CHAPTER 3

The Growth of Urban Gay Scenes

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter describes the growth of Germany's gay scenes in Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, and elsewhere, which had started in the nineteenth century but reached full bloom in the 1920s. By the Weimar era, these scenes included not only a variety of bars, restaurants, and other meeting places for gay men and lesbians, but also a growing network of social clubs and even a surprisingly successful publishing industry.

OVERVIEW

The Weimar Republic—the name of the democratic government that was born in Germany after the disastrous First World War and the fall of the Kaiser's regime in late 1918—became famous for its experimental modernism and its relative openness with regard to sexuality. The gay scenes of Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, and elsewhere contributed considerably to the country's reputation for permissiveness. These scenes included not only a variety of bars, restaurants, and other meeting places for gay men and lesbians, but also a growing network of social clubs and even a surprisingly successful publishing industry. These scenes were not born in 1919, however; in fact, they have a history stretching back into the nineteenth century. This chapter examines not only the various dimensions of Germany's gay scenes, but also the numerous social, economic, and cultural factors that contributed to their growth. Despite police efforts to watch and limit the areas that gay men and lesbians gradually made their own, Germany's gay scenes expanded steadily, offering opportunities to establish relationships, fashion identities, and pursue political projects. By the middle of the 1920s, many of the social clubs that had arisen from the social networks of the gay scenes were united in a new national organization, the Federation for Human Rights (BfM), under the leadership of the publisher Friedrich Radszuweit.

KEY TERMS
Claire Waldoff; Weimar Republic; Friedrich Radszuweit; German homosexual magazines; homosexuality in Weimar Germany

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NOTES TO CHAPTER 3


2 Ibid., 102.


5 Quoted in Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade*, 61.

6 Ibid., 61–62.


8 This is my translation. I make no attempt to keep the rhythm or rhyme of the song. Much thanks to Geoffrey Giles for some assistance with this translation.


10 Ibid., 104.


16 Quoted ibid., 778.
19 Ibid., 138–39.
24 Quoted in Large, *Berlin*, 93.
25 Ibid., 94–95.
31 Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*, 27.
33 Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*, 27.
41 Ibid., 90.
46 Large, Berlin, 211–12.
47 Weitz, Weimar Germany, 228.
48 Ibid., 302.
50 Ibid., especially chap. 3.
51 Cocks, Psychotherapy in the Third Reich.
52 Weitz, Weimar Germany, 297–301.
54 Weitz, Weimar Germany, 313.
55 Jelavich, Berlin Cabaret, 176.
57 Hau, The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany; Chad Ross, Naked Germany: Health, Race and the Nation (New York: Berg, 2005).
58 Houlbrook, Queer London, 9.
59 For a fascinating discussion of this sex tourism to the city, see Robert Gay Berlin, 187–219.
60 Theis and Sternweiler, “Alltag im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik,” 63.
61 Beachy, Gay Berlin, 70.
62 Ibid., 59.
63 Ibid., 61.
64 Ibid., 59.
65 Hirschfeld, The Homosexuality of Men and Women, 785.
66 Ibid.
67 Paul Näcke, “Ein Besuch bei den Homosexuellen in Berlin,” republished as an appendix to Hirschfeld, Berlins Drittes Geschlecht, 170. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
68 Hirschfeld, Berlins Drittes Geschlecht, 90.
70 Ibid., 172.
71 Isherwood, Christopher and His Kind, 30.
72 Hirschfeld, The Homosexuality of Men and Women, 785–86.
73 Ibid.
74 Tamagne, A History of Homosexuality in Europe, 1:51.
76 Hirschfeld, Homosexuality of Men and Women, 785.
77 Tamagne, A History of Homosexuality in Europe, 1:54.
78 Hirschfeld, Homosexuality of Men and Women, 787.
80 Hirschfeld, Homosexuality of Men and Women, 787.
82 Ibid., 54.
84 Ibid., 164.
85 Ibid., 167.
91 Hirschfeld, *The Homosexuality of Men and Women*, 800.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid. 795
94 Ibid., 792–93.
95 Theis and Sternweiler, “Alltag im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik,” 55.
96 Hirschfeld, *The Homosexuality of Men and Women*, 793.
102 Ibid., 65–66.

Dobler, Zwischen Duldungspolitik und Verbrechensbekämpfung, 308.

For a history of Hamburg’s police department, see Wolfgang Schult, “Geschichte der Hamburger Polizei, 1814–1964” (Hamburg, 1964), manuscript in Staatsarchiv Hamburg.

For the modernization of Berlin’s police procedures, see Dobler, Zwischen Duldungspolitik und Verbrechensbekämpfung, 145–76.

Ibid., 308–10.


Hirschfeld, The Homosexuality of Men and Women, 786.

Dobler, Zwischen Duldungspolitik und Verbrechensbekämpfung, 527–43.

Sparing, Wegen Vergehen nach §175 verhaftet, 18–19.


Tamagne, A History of Homosexuality in Europe, 2:328. Munich seems to have stood out as a major exception to this rule, which may at least partially explain how small the gay scene remained in Munich during the 1920s.


Hirschfeld, The Homosexuality of Men and Women, 776, 780.

Ibid., 781.

Ibid.

Hirschfeld, Berlins Drittes Geschlecht, 80–81.

Lybeck, Desiring Emancipation, 104–5.


Rosenkranz and Lorenz, Hamburg auf anderen Wegen, 13–14.


Lybeck, Desiring Emancipation, 152.

Schader, Virile, Vamps und wilde Veilchen, 76.

Lybeck, Desiring Emancipation, 163–64.

135  Marhoefer, Sex and the Weimar Republic, 62.

136  The Lex Heinze was inspired by the trial of the pimp Hermann Heinze and his prostitute wife, who were ultimately convicted of murdering a night guard during a robbery gone wrong. The trial attracted much press attention and ultimately raised a great deal of public concern about the moral and physical conditions that prostitutes lived in. The Lex Heinze both made pimping illegal and broadened the country’s censorship laws. For the effect of the Lex Heinze on imperial censorship, see Gary D. Stark, “Pornography, Society, and the Law in Imperial Germany,” Central European History 14, no. 3 (1981): 216–19.


138  Ibid., 23.

139  Ibid., 6–7.


142  Ibid., 8.


144  Stuttgart, Homosexuelle in Deutschland, 53–54. This number is probably based on Radszuweit’s own statement, which Micheler observes there is good reason to doubt. Unfortunately, coming up with a more reliable number is difficult. See Micheler, “Zeitschriften, Verbände und Lokale,” 32.

145  There was an earlier version of The Third Sex published by Radszuweit in late 1928 and early 1929 that focused on sensational stories of (hetero)sexual crimes of various sort. It was shut down after only a few issues. Except for the title, it had nothing in common with the transvestite magazine that was published by Radszuweit during the early 1930s. See Micheler, “Zeitschriften, Verbände und Lokale,” 32.


147  Schader, Virile, Vamps und wilde Veilchen, 74–76; Marhoefer, Sex and the Weimar Republic, 57.


150  Quoted in Schader, Virile, Vamps und wilde Veilchen, 50.

151  Ibid., 48–51, 142.

152  Ibid., 54–60.


156  Matt Houlbrook makes a similar argument about the attraction that London had on British provincials. See Houlbrook, Queer London, 9.

157  Hirschfeld, Berlin’s Drittes Geschlecht, 74.

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 9–36. The term *imagined community* was developed by Benedict Anderson as a model for understanding nationalism; however, the relationship it establishes between cultural material and social groups has proved very useful for thinking about the other kinds of social categories.


Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic*, 114.