



Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis (German and European Studies)

By Laurie Marhoefer

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Liberated, licentious, or merely liberal, the sexual freedoms of Germany's Weimar Republic have become legendary. The home of the world's first gay rights movement, the republic embodied a progressive, secular vision of sexual liberation. Immortalized – however misleadingly – in Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* and the musical *Cabaret*, Weimar's freedoms have become a touchstone for the politics of sexual emancipation.

Yet, as Laurie Marhoefer shows in *Sex and Weimar Republic*, those sexual freedoms were only obtained at the expense of a minority who were deemed sexually disordered. In Weimar Germany, the citizen's right to sexual freedom came with a duty to keep sexuality private, non-commercial, and respectable.

Sex and the Weimar Republic examines the rise of sexual tolerance through the debates which surrounded “immoral” sexuality: obscenity, male homosexuality, lesbianism, transgender identity, heterosexual promiscuity, and prostitution. It follows the sexual politics of a swath of Weimar society ranging from sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld to Nazi stormtrooper Ernst Röhm. Tracing the connections between toleration and regulation, Marhoefer's observations remain relevant to the politics of sexuality today.

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Editorial Review

Review

‘This is a clear, beautifully written, and – unlike many North American books on German history – superbly edited book (German phrases, concepts, and names are error-free)...This valuable contribution should put to rest the long-lasting thesis that sexuality was responsible for the decadence of the first German republic.’

(Norman Domeier *H-Soz-Kult* April 2016)

‘In her highly original and wide-ranging study, Laurie Marhoefer makes a number of provocative and persuasive arguments regarding the character and significance of sexual politics in the Weimar Republic.... A multifaceted and analytically rigorous contribution.’

(Kirsten Leng *German History*, vol 34:03:2016)

‘In her excellent book, Marhoefer has certainly succeeded in drawing attention to what she calls the "complexity and ugliness" of homosexual emancipation. At the same time, she ends up reproducing a dynamic common in the field of gay, lesbian, and queer history.’

(Craig Griffiths *H-Histsex* November 2016)

"Laurie Marhoefer has written an important book that will be of interest not only to those who work on twentieth-century Germany and on the history of sexuality, but that also offers a valuable background to German sexual politics today, where same-sex unions have existed since 2001, while same-sex marriage and same-sex adoption are still the subject of heated debate."

(Katja Hausten *Times Literary Supplement*, April 1, 2016)

‘Splendid study...Laurie Marhoefer encourages the reader to think carefully along with her, and one cannot ask for more than that in this engaging first book.’

(Geoffrey J. Giles *Canadian Journal of History* vol 51:03:2016)

‘Marhoefer’s book will be an excellent addition to graduate collections in German history and cultural studies, European studies, and history of sexuality... The book will also make fine addition to upper-division undergraduate courses.’

(B. Boovy *Choice Magazine* vol 53:10:2016)

Review

“*Sex and the Weimar Republic* makes a compelling argument about the importance of sexual politics – writ

large – in the Weimar Republic. It is an important book, of interest to those who study twentieth-century Germany and to those interested in the history of sexuality.”

(Robert G. Moeller, Department of History, University of California, Irvine)

“An ambitious book. Marhoefer asks us to reconsider the politics of sexuality in the Weimar years – including its role in bringing Hitler to power. *Sex and the Weimar Republic* is carefully researched, broad in its scope, and packs important insights for those interested in queer politics today.”

(Elizabeth Heineman, Department of History, University of Iowa)

About the Author

Laurie Marhoefer is an assistant professor in the Department of History at Syracuse University.

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