifteenth century. But:

The extensive use of torture, the gruesome sentences of crippling and death underline the arbitrary character of the criminal justice at that time. Under these aspects it is difficult to call the killing of sodomites by the customary term execution; rather, we can, just as in the case of Jews and “witches,” absolutely speak of murder and mass murder. (152)

Hergemöller noted, as mentioned above, that the civil authorities were mainly responsible for the persecution and killing of sodomites. Yet what were the catalysts that moved “this aggressive and merciless behavior of medieval men”? He answers this question in his final chapter:

These catalysts were the theologians. . . . The antisodomitic theologians (female and male) were not satisfied . . . with repeating in their morality sermons and confessional books the biblical prohibitions or the Justinian verdicts, but they made a continued effort to develop new “contemporary” and individual special forms of the antihomosexual dogma. . . . The theologians intended thereby, first, to discipline the personal conscience of the believers, but also, second, to legitimize the extermination of the sodomites as a work pleasing to God. (163–164)

A list of such theologians (21 men and 6 women, one third of whom are official “saints” of the Roman Catholic Church) follows. Hergemöller then discusses a book by Dietrich Kolde (of Münster in Westphalia), first published in 1485, as an example of antisodomitic propaganda. He concludes:

It was not through simple repetition of written quotations, nor through calling on the hierarchically organized forced obedience, but rather through systematically constructed, methodically considered forms of argument and agitation that the theologians thus prepared the fertile soil for the conception of the extirpation of sodomites in the Middle Ages and the time following. This is the guilt from which no one can release them. (182)

There are valuable lessons to be learned from this book, and Hergemöller himself suggests two of them:

For one, the unbroken line of the homosexual persecution tradition from then till today becomes clearer, so that the understanding of the current form of

repression becomes sharper and the individual and collective orientation toward the future becomes easier. . . .

For another, the presentation of the interaction between persecutors and persecuted, between perpetrators and victims, between majority and minority, makes clear essential structural moments in the area of the normative production of minorities, in the area of their stigmatizing, labeling, discrimination, and elimination. If we know the methods and models of the past, then the methods and models of the present will no longer be strange to us, even if they wear a sublime mask or hide behind dialectical fake reconciliation. (162)

An example occurred to me in reading of the continual “demonization” of homosexuals and of Venice, where in 1462 several boy sodomites were interrogated and sentenced. One of them, Theodorus, called “the Greek cripple,” was tortured and convicted of being an active sodomite. Because he was underage, it was recommended that he be given 25 lashes and then have his nose cut off to the bone. A counter-proposal was made that “it would be better to castrate him and in addition to cut off his nose, so that in Venice he would remain ‘as a monster’ (*tamquam monstrum*)” (151). Today these processes are being applied with a vengeance to pedophiles. They have been so demonized that anyone who speaks in their defense is also suspected of being in league with the devil. There continue to be calls for their castration and this is also done, at least chemically. Like the barbers and “surgeons” of Venice, anyone whose job brings him or her into contact with someone suspected of pedophile activity is required to report it, not only, as in Venice, on pain of being forbidden to practice their profession, but of going to prison themselves—thus effectively eliminating any objective research into pedophilia.

Recently (in 1998) there was a charming example of the making of a “monster” in Santa Rosa (the northern California town where the movie *Smile* was filmed). There a man released from prison after serving his sentence as a “child molester” registered his address with the police as required by law. The police then notified all his neighbors, who forced the man to move. When the man registered his new address, the police also informed his new neighbors of the “monster” in their midst. The second residence was also made unbearable, so the man moved a third time. Once again the police aroused his

neighbors. In desperation the man tried to bring a legal action against the police, but the judge ruled against him, while the police continued to wear their “sublime mask.” It is not a giant leap to ask what hidden sadistic needs were being satisfied by their actions. As Hergemöller writes: “Only when we comprehend the history of the past as the history of the present, can we prevent it from also becoming the history of the future” (162).

Finally, I would like to note that paragraphs in this book are indented. I urge other German publishers to follow this welcome example.

—Hubert Kennedy

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Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity

by Harry Oosterhuis

Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000. x + 321 pp.

Dutch historian Harry Oosterhuis begins his excellent cultural history with a quotation from a letter written in 1900 to Richard von Krafft-Ebing from a twenty-year-old Estonian nobleman called “Von R.” (A facsimile of four pages of this letter is included among the several photographs of Krafft-Ebing, his family, his patients and colleagues, and his sanatorium that illustrate the book.) His detailed account (“an elaborate introspection of his problematic sexuality”) was intended, as Von R wrote, to “report something to the scholar that is not entirely without interest.” In it Von R told, among other things, of his difficulty in abstaining from masturbation and of the one man with whom he gave in to his passion. This happened when, as a seventeen-year-old, he made a coach boy comply with his wishes: they had sex five times in “imitation of coitus”—“not,” Von R stressed, “between the thighs.” Furnished with key words in the margin, the letter uses the format and language of the psychiatric case description. Oosterhuis concludes: “Doubtless, Von R was inspired by Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia sexualis*, ... and his confession seems to be typical of the process that Michael Foucault and other scholars have designated as the medical construction of perversion” (2).

For Oosterhuis, however, the process was not as one-sided as it has been pictured. Rather, there was a dialogue between layman/patient and psychiatrist that resulted in what Oosterhuis terms the “modernization of sexuality.” This occurred in a relatively short period of time in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The principle instrument of this change was Krafft-Ebing and the dialogue is reflected in the several editions (he worked on twelve in his lifetime) of the perennial best-seller *Psychopathia sexualis* (1886 and later).

All are agreed that—according to Oosterhuis, the much-maligned—Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902) was the most important figure in this transformation in the nineteenth

century. Born in Mannheim, Germany, Krafft-Ebing studied medicine in Heidelberg and, after several positions in Germany, was professor of psychiatry in Austria, first in Graz and then in Vienna. His primary interest was in homosexuality, but he investigated and classified all the “perversions”: it was Krafft-Ebing who in 1890 coined the terms “sadism” and “masochism”—the first named after the Marquis de Sade and the second for the writer Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, who had taught history at the University of Graz shortly before Krafft-Ebing’s arrival. Sacher-Masoch complained that Krafft-Ebing had used his honorable name, the very name of his mother, to designate a sexual perversion. (His mother’s family name was Masoch and his father had added it to his own on his marriage to her.) Fortunately de Sade was no longer alive to complain. It was also Krafft-Ebing who defined “pedophilia erotica” as a psycho-sexual perversion in 1896.

His interest in homosexuality inspired by the homosexual emancipationist and theorist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895), Krafft-Ebing first published on homosexuality in 1877. He wrote to Ulrichs in 1879: “It was the knowledge of your writings alone that induced me to the study of this highly important field” (cited in Ulrichs 1994, *Critische Pfeile* 92). (Oosterhuis falsely states that Ulrichs was one of Krafft-Ebing’s patients, “who consulted him in 1869 when Krafft-Ebing was in practice as a nerve doctor in Baden-Baden” [139]—apparently basing this on a misidentification by the editor of a recent volume of Krafft-Ebing’s letters [Krafft-Ebing 2000, 129].) Already in 1864 Ulrichs had begun publishing his views of the inborn nature of homosexuality, whose naturalness he based on a biological theory derived from contemporary developments in embryology. His goal was the decriminalization of homosexual acts. For this reason he welcomed the efforts of Krafft-Ebing, who was often called as a forensic expert, to oppose the harshness of the criminal code. In his later years Krafft-Ebing was outspoken in his opposition to the anti-sodomy laws, and during the legislative debate over a new penal code for Austria, he published an essay in 1894 in which he recommended that homosexual acts be allowed, with an age of consent of eighteen. (Ulrichs, who submitted his own brief to the legislature, commended his efforts, though he thought eighteen too high an age.)

But where they parted company was over the question of health versus sickness. Homosexuality was not a sickness in itself, Ulrichs insisted and complained in 1879: “My

scientific opponents are mostly doctors of the insane, e.g., Westphal, von Krafft-Ebing, Stark. They have made their observations on urnings [homosexuals] who are in institutions for the insane. They appear never to have seen mentally healthy urnings” (Ulrichs 1994, *Critische Pfeile* 96). Oosterhuis agrees that, at that time, “Ulrichs’s criticism was to the point”; but, “it did not hold true for all of the twelve case histories on contrary sexual feeling [homosexuality] that Krafft-Ebing published in the early 1880s.... These histories, all but one of men, were based on his own work with patients or they were derived from the candid letters men wrote to him” (139). That is, these men were not in institutions for the insane—which does not mean that Krafft-Ebing considered them healthy. In 1885, for example, he published two “elaborate autobiographies of, as he put it, two sincere and intellectually gifted urnings,” for whom “Ulrichs’s work in particular had revolutionized their lives because it disclosed to them that they were not alone” (148). One of them wrote to Krafft-Ebing: “I cannot describe how much I felt relieved when I heard that there are many other men with the same sexual disposition, and that my sexual feeling is not an aberration, but an inner, natural sexual inclination” (148). Oosterhuis reports that “Krafft-Ebing’s introduction to these two autobiographies clearly reveals that his insights were in part influenced by his homosexual patients and correspondents” (149). Despite his own evidence, however, Krafft-Ebing reported in every edition of *Psychopathia sexualis*: “Ulrichs failed, however, to prove that this certainly congenital and paradoxical sexual feeling was physiological, and not pathological” (Krafft-Ebing 1965, 222). Only at the very end of his life did Krafft-Ebing admit that some homosexuals were not sick.

Nevertheless, it was certainly a comfort for many, as Krafft-Ebing’s case histories show, to learn from him that they were not wicked, immoral creatures, but merely sick. Above all they were relieved to learn that they were not alone, though probably most were not individualistic enough to end the lesson there, as the anarchist writer John Henry Mackay did when he read *Psychopathia sexualis*. Mackay wrote in his largely autobiographical novel *Fenny Skaller*:

He begins to comprehend.

He still knows nothing. but he does now know one thing: there are others like him! ...

He did not open the book again for many years. What it could give him, it had given him. He had forgotten what he had read. He understood only so much: they had locked up his love in science's wax-figure cabinet of monsters, of deformities and monstrosities of all kinds—there they had also classified him: among people with whom he had nothing in common, and could and would have nothing in common. (Mackay 1979, 1: 40–41)

In his book Oosterhuis underscores the precarious position of psychiatry in the early nineteenth century:

Medicine's appropriation of mental disorders as part of its rightful and "natural" sphere of involvement and the scientific credibility of psychiatry required Krafft-Ebing's commitment to positivism and a conception of mental illness as an organic disease of the brain or the nervous system. However, the belief in the somatic basis of insanity was hardly confirmed by contemporary anatomical and physiological evidence. (102)

In this bleak situation degeneration theory came to the rescue of psychiatry and Krafft-Ebing in particular. The theory had been introduced in 1857 by Auguste Bénédict Morel, a Catholic ex-seminarian who saw it as a consequence of the (literal) fall of Adam. It was taken over by Valentin Magnan who, as Oosterhuis says, "sealed the inclusion of degeneration theory in psychiatry by purging it from its religious overtones, which still haunted the work of Morel" (53). Krafft-Ebing was "deeply influenced" by Morel, who "had devised a theory of retrograde evolution to explain several pathological phenomena from the influence of environment as well as heredity" (52). In accepting degeneration theory, Krafft-Ebing was a leader in its "eager reception" by psychiatrists. And his adherence to it continued, as did his admiration of Morel. In 1894, e.g., he called attention to his continuance of the ideas of Morel, "one of the greatest French anthropologists and psychiatrists of France" (Krafft-Ebing 1894, 4). For Krafft-Ebing,

Oosterhuis writes, “the underlying causes of all perversions remained degeneration and heredity” (61), and “as the leading apostle of degeneration theory in central Europe, he stressed the role of heredity in the etiology of mental illness until the end of his career” (103).

But why was this theory so popular? Oosterhuis notes:

The theory was so attractive for psychiatrists because it gave them a unifying, established scientific concept that could be used to bring various aspects—including constitution, pathological behavior, mental symptoms, moral influences, and social conditions—under one rubric. Thus in Krafft-Ebing’s model of disease a multitude of widely divergent causes could be responsible for mental disorders. (105)

He adds, however: “The attractiveness of the concept of hereditary degeneration for psychiatrists in the days of Krafft-Ebing may well be specifically accounted for by its vagueness and indeterminacy” (106).

But if degeneration theory continued to be the theoretical basis of his work, in practice Krafft-Ebing encouraged a dialogue, not only with patients who consulted him, but also in a wide correspondence that, according to Oosterhuis who had access to his unpublished files, was faithfully reflected in his publications, primarily in *Psychopathia sexualis*. As Oosterhuis comments:

The theory of degeneration and an emphatic understanding of individual predicaments existed side by side. Krafft-Ebing’s work fluctuated between the stigmatization of perversions as mental diseases and the recognition of the individual’s particular and unique desires.... Several perverts went to the psychiatrist, not so much seeking a cure, but to develop a dialogue about their nature and social situation. Sexual identities could not be formed in isolation; they had to be recognized, confirmed, and legitimized by others. (212)

I have emphasized the topic of homosexuality as appropriate to a *Journal of Homosexuality* review. But Oosterhuis’s work is more encompassing than I may have

suggested. Thus general trends in nineteenth-century psychiatry in central Europe, the shift of emphasis from institutions for the insane to university clinics and private sanatoria, the influence of Darwinian and Lamarckian biological theories (the latter in particular in the case of degeneration theory), and the efforts to establish psychiatry as a legitimate medical discipline, particularly in the university—all these are covered by Oosterhuis in an exemplary way. This is cultural history at its finest.

Finally, if the book had any real flaws—and I don't find them—I would forgive Oosterhuis much for his comment that some men who furnished Krafft-Ebing their autobiographies “referred to the decisive (t)urning point in their lives” (227). Who says the Dutch don't have a sense of humor?

—Hubert Kennedy

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