

GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND BELONGING: FEMALE HOMOSEXUALITY IN GERMANY, 1890-1933

Marti M. Lybeck

2008 FRITZ STERN DISSERTATION PRIZE WINNER
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN LA CROSSE

I would like to begin this essay on my dissertation research with some reflections on the questions that motivated and shaped it. At its most basic level, my question was: How does social and political change happen? The central topic I investigated, women's emancipation, is one of the profound long-term changes in modern history. We know a lot about the events and organizations that were important to this transformation, and quite a bit about how abstract processes—such as modernization, capitalist economic development, and political liberalization—affected it. But in the end, people have to agree to live their lives differently and to make new choices. Economic structures, state actions, and advocacy organizations were, of course, crucial shaping factors in the emergence of New Women in the late nineteenth century, but they only give us context. They do not really explain how women became new.

My focus point in trying to penetrate emancipation is sexuality. One of the key terms in my analysis of women's changing sense of themselves is desire. Desire is clearly one of the things we think about when we think of sex, but desire—desire for something different—is also central to any project of emancipation. Desire also describes what I was about in pursuing this research. I wanted to get below the surface of feminist organizations and the spectacular images associated with New Women and into what was happening in the consciousness and psyche of individuals that prompted them to create new self-definitions and new ways of imagining how their stories fit into the larger social and political stories of their time. I wanted to understand the processes and influential factors that gave shape to their choices and sympathies. I wanted a much more troubled view of how people struggle with re-making and re-defining themselves as they live out the relationships and activities of everyday life. I wanted to know how sexuality—pleasure, love, and desire—intersected with emancipation. I wanted to figure out how national identity and political commitments might be affected by changes in gender and sexuality on the very intimate level that encompasses feelings and dreams. And I wanted to connect all of

this to the pressures and fractures of German history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In satisfying my intellectual and historical desires, I was transgressing one of the crucial rules that most of my historical subjects lived by. Most women I investigated could not simply claim emancipation as what they wanted. Articulating desires for things like freedom, ambition, power, a more enjoyable life—even in the name of justice—was taboo. They needed elaborate self-denying justifications to support their claims. As they negotiated this paradox, middle-class women produced texts in which their forbidden desires confronted the ideals they assimilated from their education and culture. Much of my dissertation was built on reading these texts carefully to get beyond the assumption that women naturally fought for liberation because they wanted to free their “real selves” from the oppression enforced on them by sexist social norms.

Narrowing the focus even further to homosexuality was uniquely possible in the German context. The German homosexual movement had long roots among men in the second half of the nineteenth century and was then the most organized and publicly visible in the world.¹ When women occupied their own specific corner of the developing homosexual public sphere in the late 1920s and early 1930s, they left a historical record that gave me an intriguing entry point for my inquiry. Women active in the German homosexual movement wrote articles, stories, autobiographical fragments, poetry, and letters to and for newspapers published for their community.² But telling the story of that one new public group, as important as it is, did not fully resolve my questions. By taking female homosexuality as a category—and a new one in public awareness—I could move out into discussions and representations of the intersection of gender and sexuality in many other contexts.

Wherever female homosexuality became an issue, it generated anxiety, conflict, and struggle, and therefore source material documenting changes in conceptions and experiences of gender and sexuality. Following the history of the concept allowed me to set up comparisons and trajectories of change over time. I could productively bring in historical subjects who struggled with these issues even though they did not think of themselves as homosexual.³ When medical experts defined the category of female homosexuality at the end of the nineteenth century, they more frequently used the

1 See James Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany* (New York, 1975); and Harry Oosterhuis, “Homosexual Emancipation in Germany Before 1933: Two Traditions,” 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, 1991), 1-27.

2 The major periodicals are *Die Freundin* (1924, 1927-1933), *Frauenliebe* (1926-1930), and *Garçonne* (1930-1932). All are available on microfilm. Descriptions of the content can be found in Katharina Vogel, “Zum Selbstverständnis lesbischer Frauen in der Weimarer Republik: Eine Analyse der Zeitschrift *Die Freundin* 1924-1933,” 162-68, and Petra Schlierkamp, “Die Garçonne,” 169-179, both in *Eldorado: Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin, 1850-1950: Geschichte, Alltag, Kultur*, ed. Berlin Museum (Berlin, 1984).

3 Similar approaches to the intersection of gender and sexuality for groups of women in this period are exemplified in Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago, 1985) (on Great Britain); and Margit Göttert, *Macht und Eros: Frauenbeziehungen und weibliche Kultur um 1900: Eine neue Perspektive auf Helene Lange und Gertrud Bäumer* (Königstein/Taunus, 2000) (on the German women’s movement).

term “invert.” Concepts of inversion prioritized gender over sexuality. Same-sex desire was understood as being caused by abnormal gender character—a masculine woman desired women because of her essential masculinity. Medical experts and other intellectuals who used the new categories in thinking about social relations in the late nineteenth century invariably conflated what they diagnosed as female masculinity with feminist claims on masculine spheres.⁴ In consequence of these uncertain and overlapping boundaries between sexual desire, gender performance, and aspirations for emancipation, discourse and contention over sexual categories always intimately involved gender and same-sex relations as well. These four elements—sexual desire, gender performance, feminist aspirations, and same-sex love—were exactly the facets of emancipation that I wanted to examine. They formed a conceptual quartet that shaped the analysis of texts and group dynamics.

As I discovered clusters of sources that fit these parameters, I found that I had four case studies of groups of women clearly wrestling with emancipation from traditional female roles and expectations. Two of them coalesced in the decades before the turn of the century and two during the Weimar Republic. This chronology is unsurprising since the New Woman was a figure much commented upon in both periods. In both periods sexuality as a theme proliferated as a point of experimentation and commentary in the sciences, the arts, and among avant-gardes.⁵ My micro-historical methodology involved careful reconstruction of the social context within which each group lived, of some of the texture of its everyday life, and of the conflicts as well as the attractions and affections among the individuals within it.

I.

The first case study was formed out of the stories of a small but growing stream of German women from well-off families who migrated temporarily to Switzerland in order to take university degrees beginning in the 1870s. German universities did not grant degrees to women before the first decade of the twentieth century, although many women did study with individual professors. Access to higher education was one of the earliest and strongest issues fought for by the feminist movement in that period. Living independently in Switzerland and taking on the identity of a student were regarded as scandalous in the press and among the

4 The classic analysis of inversion as it related to female homosexual identities is Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “Discourses of Sexuality and Subjectivity: The New Woman 1870-1936,” in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. (New York, 1989), 264-280. See also Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Homosexual Identity* (Chicago, 2000).

5 Two works I have found particularly helpful for my contexts are Peter Jelavich, *Munich and Theatrical Modernism: Politics, Playwriting, and Performance, 1890-1914* (Cambridge, MA, 1985), and Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and the “New Objectivity”* (New York, 2001).

bourgeois social circles from which the students came. The image of the student, stereotyped as masculine and asexual, became the object of public censure and ridicule. Like most pioneers, women university students also had to contend with the resistance of many of their male colleagues.⁶

The intensity of their student days induced many to write memoirs or novelizations of their experiences. In one case, collected letters and diary entries from the period were published as a memorial.⁷ Most were financially dependent on relatives and had to manage precarious family support carefully. But in their memories, at least, the exhilaration of new mental and physical freedom and intellectual stimulation outweighed the obstacles and barriers, and the intensity of sharing these experiences heightened their relationships with one another. A number of the women who were students in this pioneer period, including Anita Augspurg, Käthe Schirmacher, Franziska Tiburtius, and Joanna Elberskirchen, also appear in histories of female homosexuality because they lived in female couple relationships throughout their lives in addition to being active and outspoken feminists.⁸ Careful reading and analysis of these narratives reversed many of my assumptions about the role of the university circle of friends as a site where homosexual identity might have begun to take shape.

First of all, women sought out university study because they already had feminist aspirations, close relationships with other women, and a strong drive to be active in public life. Although their friendships were intense and lifelong, in the university setting they did not form romantic couples. The fragile position from which they sought to claim autonomy and intellectual authority meant that any kind of absorbing love relationship was threatening to those goals. Instead they formed flexible networks that gave priority to comradeship and support, but that also involved occasional flirtations or fantasies. Gender performance was also strategic. Appropriating masculine signs was a strategy of signaling unwillingness to enter into traditional relations with men—relations which they could not separate from the norms of subordination and reproductive roles. But when more could be gained from conforming to conventional femininity, they adapted their personal styles. The radical aspect of their feminism lay in imagining and acting out genderless subject positions and non-sexualized sociability as a model basis for a new kind of social relations.

6 A very thorough analysis of the contradictions faced by women students is found in Patricia Mazón, *Gender and the Modern Research University: The Admission of Women to German Higher Education, 1865-1914* (Stanford, 2003).

7 The main titles are Ella Mensch, *Auf Vorposten: Roman aus meiner Züricher Studentenzeit* (Leipzig, 1903); Ricarda Huch, *Frühling in der Schweiz: Jugenderinnerungen* (Zurich, 1938); Käthe Schirmacher, *Züricher Studentinnen* (Leipzig, 1896); Käthe Schirmacher, *Die Libertad: Novelle* (Zurich, 1891); Franziska Tiburtius, *Erinnerungen einer Achtzigjährigen* (Berlin, 1929); and Marie Baum, Ricarda Huch, Ludwig Curtius, and Anton Erkelenz, eds., *Frieda Duenning: Ein Buch der Erinnerung* (Berlin, 1926).

8 See Mecki Pieper, "Die Frauenbewegung und ihre Bedeutung für lesbische Frauen (1850-1920)," in *El dorado*, 116-124; and Ilse Kokula, *Weibliche Homosexualität um 1900 in zeitgenössischen Dokumenten* (Munich, 1981).

II.

Slightly later, in the mid-1890s, a heterogeneous group of feminists and emancipated women came into contact with each other within the overlapping circles of Bohemians and intellectuals that characterized Munich in that era. For this network, there are relatively few direct sources.⁹ Instead I use a set of fictional texts that appear to draw on the personal styles as well as the issues of emancipation that were evoked by the authors' observations of New Women.¹⁰ The central figure in my analysis is Sophia Goudstikker, photographer and feminist activist. Goudstikker moved to Munich together with her then-partner Anita Augspurg as a deliberate act of self-emancipation. Goudstikker became notorious in Munich for her freewheeling appropriation of the trappings of masculinity as a provocative challenge to gender norms. While Goudstikker appears to combine all the markers that mean lesbian—masculine affect, female partners, feminism—it is clear in reading the representations of her that contemporaries diagnosed her as asexual or misguided rather than as a type with a label such as “invert” or “homosexual.”

Goudstikker's performance of masculinity as captured in these representations took place within a milieu that was intensively engaged in rethinking sexuality. This opened a space where all kinds of alternatives were in play. I read Goudstikker's masculinity as a critical mimicry. One of its features was enactment of a “lady's man” role in interacting with other women. This exaggerated flattery and solicitude was a critique of men's conventional approaches to women, but it also embedded a claim to sexual autonomy. The texts she seems to have inspired wrestled with how heterosexual reproduction, the family, and

⁹ A thorough description of Goudstikker and the Munich milieu is found in Rudolf Herz and Brigitte Bruns, eds, *Hof-Atelier Elvira, 1887-1928: Ästhetien, Emanzen, Aristokraten* (Munich, 1985).

¹⁰ The three main texts are Lou Andreas-Salomé, “Mädchenreigen,” in *Werde die du bist! Zwischen Anpassung und Selbstbestimmung: Texte deutschsprachiger Schriftstellerinnen des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Gisela Henckmann (Munich, 1993), 331-332; Frieda von Bülow, “Laß mich nun vergessen!”



Sophia Goudstikker with Anita Augspurg and other German women's rights activists at an international women's conference. From left to right: Augspurg, Marie Stritt, Lily Braun, Minna Cauer, and Goudstikker. Photograph circa 1901. Credit: The Granger Collection, New York.

in *Die schönsten Novellen der Frieda von Bülow über Lou Andreas-Salomé und andere Frauen*, ed. Sabine Streiter (Frankfurt, 1990), 69-142; and Ernst von Wolzogen, *Das dritte Geschlecht* (Berlin, 1901).

11 Aimée Duc, [pseud. Minna Wettstein-Adelt], *Sind es Frauen? Roman über das dritte Geschlecht* (Berlin, 1976).

12 Bülow, "Laß mich nun vergessen!" 84.

13 Magnus Hirschfeld was the leader of the movement to repeal article 175 of the penal code, a sexologist who theorized about homosexuality and headed an institute for sexual research, and the author of numerous works explaining homosexuality and other sexual behaviors to a popular audience. See his *Was soll das Volk vom dritten Geschlecht wissen? Eine Aufklärungsschrift über gleichgeschlechtliche (homosexuell) empfindende Menschen* (Leipzig, 1901) and *Berlins drittes Geschlecht* (Berlin 1905). For a brief introduction to Hirschfeld's theories, see James Steakley, "Per Scientiam ad Justitiam: Magnus Hirschfeld and the Sexual Politics of Innate Homosexuality," in *Science and Homosexualities*, ed. Vernon Rosario (New York, 1997), 131-54.

14 For the scandals involving the Kaiser's circle, see James Steakley, "Iconography of a Scandal: Political Cartoons and the Eulenberg Affair in Wilhelmine Germany," in *Hidden From History*, 233-57.

erotic love could incorporate women's independence. The chapter also pays attention to the difficulties women in this period encountered in thinking of themselves as autonomous sexual subjects, much less in thinking of the erotic as a factor that could define personal identity. Goudstikker's masculinity marks out a transitional stage of asserting female sexuality. Other nontraditional women asserted themselves sexually in other ways; together these experiments in sexual subjectivity were a crucial precursor to the emergence of homosexual identity in the following decade.

A 1901 novel about female students was titled *Are These Women?*¹¹ The Goudstikker-like character in one of the novels says, "If only there were such a thing as a normal woman!"¹² These symptoms make clear the destabilization of Victorian ideals of womanhood at the end of the century. The common thread that runs through both of the pre-twentieth-century case studies is a complete reconsideration of received gender roles going on in multiple locations. For women, considering new self-definitions meant confrontation with expert (male) voices authoritatively claiming to know what a woman was. New roles and aspirations for women could not be harmonized with the existing concepts of sexual desire and love. One of the most intense and intimate issues for feminists, as well as for medical experts, artists, and intellectuals, was defining how sex, reproduction, and love could function if the femininity that anchored them was no longer operative.

Before 1900, neither women in all-women's social groups nor the public generally yet recognized female homosexuality as a category. After the turn of the century, a number of texts appeared that described or made reference to the stereotyped female homosexual in explicit terms. In the German context, debates over reform of the law that criminalized homosexual contact between men and the character of Countess Geschwitz in Frank Wedekind's *Lulu* plays were two important controversies that brought discussion of homosexuality into broader public awareness. Magnus Hirschfeld and other sexologists published books and pamphlets meant to inform the public about alternative sexual orientations.¹³ *Große Glocke*, a Berlin weekly, built on the scandals about male homosexuality among German elites by exposing the existence of neighborhoods, clubs, and bars where homosexual women gathered.¹⁴

to make their claims for inclusion in the nation, while denouncing those who hurt the reputation of homosexuals by acting out their desires. But conservative policing of behavior was not limited to the speeches and political appeals, which may have had limited resonance with ordinary members. Attention to the short stories and the novellas published in the periodicals reveals the representations of love, sex, community, and values with which readers identified more closely.

Most of the narratives were shaped according to the elements of the popular love story genre. The lonely protagonist is rescued by finding her true love. In many stories, the plot develops from another standard device: the dilemma of the protagonist's choice between two potential lovers—one identified with desire and erotic satisfaction (and the spaces of erotic exchange that proliferated in Weimar Berlin), the other with spiritual love and the stable couple (and the establishment of a respectable home). This melodramatic choice externalized the conflicts between love and desire that continued to trouble women's self-conceptions, even in sexually frank Weimar and even among women who identified themselves with a sexual preference. Needless to say, the heroine inevitably chose the partner with whom she could share her denial of sexual desire. But the respectable couple, or the female subject who aspired to be in one, needed compensation for the erotic temptations that it renounced. An ideology of "holy love," spoken of using excessively religious language and imagery, eroticized the act of renunciation itself. The idiom of sacrifice and spirit mobilized in this ideology meshed seamlessly with romantic nationalism and German idealism. Two factors reveal that the hegemonic values of respectability may not have been quite as secure as they seemed. First, the very obsessive quality of drawing the boundaries between acceptable and rejected kinds of same-sex behavior indicates that the more transgressive pursuit of pleasure and desire remained an ever-present irritation. Secondly, although the stories find narrative closure in rewarding love and sacrifice, on the way to getting there, they communicate the excitement of erotic exchange and passion.

IV.

Another kind of sacrifice and duty connected to the nation motivated a second set of Weimar women. Women who worked as social workers, teachers, nurses, and policewomen were able to enter the

¹⁶ I analyze these overlapping groups as emergent alternative public spheres using the concept as described historically in Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Boston, 1989); and Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14 (2002): 49-90.

civil service under the terms of Weimar citizenship. They defined their professional ambitions as particularly gendered service to the nation. Most of them worked in female-dominated spheres that were nevertheless responsible to higher male bureaucrats. My engagement with women in the workplace comes through accusations of homosexuality that emerged in workplace conflicts and entered the historical record through disciplinary cases.¹⁷ The core of each case was conflict within workgroups that had fractured into enemy camps caught in a cycle of sabotage, harassment, and revenge. In their depositions, the working women describe their relationships with one another, as well as the pressures women faced in moving into unaccustomed roles and in adapting to the expectations of competitive and politicized workplaces. Family members and friends outside the workplace were also invited to assess their sisters' or friends' personality and relationships. Medical experts were consulted to diagnose the psychological and sexual character of the women accused. The sources thus provide a snapshot of knowledge and ideas about homosexuality in the medical profession and in the broader general population.

Through close reading of the circulation of rumor and accusation from the archival evidence, it is possible to reconstruct the strategic use of sexual language in circuits of power. Through innuendo and scandal, interpretation and investigation, repressed knowledge became a site for “spirals of power and pleasure” that, not incidentally, also generated considerable shame and psychic pain.¹⁸ In each case, juridical authority succeeded in removing the woman blamed for the irritating habit of making same-sex desire visible. But to situate this outcome as the story of (gendered) power would be to miss the power of talk about sex and the participation in these circuits of power by women who were supposed to be officially “pure.” In each case, the accused woman generated an escalating series of grievance statements demanding that the state recognize her injured innocence. In hyperbolic language, they created a mirror exposing the gaps between the civil service’s legitimating rhetoric of service and the competitive reality of the workplace.

Although their grievances decried the politicization of the bureaucracy as corrupt, the accused women also felt it necessary to align themselves with a party that could protect them and defend their honor. The *Lyzeum* teacher Anna Philipps exemplifies the reaction of a civil servant who smarted under the shame of disgrace and

17 In addition to the Philipps case manuscript cited in note 19, this chapter examines two archival cases. The Atteln case involved a nurse working in Frankfurt. Institut für Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt, Personalakten 52.667. The Erkens case involved the entire city government and was widely reported on in the German press. Erkens was head of the Female Police in Hamburg. Staatsarchiv Hamburg, Disziplinärkammer, D 8/32, Bd. 1-17; Polizeibehörde, No. 314, 338; Polizei Personalakten, No. 316.1, 316.2. The case was also the subject of Ursula Nienhaus, *Nicht für eine Führungsposition geeignet: Josefine Erkens und die Anfänge weiblicher Polizei in Deutschland, 1923-1933* (Münster, 1999).

18 The analysis of discourse as power and of the relations within the groups as an instance of capillary power draws on Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1990), 92-102, quote on 45.

took her case eventually to the National Socialists. In the early years following World War I, she had seen the film “Anders als die Anderen” and read some of Magnus Hirschfeld’s work. The knowledge of homosexuality she acquired caused her to question whether she might be homosexual herself. At this stage, she occupied the new space of republican openness with adventurous curiosity and openness to its possibilities. When she began to discuss the issue with her coworkers, they clearly recognized the danger of giving a sexual and perverse definition to their relationships and distanced themselves from her. As the case escalated, she took her demands for rehabilitation up the chain from the local school authorities to the Prussian minister responsible for education. By the time she had her own case file with commentary printed in 1931, she implicated the entire Weimar system: “The longer the fight for the rehabilitation of my professional honor lasts, the clearer the position of the government in this question becomes. Teachers who are prostitutes and homosexuals can do what they like—they are protected. Respectable teachers are allowed to be slandered by these people ... That is the new Germany!”¹⁹ As the case became public, she rewrote her narrative to turn herself into a figure of righteous opposition to official corruption. The desires she had acknowledged earlier were extruded onto a fantasized conspiracy of dark power ranged against her.

Philipps was just one of a steady stream of women appearing in my research who combined exploration of the sexual aspects of emancipation with nationalist and authoritarian ideologies. This seeming contradiction is often left unexplored as an embarrassing coincidence for histories of either sexuality or politics. Striving for emancipation among both generations of women meant envisioning how they might use new opportunities to contribute to national unity, strength, and progress. When their aspirations were thwarted—by lack of space for women, by the compromises required in a political environment, by the unwillingness of “others” to accept their vision of national unity, by internal group conflict, or by their own miscalculation—the vision of the strong nation remained as the site where the kind of meaningful emancipation they sought could best be realized. By the end of Weimar, the existing state had lost its potential to fulfill their hopes, even though it had considerably expanded their life chances. The congruence in promises of renewal shared by feminism and nationalism provides one way of understanding the combination that seems so contradictory.

¹⁹ Anna Philipps, *Um Ehre und Recht: Mein Kampf gegen das Provinzial-Schulkollegium Hannover und das Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Volksbildung*, unpublished manuscript (Neuminster, 1931?), 12.

What was at stake in these everyday lives was finding a way to reconcile the temptations of emancipation and modernity with committed visions of the self as a contributing member of the nation. Examining marginal groups where sexuality became a hot-button issue provides a way of placing pleasure and desire within this framework. In the increasingly sexualized atmosphere of Weimar popular culture, these tensions became acute factors in self-fashioning and identity construction. Although the two groups of Weimar women that I have studied claimed very different gender identities, both sought the center from their marginal positions. For them, emancipation and modernization were strongly shaped by their adoption of the ideals of the *Bildungsbürger* culture in which they had been educated.²⁰ Even though many of them likely did not come from the *Bildungsbürgertum*, they had absorbed its emphasis on self-cultivation, ethical responsibility, spiritual orientation, and a belief in reconciliation for the good of the whole. Even among homosexuals, sacrifice and denial of desire were crucial to a vision of themselves as elites who could contribute to German culture. The emancipated subject that women of all groups strove to become was infused with these qualities. Active participation in the nation and the public sphere required constant assertion of desirelessness or a uniquely masculine ability to control one's desires and channel them responsibly. In either case, part of defining the self as competent for national citizenship entailed insistence on reinforcing boundaries against those "other" women who simply gave themselves up to unruly and selfish desire.

V.

In focusing on the effects of the rapid course of German modernization on women who occupied marginal positions within German society generally, my findings move historical questions onto new terrain in three different scholarly domains. For gender history, as we have seen, women's emancipation did not simply mean the liberation of the individual from constraint, and it did not necessarily mean criticism of the ruling ideology. Scholarship that locates emancipation either with feminist activists or with transgressive flappers and vamps tends to take oppositional stances as a given. My focus on individuals and small social groups recovers the dynamic interaction between feminist ideas and emancipatory desires, on the one hand, and life circumstances that required justification and stabilizing references to received images and ideals, on the other. Despite the

²⁰ See Laura Tate, "The Culture of Literary *Bildung* in the Bourgeois Women's Movement in Imperial Germany," *German Studies Review* 24 (2001): 267-281, esp. 268-272.

vast differences between the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras, there are clear continuities between the generations. The gender emancipation that many women at the end of the nineteenth century sought through education was diffused more widely, in the Weimar years, to the middle levels of the population through greater access to girls' higher schools where teachers saw their mission as inculcating the values and ideals of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Female masculinity was a feminist strategy in both eras, but its meanings were quite different. For the early new women, appropriating a masculine affect was a strategy forcing observers to rethink femininity and heterosexuality. In the twenties, it functioned as an ambiguous sign of homosexuality, but it also took on additional political weight as homosexual women aligned their masculinity with models of the political subject and with discourses that bemoaned Weimar's masculine deficit.

In chapters that frame the case studies, the dissertation traces the history of public confrontations with the concept of female homosexuality in the Reichstag, among censorship authorities, in the arts, and in scandal journalism. In combination with the case studies, this research supports a history of the emergence of female homosexuality as a concept and as an identity in Germany. A close focus on micro-historical contexts makes clear that ideas about sexuality and sexual identity were in flux in both periods. In the late nineteenth century, women in a position to do so experimented with relationships, attractions, personae, and the possibilities for desire without linking such experiments to fixed categories. In the Twenties, they acted as if the category was stable, but their debates and struggles show that no single subcultural pattern ruled the intersection of gender and desire. They published and discussed the work of medical experts as well as the many cultural theorists of homosexuality who had emerged from the men's homosexual movement. Writers did not abjectly or passively accept definitions of homosexuality as pathology. Instead they selectively appropriated theory for their own purposes of identity building. Some were sure the couple consisted of a masculine woman and a feminine partner. Others celebrated attraction based on similarity and shared struggles. Most combined the two as it suited their purposes. The close connections between emancipation as women and sexual emancipation meant that female homosexuality in this period was something quite different from male homosexuality, although the movement placed the two groups in unequal proximity.

The focus on the interaction of sexuality with political subjectivity and some of the concerns of conservative nationalism exemplified by Anna Philipps suggests that there is more to the politics of sexuality than state regulation and the programs of movements for emancipation. In our thinking about Weimar and its demise, we might therefore give more emphasis to the internal conflicts generated for ordinary people in their confrontation with particular aspects of change. Even those who had undeniably progressive and modern goals could combine these with references to the past and with the vilification and exclusion of others who represented the troublesome aspects of their own temptations and desires. The eventual resort to the Nazi Party, even by women active in the homosexual movement, may be symptomatic of the acceptance of fascism by Germans more generally.

Using a micro-historical method of examining the processes of modernization in small groups brings the everyday struggles of women's changing lives into focus. Attention to all of the conflict, shame, jealousy, and resentment as well as the aspirations, ideals, and triumphs that shape personal change makes clear how these ultimately accumulate as social and political change. In the context of messy lives, change is unexpectedly promiscuous in its alliance with past and future, progress and reaction, liberation and repression, inclusion and exclusion.

Marti Lybeck is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin La Crosse. She is working on a book project based on her research on gender and female homosexuality in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany.