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Blurring the Boundaries: Images of Androgyny in Germany at the Fin de Siecle

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Blurring the Boundaries: Images of Androgyny in Germany at the Fin de Siècle

A Thesis Presented for the
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Dedication

This work is gratefully dedicated to my family.
To my parents, who have given unconditional love and support even in the hardest of times;
And to Ryan—your brotherly love means more to me than you will ever know.

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I extend special thanks to the members of the History Department at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville—especially Monica Black, Denise Phillips, and Lynn Sacco—for their unwavering support of my graduate education. Additionally, thank you to my fellow graduate students in the department who provided both academic and emotional support in times of great need.

Abstract

The following study inquires into the emergence and development of a positive, nonnormative homosexual identity in German social discourses regarding androgyny and same-sex desire during the Wilhelmine period. Literary works, medical journals, homosexual journals, and visual art in the late-nineteenth century reflect a growing interest in androgynous bodies throughout Germany's developing homosexual community. Such primary media provide the evidence for this study. Of particular interest are the works and theories of homosexuals themselves with an emphasis on their organizational journals (such as *The Own* and *The Annual Book for Intermediate Sexual Stages*) and photographs. This project examines the dissemination and reception of images of androgyny that were included in these various works by Germany's homosexual community—indeed, how homosexuals themselves responded to a subversive project of normality. Ultimately, their response is the foundation of the main argument of the essay. Homosexuals in Germany at the fin de siècle fashioned a new, self-affirming aesthetic with androgyny at its core. I maintain that the media of photography, literature, and popular journals disseminated this aesthetic among those who sought to define themselves simultaneously outside normative gender roles and in a positive manner.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Anecdote

Tafel XI of Magnus Hirschfeld's *Geschlechts-Übergänge,* a 1906 sexological study combining photographical and textual evidence to prove the existence of a "Third Sex" in German society, depicts a young, naked male leaning delicately against a wall in a relaxed, passive pose. While one hand rests coyly behind the male's body, the other has a limp grasp on a flower, its stem pointing directly to his genitalia. The caption under photograph reads "Gynäkomastie," meaning gynaecomastia or a medical condition which causes excess breast tissue to grow in men and boys.

Whether considered to be aesthetically pleasing, oddly deviant, or overwhelmingly ordinary by contemporary viewers, the photograph's significance lies in its interpretive potential—how Germans at the fin de siècle understood the symbols and underlying messages that constitute it. As Roland Barthes contends in his essay "The Photographic Message," the photograph "profess[es] to be a mechanical analogue of reality" by presenting the "perfect analogon" of the subject. [1] However, the photograph is not merely objective realism. It has "two messages: a denoted message, which is the analogon itself, and a connoted message, which is the manner in which the society to a certain

[1] Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," in *The Barthes Reader*, ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 196.

extent communicates what it thinks of it." [2] In the case of *Tafel* XI, the dual messages seem to be, at first glance, contradictory. While the subject is obviously male with great emphasis placed on his penis, the connoted messages of the photograph are strikingly feminine: his passive pose, his semi-developed breasts, the symbolic flower. Ultimately, the two seemingly opposite categories—the masculine and the feminine—are cleverly conjoined in one body: the androgynous male. Therefore, Hirschfeld's image of the androgynous male—and the larger set of photographs, paintings, and literary works to which it belongs—can be understood as more than scientific research or artistic representation. It was part of a larger cultural production in Germany in which homosexual communities were attempting to fashion a new aesthetic with androgyny as its ideal. [3]

A Note on Terminology

In my own formulation, homosexuality can be defined simply as a form of sexual desire in which attraction is directed toward a person of the same sex. This is a generalizing definition which, nonetheless, raises various problems. For instance, many homosexuals (those who felt or acted on same-sex desire) at the fin de siècle and in other periods also led parallel lives, giving the

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[2] Ibid., 197.

[3] As Michel Foucault demonstrates in his *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, sexuality is a social construction created by institutional discourse in the late nineteenth century. By extension, the terms “homosexual” and “heterosexual” are highly unstable due to their connection to sexuality as a separate realm of being. Following the lead of scholars such as Robert Beachy and Florence Tamagne, I have chosen to use the term “homosexual” to refer to those people in Germany who felt same-sex desire. While the term was not universally used by all Germans who felt same-sex desire, many actively used it in their public and private writings. It, therefore, serves as a linguistic tool to write about this specific group at the fin de siècle.

appearance of being heterosexual by publically demonstrating sexual attraction toward a person of the opposite sex. On the other hand, a very restrictive definition of homosexuality that ties same-sex desire to a clear and elusive identity in complete opposition to the dominant, normative, heterosexual society assumes the existence of present-day dichotomies on the past. Ultimately, as historian Florence Tamagne describes, two main dangers exist when defining homosexuality: "the dilution of the concept of homosexuality in the infinite variation of individual experiences, and the ghettoization of homosexuality, since the term could no longer be applied to any but a very restricted group of individuals who satisfy all the criteria of homosexuality: exclusive attraction, complete sexual relations, affirmed identity, overt militancy." [4] In this essay, I support a more generalizing definition of homosexuality. Not only was the fin de siècle a period in which homosexuality as a discursive term was being formulated, but a more generalized definition captures the interconnectivity of homosexual subcultures and dominant culture and the influence that each had on creating and recreating the other. By extension, I use the term "homosexual communities" to refer to the various groups within German society that openly identified themselves based on their same-sex sexual activity, most notably the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee* and the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen.* As I will explain, while each group had different ideas about their own sexual identities and used different terms to identify those identities, both groups defined themselves (and were defined

[4] Florence Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe: Berlin, London, Paris, 1919-1939* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004), 6.

by dominant society) based on their attraction to people of the same sex and their desire to abolish the law that forbid acting on that attraction.

Main Argument

Historians of sexuality in Germany have recently argued that the formation of identity is a communicative process that emerges from the ideological interaction between institutional discourse and lived experience. [5] In this formulation, individuals and groups can develop a sexual identity for themselves based on not only the discourses of normative sexuality that inform their society but also their own understanding of sexual desire. Although the recent historiography of sexual identity formation in Germany has examined an array of cultural influences on the process itself (including studies of masculinity, art, literature, *Lebensreform* Movements, etc), there is an absence of scholarship regarding the effects of the images of androgyny—such as Hirschfeld's *Tafel* XI—that pervaded German society at the fin de siècle. Literary works, medical journals, visual art, and gay magazines reflect a growing interest in, and, at times, an obsession with androgynous bodies. Homosexual groups utilized images of androgyny to create a new aesthetic which represented a self-affirming expression of male homosexual identity. Although androgyny was certainly not the only factor in the formation of this aesthetic, androgynous bodies as represented in literature, journals, and art

[5] Scholars such as George Chauncey, Florence Tamagne, William Peniston, and Robert Beachy emphasize the role of experience over discourse in the creation of identity. Their works explore the cultural contexts in which homosexuals lived—their communities, their social networks, their interactions with each other, etc.—to present identity-formation as a dual process. While discourses clearly affect the identity of a person or a group, the push-back of the subject (i.e. how he or she perceives his or her identity after internalizing the discourses) is part of the process as well.

complicated perceptions of normative sexuality by blurring the distinctions between what constituted the "masculine" and the "feminine."

This essay aims to illustrate that instead of adhering to the perverse sexual identity that was being formulated by physicians in some medical discourses, German homosexuals at the fin de siècle simultaneously defined themselves outside normative gender roles and in a positive manner. The influence of some medical discourses that described homosexuality as pathology surely cannot be underestimated, but the self-fashioning and self-affirmation by homosexuals themselves was an integral part of the process as well. While homosexual self-identity in Germany at the fin de siècle was formulated by a conglomeration of ideas regarding nudity, biology, hermaphrodism, masculinity, femininity, pederasty, etc., this essay analyzes the influence of aesthetic androgyny, specifically, as a crucial constituent part of a rather complex ideological construct. Androgyny, then, served as a metaphorical weapon of German homosexuals to combat the imposition of normativity and to formulate self-identity.

Chapter 2

Background

A Society in Transition

Describing Germany at the end of the nineteenth century, historian Suzanne Marchand writes: "The later Wilhelmine world was characterized by enormous ambition and optimism, booming industries and bustling new urban spaces, cultural and political activism on a new scale, and the promise, if not the immediate realization, of a 'place in the sun' on the world stage." [6] The post-1885 years saw extraordinary cultural change, as German cities underwent massive growth and the "second industrial revolution" transformed the coal, iron, steel, and chemical industries. Furthermore, in these years, feminist, socialist, and Catholic political movements burgeoned while electricity, cinema, telephones, typewriters and motorcars were integrated into everyday life. [7] In Germany's metropolitan areas, unlike elsewhere in Europe, a homosexual scene was beginning to coalesce with bars, clubs, and meeting places for men as well as women. Organizations like the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee*, under Magnus Hirschfeld, and the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen* led by Adolf Brand, were forming to circulate their own understandings of same-sex desire.

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[6] David Lindenfeld and Suzanne Marchand, eds, *Germany at the Fin De Siecle: Culture, Politics, and Ideas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 1.

[7] Ibid., 3-4.

However, to some extent, Wilhemine Germany was also a place of contrasts and contradictions. According to historian Florence Tamagne:

> While urbanization, the guarantee of anonymity, and developments in medicine were leading to a greater sense of tolerance and while the beginnings of a homosexual 'scene,' even a 'community,' were seen, anti-homosexual legislation was strengthened and was used as a pretext for moral repression. [8]

By the end of the nineteenth century, there existed simultaneously in Germany a more visible homosexual community plagued by Paragraph 175, a law meant to repress it. In contrast, France (especially Paris) was characterized by an absence of repressive laws: “It already symbolized a brilliant, theatrical, sometimes blatant homosexuality that was quite disengaged from political and social concerns.” [9] Additionally, much like in other European national contexts, rapid social change threatened to undermine traditional gender roles in Germany—most notably, the concept of masculinity. As Gail Bederman defines it, masculinity is "the cultural process whereby concrete individuals are constituted as members of a preexisting social category." [10] The ideological processes of gender—how a society constructs definitions of manhood or womanhood at a certain point in time—form a complex system composed of a variety of institutions, ideas, and daily practices. Combined, these processes "produce a set of truths about who an individual is and what he or she can do,

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[8] Florence Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe: Berlin, London, Paris, 1919-1933* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004), 18.

[9] Ibid., 21.

[10] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 7.

based upon his or her body." [11] Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century in Germany, a normative ideal of masculinity had developed to which all men were supposed to conform.

A New Masculine Ideal

While the existence of an ideal of masculinity at the end of the nineteenth century was not something new, the specific characteristics that formulated that ideal in Germany were strikingly different than what came before them. In the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many of the attributes an "ideal man" in Germany was supposed to possess were influenced by the Pietistic and Evangelical revivals. [12] In general, Pietism represented a critical counterculture within German Lutheranism: "Pietists cherished the *experience* of faith; they developed a refined vocabulary to describe the extreme psychic states that attended the transition from a merely nominal to a truly heartfelt belief in redemption through reconciliation with God." [13] In regard to masculinity, Pietism demanded moderation, sexual and mental purity, and control over one's passions. As a bridegroom of Christ, a man was supposed to place "total reliance upon the strength of Christ and an admission of one's own impotence." [14] Consequently, men were supposed to partake in some form of

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[11] Ibid., 7.

[12] George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 48.

[13] Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (Harvard University Press, 2006), 125.

[14] George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 49.

submission which meant that “manhood came close to accepting so-called feminine attributes.” [15] On the other hand, in its formulation at the fin de siècle, the normative ideal of masculinity allowed men to fulfill its standards through steeling their bodies, defending their honor, and demonstrating the utmost virility. This shift from purity and moderation in the eighteenth century to domination and virility at the fin de siècle was largely an effect of economic changes that had rendered the former masculine ideal less plausible. [16] But, as with any ideal during a specific period of time, not all men at the end of the nineteenth century were able to fully embody it. Historian George Mosse explains that "the traditional outsiders [the Jew, the Gypsy, the homosexual, the asocial] were joined by those who by rights should have been part of the mainstream, otherwise respectable middle-class men who could not live up to the manly ideal because in some manner they were considered sick or unmanly." [17] Thus, while homosexuals in Germany were considered to be deviant by normative discourses, the crucial defining boundary between them and the "respectable" bourgeois male was in danger of collapsing. But, at the

[15] Ibid., 20.

[16] As historians such as Gail Bederman and George Mosse have argued, a discourse of masculinity in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries stressing self-mastery and restraint expressed and shaped middle-class identity. Therefore, the “ideal masculinity” that I am describing is largely intertwined with the values of the German middle class. This middle-class masculinity in the century or so before the fin de siècle had been created in the context of a small-scale, competitive capitalism. However, as described earlier in this essay, rapid economic change during the “second industrial revolution” greatly expanded job opportunities for men of all classes and transformed Germany’s industrial economy. Under these conditions, men of the middle class faced the real possibility that traditional sources of male power and status would be somewhat meaningless since any man could theoretically achieve the same prestige. Therefore, codes of manly self-restraint began to seem less relevant since restraint was not conducive to progress over and competition with other men.

[17] Ibid., 83.

same time, German homosexuals identified their differences from those who did not feel same-sex desire—whether they fit into the manly ideal or not—and attempted to fashion a new androgynous ideal that portrayed homosexuality as both nonnormative and positive.

The Androgynous Ideal

Like an "ideal masculinity," androgyny as an aesthetic ideal was not a novel concept in Germany at the fin de siècle. Naked, "feminine" young boys who represented beauty in its purest form were often the subject of various works of art in ancient societies. [18] While the young male nude was characteristic of the art of ancient Greece and Rome, it was a motif that was rediscovered in eighteenth-century German Classicism. For instance, Johann Winckelmann, a German art historian famous for his work entitled *History of Ancient Art*, idealized androgyny as a unity beyond sexual difference. In her monograph *Embodying Ambiguity: Androgyny and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Keller,* Catriona MacLeod demonstrates Winckelmann's identification of androgyny as a brand of beauty that goes beyond male and female and, therefore, has universal properties that transcend sexed bodies. As MacLeod explains, Winckelmann's writings on "sexually fluid sculptures take pleasure in the aesthetic and erotic effects of polymorphous bodiliness." [19] Androgyny for Winckelmann, then, was the epitome of toleration and sexual fluidity.

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[18] Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 85.

[19] Catriona MacLeod, *Embodying Ambiguity: Androgyny and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Keller* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 23.

However, as the eighteenth century progressed, a paradigmatic shift occurred in which other figures such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, Schiller, and Goethe understood androgyny as "a mythical, theoretical vehicle for the inscription of difference, acquiring iconic status as the prime cultural symbol of heterosexual union." [20] As Winckelmann's successors understood it, if an androgynous body—one that has both masculine and feminine qualities—denoted ideal beauty, then social structures that represented male-female unity were also ideal. Therefore, since androgyny represented ideal beauty through a harmonic combination of masculine and feminine, Winckelmann's successors interpreted it as representative of the union between man and woman. No longer were "masculine" and "feminine" universal properties that transcended bodies as Winckelmann had suggested; the characteristics that formed those categories were now associated with males and females. However, as the ideal of masculinity with its suggestion of a rigid division between the sexes was solidified, the view of androgyny as representative of heterosexual union was replaced. If before 1850 the androgyne "had been a symbol of fraternity and solidarity, by the end of the century it had been transformed into a symbol of vice and sexual perversity." [21] At the same time, for those considered to be of deviant sexualities, the androgynous ideal persisted. Specifically, for some German homosexuals at the fin de siècle, the

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[20] Catriona MacLeod, "The 'Third Sex' in an Age of Difference: Androgyny and Homosexuality in Winckelmann, Friedrich Schlegel, and Kleist," In *Outing Goethe and His Age,* edited by Alice Kuzniar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 195.

[21] George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 92.

androgyne "stood for boyish youth, grace, and beauty in the service of a constantly shifting sexual identity." [22] Winckelmann's interpretation of androgyny had thus come full circle. Ultimately, while facing the dominant, normative view of aesthetic androgyny as perverse, Germany's developing homosexual community at the end of the nineteenth century still voiced its own positive, nonnormative interpretation.

[22] Ibid., 92.

Chapter 3

The Normative Discourses

Law Codes

To fully understand the ideological position of German homosexuals in regard to their own identity, it is necessary to illustrate the normative discourses regarding homosexuality that labeled it as pathology. Perhaps the most significant and recognizable of these discourses, German law criminalized male-male sexual acts. In 1871 the new German Reich recast the older Prussian anti-sodomy statute as Paragraph 175 of the new Imperial Criminal Code: "Unnatural vice, whether between persons of the male sex or of humans with beasts, is to be punished by imprisonment; a sentence of loss of civil rights may also be passed." [23] Although the exact interpretation of the law was contested and eventually expanded to include "intercourse-like" sexual acts, Paragraph 175 defined same-sex acts as both deviant and criminal. Consequently, Germany's homosexual community understood the negative connotations of the law and responded to it. For instance, as a writer called Gotamo commented in an issue of *Der Eigene,* one of several magazines meant for a homosexual audience, "The first outward success that we are aiming at must be the removal of that disastrous paragraph which has crept into the

[23]Robert Beachy, "The German Invention of Homosexuality," *The Journal of Modern History* 82 (2010): 807-808.

laws of almost every state." [24] As the main goal of his career, Magnus Hirschfeld frequently condemned the law as well: "The Judiciary should as soon as possible change this Paragraph . . . and homosexual actions should be treated in the same way as those between people of the opposite sex." [25] Ultimately, the definition of homosexuality as pathology by German law constituted a major part of the normative discourse against which homosexuals defined themselves.

Health and Beauty

In addition to the legal code, discourses regarding health and beauty further stigmatized homosexuality. Turn-of-the-century popular hygienic literature presented an aesthetisized version of the ideal human body:

> Regarding beauty as the expression of healthy and normal organic functioning and ugliness as a sign of disease, they [physicians] offered gender-specific representations of the ideal: statues of Hercules and Apollo embodied the masculine ideals of beauty and strength, and statues of Venus gave form to the feminine ideal. [26]

The normative ideal of beauty in Germany was different for men and for women. While men were supposed to have muscular, broad shoulders and narrow hips, the ideal beauty of women was expressed in “their well-developed

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[24] Gotamo, *Into the Future!* (1903), in *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany: The Youth Movement, The Gay Movement, and Male Bonding Before Hitler's Rise,* ed. Harry Oosterhuis (New York: The Haworth Press, 1991), 130.

[25]Magnus Hirschfeld, *Petition to the Reichstag* (1897), in *We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics,* ed. Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan (New York: Routledge Press, 1997), 135.

[26] Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 33.

breasts, broad hips, and erect posture." [27] Characteristics of beauty for women were signs of ugliness in men, and ugliness was an unmistakable sign of disease. As F. König, a German physician in the early twentieth century, writes: "Ugly is the sick and diseased human. In the same way in which beauty bears the stamp of a perfect harmony of all physical, mental, and spiritual functions, ugliness is the expression of all disharmony and of all physical, mental, and spiritual disturbances." [28] By fashioning and supporting an androgynous ideal that stressed fluidity in regard to beauty, homosexuals were thus categorized as unhealthy or pathological. In effect, homosexuality became, at least to some physicians, an unfortunate consequence of an unhealthy life. For instance, Richard Ungewitter, a German life-reformer, equated homosexuality with the indulgences of the wealthy. Contending that wealthy Germans prioritized material goods such as expensive clothing and rich food over healthy living, Ungewitter writes: "One does not cultivate true culture of the mind but the external appearance, empty-headedness, blasé character, arrogance and narrow-mindedness." [29] He reasoned that sexual abnormalities such as homosexuality were a problem for those who rejected a healthy lifestyle—those partaking in "excess alcohol, night life, and mental over exertion." [30] Same-sex relations, then, were indicative of what was considered to be unhealthy or degrading.

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[27] Ibid., 67.

[28] F. König, *Ratgeber in gesunden und in kranken Tagen* (Leipzig: Meyer, 1910), 96.

[29] Richard Ungewitter, *Nackt: ein kritische Studie* (Verlag Richard Ungewitter: 1909), 47.

Public Scandals

Along with discourses concerning the law and health, various public scandals involving same-sex acts proved the social condemnation of homosexuality both in Germany and in Europe at large. The Eulenburg affair in Germany, for instance, was an incident in 1907 when the journalist Maximilian Harden, in his newspaper *Die Zukunft*, accused two close friends of Kaiser Wilhelm II, Prince Philipp von Eulenburg and Count Kuno von Moltke, of being homosexuals. According to historian Florence Tamagne, "the episode was indisputably political in origin: an advisor to Wilhelm II, and incidentally his best friend, Eulenburg was an anti-imperialist diplomat and favored a rapprochement with France." [31] In effect, he quickly drew upon himself the resentment of the military and of Bismarck's disciples. While Moltke was eventually asked to resign and Eulenburg to leave the diplomatic corps as the final result, the underlying motive was to discredit the Kaiser by casting suspicion on his entourage and upsetting Germany's international relations. [32] More importantly, however, the Eulenburg case did serious harm to the image of the homosexual: "The press and the general public now looked on

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[30] Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003), 48.

[31] Florence Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe: Berlin, London, Paris, 1919-1933* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004), 23.

[32] James D. Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 37.

homosexuals as traitors to the nation." [33] Once again, homosexuals were labelled as outsiders.

While public scandals in Germany had the most direct effect on its homosexual community, other incidents in Europe also helped to solidify the dominant, negative image. In England, the trial of Oscar Wilde took on considerable symbolic importance for the condemnation of same-sex activity. The facts are well-known: after having received at his club an insulting note from the Marquis de Queensberry, calling him a "sodomite," Wilde filed suit for slander. The trial opened on April 3, 1895, but quickly turned to his disadvantage when several young male prostitutes were called to testify. [34] Two further lawsuits ensued and on May 25, Wilde was sentenced to two years in prison, to the great joy of the public and press. The publicity surrounding Wilde's trials alerted a very wide audience—both in England and elsewhere—to the negative perceptions of homosexuality. For example, a writer in *The Lancet* newspaper, a popular English medical journal that was widely read throughout Europe, said of same-sex acts: "It is particularly important that such subjects are not discussed by the man in the street, much less by the young boy or the young girl." [35] Wilde's sentence, as the comment of this writer demonstrates, crystallized in the public view the image of the homosexual as a "corrupter of

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[33] Florence Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe: Berlin, London, Paris, 1919-1933* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004), 24.

[34] Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 93.

[35] Florence Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe: Berlin, London, Paris, 1919-1933* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004), 22.

youth," a source of danger and depravity. Thus, homosexuality was deviant and should be silenced. The Wilde scandal was so influential and infamous in England and abroad that the British Parliament drafted the Publication of Indecent Evidence Bill in 1896 to prohibit the publication of reports on trials relating to homosexuality. [36] Further evidence of the effects of Wilde's trials is provided in E.M. Forster's early novel of homosexual identity, *Maurice* (written in 1909 and published thereafter). The novel captures the various attempts made by Maurice Hall, the protagonist, to understand his sexual identity and to somehow reconcile that identity with society's negative view of it. After numerous discussions with other characters and several visits to a hypnotist to "cure" his deviant sexual desires, Maurice is left confused and isolated. When the protagonist looks for words to describe himself, he says, "I'm an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort." [37] Left in a tragic state, Maurice relates himself to Oscar Wilde, himself a condemned homosexual man. This serves as a reaffirmation of the negative view of homosexuality as something to be condemned and silenced. However, paradoxically, public scandals such as the Eulenburg and Wilde trials were a catalyst for a new sense of identity among homosexuals. Both cases revealed the existence of a homosexual lifestyle that was already solidly in place: while the Eulenburg affair revealed the existence of homosexuals at even the highest level of society, the Wilde trials uncovered a

[36] Ibid, 22.

[37] E. M. Forster, *Maurice* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 146.

complex network of young male prostitutes. Ultimately, those who felt same-sex attraction could look to these incidents as proof that they were not alone.

Chapter 4

The New Aesthetic

Photography

Through law codes, health concerns, and public scandals, the normative discourses that defined homosexuality as pathology were fashioned and disseminated throughout German society. As George Mosse explains of normative society, "Those who stood outside or were marginalized by society provided a countertype that reflected, as in a convex mirror, the reverse of the social norm." [38] However, paradoxically, the opposite must be true. Thus normative discourses served to unite Germany's homosexual community by presenting its countertype. Acknowledging their difference in nature, homosexuals in Germany fashioned new, positive identities for themselves. As I will now endeavor to show, images of androgyny provided a means to accomplish this and to communicate those identities to others.

As explained above in the description of Magnus Hirschfeld's *Tafel* XI, one method of creating a positive identity through androgyny was the photograph. Historian Thomas Waugh writes of homoerotic photography, "The impulse to desire, and to represent that desire, has motivated the embryonic gay cultures of the last century and a half—visual or literary, licit or illicit,

[38] George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 56.

appropriated or invented." [39] Specifically, at the fin de siècle, homoerotic photographs of androgynous bodies offered the Wilhelmine homosexual a visual language that proved the existence of another culture and connected him to it. As one of the most notable figures in Germany's homosexual community, Hirschfeld's works were crucial to the formation of this visual language. In *Geschlechts-Übergänge,* Hirschfeld provides another example of androgynous bodies aside from *Tafel* XI. With a caption that reads "Manner mit weiblichen Becken" meaning "men with female hips," *Tafel* XIX depicts two young, naked males in passive poses. While one figure stands with his hip jutting to the side, the other sits with his legs clenched together. Ultimately, both figures represent the new, androgynous ideal of Germany's homosexual community. The underlying message of *Tafel XIX's* standing figure is identical to that of *Tafel* XI: the figure is male but has stereotypically feminine characteristics such as his curvy hips and slender frame. In a similar fashion to *Tafel XI,* the standing male holds a flower (once again suggesting femininity); however, the flower points to his head rather than to his penis. While there could be several explanations for the change in position of the flower, it is interesting to note that in each photograph the signs of "femininity" are evenly spread throughout the length of the body. The semi-developed breasts of the male in *Tafel* XI are proportioned by the flower near his pelvis. Similarly, the flower near the male's head in *Tafel* XIX is matched by his curvy hips.

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[39] Thomas Waugh, *Hard to Imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from Their Beginnings to Stonewall* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 6.

Although no definite explanation can be determined, perhaps the evenly-placed signs of femininity were to balance the overall recognition of the body as male. Ultimately, the existence of both denotes androgyny. In reference to the photograph of the sitting body, the sex of the subject is much less obvious. A penis is present in the photograph, but it is hidden behind the subject's *weiblichen Becken,* an ideal characteristic of women. Additionally, the placement of the subject's hands is reminiscent of nineteenth-century female portraiture. Once again the androgynous body blurs the distinctions between what constituted the "masculine" and the "feminine."

Photography of this kind was not only present in Magnus Hirschfeld's work, however. Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden, a nobleman who travelled Europe, became a well-known photographer in homosexual social circles throughout Germany and elsewhere. As Emmanuel Cooper explains, "his major output, and clearly what he most enjoyed doing, was of sexually suggestive photographs of naked youths. [. . .] Older youths would often be posed with younger ones; body contact, though circumspect, was not avoided, and sex roles were implied by such means." [40] In a similar fashion to Hirschfeld's work in *Geschlechts-Übergänge,* von Gloeden's photograph entitled "Two Youths on a Seat" depicts two naked males of different ages holding hands. Just as in *Tafel* XI and *Tafel* XIX, the younger, "effeminate" male holds a flower. Interestingly, however, the other youth shows none of the usual signs of femininity (hips, breasts, etc) and is positioned in an active pose. While the

[40] Emmanuel Cooper, *Taormina: 20 Photographs* (London: GMP Press, 1984), 196.

androgynous ideal is communicated through the male holding the flower, the significance of the photograph lies in the presence of the "active" male next to the "passive" androgyne. This interplay of "active" and "passive" male roles generates a homoerotic aura: the younger youth is soliciting the gaze of the older youth, whose prominently exposed penis underscores the latter's virile masculinity. Von Gloeden's photograph not only evokes the classical roots of androgyny to legitimize the ideal; but, on a literal level, it depicts a rather harmonious relationship between two people of the same-sex. The presence of the androgynous male and his position in relation to the "active" male, then, communicate the existence of homosexual identity (although somewhat ambiguous) and present it as a positive.

Magazines and Literary Works

In addition to photographic images of androgyny, homosexuals in Germany wrote of their androgynous ideal in various magazines and literary works. By the end of the nineteenth century in Germany, the two major homosexual-based organizations—Magnus Hirschfeld's *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee* and Adolf Brand's *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*—had launched their respective journals, *Jahrbuch für sexual Zwischenstufen* and *Der Eigene.* In terms of ideology, the two organizations differed greatly. As a science-based theorist of sexuality, Hirschfeld contended that homosexuality was a normal genetic phenomenon in which men with "female souls" and women with "male souls" were simply miscues in the process of natural selection. Hirschfeld explained: "Everything that the woman possesses, the

man—even in such small remnants—has and traces of all masculine characteristics are at the very least existent in women." [41] Within this statement, Hirschfeld deconstructs the conventional and unquestioned polarities of "man" and "woman," thereby exposing the performative nature of gender. Adolf Brand and his followers in the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen* presented a much different view. In their articulation, society should be placed into a well-organized structure:

> [The *Gemeinschaft*] envisioned a new Nietzchean hierarchy, along an imagined, antiquitous Greek classification. Wise and muscular Aryan pederasts with their admiring boys headed [their] proposed social order, followed by grades of heterosexual men, based on physiognomy, racial purity, and intelligence, then women. [42]

Brand's view of sexual hierarchy exalted male virility but incorporated same-sex desire into the system. By participating in homosexual acts as a youth, manhood could be attained. Same-sex sexual acts represented for Brand and his followers "the great longing to merge body and soul and entirely become one with him [one's sexual partner]." [43] While the two viewpoints seem irreconcilable, the androgynous ideal is their common ground. Hirschfeld's stance is obvious: if gender is performative, androgynous bodies are a natural occurrence and their ability to exemplify sexual fluidity makes them ideal.

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[41] Magnus Hirschfeld, *Sappho und Sokrates: Wie erklart sich die Liebe der Manner und Frauen zu Personen des eigenen Geschlechts?* (1902), in *Documents of the Homosexual Rights Movement in Germany, 1836-1927*, ed. Jonathan Katz (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 26.

[42] Cited in Mel Gordon, *Voluptuous Panic: The Erotic World of Weimar Berlin* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2006), 85.

[43] Adolf Brand, *Friend-Love as a Cultural Factor: A Word to Germany's Male Youth* (1903), in *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany: The Youth Movement, The Gay Movement, and Male Bonding Before Hitler's Rise,* ed. Harry Oosterhuis (New York, The Haworth Press, 1991), 147-148.

Although members of the *Gemeinschaft* proposed a rigid sexual hierarchy, they also believed that a period of androgyny was required for all males in the early part of their lives. As a writer called Gotamo commented in an issue of *Der Eigene: "*The homosexual part of the sex drive . . . was directed above all toward youthful individuals who were to some extent related to the feminine type, and the whole Greek cultural history is the most telling proof of the splendid, moral heights to which this drive can be advanced." [44] Ultimately, both groups idealized androgyny but for different reasons: for the WhK it represented sexual fluidity and for the *Gemeinschaft* it was essential to the development of male youth.

Poetry

It was due to the efforts of both groups, then, that the androgynous ideal was circulated among Germany's homosexual community in magazines. Within this literature, poetry was an effective means of communicating the ideal. One such literary work was "The Nameless Love" by John Henry MacKay, a member of the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen.* Using the pseudonym Sagitta, MacKay speaks of the once popular androgynous body and of homosexuality in general: "Yet since you think it a dirty thing / Have dragged it through fear and infamy / And kept in the dark under lock and key-- / This love will I freely sing." [45] While MacKay recognizes the nonnormativity of the

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[44] Gotamo, *Into the Future* (1903), in *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany: The Youth Movement, The Gay Movement, and Male Bonding Before Hitler's Rise,* ed. Harry Oosterhuis (New York, The Haworth Press, 1991), 132.

androgynous ideal in which he advocates, he still dedicates himself to that ideal because of the identity that he has fashioned around it. He emphasizes this point as he writes, "To love's persecuted my song I bring / And to the outcasts of our time / Since happy or not this love is mine-- / This love dare I loudly sing." [46] Ultimately, MacKay's recognition of the androgynous ideal as both deviant and positive provided fertile ground for others who felt same-sex attraction to identify themselves in the same manner and, as a result, to fashion a sexual identity.

Articles

Much like MacKay's poetry, other writers in Germany's homosexual organizations chose to present androgyny through short articles. In his work "A Word in Advance to the Better Ones," an author named Caesaréon writes of the need to defend androgyny as the sole form of beauty. Connecting the idealization of androgyny to its Greek origins, Caesaréon asserts, "We, who delight in beauty, must first seize its banner before the sun of civilization will reach its zenith." [47] Recognizing the connection of his aestheticism to that of the Greeks, Caesaréon believes that his society cannot progress without acknowledging it. While MacKay speaks positively of the identity in which he has fashioned, Caesaréon takes one step further—he proclaims the supremacy

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[45] John Henry MacKay, *The Nameless Love* (1906), in *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany: The Youth Movement, The Gay Movement, and Male Bonding Before Hitler's Rise,* ed. Harry Oosterhuis (New York, The Haworth Press, 1991), xvii.

[46] Ibid., xvii.

[47] Caesaréon, *A Word in Advance to the Better Ones* (1903), in *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany: The Youth Movement, The Gay Movement, and Male Bonding Before Hitler's Rise,* ed. Harry Oosterhuis (New York, The Haworth Press, 1991), 93.

of homosexual identity over all others: "We are the better ones; do you know it? We are those who love only beauty, only love for beauty's sake." [48] In Caesaréon's formulation, those like him whose identity is formulated with same-sex desire at its core are "better" because of their love of beauty—the androgynous ideal of beauty. That is not to say, however, that *all* homosexuals were androgynous. But the assumption (one that Caesaréon makes himself) is that all homosexuals had the potential to recognize the beauty of androgyny and to idealize it.

Another writer that emphasizes the positive nature of homosexuality through androgyny is Edwin Bab. In his article "Die Gleichgeschlechtliche Liebe (Lieblingminne): Ein Wort über ihr Wesen und ihre Bedeutung" [Same-Sex Love, or *Lieblingminne*: A Word on Its Essence and Its Significance], Bab recognizes the normative position of same-sex love as pathology. He contends that homosexuality was "held to be a crime, like a robbery and murder; then they made it a vice, like alcoholism and addiction to morphine; later it became a symptom of mental illness dangerous to the community; finally the act of deformed people." [49] But, more importantly, Bab (like MacKay and Caesaréon) presents it in a positive light. He claims that same-sex love is "the expression of a self-evident, natural drive, dwelling in all people . . . I have dared something further: [to bring it] out into fresh, thriving nature and into strong,

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[48] Ibid., 93.

[49] Edwin Bab, *Die Gleichgeschlechtliche Liebe (Lieblingminne): Ein Wort ihr Wesen und ihre Bedeutung* (1903), in *Documents of the Homosexual Rights Movement in Germany, 1836-1927*, ed. Jonathan Katz (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 66.

pulsing, flourishing life." [50] Once again, the author recognizes the deviance of his identity in comparison to normative sexuality while simultaneously defining it as positive. Bab's inclusion of androgyny comes in his discussion of sexual feelings toward another person. He writes: "Allegedly a man can only have sexual feelings for a woman, and a woman for a man. Yet this difference too appears to me not to hold water." [51] As Bab explains, it is possible (and even encouraged) to love a person of the same-sex. More importantly, however, Bab includes androgynous bodies in this category, "men with fully developed breasts" and "bearded women." [52] These bodily features "are characteristic of one sex without making up the essence of that sex . . . in contrast to primary [characteristics], which determine the sex itself, such as testicles and ovaries." [53] Much like the photographs included in Hirschfeld and Von Gloeden's works, Bab describes bodies that are determinably one sex (due to their genitals) but have characteristics of the other sex. Furthermore, he contends that they can and should be loved.

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[50]Ibid., 66.

[51] Ibid., 55.

[52] Ibid., 54.

[53] Ibid., 54.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

A Reverse Effect

Through images of androgyny as represented in photography, poetry, and short literary works, homosexuals in Germany at the fin de siècle fashioned a new aesthetic which contributed to the formation of a nonnormative sexual identity that they interpreted as positive. While this identity was formulated by a vast conglomeration of discourses and ideologies, aesthetic androgyny was a crucial part of that complex process. Although normative discourses regarding homosexuality (including law codes, health concerns, and public scandals) presented it as pathological, homosexuals themselves utilized an ideal of androgyny that was rooted in the traditions of ancient Greece and German classicism to combat those discourses, thereby creating their own. While photographs of androgynous bodies gave visual form to this aesthetic ideal, poems and other literary works provided the rhetorical substance to support it. Ultimately, as Thomas Waugh contends, "using the idiom of a dream and feeling rather than logic, the homoerotic photographers made an all the more important contribution to defining and affirming the emerging condition of homosexuality." [54] Additionally, the poems and articles about androgyny included in homosexual magazines further buttressed that condition. Germany's homosexuals, therefore, could look to these works,

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[54] Thomas Waugh, *Hard to Imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from Their Beginnings to Stonewall* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 27.

identify the presence of androgyny, interpret it as an alternate ideal, and form an identity based on the sexual desires common to those in their nascent community.

Paradoxically, however, images of androgyny and the homosexual identity they helped to shape had far greater influence than on homosexuals themselves. As historian George Chauncey asserts of the developing gay world in New York, "the relationship between the gay subculture and the dominant culture was neither static nor passive: they did not merely coexist but constantly created and re-created themselves in relation to each other in a dynamic, interactive, and contested process." [55] Therefore, according to Chauncey, not only did the homosexuals of the gay subculture define themselves by their difference from the dominant culture, but those of normative sexuality in the dominant culture defined themselves by their difference from the gay subculture. Ultimately, those in the latter group "constituted themselves as 'normal' only by eschewing anything that might mark them as 'queer.'" [56] The same is true in the German context. By identifying and rejecting the various signifiers of homosexuality (i.e. feminine characteristics on a male body), those of normative sexuality solidified their own sexual identities. Therefore, the effects of the androgynous ideal worked both ways.

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[55] George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 25.

[56] Ibid., 25.

What Comes Next

The cultural significance of androgyny at the fin de siècle, then, was its transformative power in fashioning and shaping sexual identities. However, with the advent of the First World War, androgyny as an aesthetic ideal would no longer be of great influence. The war led to "a misogynist, militarist tendency expressed in antidemocratic movements and an apology for virile violence." [57] In effect, during the period of the war, little room was left for minorities and all forms of deviation were rendered suspect. That does not mean, however, that these minorities disappeared. Increasing intolerance of sexual minorities during the First World War simply made their presence less visible. During the Weimar period, these sexual minorities (along with many other types of minorities) were overwhelmingly visible once again and a liberalization of the public sphere allowed them to flourish for a time. On the other hand, in the context of the First World War, ambiguity was born from confusion around the concept of homoeroticism, itself partially a consequence of the war. It could be associated with camaraderie, heroism, male beauty—and therefore with virility; just as it could be condemned as traitorous, impotent, and thus female. Ultimately, while the androgynous body was the focus at the fin de siècle, the homoerotic—a term that could apply to even the most "masculine" of men—became the emphasis during the First World War. This shift, like those before it, would once again change the fluid boundaries of sexual identity.

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[57] Florence Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe: Berlin, London, Paris, 1919-1933* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004), 26.

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