The Politics of Masculinity in the (Homo-)Sexual Discourse (1880 to 1920)

Claudia Bruns (Universität Trier)

"Oh ye men, be men! Then we will again have a manly, even a humane culture!"
Edward von Mayer (1903)

That the state was an exclusively masculine domain was a common topos in the discursive system of the long nineteenth century. It was part of the bourgeois order of the sexes to associate women with the private domestic sphere and men with the public sphere. In the Wilhelmine empire, a strong, militarily powerful state was a sign of healthy and Germanic masculinity. By contrast, national degeneration was connected with sexually abnormal, racially ‘deviant’, and ‘feminized’ men. So this division was tied not only to an unequal division of political and social privileges and rights between men and women, but also to a hierarchization of men and masculinities. The establishment or preservation of social hierarchies in the modernizing society of the Kaiserreich was no longer legitimized primarily through caste and corporate privileges, but rather through newly ‘discovered’ biological-sexual differences. In the wake of the rise of the natural sciences, sexuality became a dominant means of explaining social behaviour. With the aid of this concept, contemporary scientists and anthropologists not only attempted to decode the personality of the individual, but also to thoroughly work out his biologically based, gender-coded ability to forge a bond with family and the collective. The sexual–biological attachment to others functioned increasingly as the measure of social worth and social integration, as this article shows using the example of the discourse of masculinity. And alternately, the attachment of the individual to society, his productivity and utility, was increasingly tied to the nature of his sexuality.

The unusually broad debate in the German Empire regarding male homosexuality can be read, therefore, as an instance of the fundamental ‘biologization’ of the political. That is to say, the power conflict between different masculinities and between the sexes not only became a subject of parliamentary debates, but was also carried out in the field of medicine and the new sexual sciences. The broad discussion of male homosexuality also posed, of course, the question of ‘normal’ masculinity. This subject was particularly controversial because it touched upon the bases of patriarchal society and raised questions regarding socially recognized forms of masculinity.

This essay uses the example of the masculinist discourse of the homosexual emancipation movement to examine these connections between sexuality and social order. The turn of the century saw the emergence of qualitatively new discourses of masculinity and virility, inspired by complaints about the evisceration of traditional gender roles and the concomitant leveling of gender characteristics. The hitherto unquestioned characteristics of the generic subject were fundamentally challenged and in need of explicit redefinition. Since the late eighteenth century, only women had been considered gendered beings (especially in a middle-class context); the generic, autonomous individual had been implicitly thought of as male. As the focus of academic discourse, masculinity was only thematized when it deviated from middle-class norms, in conceptualizations of crime, masturbation, perversion, or homo-sexuality. As a result, the discursive construction of sexuality in the nineteenth century initially produced definitions of deviant, sick, or perverse forms of masculinity, with ‘healthy’ masculinity as a constant, implicit field of reference. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, the increasing public presence of women led to a discursive questioning of ‘normal’ masculinity.

An important part of that discussion was the attempt of men marked as deviant to write themselves into the discourse of hegemonic masculinity in new ways. The ‘masculinist’ tradition is one example of such an attempt to describe homosexual men as virile men, who could be considered particularly useful in a national context. This attempted self-integration into the discourse of hegemonic masculinity was an expression of resistance to widespread discrimination; but it was also one that maintained and supported the very structures of hegemonic masculinity on which such discrimination was founded.


This essay will discuss, in chronological sequence, the ideas of three masculinist thinkers: Gustav Jaeger, Benedict Friedlaender, and Hans Blüher. It will focus especially on the significant shifts in rhetoric in strategies for legitimizing male-male relationships, as well as historically variable strategies of differentiation vis-à-vis women and Jews.

These men were part of a distinctive masculinist tradition that has not been the subject of sufficient scholarly attention. Most works on the homosexual rights movement in Germany have focused on the work of Magnus Hirschfeld and his associates in the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (Wissenschaftlich-Humanitäre Komitee or WHK), which was founded in Berlin in 1897 largely in order to agitate for the repeal of §175 of the criminal code, which punished homosexual acts between men. Most men in the WHK supported the so-called ‘third sex’ theory, which held that some people had male bodies but female souls. While this position was dominant within the broader homosexual rights movement, from the outset a number of men articulated a different vision and program, which is useful to refer to as masculinism. Gustav Jaeger’s research on male homosexuality helped to lay the groundwork for this masculinist position in the 1880s; Friedlaender’s publications gave it a more coherent theory after the turn of the century; but it was Blüher’s work that popularized it during and after World War I.6

I: Gustav Jaeger—A Male Affair:

‘Normally Sexual’ or ‘Monosexual’?7

Confronted with medical discourses that constructed the homosexual male as useless, sick, and effeminate, in the 1880s the physician and naturalist Gustav Jaeger (1832–1917) attempted to construct a countervailing model of the sexual health and exceptional virility of the ‘deviant’ male.8 For Jaeger, the new standard of healthy sexuality was desire itself, not the ‘right’ (heterosexual) choice of object. He considered every desire that was directed toward another person rather than the self, arguing that all sexual attraction was founded on physiological interactions between the ‘soul substances’ of different individuals. What made a person’s sexual desire normal was not its procreative and familial function, but its function in forging a bond to another human being, and through them to society at large:

The normal eo ipso, but also every homosexual person needs another being to become erect and to satisfy their desire. And this main precondition, this virility, forces them to be interested in another being, causes their egoism to recede. And it is the strong tie, which connects even homosexuals to other members of the human community. Solely the monosexual being needs no one else on earth, merely his own self.9

Emphasizing the fundamentally social nature of every object-oriented sexual connection, then, Jaeger integrated homosexuality into the normal—a step which in turn created new but no less categorical divisions between normal and abnormal. In Jaeger’s analysis, the ‘monosexual’—someone who pursued his sexual gratification alone and without an outer-directed desire—appeared as the conceptual counterpart to the normal sexual. Not homosexual bonds but sexual loneliness, social disconnection and disintegration signified moral and societal danger and perversion. Here, the masculinity of the monosexual was denied. Jaeger also, however, considered the monosexual a danger to the state, particularly if he held high political position.10 According to the discursive connection developed in the nineteenth century between masculinity, (sexual) freedom of will, and civil rights, all those lacking a virile masculinity also lacked any attachment to the national. In contrast to the socially useless monosexual dangerous to society, then, for Jaeger the homosexual was capable of special political and social achievements precisely because of his (physiologically founded) connection to other men.

In fact, in Jaeger’s definition, homosexual men not only met the masculine norm, but even surpassed it:

Among the homosexuals, a most curious kind of men will be found, which I call the superviral ones. They are . . . superior to man as such, just as the normally inclined man is superior to the female . . . Because he lives exclusively in the male community, and because men submit to

---


9 Jaeger, Lehrbuch der allgemeinen Zoologie (1880), p. 266.
him, *superior* man frequently ascends to the highest levels of intellectual development, social standing and male capacity ...”

The ‘ladies man’ (Weibehrild), Jaeger argued, was an inferior man; a ‘man’s man’ or ‘hero among men’ (Männerheld) was a superior one. Confronted with a Männerheld, the normal man allegedly behaved like a woman, accepting a passive and subordinate position. Thus, implicitly evoking the Greek tradition of male-male love (a knowledge he could assume among his contemporaries), Jaeger postulated the male homosexual’s special cultural contribution.

Because of his sexual connection with others and his ability to contribute to the good of the nation, the homosexual male was not only sexually and socially normal; he had, in fact, exceptional social potential.

II: Benedict Friedlaender—Renaissance of Men with a Bisexual Dual Function in Nation State and Family

In the early 1900s, inspired by Gustav Jaeger’s theories, Benedict Friedlaender (1866–1908) proposed an expanded theory of “physiological friendship”. Friedlaender studied mathematics, physics, botany, and physiology, wrote his doctoral dissertation in zoology, and was influenced by the British biologist Charles Darwin, the zoologist and philosopher of nature Ernst Haeckel, and later the positivist philosopher and anti-Semitic Eugen Dühring. Friedlaender developed Jaeger’s strategies of normalizing homosexuality further, by postulating friendship among men as a normal drive. While conceding that sexual attraction and repulsion were—as Jaeger had held—physiologically based in ‘chemotactical phenomena’, Friedlaender focused on the social-scientific rather than the natural-scientific, arguing that the “social question” is tightly connected, if not overlapping, with the question of eons. Rather than assuming an essential difference between homosexual and heterosexual men, Friedlaender integrated homosexual forms of male-male friendship into his definition of normal sexuality. Friendship between men, he held, was already a kind of “love between like sexes”, though of a refined variety. The physical-sensory basis of friendship could not be separated from that of sexuality. On the basis of this insight, Friedlaender, claiming that he was “the first among the post-classical authors to break with the myth that only a minute minority, the so-called ‘third sex’, or ‘Urminge’ or whatever the artificial term might be, could have an interest in this question”, argued that in fact a large proportion of men, perhaps even the majority, were implicated.

It is therefore almost certain that there are more bisexuals existing than pure homosexuals; and it is even a quite probable assumption that most men are more or less bisexual ... and that it is only the moral discrimination against same-sex love that leads the majority either to suppress their desires ... or to hide them completely.

In Friedlaender’s view, this expanded masculinity had profound political implications, because of the potential role of liberated male sexual desire in shaping the nation state and family. The ‘Renaissance of Eros Uranios’—the title of Friedlaender’s book—would, he held, empower men better to shoulder their responsibility both for biological reproduction and for the nation and patriotic-national duties. In his view, however, men’s familial duties were less important than their contributions to the nation. With this argument, Friedlaender countered the assumption of the still-young racial hygienist discourse holding that homosexuals were damaging to the “life process of the race” because they entirely “lacked the drive to preserve the species.”

According to Andrew Hewitt, Friedlaender’s theory of a continuity between homo- and heterosexual led to the assumption that a fixed identity could no longer be considered the basis of desire. This is only partially true, however. Homo- and heterosexual identities were partially dissolved and fused, but the necessity of a male identity was still taken for granted. In Friedlaender’s theory, specifically of homosexual identity politics was superseded by male identity politics. There is no mention of all at a comparable continuum of same-sex desire in regard to women. Women fulfilled here the role of lack, of pure negation of maleness and masculinity.

In comparison to Jaeger’s 1880s argument, Friedlaender in fact distinguished his ‘new man’—created in an erotic renaissance—not from other men, but from an overly strong female influence and from Christian (female-influenced) priests. His continuum from hetero- to homoerotic masculinity did not locate the new adversary in other men, but in the opposite sex, which was made responsible for the split among men, with ‘general, historically and

13 Friedlaender, Die Renaissance des Eros Uranios, p. 311.
14 Friedlaender, Die Renaissance des Eros Uranios, p. 106 and 128.
15 Friedlaender, Die Renaissance des Eros Uranios, p. xiii.
16 Friedlaender, Die Renaissance des Eros Uranios, p. 83.
17 Friedlaender, Die Renaissance des Eros Uranios, p. 176.
19 Hewitt, ‘Die Philosophie des Maskulinismus’, p. 44.
20 Friedlaender, Die Renaissance des Eros Uranios, p. 265.
female otherness than as a power structure in which the exclusion of the woman plays a central role for the construction of a hegemonic masculinity and a masculine nation. In the masculinist discourse, the accusation of national and racial degeneration levelled, for example, by the racial hygienist Ernst Rüdin against homosexuals was now directed against the woman: 'A people under these influences [of women] must degenerate into an ochlocracy, a gynocracy, a kleptocracy, and will lose the struggle between the nations. This is one of the few clearly discernible basic laws of the history of nations.'

II: Hans Blüher—The Social is (Homo-)Sexual:
The Nation State as Male Product

Hans Blüher, a sexologist and popular chronicler of the Wandervogel movement who later turned conservative–revolutionary, started in 1912 to build on Jaeger's and Friedlaender's masculinist positions. Dismissed from the University of Berlin in 1916 without completing his degree, he called himself a 'private scholar of sexual problems', published numerous psychoanalytical articles in Sigmund Freud's and Hirschfeld's journals, and worked temporarily as lay analyst. Making use of Freud's new psychoanalytical theorems, Blüher argued that sexuality was the very foundation of the social. Specifically, he held that suitability for political leadership positions, and for the education of male youth, was based on the degree of a man's sexual attractiveness for men. The more strongly a man was connected to other men, the more exceptional was his capacity for politics and education.

Blüher argued that a person has an originally bisexual disposition, and that the choice of object vacillated during childhood and puberty, until one orientation—either homo- or heterosexual—came to predominate and became 'organic', while the other was suppressed. A person who could achieve orgasms with both sexes, therefore, was not merely bisexual, but fully potent. Homosexuals alone—the 'fully inverted'—could become Männerhelden, who could then initiate, through erotic attraction, Männerbünde, or male bonding groups. These in turn were the origin of the nation state: 'The state-building

---

20 Friedlaender, Die Renaissance des Eros Uranus, p. 278.
21 Friedlaender, Die Renaissance des Eros Uranus, p. 278.
22 Friedlaender, Die Renaissance des Eros Uranus, p. 278.
24 The term Lieblingmännchen was introduced around 1900 by the masculinist painter and writer Eduard von Kupffer. It was supposed to replace older, negatively connotated references of male–male sexuality and could be translated by 'dear loving friendship among men'.
forces are male, a result of the male society and the Männerbünde, centered around the masculine hero and his homoerotic attraction.34

Blüher’s Männerbund was thus, at its very core, homosexually oriented. On the other hand, it was only the Männerheld’s capacity for sexual sublimation that established the basis for his attractiveness and, as a result, the constitution of the group itself.35 In regard to its lower ranks, the Männerbund was open to normal, heterosexually active men, as long as they were not exclusively fixated on women and families. Strategically, this reversed the situation of the normal man.36 Now he, rather than the homosexual man, had to prove his capacity to build relationships (with other men), because the nation state was based on homoerotic connections between and among men. At the same time, this concept also left much space for normal men to adopt the idea of the Männerbund for themselves, since Blüher’s assumption that everybody was innately bisexual explained how men could be both heterosexual and still more closely bonded with other men than with women.

Thus, while Friedlaender had posited a dual function for men in family and state, Blüher argued for exclusive national contribution of the ‘superior’ man. This idea of a fundamentally homosocial, state-supporting Männerbund was widely discussed—initially in the Wandervogel movement, which Blüher interpreted as a homoerotic phenomenon, and then also within medical- psychological and political-cultural discourses.37 The differentiation from women no longer required radical negation (as in Friedlaender’s work, where even familial reproduction was a male-dominated field), but through the assignment of an inferior, complementary, female role in the private—familial sphere and the antifeminist demand to exclude women altogether from the political arena:

Every woman is a kind of family-being and only this. It is absolutely wrong to claim that the state is a family on a grand scale. Animal species which are organized in families can only build scattered herds, not states. To build a state a different social principle is necessary, of which women are not a part.38

36 Blüher explains the different types of male-male attraction in Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen, pp. 74–75.

VI: Hans Blüher—The New Man between the Appropriation of the Feminine and the Rejection of Jewish Masculinity

In fact, Blüher’s vision of the new man no longer excluded the female/feminine as radical difference, but rather appropriated the feminine—erotic as a part of masculinity. Blüher connected the attempt to integrate homoerotic desire into normal object relations with the domination, formation, and creation of Woman as image in the male imaginary. The specific construction of Blüher’s alloscopic39 could be understood as distinct from Freud’s idea of successful and unsuccessful object choice, in which the normal man’s healthy connection with the mother was contrasted with a ‘narcissistic’ homosexual identification.40 While Freud’s model of male development presupposed a heterosexual desire that used the image of the mother as orientation, Blüher understood a successful alloscopic connection as the total typification of the mother within the imaginary. Such a transformation of the mother into an image made it possible to expand the understanding of heterosexual desire to include same-sex objects. Instead of the mother image, the male-hero image could equally be desired, because the alloscopic quality of the relationship rather than the right choice of object guaranteed, according to Blüher, the normality of the sexual relationship.41 And yet Blüher distinguished between the imaginatively desired image of the masculine hero and the image of the mother/woman. She needed to be created as part of an aesthetic act and defined as part of the male:

[The creative talent of Goethe replaced the unattainable Lotte with an ideal Lotte, who, however, was not merely a reflection of the real Lotte serving as an object of desire for the purpose of orgasm, but, rather, represents a particular tendency within an objective work of art. Thus: the Lotte of Werther is not a Lotte out of the realm of imagination; the Lotte of Werther is pure creation, sprung from the spirit of Eros; ... the literary fantasy stems from the realm of male procreation, is brought forth from within himself in intensive and prolonged labour.]

This model, in which the male overcame the (real) mother by creating her anew within the imaginary, was Blüher’s response to Freud’s concept of homosexuality. This principle is thus not anti-epidial, as Hewitt suggests, but shifts the epidial relationship into the aesthetic—imaginary.43 The imaginary, however, is present not as an empty play of signifiers, but as male domination and appropriation of the female. Born of woman, man posits his imagination as being the origin of the

mother. This act of sublimation thus constitutes his masculinity as omnipotent and androgynous. With implicit recourse to the classical ideals of androgyny that were continued in the romantic ideals of symbiotic love,44 the virile man in particular turned out to be a gendered, dual being with superior powers.45

Bluhm’s sexological strategies to legitimate imaginary object relations increasingly corresponded, in the course of the war, with aesthetic formations of male (self-)creation: because of their special ability to think ‘in images’,46 men were considered capable not only of representing intellect and logos, but of creating an ideal, aesthetically productive synthesis of matter and idea, feminine eros and masculine logos. It was this platonic synthesis that constituted a specifically male intellectuality and that Bluhm, with reference to the debate about the German ‘spirit of 1914’,47 called a ‘secondary sexual characteristic of the male’.48 In contrast, women remained tied to the material world, because they could never transcend pure eros without losing their femininity: ‘women can only reach a certain level of the—basically male—spirit [Geist], not its creative potential’.49

Overcoming the modern split of the subject into aesthetic and cognitive rationality was, therefore, an option only for the new man. Only for a man it was potentially possible to become the artist/subject who, in neo-humanistic thought, was capable of reconciling the mortal, physical characteristics of human beings (eros, drives) with ontological universals (logos).

In Bluhm’s thought, aesthetics functioned as a mediator between sexological and political discourses. The products of male imagination included not only men themselves, but also the nation state. Thus, the male leader (der führende Mann) as politicized artist/subject was supposed to possess the ability to create ‘the nation’, by producing and transforming it within the imaginary:

The people become a people through being chosen by a leader [Führer], and only part of the masses unified into a people through allowing themselves to be penetrated by this act of choice … He knows of the spiritual condition of the humanity which surrounds him and feels pity for them. He knows that people who have been without a leader for a long time are unable to immerse themselves in their true essence and … that on their own they have nothing at all to fill their lives with sense and dignity. … Thus the man who is a true leader really strives for the happiness of his people; in his creative imagination he has, however, already elevated the people to a higher level, which in turn is the precondition for their happiness, whereas by contrast a mere people’s representative takes the people ‘as they are’ and merely represents them.50

Through this political act of creation, man was both able to define himself completely and to claim ownership of his ‘property’; by appropriating the creative potential, he simultaneously ‘birthed’ himself, both as male subject and as ‘the nation’, which was transposed from the (female, material) real into the (male) imaginary. The leader used his imagination to elevate and transform a scattered, female crowd into a structured, male nation. The external sign of this intellectual feat was the transformation of the material crowd into a unit, which was visualized as an extension of himself. This fusion of the nation and its leader completed the central subjective process of self-creation. In this right-wing political theory, the point was not the negation of the individual, but its correspondence with and total participation in the myth of the great, male self.

In this context, Bluhm accused Jews of an overly strong fixation on logos. Their hostility toward images (Bildfeindlichkeit) supposedly deprived them of platonic thinking and thus of true intellectuality (Geistigkeit). At the same time, according to Bluhm, Jews were suffering from a significant weakness in regard to male-centered social structures (Männerbundswelt), with a concomitantly weak ability to build a nation; this, in turn, was caused by a ‘hypertrophy’ of family relations.51 As a man bound firmly into the family, the Jew became the prototype of the effeminate and feminized male, thereby taking on the stigma hitherto ascribed to the homosexual. ‘The associative connection between maleness and Germanness’, wrote Bluhm in 1922, ‘and of the effeminate and servile with the Jewish is a direct intuition of the German people, one that becomes more certain day by day’.52

At the same time, the Jew, whose thought Bluhm believed to be abstract, rational, and uncreative, embodied the negative characteristics of modernity. As an ‘unspiritual’ and ‘incapacitated’ man, who personified rather than overcame the split between eros and logos in the modern subject, the Jew could not construct bonds with other men, could not join a Männerbund, and could not follow a leader. The Jew—too fixated on logos, and too tied to the materiality of the family—that bracketed the ideal of the new German man at both (negative) ends: ‘We Germans’, Bluhm wrote, ‘are encircled [umklammert] by the type of the Jew.’53


48 Bluhm, ‘Was ist Antifeminismus?’, p. 87.


50 Bluhm, Führer und Volk in der Jugendarbeit, p. 5.


After 1916, then, the signifier of failed masculinity shifted in the masculinist discourse from the feminine/abnormal man as described in the theory of sexual gradations (Hirschfeld's Zwischenstufenlehre) to the Jewish man of the 'secondary race'. This tendency intensified when it became clear that the exclusion of women from the political sphere was an illusion and when the lost war made it necessary to restore and redefine male political capacities. The Jewish man was encoded as a 'failure' between the sexes; the fight against him became a means to reinstate both the masculine and the male-defined political order. It is this imperative that explains the appeal of Blüher's ideas, particularly in conservative circles.

V: Conclusion

The masculinists' attempts to include homosexuality in normal masculinity was supported by evolving strategies of exclusion. These strategies covered a wide spectrum—from Gustav Jaeger's construction of a superior virility in comparison with other men, to Benedict Friedlaender's radical negation of the female, to Hans Blüher's partial integration of femininity into the concept of the male subject. On the one hand, homosexual identity as it had emerged in the nineteenth century was adapted and positively redefined, toward a special category of the hyper masculine. On the other hand, there were also attempts to undermine the category of the homosexual and to define the constitution of masculinity broadly enough to allow the inclusion of same-sex relationships. These attempts can be seen both in Friedlaender's notion of bisexuality as normal, dually functional male desire and in Blüher's description of the Männerbund as homoerotic continuum, with various gradations of same-sex leanings. Masculinity, social integration and normalcy were linked to form a new argument that also tried to redefine normality itself as masculine/male-centered social principle. The masculinist theorists attempted to legitimize their claim to the status of a useful, valuable, and normal member of society through a discursive transformation of the ability to forge a sexual bond into the ability to forge a social bond. Here, political formations such as the social cohesion of a nation were rendered in biological terms—a process Foucault called a 'rewriting of the political discourse in biological terms' or the 'biologization of the political'.

As a strategy of homogenization resting on a binary order this discursive transformation was bound to new exclusions. Political opponents became 'external' or internal threats with regard to the population. Medical science thereby took on the role of a technology of political intervention which presupposed the existence of permanent pathologies (for example, sexual deviations), but above all constantly produced new ones. The masculinists sought to redirect this discursive process in such a way as to legitimate male same-sex desire; and in doing so they constructed their own distinctive strategies of exclusion. For Jaeger the solitary monosexual, who lacked any object of desire, was sexually alone, socially unattached, disintegrated, sullen, and unmanly: in short, a danger to the population. For Friedlaender the threat was 'an excessive female influence' that had sabotaged every form of masculine eroticism for thousands of years. For Blüher, the danger came, ultimately, from the 'unmanly Jew,' incapable of creativity and of statehood. The 'question of the sexes' which had become so virulent around 1900, in short, opened up the possibility of achieving recognition by means of anti-feminist and racist exclusions in the name of an innovative masculinity. This new masculinity defined itself through devaluation of certain other men, who were marked as asocial, asexual, racially dangerous or politically socialist, and all women (in the process of emancipation), who were alternatively marked as antisocial, hostile to the state, or degenerate.

Among the masculinists, these anti-egalitarian formations were accompanied by a romantic self-understanding that defined German 'culture' and Germanness as a specific form of aesthetic in opposition to French and English "civilization", which further supported the delimitation from Hirschfeld's international ideals. In other European countries as well as in North America, there were similar masculinist strategies within homosexual emancipation movements. Unlike their German counterparts, however, these aesthetic models of legitimation (for example, in their idealization of Greece) were not constructed in opposition to democracy and socialism. In England, for example, the authors John Addington Symonds and Edward Carpenter, inspired by Walt Whitman, idealized 'comradeship' among men as a means of radical democratisation in their works.

German masculinist ideas were attractive because they carried an aura of progress and theoretical modernity (especially in Blüher's work), but also because they adopted differentiated strategies and historically variable tactics in their attempts to maintain and support hegemonic structures in times of crisis. The joining of virile masculinity and national order linked the (re-)establishment of hegemonic masculinity on an individual level with the (re-)construction of the...
national whole as a steadfast, virile, and superior entity on a collective level. This masculinity was defined not primarily by the production of progeny, but by the transformation of a disunited crowd into a 'racially pure' national whole—through the exclusion of those who threatened the 'healthy core'. This was the beginning of an aristocratic, elitist concept of masculinity that Blüher developed further during the Weimar Republic. This concept not only fascinated many young men of the German youth movement and contemporary writers like Thomas Mann, Kurt Hiller, and Rainer Maria Rilke; it also became influential in the political circles of the 'conservative revolution' around Heinrich von Gleich, and it achieved an explicitly political profile in the Männerbund theories of the 1920s and 1930s.

Translated by Stefanie Sievers

Abstract

Masculinity became an important topic of discussion around 1900, not only as reaction to the growing women’s movement, but also a result of new developments in the medical and sexual sciences. In the late nineteenth century medical doctors began to take a sustained interest in same-sex sexual relations between men, giving rise to the concept of the homosexual man as feminized and dangerous to the social order. While the medical concept of the ‘third sex’ could also be—and was—used for emancipatory purposes by early advocates of homosexual rights, a group of masculinists rejected these discriminatory characterizations by insisting on their masculinity and arguing that state and society were in fact based on male bonding. These masculinist strategies, which sought to integrate male–male sexuality into hegemonic masculinity, represented resistance against discrimination, but they also served to shore up and modernize hegemonic structures that discriminated against women and Jews.