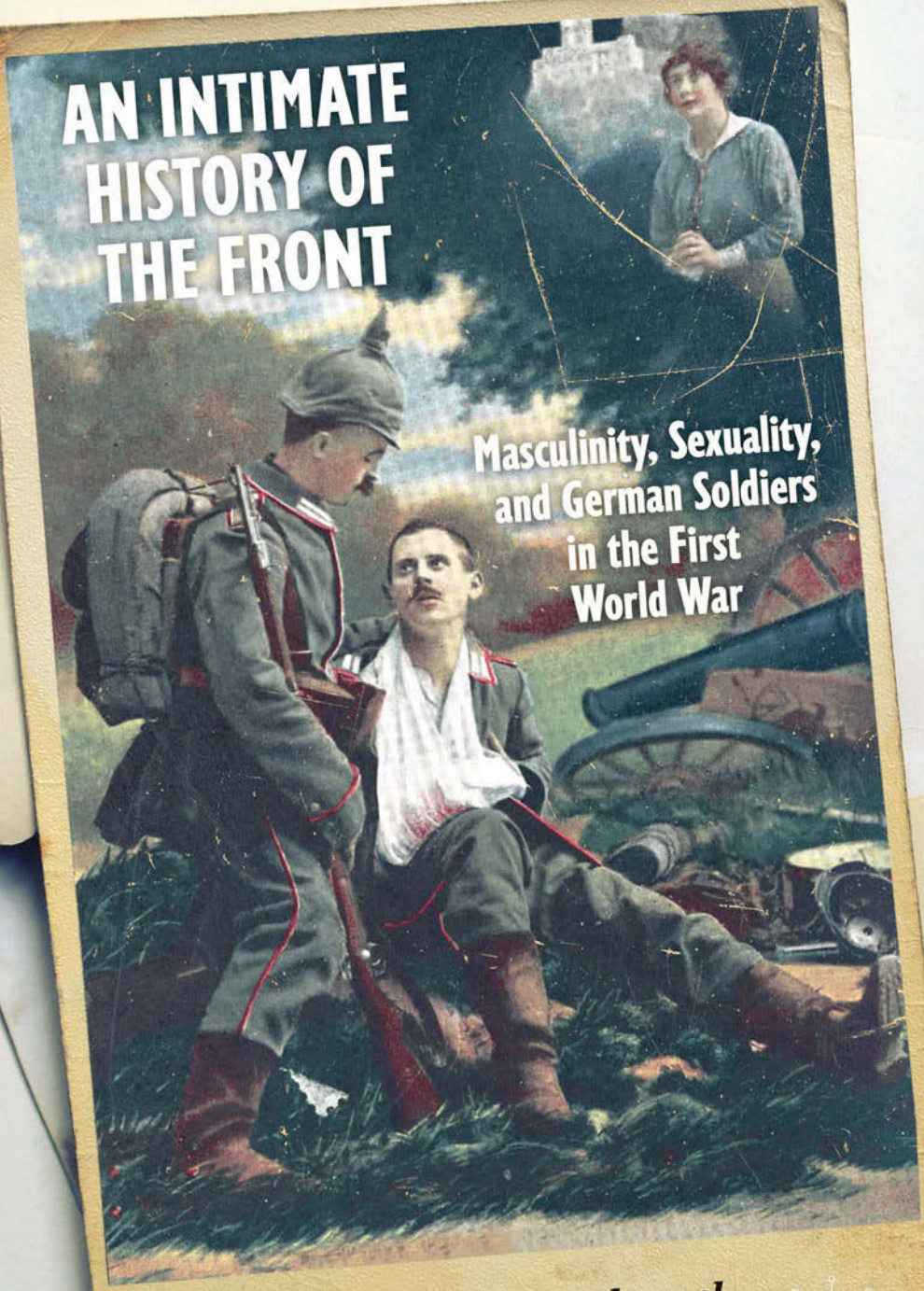
AN INTIMATE HISTORY OF THE FRONT

Masculinity, Sexuality, and German Soldiers in the First World War



Jason Crouthamel

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Dedicated to Grace—she knows why

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Jason Crouthamel
Grand Rapids, March 2014

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Abbreviations

BAB	*Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde* (Federal Archive Berlin-Lichterfelde)
BAMF	*Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg* (Federal Archive-Military Archive, Freiburg)
BfM	*Bund für Menschenrechte* (League of Human Rights)
BHAK	*Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv-Kriegsarchiv, Abteilung IV, Munich* (Bavarian Main State Archive-War Archive, Department IV, Munich)
GdE	*Gemeinschaft der Eigenen* (Community of the Self-Owned)
HSAS	*Hauptstaatsarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart* (Main State Archive Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart)
LAB	*Landesarchiv Berlin* (Regional Archive Berlin)
NSKOV	*Nationalsozialistische Kriegsopferversorgung* (National Socialist War Victims Association)
OHL	*Oberste Heeresleitung* (Supreme Army Command)
SA	*Sturmabteilung* (Stormtroopers)
SAB	*Schwules Archive-Museum, Berlin* (Gay Archive-Museum, Berlin)
SPD	*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
WhK	*Wissenschaftlich humanitäres Komitee* (Scientific Humanitarian Committee)
WLS	*Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart* (Württemberg Regional Library)

Introduction

A few weeks after the outbreak of the Great War, Kurt K., who volunteered as a lieutenant in a Bavarian mortar battalion, began a correspondence with his fiancée, Lotte, that would last through almost four years of war. After enduring artillery bombardments for endless days and witnessing the death of his closest friend in October 1914, he wrote to his fiancée, "It's like I live more in a dream than in reality."[1] He tried to explain this "dream" to Lotte, but he struggled. In his intimate expression of feelings, Kurt K. let down his guard to confess that he may no longer be able to maintain his masculine, iron image of emotional self-control:

> The future lay before us and we believed we only had to reach forward to make it happen as we wished. And now everything that once made me happy is lost in France, and I feel so completely alone. The last of my friends went to East Prussia, because he had to take care of his step mother. But his brother was killed. Don't think I'm soft (*weichlich*). But think about it this way: if suddenly all your female friends, with whom you had shared joy and pain, were killed off, wouldn't you also have such thoughts?[2]

Such a willingness to expose his vulnerability, and his fear that Lotte would think he was "soft," was a decisive moment for Kurt. It signaled a longing for an emotional bond as he tried to share what he called the "hard truth" of witnessing mass death and "another exterminated life."[3] However, when Lotte responded with stoic optimism that he would find new friends to replace those who died, he grew impatient with her, and he criticized her for being a "typical girl" who could not understand what he was going through.[4]

By 1916, Kurt had stopped trying to explain how the deaths of comrades affected him, but he intimated to Lotte that he was "internally broken."[5] After surviving the battles of the Somme and Arras, he did not even attempt to prop up a façade of the steel-nerved, emotionally restrained masculine warrior ideal. He confessed to Lotte that his nerves were on the brink of collapse and he was barely able to hold himself together. Though he felt cut off from Lotte, he still

needed an emotional outlet and reached out to her about his fears and sense of disillusionment.[6]

Kurt K.'s fear that Lotte would "think I'm soft," his struggle to describe and cope with the emotional trauma of war, and the damage inflicted by the war on his relationship with his fiancée are central themes of this book. Kurt K. wrestled with the pressures of a masculine ideal to which men were expected to conform. The hegemonic masculine ideal stressed emotional self-control and toughness. The image of the steel-nerved ordinary front soldier became ubiquitous in popular media, and it was a cornerstone of postwar myths of the rugged "New Man" who emerged out of the horrors of war.[7] Germany's military leaders and civil organizations attempted to control and reinforce a dominant image of a heterosexual, self-sacrificing warrior focused entirely on the defense of the nation. Effeminate behavior and homosexual men were denounced as threats to this militarized ideal of masculinity.[8]

The goal of this book is to illuminate the private world of German men in the Great War. It focuses on soldiers' narratives of the war experience in front newspapers, letters home (*Feldpostbriefe*), diaries, and military court records to reveal how front soldiers perceived ideals of masculinity, expressed love and other emotions, found intimacy, and experienced sex. While many historians have reconstructed how military, medical, and political elites perceived the "crisis of masculinity" triggered by the war, uncovering ordinary soldiers' complex, often iconoclastic conceptions of masculinity and sexuality has been much more challenging. Several interrelated questions are explored in this book: What was the impact of the war on hegemonic masculine ideals? To what degree did men at the front embrace dominant gender and sexual norms? How did they modify masculine ideals and sexual norms as they coped with the traumatic front experience? How did they perceive "deviant" sexual behaviors, including homosexuality, "effeminate" traits, or feminine emotions?

The central argument of this book is that German soldiers actively negotiated, bolstered, and challenged prevailing masculine ideals in an effort to survive the traumatic experience of modern war. In the remote, otherworldly universe of the front experience, men created complex notions of masculinity that both reinforced and modified hegemonic gender and sexual norms. While the dominant image of the tough, martial masculine warriors was all-pervasive, ordinary soldiers reacted to this image in complex ways. In their front newspapers and letters, many mocked the masculine image of the self-controlled, emotionally disciplined male. They sought a space in which they were safe from the pressures of the hegemonic ideal. Front soldiers' perceptions of hegemonic masculinity cannot be reduced to a singular image, but there was a common denominator in the war experience: men searched, often desperately, for emotional support and

intimacy, which included confessions of vulnerability and hunger for nurturing and compassion.

The ways in which men found this intimacy and emotional support diverged. Some sought, with mixed success, greater intimacy with women. Others craved, through their definitions of comradeship that permitted different forms of love, intimacy with other men under the guise of comradeship. "Comradeship" was defined in various ways. It became an umbrella concept under which men with different perceptions of emotional and sexual norms found inclusion, at least from their point view, as "real men." Soldiers who saw themselves as "real men" and "good comrades" sometimes fantasized about adopting feminine characteristics or even experimented with homosexual love. This normalization of "feminine" emotions of compassion and nurturing created a safer space for men to express love, allowing for experimentation with different emotional and sexual paradigms. Some men affirmed homosocial and homosexual behaviors and desires as natural, masculine, and even necessary mechanisms for surviving the strains of trench warfare.

Investigating the history of masculinity, emotions, and sexuality, historians have mainly analyzed the military's attempts to control soldiers' sexual behaviors, their estrangement from women on the home front, and the more "feminine" side of comradeship. This study focuses primarily on soldiers' voices to analyze their complex perspectives on gender roles, behaviors, and identity. This is important because it sheds light on how ordinary men, as well as previously marginalized groups (in particular homosexual veterans), conceptualized masculinity and the complex ways in which they reinforced and subverted the hegemonic male image. War was indeed the "school for masculinity" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as historians have observed,[9] but the war experience educated men in different ways.

Uncovering the Private Worlds of Front Soldiers

Exploring the private worlds of soldiers presents numerous challenges. This book's approach is influenced by recent scholarship produced by social and cultural historians, as well as an interdisciplinary application of theories from sociology and gender studies. It employs an empirical methodology that focuses on soldiers' voices, drawn primarily from letters and front newspapers, to interpret their changing constructions of masculinity, normative and deviant sexuality, and the emotional-psychological impact of the trench experience. It is difficult to uncover soldiers' actual behavior and experiences. Indeed, it is easier to analyze soldiers' perceptions of masculinity as revealed in language, symbols, and images. However, as a number of historians have emphasized, gender is a complex set of practices and experiences, or perceptions of practices and

experiences, rather than solely a set of images or representations imposed by prevailing political and medical authorities.[10] Notions of masculinity are not limited to a linguistic and rhetorical framework. As noted by historian Kathleen Canning, it is challenging, yet important, for historians to analyze both language and experience. In doing so they must also move beyond a simple binary construction of these two categories.[11] For historians to reconstruct masculine ideals "from below," it is important, yet difficult, to interpret both representations of masculinity and behaviors that often seem contradictory.

Recently, experts in the cultural history of the Great War have revived and redefined the importance of experience, mainly by exploring a broader definition of experience, including experiences of the senses.[12] As men reflected on their emotional experiences in the trenches, fear, grief, love, desire, and other emotions played a prevalent part in their narratives. When men described the emotional impact of the war, they tried to reconcile their experiences with fear and desire in the context of prevailing masculine norms, which dictated that they suppress these emotions. Experiences shaped how men perceived masculine ideals, as men reevaluated, reinforced, or reshaped masculine ideals through the prism of these complex emotional experiences.

The experiences and emotions of front soldiers can be reconstructed from one of the most widely distributed forms of media that circulated in the trenches—front newspapers. This study utilizes 13 different periodicals, mostly published for soldiers on the Western front.[13] Front newspapers were diverse in terms of their tone and content. They included features and cartoons on the broader events of the war, daily life in the trenches, and humor designed to bolster morale and entertain troops. According to historian Anne Lipp, front newspapers tended to reflect different perceptions of the war depending on who produced them in the military hierarchy. The largest newspapers, including the *Kriegszeitung der 4ten Armee* (*War Newspaper of the Fourth Army*) and the *Liller Kriegszeitung* (*War Newspaper of Lille*), which were produced at the army corps and divisional level (*Armeezeitungen*), circulated around 80,000 copies in editions produced several times per month. These widely disseminated army newspapers published articles mostly by officers, and they included contributions by civilians, in particular doctors and professors. Army newspapers promoted dominant masculine ideals of steel-nerved, self-sacrificing soldiers through essays and cartoons aimed at bolstering the morale of front soldiers.[14] These newspapers conveyed more traditionally prescribed images of masculinity (namely, a martial heroic ideal for men) and ideals of women as female comrades who remained loyal and chaste on the home front.[15]

More dissonant perspectives on masculinity can be found in the less widely distributed "trench newspapers" (*Schützengrabenzeitungen*). These were produced at the regimental or company level and edited by soldiers themselves,

including enlisted men and noncommissioned officers. They were often disseminated once a month to smaller audiences.[16] The army imposed censorship on both army and trench newspapers. Criticisms of military authority or justifications for the war are largely absent. But some of the trench newspapers, especially the less stringently controlled periodicals that circulated within units, indicate that writers sometimes got away with a surprising amount of cynicism and irreverence under the guise of humor and entertainment.[17] In contrast to the more heavily censored army newspapers, trench newspapers often contained more escapist, fantasy-themed, and often bizarre cartoons and humorous stories with risqué depictions of sexuality and humorous plays on gender roles.[18]

In addition to front newspapers, letters from the front (*Feldpostbriefe*) provide a rich source base for analysis. This study is based on letters written by more than one hundred soldiers, which were examined at regional and federal archives in Germany.[19] There are significant challenges and potential limitations in evaluating soldiers' letters.[20] Though a substantial number of letters from infantrymen who were from working-class backgrounds do exist and will be analyzed here, most letters available in archives were written by officers and noncommissioned officers from middle- and lower-middle-class backgrounds. Thus historians cannot overgeneralize about the degree to which these letters represent the experiences of a socially diverse mass army.[21] Further, men and women responded to the intense pressure of separation in different and complex ways depending on their prewar marital and relationship experiences.[22] Finally, military censorship imposed on *Feldpost* would suggest that men were limited in describing experiences and emotions that may have contradicted traditional ideals. However, the Supreme Army Command (OHL, *Oberste Heeresleitung*) had to deal with on average 6.8 million letters sent every day from soldiers to the home front.[23] The 8,000 officials assigned to censure this massive amount of mail could only monitor it superficially.[24] Thus soldiers' letters were surprisingly frank, as men revealed their emotional lives, the psychological and physical effects of violence, and even their critical perspectives on the war.

After the war, soldiers' grievances and resentments were largely sterilized by right-wing, nationalist interest groups who celebrated the war experience as a sacred event.[25] But letters produced between 1914 and 1918 that were unfiltered by postwar interest groups indicate that soldiers' experiences were much more diverse and complex than postwar myths and memories suggest.[26] As Jay Winter has observed, "What soldiers wrote about the war must be separated from what was done with their words."[27] German soldiers saw letters as a relatively safe zone in which to convey their emotions.[28] Letters provided a space in which soldiers could let down their masculine image. Men often expressed "feminine" feelings of neediness and vulnerability, and they expected their wives to reciprocate with empathy, tenderness, and reassurances of love. There was

no monolithic way in which men wrote about love and affection. Some men enthusiastically conveyed their emotions, while others were extremely guarded, giving only brief, but powerful, hints about how the war changed them. In many cases, men spilled their experiences on the page with little analysis, almost as if they were overwhelmed by the sensory experience of the front. They used letters to their loved ones as an outlet to recount feelings and experiences that they confessed were incomprehensible to them.

Interpreting letters is a challenge for historians because they often reveal how men wished to represent themselves, making it difficult to discern the actual front experience and its effects.[29] Letters revealed how men wanted to be perceived by women as much as what was actually happening to them. At the same time, letters also offer a considerable advantage over other soldiers' writings. War diaries (*Kriegstagebücher*) were often dominated by day-to-day logistics, while postwar memoirs tended to be even more problematic, as men had even more time to reconstruct themselves and their memories. Letters were often written within hours of combat, or even while under shell and machine-gun fire. With an imagined audience of trusted wives and fiancées, men often opened up a raw glimpse into their fears and desires. Their letters betrayed degrees of desperation and despair that reveal the impact of the war in stark emotional terms.

Hegemonic Masculinity versus Spectrums of Masculinities

In early twentieth-century Germany, the all-pervasive image of the steel-nerved, disciplined warrior suggested an easily identifiable masculine ideal. However, historians have contested whether this warrior image was really the dominant ideal accepted by the majority of soldiers in the Great War. One of the most influential scholars on masculinity, sociologist R. W. Connell, argued that while dominant masculine ideals may pervade a culture and put pressure on men to conform, ordinary men's perceptions of these masculine norms are elusive, and the hegemonic ideal is often contested and unstable.[30] Historian Christa Hämmerle, applying Connell's sociological approach, has observed that it is difficult to uncover the degree to which hegemonic, militarized conceptions of masculinity were accepted by the majority of soldiers in the trenches.[31]

The prevailing martial masculine image was fragile and, as Monika Szczepaniak recently noted, tends to be oversimplified by historians. As Szczepaniak argues, though the "steel hero" warrior ideal became an all-pervasive image, it was not necessarily the "universal masculinity."[32] While front newspapers produced by soldiers often reinforced martial masculinity, and soldiers promised in their letters that they upheld the emotionally controlled, disciplined, self-sacrificing image, there is also evidence in these same sources that men

mocked, denounced, and reshaped masculine ideals in response to the traumatic experience of war. The psychological and physical damage caused by trench warfare indeed provoked a crisis of masculinity. However, as Birthe Kundrus argues, this crisis cannot be reduced to a "single common denominator."[33] There was no singular masculine ideal that emerged from the war experience, but rather multiple masculinities that demand in-depth analysis of different veterans' voices.

Studies of masculinity have largely focused on how power elites constructed masculine ideals. Historian George Mosse spearheaded studies of dominant masculine ideals that were defined mainly by doctors, military leaders, and political conservatives against a masculine "countertype," which included racial "others" and sexual "deviants," including homosexuals, who were perceived by cultural elites as a threat to hegemonic masculinity.[34] Foucauldian influences on the history of masculinity have also shaped scholarship that concentrates on how cultural and political elites, especially in science and medicine, imposed dominant masculine ideals and sexual norms and in turn categorized "subversive" symbols, ideas, and images as dangerous.

This book tries to uncover dissonance and reconstruct different conceptions of the masculine ideal that existed beyond the dominant norms set by social, political, and cultural authorities. My work is influenced by Edward Ross Dickinson and Richard Wetzell, who recently argued that historians need to move beyond Foucault's concentration on medical elites and how their disciplinary mechanisms defined historical subjects. Instead, there needs to be greater focus on sexual subjectivity and diverse groups negotiating the categories set by medical and political authorities.[35] As Scott Spector recently observed, there has been a shift away from historiography based on Foucauldian models of power elites imposing and exerting control over identity, and recent studies are focusing instead on the complex, more nuanced relationships between individuals and ideologies in the construction of sexual identity.[36] In this vein, my approach is also inspired by Geoff Eley's scholarship, which encourages historians to combine the tools of social and cultural history to uncover sites of transgression and subversion in the history of sexual politics.[37] The perspectives of marginalized groups, including homosexual men, who are an important part of this study, are vital because they not only reveal the diverse constructions of masculine identity that existed in early twentieth-century Germany but also complicate how we interpret the impact of the war on gender and sexual norms.

The notion that there are diverse, multiple, sometimes overlapping masculine identities has been one of the most important breakthroughs in gender history.[38] But this breakthrough has begged the question, what different forms of masculinity existed in the imaginations of front soldiers? A history of masculinity "from below," focusing on soldiers' narratives, offers some glimpse

into pluralistic masculine identities. Narratives by front soldiers reveal different types of masculinities, ranging from those who embraced officially sanctioned, hegemonic masculine images, to those who synthesized "masculine" and "feminine" behaviors, to those who vehemently criticized the self-controlled, tough, self-sacrificing warrior ideal. The idea that men fused "masculine" and "feminine" characteristics, especially under the rubric of "comradeship," has been observed by a number of historians, most notably Thomas Kühne. Kühne has demonstrated that ideals of "comradeship," which became a cornerstone of masculine identity in the age of total war, incorporated acceptable "feminine" emotions, including expressions of nurturing, compassion, and even emotional love between men.[39]

Much of Kühne's work is based on an analysis of comradely ideals constructed and sanctified, especially by right-wing groups, in the interwar years. Soldiers' letters and front newspapers from the war itself reveal more complex notions of the "good comrade" that go beyond a fusion of feminine and masculine characteristics. Some men expressed a wish to escape from martial masculinity as they fantasized about gender transgression, including becoming women and loving other men. While this may have suggested an intermediary sexual identity that blended gender characteristics, sources reveal that men expressed a desire to oscillate from "masculine" to "feminine," with the two genders remaining distinct. Instead of occupying an intermediate or new gender identity, these soldiers created an imagined universe where they could temporarily live a fantasy of escaping male gender norms and experiment with "feminine" emotions. The war thus gave heterosexual men an alternative universe in which to explore their "feminine" side in order to be a good comrade without disrupting traditional gender dichotomies.

The multiple masculinities that can be located in the universe occupied by front veterans do not necessarily mean that hegemonic masculine ideals were shattered. Instead, they were adjusted or reconstructed in ways that made sense to men trying to cope with the traumatic experience of war. Jessica Meyer's work on British soldiers' conceptions of masculinity has been extremely influential. She argues that British men balanced two masculine identities during the war: a heroic image associated with their role as defenders on the front, and a domestic image that they cultivated as they strove to be good fathers and husbands. Meyer's work is vital because it employs a "bottom up history," focusing on soldiers' personal narratives, especially letters and diaries, to show that men felt pressured to negotiate and conform to these identities as both heroic fighters and domestic caretakers.[40] German soldiers' letters and front newspapers also suggest that men eagerly balanced the dual identities of heroic warriors and domestic patriarchs, as projected through their letters home. But by 1916, especially after the human carnage witnessed at the Somme and Verdun, many men

expressed cynicism and disillusionment with the heroic image.[41] They often continued to perceive and present themselves as loyal to the nation, but they also began to criticize expectations that they control their emotions or channel all their energies toward self-sacrifice.

Love and Other Emotions in the Trenches

The history of emotions has emerged as an important category of analysis in recent years. Historian Alon Confino has suggested that German history has perhaps been too driven by a history of ideology, and he asks whether people are perhaps governed more by their emotions and perceptions than by ideological interests.[42] Emotions like fear, Joanna Bourke argues, are essential sites of study, because they are the key for understanding how individuals interact with their social environment.[43] Ute Frevert has led historians in the study of emotions as a powerful force in social, cultural, and political life that deserves investigation. In particular, she links the study of emotional damage to the experience of psychological trauma in the context of war: what feelings do individuals repress or release? How do they express their emotions? How are their emotions damaged or distorted?[44]

The Great War altered the ways in which men expressed and perceived their emotions. The terror of war caused men to revolt against masculine expectations that required them to repress their fear and anxiety. Historians have analyzed one of the most dramatic examples of mutiny against masculine ideals of stoicism and emotional repression: shell shock. Shell shock was not only a reaction against the unbearable psychological stress experienced in the trenches; as Elaine Showalter has argued, it was also a rebellion against prewar masculine norms that required men to restrain their emotional responses to trauma. The symptoms of shell shock served as outlets for men to display fear and anxiety.[45] This desperation to find an emotional outlet can even be found in men who were not debilitated by uncontrollable shaking, spasms, paralysis, and other visible signs of mental trauma.

In their letters home, men reached out to women for emotional support, and many readily expressed their need for comfort, love, and intimacy. Similar to how they performed masculine gender roles, men also performed emotions. This can be reconstructed from their letters and front newspapers, where men sometimes simultaneously expressed feelings that oscillated between accepted, hegemonic emotions (loyalty to the fatherland, toughness, self-control) and emotions that were discouraged under masculine norms (anxiety, neediness, vulnerability). It is tempting to identify certain expressions of emotion as "authentic," especially when a soldier intimates to his wife or girlfriend his "real feelings." It is perhaps more accurate to interpret the fluctuating, complex

expressions of emotion found in letters as evidence that men wrestled with how they presented their emotions to women and other men, as they wavered between accepted "masculine" emotions and emotions that they could not control under the strains of combat.

Their performance of different emotions depended on the receptivity of their audiences, whether male comrades or women at home, and whether they perceived these audiences as able to comprehend the psychological effects of the war. Historians have often suggested that comradely bonds with other men filled the gap left by separation from women. However, soldiers' letters reveal that men still called on women to deliver emotional support through the mail. In his work on the emotional lives of British soldiers in the Great War, sociologist Michael Roper demonstrates that even if they became frustrated with women who allegedly could not comprehend the trench experience, men still sought their primary emotional support from wives and mothers.[46] At the same time, total war put a tremendous strain on men and women, in particular because men found it difficult to convey to women the traumatic experience of mass violence.[47]

Historians have recently pointed to humor, often including the most macabre and cynical forms, as sites for examining men's emotions and mechanisms for coping with the stress of the front.[48] The relatively safe zone of humor in trench newspapers allowed men to explore a rich fantasy world in which they expressed desires to possess "feminine" emotional characteristics, including loving other men. Cartoons and feature articles in trench newspapers joked about increasingly dissatisfying relationships with women and portrayed loving other men as a desirable, acceptable, and necessary part of the trench experience. Men experimented, at least through playful humor, with fantasies of gender transgression and the idea of "becoming women." This appealed especially to those who expressed fatigue with living under the burden of the heroic ideal and the male universe of violence. In their humor, they expressed a desperate hope that they could be better "comrades" if they could more openly express emotions of love and tenderness.

Male Sexuality and the Great War

The history of sexuality is a central part of this study of the private world of German soldiers. This book uses soldiers' voices to reconstruct how men perceived sexuality and to analyze how war influenced their behaviors and assumptions.[49] In studying the history of sexuality, it is crucial to emphasize that the actual sexual behavior of men is elusive and often hidden. There is much more evidence of their perceptions of sexuality, rather than their experiences.

As historian Dagmar Herzog argues, total war allowed men to experience sexual pleasures in an environment outside traditional social structures and control.[50] Sources reveal that men experimented with, redefined, and reevaluated existing gender and sexual identities, often in ambiguous ways. Trench newspapers contain examples of sexual humor and erotica produced by soldiers and thus provide a glimpse into tensions and fantasies within a space that, as historian Anna Clark notes, is otherwise hidden from historians.[51] Influenced by Judith Butler's emphasis on the importance of performance of sexual behavior and constantly shifting constructions of gender over self-perceptions of identity, Clark highlights the significance of "twilight moments"—sexual acts that are socially taboo but that individuals still engage in despite feelings of shame or embarrassment.[52] Though it is perhaps impossible to determine what sexual acts front veterans actually performed, soldiers' media reveal that they were fascinated with behaviors that may have been socially unacceptable but that seemed to offer promise of comfort or relief in the otherworldly universe of the trenches.

Interpreting these "twilight moments" is challenging. Scholars analyzing the history of homosexuality have played a leading role in showing historians how to uncover "hidden history." As Helmut Puff observes, when analyzing homosexuality from the perspective of subjects, it is important to differentiate between acts, behavior, and identity.[53] Dagmar Herzog recently observed that historians need to be sensitive to the complex emotional layers of sexuality, as "sex meant different things to different people," ranging from delight, to excitement, to habit, to insecurity.[54] Male perceptions of sexuality, and their relationships to prevailing ideologies about sexuality, were extremely complex. What men actually did, and what they considered normal or desirable, is difficult to reconstruct. However, it is possible to reconstruct how they imagined sexuality and experimented with behaviors, or experimented with how they perceived those behaviors.

Historians analyzing the history of sexuality in the Great War have concentrated on battles over the venereal disease (VD) epidemic as the most conspicuous site of anxiety over male sexuality. While military authorities tried to monitor and control VD, which they saw as primarily a threat to the male body's ability to effectively wage war, civilian organizations mobilized to control what they perceived as a moral crisis triggered by sexual hedonism.[55] Homefront perceptions of sexual crisis can be analyzed on another level: fears about the transference of sexual immorality to the home front. Sexual immorality was blamed on traditional "deviants," "foreign" women who tempted morally upright German soldiers, and racial "others," especially Russian POWs who seduced weak-willed German women.[56] But the military also had to cope with a growing fear that the war was producing psychosexual pathologies in men

damaged by the trench experience. This included returning soldiers inflicting sexual violence on women and children.

While there has been substantial research on military and state control of sexuality, there has been relatively little research on how soldiers responded to authorities' attempts to intrude in their sexual lives. The "heroic ideal," which celebrated the abstinent, self-sacrificing warrior, seemed increasingly condescending and inhumane to men who had to deal with the hardship of the front. Many men felt entitled to sexual gratification as a relief from the stress of modern war, and they begrudged interference from what they saw as an unsympathetic and aloof civilian population. Paradoxically, just as men expressed the need for emotional comfort, they also expressed resentment toward women and found it difficult to relate to them. Men complained that sex with women, even with their wives and fiancées at home, had become unfulfilling, mechanical, and spiritually empty. Anxiety about this brutalization of sexuality was articulated not only by sexologists on the political left like Magnus Hirschfeld and conservative morality crusaders lamenting the erosion of traditional values.[57] This fear of sexual life becoming more brutalized and base was also recognized by ordinary soldiers struggling to cope with the psychological trauma of the front.

Masculinity has largely been defined in terms of how men perceived and related to women, but the war experience produced strong emotional bonds between men that require historians to shift their focus. John Tosh, for example, has called for a greater focus on homosocial dynamics, moving away from defining masculinity primarily as a mechanism of patriarchal control over women. Reconstructing masculinity requires us to consider how men related to other men and the ways in which male–male relations influenced their perceptions of normative masculinity and sexual behavior.[58] One of the goals of this book is to reconstruct how "subordinate" groups, including homosexual men, perceived dominant masculine ideals. The Great War had a dramatic impact on homosexual men, but the effects of the war on the homosexual rights movement has largely been overlooked by historians. Scholarship on the history of homosexuality in Germany has primarily focused on the formation of emancipation movements in the late nineteenth century, the "golden age" of gay culture in the 1920s, and the systematic persecution of homosexuals under Nazi terror.[59] Historian Robert Beachy locates the "invention" of homosexuality in late nineteenth-century Berlin, where there existed a "confluence of biological determinism and subjective expressions of sexual personhood" that recognized the homosexual as a unique being.[60] I argue that the experience of total war had a major impact on how homosexual men conceptualized the nature of homosexuality and their identities. In homosexual rights organizations' newspapers published shortly after the war, many homosexual veterans used the memory

of the war experience to reinvent the image of the homosexual male, aligning themselves with the mainstream masculine warrior image.[61] Similar to their heterosexual comrades, homosexual activists glorified the nurturing, "feminine" side of comradeship, as long as there was no ambiguity that they were indeed "real men," as proven in the crucible of combat.

Interestingly, heterosexual soldiers' changing perceptions about emotions opened the door for homosexual soldiers to be more open about love, including physical expressions of love, between men. Homosexual men found comradeship to be an ideal prism through which to define their emotions and sexuality, and the front experience influenced the way men imagined themselves and their roles in society. Though the homosexual emancipation movement was diverse in its political views and theoretical perspectives on homosexuality, the war became a unifying experience through which homosexual men defined themselves. Many homosexual veterans embraced martial masculinity and contested the exclusively heterosexual imagine of the warrior male. The ideal of "comradeship," homosexual men argued, opened the door for homosexual men to assert that male–male love was not only acceptable but also a cornerstone of the defense of the nation. The war experience emboldened homosexual men to contest Paragraph 175, which criminalized sex between men, and combat stereotypes of homosexuals as "deviant" outsiders. Further, the front experience triggered debates between already disparate homosexual rights organizations over whether homosexual men were a partially "effeminate" third sex, as Magnus Hirschfeld theorized, or whether the war proved that "masculine" homosexual men were the ideal warriors for civil rights and postwar integration. As a result of their memories of the war, homosexual men found a new language and image to combat marginalization and redefine themselves as "normal" within a framework of hegemonic masculinity.

Focusing on the pre-1933 experiences of homosexual men, especially their experiences in the Great War, not only fills a gap in the scholarship but also allows an investigation into the history of gender and sexuality without being overshadowed by National Socialism. To avoid the temptation to categorize constructions of masculinity in the shadow of Nazi gender policies, this study deliberately attempts to analyze the history of masculinity separate from the National Socialist framework. While it is difficult to analyze notions of "comradeship" and militarized masculinity without anticipating the rise of National Socialist gender constructions, there is the danger of interpreting German gender history as a line leading to Nazi social policy. It is crucial to look at pre-1933 interpretations of masculinity on their own so as not to ignore nuanced, complex perceptions of manliness that elude postwar political attempts to appropriate and simplify memories and images of the war experience.

Between 1914 and 1918, men encountered a wide spectrum of emotions and experiences that demand analysis within that particular context of violence and upheaval. The war triggered fundamental changes in how men imagined the warrior image. It also profoundly changed how they perceived and expressed emotions and desires. The meanings of these new emotions and conceptions of masculinity and sexuality would be fought over by social and political groups after the war ended. But for many "ordinary men," the effects of the war eluded categorization and were more complex than political, medical, and military authorities imagined.

CHAPTER 1

The Ideal Man Goes to War

Ideals of masculinity became increasingly militarized in imperial Germany. Middle-class social organizations coordinated efforts with military, medical, and political elites to carefully construct a hegemonic masculine ideal based on the warrior image. While subsequent chapters will analyze ordinary soldiers' reactions to this hegemonic ideal and the behaviors and emotions they explored to cope with the stress of warfare, this chapter focuses on the dominant masculine ideal that was disseminated in imperial German culture before and during the war. It investigates three interrelated themes: the popular image of the "good comrade," idealized emotional and sexual relations between front soldiers and women at home, and military and civilian efforts to control male sexual behavior.

The nation's survival allegedly depended on the ability of every soldier to embrace the dominant ideal of the "good comrade," which required them to control their emotions, remain loyal to women at home, and suspend their sexual desires until the war was over. Prewar fears of "degenerate" threats to the male ideal, including homosexuality, heterosexual promiscuity, and lack of emotional self-control, strongly shaped how middle-class conservative critics perceived men at war. Many saw the war, which was expected to last a few months at most, as an opportunity to resuscitate decadent masculinity. The war provided a framework for clearly defining "good comrades" and loyal women on the home front versus degenerate "types." Men and women were imagined to be locked in a symbiotic, spiritually sustaining relationship, bound by mutual loyalty and dedication to the fatherland. This spiritual relationship, civilians hoped, was so powerful that it replaced men's sexual needs and desires at the front. Utilizing soldiers' mass media (in particular, army newspapers), civilian morality organizations, which included doctors, political leaders, and pastors, tried to win over the hearts and minds of ordinary soldiers by convincing them

to adhere to the ideal of a "good comrade" fixated on self-sacrifice and self-restraint, thus ensuring the survival of the nation.[1]

This chapter argues that the perception of front soldiers as heroic comrades changed in the wake of perceived sexual immorality. Civilian morality organizations accused men of capitulating to their selfish instincts, and the image of the abstinent, selfless front soldier deteriorated into fears that the war produced morally and sexually damaged men. Medical and religious authorities feared they were losing control as men succumbed to sexual promiscuity away from home, especially as the venereal disease crisis unfolded and the military began to regulate brothels just behind the lines. Soldiers' masculinity was largely defined and imposed by civilian authorities, who grew increasingly desperate to enforce the image even when they suspected that front soldiers had lost faith in the prescribed masculine ideal. Paranoia on the home front intensified, and anxious civilians organized greater pressure on military authorities to monitor sexual hedonism. To the home front, the venereal disease crisis signified more than just a threat to the nation's fighting strength; it also reflected home-front perceptions that infected men betrayed the nation's expectations for manliness and threatened to corrupt the German *Heimat*.

Hegemonic Masculinity in Imperial Germany

In nineteenth-century Germany, the concept of "masculinity" became increasingly aligned with a militarized notion of the "heroic ideal," which dictated personal sacrifice and absolute loyalty to the fatherland.[2] This prevailing model of masculinity, reinforced by conservative teachers in Germany's school system, required men to be fierce and aggressive soldiers, yet also capable of controlling their emotions in an effort to stay focused on making sacrifices for the nation. Emotions like love and compassion, especially when concerned with personal needs and desires, were considered unmanly, ultimately a threat to the heroic ideal.[3]

The idealized masculine image was defined against demonized countertypes. The image of the effeminate dandy became a lightning rod for social critics who argued that German men had become completely self-absorbed, indulging in sexually "deviant" behaviors without a care for bourgeois standards of self-control and devotion to the nation.[4] Emancipated women, neurotic men, Jews, and homosexuals were seen as the enemies of middle-class standards of discipline and chastity. Allegedly working-class tendencies toward promiscuity, homosexuality, and sexual violence threatened to spread like a contagion, according to conservatives who hoped to counteract this sexual plague with the image of a warrior male who transcended sexual needs and replaced them with complete devotion to the fatherland.[5]

In the decade just before the war, "manliness" was also becoming increasingly medicalized, as doctors took it on themselves to prescribe a bulwark against male degeneration. Leading psychiatrists in imperial Germany's universities and medical clinics warned that modern industrial society bred degenerate psychological drives and behaviors, including sexual perversion. Establishment doctors targeted socialism and "racial enemies" for allegedly spreading sexually deviant behaviors that eroded the German family and national life.[6] Most psychiatrists believed that the boundaries between "normal" and "abnormal" sex could easily be contained. Though they warned of the threats of modernity, doctors were confident that middle-class culture could keep its effects under control. In his classic 1892 work, *Degeneration* (*Entartung*), Max Nordau argued that while the machine age "ruined the nervous system," men with strong nerves and work ethic could preserve their manliness.[7] Influential Berlin sexologist Iwan Bloch, in his 1906 work *Sexual Life in Our Times*, wrote that "a properly functioning soul" with "strong willpower" could resist the corrupting effects of city life, cabarets, and temptation toward promiscuity and sexual licentiousness. Masturbators, perverts, homosexuals, and other "male hysterics," he warned, were a danger to the national community but easily recognizable and thus easily controlled.[8]

Fears about the spread of homosexuality dominated medical and popular debates about an alleged crisis in male sexual behavior. While some doctors warned that this homosexual "epidemic" came from below, as working-class "degeneration" expanded with the onslaught of urban life, there were also anxieties that the spread of homosexuality came from above, a symptom of aristocratic decadence. In the wake of the 1907 Eulenburg scandal, in which the Kaiser's confidante was exposed as a homosexual, middle-class critics questioned whether or not the aristocracy had lost control of the officer corps as a pillar of masculine virtue. Further cases of officers allegedly seducing their recruits led to Reichstag speeches calling for public inquiries into homosexuality in the Prussian officer corps.[9] The image of the Prussian officer, traditionally the central image of German masculinity, came under fire as the sexual behavior and secret lives of these aristocrats in uniform seemed to contradict their claims to be the defenders of German manhood.[10]

Germany's middle class asserted a carefully defined notion of the male sexual ideal. Under pressure in the wake of the Prussian officer corps scandals, the military underwent reforms that eroded the power of allegedly decadent aristocrats in favor of a more technocratic, industrialized military that emphasized "toughness" over aesthetics.[11] Right-wing critics, especially in the mostly middle-class German Navy League and Pan-German League, called for the old aristocratic leadership to be replaced by "real men" whose credentials were a "hardened masculinity" and middle-class values based on work ethic, merit, and

productivity rather than court connections. The bourgeois male was imagined to be a pillar of rational sexual control who resisted the temptations of "irrational" instincts. Male sexuality was idealized as rational and ordered, characterized by a strong will that maintained sexual restraint. In a larger Victorian context, the middle-class imagination cherished an image of stoic emotional self-control in which men could not only resist sexual temptation but also restrain themselves from complaining or reflecting on personal needs.[12] Through practiced restraint, men could protect themselves from the irrational, "feminine" passions that threatened to erode their naturally rational selves.

Fully developed "manliness" and heterosexual stability, conservative critics argued, could only be achieved within the context of the bourgeoisie's carefully defined universe of socially appropriate marriage. As Bärbel Kuhn has demonstrated in her study of single men and women in Wilhelmian Germany, greater pressure was put on men to marry in order to fit the middle-class ideal, as it was believed that married men focused their energy more intensely on social duties like work rather than the emotional stress of sexual competition.[13] Men were constructed as morally fragile before they married, as they became dependent on lower-class women, in particular prostitutes, for sexual gratification, which undermined their ability to remain rational and focused on their more utilitarian pursuits in the economic sphere.[14] Without proper discipline, "antisocial" behavior could spiral out of control. Men who delayed marriage were more susceptible to developing "sexual abnormalities," including homosexual tendencies. The stereotypical homosexual was seen as effeminate and symbolized male arrested development, immorality, and uselessness.[15]

Sexual restraint was a cornerstone of bourgeois masculinity. In 1908, F. W. Foerster, an advocate for Germany's Purity Leagues, argued that sexual restraint bolstered manly virtues like courage and discipline, while masturbation and promiscuity eroded strength of will and capacity for self-sacrifice.[16] On the brink of the war, Germany's middle class increasingly idealized a vision of militarized male sexuality, in which spiritual devotion and physical exertion for the nation could help men control their temptations toward degenerate sexual behaviors.[17] This self-control was essential to maintaining not only bourgeois values but also the needs of the national community as defined by medical and military authorities.[18] Germany's doctors, religious elite, and conservative critics eagerly sought a transformative event that could regenerate decaying masculinity and resuscitate traditional values threatened by rapid social, political, and economic change.

Since the early nineteenth century, German popular media had celebrated the warrior ideal as the foundation of masculinity and the basis for national regeneration.[19] During the Wars of Liberation, songs and poems sanctified "camaraderie" as a masculine characteristic and national value. The "*Vaterlandslied*"

("Song of the Fatherland"), written by historian Ernst Moritz Arndt in 1812, expressed the idea that God wanted brave men, loyal to the fatherland, to join their brothers in the fight to the death against the hated enemy.[20] Writers of a wide range of newspapers, literary publications, songs, and poems promoting national ideals described German manhood in contrast to that of the enemy, in particular France, which was seen as lacking the loyalty, honor, and other traits that defined male identity.[21] Popular media thus became an important instrument for constructing and disseminating notions of militarized, martial masculinity.

Popular culture portrayed Germany as a nation of comrades. After the 1870–71 Franco-Prussian War and German unification, the national community imagined through war memorials, religious commemorations for the dead, and the historical narrative built around Germany's war experience sanctified the idea that one could only become a loyal subject and member of the *Volk* through soldierly prowess. Self-sacrifice, obedience, and loyalty became part of the cult of militarism used to promote patriarchy, antidemocratic politics, and traditional social hierarchies.[22] War was seen as a testing ground for manliness, and it provided the opportunity for men to demonstrate their individual worth within the collective act of defending the nation. As Karen Hagemann argues, men sought new values in response to the dramatic social and cultural insecurities brought about by industrialization and political fragmentation, which tended to subsume men into a mass, collective culture that many found disorienting.[23] Through war, men could demonstrate their commitment to newly defined concepts of "manly valor" and "national sacrifice" that German poets and cultural elite enshrined as essentially "German" male characteristics.

Notions of military camaraderie in the nineteenth century, which culminated in notions of "comradeship" during the age of total war, gave men a sense of meaning and self-actualization. The idea of a *Männerbund*, which provided belonging and emotional support outside traditional social structures while at the same time being worshiped by those same social institutions for protecting "traditional" life, appealed to millions of German men. Male camaraderie in battle allowed men to transcend the confines of bourgeois life through the extraordinary experience of war while simultaneously achieving middle-class values of status, respectability, and moral purity.[24]

Although they were imagined to be morally pure, common soldiers also had a bad reputation in the decades before 1914. They were known for their lewd songs and licentious humor, especially when they were in groups, where men expected each other to engage in ribald behavior. In the late nineteenth century, men were expected to gain sexual experience when they joined the army, which turned them from innocent boys into "men."[25] Besides straining relations with civilians, who often criticized soldiers for being too aggressive and out of

control, soldiers' sexual behavior also became a medical problem. By the 1880s, 35 out of 1,000 soldiers in the German army were being treated by army doctors for venereal diseases. Garrison commanders tried to control their soldiers' sexual adventures by prohibiting them from frequenting inns where they could find prostitutes. The military tried to deflect responsibility for this problem by pointing to soldiers' prearmy moral shortcomings or excusing soldiers by saying that it was their "nature" to let loose while away from the confines of home.[26]

Civilian-organized morality leagues would not accept the idea that it was natural for soldiers to escape, even temporarily, restrictions that had been placed on them at home.[27] To maintain the image of the morally pure soldier that civilians idealized, and to prevent the spread of venereal disease, men were expected to remain sexually abstinent while they were away from wives and girlfriends.[28] Moral crusaders in imperial Germany put considerable effort into monitoring soldiers' behavior, even while they were on the other side of the world. Protestant Christian missionaries, for example, created the *Deutsche Seemannsmission* (German Sailors' Mission, or DSM) to both educate and control German seamen. The DSM used the term "prodigal son" to describe merchant and imperial navy seamen who they saw as in a precarious moral situation where they were constantly tempted by the sexual possibilities available in ports in Buenos Aires, New York, and other foreign shores.[29] The DSM's efforts were based on a carefully constructed image of masculinity in which sailors were naïve but essentially good individuals who were taken advantage of by immoral, foreign influences—namely, prostitutes. In this model of masculinity, men were victims of predatory prostitutes or even, especially in the case of homosexual relationships that sprouted during lengthy voyages, boredom. Missionaries surmised that once they were given care by the DSM, which provided cultural activities and community to help them stay connected to their fatherland, sailors would remain chaste.[30]

The "Good Comrade" Goes to War

With the outbreak of the Great War, the War Ministry transcribed and published in mainstream newspapers letters by soldiers that propped up the masculine ideal. The letters were carefully selected to reassure families in Germany that their men fulfilled the image of the ideal soldier. These examples of soldiers' letters reinforced the dominant image of loyal, patriotic, self-sacrificing young men who deserved utmost devotion from their families at home. In one letter from August 1914, a soldier named Gerhard described German soldiers as so morally upright that they were even admired by foreign women in occupied territories. He revealed how local women in Luxemburg liked German soldiers, who reminded them of their own husbands. He was particularly thankful to

women in the small town of Esch: "The population was *very* [emphasis in text] friendly, because the Gelsenkirchen mine nearby had a huge factory with many German workers. The men were for the most part conscripted, and the women treated us as they would have treated their husbands. They gave us plenty of food and drink."[31] German men saw themselves as respected across national boundaries. German soldiers who stayed temporarily in the town expected loyal women who missed their husbands to treat visiting soldiers as their own. After a lengthy description of heroism in battle, Gerhard signed off saying, "In obedience to God, deepest love, yours Gerhard."[32] Thus he saw himself as fulfilling the idealized masculine image of the pious, universally idolized heroic warrior.

The letters that were approved for the mass media publication by the War Ministry painted an image of soldiers as successfully making a transition from youth to manhood through their experience in war. These letters described the memories of the idyllic *Heimat* and youth in loving terms but also asserted that men unquestioningly accepted their new, manly roles as self-sacrificing warriors ready to die for the nation. One 1915 letter by Wilhelm S., included in a file of letters transcribed by military officials for publication, details this simultaneous longing for his home town and manly acceptance of his fate at the front:

> If I think about how much love and effort the dear people of Wilhelmsdorfer gave it makes me feel like I'm ungrateful. Just as the greetings from Wilhelmsdorf make me happy, old memories arise and swiftly overwhelm me. That's where I spent a good part of my youth, where I was a free and happy child and could frolic about in God's nature. Memories!
>
> Since then I've become a man and must live in the land of the enemy, to fight for German truth against lies, British treachery, Slavic deceit; and this battle for truth makes us proud and gives us courage. For this reason we may lay down our lives. That is an honor, a piece of sacrificial courage, and also a service to God.[33]

The letter attempted to reassure his family that he still cherished his memories of home and his carefree childhood but that he now embraced his new role as a man with unwavering devotion. Wilhelm S.'s War Ministry–approved narrative conveyed his sense of pride in evolving to manhood and the expectations that came with it.

Civilian authorities tried to influence men's thinking and behavior. Civilians worked closely with the military to utilize one of the most popular media read by soldiers, front newspapers, where values of comradeship, sacrifice, and honor were carefully defined for the millions of men conscripted for battle. Doctors, religious leaders, and officers used front newspapers, especially the army newspapers that were most carefully controlled and edited by officers and civilians, as a forum for prescribing ideals of masculinity. Morality crusaders emphasized

that through willpower and faith in comradeship, men were expected to be content and able to endure the privations of life at the front. In December 1916, after several hundred thousand German soldiers had been killed at Verdun and the Somme, Chaplain B. Pfister, assigned to the 14th Infantry Regiment of the German Army's 3rd Division, encouraged men to ignore their personal worries and problems despite the long, drawn-out war. "Be confident and be a man!" Pfister wrote in *Der Dienstkamerad* (*The Service Comrade*), encouraging men to be cheerful and courageous, as the war was the will of God and fatherland.[34] Pfister specifically observed that "true manliness" required men to be "loyal, obedient and friendly." To earn the "crown of manliness," men had to believe in God, who gave them the strength to show true comradeship by fighting hard against the enemy, which showed their love and faith in their comrades.[35]

Army newspapers reinforced a strict dichotomy between "feminine" versus "masculine" characteristics. The more official newspapers, in particular, published rather sentimentalized, reverent tributes to the nature of male warriors and their feminine counterparts. In a January 1917 edition of *Die Somme-Wacht* (*The Watch on the Somme*), women were idealized as "sensitive souls" who bore the "scepter of morality." Women were spiritually calm, connected to nature, and driven by love and loyalty. They were "divine roses in an earthly life" who deserved respect and honor from men. In contrast, men were dominated by "restlessness" and "wild power," and being prone to "crushing violence," they were most suited to fighting against Germany's enemies.[36] Women needed to be protected by the masculine warrior, but they also served as an emotional bulwark for men. The essential differences between men and women were depicted as immutable, and war further solidified the distinctive traits of the two genders.

Humorous cartoons and features in front newspapers often depicted different male and female "types," which further reinforced dichotomies between "good comrades" and the unmanly "other." The *Kriegszeitung der 4ten Armee* (*War Newspaper of the 4th Army*) regularly published comedic supplements that often poked fun at men who were effeminate. Such men were selfish, interested more in art and culture than military duty, physically deficient, and guided by their emotions. One sketch of a corsage-wearing dandy clad in a suit and top hat labels him a "comrade" but mocks his desire to go to the opera rather than a "fun comedy," which is "unheard of" for a front soldier. He enjoys flirting with girls, suggesting he is heterosexual, but he would rather spend time dressing up for opera night than joining his comrades for less cultured entertainment.[37] In another cartoon with an accompanying caption, a slim-shouldered young recruit who complains about drill and barely shows competence in training is lambasted as barely meeting the standards of manhood. Only with patient encouragement from his comrades, who teach him the virtues of hating the

enemy, singing songs while marching off to the troop train, and loving the fatherland, can he become a real man.[38]

Degenerate female types also appear in the same *Kriegszeitung* article, and they are closely connected to their degenerate male counterparts. Frivolous dancing girls distracted soldiers until they become neglectful of their duties. These women were portrayed as sexually attractive, displaying legs and cleavage in the cartoons, but they were also selfish and superficial. In contrast, "good" women willingly sent their men off to the front, dutifully providing them with food for the long transport on the army trains. Modest in dress and demeanor, the "good" woman was depicted not as a provider for men's temporary sexual needs but as an emotional provider for soldiers who were focused on their military obligations. Thus the ideal woman supported not only the individual but also the nation.[39]

Mutual Comrades: Idealized Relationships between Men and Women at War

Men were expected to show comradeship to not only their colleagues at the front but also the loyal women who supported them at home. Domestic life and women's behavior had become increasingly nationalized in imperial Germany, and this was intensified during the war.[40] Men and women were expected to be mutually bound by their service to the nation, whether as mothers or warriors. Poems and feature articles in front newspapers were filled with tributes to loyal women who, along with God and faith in the fatherland, gave men psychological strength to fight bravely.[41] In *Der kleine Minenwerfer* (*The Little Bomb-Thrower*), a poem dedicated to "The German Wives" promised that men will "shield the German nation and protect house and home" in the "holy war." With God and their wives at their sides, the poem asserts, total victory is secure. The battles may take men away from their home, but honor and loyalty "consecrate" men's souls to their wives.[42]

Women as nurturers were mobilized for war. Nurses, with whom millions of wounded men came into contact during the war, saw men at their most vulnerable. Unlike women on the home front, nurses were perceived as exceptional, because they personally witnessed the traumatic reality of the front, and they shared an intimacy with men that drew respect and awe.[43] Soldiers projected on to nurses an image of almost transcendent purity, worshiping their role as perfect mothers and caregivers. In *Der Kamerad* (*The Comrade*), a low-budget newspaper produced by and for war wounded at military hospitals behind the lines, numerous articles and poems were dedicated to nurses. "Our Wilhelmina" was idealized for her "friendly expressions" and willingness to "play games, make fun and tell jokes" that cheer up the traumatized survivors of

the trenches.[44] Men expressed awe at the contrast between the brutality of the trenches and the loving care they experienced under the watch of their nurses. Virtually helpless as they waited for their wounds to heal, soldiers were inspired by the domestic "nest" provided by "the good sisters" in hospitals.[45]

Soldiers imagined nurses as perfect caretakers who, in providing domestic comfort and emotional support, embodied ideal feminine characteristics. One grateful soldier marveled at how these women were "sweethearts, mothers and wives" (*Geliebte, Mütter, Frauen*) all rolled into one personage.[46] As chaste, perfect women, nurses occupied a unique zone in the minds of front soldiers. At the same time, nurses had an intimate, gritty knowledge of the reality of the trenches. Men shared a bond with these women that resembled "comradeship." Further, soldiers had to negotiate a hint of role reversal, as wounded men became dependent on women, both physically and psychologically. Writing for *Der Kamerad*, a sergeant portrayed wounded soldiers as emotionally helpless as traumatized children.[47] In his poem, the nurse rescued soldiers by providing a sense of normal existence and sharing love and friendship with her damaged men. Though they occupied a different sphere and possessed a different nature in the imaginations of brutalized men, "good sisters" came exceptionally close to being "good comrades," sharing the traumatic experience of the front firsthand. Though nurses, as women, were essentially different, they built bonds with emotionally fragile men, entering into a relationship in which men could become dependent on them while at the same time remaining masculine, as prescribed by their status as front soldiers.[48]

Women at home had little idea of the horrors experienced by men at the front, but they could still provide a form of comradeship from behind the lines. The good woman showed her commitment to comrades on the front by remaining sexually abstinent. The *Liller Kriegszeitung* (*War Newspaper of Lille*) dedicated considerable space to detailed articles about pure, chaste women spiritually bound to their husbands. In "Loyalty" by Heinrich Zerkaulen, the war's effects were recounted through the eyes of the beautiful, blond Gretel, who is anxious and lonely after two years of waiting for her husband Peter to return. His letters promising imminent victory gave her psychological strength as she convinced herself that her individual needs were less important than the national cause. "I know that love must be struggling throughout Germany," Gretel admitted, and she resigned herself to the notion that the war was more important than her individual needs.[49] Women were depicted as if they were in a parallel universe with men, sacrificing themselves for the nation. Like their husbands, they were expected to "hold through" (*durchhalten*) without complaining and show the courage and hardness of will needed to achieve victory.

Similar to men, women's bravery was defined as the ability to display self-control and self-sacrifice. Soldiers' newspapers depicted women as passive and

grateful for their husbands' steadfast defense of the fatherland, meaning that they did not distract their men with their "selfish" needs in the face of national crisis. In "Our Wives Are Brave" in the *Liller Kriegszeitung*, "Lieutenant L." described the emotional state of his "little wife" ("*Frauchen*"). He idealized her for suffering through the "dangerous and trembling anticipation through difficult hours" that dominated the home front "without complaining and yammering." Despite her essentially fragile femininity, his wife could muster up strength and courage, as "their [women's] soft psyches breathed new life into their strong, resolute wills."[50] Lieutenant L. imagined that his wife gained this strength by reading the *Liller Kriegszeitung*, where accounts of heroic soldiers gave her confidence and she derived her own sense of determination reading about other women in her situation:

> My young little wife read the "Liller" just a few days ago. It is during the twilight hours when thoughts take form and her yearning for her beloved husband becomes greatest. My little wife discovered her reflection in the "Liller." She writes to me that every other woman must be as happy as she is to know that we, the field-grey men, may be in pain, but the strong determination of women give us the determination to hold through to the very last, even if misery and despair want to sneak into our hearts.[51]

Lieutenant L's "little wife" is his perfect fantasy of the ideal, selfless woman on the home front. As a figment of the soldiers' imagination, the ideal woman was dedicated entirely to bolstering her husband emotionally, in this way serving the fatherland by keeping him psychologically focused on his duty. Her sense of honor and national loyalty was thus defined entirely through him.

Civilians held up the image of the chaste, loyal, idealized woman at home as fodder for male fantasies. In addition to bolstering the front soldier's will to "hold through" with their self-control and willing to sacrifice personal needs, military and civil authorities tried to reassure men that dreaming of women at home provided sufficient sexual satisfaction. In one *Liller Kriegszeitung* poem, a pharmacist named Dr. Ehrlich wrote from the point of view of a lonely ordinary soldier who dreams of his girlfriend while bullets fly overhead: "Girl, I often think of you out there day and night / [. . .] In many worried hours I felt much better / imagining that I kissed your splendid red lips." Women guaranteed not only a haven of sensuality in the poem but also the promise that men would gain respect for their manly performance fighting the nation's enemies: "And smile upon me with your rose mouth / Tell me: 'You shall return home from the heat of battle in honor, dearest.'"[52] The civilian writing this poem created an interesting fantasy regarding how soldiers at the front survived psychologically. In Dr. Ehrlich's version of the front experience, loyal and sexually attractive girls

on the home front gave men an outlet, at least in their imaginations, to distract them from the stress of fighting.

The imagined "good" woman was ultimately a virginal, spiritual figure, often represented as a transcendent muse for suffering soldiers. Popular postcards depicted women as dreamlike figments of soldiers' imaginations, giving men a psychological outlet while they endured the stress of the front. One series of postcards produced in 1915–16 titled "I stand guard in the dark and gloomy midnight" depicted soldiers standing watch in an idyllic grove of trees. Each card in the series showed a superimposed dream image of the soldier embracing or holding hands with his beautiful wife, with an accompanying poem about the wife's "loyal heart" and "sincere kisses" even when "love is far away."[53] Such images clearly inspired real soldiers in the squalor of the trenches. A soldier from the 83rd Infantry Division sent one of these postcards to his wife from the front in late July 1916, only a few horrifying weeks after the outbreak of the Battle of the Somme, which inflicted half a million German casualties. In prose that mirrored the sentimental poem on the postcard, he assured her that he was healthy and thought of her constantly while he endured life in the trenches.[54]

This image of a ghostlike woman in the idealized *Heimat* permeated front newspapers. The cover of a supplement to the *Liller Kriegszeitung* offered a drawing of a soldier steadfastly standing guard, while behind him is an equally determined mother nursing her son, both of whom are framed by a halo. The caption stated, "The soldier (*Feldgrau*) protects the *Heimat*."[55] The soldier and wife/mother presented a perfect dichotomy of the dedicated front fighter and the resilient, loyal woman on the home front. This dichotomy created some tension for soldiers as they psychologically tried to commit to both worlds.

On one hand, the madonna-like German woman motivated the front soldier to fight for her honor and survival. However, she could also distract him from his manly duty as a warrior. In a 1917 edition of the *Scharfschützen-Warte* (*Snipers Watch*), soldier Willy Runge recounted how mesmerized he was by the exciting, patriotic spirit of 1914. He dreamed of becoming the perfect hero, longing to display the courage of Siegfried and the medieval knights while facing the thunderous guns of the enemy. However, at night, he dreamed of his sweetheart, Lilly, who "tortures" him with the promise of a life away from the front. He also dreamed of a "wild battle" in which he "enthusiastically attacks the enemy," but these images were encroached on by visions of beautiful Lilly, wearing a laurel wreath and inviting him to join her on her heavenly cloud. In his dream, his bayonet is transformed into a perfume spray bottle, and his heroic exploits evaporate as he imagines his future as a civilian. When he wakes up, he announces to his father that he wants to volunteer.[56] Willy's message was clear: though Lilly is the pure, ideal fantasy, one must exert the will to break free from the safe, comfortable domestic bliss and join comrades in battle.

Front newspapers suggested that women were useful fantasies to help soldiers survive psychologically, but real women were portrayed as a problem if they came too near the front in any role other than as motherly nurses. In the exclusively male, militarized front environment, there was little space for actual women, who were depicted in sketches and feature articles as a nuisance with their superficial, flirtatious desires. In one cartoon for *Die Scheuner Kriegszeitung* (*The Barn War Newspaper*) a sergeant condemned "Those damn girls!" who gawk, smile, and giggle from behind his line of parading soldiers.[57] Though occasionally flirtatious and always attractive, women were also a distraction from military duties.

Soldiers' newspapers also contained comedic features and cartoons that defined images of the "good" woman in contrast to women who were problematic. In many ways, the "good" German woman was contrasted with the "other," which was the foreign woman under occupation. In the trench newspaper, *Der kleine Brummer* (*The Little Buzzer*), a publication handwritten by soldiers and full of irreverent, sometimes risqué images in addition to patriotic sketches and poems, each of the four installments issued in 1915 contained excerpts of a long-running story titled "The Paradise of the Underworld." These were presented as the "diaries" of a mysterious French woman, named Josephine Neuvillette, who recounts her exploits with German and French soldiers. In addition to narrating her spy work and gathering intelligence on Germany's latest weapons and troop movements, the "diaries" provided details regarding this French woman's character and values. Always flirting to get her way and obsessed with the superficiality of her image projected in fashion and style, Josephine is represented as a shallow, manipulative woman.[58] Compared to spiritually deep, emotionally sensitive, and loyal German women, women in the occupied territories were seen as dangerous.

Women of enemy nations were portrayed as not complete women. Women on the other side tried to seduce and sabotage German men, but they were also gender ambiguous and sexually confused. British women, for example, were represented as losing their grip on their feminine nature. In the *Liller Kriegszeitung*, a cartoon of an androgynous woman captioned "Newest English Fashion" poked fun at the enemy's gender confusion. With mostly feminine traits—carrying a ladies' handbag, and wearing a plaid skirt—the cartoon figure's military tunic, army boots, short hair, and hat that looks suspiciously like a helmet all suggest that she has been masculinized by war, deserving only mockery for her ambiguous nature.[59] In contrast, German women remained distinctly "feminine," despite the pressures of total war. They could contribute to final victory without disrupting traditional social structures and bourgeois conventions for women.[60]

"Enemy" women were further devalued in soldiers' newspapers as objects that did not deserve respect. Serving as the "whore," in opposition to the German

woman as the "madonna," Eastern European women in particular were seen as less than human, sexually promiscuous, and physically dirty and uncivilized. In the *Zeitung der 10. Armee* (*Newspaper of the 10th Army*), a Russian woman is mocked for cheating on her husband and having a baby with a German soldier. In another army newspaper, Polish women are portrayed as sexually available to German occupiers.[61] On one hand, the sexual objectification of allegedly willing foreign women under occupation served as a tantalizing outlet for men in soldiers' newspapers. Treated with a good dose of humor, it was safe to mock "bad" women for all their traits that made them polar opposites of the loyal, chaste German *Hausfrau*. At the same time, the sexually available French and Russian women who were objects of entertainment in the newspapers were also treated as dangerous threats to not only soldiers' moral character but also their health and thus the survival of the nation.

The Campaign for Sexual Abstinence: The Home Front Mobilizes to Monitor Their Heroes

While reassuring soldiers that their wives remained chaste on the home front, the military prepared to cope with the reality of millions of sexually frustrated men on the combat front. The spread of venereal disease (VD) that threatened to weaken the army's fighting capabilities drew considerable resources from the military, which feared an epidemic that could incapacitate the army's ability to fight. Hospitals in cities like Freiburg, where soldiers in transit to the front mixed with an ever-expanding market for prostitutes, overflowed with infected men and women to such a degree that beds for VD patients had to be set up in lecture halls and makeshift clinics.[62]

After the stalemate that set in during the winter of 1914–15, the military began an unprecedented level of intervention into the private lives of men and women to monitor and control sexual behavior. In a March 1915 letter exchange with the State Secretary of the Interior, Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, bombarded with numerous reports from military doctors, declared that the VD crisis had reached an epic scale that threatened the nation's survival. The weakening of the German army's fighting strength and the potential disaster VD posed for the health of the front demanded "an energetic state intervention," Bethmann-Hollweg observed, including measures to protect against the spread of the disease.[63] Military and state authorities established sex education programs, distributed condoms, and regulated prostitution in an effort to curtail the threat of VD. Sex was rationed as the military attempted to take control of soldiers' sexual lives.[64]

The military attempted to control prostitution on the Eastern and Western fronts as well as bordellos in Germany, which generated lucrative business

with millions of young men entering war service and separated from social controls of home. Civilian organizations, including the German Center for Youth Welfare (*Deutsche Zentrale für Jugendfürsorge*), called on the Bavarian War Ministry to organize regular medical examinations for prostitutes, isolate and treat men with VD, and educate soldiers on how to avoid infection.[65] The Baden-Württemberg and Prussian armies also mobilized VD prevention campaigns by early 1915. The Prussian War Ministry organized lectures for soldiers on the potential consequences of alcohol abuse, which doctors argued led to higher rates of infection, as drunken men were less likely to abstain from visiting prostitutes.[66]

As the military mobilized its resources to deal with the VD crisis, it struggled with a chronic shortage of doctors trained to treat men who were infected. The head of the Bavarian Army's field hospitals complained that doctors at the front were not adequately trained to identify symptoms of VD, and thus many infected men continued to evade treatment and unknowingly infect further individuals.[67] Because medical personnel were lacking, the government called on businesses involved in birth control before the war to provide the products and medical advice. Ready to profit off of the booming market for prophylaxis, condom manufacturers enthusiastically gave their support to the military's regulation of sexuality. Luitpold-Werk in Munich, which manufactured Senori condoms, wrote to the Bavarian War Ministry indicating that they were glad to help the troops and could provide whatever bulk quantity of products was needed at the lowest prices on the condom market. They also suggested that they could send trained hygiene consultants to show men how to comfortably put the condoms on and could advise women on how to disinfect their vaginas before intercourse in order to ensure bacteria-free sex.[68]

Condom distribution and brothel regulation suggested a tacit admission on the part of the military authorities that men were having extramarital sex at the front. However, civilian interest groups considered these programs for regulating sex to be counter to national values, and they made a concerted effort in soldiers' media to promote what they regarded as the best solution for coping with the sexual displacement of German soldiers and their families: abstinence. Morality organizations, well-established before the war, mobilized their media campaigns to promote this abstinent warrior image as a countertype to the supposedly selfish brothel-visiting soldier. The idealized front fighter was supposed to be so focused on the nation's survival and final victory that he did not require the solace or escape of sexual pleasure. Propagandists tried to reassure the home front that their husbands and boyfriends could easily suppress their sexual instincts by channeling their energies toward battle. Army headquarters released reports of the heroic deeds performed by front soldiers, carefully censored for

public consumption, that portrayed men as filled with "desire and love" (*Lust und Liebe*) only for victory as they tried to break through enemy lines.[69]

The military officially asserted that sexual abstinence was optimal in order maintain fighting fitness, but they had to deal with a skeptical audience. In a booklet on the medical effects of flying published by the air force (*Luftstreitkräfte*), pilots were encouraged to avoid promiscuous sex because it was physically draining and it could lead to venereal disease: "In terms of sexual intercourse, moderation and precaution must be practiced to prevent long-term damage (this is not at all a judgment from the moral standpoint). If one is to be afraid of bad consequences due to excessive sex, one must also remember that there is the danger of infection. Each infection makes one unable to serve at the front for weeks. Becoming unable to serve is your own responsibility and must be avoided at all costs."[70] Interestingly, pilots were told this was not a judgment about their moral character but strictly a matter of staying fit for duty. The air force played on their pilots' sense of commitment to fighting, and they suggested that men were not prohibited entirely from sexual activity but only needed to take precautions and avoid excess.

Soldiers at the front apparently did not take these official warnings very seriously. Writing for the frontline newspaper *Der Flieger* (*The Flyer*), medical corps Captain Dr. Fischer criticized soldiers for treating VD as a joke. He promoted abstinence as not only the best means of disease prevention but also a soldier's duty. Aware that soldiers saw abstinence education as futile, and that even many civilians were fatalistic about whether soldiers would abstain, Dr. Fischer tried to counter assumptions that men could not control their sexual urges:

> In the general population it is widely viewed that for most men sexual intercourse is a "necessity." That is nonsense. One can go for a very long time without it and not experience any damage to one's health. It's certainly all right to have to exert will-power and be abstinent, but it's also damn difficult! It is rather easier to ask a mature man to do this. And if one gets the feeling that one must let a few drops loose and then it becomes a total flood, well, then one is even more damned, as one is then certain of sexually transmitted infection.[71]

Many men simply refused to exert their willpower, Dr. Fischer alleged, and they rationalized that sexual abstinence was going against nature. The doctor then tried to scare his readers with detailed, graphic descriptions of different kinds of VD and their symptoms, including oozing chancre sores, paralysis, heart attacks, and other health disasters. After a thorough review of the consequences of sexual promiscuity, Dr. Fischer admitted that some men would continue to have sex with prostitutes anyway, and he provided advice on prophylaxis. Condoms, including brands by Viro and Samariter, could be purchased at

pharmacies, or as a last resort, men could wash their genitals after having sex with prostitutes. "However, all of these protective measures are not certain," Dr. Fischer reiterated. "The only sure-fire method is abstinence. Each soldier must realize that venereal disease is like a self-inflicted wound. It subverts the performance of our sacred oath to serve the fatherland."[72]

Dr. Fischer's advice on using condoms reflected a concerted effort by the military and medical establishment to preach abstinence but also a realization that they had to prepare for soldiers who were unwilling to embrace the prescribed abstinent-warrior ideal. Military intervention did not stop once condoms were distributed. Doctors also followed up by investigating how frequently men were having sex and whether they were actually using their readily available condoms. When they registered at military hospitals and health clinics to meet with a doctor for any condition, men were asked to fill out surveys asking about their sexual behavior. The surveys asked them to state whether they used prophylaxis and to provide precise descriptions of exactly how they used it.[73] Some of the most extensive efforts to control male sexual behavior were developed in the navy, which, even before the war, conducted workshops to educate soldiers in how to use condoms and hired doctors to inspect sailors just before and after they sought recreation in port cities.[74]

Morality crusaders on the home front were not satisfied with the military's efforts, which they saw as a hypocritical double game. Employing increasingly militarized rhetoric about the battle against sexual immorality, conservative groups put ever greater pressure on the government and military to more aggressively enforce sexual abstinence. Fusing medical and religious interests, the Coalition of Men's Associations for the Fight against Public Immorality published a monthly newspaper, *Volkswart* (*The People's Watch*), in which they argued for a restoration of "Christian morals" as the most effective means of combating venereal disease and national degeneration. According to the association, the fight against "immoral sexual intercourse," which they defined as any sexual activity outside marriage, was a key part of the struggle for the nation's racial fitness and survival. In order to stem the threat of sexual promiscuity, they advocated teaching men the benefits of sexual abstinence. In addition, they argued that men's sexual instincts could be better contained with more aggressive measures against prostitution, including closing all bordellos regulated by the army just behind the front and in the homeland.[75] The association's representative, Dr. Anton Rath, asserted that in addition to sweeping laws against prostitution and VD, condoms should also be banned, as they encouraged promiscuity.[76]

While most civilian groups attacked the military's condom programs as counterproductive, some conceded that condoms were necessary as a last resort. The *Bund für deutsche Familie und Volkskraft* (Association for German Families

and National Strength) published pamphlets for soldiers that touted the benefits of early marriage, exercise, and (if one must have sex) condoms as means of avoiding the spread of disease. Hoping to distribute them in barracks and at the front, the pamphlets contained testimonies supposedly from actual soldiers who expressed regret for contracting VD. In one letter, "Emil" writes to "Paul" admitting shamefully that he is being treated in the hospital for VD while Paul still bravely fights for the fatherland. Emil writes, "I want to warn all comrades about the dangers of VD and the need to protect yourself. One cannot tell the difference between healthy and unhealthy girls, and you cannot be certain even if you use protection." Emil recriminated himself for being "stupid," and he expressed envy for Paul's loyal wife.[77]

The military used mass media on the home front to promote abstinence and reassure civilians that the army was in control of soldiers' sexual lives. In 1915, mainstream mass-market newspapers including the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (*Frankfurt Newspaper*) and the *Berliner Tageblatt* (*Berlin Daily Edition*) published articles by doctors on the threat of venereal disease and sexual hedonism at the front. According to Prof. Albert Neisser, who was appointed by Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg as an authority on the problem of venereal disease at the front, the "gateway" that led to VD infection was alcohol addiction and its consequences. Soldiers rationalized, according to Neisser, that since they faced overwhelming stress at the front, they were entitled to seek relief through drinking. With "no opportunity for sexual intercourse," and nothing but "the heat of battle," men turned to alcohol, which led to chronic drunkenness. When they returned to quarters behind the lines, "they ran to be with loose women and infected themselves!"[78] Prof. Neisser argued that seeking sexual relief from the psychological stress was normal but could be easily overcome if only men had the willpower to avoid alcohol and subsequent sexual promiscuity. While many believed that sexual intercourse was an insurmountable natural instinct, Neisser lamented, it was in reality possible to control if only men would admit that they possess the will, and responsibility, to "paralyze" their sexual drives. If they could only accomplish this self-control, Neisser concluded, it would eliminate the growth of prostitution and the spread of disease.[79]

It was entirely masculine to remain sexually abstinent, civilians argued. As doctors joined civilian organizations to promote abstinence at the front, they were careful to reinforce an image of abstinent men as masculine, heroic, and acting in the interest of national survival. Abstinence was more than just a matter of protecting one's health. It was a way of defending the *Heimat*. To place more pressure on the military's efforts to control sexual behavior, the medical faculty at the University of Halle formed the *Deutschen Aerztebunde für sexual Ethik* (German Medical Association for Sexual Ethics), which linked sexual abstinence to military victory. The war demanded the utmost moral purity,

wrote the association's representative Dr. Anton, in order to ensure final victory over Germany's enemies. Only strong-willed men were brave enough to be abstinent. According to Dr. Anton, soldiers needed "emotional courage" to control themselves sexually. Real "heroes" remained focused on their duty, while the "debauched" (*Lüstling*) threatened to betray the nation.[80] Interestingly, Dr. Anton argued that the conditions of the front, which were so physically and psychologically draining, should make it easier for men to remain abstinent, as their sexual drives would be diminished: "Now is the time of heroes; the overcoming of weariness, pain, and physical demands (*Körpergefühle*) will be easier in such times compared to peacetime. In short, whoever experiences this great difficult time—and this is the same in all cases—is so completely distracted and busy that it is easier to overcome sexual arousal than it is in peace time."[81] For Dr. Anton, war was ideal because it obliterated the selfish demands of each individual, requiring all Germans to subsume themselves into the national cause. It was not futile to resist sex, doctors claimed, and "real men" did not demonstrate their manliness by notching up conquests with prostitutes. Instead, sexual purity was the mark of heroic men who dedicated themselves to the fatherland.

Christian leaders echoed this argument for abstinence. Dr. Aufhauser, a military chaplain, wrote for the Catholic periodical *Allgemeine Rundschau* (*Daily Magazine*) to assert that "the sexual question" was a top priority for the military, not only because it was a question of religious ethics and medical hygiene, but because sexual immorality threatened both the combat and home fronts. Soldiers who practiced self-control were national "heroes" who set the example for a "pure and immaculate" (*rein und makellos*) life dedicated to protecting home, family, and fatherland.[82] Dr. Aufhauser recommended a wide range of measures to combat soldiers' temptations to seek sexual relief from the stress of combat. These included mandating sexual abstinence as a military duty, promoting constant sex education behind the lines, confining soldiers on leave to barracks so they could not seek sexual adventure in the cities, and imprisoning men diagnosed with VD. Doctors who belonged to morality organizations called for soldiers to be punished if they contracted sexually transmitted diseases. One medical expert suggested that the military institute a policy that required "sexual abstinence as a duty for the entire army in the field, including all enlisted troops and their superior officers for the duration of their service at the front." It was recommended that all soldiers who contracted VD, as well as men who did not disinfect themselves within six hours after "their indiscretion" with prostitutes, should be punished.[83]

In order to accomplish this, Dr. Aufhauser recommended the expansion of a vice police (*Sittenpolizei*) force that worked closely with doctors and religious leaders to uncover VD-infected "criminals." Increased religious training was key to improving soldiers' moral character. In order to encourage men to remain

morally pure, he recommended that the military close down all bordellos and ban beer from soldiers' quarters. To replace them, he suggested Christian reading groups and lemonade. These measures had a racial dimension as well. Dr. Aufhauser emphasized the need to protect the home front from the menace of "other peoples" who might mix with German troops and weaken "the German race" through miscegenation. As "sons of a heroic race (*Heldenvolkes*)," real men should be able to distinguish between moral and immoral behavior. Dr. Aufhauser believed that the "joyful courage to sacrifice" sprang from religious faith and strong will, "which are essential to the preservation of our national and political essence."[84]

Deepening tensions emerged between the military and home-front morality crusaders over how to control male sexual behavior. While the military was satisfied with men taking prophylactic steps to prevent the spread of VD, the main threat to fighting health, the home front tenaciously held on to the image of men as sexually "pure." Morality crusaders were concerned that unless men remained abstinent, soldiers would suffer spiritual crisis and moral degradation that was just as threatening to the nation as the spread of venereal disease. In a lecture delivered at the Berlin philharmonic in March 1915, Bishop Michael von Faulhaber of Speyer—who would later become archbishop and famously join with other Catholic clergy to negotiate the Concordat with Hitler in 1933—called on Christians to help support "the moral strength of faithful soldiers in their heroic fight." The war, he feared, would erode the moral condition of men who succumbed to sexual temptation while separated from home. The front experience would shake the spiritual foundations of the troops, von Faulhaber argued, unless loyal civilians equipped men with not only the weapons of battle but also pure moral consciences.[85] For Christian leaders like Faulhaber, soldiers' moral purity in the spiritual sense was as much of a concern as healthy bodies.

This tension between home-front morality organizations and the military exploded over the issue of bordellos condoned and supervised just behind the front lines by the military. In contrast to the military's policy of managed prostitution, civilian organizations advocated the shutting down of all bordellos and total sexual abstinence for soldiers. The *Deutscher Zweig der Internationalen Abolitionistischen Föderation* (German Band of the International Abolition Federation), led by middle-class women, complained to the Bavarian War Ministry that it was disappointing for women on the home front to hear that men who could not handle the stress of the front resorted to seeking comfort with prostitutes. Though the military, they argued, had the best intentions in regulating prostitution, this system only demoralized the troops and weakened their resolve to fight. The federation thus advocated a total prohibition on extramarital intercourse.[86]

The source of temptation, according to civilian morality crusaders, was the degenerate, predatory, immoral woman who persuaded soldiers to find sexual gratification away from their wives. In 1915, the *Deutsche Gesellschaft zur Bekaempfung der Geschlechtskrankheiten* (German Society for the Fight against Venereal Diseases) sent a leaflet, approved by the Bavarian War Ministry, to distribute to regiments at the front. The leaflet called on soldiers to think of the nation and their wives when tempted by "weak-minded" girls:

> Each soldier has the sacred duty to remain healthy for his fatherland, doubly-so in time of war, when the greatest demands are placed on one's abilities. There is nothing that causes more damage to one's health and performance abilities than syphilis and gonorrhea. They cause not only great pain, but also make men worn-out and unable to march or fight, never mind the terrible health damage that these illnesses cause later in life. One gets venereal diseases from weak-minded (*leichtsinnige*) girls and women, almost all of whom have VD and then give it to men with whom they have sex. Soldiers must therefore strongly avoid these women in enemy territory as well as in the *Heimat*, where he is quartered. Married men should think about how they can infect their wives and bring unspeakable misfortune to their families [. . .] Soldiers must remain healthy and fresh for the duration of the war in his own interest as well as in the interest of the fatherland, which needs the strength of each individual for this fight and for freedom.[87]

In some cases men were told not only to avoid physical contact with these women but also to avoid even fantasizing about them. The *Deutscher Bund der Vereine naturgemässer Lebens- und Heilweise* (German Coalition of Associations of Natural Ways of Life and Healing) insisted that abstinence could only be achieved if men cleansed their minds as well as bodies. In addition to regularly cleaning genitals and avoiding alcohol, the association recommended the following in their 1915 flyer sent to frontline troops: "Avoid coming into the proximity of women and girls with whom you might stray from the path; also keep your thoughts pure and discipline your fantasies. Avoid those conversations and jokes that are sensually stimulating and make it difficult to control yourself."[88] Thus morality crusaders attempted to control not only the bodies but also the minds of soldiers, calling on soldiers to avoid even thinking about "impure" women.

Morality crusaders regarded sexual immorality as a threat that was comparable to foreign enemies. Middle-school teacher J. Fröhling, a representative for the *Verband der Männervereine zur Bekämpfung der öffentlichen Unsittlichkeit* (Coalition of Men's Associations for the Battle against Public Immorality), called on the Interior Ministry to distribute his organization's pamphlet, "Teutonic Strength and Sexual Questions," which warned about the moral decline unfolding at the front. In his prescription for a Christian-based counterattack,

Fröhling offered militaristic rhetoric that described the front as a dangerous moral landscape that needed to be contained to preserve the home front's survival. In Fröhling's estimation, the home front was at war with not only foreign enemies but also sexual hedonism spreading from the front, requiring civilians to wage war, with "purity and morality" as their primary weapon. "Germany is facing its most urgent crisis," Fröhling insisted, "[. . .] for which special measures are needed to fend off this onslaught of immorality (*Ansturm der Unsittlichkeit*) that has caused a unique national crisis."[89]

The Home Front under Siege: Sexually Damaged Men Return to the *Heimat*

Some civilian groups perceived the war experience itself, rather than just "debauched men," as the epicenter of a national emergency. Religious leaders and doctors behind these morality crusades preferred to imagine soldiers as innocent victims of a morally corrupt environment, but there emerged a creeping suspicion that damaged men might bring their immorality home. In his treatise *The Wrong Path and the State of Emergency of Sexual Life in War*, Dr. J. Spier-Irving described German soldiers as "harmless and good-mannered" but in danger of corruption while separated from the bourgeois norms and controls of civilized German society. His chapters provided a long list of anxieties about innocent German men encountering the sexual other. While quartered in the homes of foreign families, Dr. Spier-Irving argued, German soldiers could not help but be influenced by the pornographic photos and novels that were widely available in France, transforming German men into something that resembled filthy-minded Frenchmen.[90] Even worse, the "primitive instincts" of Polish culture and the "brutal sexual instincts of colored British and French soldiers" would infect vulnerable German soldiers.[91] Dr. Spier-Irving sympathized with German troops who faced death and despair, constantly tested by foreign women and the promise of sexual adventure, but he feared that the barbaric sexual behaviors learned at the front would infect bourgeois culture at home unless these men could resist degeneration into sexual chaos.[92]

As the front displaced millions of men from traditional social structures and distorted male sexual behavior, separation and deprivation also corrupted women's sexual lives, according to anxious civilians. Similar to Britain and France, an explosion in commercial sex industries on the home front resulted in an outpouring of popular anxiety about uncontrolled sexual instincts.[93] A representative from Düsseldorf's *Rheinisch-Westfälische-Gefängnis-Gesellschaft* (Rhineland-Westfalen Prison Association) wrote in early 1918 to minister Count von Hertling about the "moral damage" caused by the war, which resulted in skyrocketing numbers of women and girls falling into prostitution

and contracting venereal diseases. The rising number of women turning to the crime of prostitution, according to the association, was a direct outcome of the separation of men from their wives and girlfriends: "The war has hit us with not only wounds to our bodies and lives, but it has also at times caused monstrous moral emergencies (*ungeheure sittliche Notstände*). The women's prisons are overflowing, the paperwork at the skin ailment clinics of our hospitals is overwhelming, and the challenge of health care education has risen substantially. Along with this comes the countless numbers of girls and women who are ripped away from their families because of the war."[94] Association activists were pessimistic about whether this crisis was reparable. While they hoped that many of these fallen women might return to their rightful place in the domestic sphere, they also feared that the war and separation caused permanent damage:

> Certainly most of them will find their way back to a domestic stove (*häuslichen Herd*) or similar setting as before in order to earn their living in an honest way. But it is just as certain that a large number will not survive these times without internal damage (*inneren Schaden*). All of these circumstances are terrifying—that a very high number of girls and women will morally fall, and that we will have to deal with a rising number of these cases who commit sexual offenses professionally or find a way down this path.[95]

Fighting prostitution and the accompanying crisis of venereal disease was a whole new front in this war, requiring utmost vigilance and national commitment, according to the association. Working-class men and women were seen as particularly susceptible to moral breakdown under the strain of wartime separation. The prison association's prescription for confronting this crisis included the building of "workers' colonies," where both women and men in crisis could receive counseling and economic assistance. Specifically, association leaders envisioned evangelical and Catholic advisors monitoring the sexual morality of workers in these colonies. These advisors would educate morally precarious individuals about the medical and psychological consequences of prostitution.[96]

Despite the military's reassurances that it could manage the spread of infection through abstinence education and management of prostitution, the numbers of soldiers afflicted with VD escalated. In January 1915, medical experts estimated that the equivalent of an entire army corps, more than 50,000 men, had been stricken with syphilis and gonorrhea and rendered incapable of fighting.[97] In Berlin alone, more than 1,000 soldiers in military hospitals were being treated for venereal diseases only three months after the war had broken out.[98] The military was overwhelmed. Soldiers desperately went to quack doctors for ineffective treatments, and unregulated bordellos continued to thrive behind the lines and in Germany's cities. According to some moral reformers, prostitutes

on the home front posed greater danger for soldiers than those on the combat front, as prostitutes at home were less regulated and thus more likely to be infected.[99] The state secretary of the Reich Judiciary Office (*Reichs-Justizamts*) informed the Ministry of Interior in December 1916 that in addition to centralizing medical treatment for VD, infected soldiers, as well as quack doctors, needed to be arrested in order to control the problem.[100]

By 1917–18, the image of the "innocent," essentially pure soldier had been replaced by fears of morally degenerate men who endangered the fatherland. In a February 1918 letter to the Ministry of the Interior, which organized the civilian police, the army warned that VD-infected soldiers posed a grave threat to their wives and girlfriends while on leave. The army cited a case in which a soldier, shortly after returning to his unit after leave to see his wife in Düsseldorf, discovered symptoms that led him to get a medical inspection. Tests proved he had gonorrhea, which he had most likely been infected with before seeing his wife. The military contacted the Düsseldorf police, who were unable to contact her to determine whether or not she had been infected. Military authorities took legal action against the husband for causing "physical injury" to his wife, and they launched investigations into the potential threat posed by soldiers on leave who were infected but not yet showing symptoms. Using this case as an example, the Prussian War Ministry warned that VD posed a serious national emergency: "It is of utmost necessity that the battle against venereal diseases must be considered as the greatest threat to national reproduction and national health (*Volksvermehrung und Volksgesundheit*), for which all promised measures need to be carried through in order to gain control over it." The War Ministry solicited any advice from the Ministry of Interior for how to proceed in handling this crisis.[101]

In February 1918, the threat of venereal disease spreading to the home front, and the failure of the military to control the crisis, once again became a topic of debate in the *Reichstag*. Representatives from a wide range of political interests expressed their commitment to protect the nation's moral fiber and the health of mothers, children, and youth at all costs.[102] This included establishing a law with a provision that anyone, including soldiers, who knew they had VD and yet failed to get medical treatment should be put into prison. As the state's police system prepared to intervene and arrest VD-infected individuals as criminals, letters of support from political groups poured in to promise enthusiastic support for the law. As the law was being debated, the German Society for the Fight against Venereal Diseases (*Deutsche Gesellschaft zur Bekämpfung der Geschlechtskrankheiten*) wrote to the Ministry of Interior to declare its support for imprisoning untreated individuals who knowingly spread VD. They targeted women as dangerous but concentrated on infected soldiers as the biggest threat to the nation's health. In addition to arresting those who refused to

get treatment, the anti-VD society recommended that all men who were being discharged or sent on leave should, as part of their military duty, be required to get a medical examination. The subsequent medical report should then be made available to civilian authorities in order to keep track of potentially dangerous veterans as they returned home.[103] The passing of the law encouraged civilian organizations who had long advocated greater state intervention in soldiers' sexual lives.

In practice, however, the law hardly made a dent in the VD crisis. In June 1918, the president (*Regierungspräsident*) of the city of Breslau wrote to the Ministry of Interior to complain that police surveillance of infected soldiers was ultimately ineffective. In his regional district in Breslau, and his former district in Saarbrücken, "all available police and resources" were directed at stemming the rise of venereal disease transmitted from soldiers to civilians while on leave. Despite working in consultation with a specially appointed state doctor and an army general who were dedicated full-time to identifying and controlling men with VD, very little progress had been made: "It is clear that only a slim minority of sick soldiers are being monitored and treated at home, and that the spread of venereal diseases in the army poses a major danger to the home front population."[104] While recommending the expansion of surveillance systems, the Breslau official admitted that the huge number of soldiers at different stages of illness made it nearly impossible to uncover and control the disease.

Conclusion

Sexual promiscuity and diseased soldiers were perceived as just as dangerous to the nation as international enemies, and with defeat and revolution in 1918, as will be explored in further chapters, sexual immorality would become part of the right-wing narrative that Germany had been "stabbed in the back" rather than defeated militarily. In contrast to their home-front "comrades," soldiers saw efforts to control their sexual behavior as little more than food for humor. Doctors and civilian associations combating VD and the "moral crisis" resented soldiers, who allegedly did not take the problem seriously. Tensions grew between civilians who saw sexual immorality as a threat to the nation and soldiers who felt entitled to escape into sexual promiscuity.

The VD crisis highlighted the deep schism between the home-front and combat-front ideals of masculinity. For civilians, the "good comrade" was essentially defined by his relationship with those at home. The ideal warrior was abstinent, self-sacrificing, and emotionally fixated on his loved ones in Germany. Conformity to concepts like "duty," "honor," and "loyalty" was defined primarily on the basis of whether or not men were psychologically and physically committed to the home front. Though many front fighters embraced the

civilians' vision of a self-sacrificing, heroic ideal, it would be mocked, retaliated against, and even dismantled by veterans who were disillusioned with or traumatized by the war experience. Chapter 2 examines the "crisis of masculinity" from the perspective of front soldiers, the impact of the trench experience on their perceptions of masculinity and normative sexual behavior, and the home front's deepening fears about the psychosexual effects of the war.

CHAPTER 2

Masculinity in Crisis

Sexual Crime, Dislocation, and Deprivation

Medical, religious, and military authorities made unprecedented attempts to assert control over men's sexual lives through mass media and militarization. However, it became impossible to conceal the contrast between the idealized image of the abstinent war hero and the reality of the war's brutalizing effects. The trauma of war triggered ever-growing anxieties about the war's impact on male sexuality. The failure to control soldiers' sexual lives fueled escalating home-front fears of a crisis of masculinity, including anxieties about promiscuity, disloyalty, homosexual behavior at the front, and fears about sexual violence committed by soldiers returning home. Ordinary soldiers' perspectives help us reconstruct this crisis "from below." This chapter focuses on soldiers' growing resentment of home-front expectations that they remain abstinent. In addition, it examines the impact of mass violence on their sexual and emotional life, including the effects of sexual deprivation.

The central argument of this chapter is that there was no homogeneous "crisis of masculinity." Instead, the nature of this crisis depended on whether it was seen through the prism of civilians' or combat soldiers' experiences and assumptions. The home front perceived the occupied territories just behind the combat front as a sexual Babylon. The VD epidemic that exploded in early 1915 tainted the image of the self-sacrificing, restrained, loyal warrior dedicated only to defending the fatherland. There was a widespread perception that sexually promiscuous men were not fully committed to their masculine duties of sacrificing themselves for the nation, and that the energy they put into fulfilling individual sexual needs was a betrayal of the masculine ideals of self-restraint and loyalty to both the nation and self-sacrificing women at home.

The venereal disease epidemic's effects on the male body were only one aspect of the army's sexual crisis. Military and civilian authorities also feared

the outbreak of psychosexual pathologies in men returning from the front. The military had to deal with soldiers on leave who inflicted sexual violence on German women and children, which generated anxieties about sexually uncontrollable soldiers victimizing the loyal home front. They could not control growing popular suspicions that the war actually had the opposite effect of what was anticipated. Doctors attempted to contain this crisis by characterizing these men as degenerate, inherently pathological criminals, but investigations often revealed that these men had no previous history of sexual violence. Military doctors rejected suspicions that the war actually had the opposite effect as what was anticipated, but the war seemed to produce damaged men. Instead of creating morally and psychologically healthy soldiers, the war's violence seemed to produce complex and disturbing cycles of violence that men could not control when they returned home.

Military authorities tried to contain sexual violence and characterize perpetrators as chronically degenerate aberrations, but these cases reflected deeper anxieties about the war unleashing broader sexual chaos. As soldiers sought promiscuous sex, became addicted to violence as a means of satisfying sexual urges, and engaged in sexual relations with other men due to deprivation, it triggered fears that that these were not the outgrowth of inborn "degenerate" tendencies but rather a response to the otherworldly front experience. The home-front population grew increasingly suspicious that the war had deeply transformed otherwise normal men, and doctors were hard-pressed to explain why some men who had no prewar record of sexual violence committed unspeakable crimes while on leave from the front.

Looking at the crisis of masculinity from the perspective of ordinary front soldiers illuminates another dimension to this crisis. For many men, the brutalizing effects of modern war made the "heroic ideal" seem obsolete, condescending, and even inhumane. Instead of subsuming their emotions and sexual energies into the demands of sacrifice for the fatherland, men sought greater physical and psychological intimacy as an antidote to the fear and stress experienced at the front. Many expressed disillusionment about the demands for self-sacrifice, and they sought immediate sexual gratification as a relief from the stress of war or expressed the need for more emotional support from women at home. Soldiers began to resent pressures, coming from what they saw as an ignorant and aloof civilian population, to conform to a masculine ideal in which they had to remain abstinent and control their emotions. Many men feared that they had to cut off their emotions just when they needed greater emotional sustenance in order to survive. Further, many soldiers felt a loss of self-control and were shocked by how the war had transformed them. Those who brought the violence of the war home were at a loss to explain how the brutalizing effects of the war altered their minds and bodies.

Soldiers' Responses to the VD Crisis

Records concerning the military's attempts at managing male sexuality and civilian organizations' reactions to VD are abundant, but it is more challenging to reconstruct how ordinary men perceived the "sexual Babylon" behind the lines that garnered so much attention and criticism. Men very rarely spoke frankly about the brothels in their letters home. Some painstakingly tried to reassure the home front that they found the houses of prostitution repulsive. Lieutenant (*Leutnant*) Hans W., who arrived in France in late 1915, wrote to his parents that the proliferation of the bordellos and the accompanying VD epidemic was the symptom of a decadent French culture that tempted good German men. "Most of the bars here have the character of a bordello," he wrote, "[. . .] that shows the true character of the 'grand nation'—absinthe and women."[1] More than a year later, this topic came up again in his letters, and he had to concede that some German soldiers gave into temptation in this decadent environment. But he reassured his parents that if any men were suspected of being infected with venereal disease, they would be quarantined in Belgian hospitals and not be allowed to return home.[2]

A different perspective on how ordinary men interpreted the venereal disease crisis can be found in letters by chaplains who had to interact directly with soldiers on what were seen as issues of morality as well as national health. Chaplains' accounts highlight the difficulties they had convincing soldiers to conform to a heroic ideal that required sexual abstinence. Whatever their opinions of the sexual behavior of soldiers, chaplains' accounts actually offer a candid glimpse into what men thought of the morality organizations and their efforts at sexual control. In March 1915, frontline chaplains in the Baden-Württemburg army received letters from an evangelical organization complaining about the "terrible gossip about the rise of sexual immorality in the army," including the appearance of bordellos and the VD epidemic. The chaplains' superiors asked them to report with their "own observations" to compare against the "unprovable generalities" circulating on the home front so that the evangelical organization could decide on their own whether there really was a crisis on the front and whether measures taken by religious groups to stem the tide of immorality were working.[3]

Field chaplain Richard Lempp of the 26th Reserve Division from Stuttgart responded with an amazingly blunt account of ordinary soldiers' resentment of the home front and a critique of morality crusaders' perceptions that the troops were a bunch of immoral louts. Chaplain Lempp's letter provides an interesting grassroots perspective on the mood of the frontline troops that contrasts sharply with the perceptions of evangelicals on the home front:

> It's impossible for the men to have immoral intercourse (*unsittlicher Verkehr*) while at the front. Only one case of newly diagnosed venereal disease has come to my knowledge in our division, but I can't be certain of this. The officers and troops feel that it is a bit of an insult when you always send us warnings from the *Heimat* to avoid immoral behavior, and the evangelical consortium must, when it raises a voice of warning, do it in a way that is very careful not to hit them over the head with it.[4]

Chaplain Lempp attempted to convey to his superiors that men felt condescended to and disrespected by civilians who accused them of immoral sexual behavior. In another letter, he also argued that it was hypocritical for authorities to expect sexual restraint when they organized brothel visits, especially for officers from army headquarters behind the front. The men in the front lines, he suggested, spent all their time fighting, while the middle-class officers enjoyed comfortable jobs and sexual temptations in the reserve lines.[5]

Chaplain Lempp's account provides an interesting glimpse into the resentment brewing between front soldiers and the *Heimat* over adherence to sexual purity. Lempp was rather exceptional in his criticism of what he perceived as overbearing Christian morality movements and military authorities whose hypocrisies were transparent to ordinary front soldiers. While Lempp believed that the fear of sexual crisis was overblown, most field chaplains warned that the there was an imminent moral collapse at the front in the spring of 1915. Chaplain F. Roos, who served in the front lines with the 54th Division of the Baden-Württemberg 4th Army, complained to his evangelical colleagues that the military was turning a blind eye to the "raging immorality" taking place at the front. Roos argued that the military needed to act more aggressively to contain and control the occupied civilian populations, and he brought his case to a conference of pastors, military officials, and doctors convened to discuss the VD crisis. Roos blamed the crisis on the "immoral Belgians," more than 12,000 of whom he alleged were infected with VD in the city of Ghent alone, who were "tempting our men to fornicate" just behind the lines.[6]

Serving in the same division as Chaplain Roos in late 1914–15, another chaplain, Gustav Gruner, also complained about the unfolding moral crisis that he witnesses at the front. However, in contrast to Roos's focus on the "immoral Belgians," Chaplain Gruner emphasized that men sought sexual release because they were stressed by combat. Gruner's letters included lengthy, stark narratives on the human costs of the war soldiers experienced in the trenches in October–November 1914. Gruner observed that field chaplains had their hands full providing solace to the overwhelming number of wounded streaming into the field hospitals. He also oversaw burials and prepared bodies for the return home. Gruner was optimistic that men took heart in their faith in God, and that they

could endure because they knew they had the support of the home front, but he was concerned about the "enormous pressure" and the "stresses of war" (*Kriegs-Strapazen*) that surrounded life in the trenches.[7] After attending the same conference on VD as his colleague Chaplain Roos in March 1915, Gruner sent a letter to their superiors in the evangelical chaplains' administration, in which he argued that the problem of venereal disease could not simply be solved through doctors' efforts to contain it. Men would seek relief as long as they faced the strains of combat, he observed. He criticized the military and its doctors for excluding pastors from providing religious counseling for young volunteers, which he believed they needed in order to make moral decisions and stay away from the brothels.[8]

A common denominator in morality crusaders' interpretations of the VD crisis was the blame they placed on "loose women," "immoral" foreign populations, alcohol, and the inability of German soldiers to control themselves sexually. What is largely absent from civilian narratives on frontline sexual crisis was the possible link between the stress of war and male sexual desire. Though the prevailing propaganda put forth the notion that heroic, ideal men channeled their sexual energies entirely toward defending the nation, there were suspicions that the stress of combat led men to seek sexual relief. Like many other social organizations, the *Deutsche Zentrale für Jugendfürsorge* (German Center of Youth Welfare) in Munich blamed the VD epidemic partly on the economic realities of prostitution, the lack of protective control imposed by parents of young men at the front, and the geographical distance between soldiers and their wives. However, the center also identified the psychological stress caused by war as a culprit for the crisis: "The strong sense of nervous excitation (*Nervenerregung*), which is unavoidably connected to the experience of combat, also has a strong effect in elevating sexual sensitivity (*geschlechtliche Reizbarkeit*) [. . .] after being in serious danger and under tremendous stress, there is the overwhelming need to affirm joy in life (*Lebensfreude*) and satisfy this need in an ideal way."[9] The Center of Youth Welfare recommended containing the VD epidemic by imposing regular inspections on prostitutes and educating men at the front about basic strategies for avoiding infection.[10] However, their recommendations did not address how to deal with this acknowledged link between the psychological stress of war and men's desires for sexual and emotional relief. As the stalemated war entered its second year with the horrifying realities of modern combat overtaking propaganda images of sterilized, heroic battles, military and civil authorities could not control the emotional toll of combat and its complex psychosexual consequences.

Sex Crimes Committed by Soldiers on Leave

The crisis caused by the venereal disease epidemic was only one dimension of the broader sexual crisis that tore apart the home and combat fronts. Court records reveal that military authorities struggled to contain men who committed sexual crimes against German women and underage girls while on leave. Soldiers arrested for sex crimes presented a specter of potentially dangerous, pathological men who victimized the resilient home front. The military tried to compartmentalize these men as degenerate, inborn criminals who happened to be in uniform. However, case studies reveal military doctors' and civil authorities' anxieties about whether or not the heroic war experience was actually producing damaged men.

Court-martial records dealing with sex crimes present considerable challenges for historians. It may not be possible to uncover the actual causes of sexual violence that soldiers inflicted on civilians while on leave, and the voices of soldiers who perpetrated these crimes are extremely rare, but these files do reveal prevailing perceptions that military authorities had about male and female sexuality, as well as perceptions about the causes of sexual violence in the context of total war. The military officers who presided as judges in these courts tended to characterize men who perpetrated sexual violence as falling into three categories: chronically degenerate criminals who could not control their pathological instincts; otherwise "good" individuals who temporarily lost control because of circumstances, including the psychologically damaging effects of the front experience; and men who were lured or tempted by women, whom judges often blamed for the crime. A common denominator in military judges' reports was their tendency to minimalize the responsibility of men who allegedly could not control their actions. While the German media largely ignored reports of rape committed by German soldiers in occupied territories (which historians have demonstrated did indeed occur) as propaganda smears against the honor of German soldiers, sex crimes inflicted by soldiers at home caused much more consternation.[11] Officers presiding over accused soldiers could not reconcile the image of men who had a record of "good military conduct" with the unspeakable acts that they inflicted on women and children in their own *Heimat*.

From a legal standpoint, there were two major categories of crimes involving sexual violence against German civilians that appear in military files. The majority of cases were labeled "sexual crimes" (*Sittlichkeitsverbrechen*) under Paragraph 176 of the criminal code, which involved rape and attempted rape. Some of these cases involved sexual assault of girls under the age of 14. Fewer cases of sexual crime were labeled "unnatural sexual acts," which were violations of Paragraph 175: Germany's antisodomy law that criminalized sexual intercourse between men and sex with animals. The focus here is on the cases of

rape inflicted by returning soldiers, in particular on underage German girls. In her study of rape in the *Kaiserreich*, Tanja Hommen demonstrates that there was a prevailing assumption that male sexual desire was essentially violent. Sexual intercourse was perceived as an essentially brutal act, with men constructed as active, sexually aroused beings who coerced the resistant woman into sex. Rape was difficult to prosecute because it was assumed to be normal for women to physically resist men's sexual advances, to the point that men were expected to be aggressive.[12]

These cases of rape committed by returning soldiers must be analyzed in this context of imperial German society's assumptions about male desire and sexuality. In cases of rape and attempted rape, even rape of children, judges' reports often alluded to men being "sexually aroused" as a natural, even justifiable explanation for why they assaulted a woman or child. Further, judges often blamed victims for stimulating this supposedly uncontrollable male lust by allegedly flirting, not resisting enough, or placing themselves in situations that made men lose control. However, such cases also challenged imperial society's assumptions about male sexuality, prompting medical and military authorities to ask, Why did some men who had no previous record of sexual violence suddenly lose control when they returned home from the front? Did the war overstimulate the sexual instincts of otherwise restrained men or reduce their ability to control their violent sexual urges?

Some of Germany's leading psychoanalysts addressed these questions during and after the war. Sigmund Freud pointed to postwar violence, including sexual violence, as a manifestation of childhood psychosexual trauma, though Freud conceded that environmental factors, including the enormous stress of modern combat, could also trigger neuroses. The war played a critical role in pushing Freud to reevaluate psychoanalytic theory. After the war, Freud identified the "death instinct" (*Thanatos*) rather than the "life instinct" (*Eros*) as the central underlying drive in the human psyche.[13] The famous Berlin sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld affirmed Freud's argument that the increased violence of the war and postwar period was linked to the disruption of psychosexual drives. Hirschfeld argued, however, that the psychoanalysts' theory that the war stimulated preexisting psychosexual neuroses was not their most important contribution to understanding the effects of the war. Instead, Hirschfeld noted in *The Sexual History of the World War* (*Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges*) that Freud's link between the violence of the war and the unleashing of sadistic instincts, particularly the death instinct, was more crucial. Further, Hirschfeld emphasized that the war created an overall atmosphere that allowed normally repressed sexual drives to manifest in not only combatants but also civilians. This "release of sexual restraints" was fostered by the "libidinous effects of war enthusiasm"

beginning in 1914 and the normalization of violence that unfolded as the war dragged on for years.[14]

During the war, the military assigned sex-crime case evaluations to military psychiatrists, who trained in a medical establishment that rejected psychoanalytic theories on mental illness and the origins of criminal behavior. Psychiatrists' evaluations reflected prevailing medical theories that criminal sexual behavior stemmed from inherently degenerate pathologies and instincts that men acquired by heredity. Dr. Robert Gaupp, for example, provided psychiatric evaluations of soldiers who committed rape while on leave in Germany. Gaupp became a leading specialist in "war neurosis" at the University of Freiburg. He argued that men who manifested symptoms of psychological trauma were hereditarily degenerate "psychopaths" and that the war was a path for healing their chronic conditions.[15]

In September 1915, the military court in Stuttgart asked Dr. Gaupp to evaluate the case of Otto G., who claimed that due to psychological illness, he was unable to control himself during, or even remember, an incident in which he was alleged to have committed a sexual crime (*Sittlichkeitsverbrechen*)—namely, the rape of an underage girl. Gaupp indicated in his report that the 37-year-old Otto G. had undergone psychiatric evaluations since 1898 and had been diagnosed as possessing a "deviant sexual instinct" by doctors since long before the war. He had displayed signs of masochism and sadism, and despite his efforts to "become normal" by marrying a woman and for a time appearing to be a sexually healthy man, his "inherently degenerate perverse sexual instincts" persisted and he was arrested five times between 1898 and 1913 for exhibitionism. In 1914, Otto G. saw volunteering to go to war as an opportunity to redeem himself and show his character as a patriotic, morally upstanding individual.[16]

When he was arrested in April 1915 for raping an underage girl while on leave in Stuttgart, Otto G. claimed that he did not understand how the authorities could accuse him of this crime. He insisted that he was a person of strong moral character, as his war service attested, and that he had no interest in sexually abusing a child. He admitted that he might have abused the girl, but, he insisted, he was not a bad or abusive person and that he had no intention of hurting the child. He claimed that he must have blacked out during the incident. G. pleaded that he was temporarily insane when the crime occurred but he did not want to be declared mentally ill and confined to an asylum, because then he would be stigmatized as a danger to the community. He begged the courts to send him back to the front, and he hoped that if he did this he could acquire a pardon by performing brave acts in combat.[17]

Dr. Gaupp concluded that although Otto G. was a chronically degenerate, sexually abnormal individual, this did not excuse him from responsibility for his actions. Only if the individual suffered from an uncontrollable condition, like

epilepsy, Dr. Gaupp argued, could they claim that they were not responsible for their actions. Though Dr. Gaupp rejected Otto G.'s claim to not remember the crime, he did accept G.'s claim that he did not intend to rape the child. Gaupp was also impressed by G.'s desire to return to the front, and despite concluding that G. was an "irreparable sexual offender," Gaupp recommended only a "mild punishment."[18] The judges agreed and sentenced Otto G. to only one month in prison, and he was released to return to his battalion in the field.[19] One of the interesting aspects of Otto G.'s case is that the court and its appointed psychiatrist agreed that the front was the ideal path for rehabilitating a chronic sexual degenerate. They agreed with Otto G., who saw combat as a means for redemption and proof of moral character.

The courts concluded that Otto G. was a chronic sex offender whose prewar criminal behavior lasted into his military career. However, a number of men arrested for sexual crimes while on leave possessed no record of prewar criminal behavior, and these men claimed that it was the war, and not inherent psychological traits, that damaged their minds and turned them into sex criminals. While psychiatrists argued that combat experience was the best prescription for pathological men to achieve the masculine ideal, there were growing fears that men came back from war further damaged and even more dangerous. The former gardener turned infantrymen Eduard F. found himself accused of attempted rape of a girl under age 14 (violation of Paragraph 176). He had escaped punishment for another sexual crime in September 1914 when he gained a pardon by volunteering for the infantry. However, three years later, while on leave in his home town of Gmünd, he followed a ten-year-old girl on her way home from school and, on a secluded path, assaulted her by reaching his hand up her skirt while smothering her screams. The girl's cries alerted her father, who captured Eduard F. and took him to the police. When F. was arrested, he confessed that he had assaulted the girl and claimed that he was drunk, though the girl's father and police did not detect alcohol on him. Before the trial, judges interviewed Eduard F.'s mother, who indicated that she was worried her son was suicidal because his mental condition had deteriorated substantially after being at the front for three years, to the point that she called on the court to put her son in a psychiatric institution.[20]

Judges turned the accused over to Dr. Koschella at the psychiatric hospital in Stuttgart, where Eduard F. came under evaluation for the next four months. Dr. Koschella reported that F. came from a "seriously damaged" working-class family, with a mentally ill father who committed suicide. Other than his 1914 arrest, Eduard F. had no prior punishments and was described by Dr. Koschella as a person with a "timid and peaceful," even friendly, nature who was a dependable worker but who also occasionally showed signs of excitability and anxiety, according to his parents.[21] Eduard F. was weak-minded,

even "child-like," but "completely conscious of the charges against him." He expressed remorse about the crime, giving the excuse that drinking Schnapps had "damaged his mind" when he attacked the little girl. Dr. Koschella noted that his patient seemed to have "no deep-rooted affective sexual irritability," and he was impressed by his general good conduct in military service, including F.'s desire to help wounded comrades in the hospital where he worked.

The psychiatrist concluded that F. was of sound though weakened mind, influenced to some degree by intoxication when he committed his crime. He recommended that F. did not need to be confined to an asylum and that he should not be prosecuted for rape, and he noted that F.'s sentence should be reduced in consideration of his good military record.[22] The judges accepted Dr. Koschella's evaluation and reduced F.'s sentence, concluding that "the act was carried out only in a moment of lascivious excitement under the influence of alcohol," and they sentenced him to only a few months in prison for the endangerment of a child.[23]

While Eduard F.'s psychiatrist and the judges were careful to specify that his criminal behavior was linked to a temporary alteration of his personality induced by alcohol, F.'s mother insisted that he had been psychologically altered since his time in the war. Authorities did not acknowledge this as a viable possibility, and their reports completely detached F.'s sexual deviance from his military experience, except to say that his good conduct as a soldier proved that his attempt at sexual assault was an aberration. The military was careful to deny any possibility that soldiers' experiences at the front could turn them into sexual predators or intensify already preexisting inclinations toward sexual violence.

Rather than connect the war experience and sexual deviance, military and medical authorities preferred to maintain preestablished theories that linked sexual violence to hereditary, degenerate characteristics of individual soldiers. Judges and court-appointed psychiatrists explained that if individual histories did not contain a pattern of criminal sexual behavior, their behavior could be explained and partially excused by mitigating circumstances. Frontline experience was invariably referred to as evidence of their good character rather than the cause of their pathology. In the case of Johann K., who was arrested on suspicion of rape while on leave at home in 1915, he claimed that he was not cognizant of his crime because of repeated blackouts he experienced after a traumatic event at the front earlier that year, when he endured more than 48 hours under heavy bombardment until he was knocked unconscious and brought to a field hospital. Since that experience, he suffered from lingering headaches, delusions, disorientation, and dreamlike states of consciousness (*Dämmerzustände*), and, he claimed, it was while in one of these dreamlike states that he committed the sexual crime. He also claimed to hear voices. The doctor assigned to evaluate him pointed to Johann K.'s disturbing family history, which included abuse at the

hands of his alcoholic father, a mother who was a prostitute, sexual encounters with his sister since he was 14, and a record of theft and imprisonment. The doctor concluded that K.'s delusions and dreamlike behavior were likely due to a chronic degeneracy and possibly psychosis linked to an epileptic condition. But the doctor also noted that during the rape "there was not a condition of unconsciousness or ill disturbances of his psychological activities that could have obliterated his freedom of will." The judges agreed and sentenced Johann K. to ten months in prison before he was sent back to the front.[24]

Civilians on the home front had to deal with returning soldiers who were given reduced sentences by judges who believed that war service would reverse their pathological condition. In cases of attempted rape by soldiers on leave in Germany, including cases in which soldiers were arrested for sexually abusing children, judges gave perpetrators reduced sentences, citing their "good conduct" in war service. When former bricklayer turned infantryman Franz B. was first arrested in July 1918 for molesting a girl under 14, he was released under the conditions of a general pardon (*Gnadenerlass*) granted to veterans at this late stage in the war. He was arrested on two other occasions for molesting four girls between the ages of 4 and 8. In each instance, he lured the girls into a room where he worked with the promise of showing them pictures, and then he lifted their skirts and sexually abused them. After detailing the long list of abuse, the military judges indicated that a reduced sentence was warranted because "no severe or permanent damage was done to the children in sexual terms." They also noted that "the accused has conducted himself well in the military" and that he had seven children and a wife who were economically dependent, none of whom were ever attacked by him. The court sentenced him to one year in prison.[25]

Military courts took soldiers' records of good military conduct into consideration when they reduced their sentences for crimes committed in Germany. However, when men sexually abused women and children in occupied territories, at least in France and Belgium, judges increased their punishment because they damaged the image of the German soldier. Judges' concerns about this image can be seen in the case of Heinrich B., an infantryman brought to trial in a Bavarian army court in 1917 for violating Paragraph 176, which involved the sexual abuse of a five-and-a-half-year-old girl in the house where he was quartered in the French town of Athies. Trial records include an affidavit by B. in which he confessed that he lured the little girl into a room in the French family's house, where he sexually assaulted her. The accused, who came from a working-class background and volunteered for military service in 1910, had no prior arrests and a record of good conduct in his unit. The judges concluded that because the accused was drunk, and "the alcohol elevated his level of sexual desire (*Sinneslust*)," they would take into consideration what they described as

"mitigating circumstances." However, they imposed the punishment because "the accused through his behavior seriously damaged the perception of German soldiers in the eyes of the civilian population."[26]

Judges were perplexed when soldiers had no history of degenerate sexual abnormalities before their war service. In these cases, some military authorities begrudgingly acknowledged that there might be a connection between stressful combat experiences and sexual violence. A military court recognized this in the case for Eugen H., a single man who was a baker and military reservist before he volunteered for active duty when the war broke out. He had been posted at the front three times, and after his last rotation in the front lines between October 1916 and early 1917, he returned home for recuperation leave (*Erholungsurlaub*). On his first day at home, he invited two 11-year-old girls, one of them his niece, to go with him for lunch and a walk in the forest. According to the judges' report, he "lay down in the forest with the two girls and in a sudden fit of randiness (*Geilheit*) he grabbed the girls under their dresses and their undergarments and played with their sexual parts for a moment." Though Eugen H.'s voice does not appear directly in the court records, the judges indicated that his excuse was that his nerves had "collapsed" since his wartime experiences and that he had drunk copious amounts of wine on the morning of the crime. Despite "two insignificant civil infractions" in his record, judges noted that "in the military he always conducted himself well." In their conclusion, the judges acknowledged that Eugen H.'s war experiences may have influenced his behavior: "It cannot be refuted that as a result of his wartime experiences his nerves collapsed (*seinem Nerven heruntergekommen ist* [sic]) and he drank three quarters of wine on the morning of this Sunday in question, and thus it was difficult for him to resist these sudden feelings that overtook him." Though the judges did not reflect on the specifics of how combat had weakened his nerves, and subsequently his ability to control himself, their deduction that there was a connection between the front experience and the sexual crime represented an admission that the war damaged men psychologically. The court described the war-induced "collapse of nerves," the influence of alcohol, and what they described as the "lack of physical and sexual damage inflicted on the children" as mitigating circumstances that allowed a "limited sentence of six months in prison as sufficient."[27]

Military courts would also blame the victims for the perpetrators' sexual crimes. This can be seen in the case of Karl V., who was accused of molesting three girls in 1916. The tailor who volunteered for the infantry was on leave in Germany when, after a drinking binge, he hid in some bushes near a road and convinced two 12-year-olds and a 10-year-old to raise up their skirts and expose themselves. The girls explained that he offered the older girls ten marks and the younger girl six marks to do this, but the judges suspected that the girls took

the initiative and asked for the money in exchange for exposing themselves. The court concluded that Karl V. had violated the girls' "sexual honor" (*Geschlechtsehre*), but the judges cited his "record of good conduct in the military" and the fact that he "only intended to but did not actually attack" the girls as mitigating circumstances that warranted what they described as a light sentence of only six months in prison.[28]

Even in the cases of POWs who preyed on German girls, the girls were chastised by military courts for tempting soldiers and placing themselves in the situation that led to their rape. For example, French POW Emile F. was arrested for "sexual offense and slander" of the 17-year-old farmer's daughter at the German farm where he was assigned work duty. He repeatedly harassed the girl physically while they worked together, kissing her against her will, grabbing her breasts, and grabbing her from behind until she screamed and broke free. He claimed that she let him kiss her during work breaks and that she did not resist but actually encouraged him. The judges ultimately imprisoned him for eight months for "violent intent to fornicate with a woman." But the judges also indicated in their summary that "the girl was not cautious in her relationship with [Emile F.] and kept trying to come into his proximity, making it difficult to not give into his will." The girl was also "flirtatious and impudent" and "not very respectable (*unbescholtenes*)," according to the court, and she "failed to take into account the risk involved with interacting with Frenchmen."[29]

Most of sexual crimes dealt with by the military courts involved the sexual assault of adults and children, dealt with under Paragraph 176. However, court records also included cases of what they deemed "unnatural sexual acts" (*widernatürliche Unzucht*), which included behaviors that violated Paragraph 175—Germany's antisodomy laws that had been legislated since 1871. Though most of these cases involved prosecution of soldiers caught in homosexual acts, which will be examined in a subsequent chapter, the term "sodomy" was broadly defined to include "unnatural sexual intercourse whether perpetrated between persons of the male sex or between men and animals."[30] In the cases of bestiality investigated by the Baden-Württemberg army's military court in Stuttgart, judges were perplexed by the lack of preexisting pathological disturbances in soldiers who engaged in sex with animals while at home on leave. Court authorities noted that these men did not have prewar histories of sexual relations with animals, and up to the point they were arrested for bestiality, their conduct while at the front had been exemplary. In one case, Konrad G. returned home in 1916 to recuperate after being wounded and worked on the same farm he did before the war. One evening, a witness passing by G.'s parents' house noticed chickens flying about in their kitchen, along with screaming and commotion. When approached, Konrad G. fled, and the witness found a dead chicken, mauled and bloody after it was subjected to "unnatural sexual acts,"

which the court verified with a necropsy report on the dead chickens. The court took into account G.'s record of good conduct and the lack of any record of prior sexual behavior when they sentenced him to two months in prison.[31]

Judges were surprised to find that these men accused of bestiality appeared otherwise normal, and they rationalized these cases as aberrations in which returning soldiers were influenced by alcohol, sexual deprivation, and overexcitement that they could not control. Friedrich S., a 17-year-old volunteer in the infantry, sneaked into a barn where he was assigned work detail and attempted to have sex with a cow. The court noted that he did not get very far because the cow refused to stand still. Judges reported, "He looks completely normal and normally developed, makes a positive impression and was, as he indicated to the court, in the top of his high school (*Realschule*) class." Because he expressed regret, was young, and this was his first arrest, the court reduced his sentence and added that the young man clearly was unable to control his sexual excitement while on leave.[32]

In a similar case under the jurisdiction of the Bavarian army's court, several fellow comrades gave testimony that they observed noncommissioned officer (*Unteroffizier*) Friedrich V. having sex with a horse. One of the witnesses became suspicious when he saw V. going in and out of the company's horse stalls, where he heard the horses screaming and behaving in an agitated manner. When the first witness sneaked into the stall, he saw V. on a stool, pants open, thrusting into the horse from behind. The first witness exclaimed to the second witness standing there watching the scene: "I think he's screwing the horse."[33] The voices of these soldiers were rarely included in court transcripts, but this case was an exception. In his testimony in front of the court, Friedrich V. expressed shock at his own actions:

> When I got news from my wife that she was going to clear out of our apartment, I was very upset. This news made me extremely worried. Just after I began drinking beer and Schnapps and quickly became so drunk that I know longer was aware of what I was doing. When people told me the next day what I had done, I could not at all remember any of these events from the previous night [. . .] However, because of the alcohol consumption and because I had been thinking about the fight with my wife, I was sexually very agitated (*geschlechtlich sehr erregt*). I've had sexual experiences since I was 16, but never have I engaged in the kind of intercourse that people told me I did. But it's not inconceivable that I did it because I was overcome by sexual arousal.[34]

Friedrich V. struggled to explain what he did and could only imagine that he was unable control himself after fighting with his wife and binge drinking. Sympathizing with V.'s disbelief that he was capable of such behavior, the court

agreed that Friedrich V.'s actions were not indicative of his character, and they observed that he had never before been arrested or disciplined. V. was given only two weeks in prison.[35] The court agreed that he was clearly overcome by sexual frustration and the consequences of separation from his wife, but the underlying causes of this uncontrollable sexual excitability were left unexplained by the court.

Sexual Excitement, Emotional Numbness, and the Front Experience

The military was increasingly anxious that some men were psychosexually damaged by the war experience. In cases of men diagnosed with "war hysteria" or "war neurosis," most military doctors still argued that these were effeminate, hereditarily degenerate men with organic pathologies. However, some psychiatrists countered that the traumatic war experience may have caused symptoms of neurosis in otherwise healthy men.[36] These military doctors suspected that men diagnosed with "war hysteria" were, in addition to suffering mental breakdown, also sexually damaged by the war. Doctors were focused on finding ways to get "hysterical men" fit and back to the front, but there was also concern about whether or not these men would reintegrate into family life after the war.

Doctors mobilized to investigate the sexual effects of the war on ordinary soldiers. In 1918, the Labor Ministry authorized Dr. Lipmann at the Institute for Applied Psychology in Potsdam to produce the definitive study of psychological damage and the problems facing men as they reintegrated into postwar life. To evaluate soldiers recently returned from the front, Lipmann hired Paul Plaut, an officer who had experienced combat at Verdun and who had been doing police duty at a veterans' hospital in Berlin. Plaut was not a professional psychiatrist, but he had experience evaluating the psychological effects of the war by interviewing veterans regarding their emotional responses to stress and fear. Modern industrial combat, Plaut theorized, had unique physical, psychological, and moral dimensions. Waiting to be killed under shell fire, he believed, caused nerve damage in which the electrical streams that passed through the bundle of nerves in the brain were cut off, damaging motor coordination. In addition to this deadening of the nerves, men suffered complex emotional disorders. What concerned Plaut most was that while the physiological damage to nerves would heal, the "multifaceted, myriad emotional responses to the war" would persist. Even those who looked "normal," he predicted, harbored an "inner crisis" that undermined their ability to return to life after the trenches.[37]

Plaut collected several thousand surveys, which included a whole range of questions that focused on the sexual life of soldiers: "What are the main sources of your so-called excitement for war?" "Do your sexual desires increase in the circumstances of war, stress, moodiness, etc.?" "Are you drawn to danger—why?"

The answers men gave to these questions convinced Plaut that even healthy, "strong-muscled men" suffered from "new peculiarities." In addition to the tics, tremors, nightmares, and depression that were familiar signs of war neurosis, he found evidence of men becoming jaded to violence and even emotionally and sexually dependent on feelings of excitement produced by killing. Plaut determined that most soldiers surveyed became sexually aroused in combat, and on occasion transferred these feelings to other men, but their long-term response to this depended on their prewar sexual experience, marital status, age, and social class. Men from working-class backgrounds, whom he believed had less complex emotional lives, were more permanently damaged by the feelings of sexual excitement they experienced in combat and would continue to seek sexual gratification through "abnormal" means, including homosexual behavior. In contrast, he predicted middle-class men would more effectively reassimilate into postwar norms. Though the war tempted officers into "deviant" behaviors, they could control these feelings and quickly return to "normal," masculine standards of behavior, including self-control and heterosexual desires.[38]

Plaut believed social class shaped how men would respond to sexual excitement and violence, but he warned that the war also had long-term "moral" consequences across class lines. In particular, he predicted that war produced a morbid fascination with violence. Men tried to replicate the excitement of war by seeking sexual arousal through violence, which they experienced at the front to cope with fear and stress. Soldiers would then become addicted to "unnatural" experiences of violence and accompanying sexual release. On the surface, men adjusted by mimicking the outward behavioral norms of bourgeois society, but they actually concealed a whole range of psychopathologies hidden just beneath the surface. Even more common than sexual arousal in the face of violence was an obsession with images of terror that sapped men of their emotions and empathy for fellow human beings.[39] One soldier wrote in the survey:

> In the trenches lie the stinking corpses one on top of another [. . .] Over our group a shrapnel bomb explodes. The first man is dead: shrapnel in the head, he remains there in a sitting position until the next day, when we fetch him. The second, a corporal, dead: bullet in the neck. The third, a non-commissioned officer, shot through with holes like a sieve—head, chest, and hand shots. Life was sucked out of him. The fourth, helmet shot through. The fifth was me. The sixth, shot through the heart, dead. The seventh shot in the back. The eighth also dead. All from one shrapnel bomb. When one sees all that suffering, the air and all sense of desire certainly drains out of you.[40]

Many of these men withdrew into a state of being where all feelings of compassion and sensitivity eroded, replaced by a numb fatalism and isolation. Though

men did not explicitly make the link in their narratives, Plaut deduced that the numbing effect of violence also resulted in an erosion of sexual energy and a loss of interest in forming healthy sexual relationships and families.[41]

Soldiers rarely discussed the psychosexual effects of the war in their letters, memoirs, and diaries. However, as historian Bernd Ulrich argues, letters from the front serve as "psychological documents" of the war's traumatic effects, and they reveal much about the emotional effects of the war. Soldiers struggled to describe the breakdown of civilization and the distorted psychological and emotional universe they experienced in the wake of industrialized violence.[42] Descriptions of sexual brutality sometimes intertwined with the larger narrative about physical brutality that was such an essential part of men's narratives about disillusionment with the "heroic ideal." In an unusually frank and revealing series of letters to his fiancée, Laura, in 1916, Sergeant Hannes M. detailed the abhorrent behavior of German soldiers toward local women, which set him over the edge as he spiraled into deep disillusionment. After describing the decaying corpses rotting in fields, skeletal remains of horses in shell holes, and the starving children among the Romanian population, Hannes M. recounted this scene: "And on the streets drunken soldiers bragged about their conquests over Romanian females (*Weiber*). It was for a few hours that such horrendousness (*Grauenhaftigkeit*) lasted. Eventually people returned to their senses and order returned."[43] Disgusted by the sexual behavior of his comrades and the unbearable violence he witnessed at the front, Hannes M. expressed longing for a normal existence and the emotional comfort of his home and fiancée. Interestingly, perhaps reflecting his sense of fragmentation, he often used third person as he expressed his desire to be with Laura:

> I want to come home and hug my little woman whom I deeply love, and kiss you a thousand times because your Hannes is indeed so hungry for you, for your scent and your freshness and your life [. . .] It's this abominable war (*scheusslicher Krieg*) that hurts me so much, that I have to endure while I'm so distant from you, that has created such a different life for me compared to what you describe to me about home. You tell me of your narrow, peaceful world, in which everything is so incomprehensibly different than it is here [. . .] Laura, Laura, Hannes makes your heart heavy because he only tells you about the cruelty and suffering. But don't worry yourself! It will all undoubtedly return to normal. This war must eventually come to an end.[44]

Disillusioned with the "abominable war" that turned his world upside down, Hannes M. struggled to relate his experiences. Unable to comprehend the violence that surrounded him, repulsed by the behavior of his comrades toward local women, he fantasized about escaping into a world of love and comfort.

One of the most widespread psychological responses to violence in the trenches was the tendency of men to feel emotionally numb and fatalistic. Many men became worn down by their experience, and they often developed a deep sense of fatalism and indifference in order to survive from day to day.[45] At the same time, the stressful environment of the trenches caused men to hunger for emotional intimacy to compensate for the all-pervasive violence that surrounded them. Some men, like Hannes M., were able to confess their need for love and intimacy to their wives, girlfriends, and families. Most men, however, struggled to describe the psychological effects of the war's brutality. Writing in August 1916, in the wake of the Somme battle, Hans K. hinted to his aunt and uncle that he was at the end of the rope, but he held back: "Now it seems I have already served so long as a defender of the fatherland. Hopefully I don't have to serve much longer, because that would be horrendous. I suppose one shouldn't really have such thoughts about this."[46] While often hesitant to reflect on their experiences in letters to family and female companions, men were more forthcoming with other men about how the war caused a crisis in their values and altered their world view.

As men grew more disillusioned with the war, they felt most comfortable intimating their psychological distress to other men. In 1917, a soldier from a Baden-Württemberg regiment named WB wrote a series of letters to his comrade, Johann V., that illustrate this sense of fatalism about the war and a sense of numbness and remoteness from prewar ideals. Johann V. was a cavalry captain while WB was an only a sergeant (*Vizefeldwebel*) machine-gunner, yet WB assumed a level of familiarity and intimacy that suggested a close bond between the two men. WB expressed admiration for Johann V.'s "beautiful yellow rider's uniform" and "gladiator's face hidden by stylish hair."[47] WB's tender feelings for his comrade stood in stark contrast to his graphic descriptions of violence, and his need for an emotional connection counterbalanced the disillusionment with the spiritual hole left by war. War was nothing more than "filth, rats, mice, fleas and lice," and trench warfare turned men into helpless beings rather than heroic adventurers: "In it [the war] the masses are left to be passive heroes (*passives Helden* [sic]) bogged down in idleness."[48] While the aristocrats gave "lively lectures" about the glories of war, WB wrote, lowly enlisted soldiers had to endure "sinking into mindlessness and depravity" that had dominated the monotonous trench experience.[49]

WB intimated to his friend that there must have been an epidemic of mental illness that drove comrades and civilians to continue this war. Struggling to explain how this disaster could have happened, and how it affected him, WB adopted an almost stream of consciousness style that fuses humor with the grotesque:

> War psychosis, wrapped into the fog of a meteor, let's just say it: chronic atrophy of the brain, *Dementia militarilis bellicosa*. It's like something being evacuated out, and I'm not talking about the rectum. One no longer lives. One has only fragmented and infrequent feelings. Look, I want to publish a brochure: "The Inflatable Rubber Cushion (*Das Gummikissen*) in the World War." Don't laugh [. . .] I'll send you a really bad photo, in which you can see the stupefied expression on my face as well as the look of my only comrade here, my dog, the only one who still wants to feel emotions.[50]

All pretensions toward a stoic, heroic ideal were absent from WB's narrative on the psychological effects of the war. Instead, he described himself as a man who has become emotionally numb yet is also desperate to recover his sense of feelings, and to express his love for Johann V., WB finished this letter thus: "I don't know when the *bellum gloriosum* will come to an end. I hope it's not so soon—imagine the great deal of trouble it's going to be to have to feel again. I remain in love—your devoted WB."[51] Starved for affection and intensely lonely, WB closed his sardonic diatribe against the war and hollow old values with a vulnerable confession of love and self-doubt about whether he will ever be the same after the war.

Sexual Deprivation and Frontline Homosexuality

In the remote, otherworldly environment of the war, men who otherwise defined themselves as heterosexual experimented with homosexual relations. The impact of the war on Germany's homosexual rights movement, in particular homosexual veterans' perceptions of masculinity, will be analyzed in Chapter 5. The focus here is on men who engaged in homosexual behavior in the context of wartime sexual deprivation and stress. After the war, some men suggested that their homosexual inclinations were first triggered by experiences at the front. This deflection of blame on the war experience can be found in the arrest records of men attacked after 1933 by the Nazi regime, which aggressively persecuted homosexuals and interrogated them about their sexual histories. In interrogation records kept by police and Gestapo, some veterans emphasized that wartime conditions led them to seek sexual relief with other men, and they insisted that they had otherwise identified as being heterosexual until the war drove them toward homosexuality. Facing imprisonment in a concentration camp, these individuals were clearly trying to evade being categorized as homosexuals, and it must be stressed that their narratives were given under conditions of unprecedented violence at the hands of the Nazi regime's police. At the same time, by blaming the war for triggering their behavior, they contradicted the

notion that the war experience cultivated an idealized image of heterosexual masculinity.

These case studies link the deprivation and remoteness of the war experience to homosexual experimentation. One of these cases includes the narrative of Axel F., who was arrested by the Nazis in 1936 on suspicion of homosexual behavior and sentenced to two years in prison under Paragraph 175. Much of his interrogation focused on him giving up the names of other homosexual men that he associated with, but police also recorded Axel F.'s revelation of his first encounters with homosexuality. He described the war experience as one filled with privation, isolation, and frequent temptations to engage in homosexual sex. According to police records, Axel F. confessed,

> As a result of my imprisonment as a POW in Egypt [from September 1918 to November 1919] I developed my tendencies (*Veranlagung*). Masturbation was my only means to relieve sexual deprivation (*sexuelle Not*). There I found myself in a really tropical English camp. The climate had an especially sexually stimulating effect on us. There was often the possibility of seduction. An older comrade in a drunken state (through whiskey) wanted to have immoral sexual relations (*unzuechtige Handlungen*) with me. However, I resisted with my last bit of strength and fled the tent. And I never spoke with him again.[52]

Axel F. went on to insist that despite multiple attempts by Turkish and German officers to initiate sex with him, he never caved in and "in no case [. . .] did I do something inappropriate with comrades or subordinates." Further he pointed to the fact that it was "in no way possible" to have sex with women while in Turkey, before his imprisonment, because of the pervasive danger of venereal disease. Despite resisting homosexual experiences during the war, Axel F. admitted engaging in sexual relations with multiple men in the 1920s and 1930s, including in the *Wandervogel* and other youth associations, and he suggests that the war somehow derailed his "natural" sexual trajectory as he "caught" homosexual tendencies.[53] Axel F.'s narrative subverted the notion, constructed by military and medical elites before the war, that combat was the ideal healing experience for potentially "degenerate" men.

A number of men, whether innately homosexual or heterosexual, portrayed the war as an experience that distorted their desires. For some heterosexual men, it disrupted their "normal" sexual identities, or in the case of men predisposed to homosexuality, the war made it difficult for them to resist temptations toward "criminal" behavior. Fritz H., who was also accused by the Nazis of violating Paragraph 175, pointed to the war experience as the site of his first homosexual encounter. Though he admitted in his Gestapo interrogation to being "predisposed to be homosexual," he blamed the war for "kindling" his sexual desires

for men. While at the front, he claimed he was seduced by another man into mutual masturbation, which led him to grow accustomed to homosexual behavior: "I remember that I was seduced by comrades. Subsequently, I started to get used to same-sex intercourse and kept doing it until 1918. The sex only took place now and again." After the war, Fritz H. insisted that he was better able to control his inclinations, and he claimed to have avoided same-sex relations until 1928, when he was once again seduced by a man, which led to another period of "rekindled" homosexual behavior.[54]

While Fritz H. pointed to the war as a catalyst for already latent homosexual tendencies, some men claimed that they "caught" homosexuality in the war. One individual, Karl L., who was arrested by the Gestapo in 1936, claimed that he was "normal" until the war transformed his sexual identity. Karl L.'s neighbors reported him to the Gestapo when they noticed his frequent overnight boat parties with young men on the Havel River. His file contains testimonies from witnesses who claimed L. "is well known here since 1926 as a homosexual and a sadist," and his record indicated that he had been arrested even during the Weimar years for violating Paragraph 175 and for physical assault. When the Gestapo interrogated him, he claimed that he had bisexual tendencies and that when women were not available, he would occasionally, while in a state of drunkenness, "lean towards sex with men to indulge my desires."[55] Once he incriminated himself under Paragraph 175, he then tried to explain that he had not always had homosexual tendencies but that these only began as a result of sexual deprivation, which he experienced while in the trenches twenty years before:

> I would like to state the following in a response to how I have been judged. Before the war I had no bisexual tendencies. At the age of 19, I was already engaged to the woman who would become my wife, whom I married in a war wedding ceremony (*Kriegstrauung*) in 1915. For the entire four years of the war I was in the field and during this time had only three short leaves. In addition I was wounded three times, and in one instance it was a severe injury. I believe that these unfortunate tendencies originated during the war years and because of the state of chronic abstinence during my youth. These tendencies might have also occurred because of the injuries, which made it impossible for me to defend myself against them.[56]

According to his narrative, Karl L. was changed by the war. His repressed heterosexual desires, combined with a state of increasing emotional vulnerability stemming from separation from home and the stress of being wounded, caused him to seek other forms of sexual relief.

This characterization of the war as interrupting "normal" sexual development recurred in the narratives of veterans who were later arrested under Paragraph 175. When Albert H. was arrested in 1939, he confessed that he had engaged once in homosexual behavior, but only when he was a soldier in 1916, and this was with another soldier whose name he could not recall. Accused more than twenty years later of cruising for men in neighborhood bars, he claimed that he was only a tattoo artist trying to make ends meet by bringing sailors up to his apartment, where he could give them tattoos. His neighborhood was indeed full of seedy characters, he admitted, but he insisted that he did not have sex with the men he brought home. Police concluded he was "obviously a homo," but they admitted that incriminating statements from Albert H.'s neighbors were not reliable because they clearly held a grudge against him.[57]

Though the testimonies in these police files under the Nazi regime are problematic because they contain narratives by men desperate to elude persecution, they offer evidence that some veterans linked their postwar sexual identities to the deprivation and stress experienced in the trenches. Whether they had actually once been heterosexual is uncertain, but these narratives reveal that some men believed that they could explain their sexual "deviance" to authorities by alluding to the war. They perceived the war as an experience that bent their sexuality. Such a link suggests a layer of skepticism, at least in men who felt damaged by the war, about the wartime image of combat as the ultimate experience in which abstinent men would become revitalized while channeling their sexual energies toward sacrifice for the nation.

Conclusion

The war experience produced an interesting tension. On one hand, the war intensified nineteenth-century gender ideals, as many veterans and civilian authorities celebrated a militarized, martial masculinity and longing for "comradeship," which they sanctified and were nostalgic for after the war.[58] But during the war, hegemonic conceptions of "masculinity" came under fire as men struggled to maintain the martial masculine ideal in the face of physical and psychological trauma. The sexual crisis that erupted during the war caused panic among military and medical authorities, who focused on the venereal disease epidemic and the return of sexually violent men as evidence of a moral breakdown at the front. In the case of sexual violence, doctors allied with military courts to categorize these crimes as symptoms of chronic degeneracy, but cases of returning soldiers inflicting sexual violence on the home front triggered suspicions that the war altered even "normal" men. Beneath the veneer of the hero in uniform, civilians feared, there lurked emotionally numb, sexually deranged men who could not control the violent instincts they had learned in

the war. The explanation that "degenerate" individuals tainted the heroic image seemed hollow as doctors began to suspect that the alleged "cure" for degeneracy, the celebrated war experience, actually produced damaged men.

Men at the front perceived the "crisis of masculinity" differently. They saw the crisis as a failure of the heroic, self-sacrificing image to bolster them through trench warfare. Men's emotional responses to the war experience were complex. On one hand, they became numb, fatalistic, and emotionally cut off in an effort to survive the trenches. Simultaneously, many expressed hunger for love, intimacy, and comfort within the increasingly isolated world of the trenches. They resented the dominant masculine image and its demand that they remain resilient and self-controlled, and the emotional support they were promised from home seemed increasingly remote. Sexual deprivation led some men, whether intrinsically homosexual or not, to experiment with same-sex relations, which further challenged expectations that devotion to the nation would supplant sexual needs and desires. The war distorted male emotions and sexual desires to a degree that could not necessarily be accommodated by hegemonic masculine norms of self-control. As Chapter 3 will show, men tried to reassure the home front that they still fulfilled the masculine ideal and had not fundamentally changed, while at the same time they sought new ways to experience intimacy and sexual relief.

CHAPTER 3

"Don't Think I'm Soft"

The Masculine Image Presented to the Home Front in Soldiers' Letters

Since the late nineteenth century, the military had tried to instill in soldiers the sense that they were part of a new "family"—their military unit—which provided them emotional comfort, and the army emphasized that their primary bond was to their unit rather than their family of origin.[1] Despite this expectation, men continued to seek emotional support from home. As the war dragged on, letters between soldiers and their families became a lifeline between men and women separated and suffering under hardships on the combat and home fronts. This chapter focuses on letters written by front soldiers, and it explores how soldiers described the emotional and psychological effects of the war to their wives, girlfriends, and families. What did they reveal and conceal about their emotional experiences at the front? How did they perceive themselves in relation to prevailing masculine ideals? How did they characterize the physical and psychological impact of mass violence to their loved ones at home?

In their letters home, soldiers tried to convey a particular image of themselves at the front. They often tried to assert their roles as patriarchs, even from the great distance that separated them from their families. Men still imagined themselves preserving control over their domestic kingdom, giving advice and orders about how to maintain life on the home front.[2] Consistent with this role, they portrayed themselves as fulfilling the heroic image by protecting their families as warriors for the nation. They also carefully defined the roles they expected German women to fulfill, in particular the emotional support that they anticipated, while condemning "other" women whose sexual temptations they had to resist. However, the war increasingly broke down this image of the manly front-fighter in control of his emotions. On one hand, men tried to reassure their families about their safety

and well-being. Most described the reality of violence and danger in relatively limited terms, avoiding gory details, especially the act of killing that historians have demonstrated left such an indelible mark on their psyches.[3] At the same time, while they played their roles as men in control, many men allowed themselves to reveal their emotions, including their need for tenderness, intimacy, and love to counterbalance the traumatic stress of modern warfare. Letters bring to light how men became increasingly psychologically dependent on their wives and girlfriends, as frontline soldiers called on women to deliver emotional support through the mail.[4]

This chapter argues that letters provided a safe space in which many soldiers could let down their masculine image. The traumatic experience of war destigmatized expressions of emotional vulnerability. There was considerable tension between men and women over the experiential gulf that separated them, but many men expressed "effeminate" feelings of neediness and vulnerability, and they expected tenderness and reassurances of love. Men wrote about love and affection in different ways. Their emotional lives, and the ways in which they conveyed emotions, cannot be overgeneralized. Some were candid and comfortable in baring their emotions. Others offered only measured hints about how the war changed them. Some men openly relied on women for primary emotional support, while others claimed to feel cut off and suggested that they felt more connection to comrades. Letter exchanges were often mundane, focusing on laundry, food, and finances. But they also detailed in graphic terms the physical and psychological trauma of the war experience. One of the most interesting types of letter exchanges were those in which men and women used *Feldpostbriefe* as a platform for developing intricate, often self-referential fantasy lives that evidently helped men survive. Letters became a refuge for their imaginations to escape the horror of the trenches into an alternative world filled with love and compassion.

"Great Joy!"—Letters as a Lifeline to Loved Ones

In their humor-filled front newspapers, soldiers joked about the importance of care packages and letters from home. In a cartoon for *Die Sappe* (*The Sapper*), one "front hog" jests in a nonchalant way that he does not really care whether his wife sends a package, and that if it makes things easier for her, she does not have to actually send anything. At the same time he expresses hope that he will not be missed at mail call and that "the bigger the package the better."[5] The cartoon playfully encapsulated the contradiction in men's expectations. They pretended to not be dependent or anxious about letters from home, but they expressed an almost desperate level of psychological dependence on correspondence from loved ones.

As historian Benjamin Ziemann argues, despite soldiers' postwar memories of "comradeship" as the essential foundation for psychological survival, men continued to rely on women for emotional support. Though men often found it difficult to convey the experience of mass violence or describe the war's deeper effects, they did not cut off their emotional ties with women. Indeed, men did not simply rely on "comradeship"; their letters home reveal that many actually intimated feelings of vulnerability and became increasingly emotionally dependent on their wives and girlfriends.[6] Alfred G., who was taken prisoner of war in 1917, waited with bated breath for letters from his girlfriend Claire from Potsdam. Living in an increasingly isolated world within his POW camp in England, all he could think about was whether their letters were still getting through to each other, and when he received her first letter, he was ecstatic: "Dear Claire! Your letter of January 2 [1918] was received on February 16. Great joy! I thought that my letter hadn't reached you. Therefore I haven't written, in order to wait for the answer. Your letter was very dear. Look, maybe it wasn't so good to take the talisman with me. Look what it did!"[7] Alfred's chastisement about the talisman was a tender joke, as he told Claire that he loved her and depended on her. After begging her to write more often, Alfred reassured Claire that his British captors were treating him well. On a surface level, he was content: "Personally, I have an outwardly good life." The camp had creature comforts including cigarettes, a tailor, a piano, a harmonica, and a chapel that the prisoners planned to build. But he made Claire feel that without her, he could not emotionally survive the camp: "I expect you to send many more love letters in addition to the first. Heartfelt greetings, yours forever, Fred."[8] Soldiers assigned their loved ones an essential emotional role. While men domesticized their new all-male physical environments, they gave women at home the task of providing love from long distance to prop up their emotional strength.

Some men were not ashamed to admit how emotionally dependent they were on a few lines of writing from home. When infantryman Joseph S. was captured in 1915 and taken as a prisoner of war to Camp Boulhant in France, the Red Cross gave him the chance to write to his wife in Stuttgart. He begged her to write more often, as her letters were his only basis for hope and relief from the drudgery. Every day, he said, he lived in "feverish expectation" that the mail would bring him some joy:

> The days drift in monotony until the word of relief: "Letters have arrived!" How can one describe the jubilation that comes with that one expression? One never knew how much love one had for home, but now when home only exists in spirit and in thoughts it makes one unspeakably happy to get a greeting with cards and letters. Believe me, it is not possible to describe the feeling of love that I got from your package from August 20th, and shortly after I received your other dear letter.

> I give you my deepest thanks for your love and care, and can give you my hand in spirit. Would you begrudge me very much if I asked you to give me just a little more such joy?[9]

Joseph exposed how dependent he was on his wife's letters by adding a gentle request, even chastisement, that she write more often. In this same letter, he heaped a bit of guilt on his wife. Mild resentment about his own predicament versus the relative safety enjoyed by civilians was not far beneath the surface of his writing. He concluded with a passive-aggressive reminder that he would not be able to partake in the Christmas joy that those on the home front could experience: "So many others in the *Heimat* get to enjoy this beautiful celebration and I don't begrudge them—I want to give my heartiest Christmas wishes and deepest greetings / From your thankful Joseph S., POW."[10]

The image of home as a kind of oasis was vital to men in the trenches. Many soldiers imagined their home life, and their wives, as a beacon that spiritually shielded them from the horrible reality of the front. Soldiers described in great detail how they had domesticized their front environment to make life in the trenches as "civilized" and "German" as possible. At the same time, they expected their families at home to remain in a kind of time capsule, a perfect embodiment of domestic bliss that they could channel emotionally. An example of this can be found in the letters of Wilhelm S., a 35-year-old infantryman (*Grenadier*) and son of a shoemaker, to his wife, who is not named in his file. His archive file contains three artifacts—dog tags, a pen, and his field sewing kit. The fact that the latter was preserved perhaps symbolized the importance of this tool of domestic order. Wilhelm S.'s diary gave dry accounts of what he ate and the battles he witnessed, but his letters to his wife revealed more about his feelings for her and how he related to buddies at the front. His letters highlight just how important it was for men to have an emotional and physical connection to home, and he believed that his status among his comrades rose when they knew he had such a devoted and loyal wife. He repeatedly thanked his wife for ensuring that he always had something in the mail bags, and he boasted to her that he was the luckiest man in his unit: "My comrades told me that two packages had arrived. I didn't want to believe it, because sometimes they are joking, but when I come up nearer, I see that they are for me. Again so soon! How does the phrase go: have you ever been hungry? Never. Not at all."[11] After he listed the butter, meat, Zwieback, sausage, and other goodies that she sent, he wrote that he thanked God that she never faltered in sending him care packages, and he described their relationship as "exceptional," because other men did not get as many packages as he did.[12]

Wilhelm S. perceived himself as a moral, good husband who deserved his wife's devotion because he wrote to her regularly. Whether his comrades

perceived him in this way is more difficult to discern, as he described his comrades' insecurities about their domestic status and their envy of his dedicated wife. He was quite generous to his buddies, even though he clearly did not think they were as morally upright as he was, and with great pride and a bit of humor he showed off his "good wife" by sharing the food she sent: "At Vespers we consumed the Sauerkraut you sent and it was very good. Everyone wanted to try it and they said it must be from a good wife. They must have been lazy rogues, otherwise they would have gotten something from their spouses. I haven't really told anyone here that you are a pastor's cook, because they aren't very friendly and they make a lot of snide remarks."[13] Wilhelm clearly felt self-conscious about his image around his comrades. Because he was an older infantryman who the men simultaneously admired and made fun of, perhaps he worried that they might perceive him as prudish or stuck up. He seemed to relish that his comrades, despite their "snide remarks," were jealous that he had such a secure married life. After signing "in profound love, your Wilhelm," he added that his friends liked the sauerkraut so much that they wanted to send their greetings and signatures—five of his comrades signed their names to the letter.[14]

Wilhelm S.'s wife was conscious of the role she played in supporting her husband, and she eagerly filled his imagination with an image of herself as a provider of not only physical but also emotional sustenance for her husband. His wife included a sentimental poem, which his archive file suggests was written by her, that reflects the sentimental attitudes that pervaded popular media about bonds between wives and their husbands at the front. The poem reassured him that despite their distance, they were still spiritually together: "Dearest, you remain so far away / So far from wife and child and 'home' (*Heim*) / Above us are the same stars / And a sun that shines on us all." The poem continued with expressions of faith that God watched over them and promised that they would eventually be united in eternity with "no more suffering and pain."[15] Wilhelm S. clearly cherished his wife's poem, as he kept it in his diary.[16]

"The Hard Truth": Soldiers Struggle to Convey the Trench Experience to Loved Ones

Soldiers' letters reflected how quickly the excitement of the "spirit of August" wore off. By the end of 1914, men were grappling with the stalemated war and how to describe the reality of the trenches to their loved ones. Many struggled to convey the complex psychological effects of the war and often oscillated, in the same letters, between narratives filled with powerful emotions, whether ecstatic joy or stark terror, and narratives focused on mundane existence from day to day. As soldiers desperately tried to intimate their experiences, some became indignant with what they perceived as women's naiveté or even callousness. At

the same time, letters served as a space in which men could let down the veneer of the stoic warrior who was always in control. Soldiers who tried to write about the emotional effects of the war often did with great frustration.

As the war descended into stalemate and attrition, the tone and content of letters home also began to change. The stark contrast between the enthusiastic days of August 1914 and the banalities of daily life at the front can be seen in the letters of Carl G., the son of a factory owner who began the war as a sergeant (*Vizefeldwebel*) and was eventually promoted to lieutenant (*Leutnant der Reserve*) after surviving four years of fighting. Carl G. was a diligent writer who averaged five letters per month to his parents for the entire war. Like so many German men, he expressed tremendous excitement about volunteering for war, in particular for the admiration he received from German women. In a letter on August 25, 1914, he told his parents that, en route to France, German women in the small towns that he went through in the black forest treated him and the other men "lovingly and with enthusiasm," making his journey to the front a "wonderful" experience.[17] This elation crashed quickly, as only a week later he complained about being stricken by diarrhea from bad apples, chronic headaches, endless military exercises, problems with laundry, and dirty living quarters behind the lines in France.[18] Carl G.'s parents got a sense of the dramatic experiential and emotional shifts that dominated life at the front, as their son went from object of hero worship to coping with the banalities of life in modern war.

Mass death led many men to become more cynical and disillusioned, and some shared with their loved ones how the war transformed them. Hans W., a lieutenant (*Leutnant*) who reached the front in October 1915, survived the horrific battles at the Somme, Cambrai, Passchendaele, and the spring 1918 German offensive. As his experiences with violence intensified, so did his candidness about how he became war-weary and jaded to violence. In early 1916, he wrote to his parents about how the war had fundamentally changed him: "Physically I'm well, but mentally one becomes crazy here (*aber geistig verblödet man hier*), tedium and yet more tedium [. . .] the men get increasingly desensitized from the long war."[19] When one of his friends was killed in a bomb blast at the battle of Flanders in November 1917, he described the death in great detail. He also expressed the shocked realization that he was becoming jaded to violence. After witnessing the horror of the Somme slaughter the year before, the battle of Flanders "did not seem so bad." He told his parents that his tense nerves had reached their peak, and that though he was still willing to do his duty, he was personally burned out and could barely go on.[20]

Feldpostbriefe could serve as a kind of confessional, where men intimated their real fears about combat. Arthur M. wrote to his wife, Therese, as early as November 1914 about how he and many of his comrades were sick of fighting.[21]

A year later he told Therese that he wanted to rid his mind of the scenes that he witnessed in the trenches, but he could not. Instead, he warned her that the images that flooded his mind were now an indelible part of his life: "Later I will tell you about everything, everything. About all the suffering, the torment, the beauty and everything. But the murder and shooting, that I won't be able to tell. Those things I must eradicate from my thoughts. When such thoughts spin around after a battle, one has to shake it out of one's head. Those are things that I will remember all my life."[22] On one hand, Arthur M. intimated to Theresa that the war traumatized him and burned in his memory. At the same time, he set limits on how much he could tell his wife. The experience of suffering and, strangely, even the "beauty" of war could be conveyed, but the act of killing and the graphic details of combat remained taboo. Arthur could tell his wife that he was transformed by the war, but the actual content of his memories reinforced a gulf between them.

Letters from soldiers wavered dramatically between descriptions of unthinkable violence and desire for tenderness and compassion. Friedrich B's letters to his pregnant wife before his death in December 1914 shifted radically from intense narratives of terror to declarations of love. He saw his wife as someone with whom he could intimate the war's effects, even if it meant confessing that his nerves were shattered and he was terrified:

> Oh, if only there were peace soon. We are all so war-weary, our bodies and nerves so tense because of the constant stress and being in a permanent state of danger. Right now I just want to sit down on your bed, take your dear hand in mine and tell you about my recent experiences [. . .] I'm not ashamed to admit that right now tears are streaming down my face. We're surrounded by a tenacious enemy. Death lurks barely 200 paces in front of us, the order to attack about to be given and all of our loved ones are at home with no sense of it all. Will I ever see my son, will my son ever see his father? As I'm tormented by such awful thoughts the order is given to attack.[23]

He continued with a long narrative of the terrifying artillery battle and his fear of imminent death, then closed with, "Be healthy now, my dearest child. Kiss the children for me and be warmly kissed and hugged by your loyal, loving, precious man."[24] Friedrich B. put great trust in his wife to empathize with him as he let down his emotional guard.

Some men hinted at the terrifying violence they endured but also shielded their loved ones from the reality of the front. Writing from a field hospital shortly after being injured, Fritz S. showered his wife with loving thanks for her letter that triggered "such wonderful feelings." But he feared that even though she was a loyal soldiers' wife, if he told her in detail what happened to him

it would overwhelm her. She should be satisfied to hear that he was alive, he wrote, and now that she had his letter to prove he was safe she did not have to live in a world of uncertainty, as "a soldier's wife can only take so much."[25] Fritz S. tried to exert considerable control over his wife, even from his prone position in the field hospital. He ordered her not to work, which he deemed "unnecessary," and he complained that it was demoralizing to get letters from her about how she had to take a job cleaning other peoples' houses. Her primary job, he wrote, was to send him more letters and care packages with food and medicine.[26]

While many attempted to convey the war's effects to loved ones at home, they sometimes became resentful about how their wives and families reacted. In some cases, they felt that loved ones did not appreciate or understand the depths of their sadness, especially at the loss of comrades. This growing psychological and experiential divide can be seen in the correspondence between lieutenant (*Leutnant*) Kurt K., whose story opened this book, and his fiancée, Lotte, who lived in Berlin-Charlottenburg. He and Lotte exchanged often intense letters during the entire four years of fighting about the impact of the war on their lives and their emotions. Kurt K's letters alternated dramatically between intimate attempts to convey his feelings about losing friends at the front and criticism of her inability to comprehend what he was going through.

In the opening months of the war, Kurt, who served in a mortar battalion, heard almost daily news about old school friends who suffered injury and death. In September and October 1914, he struggled desperately to describe to his fiancée what the deaths of comrades meant to him. He told Lotte about one lost friend in particular: "My best friend Gustav F., who once studied with me in Berlin, was killed yesterday in a hail of bombs. We will never see each other again. It's as if I've lost everything."[27] After experiencing death all around him and artillery attacks that could last for days, Kurt wrote, "After all this it's like I live more in a dream than in reality. That is, a new reality that I could only slowly grasp."[28] He was even self-conscious that she would consider him soft or effeminate if he wrote too much about his feelings. This embarrassment about his emotions came through one letter when he tried to get Lotte to see the effects of the war from his point of view: "Don't think I'm soft (*weichlich*). But think about it this way: if suddenly all your female friends, with whom you had shared joy and pain, were killed off, wouldn't you also have such thoughts?"[29] Reluctant to shed his masculine armor against such powerful emotions, Kurt K. asked for his girlfriend's sympathy as his veneer of self-control and emotional discipline broke down. Such powerful emotions and depression, he asserted, were normal feelings for men under these conditions.

Men underwent experiences that seriously challenged prewar expectations that they remain stoic and in control of their feelings. Kurt K. struggled to find

words to encapsulate how he felt in response to friends dying, and he at first imagined that his fiancée, being a woman, could understand such stark emotions. He felt close enough to Lotte to expose his raw feelings and seek reassurance. However, he did not like what she had to say. Lotte responded to his news about death and intense loneliness with optimism and encouragement, telling him in the spring of 1915 that surely he would find new friends soon. Though her advice was consistent with preserving the stoic masculine image, it did not console him:

> Do you still remember when I wrote in one of my recent letters, that all of my friends had fallen. You wrote back that I would soon find other friends. But this is no comfort, because a friend that one has been with since childhood cannot be so easily replaced. But in hindsight you were certainly right. I had found another good comrade. We met in Münster. A few days ago he also fell after a victorious attack on an English position. I wasn't there. We buried him two days later in Comines. Now I'm alone again.[30]

In a subsequent letter about his new friend's burial, he wrote that his friend's fiancée begged him to write about his last hours. He told Lotte that he could not compose the words to express such pain over "another exterminated life."[31] Increasingly, Kurt K. felt cut off from Lotte and home. Though he tried to intimate what he was going through, her attempts to be supportive and optimistic seemed to him remote and incomprehensible.

In the summer of 1915, Kurt told Lotte what he called a "hard truth": he suffered from an overwhelming sense of war weariness (*Kriegsmüdigkeit*). All patriotic enthusiasm for the war had dissipated as he began to go through the motions only out of a sense of duty. Lotte's response to this revelation offended him even more than her optimism, and he brushed her off as being a "typical girl" who misunderstood him. He was still happy to get her letters, but he suggested condescendingly that her gender made it essentially impossible for him to communicate to her: "Now I come to the point where you sermonized to me in your last letter about my war weariness. Your letter made me really happy, dear Lotte, because you think as every girl (*Mädel*) should. However, you have not correctly understood me. What I said was true. Happiness, as it had been in the beginning, does not at all exist in the war today. It's more like a feeling of duty that dictates our relationship to the war."[32] Here Kurt drew a clear delineation between what "girls" are capable of understanding about the war and the reality that men must endure. In addition to a gender barrier, he lamented the experiential barrier in another letter. Only those who experienced the violence for themselves could comprehend the psychological effects of the war, he wrote, and no letter could transmit the terror of life at the front.[33]

Despite Kurt K.'s difficulties in communicating with his fiancée, and his notion that there was an essential wall between what women and men could understand about this war, he divulged that he had undergone a profound change as a result of the trench experience. Though he refrained from providing details about the violence that he witnessed, he intimated to her by 1916 that he was no longer the same person that he was in 1914. "There are many in this war who are internally broken," he wrote, "and we're all on the way there."[34] By the end of that summer, after the Battle of Somme, he wrote that he had lost all his old comrades. He immersed himself in studying philosophy, which he said gave him some consolation.[35] In spring 1917, he told Lotte that he was barely able to hold himself together after enduring bombardments at the Battle of Arras. It took all his effort, he wrote, to prevent his nerves from collapsing.[36] Holding up the heroic, masculine image of self-control no longer interested him. The archive file indicates that his letters from the summer of 1917 and into 1918 are missing, but an identification paper stamped in July 1918 indicates that he survived at least until then.

In contrast to Kurt K.'s correspondence, some men were uninhibited about revealing to wives and girlfriends how mass violence affected them, and they imagined that women could understand, or at least empathize with, what they were going through. This openness often evolved over the course of their letters. Soldiers' first attempts to talk about their experiences were often tinged with clichés similar to what could be found in the ubiquitous love poetry that appeared in postcards and newspapers. These sentimental poems found their way into the writings of men and women who grasped for the words to express their feelings. In one of his letters to his wife, Laura, Bavarian noncommissioned officer Hannes M., whose repulsion over his comrades' immoral sexual behavior was discussed in the previous chapter, resorted to a poem that he read on a postcard to express his love. Writing "My dear wife Laura," he then quoted the poem: "Our hearts are loyal. Our words are true. German is our song. God gives our command."[37] Such verse permeated media read by soldiers and gave them a blueprint for writing about emotions, a language in which women were expected to be more fluent. In this case, the poem he found conflated love, nationalism, and religious piety in a tidy stanza that conformed to prevailing assumptions about how men were to temper their personal feelings with their patriotic devotion.

Though his first letters relied on such nationalistic clichés to express his love, Hannes M.'s letters changed dramatically. He would alternate between love letters that were highly esoteric and self-referential, with unabashed expressions of love, and then suddenly write in detail about horrific violence he witnessed in the trenches. After narrating combat experiences, he would shift to tender sentiments, sometimes alternating between first and third person to describe

his feelings: "And now I must lapse into the usual, because I want to hug my dearest little woman (*innigliches Frauchen*) and kiss her, kiss her a thousand times. Indeed, Hannes is so hungry for you, for your scent and your freshness and your life. Your heart is loyal, and I'm so happy to have you. But unfortunately you are so far away. I am forced to save my love, I'm addicted to it, and I must put it back in my bank account so that I don't collapse from exhaustion."[38] Hannes portrayed love as the fuel that sustained him through his ordeal. He confessed his psychological dependence, perhaps shifting into third person to buffer the raw emotional state that might have threatened his masculine armor.

Hannes M.'s declarations of undying devotion to his wife were quite touching and certainly reflected his deep love. However, his expressions of love also contained evidence that there was tension underlying his relationship with Laura. Mixed in with his loving prose were frequent jabs about Laura being in such a safe and, as Hannes frequently called it, "narrow" world. He reassured Laura that though she was in a secure and civilized environment that seemed increasingly remote to him, he did not begrudge her: "How strange it is to think of theater, dance, culture, etc. How foreign and distant and almost incomprehensible they sound to me. But make no mistake, my dear. I'm happy for you at home, happy that you have everything."[39] Despite his reassurances, he peppered her with prose that was both condescending and reproachful, criticizing her supposedly easy life:

> My dear, my one and only love, I have so much yearning for you, for your peacefulness (*Stille*). It hurts me so much to live so distant from you, in this hideous war, which seems to be from a totally other life, even though it is mine. You tell me about your narrow, quiet world, in which everything is so unspeakably different than it is here. It could be that from outside it appears insignificant and "proper" (*richtig*). However, it's not really like that, because this world is indeed the earth, the womb, the cradle of our completely human life, which is so important and indispensable. And we must manage this life within a narrow circle. We must starve in it. Who knows whether others empathize. And this life is so damned difficult, so filled with stressful events that one collapses under the burden of it all. The last days here have been totally chaotic and confusing, the consequence of cruel despair.[40]

Hannes' letters were full of contradictions, and they suggested a passive-aggressive interplay existed between him and Laura. Almost as if to make her feel guilty, he tells her that he appreciates hearing about her world, no matter how remote, and then he negates her by saying that she has no grasp of the reality that exists beneath her thin veneer of existence. He postures to assert that he is in control and knows the true nature of this "reality," but then he admits in

the end that he is actually trapped in an increasingly surreal, chaotic world that he cannot understand and that has challenged his prewar assumptions.

Hannes tried to describe to Laura the crippling psychological chaos that overwhelmed him. He intimated to Laura feelings of disillusionment with nationalism and Christianity, suggesting that his thinking had changed since his use of clichéd poetry when he started writing to her. His disillusionment with traditional values was triggered by the shocking violence that he encountered, especially violence inflicted on civilians. He tried to describe one instance to Laura in which children playing in a refugee camp were struck by bombs, an experience that he depicted thus: "dreadful screaming, springs of blood, corpses, bloody wounds."[41] After recounting such unspeakable violence, he paused to reflect, once again shifting to third person, as if analyzing his own changing world view with a distant eye:

> Laura, Laura, Hannes' heart is heavy. It knows only of cruelty and suffering. But don't worry. It will certainly also change. The war must come to an end. Laura, it's so strange—consider this: 2,000 years of Christendom are behind us with the evangelism of love and yet they force millions of people to swear, in Christ's name, in God's name, the oath before the flag. It's against all that we were told by the priests, the pastors who gave millions their blessings and claimed to do God's work. Amen! But stop with all these gloomy thoughts.[42]

In Hannes' view, Christian leaders betrayed their ideology of love by endorsing the nationalistic fervor behind the war. His third-person narration of his own religious experiences, and his quick transition—"But stop with these gloomy thoughts"—suggest that he was reluctant to share this with his wife, but he forced himself to confess this inner transformation.

Soldiers like Hannes desperately struggled to convey the psychological impact of the war. Their letters often alternated between stark, brutal narratives and awkward attempts to conceal the horrific scenes they witnessed at the front. Hannes M.'s letters to his wife epitomized the almost surreal oscillation between brutality, reluctant confessions of disillusionment, and attempts to sterilize the reality of the front. In one letter, he reassured her that nature would take care of the "escalating terror" that he witnessed in war: "As we continued forward around midday up and down the hills and through the snow, the white blanket gave no sign of the insanity of corpses and shell holes that were all around. With great empathy the snow beautifully covered it all. The area was white and mild. I lost the horizon in the haze."[43] Soldiers' rhetoric about the violence of the war often seemed to suggest that they were not only traumatized by the violence that permeated their worlds; they also were not sure how they wanted to depict it to families at home. They professed to find beauty in horror, order

in chaos, and reassurance in an apparently irrational and indifferent landscape. Their representations of violence were complex as they struggled to articulate its meaning to loved ones on whom they depended emotionally but who were becoming increasingly remote because of the gap in their experiences with the war's violence.

The ways in which men wrote about violence, and the degrees to which they revealed their experiences with combat and its psychological effects, varied dramatically. In some cases where men wrote both letters and diaries, there were sharp contrasts between what they revealed in their diaries and how they wrote about the war to loved ones at home. The former teacher Wilhelm K., who began the war as a lance corporal (*Gefreiter*) and was promoted to lieutenant (*Leutnant*) in 1916, kept a diary that suggests he was experiencing considerable inner turmoil despite the rosy façade that he built up in his letters to his family. In one of his diary entries in August 1916, he wrote candidly about how frustrated and betrayed he felt when his regiment "in fourteen days of hard and cruel fighting and floods of blood" lost more than one thousand men to keep a position from falling to the British, only to see the unit that relieved him give up the position in a few hours.[44] His letter to his brother a few days after this entry painted the disaster as a victory. Though he mentioned that there were losses, he gave the impression of being optimistic: "It's going quite well. We really smeared the English. Our regiment will be mentioned in the orders of the day (*Tagesbefehl*)."[45] In his letters during these months to Marie, whose relationship to him is not clear, Wilhelm painted an even more sterilized picture of life at the front, and he made no mention of the human losses that he witnessed. He described the ruined house that he slept in as "really quite comfortable" (*sogar ziemlich behaglich*), and he asked her about weddings of mutual friends.[46]

The stark contrast between the graphic violence detailed in Wilhelm's diary and the image that he projected to his family and friends was noted by his own brother, Helmut, after the war. Wilhelm was killed on March 21, 1918, on the first day of the spring offensive, Operation Michael, in which General Ludendorff launched his last-gasp attack hoping for final victory before fresh American troops and resources tipped the balance. Shortly after his brother's death, Helmut typed up excerpts from the diary and letters. Helmut inserted into the transcription expressions of surprise that while his brother experienced mass death and the loss of friends, he made no mention of these catastrophes or his frustrations in letters written during this time. Helmut wrote alongside his brother's passage about losing more than a thousand men in two weeks that his brother "spoke nothing about this in his letter to me."[47] Helmut's comments suggest a sense of shock and hurt that his brother could not intimate what he was going through to his loved ones.

Though total war meant that both men and women faced tremendous hardships, many men perceived their own experiences as exceptionally brutal and stressful. On one hand, they imagined a strict dichotomy between the experiences of men and women, with men fulfilling the more dangerous demands of martial masculinity, which entailed selfless defense of their families and devotion to the fatherland, and loyal women showing their dedication to the nation by supporting their soldier husbands from the relative safety of home. Nevertheless, some men felt resentful that women allegedly had it easier. This tension and simmering resentment can be seen in the case of Lieutenant (*Leutnant der Reserve*) Otto L. and his wife, whom he nicknamed "Berbel." Otto L. took immense pride in fighting for the fatherland and relied on her loyalty as he faced the stress of war. He was careful to remind her that his role was the most difficult: "I am proud, Berbel, to be able to be part of this fight for my *Heimat* and naturally I cannot require that you have the same feelings for Germany, but it will come in time. Oh Berbel, whenever I think of the horrors (*Schreckens*) of this war and the misery of our French enemies as well, I often think about how good you have it at home."[48] It was more natural for him to have "feelings for Germany," Otto L. maintained, with a hint of condescension, while women enjoyed the comfort of the home front. He repeatedly expressed that he depended on Berbel for emotional support, telling her to "press thumbs" and think of him whenever she heard that battles were raging at the front. Even from the vast distance that separated them, as Berbel spent much of the war with a small colony of Germans in Haifa, under the Ottoman Empire, he filled his letters with detailed instructions on how to maintain and run the daily routine of the house while he was away. Otto told her to be brave and assured her, "I will take care of you."[49]

Otto L. reminded his wife that he could continue to fulfill his role of caretaker for Berbel and their one-year-old son, Bruno. He told her that he could not reveal to her the terrifying nature of the war, but he assured her, "You can be proud of me because I'm fighting for you, Berbel, and little Bruno."[50] However, there was some tension over whether he felt that Berbel was really supportive or actually a drain on him. After he spent time in hospital due to a war wound in early 1915, his letters became a bit more disjointed and carried hints of sarcasm and anger. When his wife complained about financial problems at home, he chastised her: "Even through these major problems we've got to help each other and in the meantime you cannot complain. Stop it! We've got to keep singing our marching songs and I'm asking you to do the same—if we can get through this things will get better."[51] Otto L. criticized her as a grumbling and nagging woman, an image often found in *Feldpostbriefe*, which soldiers described as infuriating and, after the war, often characterized as a drain on the army's fighting abilities.[52] The couple's relationship was most seriously

strained when their baby, Bruno, died from an infection. Berbel's heartrending correspondence, which included a lock of her dead baby's hair sewn to the top corner of the letter, suggested a tremendous sense of guilt that she could not save Bruno. She promised Otto that she did her best as a mother, and she went into agonizing detail about holding the child's hand as he died. Clearly traumatized by the experience, Berbel begged Otto to let her come to him, and she insisted she could "do something for the fatherland" that would allow her to be nearer to him at the front. After closing the letter, she added in the margins on the last page: "Please dear Otto, my love, don't go to the front again. You can find another way to serve and help the fatherland. Please Otto, give me your love. It's my burning wish (*heisser Wunsch*)." In the wake of a shared trauma, the death of their son, Berbel begged him to open up his feelings, but Otto remained stoic and self-controlled. Otto remained at the front, and though he expressed sorrow over the baby's death, he rarely wrote about it, as his writing focused primarily on the daily stresses of front life, loss of friends, and the difficulty of being away from her.

Feldpostbriefe as a Space for Emotional Intimacy

While the correspondence between many couples revealed a widening gulf between traumatized men and women, other couples grew closer as they turned *Feldpostbriefe* into a kind of secret world where they could explore intimacy on an intense level. Soldiers conveyed or concealed their feelings in different ways. As the traumatic stress and deprivation of the war intensified, many men expressed a greater desire for emotional intimacy with their wives and girlfriends. While there was no dominant pattern for how men expressed love in their letters, examples of *Feldpostbriefe* that survive in archives suggest that letters provided men with an emotional space that allowed them to confess their feelings of vulnerability, emotional dependence, fear and love that may have been otherwise taboo in the confines of the "heroic ideal." For some individuals, *Feldpostbriefe* provided a safe outlet where they could escape into, or at least fantasize about, another world separate from the horrifying realities that surrounded them.

An example of a front soldier using letters as a kind of confessional, where he could share feelings of despair, loneliness, and disillusionment, can be found in the *Feldpostbriefe* of Felix F., who wrote to his wife, Maria, nearly every day from October 1914 through December 1918, when he returned home. Felix F.'s readiness to share his emotions in letters evolved to become more substantive, and more desperate, as the war unfolded. A school teacher who at the age of thirty volunteered shortly after the outbreak of the war and was quickly promoted to lieutenant (*Leutnant*), Felix's letters to his wife in the fall

of 1914 begin with reassurances that he was safe and content in his devotion to the fatherland, and that as long as the mail gets delivered he will be able to "hold through." At the same time, realizing that the war would last longer than expected, he warned her and their son, Karl, to prepare for a long separation.[53]

By the end of 1915, his letters evolved from the reserved style in which he details logistical problems that he faces at the front to more emotionally substantial descriptions of how the war affected him psychologically. He could not sleep because, he wrote, "all possible thoughts and worries, even really stupid ones, fly through my head."[54] He confessed that he was "in despair," and that he could admit it only to her, and not his parents. "I'm sick of it," he wrote, "I'm tired of the war and terribly homesick." Bitter that his applications for leave were repeatedly turned down, he revealed a daily grind in which constant bombardments made it impossible to rest, and he admitted that he often cried himself to sleep while standing up in his trench. "This can't last much longer," he wrote, "this misery must come to an end."[55]

After surviving the Battle of the Somme in the spring of 1916, Felix F.'s letters took on an even more desperate tone, and he put ever greater pressure on his wife to provide emotional support. Unfortunately, Felix F.'s wife's letters are not preserved in the archives, but by the fall of 1916 he began to complain in virtually every letter that she did not write enough or that her letters were inadequate.[56] Describing letters from her as his only lifeline that helped him combat loneliness, he begged her to write more substantial letters that conveyed her innermost thoughts.[57] Even if he felt his wife did not meet his escalating emotional intensity, letters provided Felix F. a space to confess feelings of vulnerability, loneliness, and anxiety. Each day he dedicated an hour, which he described as the only time he could let down his guard and be truthful, to write to his wife. He felt that he could not tell other men at the front how he really felt, and he complained that his relationships with comrades had deteriorated.[58] "I'm going to spill it all to you," he wrote in one letter, and he called on her to do the same.[59] However, when she did write, he perceived her letters as too negative and too focused on problems on the home front. Her complaints about shortages and the long war made him feel "upset," and he asked her to instead focus on descriptions of their beautiful home and how happy they would be when he returned.[60]

By 1917–18, tensions between Felix F. and Maria escalated. As he scolded Maria for her infrequent letters, Felix F. took on an increasingly sardonic tone: "Write to me soon, even just a few lines. I know that you don't have much time for your precious husband (*Schatzmann*) [. . .] I don't expect a precious letter (*Schatzbrief*) every day. The main thing is that you're healthy."[61] His letters suggested increasing frustration with her and a sense of insecurity about his eroding control over her. She chose to move without consulting him for advice, and she

decided to work. When she complained about feelings of loneliness and suffering, he blamed it on her decision to work, which he said distracted her from her main occupation: "What are you doing working, my precious? When we get you back into the household, I hope that your despair (*Elend*) will fly away; it's high time that you be brought into different circumstances. Otherwise I'm fine. We're all healthy. Hearty kisses, yours, F."[62] Maintaining an unchanging household was vital to him. In his letters, he frequently described an idealized imagined home as he endured the privations of the front.[63] He saw her independence from him as a threat, because it prevented her from focusing on preserving his idealized image and thus providing him with emotional support that sustained him.

On one hand, like Otto L. writing to his wife in Haifa, Felix F. desperately tried to preserve the patriarchal order and control his wife's behavior in a way that reinforced the dominant masculine ideal. At the same time, by the spring of 1918, his letters revealed that manly expectations of self-sacrifice and dedication to duty for the fatherland no longer appealed to him. He merely wanted to return to his wife's arms: "I wish I could be back with you. The life of the soldier must at some point come to an end. If only I were a schoolteacher now, I'd get at least half a day to myself again."[64] His years in the army, he wrote, sapped his energy.[65] By October 1918, with talk of peace spreading through the ranks, he expressed hope at the possibility of return mixed with anxiety that he might be killed at the last minute: "Well, there eventually must be peace. It's inevitable now. One can't think about all the blood and suffering that happened in vain. But at least we can come home to be with our wives and children. We have to keep our eyes open for last-minute dangers. If I can remain standing at the front, precious, I will be with you. It's also good that I can at least say I did my duty."[66] With the end of the war in sight, the heroic ideal that had so energized Felix F. in 1914 now seemed like some distant afterthought, secondary to basic survival and his main incentive to live: so that he could be reunited with his wife and son. While proud that he did his duty, the war no longer seemed worth it, and his individual desires for home and hunger for survival supplanted ideals of sacrifice. In one of his last letters before finally getting home in December 1918, he said that he only wanted to forget everything that happened to him and return to a home life as it was before the war.[67] However, as will be explored further in Chapter 6, Felix would feel just as isolated and disillusioned at home after the war as he had felt at the front.

Felix F.'s desire for greater emotional intimacy, and the tension over how his wife responded to his needs, was not exceptional. In their letters, other men begged women to be more affectionate and open about their feelings. Rudolf V., who died in combat on July 2, 1916, on the second day of the Battle of the Somme, developed a rather intense relationship with his wife,

Julie. He expressed great love for her, but in his letters he also frequently berated her for not returning his affection frequently enough. In one letter from August 1914, he wrote, "I'm very upset with you. Since your one letter I haven't gotten any news from you. Indeed you have paper, and postage costs nothing, so that can't be the problem."[68] His first letters to his pregnant wife contained the mixture of endearments and chastising that characterized his writing: "Now, my precious dear (*lieber Schatz*), why do you no longer write to me. I don't hear anything from you. Are you mad at me? I'm always thinking about you while on the march [. . .] write back to me immediately about how you're doing, my precious dear. If only I could hug you again, completely hug and hold you and kiss you."[69] While he wrote every three or four days until his death, Rudolf V. was critical of his wife's less frequent correspondence. "Write to me immediately about *everything* [underlined in text]," he demanded, "don't hold anything back, not even the bad things."[70]

In these first months of the war, Rudolf V. defined a clear emotional role for his wife. He told her that she should show her love by standing steadfast on the home front: "Julie, be proud and brave. Watch over our children. This will allow me to feel secure and hopefully I will be able to return again. Think also of yourself and if you really love me you will get me back."[71] In this way, Rudolf portrayed his own survival as dependent on Julie's love and loyalty. In return for her devotion, Rudolf promised that he would maintain the heroic ideal of courage and self-sacrifice. However, this promise of preserving an emotional equilibrium was shattered by escalating trauma and Rudolf's perception that Julie was not responsive enough to his needs. After a severe injury on September 25 put him in the hospital, he became bitter when he went for two weeks without a letter or card from her.[72] Further, his letters became increasingly dominated by graphic descriptions of the violence that he witnessed at the front. In several letters written from his field hospital in October 1914, he wrote paragraph after paragraph about his own wounding and the gunshot and shrapnel wounds experienced by his comrades. Rudolf's letters suggested that he was particularly traumatized by his memories of the moment in which a bullet struck him in the lung. In his letters he recounted over and over the surreal moment he collapsed on the battlefield and believed he would die:

> The thought came to me that I would be in peace and I have to tell you, death didn't seem so bad. I thought, "Well, now they'll carry you away and bury you." But then it hit me, "No, just wait a minute." It felt like everyone's hands pressed down on me, and I could hear them speak as they picked me up. Not for a second did my mind (*Geist*) leave me—I heard and saw everything. Then I heard people whisper: "he's dying, give him some schnapps." Someone gave me the bottle and I drank, but not too much of it, because I was going to be dead.[73]

Rudolf wrote page after page about the deaths of comrades and detailed their last moments, as well as the different injuries suffered by men in the hospital beds around him. He even included in one of his letters a handwritten, autobiographical pamphlet, "Rudolf V., My Life, After my Wounding on September 25, 1914," and a poem called "My Dead Comrades from Chilly," about a mass grave of German soldiers and his "tears that streamed into my hands" when he reflected on the terrible wounds they suffered.[74]

Rudolf's close encounter with death profoundly changed him. His letters indicated that he was profoundly traumatized and felt extremely vulnerable. Along with his autobiographical piece and poems, he sent his wife an essay that he titled "Does War Make Men More Brutal—Excerpts from My War Experiences." He reflected on the effects of violence on men's psyches and he concluded that men ultimately transcended primitive instincts and the act of killing: "How often has one heard that war brutalizes men (*der Krieg macht die Menschen roh*)? One instinctively thinks that that the longer men remain at the front, living like gypsies under the sky, stealing chickens, shooting and stabbing men to death, they absolutely must become more brutal. I have seen war, and my experiences tell me that war doesn't make individual men more brutal than they already are. My experiences tell me that war makes men do noble things. War doesn't make men more brutal. Rather, it ennobles them."[75] Rudolf V.'s conclusion that men are ennobled by war mirrors prevailing assumptions about war being an essential, healthy masculine experience. However, in this essay that he sent his wife he modified the masculine ideal. He observed that it was not the warrior's duty, self-sacrifice, or his skill at killing that made men noble, but rather the expressions of love between comrades at the front. The fact that love could survive amid all this violence inspired him: "Is it possible for men who are still capable of love to become brutalized? I've never seen more examples of selfless love than there at the front, where in blood and desperation (*Not*) we fight through the most difficult days."[76]

In this last correspondence that exists in the archive file, Rudolf V. revealed that his emotional energy shifted. Over a few short months, his letters evolved from desperate pleas for more love and affection from his wife to his revelation, after the traumatic experience of being shot, that feelings of love were most intense on the battlefield. Interestingly, that revelation appeared in his self-styled essays that were not directly addressed to his wife. Rather, in turning to memoir, it was as though he were working to identify a source of intimacy separate from his relationship with his wife that would sustain him through the trauma of war. His letters to Julia no longer seemed cathartic. Rather, cut off and isolated from home, he turned to his comrades for feelings of love.

While men like Rudolf V. struggled to find emotional support from their wives, other men sought and found greater intimacy with women. Hermann D.,

a noncommissioned officer who volunteered for the war in August 1914, told his wife, Ida, that she was the only one with whom he could share his fears and insecurities. His first letters in September 1914 were intense, as he wrote while under artillery fire at a moment in which he believed he would be killed: "I'm on the battlefield in the heaviest artillery fire! My dear, loyal Ida! I don't know whether I will live through today. Should I fall, you can be certain that my last thoughts were of you and my dear parents. It is terrifying here."[77] Following that letter, he thanked Ida profusely for patiently helping him endure his moment of crisis. "You are really such a good person," he added, "if only I could repay you even a little bit for your kindness."[78]

One of the things that Hermann D. was profoundly thankful for was Ida's willingness to listen without judging him. His letters were filled with confessions of fear and vulnerability, and he felt comfortable intimating to her the effects that the war had on him, even his fears that he was not living up to masculine expectations. After enduring artillery fire, he wrote, his stomach was such a wreck that he could only eat rice for a week. He complained that he could not stop smoking, desperately needed a rest, and begged of her, "You must not think that something is going on with my manhood."[79] By October 1914, he shared ever more detailed accounts of the effects of violence on his psyche. He said that he hesitated to do this. He wanted her to know what he was going through, but he feared that it would burden her psyche. In the middle of writing about the devastating effects of an artillery battle, he decided to pause: "Should I let you know more? I'd rather not do that, because the violence of modern war is so terrifying. Once it's been explained to you it will be in your memory and can be revisited. Thus, you must patiently wait."[80] Though he would continue to write Ida about the stressful effects of combat, he feared that this would implant the same images in her mind that caused him so much anxiety. Nevertheless, he intimated much more to her about the reality of war than with his male relatives, including his brother Wilhelm: "Tell me where Wilhelm is being called up! Is he also going to the front? Oh, if only he could be spared from this! But if it has to be, then it's also in God's name. The war is too terrifying! Don't tell him. But I can tell you because you are a brave German girl (*ein tapferes deutsches Mädchen*)."[81] For Hermann D., his wife's role as a good woman went beyond just maintaining the domestic sphere on the home front. He also considered her capable of knowing the most emotionally stressful realities of life at the front.

Hermann D.'s relationship with Ida reflected prevailing gender assumptions about women being the emotional caretakers of the family. But he did not treat her with condescension or as an inferior who lacked the self-control of the warrior male. Instead, he treated Ida with great respect as someone who could understand what war actually did to him, while he had to maintain a

veneer of emotional self-control with other men. He told her that just as he would not hold back his emotions, she should do the same for him: "You can be certain that I have the purist feelings (*reinsten Gefühle*). I also know that *without being ordered to* [underlined in text] you like to write to me. Thus I have had no reason to hold back my thoughts from you. But I would be very happy if you would let me know your feelings. That would certainly make your pure love clear to me."[82] Perhaps a little anxious about whether his wife was as candid with him as he is with her, Hermann D. set clear parameters about his expectations for what they could put in their letters. The war experience made him receptive to his wife's emotional needs and sympathetic to how important emotions were to building a mutually respectful relationship.

Hermann D.'s subsequent letters indicated why he was so concerned about his wife's sensitivity to his innermost thoughts. He asked whether he and his men had become nothing but "cannon fodder," and he expressed fear that he would be perceived as a coward if he did not obey orders to go over the top.[83] But while waiting in agony before an attack, his sense that Ida knew his innermost thoughts bolstered his courage: "One must lie here passively. That's so wretched! Dear Ida! I've gradually come to trust you so much with my thoughts that it's almost like we're united and see the attack coming together. Then when I'm able to, at least to some extent, I must face it all again. Otherwise afterwards I'll have to stand before you as a coward. No, no, never!"[84] Pressure to adhere to the heroic ideal clearly affected Hermann, but he was also able to intimate to Ida just how afraid he was at the front. He even imagined that he was facing enemy fire with her standing by his side. By early spring 1915, he had premonitions that he would not survive, and he reflected fatalistically that his life or death was ultimately in the hand of God.[85]

Hermann D. suspected that his letters were becoming so frank that the military might censor him. After suffering a severe wound, his descriptions of violence were quite intense, and his detailed description of his injury gives a graphic account of what modern war did to human beings:

> A 1cm piece of heavy bomb shrapnel from our own artillery tore open the left side of my neck. At the same moment a fragment of gun shot hit me from behind and buried itself 2 cm deep into me, touching my clavicle without damaging the bone. When I fell hard to the ground on my stomach another piece of shrapnel tore through my bread pack (*Brotbeutel*), ripped it open and destroyed its contents. In spite of all this I'm okay right now. All the same I'm a bit overcome by the general effects of my "bad experience" (*Schlechtens*), which really had a terrible effect on me. I think there will be a few more difficulties, including damage to my hearing from the frightful explosion of a shrapnel bomb striking only 5 meters from me.[86]

He sarcastically used the euphemism "bad experience," gently mocking how combat injuries were glossed over, for what he acknowledged was a traumatic event that deeply shocked him.

His own graphic details in this letter gave Hermann D. pause, and he warned Ida that this letter might be censored. He told Ida that she would eventually read about the battle in newspapers, where it would be reported in "laconic brevity." Though his own letters did not appear to be censored, he warned that the "the military censor is very strict. Every word on every card and letter must be given up for review."[87]

Hermann D.'s fear of censorship came from not only his graphic descriptions of the reality of combat but also his increasingly negative remarks about the lack of comradeship at the front. Though he was promoted to noncommissioned officer (*Unteroffizier*)[88] status by the summer of 1915, he began the war as an enlisted man (*Gefreiter*), and he identified more with the regular troops. He was critical of the officers for "lording over" enlisted men, and he felt as long as such condescension persisted, "comradeship" was more an image than reality. In one letter, instead of concluding with his usual endearments and expressions of affection, he wrote about this tension at the front: "They [the officers] actually lead a life as if they were gods in France. Don't talk to me at all about comradeship between officers and men. That would undermine discipline! Oh, whenever they dignify a soldier like me with a word, they treat me with great condescension like I was some kind of little sub-deity (*kl. Herrgott*), [. . .] But the German soldier still does his duty for the fatherland."[89] Though insistent that ordinary soldiers still did their job despite the snobbery of their leaders, Hermann D. saw the old class tensions dividing the front community. His primary source of emotional support came from his relationship with his wife, not his bonding with other men. While he maintained the image of the heroic ideal and "did his duty," he became increasingly alienated and disillusioned, and he found in his relationship with his wife a separate emotional and psychological space that sustained him.[90]

Men developed a powerful desire to find a safe emotional universe as an antidote to the reality of life in the trenches. In the case of Fritz N. and his girlfriend, Hildegard, letters became a medium for developing a rich fantasy life where they could explore powerful emotions and even sexual fantasies. Their letters were filled with declarations of love and devotion. Fritz proposed to her in a 1917 letter, and when he wrote to her father for permission to marry Hildegard, Fritz lamented, "War and separation oppress us now more than ever."[91] Even before they were married, they called each other "wife" and "husband," and he drew a sketch of a wedding ring at the top of his letter to symbolize what he saw as their virtual marriage.[92] The war seemed to him a surreal interruption of his life and love: "I'm so completely, completely lonely [. . .] it's like a stupid

dream world—am I really alive? No! Never! I don't have you next to me [. . .] I feel like your thoughts are searching for me—have you found me?"[93]

Desperate for each other, Fritz and Hildegard explored their relationship in an imaginary world propped up in their letters. Fritz virtually never talked about the war in his letters, even when he was at the front. Instead, his letters were almost stream of consciousness promises of love. He encouraged Hilde to imagine a dream world where there was no war and he never left her:

> Lie awake and dream that I'm by your side. It's as though I have you, I'm right there at your door [. . .] Thus I live completely and only with you in our world. Everything else falls away from us. From now on I forget everything that goes on out there. Only what happens to you and I matters, that's all that remains alive inside me [. . .] Good night, my dear! Now I ask you to take my arm and press your little head against my chest! You: everything that's in the outside world sinks away, so once again it's just you and I.
>
> For you, my dear, I have love, endless love. I kiss you deeply and with all my heart.
>
> Your husband.[94]

This fantasy world imagined by Fritz was quite elaborate, and it included advice to Hilde on how to sneak into his trench at night and crawl into his bed. Though it was a playful fantasy, his carefully devised plan revealed the extent of his longing:

> I must explain to you how you can find me! We could meet in a shack in a deep-cut trench.
>
> You must be quiet, very quiet, because there are so many people everywhere. Radio operators, telephone specialists and other soldiers—I'm not alone in my bedroom: the captain lies next to me and he's such a light sleeper!! And it's so terribly cold! You must firmly cuddle me. And it would be nice if we could have breakfast together! [. . .] It's a dream! Dream![95]

Such fantasies helped sustain him, and he encouraged Hilde to "write everything that you think about."[96] Thus their letters became a haven where they could fantasize about a life without war and separation.

Their letters also became a space where they could share not only fantasies of emotional intimacy but also sexually charged fantasies. Hildegard reciprocated Fritz's letters with intimate fantasies of her own, and some of her letters outdid her fiancé's for their suggestive content. She confessed that though she tried to be steadfast and practice self-control, she was overcome by desire and spent all her time thinking about when she could be with him at home.[97] In one of her letters, she describes explicitly what she would do if Fritz were with her: "If

only I could travel with you. While you slept I could have caressed and kissed you—and if you would have woken up, I would have still been with you [. . .] I'm kissing you warmly and dearly and I am with you in all my thoughts."[98] Fritz's letters became even more passionate in response. In February and March 1918, he wrote several times every day. Each letter repeated virtually the same promises of love, including words and phrases and pet names known only to them within their secret world.[99]

Although Fritz and Hilde developed a carefully protected emotional refuge through their letter writing, Fritz was on the brink of collapse. He wrote that his nerves were at the breaking point from the tension and stress he was feeling while at the front.[100] A sense of urgency about ending the war and reuniting dominated their letters. Their friends were not holding up well under the strain. Hilde wrote disapprovingly about an old girlfriend who cheated and became pregnant while her husband was fighting at the front.[101] Hilde's yearning for Fritz was so overpowering that she feared her desires made her selfish and unpatriotic. Fritz had to reassure her that wanting peace so they could be together again was not a betrayal of the fatherland.[102] With the outbreak of the last great spring offensive on March 21, 1918, Hilde encouraged Fritz to devote himself to quick victory so he could return home. She described in great detail a fantasy in which Fritz arrived home, took her to bed, and they "had all that we longed for." With ecstatic rhetoric Hilde saw the military victory through the lens of desire: "I am totally confident that the war will soon come to a good end. Our victory is so marvelous, so marvelous! [. . .] Win! Win! And lay siege to Paris—marvelous—marvelous—and your dear dear letter from 21 [March] gives me incredible joy. Soon you'll come home, dearest! To me! Oh it's so beautiful!"[103]

When the initial breakthroughs slowed and the German army bogged down without capturing Paris, Hilde was furious. She became extremely possessive and saw the war as an unending wedge between her and her great love. After hearing that he was injured, her possessiveness intensified: "What are all these Frenchies trying to do?" she railed, "they aren't permitted to hurt my sweetie! Do you know who my sweetie belongs to? *Me* [underlined in text]!"[104] Fritz's light wound did not give him much respite, as he had to return to the front by September 1918. While many couples reflected in their letters on the broader military and political events in October and November 1918, Fritz and Hildegard's letters made no mention of outside events and stayed focus on declarations of love and desire.[105] He survived the war and they married in 1920.[106]

Avoiding "Bad" Girls: Sex and Foreign Women in Soldiers' Letters

Just as German soldiers heaped praise on their wives and girlfriends at home as foundations of their psychological health, they often condemned women in

occupied zones as undesirable. In their letters home, soldiers routinely described French, Belgian, and especially Russian women as primitive, dirty, and inferior. Their narratives reflected the racism and xenophobia prevalent among German soldiers. Frequent references to foreign women in occupied territories suggest that men were trying to reassure their wives and parents that they were keeping their distance from the dangerous "other." *Feldpostbriefe* that directly address sexuality are rare, but sexual behavior does come up in criticism of men who took advantage of the military-organized brothels. Soldiers used their letters as a chance to decry what they perceived as deviant sexual behavior committed by their own comrades who had relations with foreign women. In condemning extramarital sex, they reassured their wives and parents that they remained chaste and adhered to manly expectations of sexual self-control.

In their letters home, soldiers were keen to contrast the qualities of German women with the perceived inferiority of foreign girls. For example, Sergeant (*Vizefeldwebel*) Carl G. had a positive impression of the "lovely German girls" who hero-worshiped soldiers as they traveled through Germany's black forest to the front in August 1914, as mentioned earlier. In contrast, he wrote to his parents about how shocked he was when quartered with an Alsace family in Stockfeld. After describing the physical environment of his quarters, he went on at length about the "filthy" French families and their children:

> But now about the people here. They are disorderly and filthy (*unordentlich und dreckig*). They don't know how to raise their children. The boys in Alsace have pants but as far as I can see the girls don't wear any up to a certain age. They have shabby dresses and sit as though it were natural to be in filth the entire day. There's filth everywhere [. . .] From the dirt in the kitchen one just can't believe it. But these people can't seem to help themselves. They must stand in filth, otherwise they aren't happy. The ones here aren't even the worst.[107]

Carl G.'s perception that the poor Alsatians were not only impoverished but supposedly content to live in such a state reflected widespread cultural prejudices about the French population. His letters reinforced for his parents his assumptions about essential differences and hierarchies between the "civilized" German families he saw on the way to the front and the "barbaric" French families that he encountered.

In describing foreign women as repulsive, men seemed to be reassuring possibly anxious girlfriends and wives that they were not fooling around with them. Kurt K., whose letters to his fiancée, Lotte, were discussed earlier, repeatedly wrote about how unimpressed he was with the girls he came across in Belgium and France. According to Kurt, women in the city of Lille were particularly uncouth and annoying: "I know Lille is a city of 200,000 inhabitants and yet it makes a

thoroughly bad impression. The Belgian and French women and girls in particular immediately get on my nerves. Once I passed by a few as I approached the cathedral here. They came around the corner all tarted up, made up and powdered up. In short: brrrrr!"[108] These French and Belgian girls, he wrote to his fiancée, could not hold up to their German counterparts, whom he described with great adulation, putting them on a pedestal in stark contrast to foreign women. French women possessed only an artificial beauty, with the help of makeup, which concealed their essential degeneracy, he observed. "A large number of French girls may be pretty," he wrote, as if to acknowledge the stereotype, "but they're really dirty." In contrast, the German nurses who cared for his comrades earned his admiration. The nurses were chaste and men respected their purity, which was achieved through natural beauty rather than makeup. He did not even engage German women in relationships but admired them from a distance, thankful only to be reminded of home: "The young German nurses are the best. Young German warriors often stand a respectful distance behind them just to hear again a German word from the mouths of women."[109]

According to some front soldiers, it was not only the female foreign "other" who endangered the gender order. Some complained that their own comrades posed a threat to traditional sexual values, and they condemned their comrades who frequented brothels. For example, married Catholic farmers who were shocked by their comrades' behavior wrote home disapprovingly about soldiers who went to the bordellos behind the lines.[110] In addition to religious condemnations of sexual immorality, men were divided about the bordellos based on their proximity to the front. That is, men who endured the worst dangers in the trenches resented men who had relatively safe duties behind the lines as clerks and administrators. Front soldiers perceived men in the reserve areas, whom they called "paper soldiers," as taking advantage of the chaotic gender imbalance by exploiting lonely wives and girlfriends behind the lines. Self-identified "front hogs" (*Frontschweine*) also hated the "pigs of the rear area" (*Etappenschweine*), because they saw these men as the main beneficiaries of the brothel system that was managed in the reserve areas behind the lines. The "pigs of the rear area" were often portrayed in soldiers' letters and trench newspapers as sleazy, lazy, and debauched, while the "front hogs" bore the brunt of sacrifices in the trenches.[111]

This resentment appears in the letters of Gottlieb H., a noncommissioned officer and former book publisher. He touted the ingenuity of "front hogs" building deep trenches and dugouts to avoid enemy fire, while the lazy "reserve pigs" enjoyed comforts away from bombshells. Gottlieb H.'s archival file includes letters and poems, though it is not clear whether he sent the poems to anyone. According to one poem, the front hog endures "the call of terror" that sends him over the top, but he does his duty because he is "Protective of the

Heimat, women and children / Until the enemies crumble." While crawling in the mud of the trenches, he imagines his sexual rewards when he returns home: "Afterwards we crawl home quick and cheerful, / Back under the sheets with women, / Grunting with pleasure in the feather bed / And becoming once again round and fat."[112] This expectation that he, the hard-sacrificing front fighter, will find women welcoming him home with sexual favors sustains Gottlieb through tribulation. But his imagination was also filled with resentment of the "reserve pigs," to whom he dedicates another poem that drips with sarcasm and condemnation: "Who has neither courage nor brains in his head? / And yet carries the black and white band [the iron cross ribbon] on his tunic button?" The poem suggests that though they may be in uniform and get called "heroes" in the popular media, these soldiers are parasites who not only fake their bravery but, unlike the hardworking "front hogs," expend their energy on sexual debauchery: "Who prances around with German women until they are disgraced, / and goes with infected Belgian women afterwards? / Who rarely sleeps alone? / That would be the reserve trench pig!"[113] Front soldiers like Gottlieb H. imagined a code of behavior that he expected comrades to follow. He warned German women not to be fooled and seduced by frauds who avoided the dangers of combat. The real front fighters deserved sexual attention, while the men behind the lines, tainted by their sexual escapades in the brothels, were unworthy. Though the sexually frank poem was likely intended for an audience of other "front hogs" rather than for German women, it contained a message that would have reassured loved ones at home: men who exploited the sexual opportunities created by the war were deviant and to be shunned.

Men not only condemned their promiscuous comrades but also criticized loose German women for tempting them while on leave, and this is a topic that men did feel comfortable sharing with loved ones through *Feldpost*. Hermann B., who confided candidly with his parents about how the war had numbed him to violence and taken away his sense of humanity, also confessed that he was tempted by promiscuous women in Germany. His wealth of letters to his parents offer an interesting case study. Hermann B. was extremely frank about how disappointed he was with his comrades, including those he perceived as his arrogant and incompetent fellow officers. He was also an anti-Semite who detested his Jewish comrades.[114] His resentments caused him considerable stress. Hermann B. told his parents that "all of my anger makes me feel really nervous," and he admitted the war left him exhausted and numb. However, he feared being stigmatized by other men if he went to a doctor to complain that his nerves were shattered.[115]

During a much anticipated leave in Berlin, Hermann B. avoided his comrades and preferred to explore the streets, museums, opera house, and restaurants on his own. Berlin lived up to its reputation as a Babylon, Hermann told

his mother, and he was captivated and tantalized by the big city, whose carnal delights did not ease his pervasive unease:

> I seem to have nothing but irritation with life. I thought it would be better here, but that is not at all the case [. . .] If you think I'm finding any respite with the women here, you don't need to worry. I'm far too precautious and anxious (*ängstlich*) that I'll get something here (*daß ich mir hier was hole*), because 75% of all the inhabitants here are sick or have been sick. I returned my theater tickets for Sunday because I'm broke and don't have any desire to go.
>
> Kind regards, Yours, Hermann.[116]

It was not unusual for Hermann B. to end his letters on such a dejected note, but it was also an unusually frank discussion of women and, in a veiled but unmistakable reference, the potential dangers of venereal disease. Hermann's letter contained more than just reassurances to his mother that he would avoid "bad girls," as was found in so many letters. He also admitted that he was depressed and frustrated with life, and he could not find happiness even when he left the stress of the trenches.

Men typically revealed more frank opinions about sexual matters in letters to other men. For example, noncommissioned officer (*Unteroffizier*) August S., serving on the front lines, carried on a lengthy letter exchange with his young friend Ernst, who in 1917 still had not yet been called up for service. Ernst warned August S. about the superficial "war marriages" that proliferated. Ernst was concerned that August was going to fall victim to a woman, a mutual friend who, during August's Christmas leave, allegedly plotted to seduce August and take advantage of the simplified bureaucracy that made these quick marriages possible in wartime. Ernst complained to August that these weddings were not about love or respect but instead were clearly a sham, instigated by lust and the pressures of war.[117]

Ernst's letters to August were full of endearments and promises of deep friendship that had a homoerotic tone, including Ernst's reference to August's "sweet mouth." The letters also contained self-referential and difficult to decipher references to his strong prewar friendship with August. After his warning about war marriages, Ernst included a particularly strange passage: "Safeguard your old youth for 'its sake.' Rose-coloured—Don't fret, for 1. your hair will go grey and secondly you can't turn dog shit into chocolate-pudding!!"[118] Though the stream of consciousness, clipped style obscures his meaning, Ernst's strong warning about a compulsive marriage comes through. Marriage, Ernst warned, would be a disaster, and he beseeched August to be wary of being caught up in turbulent wartime emotions. Such strong warnings and fear of his friend's quick marriage may have been colored by Ernst's strong feelings for his old friend.

While some men used *Feldpostbriefe* as a forum to condemn promiscuous behavior, others wrote that they could understand why men sought sexual relief. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Lieutenant Hans W. wrote to his parents with disapproval about the bordellos set up just behind the front lines. However, in the months after writing those letters, he told his parents that his thinking on the subject of sexual abstinence had become more complicated as the war worsened. In a letter to his sister in May 1916, he wrote about meeting a new comrade who just arrived at the front. He noted that this comrade reminded him of himself when he entered the infantry the year before. They were both members of the *Wandervogel*, a popular youth association that emphasized nationalistic values within back-to-nature experiences like hiking and other outdoor endeavors. The new comrade preached sexual abstinence, and he "expressed strong judgments about sexual relationships (*sittliche Beziehungen*), just like I did when I entered the infantry." Hans wrote that the new guy made him realize that he had changed significantly since his puritanical days: "Over time I learned to become milder in my judgments."[119] From his comrades he learned to be more tolerant, and whether he agreed with their ideas or behavior, he felt they were trusted friends with whom he could talk about anything. In contrast, the new recruit "has no sense of humor." The new comrade even expressed disdain for apparently risqué paintings by Rubens that the men all saw in a museum. The man's inability to take a joke and make fun of himself, which Hans described as a key ingredient of good comradeship, made him untrustworthy.[120]

Hans W. was exceptionally candid compared to other men. Most men used letters home to promote an image of themselves as morally pure and loyal to the fatherland. Some men were critical of what they perceived as pervasive "immorality" at the front and at home, which they saw as a drain on Germany's fighting resolve. Carl G., who had been writing to his parents from the front every month since the beginning of the war, filled his letters in 1917–18 with his reflections on Germany's moral demise. He argued that "individual morality" was key to the survival of the *Volk*, and he compared Germany in the last year of the war to ancient Rome, which he said collapsed because of moral decay. These opinions were reinforced by pastors he heard at the front, whose ideas he admired and summarized to his parents: "This morning we were at a church service in a forest camp. The pastor gave a great sermon. He spoke of the future of Germany. We should all conquer that which is evil in us and only search for the good. It isn't big territorial gains or inflicting a lot of war damage that gives our fatherland happiness and blessings, but the satisfaction that we get from having a moral way of life."[121] Carl G. saw Germany's cities as the main threat to this "moral way of life," because in the overcrowded conditions there was what he called "climbing sexual indecency." Further, he blamed the transformation of

Germany into an urban nation for leaving children without a sense of *Heimat*, which was essential to patriotic and traditional moral values.[122]

Carl G. ended almost every one of his sermonizing letters to his parents with an update about his laundry and seemingly inexhaustible criticism about his mother's failure to properly wash his silk shirts. However, these banalities contrasted sharply with his increasingly melancholy letters about the demoralizing effects of bombardments, trying to survive in the heat of battle, and the bitter mood of his comrades. He wrote about how the artillery fire, which "placed the greatest demand on one's nerves and one's conscience" because men could not even see their enemy, turned his comrades numb and made them mindless hedonists. The fact that "men are not angels" was something, he observed, that never got into the propaganda image of the war: "When the infantryman moves up to the trenches, he likes to get drunk and make music the night before in order to drum up some fresh courage. One sees the worst of this naturally in the communications trenches. Such a life in war is not suitable for your official pages and pamphlets [his parents sent him press clippings about life at the front], because men are not angels in war and they also don't want to be."[123] Carl G. was not sympathetic toward his comrades who sought escape in what he perceived as immoral pleasures. He felt like an outsider among the other men, in particular because he did not drink or smoke. Interestingly, he mocked those who saw drinking as a masculine behavior: "Germany's place as a world power will not be achieved after the war through 'manly' beer drinking, but through enthusiastic learning and hard work to make up for the time lost in the war."[124] Carl G. thus painted an image of himself to his parents as an isolated, lone crusader who was frustrated with the moral decay that had taken over his comrades.

By the summer of 1918, when, after brief gains, Germany's last offensive came to a grinding halt as the army faced fresh troops and resources pouring in from the recently mobilized United States, Carl G.'s letters turned more bitter, as he felt like he was the only man in his unit who remained loyal and morally true. As the initial German attacks in March–April bogged down and incessant rain turned living conditions into muddy, filthy nightmares, he complained that the men had become idle, "the greatest evil," and increasingly pessimistic about whether Germany could actually win the war.[125] Writing from an observation post in the forward trenches, he criticized his comrades for being "corrupted by internationalism" and losing their moral direction. The greatest struggle after the war, he predicted, would be the "inner battle." Though he did not specify the nature of this inner struggle, he added that men could only fulfill themselves through continued sacrifice for the *Heimat* and its women and children.[126] In Carl G.'s mind, the shooting war may have been drawing to a close, but the war's devastating effects on Germany's moral condition was a war without end.

Conclusion

Klaus Theweleit began his famous work, *Male Fantasies*, by observing a peculiar phenomenon in the memoirs of veterans: references to women were noticeably absent, as men focused their narratives almost exclusively on their bonds with other men and daily life in the front. Celebration of an all-male environment in which women were primarily constructed as a bothersome "other" was indeed prevalent in the writings of many right-wing veterans, particularly officers who would later become National Socialists at the center of Theweleit's study.[127] Their memoirs eventually became sacrosanct in the National Socialist construction of the memory of the war and notions of masculinity. However, these types of memoirs did not necessarily reflect the diverse psychological landscapes of front soldiers.

Letters from the front reveal that men saw women as vital figures who played a substantial role in their emotional lives. Not all men celebrated male comradeship as sufficiently emotionally fulfilling. In many cases men did not hesitate to acknowledge that they were psychologically dependent on women and that they yearned to be with their wives and girlfriends rather than at the front. Postwar myths about a tight-knit community of comradeship suggest that men severed their psychological ties from home. In reality, many soldiers were psychologically closely bound to the home front. Social divisions between officers and soldiers, high losses, and rotations of troops meant that men continued to build emotional connections with women. At the same time, the otherworldly nature of the front, with its intense violence and accompanying mental stress, drove a powerful experiential wedge between soldiers and loved ones, even if they tried to maintain some semblance of familiar reality.

Front soldiers used *Feldpostbriefe* to portray themselves as heroic, brave, and sexually loyal individuals who held up the masculine ideal. However, especially as the brutality of trench warfare intensified, many also admitted to feelings of fear and vulnerability. Letters home became a kind of confessional where men intimated to women that they were terrified and shattered by the war. Front soldiers desperately placed trust in women to be empathetic as they tried to explain how the stress of war altered them psychologically and emotionally. While the different experiences of men and women on combat and home fronts divided many of them, and fomented different levels of resentment from men who felt the home front was aloof to the reality of the war, men still tried to reach out to women for emotional support. Their desperation and their confessions of fear and anxiety reveal an interesting change in conceptions of masculinity. While men reinforced existing gender paradigms that saw women as bastions of emotion who occupied a distinct world of love and tenderness, many men tried to enter into that world and longed to open up their emotions, even if it

seemed "effeminate." Men sought to escape the demands of self-control and stoicism, and they revealed neediness and anxiety to their wives and girlfriends. Letters home sometimes became another universe where men could let down their guard and explore fantasy worlds that engulfed them in love as an antidote to the brutality that surrounded them. As Chapter 4 will show, some men expressed envy that women could show these emotions openly, and they longed to escape the emotional restrictions required by the dominant masculine ideal.

CHAPTER 4

"I Wish I Were a Girl!"

Escaping the Masculine Ideal in Front Newspapers

In their letters home, front soldiers' perspectives on masculine ideals were often ambivalent and changed in the face of violence and stress. However, it was in another medium, shared between men in the trenches rather than with civilians on the home front, where soldiers' perceptions of masculinity were even more complex. Front newspapers produced by soldiers, the focus of this chapter, provide an interesting glimpse into how the war shaped their perceptions of masculinity and sexuality, shedding light on the complex and elusive ways in which soldiers constructed ideals of manliness. Brutalized soldiers tried to find a sense of intimacy and emotional sustenance, even when masculine norms prohibited them from exploring "effeminate" desires and emotions.

This chapter argues that within the sphere of humor and entertainment in front newspapers, soldiers generated dissonant perspectives on masculinity that do not easily fit into prevailing images of the "good comrade" sanctified in propaganda. Front newspapers, especially the trench newspapers that were grittier than the more carefully controlled army newspapers, depicted men who were loyal comrades and devoted to the nation, but who also fantasized about gender transgression, experimentation with homosexual bonds, and disillusionment with the emotionally stifling expectations of the masculine ideal. These fantasies of gender transgression found in front newspapers reflected an interesting tension: they tended to simultaneously reinforce traditional gender structures and also signal a need by heterosexual men to modify accepted masculine traits. Front newspapers, as historians have observed, contained articles and cartoons that reinforced a masculine image embodied by the "good comrade," who was a loyal, self-sacrificing soldier. This masculine image was largely constructed against images of "the other"—in particular, men perceived to be shirkers of

their duty.[1] However, men writing for front newspapers also mocked elements of the hegemonic masculine image and explored new emotions and behaviors, even those deemed "effeminate" and "deviant."

The brutality and dislocation of the front environment gave men the opportunity to explore taboo behaviors, at least temporarily, within the distorted universe of the trenches. As Dagmar Herzog observed, soldiers experienced "consensual pleasures made possible by the anonymity and mass mobility of times of war," and total war enabled men to explore sexual desires outside traditional social structures and "monitoring mechanisms."[2] While heterosexual fantasies of promiscuity and "conquering" the enemy dominated soldiers' newspapers, this was supplemented with cartoons and feature articles that toyed with alternatives to the officially sanctioned warrior ideal. Men mocked what they perceived as "mechanical" sexual norms, and through humor they criticized emotionally void heterosexual promiscuity. Sexual humor in soldiers' newspapers, especially the trench newspapers, depicted men fantasizing about acquiring "feminine" emotional characteristics of nurturing and love. They portrayed loving other men as a desirable and acceptable component of the front experience.

Rather than creating or reflecting deep-seated sexual instincts, the war experience allowed men to explore, define, and evaluate their existing gender and sexual assumptions. For many heterosexual men, war provided an alternative universe enabling them to normalize their "feminine" side in order to be good comrades without disrupting traditional gender dichotomies. The notion of "comradeship" embodied both masculine and feminine traits, which men mimicked to cope with the deprivation and emotional stress of life at the front.[3] Front newspapers sometimes took this incorporation of feminine emotions to another level, depicting soldiers who fantasized about not only mimicking or channeling feminine traits but also becoming women in order to escape the pressures of being men. Men superficially "became" women by experimenting with cross-dressing, and, on a more emotional level, men filled the vacuum of nurturing and care that was created by the absence of women. However, adopting "feminine" qualities required more than just a "softer" side of comradeship that was part of the new warrior ideal. Front soldiers did not just want to emulate missing women for psychological and emotional relief. They also fantasized about escaping their male gender roles and expectations by changing genders. By becoming women, they hoped not only to flee from the harsh reality of the trenches but also to better provide comfort for their emotionally stressed comrades.

"Heroic Masculinity" under Fire: Expressing Emotions in Front Newspapers

From the ordinary soldiers' perspective, life in the trenches was brutal, filthy, and psychologically oppressive. Surviving for days under shellfire before an attack, being buried alive, and witnessing the horrific violence produced by machine guns and high explosives created an unbearable atmosphere at the front. Psychological numbness, and even insanity, seemed the only form of escape for many men. As one soldier recounted, "I am still feeling shaky after yesterday afternoon, when the English battered our trench with shrapnel and shells. More than one water-hole was dyed purple with the blood of those who were killed [. . .] We all become more or less callous and unfeeling out here in this horrible war; whoever does not goes mad in the most real and awful sense of the word."[4] Symptoms of psychological breakdown erupted in the form of men suffering tics and tremors, paralysis, uncontrollable shaking, and nightmares. As Elaine Showalter argues in her analysis of the famous British cases of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, "shell shock" became the only form of escape from an intolerable reality for men who were socialized to control their emotional vulnerability in the face of stress. Showalter identifies at least two major patterns of emotional responses to psychological stress: the outpouring of powerful feelings of love for other men and, most frequently, "anxieties about masculinity" that led to breakdown: "If it was the essence of manliness not to complain, then shell shock was the body language of masculine complaint, a disguised male protest, not only against the war, but against the concept of manliness itself."[5]

In Germany, these physical symptoms of mental trauma were labeled "war neurosis" (*Kriegsneurose*) or "war hysteria" (*Kriegshysterie*), reflecting prevailing medical perceptions of these men as unmanly because they broke down in the face of the ultimate masculine experience. Doctors were hard-pressed to solve what they saw as an epidemic of "hysterical men," with more than 600,000 in the regular and reserve armies diagnosed as suffering from a whole range of different nervous disorders by the end of the war.[6] In their efforts to prevent military catastrophe, psychiatrists debated the most efficient paths of treatment, from electrotherapy and suggestion to psychotherapy, in order to cope with what many doctors believed was essentially an illness faked by working-class and degenerate men. The aim of treatment was to restore masculinity. Psychiatrists predicted that without proper discipline and fear of punishment, men would fall into a cycle of welfare dependence, or "pension neurosis," and abandon their traditional male roles as workers and soldiers.[7] Men who suffered from myriad symptoms of traumatic neurosis shot back at doctors, constructing their own theories on the origins and significance of "war hysteria." Traumatized men

argued that doctors were the real "hysterics" for promoting war, and that even normal men broke down under stress.[8]

"War hysteria" was only one battleground where men tried to escape from, or critique, masculine expectations that required emotional self-control and psychological resilience. Traumatized by the violent reality of life at the front, men increasingly looked with skepticism on the idealized images of masculinity and the warrior ideal promoted by civilian and military authorities. Skepticism and disillusionment can be found in narratives by soldiers who contributed articles to the trench newspapers. Much of this cynicism was couched in humor, sugarcoated with rhetoric that reinforced prevailing heroic ideals and was judged to be good for overall morale. At the same time, under the guise of humor and entertainment, there was considerable dissonance and tension between these prevailing ideals and the often surreal realities that men described.

One of the most prevalent examples of this dissonance was the mockery of officers within the safe framework of humor that helped trench newspapers elude censorship. The spiciest humor and entertainment was produced in the less-censored trench newspapers, which were written and edited by frontline soldiers. Military leaders who celebrated the heroic ideal without experiencing the danger of the trenches were frequent targets. In the handwritten, unpolished, yet ingenious and artfully crafted trench newspaper *Der kleine Brummer* (*The Little Buzzer*), soldiers used humorous poems to poke fun at generals who held cushy jobs while the "front hogs" (*Frontschweine*) endured life in the trenches. In a recurring series of cartoons and poems titled, with apparent sarcasm, "Gallery of Famous Battle Comrades," nameless officers are drawn and accompanied by poems detailing how they get to make decisive decisions from behind their desks and then happily go home to dinner. In the third cartoon of the series, a cartoon of a German general is captioned: "I'd like to eat so much caviar that it becomes distasteful."[9] Instead of bullets and accompanying fear, the officers dwell in a world of lectures about their battle plans and gourmet dining. Without directly criticizing the military elite, the irreverence and mild resentment aimed at the generals who called the shots while remaining comfortably safe are evident.

Playful jabs at officers for not bearing the brunt of danger while "front hogs" endured the mud, boredom, and moments of terror were only one dimension of dissonance in front newspapers. Soldiers also mocked the often lofty images of self-sacrifice that were a cornerstone of heroic masculinity. Such lofty images appeared in the official army newspapers, which were strictly monitored. They tried to convince men that they needed to cut off their emotions in order to fulfill their duties of sacrifice. These newspapers produced at the army and divisional levels emphasized images of "comradeship" that adhered to traditional masculine paradigms, which included exhortations to perform one's duty, work

hard, and be loyal to fellow soldiers and the nation. Prescriptions for the "good comrade" were detailed. Army-level newspapers offered stories that depicted feelings of love and personal needs as interfering with the demands of the fatherland, and they pressured men to choose love of the nation over love for women. In the newspaper *Sniper Watch* (*Scharfschützen-Warte*), an excerpt from the serialized novel *Duty and Love*, by noncommissioned officer (*Unteroffizier*) Henning, details the terrible choice that a fellow soldier must make between demands from his wife versus the demands of being a soldier. The narrative opens with an account of a noncommissioned officer named Hermann Grote who had endured seven days under British artillery fire when he was ordered to direct counterfire on a Belgian town where his wife, Marguerite, lived. Grote married Marguerite before the war, when he worked in Belgium, and he left her there when he returned to Germany to volunteer after the outbreak of the war. Four of her brothers fought in the Belgian army, and Marguerite begged Grote, "Don't go to the front again!"[10]

The story portrays Grote's wife as a naïve woman dominated by emotions. "What does a love-struck girl (*liebesbedürftiges Mädchen*) know about the fatherland and the oath to the flag," Grote asks before he concludes, "Fatherland goes before love. If you really love me, my little Marguerite, then you'll understand." Grote's loyalty to the fatherland is put to the test. With reluctance, but in control of his emotions, he directs fire on the town where his wife lives. Later, he captures a spy in the forest near German lines, and he recognizes the man as René, one of Marguerite's brothers, who pleads, "Let me go, Hermann, just this one time! We were friends!" Grote refuses to relent, pronouncing, "No, René, my soldierly duty is more important to me [. . .] You are my prisoner, and even if I lose Marguerite's love, I certainly will not neglect my duty!" René spits back, "Then die, dirty Boche!" as he raises his pistol to shoot Grote. Wounded, Grote kills René in their fight for the gun, and the story ends with the hero receiving an iron cross first class for his bravery in defeating the spy.[11]

This melodramatic story celebrated the foundational elements of the heroic ideal, sanctifying national sacrifice at the expense of personal needs, including love. However, it was becoming increasingly difficult for soldiers at the front to adhere to the "manly" traits of emotional self-control and discipline. Men reassessed the values of self-control and self-sacrifice within the reality of mass violence and industrialized warfare, which seemed to destroy the individual and one's ability to display manly, heroic traits. This reevaluation of heroism can be seen in the case of Erich Kuttner, a journalist who wrote for Social Democratic publications including *Vorwärts* before the war and contributed regularly to trench newspapers. He volunteered for the army in 1915 and was wounded at Verdun the next year. In 1917, he cofounded what would become Germany's largest war victims' organization, the *Reichsbund der Kriegsbeschädigten*

(National Association of War Victims), and throughout the postwar period he wrote extensively on the reintegration of war disabled into work and family life.[12] While recuperating from his wounds after Verdun, he wrote an article called "The 'Man'" in *Der Flieger* (*The Flyer*), a trench newspaper edited by soldiers and officers and disseminated among both air force and frontline personnel on the Eastern front. Though the public fascination with dashing fighter pilots and submarine captains got the most press, Kuttner stressed that it was the "ordinary soldier" who deserved the most praise: "The novelists create heroes who 'with piercing eyes dive into the rain of bullets.' The hero that I've experienced looks much less poetic. He is filthy, covered with crusts of dirt in his face and hands, because for eight days he has had no water for boiling coffee, not to mention wash."[13]

Kuttner's greatest anxiety was that this ordinary soldier had lost his individuality and become subsumed into the "abundant masses" (*Massenhaftigkeit*), unable to distinguish himself from the millions of other men in the war. However, this ordinary front soldier embodied what Kuttner described as "an entirely new concept of heroism (*Heldenhaftigkeit*)." The exhausted front fighter concentrated most on the daily pressures of survival, and he did not fit the dashing prewar romantic image. Nevertheless, he deserved the nation's praise, as his mere survival in the face of industrialized war earned him status as a hero.[14] The new image of masculine resilience for ordinary men was no longer the dashing, self-sacrificing, enthusiastic warrior, but rather the resilient and resourceful "front hog."

The sheer ability to survive using any resources at his disposal became the mark of the "front hog's" masculine virtue. The paraphernalia and symbols of heroic masculinity were reassessed for their functionality and usefulness. One of the most visible, ubiquitous symbols of the soldiers' masculinity was the steel helmet (*Stahlhelm*), which, along with the field-grey uniform, became the archetypal icon of male identity. The steel helmet symbolized the toughness and readiness of front fighters. In many propaganda images, especially in the more official army newspapers, it held the power to turn every individual man who wore it into a warrior, a single component of the larger war machine.[15] Trench newspapers relished in poking fun at the image of the steel helmet, and emphasized its multifaceted uses in everyday survival, including its practicality in facilitating "feminine" tasks, as more important than its symbol of masculine strength. For example, a series of cartoons in a 1917 issue of *Der Flieger* portrayed the all-pervasive *Stahlhelm* as perfect for cooking and cleaning. The cartoon soldier used his helmet as a wash basin, cooking pot, food carrier, and even a bed for his dog. But the soldier in the cartoon also took advantage of the home front's fetishization of the steel helmet, as civilians still imagined it as a symbol of masculine power. Gazing into a mirror, the soldier in the cartoon muses that

the helmet makes his face look even more attractive and, when he arrives home on leave, he wears it to impress his loyal wife, who is "amazed" when she sees her man in full uniform and wearing the *Stahlhelm*.[16] In another cartoon for *Der Flieger* captioned "Image and Reality—How Pilot Meyer actually does service and how he lets himself be photographed for Elvira," the dashing front hero is contrasted with the boring banalities of daily life, including peeling potatoes and washing equipment.[17] These cartoons reflected an interesting dichotomy between the image and reality of the masculine ideal, and they suggest that men were conscious of this tension.

Trench newspapers revealed another tension simmering in the minds of front soldiers. Despite the heroic ideal's expectation that they control their emotions, men began to resent this demand for stoic self-sacrifice. Men affirmed emotions that were portrayed in propaganda and army newspapers as a threat to the masculine ideal. Beneath the image of martial masculinity, many men began to explore more feminine characteristics that emphasized emotions of nurturing and compassion rather than strictly steel-nerved masculine control. In articles written by soldiers, in contrast to those generated by military and medical authorities, men celebrated the "softer" side of comradeship, including bonds of love and friendship that sustained them in the otherworldly environment of the trenches. In a poem titled "The Good Comrade" in a 1917 edition of the trench newspaper *Der Drahtverhau* (*The Wire Shack*), good humor and friendship were identified as a soldier's best ally. The "divine companion" and "root of life" was "friend humor" (*Freund Humor*), which protected one against the traumatic reality of life in the trenches. Paying tribute to "friend humor," the poem details:

> You were the friendly one who,
> if terrible worries pressed down on me,
> bridged over the gap from pain to new pleasures,
> and placed the remote peace-time back in my heart.
> And so you remain to me, what you were:
> A friend who sweetens that which is bitter,
> Even if the cruel murder of men (*Männermorden*)
> Closes you off to the scared hearts of some.[18]

Here the murderous violence of the trenches closes off men's emotions and overwhelms them with pain. The poem is nostalgic for a distant, forgotten world of "sweetness" and love that their "good comrade," humor, helps them recover. Rejecting the cruelty of war, the author idealizes a safer universe enveloped in friendship and calm: "Whether or not this global conflagration (*Weltbrand*)

keeps raging, whether the angel of peace shows herself, in most faithful friendship it is sworn: 'we will hold through—you and I!'"[19]

Humor was a key morale builder that provided an outlet for soldiers to express emotions beneath the façade of the martial, steel-nerved warrior. Through humor, men could confess their anxieties and desires, and within these features and cartoons can be found a feminine alternative to the masculine warrior ideal. In *Der Flieger*, a poem titled "A Sweet Relationship" details the loving relationship a soldier has with his most precious companion in the trenches—his jar of marmalade. Though it is a humorous sketch of the good "friendship" provided by jam, it also reveals the inner emotional life of the front soldier, who cannot imagine life without this most loyal "comrade" in the trenches:

> Nothing can delight my heart more, nothing is sweeter
> than you;
> In so many ways you enchant, stealing my peaceful heart
> [. . .]
> [. . .]When it is finally called out, "Lay down your
> weapons!"—you will no longer be with me.
> When we return home again, I'll apply for a divorce.
> And as long as I will live, I'll groan your name loudly,
> Because while on Russia's soil you were marmalade—my
> bride![20]

In the distorted universe of the trenches, a "marriage" with the invaluable and single source of joy, marmalade, seems perversely desirable. With a dose of humor, the poem assumes that men at the front could comprehend why a steadfast jar of marmalade provided more psychological sustenance than a woman at home. The comical nature of this poem conceals the much more serious reality that men had to cope with being deprived of emotional bonds. As men struggled to survive in an environment completely cut off from traditional physical and psychological structures, they were reassured that women on the home front remained loyal, serving as "good comrades" from behind the lines. However, the emotional strains placed on men in the trenches created an ever-expanding chasm between the combat and home fronts, and many men grew increasingly emotionally estranged from women on the home front who expected them to adhere to the obsolete, and psychologically suffocating, masculine ideal.

Fears and Fantasies: Sexual and Emotional Isolation in Front Newspapers

While the ordinary front soldier tried to maintain, or at least prop up, the image of the heroic ideal in the face of industrialized war, many men became alienated from those who had no experience of life at the front. One of the problems that men could not convey to the home front was the degree to which the war brutalized them psychologically and sexually. In the face of stress, men sought to escape through sexual pleasure. But this search for relief held only limited possibilities. Men found that sex, like life under the conditions of war, had become more mechanized and impersonal, providing little chance of emotional sustenance.

In trench newspapers, soldiers published sympathetic, matter-of-fact articles on the sexual and psychological effects of the war, including changes in the ways men and women related to each other. One of the most interesting voices to appear in soldiers' newspapers was that of Paul Göhre, a socially progressive former Lutheran pastor who joined the Social Democratic Party in 1900, which led to his ultimate break from the church in 1906. He wrote extensively on the need to reform German society, ease social class divisions, and promote the freedom to vote.[21] At the age of 51, he volunteered to fight on the Russian front in 1915, witnessing firsthand the traumatic violence of the trenches. He published a three-page article based on his experiences titled "War and the Sexes" in a December 1917 edition of *Der Flieger*. Having once been a member of the religious establishment later turned a veteran of the front, Göhre provides an interesting perspective. Rejecting the pious, reassuring defense of the traditional order found in many treatises by civilian and military elites who remained on the home front, he opted for a more candid description of the changing psychological and sexual relationship between men and women.

Göhre believed that soldiers would only listen to advice if sex were discussed in a frank, noncondescending manner. He emphasized that the sexual transformations caused by the war should be treated as a "natural social-psychological" phenomenon rather than approached from a "moral-preacher standpoint."[22] He argued that the prewar gender and sexual order had been substantially changed by the war experience. "As with so many things," Göhre wrote, "the war has also fundamentally changed the relationship of the sexes (*Geschlechter*) to each other." One of the overarching effects of the war that affected both men and women, Göhre observed, was the hardening and even deadening of emotions resulting from pain experienced in the face of mass violence. For women, the loss of loved ones at the front meant that feelings of happiness were replaced with bitterness, disappointment, and feelings of an unfulfilled life. The stress of the war changed women's "inner nature," turning them into "torn (*zerrissenen*)

beings." Even for women whose husbands survived, it was typical for them to feel coldness and antipathy toward men as a result of years of living in isolation and fear. Göhre also found that the war created a "new class of men (*neuartigen Menschenschicht*)" whose psychological scars altered their relationships with the opposite sex. He argued, "From the perspective of men, the death-slaughter of his brothers has extremely terrible effects. These emotions manifest themselves in men experiencing a sharply rising self-consciousness about their feelings towards women." Men felt self-conscious because, while their scarcity in the wake of mass death made them more desirable to women, men also became cautious and they hesitated to form permanent relationships.[23]

The war, according to Göhre, also made sex between men and women an impersonal, cold experience. Ideally, Göhre insisted, marriages occurred between men and women who sought long-term fulfillment. But instead of forming fulfilling, spiritual bonds, both men and women had become more interested in simply relieving the stress of the war, and promiscuous sex became a means to this end. "One disastrous event," Göhre observed, "is the running wild of sexual intercourse (*Verwilderung des sexuellen Verkehrs*), which has occurred between the two genders as a result of this war."[24] Göhre argued that the fact men sought comfort with women they barely knew was a logical, even necessary outcome of life at the front, but ultimately unfulfilling. Sex simply for instinctual, rather than spiritual, fulfillment also governed women's behaviors. He expected women to defend the sacredness of sexual relations, but sex for women had also become "impersonal": "All tenderness, all that is ideal, has fled. Loyalty becomes an empty delusion. The woman concerned no longer sees 'her' current soldier as a hero, which he may be, as in the first months of the war. Instead he is the agent of nourishing, comforting arousal. To women the soldier is the temporary, totally impersonal, needed tool (*Werkzeug*) for the satisfaction of natural needs."[25] Mass death made men and women more desperate for sexual gratification to escape the stress of the war. However, the war also brutalized people's emotions, causing them to engage in emotionally hollow sexual relations that made it impossible for individuals to find the psychological comfort they desperately needed. Mirroring the industrial carnage taking place at the front, sexuality became mechanical, and men and women no longer felt the same prewar sexual attractions from which they derived emotional fulfillment.

Sexual humor in trench newspapers suggested that Göhre's anxieties about the erosion of sexual fulfillment with women and the increased mechanization of sexuality reflected ordinary soldiers' perceptions. Soldiers joked about sexual games that were entertaining but also lacked personal fulfillment or attachment. This included images that reflected the militarization of sexuality, with soldiers applying their training at the front to their sexual adventures. In the trench newspaper *Die Sappe* (*The Sapper*), a series of cartoons encouraged

soldiers to use their military training to find sexual relief at home. In one frame of the cartoon, the military term for a night operation that entails infiltrating the enemy trench is given another meaning. Captioned "sneaking patrol" (*Schleichpatrouille*), the cartoon depicts a soldier sneaking through a second-floor window, ostensibly into a girlfriends' room, with the help of a ladder, while a woman in a first-floor window frowns at his shenanigans. In another frame, a grinning soldier and his girlfriend hide from an older woman tending the haystack that is the site of their rendezvous. The caption, "pilot's cover" (*Fliegerdeckung*), hints the soldier is taking cover from the nosy older woman as he would if he were at the front.[26]

A cartoon in the soldier-edited newspaper *Schützengrabenzeitung* (*Trench Newspaper*) jokingly depicted men competing for sexual conquests. Captioned "Jealousy," it showed an empty pair of boots at the base of a ladder propped against an open window, indicating a soldier is clandestinely visiting a girl. Adjacent to the home, another soldier looks at the window with a knowing grin, and he uses a conveniently placed hole in a fence to urinate into his comrade's boots. The jealous soldier's grin condones the sexually adventurous soldier's luck, hinting that he only wishes he were there first. Rather than providing emotional relief, sexual humor revealed sexuality as merely fodder for entertainment, an impersonal experience made more interesting because it was driven by competition and pleasure.

To cope with the stress of the front, sex, and sexual humor, provided an element of escape, and men reveled in images that celebrated the front as a kind of sexual paradise where the quantity of sexual conquests replaced pretensions to emotional fulfillment. One of the most popular humor narratives found in soldiers' newspapers were stories of men who had multiple wives and girlfriends, and their struggles to juggle women near the front and at home were played to comedic effect. Even in the official army newspaper the *Kriegszeitung der 4ten Armee* (*War Newspaper of the Fourth Army*), several such stories were serialized, including one called "The Five Brides—A Peaceful Story from the War-Life of Sergeant (*Unteroffizier*) R. Voth," which professed to be a story of "love and passion" that the author heard from another soldier, who is given the pseudonym Gunner (*Kanonier*) Schmidt. Now stationed in Flanders, Schmidt left three brides at home, and the narrator explains, "Whoever has been a soldier, or still is, will not find that to be too many."[27] Unable to decide which bride he wants to keep, as they are all either beautiful, excellent cooks, or rich, Schmidt dutifully exchanges letters and care packages with all three. However, Schmidt is tempted by two beautiful Belgian women, including Leontinje, the daughter of his Flemish housekeeper and Dortje, the daughter of his washerwoman. When Leontinje cooks him fresh eggs and shows off her "lovely smile," he forgets

all about his German wives "and the evening belonged exclusively to the little Flemish woman."[28]

When he returns home, Schmidt mixes up his German wives who have discovered his infidelity, and the Flemish girls become even more attractive as Schmidt seeks an escape from his problems at home. Dortje already has a husband, but he went missing in action. "Such is war that the enemy who possibly killed her husband now lived in her midst," writes the narrator, and Dortje "now wanted and had to conquer Schmidt."[29] As with Leontinje, a sexual encounter is hinted at when Dortje wins Schmidt over with an egg omelet, after which "the moon shined and smiled on the two lovers." Schmidt is put off by Leontinje's jealousy over Dortje, even though Leontinje herself carouses with other German soldiers. When Dortje discovers that her fiancé is still alive, he returns to his three wives in Germany. Schmidt keeps fond memories of the "enchanting" Belgian girls. Though his German wives are really the most loyal, true, and virtuous for putting up with his misbehavior, they are a bit disappointing compared to the sexual possibilities found at the front.[30]

The "Five Brides" met officially prescribed assumptions that German housewives are the most loyal and true, and Schmidt is sympathetic because he is portrayed as a kind of victim who is "conquered" by the promiscuous, tempting Belgian girls. At the same time, the loyal German girls prove less interesting than the enchanting Belgian beauties. The use of the word "conquering" in the "Five Brides" story to describe the Belgian girl pursuing the German soldier is interesting, as it recurs in soldiers' narratives as a double entendre. Sex became an extension of mechanized, modern warfare, subsumed within the broader military goals. "Conquering" enemy territory and sexual "conquest" were conflated in soldiers' humor that portrayed French and Belgian women as part of the reward for occupation. France itself was represented as a sexual object waiting to be conquered in a cartoon appearing in *Der kleine Brummer* (*The Little Buzzer*). Titled "The Prudish Reims" (*Das spröde Reims*), the French city is anthropomorphized as a coy woman, adorned with the city's skyline on her head. She's ogled by a soldier who says, "You're so conceited! We've actually almost got you completely surrounded!"[31] Thus sexual assault was a metaphor for the military assault on the city, and the suggestive cartoon indicates that the city may be sexually frigid, but that the German soldier cannot be kept at bay. Even more suggestive were cartoons that depicted "exotic" women from non-European war zones as sexually available to German soldiers. A cartoon captioned "In Constantinople," also in *Der kleine Brummer*, depicts two German soldiers gazing at two Arabic women, and it suggests the racial "other" was a sexual fantasy for men far away from home.[32]

Most sexual humor in soldiers' newspapers alluded to French and Belgian girls or other foreign women as sexually available, in stark contrast to chaste,

innocent German women. However, there were occasional references to extramarital sexual adventures with German girls. In a supplement to *Der Flieger* (*The Flyer*) called "Amusement Corner," a poem about a girl named "Little Maria" details her trip to the city where she can look for a husband among the plethora of soldiers. She's enamored of men in uniform—a kind of soldier groupie—and she is carrying a child but is not exactly certain about the father's identity. "I'm looking for a husband who can support me," she says, suggesting she is preying on any unsuspecting soldier who succumbs to her charms.[33] The cartoon presents her as nothing more than an opportunist, and it imagines men as interchangeable breadwinners and sexual objects for the young woman who is smitten by any man in uniform.

Remaining loyal to women at home required Herculean, sometimes self-deluding behavior that became food for humor and entertainment in front newspapers. Even the less permissive army newspapers contained features that playfully depicted the war's bizarre sexual effects, albeit with the reassurance that men were essentially loyal to women in the *Heimat*. One story in the *Kriegszeitung der 4ten Armee* described how a soldier named Heinrich Merkel fetishized a framed photo of his wife. Written by Corporal Ernst Oehrlein, the story details how Merkel, who called the photo a "substitute wife" (*Ersatzfrau*) would obsessively talk to the photo, do its bidding, and treat it like it was his actual wife.[34] When Merkel shares cigarettes and conversation with two French girls he meets at his canteen, he is stricken with guilt for his infidelity, and he spends the night reassuring his substitute wife that he will not cheat again. His comrades ridicule him. He tells them that he actually finds it consoling to have his "substitute wife" accompany him at the front, because if he wants to talk to French girls, he can turn around her framed photo and she simply will not know of his infidelity.[35] By imagining the photo is the personification of his wife, Merkel can play a kind of double-game. He lives as he wishes at the front while convincing himself that he is still loyal to his good German wife, who has become as artificial as the hated "substitute" (*Ersatz*) coffee, bread, and other basic needs that deadened the senses at home and on the front.[36]

German soldiers could also poke fun at their own fantasies and expectations of the front as a kind of sexual paradise. One cartoon published in the army newspaper *Liller Kriegszeitung* contrasts the German soldier's image and reality of French women. The cartoon depicts in its first frame a young, wide-eyed front soldier standing in his pajamas at the end of a luxurious four-poster bed (*Himmelsbett*), under a painting of a nude woman in the French house where he is quartered. He wonders, "What kind of heavenly virgin once rested in this bed?" The second frame, captioned "how she actually looked," shows the reality of who once lived there: an emaciated old woman with hairy legs and ragged undergarments, surrounded by cats. A chamber pot under the bed stands in

stark contrast to the sterilized, idyllic image of the bedroom found in the first frame.[37] On one hand, the official army newspaper may be playfully making fun of front soldiers, or warning them not to idealize the infamous image of sexually available French girls. At the same time, the cartoon also sympathetically portrays the young, innocent soldier who is mesmerized by new sexual possibilities so far from home, even if these fantasies are illusory.

For entertainment, soldiers depicted the front as a tempting, sexual paradise waiting to be "conquered." But front newspapers also reflected how the war perverted or distorted sexual behavior. With a sense of macabre humor, men published articles, especially in the trench newspapers that were more risqué than the unit or army newspapers, about the psychosexual neuroses that emerged out of the trenches. Even if men tried to escape the front experience through sexual escapades or dreams, the reality of the trenches always encroached on their fantasies and desires. In a 1916 edition of the trench newspaper *Die Sappe* (*The Sapper*), a "humorous sketch" titled "Jannette" by Richard Harnig tells the story of nearsighted, bookish academic, Aloisius, who is eager to get to the front. He is satisfied with his wife, Gretl, "a great cook," and his five sons, but she is resentful of his dual obsessions: blonde women and a deep-seated fear of rats. The army finally lets him in despite his nearsightedness and physical frailty—he makes a pathetic soldier with his slim shoulders in an ill-fitting uniform and tendency to carry his rifle as if it were an umbrella—but he enthusiastically heads to the front with his comrades.[38] While in Flanders, he becomes fixed on Jannette, the blonde daughter of the landlord where he is quartered. When he is sent to the front lines to face British artillery and the depravations of the trenches, fantasies of Jannette fill his dreams. But one night, as he reaches out to hug and kiss her in his dream, he awakens to find himself covered in rats, which bite his face and limbs. Instead of grabbing Jannette in his fantasy-dream, he grabs a jar of rat poison—depicted in a sketch accompanying the story—and smears it all over his mouth and eyes while the rats scurry all over his bed.[39] The article reflected the degree to which the terrifying reality of the front infected even the unconscious life of men. The horrors of war acted as a kind of *coitus interruptus*, as the brutality of the front interrupted sexual dreams that might have otherwise provided emotional respite from the trenches. Unable to escape the war even in their fantasies, soldiers became increasingly desperate to find some sense of relief from the psychological trauma of war.

Cross-Dressing for the Fatherland: Experimenting with Gender Boundaries and Behavior

Soldiers' desires to escape the unbearable reality of the trenches pushed them into another level of fantasy. Seeking emotional support, including love and

tenderness, they "replaced" women by taking on feminine roles. Fantasies of gender crossing were a temporary response to the traumatic reality of mass violence, as many men sought to escape the pressure of masculine gender norms by not only emulating but even transforming into, at least through fantasy, the other sex. Historian Santanu Das has observed in the case of British soldiers, "the norms of tactile contact between men changed profoundly," and the trenches created an environment where front soldiers, stressed by the violence around them, sanctioned homoerotic behavior that could include physical affection, even kissing as an expression of friendship, between otherwise heterosexual men.[40] Soldiers toyed with gender inversion and the creation of new sexual norms at the front through sexual humor. In this "safe" arena of humor, they could experiment with fantasies that rejected masculine expectations of emotional self-control. Further, sexual humor in front newspapers created a space in which men could imagine "deviant" emotions and behaviors as normal and even desirable in the unique universe of the trench experience.

Images of a cross-dressing man or woman became widely visible in the dislocation caused by total war. However, the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable crossing of boundaries were carefully defined by medical and military authorities. As historian Rainer Herrn has documented, doctors carefully distinguished between different types of transvestite behaviors and the boundaries between what they perceived as threatening or benign to the military and society. Doctors specifically identified transvestites with effeminate, homosexual constitutions as problematic. For example, psychiatrist Kurt Mendel asserted in "War Observations" published in the *Neurologisches Zentralblatt* (*Central Paper of Neurology*) that transvestism alone was not a reason for judging men as unfit for military service. Mendel specifically warned that homosexual transvestites who possessed "severe nervous disturbances rooted in psychopathic tendencies" could potentially corrupt their comrades by tempting them toward same-sex love.[41]

When otherwise heterosexual comrades dressed as women in the context of entertainment, military authorities tolerated this as a temporary act of relief from the stress of war. Theater groups, for example, regularly dressed men as women to comedic effect. Soldiers performed plays for wounded comrades just behind the lines, and these were enthusiastically embraced by the military as good for morale. Writing for the newspaper *Der Eigenbrödler* (*The Loner*),[42] a newspaper that circulated in military bases behind the lines, one doctor referred to the Hippocratic proverb that "laughter is healthy," and he emphasized that anything that boosted spirits was good for wounded and psychologically stressed individual soldiers, and thus good for the military and the fatherland. Dr. Kauffmann specifically pointed to the cross-dressing young men, or *Damendarsteller* ("portrayers of women"), in these traveling theater groups as by far

the funniest elements of the plays that elicited the most laughter in boisterous audiences of soldiers. The double entendres that dominated the stage dialogue and the visual shock of men changed into women, especially with great care for detail to create a startling illusion, caused soldiers to roll in the aisles. Male performers were amazingly convincing at mimicking women, Dr. Kauffmann observed, and they brought soldiers to "tears of laughter" with their transformation: "It is astonishing to see hardened warriors move their feet, arms and fingers, arrange hairdos, and throw hand-kisses with such grace and finesse. Even the preparation and costuming brought a charming metamorphosis that induced laughter, and it takes the artistic work of many hands to allow such a seductive, delectable little lady to appear on the stage."[43] A hint of anxiety about the ease with which men turned into women runs through Dr. Kauffmann's description, but his nervous amusement is assuaged by recurring references to laughter as a healthy antidote to the physical and psychological stress of the war. Dr. Kauffmann was careful to define the boundaries of acceptable versus problematic transvestism. Coming to their defense against possible criticism, he stressed that after so many hardships at the front, men earned the right to have fun: "Don't we need a bit of joy in today's difficult times?" It was forgivable for soldiers to abandon "prudery," Dr. Kauffmann observed, for the sake of humor, as long as it was not "grotesque."[44] Without women at the front, men themselves could now play the traditional roles expected of the nurturing, caring woman.

When the enemy cross-dressed, it was perceived as a form of transgression. Authorities justified German cross-dressing as morale-building entertainment when performed within the accepted space of theater. However, they mocked British soldiers who cross-dressed as sexually ambiguous and morally decadent. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the army newspaper *Liller Kriegszeitung* published a cartoon that depicts a sexually androgynous figure wearing ambiguous clothes: an army-style tunic with feminine collar and sleeves, a Scottish kilt, high heeled military boots, a woman's handbag, and a ladies hat that is ambiguously shaped like a British helmet. Here the humor rests on an image in which the boundaries between male and female are not clearly defined. It is not clear whether it is a man or woman, suggesting that British society, rather than temporarily dabbling in crossing boundaries for fun, has lost track of its gender norms and has created an amorphous, intermediary "other."[45]

Such gender ambiguity and sexual blending also appeared in German popular media. While the enemy was portrayed as transgressing the boundaries of morality in a way that threatened the nation, Germans could experiment within a carefully defined zone that promoted morale with humor and never threatened the nation's resolve, or essential gender paradigms. As long as their commitment to fight for the nation was clear, German men and women could

safely play with gender boundaries. Men, for example, incorporated previously frowned upon "feminine" characteristics. Popular media tapped into a growing consumer demand for images of heroes who embodied a dashing, even flamboyant style, which served as a contrast to the individual-crushing nature of modern industrialized warfare. Available for 10 pfennig each at shops all over Germany were postcards produced by Willi Sanke from his studio in Berlin, which specialized in high-quality photos of Germany's naval and air heroes. Sanke worked closely with the military to gain access to successful pilots, photographing them in his studio and in the field wearing their *Pour le Merité* awards and standing next to their fighter planes. The cards were widely collected by an enthusiastic public hungry to identify individual, chivalric heroes in the midst of this devastating war of attrition.[46] Sanke's postcard company was instrumental in constructing an attractive, masculine ideal that fused traditional codes of manhood with modern technology. Fighter pilots also embodied what historian Stefanie Schüler-Springorum characterizes as a "certain tendency for dandy-like, playful and excessive behavior" that appealed to men of all social classes who sought a masculine image that transcended the suffocating, dehumanizing experience of industrialized war.[47] Fighter pilots enthusiastically posed for Sanke's cameras in floor-length fur coats, customized leather pants, and coats and other gear that was practical for protecting oneself against the rigors of open cockpit flight but also created a new image of a flashy, risk-taking, highly individualized warrior.

The fighter pilot image reflected a rebellious spirit and a new image that provided an avenue for pushing gender boundaries to their limit. The new fighter pilot hero even provided an imagined space for women to transgress boundaries. From his studio on Berlin's Schönhäuserallee, Willi Sanke produced a popular series of cards depicting "*Fräulein Flieger*" ("Miss Pilot")—an unmistakable woman dressed in a man's pants, uniform, dagger on hip, and wearing a pilot's goggles and helmet. The series presented these androgynous figures in a variety of poses, sometimes smoking, standing in dashing poses with scarves draped around their necks.[48] Many of these kinds of images, especially those produced by publishers like Sanke with records of being subservient to the military censorship apparatus, fell into the category of harmless entertainment designed to amuse. These women were cross-dressing to amuse and attract the affections of their men, and their essential femininity was never in question. Sanke also published images of "Fräulein Flieger" smiling at and charming dashing male pilots, providing reassurance that she was still a woman who embraced her femininity and heterosexuality. The "Fräulein Flieger" image was a celebration, rather than subversion, of the new heroic male image embodied in the flamboyant fighter pilot.

Women who appeared in the image of the fighter pilot remained playful and reassured men that women were still subservient. However, there were also

postcards available that challenged Wilhelmian values with more ambiguous and sexually risqué depictions of women in uniform. One card depicted "*Fräulein Leutnant*" ("Miss Lieutenant") in a position of power. With obvious reference to Sanke's more benign "Fräulein Flieger" series, "Fräulein Leutnant" is a little more subversive as she poses in an officer's uniform, *Pickelhaube* helmet, one hand on a sword, the other smoking a cigarette, over a map with a caption: "What does the world cost?"[49] Placing the cross-dressing woman into a clearly male role—not just male clothing—with a hint of dominance over the world, the image conveys a woman with power, control, and cynicism that contrasts with Sanke's unambiguous and essentially feminine woman. The image of a gender ambiguous woman with power over men is even more forcefully conveyed in a card from 1917, which depicts on the front a woman tram conductor. "*Die Kriegsfrau*" ("the war woman") wore a tunic and cap that look like a soldier's, as well as a conventional dress. She raises her hand to stop civilian men from boarding and says with a satisfied grin, "The civilian must remain standing back, while *Feldgraue* (front soldiers) may still enter here."[50] Implying that the tram driver—"the war woman"—is now a *Feldgraue* herself, the image suggests that through the military, and its uniforms, one can take on the gender and duties of the opposite sex. Like Dr. Kauffmann's men who effortlessly become women, the genre of women dressing as men seems to marvel at how easy it is for women to adopt men's roles.

While military authorities tried to confine gender transgression to humorous and playful images, soldiers themselves experimented with transgressing gender boundaries to fill the emotional and physical challenges of surviving in an all-male environment. As the "heroic ideal" of charges led by cavalry and quick, decisive victories quickly broke down in the reality of attritional, dehumanizing industrial warfare, daily life was consumed by the drudgery of "feminine" duties that undermined the male warrior image. In *Der Drahtverhau* (*The Wire Shack*), cartoons like "Washing Day" playfully depicted men washing their own laundry and joked sarcastically that they had become "women" as a result of life at the front:

> It's great in the military!
> Yes, it always makes me happy
> That Mr. Infantryman (*Herr Infantrist*)
> Is his own washerwoman (*Waschfrau*)![51]

In other cartoons, men are portrayed as bumbling and frustrated by the challenges of washing their own socks, but humorous visual guides assure them that no matter how distasteful, they can easily accomplish this if they put their minds to it.[52] Although rationalized as necessary and neutralized with a touch

of humor, men could temporarily "be women" in the extreme conditions of the front. In one cartoon in *Schützengrabenzeitung* (*Trench Newspaper*), a soldier wearing ladies' fur handmuffs is at first mocked by his comrade as a "stupid" *parvenu*, but the *Feldgrauer* argues that they are practical in warding off the cold in the trenches.[53] Wearing women's clothes did not threaten one's essential masculinity as long as it was in the service of the nation.

Men did more than just temporarily fill the woman's role in the domestic sphere. They also imagined themselves as women, taking on the emotional traits to such an extent that they fantasized they were actually women. The brutality of war made some men feel repulsed by what they saw as innately masculine characteristics, and they envied the "softer," more peaceful characteristics of the feminine. In a poem titled "We poor men!" in *Der Flieger* (*The Flyer*), a sergeant turned poet named Nitsche longs for an existence without bombs and trenches and despicable frontline conditions. His poem is a play on the song "We poor, poor girls" from Albert Lortzing's 1846 opera *The Armourer* (*Der Waffenschmied*). Nitsche steals the famous refrain "we poor girls," inverts it with "we poor men," and then constructs his own verses about the tribulations of being a man, which, he notes, are dedicated "with a wink" to his comrade "Sergeant F." As a play on Lortzing's popular opera in which a woman laments her lot in life, Nitsche's poem is an entertainment device. But with his original verses that stray far from being a mere parody of Lortzing's opera, it is also a glimpse into Nitsche's playful longing to psychologically escape the trenches, as he imagines what it would be like to be the opposite sex. Lamenting the images of bombed-out landscapes and the tedium of military drills, Nitsche envies women's "sweet smiles" and beauty and refrains, "We poor, poor men are so completely wicked. I wish I were a girl. I wish I weren't a man!" Not just speaking figuratively, Nitsche fantasizes that he actually transforms into a woman: "If only I were bedecked with curls, with stockings á la jour, and to charm a lieutenant, I'd dance an extra round." He imagined himself strolling arm and arm with his lieutenant, displaying an "enraptured smile," and filled with thoughts like, "Being and performing beauty is my governing law."[54]

Nitsche injected vivid detail into his fantasy of what it would be like to be a woman. He dreams of cooking wonderful meals and gracefully moving about: "My breasts would arch themselves as I waltz about in high heels." He ends the poem this way: "For a long time I could kiss the entire company, and I would certainly not absorb the fragrances that come out of the frying pan—Oh, if I only were a girl, why am I a man!"[55] Nitsche's poem reflects a male fantasy of a charming woman serving soldiers and providing them relief from an all-male, brutal environment. But the poem pushes this fantasy to another level, as it also exhibits a soldier's fantasy about actually changing his gender in order to escape the expectations of being a "wicked" man. Nitsche fantasized that he could be a

better comrade as a woman, providing love and comfort to men who needed it. He imagined that he could escape his violent, masculine nature while remaining a good comrade.

Front newspapers contained numerous articles by soldiers that suggested playing with new gender roles stemmed from more than just the need for entertainment. It was also a reaction against what many saw as a repulsive and terrifying world created by masculine instincts and the warrior ideal. One soldier writing for *Scharfschützen-Warte* (*Snipers' Watch*) observed that "tired warriors" needed to escape from the pressures of the front. They could tap into the "feminine" in themselves by creating "*Frau Musika*," a soothing, lighthearted "woman" that men were capable of creating even in the all-male world of the front lines. By playing music, men conjured "a new, easy to listen to gender born in the war that lies out in the trenches and surrounds the front in sounds and noise." This woman "born in war" was a unique creation of both the trauma of war and the desperate need for solace. *Frau Musika* was available to any man with a harmonica, guitar, or voice, the writer optimistically noted, and she was "always willing" to comfort men.[56] Through music soldiers could thus recreate the nurturing, feminine love they longed for to fill in for the absence of women.

The stories about conjuring *Frau Musika* and fantasies about longing to "be a girl" suggested a desire to oscillate between two clearly defined gender paradigms of "masculine" and "feminine." The soldier who dreamed "I wish I were a girl" expressed a longing to abandon one gender and occupy another. At the same time, these fantasies also reveal that men discovered the presence of "feminine" traits within them, hinting at a fantasy of fusing two genders into one body, or creating a kind of ultimate gender—both a "good comrade" and a woman—who provided for all needs. For a number of men, this desire for an individual that possessed both gender characteristics could be expressed in homosexual bonds. Homosexual men who embodied a "third sex," as the famous sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld defined homosexuality before the war, seemed to suit the needs of combat perfectly for those who sought feminine emotions, including love, at the front.

When the war broke out, Hirschfeld and his Scientific Humanitarian Committee (*Wissenschaftlich humanitäres Komitee*, or WhK) collected thousands of letters, surveys, and interviews with soldiers detailing homosexual experiences. Though the military condemned homosexuals as unnatural "social outsiders" who threatened the nation, Hirschfeld argued that the war proved homosexuality was a natural phenomenon, as men discovered in the environment of the front.[57] Hirschfeld documented how male–male relationships became increasingly visible and homosexual men felt somewhat tolerated by heterosexuals, with whom they first built bonds of comradeship that sometimes evolved into relationships that supplanted the need for women. For many men, these

relationships provided an escape from the brutality of modern war and a space to nurture feelings of love that sustained them in the trenches, and emotional fulfillment sometimes evolved into sexual fulfillment. Men explained these as natural relationships that helped them cope with life at the front. As one officer wrote to Hirschfeld,

> One day there came an ensign from the cadet corps, Count L., with whom I immediately fell in love. We had known each other slightly from the corps. He returned my love entirely [. . .] Soon we became inseparable friends and the major and other older officers rejoiced at the splendid relationship which had grown up between superior and subordinate [. . .] so Karl and I lived together, went into service together, etc. When we didn't go out of an evening, we dismissed the servants and sat for a long time arm in arm, in close embrace, saying many tender and lovely things to each other, spinning golden for the future and building beautiful castles in the air [. . .] For two whole months we enjoyed our love happiness together.[58]

The war, according to Hirschfeld, did not create homosexual behavior, but rather it made it easier for men with preexisting homosexual constitutions to engage in same-sex relations and to overcome social and sexual repression that dominated their lives before the trench experience. The war thus created an alternate universe for intrinsically homosexual men to strip away repressive conventions and discover their essential identity.

Front newspapers did not directly refer to homosexual relationships between comrades, but they did depict men enjoying homosocial bonds that mimicked husband–wife intimacy.[59] Fighter pilots at the front joked about this kind of relationship by nicknaming a pilot-observer team as a "pilots' marriage." Pairs of men who formed particularly close friendships were often nicknamed "Franz" and "Emil." In front newspapers, such duos, often played with effeminate gestures and innuendo, appeared in cartoons that affectionately poked fun at them. In a story told in a cartoon in *Der Kleine Brummer* (*The Little Buzzer*), "Fritz" and "Emil" visit a health resort on the beach, take off their uniforms, and relax in their swim clothes. Fritz tells Emil, "First I want to rest in the sun," but fails to notice that he's reclining on the porch of a beach hut painted "for officers' only." When Emil protests that they might get in trouble, Fritz indicates that there is nothing to worry about. So engrossed in his efforts to relax with his friend, Fritz suspends military protocol, and they are amused when other enlisted men salute as they walk by.[60] The two are portrayed like a couple, and beneath the joke, which fantasizes social class inversion, there is also a hint at gender inversion as—like a couple—they vacation, bicker, and the cartoon hints at homoeroticism as Fritz makes exaggerated effeminate gestures when

he suggests they nap together.[61] Within this zone of humor, men could safely entertain homosocial intimacy and still remain good comrades.

Trench newspapers produced by frontline soldiers indicate that they constructed a universe where they could be good German men—that is, men who embraced heroic masculinity—while at the same time seeking relief from the stress of combat by testing gender boundaries. This included showing love for other men, at least while fantasizing about or playing the role of being women. It was perfectly natural, soldiers imagined, for traumatized and deprived men to want to fill the gender gap and temporarily become women. Men who transgressed sexual boundaries still saw themselves as "normal" men who constructed their own sexual realities while still remaining psychologically committed to the nation and their comrades.

Conclusion

Soldiers' humor reveals a battle over who defined masculine identity. Military and civilian authorities expected that men control their emotions while they dedicated their energies and will entirely toward the nation. Humor provided an outlet for men to escape this nationalized, militarized image and experiment with behaviors and identities that helped them cope on more individual terms with the absence of women and newfound emotional dependence on other men. Cartoons and features created by soldiers revealed disillusionment with the emotionally stifling heroic image and resentment of the home front's remoteness from the reality of mass violence. At the same time, sexual humor also revealed dissatisfaction with the emotional void left by a heterosexual paradise of promiscuous adventures away from home.

Through humor, soldiers also attacked the notion that the emotional needs of front fighters were a drain or burden on the fatherland. Fantasies of gender inversion evolved out of the circumstantial needs to find emotional intimacy and counteract brutalizing, impersonal violence. Soldiers sought more than just transference of "feminine" nurturing into their masculine identities. Some also expressed longing to escape the boundaries of masculine "nature" and become the other gender. Within the topsy-turvy universe of the trenches, men saw no contradiction or tension between being the "good comrade" and experimenting with gender crossing. Wishing that one was actually a woman became a means of asserting control over the emotional chaos generated by modern war. At the same time, when ostensibly heterosexual men fantasized about becoming women, they rejected the intermediary space of the third sex—the distinctions between male and female characteristics remained intact. Their crossing from one gender to another was an attempt to find temporary relief rather than a deeper shift in identity, and they did not try to blend multiple

genders as Hirschfeld's theories on the essentially feminine "third sex" might have suggested.

Men had diverse responses to the war's impact on masculine norms, and their sexual humor gives us a glimpse into their sometimes contradictory perceptions of sexuality in the trenches. Many men expressed a sense of emotional liberation in the face of the war, which gave them the opportunity to counteract brutal violence with "feminine" emotional intimacy. For most men this was a temporary escape necessitated by conditions in the trenches and their brutalized psyches. For others, the war liberated what many veterans saw as natural, innate homosexual desires. As the next chapter will demonstrate, homosexual soldiers argued that, contrary to prevailing stereotypes, homosexuality was entirely consistent with masculine ideals of comradeship and heroism.

CHAPTER 5

"We Need Real Men"

The Impact of the Front Experience on Homosexual Front Soldiers

As heterosexual soldiers experimented with feminine characteristics in order to survive the brutality of the trenches, many homosexual men discovered their more masculine side. The war did not create new sexual identities, but it did allow men to explore, define, and evaluate their existing gender and sexual identities within the unique world of the front experience. For some men who considered themselves innately homosexual, to use the term employed by the famous sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, this meant that war and comradeship became a prism through which it was possible to define existing self-perceptions of sexual orientation in increasingly "masculine" terms.[1]

This chapter argues that the front experience profoundly influenced the way many homosexual men imagined their masculine identities and perceived themselves in German society. Homosexual veterans from diverse political and theoretical perspectives sanctified the image of martial masculinity and contested the exclusively heterosexual nature of militarized masculinity. Further, many homosexual veterans distanced themselves from theories, most notably those put forward by Magnus Hirschfeld, that homosexuals were an essentially effeminate "third sex." Instead, many homosexual veterans, including those on the political left who were aligned with Hirschfeld's sex reform movement, castigated effeminate homosexuals as physically and psychologically inferior beings who not only failed to endure the crucible of combat but also threatened the postwar militant, masculine image of the homosexual movement. Homosexual veterans appropriated militarized, nationalistic ideals of comradeship to counter stereotypes that they were effeminate social outsiders. They used their war experience to promote an image of homosexuals as hypermasculine warriors, which it was hoped would provide the key to social assimilation

and allow them to overturn Paragraph 175, the law that criminalized sexual relations between men.

Homosexual veterans also perceived the front experience as a means of emotional and psychological liberation. By destigmatizing the outward display of emotions like love and compassion, soldiers created a space in which men could normalize and humanize "deviant" homosocial and homosexual inclinations. As heterosexual soldiers experimented with and accepted emotional bonds between men, homosexual men saw this normalization of male–male love as an opportunity to prove that they were not a deviant threat to the nation but rather patriotic soldiers who were proficient with the emotions that were essential to the nation's survival. Homosexuals sought acceptance from their heterosexual comrades and mainstream society by making the case that their love of other men was the emotional equivalent of, or even superior to, male–female desire. They equated the "good comrade," and ideal masculinity, with love for other men. Some even observed that heterosexual love had become obsolete in the trench environment and that homosexual love was more suited to modern war. As steel-nerved, masculine warriors for the nation, homosexual veterans could love other men in a framework that they hoped was acceptable to mainstream culture.

Germany's Homosexual Emancipation Movement: Divisions and Theories on Sexuality

Before 1914, Germany saw the emergence of the world's first homosexual rights movement. Scientists in imperial Germany first started to define people who desired same-sex relations, "homosexuals," as biologically determined beings. New scientific conceptions of sexuality fused with the rise of urban subcultures and political activism became the basis for a vibrant community and emancipation movement.[2] However, it was a fragmented movement, with competing organizations that embraced diverse scientific, cultural, and political views on homosexual identity and society. One of the first homosexual rights organizations was the *Wissenschaftlich humanitäres Komitee* (WhK, or Scientific-Humanitarian Committee), founded in 1897 by Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld and his colleagues. Hirschfeld, a doctor, publisher, and supporter of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), saw the WhK in the context of other movements for social reform and civil rights in imperial Germany. One of the group's main goals was the dismantling of Paragraph 175.[3] The WhK worked vigorously to educate the public about the scientific nature of homosexuality and provided support to victims of the antisodomy law and blackmail.[4] Hirschfeld and his supporters tirelessly collected petitions and lobbied Social Democrats sympathetic to reforming the law, and they published pamphlets and gave

lectures on the biological nature of homosexuality.[5] Hirschfeld also reached out to broader sexual reform movements, including Helene Stöcker's League for the Protection of Motherhood and Sex Reform (*Bund für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform*), founded in 1905. Stöcker's goals for sex reform and organization of counseling clinics, also spearheaded by Hirschfeld's Institute for Sex Research after the war, created natural groundwork for organizational and ideological alliances between the homosexual and women's movements in Wilhelmian society.[6]

Hirschfeld's work as an educator and reformer was closely tied to his scientific research on homosexuality. Hirschfeld argued that homosexuality was a biological condition that made homosexuals essentially different from heterosexuals. Homosexuals constituted a "third sex," as Hirschfeld described them, who were physically and psychologically different and an intermediate to men and women.[7] Homosexuality could be recognized by its mental and physical manifestations, including effeminate characteristics in manner, voice, and body. The WhK thus characterized male homosexuals as a separate, unique minority, a sexual intermediary with a partially female constitution that deserved both further scientific research and protection under the law.[8]

The WhK's interpretation of homosexuality was challenged by an organization founded in 1903, the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen* (GdE, or Community of the Self-Owned).[9] The GdE was cofounded by Adolf Brand. An iconoclastic former teacher in Berlin who expressed both anarchistic and *völkisch* nationalistic rhetoric, Brand began publishing the journal *Der Eigene* ("The Self-Owned" or "The Unique One") in 1896. The title of the journal gives a hint of Brand's philosophical obsessions with self-control and the total freedom of the individual from the state and traditional institutions. *Der Eigene* was designed as a forum for male culture that celebrated *Freundesliebe* ("love of friends") as interpreted through a revival of ancient Greek celebrations of the male body and mind.[10] Brand held up the Greek ideal of *Eros* as a goal that could liberate men from the shackles of bourgeois repression.[11] He called for young men to discover the value of "friend-love" in nationalist youth groups like the *Wandervogel* and in *völkisch* nudist groups who were part of a broader assault on prevailing bourgeois and sexual norms in fin-de-siècle Germany.[12]

In their interpretations of homosexual identity, Brand's GdE and Hirschfeld's WhK were polar opposites. Brand and his colleagues in the Community of the Self-Owned sharply attacked what they saw as Hirschfeld's "effeminate" classification of homosexuals. The idea that homosexuals possessed a feminine constitution was considered repulsive by members of the GdE, who envisioned an all-male utopia, or at least a society in which women were kept in their place as mothers and servants. Further, Brand argued that biologists and sexologists had "taken away all beauty from eroticism" and turned male sexuality into a

base, scientific category.[13] Homosexuals were, in Brand's estimation, ultramasculine and culturally superior to heterosexuals in their quality of refinement.[14] Where Brand's GdE considered ideal "friendship" between men to have a fundamentally erotic dimension, Hirschfeld considered "friendship" to be a spiritual phenomenon different from sexual relations. This distinction was part of Hirschfeld's effort to not alienate potential political allies on the left who might consider Brand's conflation of "friendship" and sexual feelings, not to mention the GdE's celebration of "friend-love" between men and boys, as threatening.[15] Despite their opposing theoretical and political perspectives, Hirschfeld and Brand shared one goal: the dismantling of Paragraph 175 and bringing an end to the persecution of homosexual men. The plight of homosexual men in the imperial German army became a central site in battles over the implementation of Paragraph 175 and attempts to integrate homosexuals into German society.

The Persecution of Homosexual Soldiers in the Imperial German Army

Homosexuality in imperial Germany's army is a complex topic that poses a number of challenges for historians. Ute Frevert notes that archives lack documented evidence of homosexuality in the military during the pre-1914 era.[16] However, there are sources that reveal the existence of a homosexual subculture, especially in Germany's major cities, in which soldiers played a prominent role. As Jeffrey Schneider has documented, the imperial War Ministry's files suggest there was widespread anxiety about mostly working-class soldiers who cruised the streets, especially in Berlin, exchanging sex with middle- and upper-class civilians for money. The desires and motives of these soldiers are not recorded, but they could have ranged from heterosexual soldiers' need for income to supplement their meager military wages to seeking genuine sexual pleasure.[17] The War Ministry portrayed these soldiers as innately heterosexual men who were being exploited, reinforcing prevailing assumptions about soldiers as innocent victims morally corrupted by homosexual civilians.[18] Within the army barracks, soldiers who prostituted themselves were generally not stigmatized, or even considered homosexual, especially if they took the active, "masculine" role in a sexual encounter with a passive, "effeminate" partner.[19]

Prewar Germany was infamously shaken by a series of scandals involving aristocratic men caught in homosexual liaisons with some of the upper elite members of the Prussian officer corps, including confidantes of Kaiser Wilhelm II. These scandals triggered a backlash from middle-class interest groups against the allegedly "degenerate," aristocrat-dominated military elite.[20] However, recent scholarship demonstrates that in imperial Berlin, the police reluctantly accepted the homosexual subculture, and arrests under Paragraph 175,

which prohibited "unnatural fornication" (*widernatürliche Unzucht*) between men, was only lightly enforced. As historian Robert Beachy documents, the Department of Blackmailers and Homosexuals, created by the Berlin police force in 1885, demonstrated a "tacit forbearance" of consensual homosexual sex. While the police placed surveillance on gay and transvestite bars, keeping extensive mug shots of "pederasts," homosexuals formed a distinct community that became increasingly visible in the culture of prewar Berlin.[21]

Authorities remained reluctant to investigate homosexual behavior after the war broke out, fearing that such investigations would damage the prevailing masculine ideal, as homosexual men were widely perceived as effeminate and degenerate.[22] As with the prewar period, it is difficult to reconstruct the history of homosexuality beneath the level of police and military surveillance. The complexities and motives underlying male–male sexual desire are elusive. However, military court records reveal that despite the army's reluctance to identify homosexual soldiers, there were indeed trials of men arrested for "unnatural fornication" prohibited under Paragraph 175. These cases reveal both how the military perceived homosexuality as a threat and how accused men negotiated their identities as soldiers and as homosexual men. While the law technically prohibited any instances of "sodomy," which the courts defined as anal intercourse between men, records suggest that they concentrated on cases in which men were accused of sexually assaulting other men or cases that created disturbances on the home front. The military's inquiries indicate that there was less concern for cases in which men engaged in consensual sex.

Court records dealing with violations of Paragraph 175 reveal that the military focused on cases in which men allegedly coerced other men, especially men who were lower to them in rank, into sex. The case of Georg B., for example, illustrates how the military enforced the law. Georg B., the 28-year-old son of a farmer who volunteered for the 4th Hussar Light Cavalry Regiment three days after the outbreak of the war, was accused of "unnatural sexual acts" in February 1916. According to the judges' report, Georg B. was quartered in a French village in the same room as three comrades. Late one night, he crawled into bed with one of his sleeping comrades, an 18 year old of lower rank named K. When the young man asked, "What's going on?" Georg B. responded, "Be quiet," and rubbed his penis against the unwilling man's buttocks until ejaculation. K. told the court that he was too scared to report the behavior of his older, higher-ranking comrade.[23]

Georg B. was brought to authorities when two other younger men accused him of attempted rape several days after the incident with K. Once again, Georg B. allegedly sneaked into the beds of sleeping younger men, who awoke to him stifling their protests while he sexually assaulted them. One of these younger men filed an official report complaining that he did not want to sleep

in the same room as Georg B. The court relied on the testimonies of the three men as proof that Georg B. acted in violation of both Paragraph 175 and Paragraph 74, because these were cases of rape and attempted rape. Judges noted that Georg B. "endangered morality" (*die Sittlichkeit gefährdet hat*) because he intimidated these men and kept coming on to them even when they protested. At the same time, the court noted that Georg B. "had never before been arrested, shows remorse for these acts, and possesses an instinct to sleep with his own sex." They also noted his record of "good military conduct" when they gave him the light sentence of six months in prison. Four months into his prison term, Georg B.'s father wrote to the judges to ask that his son be released from prison so that he could return to his regiment.[24] Just before his prison sentence had been completed, his regiment granted him an official reprieve. A military court at the front sent Georg B. an official confirmation in January 1917 that the case had been marked as "pardoned" on his military record.[25]

Georg B.'s case reveals the military's main concerns when dealing with homosexuality. The court was intensely focused on whether or not the sexual acts were consensual. Judges uncovered the circumstances of the sexual act in great detail, with analysis of victims' reactions to Georg B.'s sexual behavior. In pressuring younger, unwilling, ostensibly heterosexual men into sex, Georg B. reinforced prevailing images of homosexual men as predatory corrupters of Germany's youth, and this was highlighted by the judges as the primary "moral danger" in the case. At the same time, the court pointed to evidence that they believed revealed Georg B. was an essentially good person who could not control his behavior. Reflecting prevailing views of male sexuality as uncontrollable and violent, the judges included a tacit excuse for Georg B., noting that his uncontrollable "instincts" drove him to sleep with men.[26] Combined with his strong military record, Georg B. received a much lighter sentence than men received in cases of male–female rape.

Though he technically violated Paragraph 175, this was seen as incidental. Instead, the issue of sexual coercion was the primary problem, as it generated an official complaint that the military could not ignore. When the military went after homosexuals, it was primarily in circumstances that caused a major disruption to military order. Especially for those with otherwise solid military records, authorities were willing to sweep the crimes under the rug once that disruption had been contained.

The testimonies of men who were arrested under Paragraph 175 also reveal that they actively negotiated with authorities, sometimes confessing to their homosexual inclinations while protesting that they technically had not violated the law. In the case of Johann R., for example, a 22-year-old enlisted man from Würzburg who was arrested in early 1918 for homosexual rape and pederasty (violation of Paragraphs 175 and 176), he confessed that his homosexual desires

were evidence that he was mentally ill—a "pederast," in his words. One of his lovers was found dead in a *Gasthaus*. It was a case of suicide, Johann R. insisted. He gave a detailed description of their last hours together in his testimony to the court. His narrative provides an interesting glimpse into not only the underground culture of homosexual liaisons but also how some men perceived homosexuality and military service:

> Since I was 16 yrs old I've been a pederast. I don't have any feelings at all for feminine charms. I have never had sex with a woman. Up until my entrance in the military I lived in Würzburg and was occupied as a businessman in a wine shop with Oskar P. Since this time I have given in to every possible opportunity to engage in sex with men, and I go to hotels with them and masturbate across from them. [. . .] At the end of 1918 in the train station in Würzburg, while on vacation, I got to know D. [the victim in question]. He asked me for a light, and after that we had a conversation and he told me he was a pederast. He asked me if I was interested in him. Because I liked him, I said I was interested and went with him into the city up to his apartment [. . .] There we masturbated across from each other twice until 3am, and we kissed. Further intimacies did not happen. We lay on top of each other in the bed or hugged each other. Each had the other's sexual parts in their hands and rubbed until the other ejaculated. Touching sexual parts to the anus or any other nearby body region never happened [. . .] When I had to leave him on the evening of February 8 and go back to the front, I asked him for my ring back, which I had given to him on his request, because my mother would have made a fuss about it. That made him really angry, and we departed fighting. I met him later and he explained to me that he had suicidal thoughts and wanted to commit mutual suicide, but I turned him down. He showed me a revolver. I loaned him 5 Marks, because he told me he was completely broke, and then I left him [. . .] I've suffered from terrible nervousness (*starke Nervosität*) for a long time. My siblings and parents are normal and healthy, and cases of pederasty or mental illness have never occurred in my family.
>
> I don't have sex with anyone at the front.[27]

Johann R.'s detailed description of his homosexual experiences was crucial from a legal standpoint. The courts interpreted Paragraph 175 to be specifically a prohibition on anal intercourse—thus R.'s precise statement that he and his partner did not engage in this act. Petting and mutual masturbation were not targeted as aggressively by authorities.[28] Further, he emphasized that his sexual relationship was entirely consensual. Johann R. confessed here that he suffered from "nervousness," but he protested that he did not technically violate the law.

The last line of Johann R.'s testimony also reveals his perception that a division between sexual behavior at the front and at home was a significant distinction. While insisting that he was sexually active at home, his statement, "I

don't have sex with anyone at the front," stood as its own paragraph at the end of his transcribed testimony. This suggested that he believed authorities would consider this important and be lenient if he did not tarnish the moral sanctity of the front lines with his self-professed sexual deviance and mental illness. While the home front might be a site of immoral sexual behavior, the combat front remained pure, he implied. Further, his case file refers to his excellent conduct as a soldier, having fought for three years and earning an iron cross.

Johann R.'s testimony highlights the degree to which many men had internalized hegemonic ideals of masculinity that enshrined the front as a site of exclusively heterosexual purity. However, the war also gave rise to a movement of homosexual men who saw their military service as evidence that they were normal and essential members of society who deserved respect for the defense of the nation. Many homosexuals would argue that their front experiences entitled them to be respected as pillars of hegemonic masculinity, and that love between men was the most pure and ideal form of love at the front.

Comradeship and Homosexuality: The Great War's Impact on Homosexual Men and the Homosexual Emancipation Movement

The war created a new framework for constructing sexual identity and envisioning the status of homosexual men in society. Like other socially marginalized groups in Germany, homosexual men saw military service as an opportunity to prove their patriotism and integration into the social fabric. Adolf Brand's GdE largely suspended its publications as many of its members, including Brand, entered military service. Magnus Hirschfeld was an ardent pacifist and, despite his initial nationalist sentiment and hope for a quick victory, his opposition to war intensified as a result of his experience treating war victims as a Red Cross physician. While performing military service, Hirschfeld also counseled homosexual men and transvestite women, many of whom sought his advice on how to pass as heterosexual men by suppressing effeminate characteristics. He celebrated their heroism and encouraged them to write letters to him about their service at the front. Hirschfeld mobilized the WhK's scientists to study the effects of the war, and they collected thousands of letters and surveys from soldiers at the front detailing their military and sexual experiences. He published many excerpts of these letters in the *Vierteljahresberichte der wissenschaftlichen humanitären Komitee während der Kriegszeit* (*Quarterly Reports of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee during the War*) and in his famous postwar study, *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges* (*Sexual History of the War*).[29] Despite his pacifism, Hirschfeld came to respect homosexual front soldiers, and their masculine traits, for their bravery in fighting for the same nation that persecuted them.[30]

The military expressed contempt for homosexuals as unnatural and immoral, but Hirschfeld noted that homosexual men thrived in the military environment. One soldier reported to Hirschfeld that the war provided the opportunity for men to educate their comrades and dispel negative stereotypes:

> I worked very faithfully for the common cause, gave many of our fellows our literature and got them to the point where they were interested in the fact of homosexuality and then answered the questions which their interest would prompt them to ask. I came across some remarkable views and many times I was dismayed at the horrible lies which had been disseminated about us [. . .] I am certain that if everyone would do his share in the interests of the whole class of homosexuals and help dispel the legendary lies concerning us, great progress would be made [. . .] would that all my colleagues could be freed from their oppressive burden through open and valiant combat.[31]

Homosexual relationships became increasingly visible, and gay men felt somewhat tolerated as they shared the front experience with heterosexuals. The front, according to Hirschfeld, cultivated both the "male" warrior ideal and "female" nurturing traits, providing an ideal environment for the effeminate "third sex" to thrive.[32] Since homosexual men in Hirschfeld's estimation allegedly possessed characteristics of both genders, they could perform their duties as soldiers while also providing each other the nurturing and domestic security traditionally expected of women.

Hirschfeld devoted much of his research to studying the nature of homosexual behavior in war, and he carefully defined temporary versus intrinsic forms of homosexuality at the front. Hirschfeld highlighted the rise of "pseudo-homosexuality," which he defined as heterosexual men engaging in homosexual behavior, which caused the most anxiety among military authorities who feared a breakdown of masculinity.[33] At the same time, so Hirschfeld argued, the front enabled men who were innately homosexual to find other homosexual men in an environment that was more tolerant of same-sex relations than prewar or mainstream culture. The war did not create homosexual behavior, but rather this environment in which men were removed from social pressures at home facilitated relations between homosexual men who were otherwise sexually and socially repressed before the war.

Comradeship, Hirschfeld argued, was the ideal blanket under which homosexual men could more confidently assert their desires. He identified three forms of "intimate comradeship": the consciously erotic, unconsciously erotic, and bonds between men that remained unerotic.[34] Hirschfeld recorded numerous accounts of men who discovered love with other men, and these relationships were often tolerated by their heterosexual comrades as natural examples

of tenderness and love experienced between men in combat. While he was convinced that homosexual men could easily adapt to their "comradely" roles in war, Hirschfeld also pointed to numerous accounts given by men to the WhK that exemplified his theory that constitutional homosexuals possessed essentially feminine characteristics. Though there were indeed men with homoerotic inclinations who adapted easily to the militaristic culture of war, he argued that "feminine homosexuals" ("feminine Urninge" or members of the third sex) were repulsed by the war and preferred the nurturing work of caring for the wounded and other "feminine" tasks.[35]

Hirschfeld argued that while physically erotic homosexual relationships remained largely hidden, same-sex bonding was to some degree encouraged under the guise of comradeship to promote cohesion and military strength. Men explained these relationships as natural extensions of their experience at the front.[36] The war, according to Hirschfeld, made it easier for men with preexisting homosexual constitutions to engage in same-sex relations and to overcome the social and sexual repression that dominated their lives before the trench experience. The war thus created an interesting paradox. Despite its traumatic nature and intense violence, the war created an alternate universe for men to strip away repressive conventions and discover their essential identity. In addition to its traumatic, brutal effects, total war also allowed the expression of otherwise repressed desires.

When Adolf Brand's publications resumed after the war, and Brand himself returned after serving in the army, it was clear that the trench experience provided him with an image and rhetoric for the homosexual warrior male in the modern age. In one of their first editions published after the war, the GdE-sponsored journal, *Der Eigene* (*The Self-Owned*), adopted a militarized language that highlighted how Brand conceptualized homosexual emancipation through the war experience: "The younger generation often forgets that we are still standing in the middle of a fight (*Kampfe*), and that this fight has in store justice for everyone who has led it and given hard sacrifices and major, almost superhuman dedication, because he struggles against an entire world of deep-cutting prejudices."[37] After years of fighting against society's prejudices, Brand enthusiastically appropriated the language of total war and tried to impress the generation of men coming out of the trenches. Detailing his more than twenty-year war struggle against Paragraph 175, his service at the front, and society's moral condemnation of homosexuals, Brand boasted that he was an old fighter already familiar with battle: "It was actually a fight (*Kampf*) on two fronts that I conducted at that time."[38]

The front experience of 1914–18 gave the GdE a new context and language for articulating homosexual emancipation—words like "sacrifice," "the front," and "battle" would all permeate the movement's way of thinking about

the relationship between homosexual men and the prevailing culture. Though Brand tried to convince his readers that the movement had been at war long before 1914, he also characterized the Great War as a seismic event that altered the lives of homosexual Germans. Brand recounted the feeling of patriotism that swept through his community of male friends at the outbreak of the war. He portrayed himself as spiritually loyal to his comrades and the fatherland despite being a persecuted victim of Prussian hypocrisy. He complained bitterly that he had been treated as a *Reichsfeind* ("enemy of the nation") when he spent a year and a half in prison for outing German chancellor Prince von Bülow in 1907, and he noted the irony that in 1914 his feelings of loyalty to the fatherland ran so deep. Paradoxically, while homosexual men dedicated themselves to the patriotic task of the nation, the Kaiser used the excuse of the war to intensify attacks on "national enemies," including homosexuals, and "to stamp out all rights to personal freedom."[39] Homosexual men faced violence not only in the trenches but also in their own homophobic society:

> Politically troublesome persons like me were always a thorn in the eye of the rulers of the old system. The war had us declared as total outlaws. Violence came before justice. And unfortunately "protective custody" is indeed still something that is entirely a daily occurrence. Whoever speaks the truth and rips the mask from the lying Christian-draped brutality of Prussian despotism, or whoever sees the guilt for the war more on the German than on the Christian side, he will be simply discredited as an "enemy of the nation" or a "national traitor."[40]

Despite the government's attacks on homosexuals and the imprisonment of some of his friends under Paragraph 175 during the war, Brand asserted that the willingness of men to sacrifice themselves for the fatherland and their devotion to the ideals of comradeship entitled them to be accepted into German society.

According to Brand, the war proved that homosexual men were not "enemies of the nation" but rather exceptional individuals who embodied martial masculinity. They possessed the emotional characteristic, male love, that was such a fundamental element of comradeship, essential for the survival of the nation, and that placed them in the elite of German society. Members of the GdE argued that the war was more instrumental than any scientific theory in proving that homosexual men were the backbone of German cultural life. In the booklet *Male Heroes and Comrade-Love in War: A Study and Collection of Materials* published by Brand, G. P. Pfeiffer argued that "physiological friendship" was always the foundation for heroism, courage, and sacrifice displayed in war.[41] Pfeiffer provided an overview of homosexual bonding in war throughout history. "Friend-love" promoted by the ancient Greeks, he argued, "was the equivalent of modern 'camaraderie.'" The equation of "love" and "comradeship," he

argued existed naturally throughout the centuries, but little was known about it because it was suppressed by the Christian Church.[42]

Central to Pfeiffer's argument is the idea that a society could never triumph without the instinct toward "friend-love" manifested in war. He envisioned the rebirth of this long-existing male hero, who symbolized a kind of "new man" who inspired the masses to overcome the degenerative effects of industrialization and the modern age in order to "bring up a healthy, bodily strong, but also intellectually educated generation, [which] means the salvation of Germany's future, allowing our fatherland to again become great and mighty!"[43] Pfeiffer cherished this love between men as the cornerstone of the war experience, which bonded the soldier to the nation:

> Only the super-virile "superman," whose nature it is to also possess female characteristics and above all the drive toward physiological friendship, the love for a friend, towers so high above the masses that he creatively brings to light their best qualities and inspires a colorful band of men with the spirit needed for the achievement of great deeds [. . .] As a "creative man" he forms from the raw material a unitary, closely joined body, a true instrument of war, and with the soldiers inspired by him he wins the most glorious victories [. . .] We only wanted to prove that comrade-love and male heroism were the most valuable driving forces in all wars, which effected the complete devotion of one's own person to leader and friend, to the fatherland![44]

"Comrade-love" elicited interesting historical connections in Pfeiffer's analysis. He compared the Confederate States of America during the US Civil War to the German Army in 1914–18, arguing that both were "united by the true spirit of comrade-love": a pure, noble value that nearly redeemed the war experience for both armies while they were betrayed by the less-than-noble instincts of those on the home front.[45]

Pfeiffer insisted that the war gave men the opportunity to manifest emotional bonds with other men, which strengthened their fighting ability. Further, Pfeiffer argued that this feeling of love between comrades was not effeminate but undeniably masculine: "When one views his almost wild, adventurous-romantic life, one is certainly unwilling to deny his manly characteristics! And yet this full-man loves not woman, but rather his friends! [. . .] Is anyone nonetheless still willing to assert that the love for a friend is an 'effeminate' (not female! In the sense of Fliess, Weininger and others, who describe precisely the superman as composed of male and female characteristics!), an effeminate, that is, inferior, bad disposition of character?"[46] Here Pfeiffer reinforces the prevailing notion of a strict dichotomy between "masculine" and "effeminate," with the latter as inferior, and he rejects notions of blending the two genders. Love

between men at war, Pfeiffer observed, was a superior emotional trait that that was perfectly consistent with the masculine ideal and national strength.

Similar to Brand, Hirschfeld and his adherents in the WhK also stressed that homosexual men, rather than being degenerate outsiders, were particularly suited to enduring the strain of modern war. In a 1919 issue of a newspaper that catered to WhK contributors, *Die Freundschaft* (*Friendship*), a poem (placed within an article criticizing the prohibition of the newspaper) celebrated the bravery of homosexual men who must remain manly and unshakeable as they endure scorn.[47] The ongoing war against homophobia required "manliness" and resilience comparable to that found in the trenches. Homosexual men, activists argued, were better equipped to endure the traumatic human losses caused by the war because they were used to coping with the trauma of suppressing their love. The loss of comrades in combat and the loss of the lover were explicitly conflated in a poem by Georg Schöll, which played on the popular soldiers' song "*Ich hatt' einen Kamerad*" ("I Had a Comrade"). Schöll pays tribute to a comrade who wins his love, though he cannot expose his feelings for his friend.[48] In the poem, the war, by taking the life of his friend, resembled the homophobic society that takes away the possibility of male love:

> He was so loyal and happy with life,
> Like no one has been with me up until now;
> Until his spirit fled from his life
> In bloody battle and conflict.
> [. . .] He is my comrade, everything that I had;
> My everything that I had, my good comrade!
> On the cross on top of his [grave] mound it says,
> "Here rests a German hero!"
> His last breath was a request:
> "A friend is a world!"
> Oh, if I could go with him into the dear light
> of high heaven!
> Because where I don't have him there opens for me a desolate grave,
> For me there opens a desolate grave; because I never had him![49]

Schöll cast himself as a victim of both the war and hidden love. As another contributor to *Die Freundschaft*, Ulli Herwig, wrote in "The Victim of Eros," the victim of unrequited love is virtually identical to a war victim. The "true love" experienced by homosexual men "demands obedience" and, like the war, victimizes those brought helplessly under its spell.[50]

These themes were explored in the novel *Alf*, written by Bruno Vogel in 1929. Vogel, a survivor of the trenches in Flanders and founder of the Leipzig branch of the WhK, compared the emotional stress of living under antisodomy laws to the traumatic experience of combat. In the novel, Alf consoles his friend Felix, who is arrested on the home front under "their stupid paragraphs." Writing from the trenches, Alf denounces the architects of the war and of Paragraph 175 as part of the same "evil and stupidity," and he promises to fight against both war and homophobia to help future generations. Alf portrays himself as emboldened by his combat experience to fight on behalf of the less confident and passive Felix.[51] Vogel, like other WhK activists, stressed that homosexual men were doubly victimized by war and homophobia. Long experienced in the trauma of repressed emotions, they suggested homosexual men were uniquely equipped to cope with the psychological trauma of wartime loss, and they argued that homosexual men could use their toughness learned in the trenches to battle homophobia.

The New Battle against Homophobia in Weimar Germany

In the wake of defeat in November 1918, there were widespread accusations, especially from the political right, that "enemies" at home had betrayed the army. Homosexuals were one of the groups targeted as culprits in the "stab in the back" legend. In his pamphlet *The Sexual Cruelties of Love-Crazy Men*, conservative journalist H. A. Preiss claimed that the war led "normal men," as well as "intrinsically degenerate men," to turn to homosexuality, fetishism, and other "abnormal sexual practices in order to relieve their tense nerves." Preiss argued that veterans had become so focused on their abnormal sexual needs that they were no longer willing to sacrifice for the nation.[52]

Facing accusations that they had betrayed the nation and contributed to defeat in 1918, homosexual veterans writing for *Die Freundschaft* were self-conscious about how society perceived them. They now waged war against not only accusations of "abnormality" but also perceptions that they were traitors. Activists aimed to combat the "degenerate" image of homosexual men, which they saw as key in overturning Paragraph 175.[53] However, the WhK's supporters were fearful that their struggle for social justice would be seen as a fight against the state or the nation, and thus they would be demonized and denounced as revolutionary outsiders. Instead, WhK activists carefully defined "the enemy" as ignorance and prejudice.

Homosexual veterans characterized themselves as ordinary members of the front and the national community who were entitled to respect and tolerance after having sacrificed for their nation. One writer for *Die Freundschaft*, B. Eden, stressed that homosexuals were only exceptional in their goal to

emancipate themselves from legal discrimination. Otherwise, they were committed to mainstream national values. In his article "Against What Do We Fight?" Eden depicted homosexual men as warriors dedicated to protecting the nation and German values, as evidenced by their war experience. Homosexuals were "national comrades" committed like all Germans to rebuilding the nation: "Are we enemies of the state? Answer: no, because we want to be loyal national comrades (*Volksgenossen*), who want to have an extensive share of the blood in the reconstruction of Germany."[54] Homosexuals and heterosexuals, Eden argued, were unified by their mutual experience on the battlefield, and homosexual men proved themselves to be worthy by their spirit of sacrifice: "We [homosexuals] fight for our liberation from undeserved slave shackles [. . .] we do not fight against the state, the national community [. . .] or our people (*Volk*). From his particular place in society, every decent, intelligent, inverted [homosexual] man will strive, just like any decent heterosexual, to do his best for all of Germany."[55] The war, in Eden's analysis, served as a focal point for making an argument that homosexuals were entitled to emancipation. Even more so, the willingness of homosexuals to sacrifice themselves for the nation proved that they were entirely normal, moral human beings. This argument also appeared in Eden's lengthy discussion of religion, where he emphasized that the homosexual liberation movement was not opposed to the moral precepts of Christianity. He expressed admiration for Jesus's preaching of love and compassion, but he rejected the Church's claims that homosexuals were "against nature" (*Widernatur*).[56]

In the eyes of another writer for *Die Freundschaft*, the war proved that homosexual love was entirely natural. This natural experience of love between men was hidden just beneath the surface of "comradeship" that was so essential to surviving the stress of the trenches. In a serialized story about two men at the front, a narrator celebrated the emotional sustenance he drew from the "love for his friend," which helped him to face the bombs and machine-gun fire. Behind the officially sanctioned relationship as "comrades," they bonded on a deeper level: "They watched over each other, they stood next to each other in the fire, they lay close together in the rain of bombs. No third person came between these men; it was foreseen that these two belonged together as comrades, that they were unified by something even deeper than comradeship."[57] "Comradeship" normalized homosexual relationships, and these relationships made it possible for men to fight. Activists argued that the war not only entitled homosexual men to legal emancipation but also demanded that their emotional lives be recognized as normal, even ideal in the context of war, by mainstream society.

Defeat and revolution highlighted the disparities between Germany's homosexual rights organizations. Despite tenuous alliances between the WhK and the

SPD, homosexuals did not disproportionately support left-wing parties, and the community was as politically fragmented as the rest of German society. One of the leaders of the WhK, Kurt Hiller, estimated that 75 percent of homosexuals voted for various right-wing parties.[58] Brand's GdE, with its hypernationalistic, *völkisch* orientation, was traumatized by Germany's defeat and perceived the new Weimar Republic as a threat to its elitist ideals. In Brand's universe, the defeat and subsequent democracy threatened the collapse of the superior warrior male. In contrast, the politically progressive WhK saw Weimar as an ideal opportunity. The broader movements for social revolution and sexual reform that intensified in the 1920s gave the WhK a context for pushing through legal emancipation, their long-held priority. However, ambivalence in the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party toward homosexuals frustrated many activists, who wanted stronger and more sustained opposition to Paragraph 175 than many of the left's political leaders were willing to risk.[59]

Despite their shared hatred of Paragraph 175, Adolf Brand's GdE diverged further from Hirschfeld's movement in the wake of the war. For Brand, "comradeship" discovered in the trenches was less a basis for legal reform than a spiritual and psychological experience that fueled the celebrated cult of the warrior. Defeat in 1918 spelled catastrophe for this elite warrior and the whole framework for "comrade-love" made possible by the front experience. Though Adolf Brand had long criticized the *Kaiserreich*'s repressive measures toward homosexuals, he lamented the defeat of the fatherland and what he saw as the nation's demise. He was hostile to both the dictatorial imperial order and the Social Democratic Party, which he considered too materialist oriented. Mass politics was too divisive, he argued, and the bureaucratic structures of party politics drained the individualism of cultured, spiritually free Germans. Only a form of what Brand called "liberal socialism" that was "not programmatic, but individual—not dogmatic, but earth-born—and which nowhere strives for political power" could foster the "common struggle against the spirit of unnaturalness," permitting free men to love one another openly.[60]

Brand's repulsion for the Social Democrats and the new republic was further intensified by the granting of political rights to women in 1919. GdE activists had been advocates of reform in marriage and sexuality. They criticized bourgeois sexual hypocrisy and believed young men should be free to have sex with other men before and during marriage with women, which one writer for *Der Eigene* argued would help abolish the problem of prostitution. However, GdE leaders opposed the political emancipation of women and considered the women's movement to be a less important project than freedom for men.[61] Brand's acolytes were most critical of the economic emancipation of women, which they saw as a threat to male dominance.[62] The GdE's conviction that homosexual men were ideally suited to the defense of the nation resonated among

other right-wing activists who saw the homosexual warrior as the core of a new society. Hans Blüher, a leading figure in Germany's *Wandervogel* movement since 1902, believed that the war demonstrated the essential role of male–male relationships in preserving Germany's future. Male relationships experienced in *Männerbünden* (Men's Leagues) were superior to heterosexual relationships, he argued, because women weakened men with their alleged spiritual and intellectual inferiority and pressure to conform to effeminate, bourgeois family norms.[63] Within Men's Leagues, homoeroticism was permissible, even encouraged as a powerful and desirable bond between men, though physical homosexual relations were still, at least officially, considered overstepping an acceptable boundary.[64]

Brand became increasingly pessimistic about whether German culture would ever accept homosexual men. Overcoming homophobia was, in his eyes, a spiritual and psychological rather than political project, and whether Paragraph 175 changed or not, society would still hold negative perceptions of homosexual men and denounce them as "pederasts."[65] Paragraph 175 had always been a common target that on the surface unified the nationalistic GdE and the progressive WhK. However, Brand saw the focus on legal reform as a distraction from the more vital task of creating what he called a "free" and "moral" society that respected the legitimacy of love between men, which he saw as essential before Paragraph 175 could be dismantled.[66]

For Adolf Brand, democracy and equal rights for all citizens was not the path to national regeneration. Brand's GdE characterized the new republic as degenerate. In a short-lived 1921 periodical run by Brand, *Freundschaft und Freiheit* (*Friendship and Freedom*), GdE acolyte Dr. Eduard von Mayer wrote an article titled "Versailles and Paragraph 175," in which he lamented the "proletarianization of humanity." The republic weakened society with its emphasis on equality, von Mayer wrote, and "deep biological damage" inflicted by the political left threatened the nation's racial fitness. Von Mayer also blamed this degradation on "Germany's foreign policy blindness" that led to the "catastrophic" signing of the oppressive treaty with the Allies. Interestingly, von Mayer equated the same moral and political failure that led to the republic's capitulation at Versailles with the oppressive mentality behind Paragraph 175, and he denounced the "inner weakness" of both the imperial and republican systems. Weimar's failure to stand up against the Allies at Versailles made von Mayer doubt the new parliamentary system would oppose the oppression of homosexuals.[67] Thus the prodemocratic WhK and the political left were now seen by the GdE as not only wrong in their approach to homosexuality but also guilty of betraying the nation.

In addition to his long-existing nemesis Magnus Hirschfeld, Adolf Brand now faced Friedrich Radszuweit, a politically moderate businessman, who

founded the *Freundschaftsbund* in 1919 and the *Bund für Menschenrechte* (BfM, League of Human Rights) in 1923. Brand considered Radszuweit a "vulgar man" whose writings were dangerous to the German nation.[68] In contrast to the WhK's medical and scientific interest in homosexuality, and the GdE's concentration on the aesthetics of "friend-love" and nostalgia for nationalism and patriarchal authoritarianism, Radszuweit's BfM focused on the democratic and legal concerns of integrating homosexuals into the social fabric.[69] Radszuweit's BfM aimed to bring together moderate left- and right-wing individuals who were unified behind the legal demand for homosexual rights.[70] Like the WhK, Radszuweit idealized the revolution and the founding of the republic as a great triumph for homosexuals.[71]

To achieve emancipation, both the BfM and the WhK made strident efforts to cooperate with women's rights groups in the 1920s. They worked closely with Helene Stöcker's League for the Protection of Motherhood and Sexual Reform, which the WhK had been aligned with since before 1914. After the war, leaders of Stöcker's movement and Hirschfeld's institute worked together to provide sex counseling for youth and women, and the leaders of these movements formed coalitions through their activism in the parties of the political left. In 1921, Hirschfeld and Stöcker organized a Berlin meeting of international organizations at the World League for Sexual Reform, where the agenda included lectures on dysfunctional heterosexual relationships and lectures on homosexuality as a natural phenomenon. Women's rights and homosexual rights activists shared resources in lobbying Weimar's Health and Interior Ministries to reform sex crimes laws.[72] This meant abolishing Paragraphs 184.3, 218, and 175 of the legal code, which restricted access to birth control and criminalized abortion and homosexuality, respectively.[73]

At the 1926 International Congress for Sexual Research, Friedrich Radszuweit highlighted the common goals of feminists and homosexuals when he pointed to what he described as the essential common legal struggle of sexual reformers: protection of the individual against state interference.[74] At the same time, the progressive homosexual rights organizations turned their focus to the discrimination faced by men. Further, they embraced a distinctly militarized rhetoric in the 1920s, and their sanctification of the male warrior image and the myth of the front experience began to contrast sharply with the pacifism invoked by feminist leaders like Helene Stöcker.[75] The WhK and BfM both celebrated homosexual war veterans as the ultimate models of the struggle for sex reform and also as exceptional victims of oppression who tragically suffered both in the war and under Paragraph 175.

Though the International Sexual Congress garnered the attention of Hirschfeld and Radszuweit, journalists for the leading homosexual organizations' periodicals focused greater attention that year on a scandal involving

the discharge of homosexual soldiers from the Republic's army (*Reichswehr*). Homosexual veterans considered this the ultimate affront to their dignity and the memory of comradeship at the front. Though Weimar was relatively liberal in lightening the enforcement of Paragraph 175, conservative institutions like the army continued to implement the law. The BfM's main periodical, *Das Freundschaftsblatt*, provided a detailed account of dedicated, patriotic soldiers left destitute by the military's implementation of Paragraph 175. The republic's newly formed *Reichswehr* issued an official prohibition on its soldiers frequenting gay bars and establishments, and the *Reichswehrminister* (National Defense Minister), Dr. Geßler, promised that as long as Paragraph 175 remained in place, the army would discharge any soldier identified as a homosexual.[76]

The Dresden branch of the BfM took up the cause of these soldiers who had been discharged. They hired a lawyer to formulate a complaint against Dr. Geßler, who responded by noting that homosexual men were "a danger to the military discipline and order."[77] Radszuweit bitterly countered that the military was hypocritical for dismissing homosexual men, as it knew that they were competent and that the army depended on them.[78] Interestingly, Radszuweit adopted a compromising tone—he conceded that if homosexuals were to abuse power or "in other violent ways give immoral offense" then it would be understandable if the *Reichswehrminister* were to discharge them. However, they should not be held in suspicion simply for being homosexual. Radszuweit concluded his open letter to Geßler by invoking the spirit of the front. He called on the *Reichswehrminister* to not only respect the ideals of freedom and justice but "also serve the inner peace, and draw on a sense of comradeship that is so great, that it cannot be torn apart and destroyed."[79] Despite the military's attempt to ostracize homosexual men from the front community, Radszuweit appropriated the sacred notion of "comradeship" as an unshakeable bond that unified men, including *Reichsminister* Geßler and the homosexual soldiers he demonized, regardless of their sexual orientation.

When the *Reichswehr* continued to discharge its homosexual soldiers, the BfM ramped up its campaign by appealing directly to President von Hindenburg, the former field marshal and commander of the German armed forces during the war. Playing to von Hindenburg's conscience as an old comrade, Radszuweit made his case that the sacrifices homosexual men made in the war entitled them to full integration into German society. Radszuweit began his open letter with an attempt to educate the president on the fact of homosexuals' real presence in every facet of the national fabric. The 10,000 homosexuals who were members of the non-party-affiliated BfM "came from all classes and backgrounds," Radszuweit boasted, and the aim of the organization was to integrate the two million same-sex-oriented Germans into society.[80] After quoting von Hindenburg's November 1924 directive that soldiers and civil

servants who "consciously trafficked in homosexual circles" must be discharged from their jobs, Radszuweit alerted the *Reichspräsident* to the war service record of these men, which was the backbone of Radszuweit's argument for overturning the law.[81]

The fight for acceptance in the post-1918 military reflected how both the BfM and WhK saw the war as ongoing for homosexual men, and leaders encouraged homosexuals to apply the spirit of the front experience and their wartime sense of dedication and loyalty to the struggle for civil rights. The language that permeated their newspapers focused on fighting, sacrifice, and vigilance. This rhetoric was especially aggressive in the most widely circulated periodical of the movement, *Die Freundschaft*, which published articles by both BfM and WhK activists. Having a deeper sense of the traumatic effects of the war, veterans called on their colleagues to avoid wallowing in the pain of wartime suffering and instead channel their energies into postwar battle to bring homosexuality into the light and take pride in one's identity. The fight for homosexual emancipation, writers for *Die Freundschaft* argued, was an ideal path for simultaneously healing the wounds of war and securing a sense of place and purpose in postwar society. In his 1919 article "Dead Sunday" (*Totensonntag*), A. Lange compared combat in the trenches and postwar "combat" to gain psychological and political freedom: "The battles of murder have passed, the battle of life has begun [. . .] The day of freedom has also come for us. We will fight (*kämpfen*) for justice until we have gained equal rights for our existence. I greet all of you, the dead, whose previous battles were in a time, where violence came before justice. Your spirit will also remain living in us until the hour of realization strikes all!"[82] Lange suggested that the same spirit of sacrifice found at the front lives on in those fighting for emancipation. The masculine endeavor of combat—requiring resilience, a strong will, a spirit of sacrifice—could be brought to bear on the postwar effort to abolish homophobia. Soldiers' experiences in the trenches were a kind of precursor for the postwar fight, hinting that their battle was also a battle for the rights of homosexuals, who were demonstrating their membership in the national community by their commitment as soldiers. The dead haunted the postwar movement for emancipation, injecting survivors with a sense of both guilt and responsibility for carrying on the fight—transferring the spirit of the trenches to the home front in the crusade against homophobia.

The memory of the front experience infected the WhK and BfM's militarized conception of the movement as a militant fighting force surrounded by enemies. Similar to Lange, Max H. Danielsen, a chairman of the WhK, contributed a cover story to *Die Freundschaft* that celebrated the "courageous prefighters" (*Vorkämpfer*) in the war for laying the groundwork for the homosexual liberation movement. The war brought a "new time for the whole world [. . .]

a time for liberation" that demanded homosexuals "stand up to promote the right to love" and dismantle Paragraph 175. Throughout his essay, Danielson tried to inspire his audience to "attack" (*Sturm*) and "fight" (*Kampf*) against the "enemies" who persecute homosexuals. Such militarized language permeated his conception of the movement: "Now we want to be courageous! We all want to stand shoulder to shoulder against a world. Then the better times will come because of our fight (*Kampf*). The enemies with the baseless masses following in line are ready to mightily blow the horn. And I am completely convinced that there still needs to be a short, decisive battle (*Kampf*) before the untenable Paragraph [175] falls."[83] Danielsen was optimistic that the war for emancipation would be quick and decisive because he saw evidence of the war turning the culture topsy-turvy and once demonized outsiders becoming more mainstream. If only homosexuals could remain aggressive and continue the fight begun in the war, the war's positive effects in destroying the oppressive remnants of the dominant culture could be completed.

The War against the Effeminate Homosexual Image

The war experience also strongly influenced the homosexual movement's conception of masculinity. The image of the hypermasculine warrior who spearheaded a new German society was not the exclusive territory of heterosexual, right-wing political groups. Militarized masculinity cultivated in the trenches closely shaped even the WhK leadership's new vision of male identity, and many who expressed admiration for the organization's political goals simultaneously rejected Hirschfeld's idea that homosexual men were essentially a unique or "third" partly effeminate sex. The postwar "battle" was not just for political emancipation; it was also a battle for image and identity. In the setting of fighting for rights and freedom, there was no room for "effeminate" men. The war altered WhK activists' perceptions of the nature of homosexuality, or at least its ideal image, and many denounced the "effeminate" homosexual, replacing him with an all-masculine, mobilized homosexual man spiritually connected to the front ideal of "comradeship."

For Brand, this shift toward hypermasculine homosexuality was not a departure, as he celebrated "friendship" at the front as an ideal masculine environment, an all-male utopia where "real men" could explore ideals of *Eros* without the feminine restraints imposed by bourgeois culture. In a 1930 GdE-supported publication, *Eros*, a supplement to *Der Eigene*, Brand tore apart the conservatives' image of homosexual men as antithetical to the warrior ideal in an article titled "Defense and Attack" ("*Abwehr und Angriff*"). The article was primarily a counter to the Nazi publisher Gustav Neumann, a sharp opponent of the

homosexual movement's attempts to dismantle Paragraph 175. Brand lamented that homophobes like Neumann symbolized society's complete failure to understand homosexuality. Despite all the scientific work done on homosexuality by his rival Magnus Hirschfeld, Brand claimed that little progress had been made to educate the public on the reality of "friendship" and homosexual identity. Specifically, Brand attacked the Nazis' claim that "man-man love emasculates our *Volk* and makes one the play-thing (*Spielball*) of one's enemies." Such an image of homosexuals as effeminate was a false stereotype, an illusory "other" that Brand compared to a quixotic war against imagined monsters: "Their fight against us is a fight against windmills, because indeed they actually fight with—in part at least—themselves."[84]

After 1918, veterans affiliated with the WhK also embraced a masculine warrior image for the homosexual activist. Unlike Brand's organization, for which the hypermasculine homosexual man was a prewar ideal, WhK activists were making a break from their founder's characterization of the nature of homosexuality. In his article "Manliness" ("*Manneswürde*") a writer who gave his name only as Kurt portrayed the "unique gender" as battle-hardened veterans:

> We must fight in a way befitting men, to achieve what seems to us dear and valuable [. . .] And among this silent, tough battle, there is another fight: the fight for a unique gender (*das eigene Geschlecht*). In the dark of the night the warriors stand in the shadows of their weapons. It is an unequal battle, which will be fought against a flood of enemies, hate and suspicion [. . .] On the other side we stand with our love of friends in our hearts, full of shame and wrath, full of conviction for the purity of our cause.[85]

In this battle against a "flood of enemies," effeminate men were constructed as detrimental. Kurt specifically targeted men "who clean themselves like young girls and go play and dance" as useless in the new fight. Effeminate homosexuals were weakening the struggle: "We need men, real men (*ganze Männer*). Effeminate men (*weibliche Männer*) are no good for battle and conflict."[86] This aggressive construction of effeminate men as outsiders stemmed partly from a sense of self-consciousness about how critics perceived homosexual men. Kurt addressed the culture's broader stereotype of homosexual men as unmanly and tried to deconstruct it with a counterimage of warrior homosexuals fighting for their rights: "[Effeminacy] is the image that our enemies repeatedly fill our eyes with: we have no sense of manliness and worthiness (*Mannhaftigkeit und Würde*). The battle burns intensely. We fight for the young man, because of our love, just as the young man fights for his young girl (*Mädel*). Everything else is vice and unworthy of men."[87] War served as the means to overturn the

stereotype of the unmanly homosexual. Kurt argued that effeminacy is a "weakness and shortcoming" that played into the hands of "the enemy."[88]

Kurt also defined the emotional dimension of homosexual love as consistent with the masculine ideal. He insisted that love between men was the purest form of love, because homosexual men at the front gave their love to each other unconditionally, without having to buy it or give it up for sale as in the case of heterosexual comrades going to prostitutes. Male–male love was the ultimate experience: "Love of man for man is sacrosanct. Whoever possesses the freedom to love a true friend has reached the holy grail. This treasure is guarded by loyal, brave men with strong minds."[89] Homosexuality, according to Kurt, was ideally suited for modern war. The homosexual warrior was emotionally intact, and he remained faithful to the hegemonic ideal of a "masculine," steel-nerved, and patriotic defender of the nation. Under this paradigm, the homosexual soldier's love for his comrades was not a deviant, selfish threat to the nation but a spiritually fulfilling experience that gave men the emotional foundations they needed to fight courageously. Emancipation for homosexual men thus became a keystone for the nation's survival.

In his analysis of the war's impact on homosexual veterans, Kurt still referred to homosexuals as a "unique sex," the term often used by the WhK's cofounder, Magnus Hirschfeld. However, the war had encouraged many activists like him to shed the notion that the "third" or "unique" sex was essentially effeminate, and Kurt's argument for "real men" signals a break from the WhK's insistence that homosexuals were exceptional beings, neither exclusively masculine nor feminine. Instead, WhK and BfM activists embraced the notion that homosexual men were essentially the same as their heterosexual counterparts. For many homosexual veterans across the political spectrum, the war revealed their fundamentally masculine nature. They boasted that their willingness to openly express emotional bonds with other men made them "unique" or even superior to their heterosexual comrades, but it did not exclude them from mainstream society's masculine image.

Conclusion

The experience of combat was instrumental across the spectrum of the homosexual movement, as it dramatically influenced the image of the postwar homosexual male and his identity. For Brand's GdE, the image of homosexual men as hypermasculine beings who embodied the "warrior ideal" remained constant before and after the war, but the trench experience gave Brand a language and focus that helped make the GdE's prewar Hellenistic obsessions relevant for the modern age. However, Brand's political orientation and his denunciation

of the women's movement isolated his organization from Weimar's network of progressive sexual reform movements.

The most substantial shift in how homosexual organizations projected an image of the male homosexual occurred within the WhK. While Magnus Hirschfeld imagined homosexuals as an essentially effeminate "third sex" before the war, his acolytes constructed a different identity for homosexual men. After the war, though they were careful to express admiration for Hirschfeld's commitment to legal rights, post-1918 WhK activists distanced themselves substantially from the founder's theories on masculinity and homosexuality. They projected an image of homosexuals possessing a militarized sense of masculinity that excluded "effeminate" men from the ranks of the new fighters for homosexual rights. The shared struggle for legal and political reform bonded the WhK and BfM to their feminist counterparts, but the war also fed the WhK and BfM a hypermasculine warrior activist image that generated antipathy on the part of veterans toward what Hirschfeld once claimed was homosexuality's essentially "feminine" nature.

Within the experience of comradeship that included male–male emotional bonds, homosexual men were able to define their love as acceptable, or even ideal, for the military environment. Homosexual veterans across the political spectrum embraced the hypermasculine warrior image and modified it to include homosexual men. Men idealized their form of love and sexuality as perfectly suited for the emotional strain of modern war, and they emphasized that men should be able to express love for other men in order to relieve the stress of the trenches. While some men tried to convince authorities that they did not taint the front with their "deviant" sexual behavior, they asserted that emotional bonds between men were perfectly consistent with, and even necessary to, the demands of defending the nation.

Homosexual men who celebrated the martial side of homosexual identity thus reinforced hegemonic ideals of masculinity. By elevating the status of the warrior ideal and renouncing the effeminate image of homosexuality, advocates of homosexual rights across the political spectrum moved closer to the mainstream culture's militarized image of manliness. Similar to their heterosexual counterparts, homosexual activists sanctified the nurturing side of comradeship as long as there was no ambiguity that they were indeed real men. Further, similar to the resentment that heterosexual men felt toward the "lamenting woman" who drained them and did not understand their psychological experience in the war, homosexual veterans resented the effeminate homosexual, who was perceived not only as an embarrassment to their militant vision of the movement but also as lesser in status because they were useless in war.

While the homosexual community in the 1920s found its path for arguing that homosexuals were made into "real men" through the war experience, they

were still perceived as enemies of the "national community," as evidenced by the violence orchestrated by the Nazi regime against homosexual men after 1933. Embracing the hegemonic image of masculinity did not substantially alter the homosexual community's status as "social outsiders." However, the experience of the war highlighted the degree to which there were competing perspectives on the dominant masculine ideal. The experiences of veterans who tried to normalize love between men suggest that the exclusively heterosexual paradigm of masculinity was not entirely hegemonic.

CHAPTER 6

Coming Home

Postwar Sexual Chaos, Disillusionment, and Battles over Masculinity

By 1918, the war seemed to have the opposite effect on male sexuality as what had been originally anticipated in 1914. Instead of stabilizing sexual behavior and reinvigorating gender norms, the war seemed to stimulate sexual chaos. While conservative doctors and cultural critics still blamed the rise in sexually "abnormal" behaviors on traditional enemies—socialism, independent women, homosexuals, Jews—they also found a disturbing link between the cherished experience of combat and the spread of perceived sexually deviant behavior. The fear of the sexual "other" persisted, but this was compounded by the fear that ordinary Germans returning home from the front concealed psychopathologies. Most disturbingly for those who tried to control sexuality, sexually damaged men had become largely invisible.

This chapter focuses on perceptions of the sexual and emotional life of soldiers in the immediate wake of the war as they returned home. The central argument is that soldiers and civilians approached each other with mutual suspicion in the wake of the war, and assumptions about sexual transgressions and transformations that took place during the war fed anxieties about an altered postwar landscape. Civilians perceived returning soldiers as sexually damaged, hedonistic, and out of control. As the men returned to the shattered home front, they became objects of resentment for a population that blamed sexual hedonism for defeat, and many civilians feared that men would bring psychosexual pathologies from the combat sphere to German society. Mirroring soldiers who constructed the "stab in the back" legend because they could not face the reality of military defeat, civilians theorized that sexual immorality weakened the combat front and caused the failure of military operations in the summer of 1918.

Meanwhile, for men returning in November 1918 through the spring of 1919, "home" appeared to be an otherworldly, chaotic landscape. What they had anticipated or fantasized about over four years of war crashed into the reality of what seemed to be an alien, altered German society. In many ways, gender paradigms had not dramatically changed. As historians have demonstrated, the patriarchy remained largely intact, as women, despite their essential roles behind the war effort, found little progress in how society perceived them.[1] As Jay Winter has pointed out, commemoration of the war was focused almost exclusively on the male experience, which was elevated and sanctified in sites of memory at the expense of remembering the contributions of women to the war effort.[2] In her comparative study of postwar patriarchies, Erika Kuhlman shows how governments and popular media, in privileging men and the combat front as the most vital site of national sacrifice, set the stage for men to return as heroic, idolized, and dominant. Despite the traumatic upheaval of total war, the gender order and hierarchies seemed largely unchanged, as men were expected to return their roles as breadwinners and women to childrearing.[3]

Despite the apparent restoration of the traditional gender order, the war triggered a fundamental change in the emotional relationships between men and women. Soldiers' accounts of homecoming reveal intense disappointment with the domestic world that they discovered upon return. Many men expressed resentment that women were no longer emotionally available to them, and they felt alienated from women who seemed to them transformed and distant, rather than frozen in an idealized 1914 time capsule. Feeling emotionally cut off from the opposite sex and isolated in a shattered postwar social and political environment, men were often nostalgic for the milieu from which they had just emerged. "Comradeship," though diverse in its meaning and experienced differently, held powerful sway as men yearned for the emotional support of male friends.

In the world of the trenches, where they were remote from the monitoring and control of home-front authorities and expectations, men could often find a niche for their own particular definition of comradeship. At the front, perceptions of masculinity and the male war experience were complex and layered. However, postwar political organizations tried to simplify, categorize, and recast the memory of the war experience. Their memories of the war were closely aligned with their definitions of normative masculinity. Political groups, especially those on the right, tried to control and categorize acceptable masculine emotions, allowing for affection between men under the blanket of "comradeship," but only if this did not cross into the territory of physical expressions of affection. Love, fear, and weakness could only be expressed in an acceptable context, according to the champions of "comradeship" on the political right. Men could share their fears and anxieties with other men in combat, but war

was expected to strengthen the male psyche and mold men into steel-nerved instruments of war.

Case studies for anxieties about incorporating emotions into the masculine image can be found in two key sites of politically charged debates over the masculine image in the interwar period. First, the plight of mentally traumatized, "hysterical" men who survived the trenches offers a glimpse into how both the political right and left defined acceptable emotions and the authentic war experience. Further, political battles between National Socialists and Social Democrats over the private life of Nazi Stormtrooper Ernst Röhm reveal anxieties about the fine line between comradeship and homosexuality, and the acceptable boundaries between emotional and physical love between men. Though a "new" man had emerged from the trenches, one who could show "feminine" emotions while maintaining the steel-nerved, masculine image, the image of the "effeminate," weak, or homosexual man still caused as much anxiety as it had before 1914. Ironically, it was returning veterans who came under suspicion.

The Hedonists Return Home

After several years of war, the perceived enemy that threatened German society was no longer only the British and French armies but also the specter of sexual immorality that German soldiers brought home. Men who could not control themselves were accused of betraying the *Heimat*, the army, and the nation. Critics on the home front continued to mobilize in their crusade against "moral degeneracy," which by the last year of the war became an explanation for the failure of the military to decisively defeat the enemy. By 1917–18, economic shortages, food riots and strikes, and deepening political divisions at home brought German society to the brink of collapse. In one last gamble for final victory, and bolstered by a surge in troops released from the Eastern front after the defeat of Russia, the military launched a major offensive in March 1918, with the aim of capturing Paris before fresh American troops and supplies could tip the balance. After initially breaking through British front lines and pushing to within forty miles of Paris, the German army bogged down with overextended supply lines, worn-out equipment, and shortages of vital resources. By August 1918, the Allies turned the tide and counteroffensives ultimately led to German military defeat. As the reality of collapse became apparent in October 1918, accusations of a "stab in the back" began to surface. According to this legend, socialists, Jews, and others long seen by conservatives as "enemies of the nation" betrayed the military and sparked revolution at home. The "stab in the back" was especially popular among veterans who resented the socialist and democratic revolutionaries and, as historians have shown, tried to cover up

the reality of widespread breakdown among both officers and enlisted soldiers abandoning their frontline posts.[4]

For many frustrated civilians who felt they made the necessary sacrifices and "held through," the "stab in the back" did not originate on the home front but in the moral decline, in particular promiscuous sexual behavior, that infected troops at the front. Catholic Church activist Mary Young-Rißmann, in her speech "The Lost War and the Moral Question" delivered to the White Cross Association for Moral Order (*Der Sittlichkeitsbund vom Weißen Kreuz*) in 1923, argued that civilians remained loyal to the end with a higher level of moral and psychological strength than many men in the trenches. She accused German soldiers of sabotaging the decisive March 1918 offensive by getting bogged down in sexual hedonism and drinking binges when they could have pushed on toward Paris. The common soldier betrayed the nation: "Though the Germans won the battles, they lost the war through sexual immorality and alcohol addiction [. . .] The German giant was not defeated militarily, but it was internally, morally ruined, with God's unbroken sword passed over to the hand of the enemy."[5] Young-Rißmann bitterly described scenes of soldiers finally breaking through British lines in the early summer of 1918, only to waste time with the prostitutes and booze that came with new territorial gains. These men, she noted, then proceeded to ruin the social fabric that held the nation together: the German family. By bringing venereal diseases and alcoholism home with them, veterans were more dangerous in Germany than in the trenches. She also blamed these moral transgressions for the subsequent deterioration of the home front, where civilians lost their will after they saw men at the front gratify their own needs rather than make sacrifices for the nation.[6]

While many civilians blamed the allegedly foreign-inspired "Bolshevik" revolution for sexual catastrophe at home, there was also a growing suspicion that ordinary men came home damaged and dangerous. Civilians perceived returning veterans as sexually unruly hordes who infected postwar society. One concerned member of the *Verein zur Fürsorge für die zuziehende männliche Jugend* (Association of the Care for Wayward Male Youth) in Hamburg complained in a letter sent directly to Weimar's newly elected President Friedrich Ebert that with returning troops came prostitutes and degenerate behavior, which manifested itself in a scene he witnessed one night and described in great detail: "On Saturday, July 12 [1919], at 11 o'clock at night, I saw sixty-two girls, most of them half-naked, dancing around the street in Ulrikestrasse."[7] He expressed shock that soldiers would cavort with these women, and he suggested that they were having sex right in the street.[8]

The abstinent, morally pure heroes imagined in propaganda at the beginning of the war now gave way to sexually degenerate, dangerous ex-soldiers who symbolized defeat and the moral chaos many associated with revolution. Civilian

crusaders denounced the bordellos that multiplied exponentially, especially in cities, with the influx of returning veterans. The sex economy that enraged home-front morality organizations during the war was now spilling over into Germany, and according to critics, it flourished in the social and political chaos left in the wake of the war, where businessmen could profit off the sex trade without fear of military interference. According to one pastor who lamented what he saw as the loss of Christian values among ex-soldiers, "The brothels endanger the health of the nation, and they exploit our people in the most shameless ways."[9] While morality groups during the war could at least rationalize that sexual immorality was confined to the otherworldly environment of the front, and even blame it on foreign influences, the boundaries between combat and home fronts collapsed as men brought the sexual behaviors normalized at the front back to the *Heimat*.

An avalanche of letters from local health officials, police, and civilian organizations complaining about VD-infected veterans poured into the ministries scrambling to organize a new government in November–December 1918. The Ministry of the Interior compiled reports on escalating cases of VD, which drew widespread coverage in popular media. Between November 15 and December 14, 1918, more than 136,000 civilians and military personnel in Germany applied for medical assistance for VD.[10] Local health authorities in the town of Meiningen reported that VD patients in their district exploded from 652 reported cases in 1917 to 2,954 in 1919. The National Health Office reported that the skyrocketing rates of VD were a direct outgrowth of the war and that infected soldiers were not seeking adequate medical care as they returned home from the front.[11]

On January 2, 1919, only two days before the Spartacist Revolution led by independent socialists and founders of the new German communist party Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht broke out on the streets of Berlin, the Ministry of Interior wrote a report recommending that doctors screen and treat soldiers, especially in the cities, where throngs of demobilized veterans were crowded. The new government promised that it would cover the cost of treatment and set aside more than 500,000 marks for fighting VD.[12] Along with this financial support, the Ministry of Interior organized medical and police campaigns to get infected individuals to health clinics before they spread the disease. Two weeks after the Spartacist uprising ended and communist revolutionaries were brought under control, ministry officials concentrated their efforts and promoted a popular campaign, on the advice of local authorities in various cities dealing with a flood of returning soldiers, which included public service announcements in newspapers. The announcement called on veterans as well as women who suspected they were infected to report to medical authorities: "Men and Women! You who are suffering from venereal disease or fear that

you are infected, seek a doctor as quickly as possible, follow their advice, and undergo treatment until you are completely cured."[13]

The advertisement assured readers that costs for medical evaluations and treatment would be completely covered by the state. Though "the health of the people (*Volkes*)" was invoked by the Ministry of Interior, thus building on wartime rhetoric about sacrifice for the nation, their campaign rhetoric also focused on the practical benefits provided by state welfare for individual health and respect for discretion as men and women sought medical help. Police officials considered it a successful, proactive approach to the crisis, and they recommended that the Ministry of the Interior further fund films and public lectures as well as exhibits that would educate citizens about the dangers of unprotected sex.[14]

Though the Ministry of Interior's rhetoric suggested a shift from militarized, wartime control of sexual behavior toward a system of state health care and welfare management, the state's approach to dealing with sexual promiscuity did not change dramatically after the war. The 1919 National Law for the Fight against Venereal Disease stipulated that it was the "duty" of infected men and women to go to a doctor. Otherwise, individuals who knowingly spread VD faced fines or up to six-month prison terms.[15] Pamphlets, condoms, and disinfection stations were made available in brothels and public toilets, and the government mobilized doctors trained to treat VD, many with military experience, in newly established state-run clinics.[16] But despite efforts to centralize control, police struggled to get people to the state-organized, free health clinics. Instead, many ex-soldiers were wary of former military doctors and—perhaps fearing stigmatization, fines, or imprisonment—went to untrained, "quack" doctors, whose ineffective treatments only worsened the epidemic.[17]

Aggressive state intervention into sexual behavior echoed wartime control. The apparatus for military-like control was mirrored by militarized rhetoric in civilian debates over sexual behavior. Sexually promiscuous individuals continued to be characterized as "the enemy" after the war. Continuing their crusade into the 1920s, the *Der Deutsche Verein für ländlische Wohlfahrts- und Heimatpflege* (German Association for Rural Health and Care of the Homeland) saw themselves as a bulwark of sexual morality in an ongoing fight against the spread of venereal disease from the cities to Germany's small towns and communities. VD was "the enemy in the home" (*Der Feind im Hause*), according to the association's pamphlet, which called for greater systems of surveillance on those who lived in cities and a return to traditional moral values.[18]

Hedonists from the cities were not the only perceived "enemies." Despite the end of the fighting, morality organizations still targeted international enemies as a sexual threat. In 1921, a report from the General Staff Headquarters in the Occupied Rhine indicated that the British, French, and American forces in the region were struggling with a venereal disease epidemic. French troops

in particular, bored with duties in the occupied territory where German women were desperate for income, saw an explosion of VD. The Allies recommended greater measures for suppressing prostitution through surveillance, and German police agreed to arrest all women suspected of selling sex to the occupied armies.[19]

In a reversal of wartime scapegoating for sexual promiscuity, the French now blamed German prostitutes for the crisis. However, German newspapers characterized French soldiers as predators on the Ruhr population, with innocent, impoverished Germans living in fear of aggressive, diseased French soldiers who did not hesitate to exploit German women. The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* cited a speech from the Ministry of the Interior that claimed "in the last year there have been countless atrocities committed by the French occupation troops against our population, including murder, abuse and rape of defenseless women."[20] These accounts were compounded by paranoia in the wake of a media frenzy over "the Black Shame" (*Die Schwarze Schmach*), which involved accusations by civilian organizations of alleged rapes by African colonial troops assigned occupation duties by the Allied armies.[21] Racist and militarized mentalities about the "enemy" and the sexual corruption of morally pure Germans continued to shape popular thinking about sexual catastrophe after the war.

In addition to the threat of disease, civilians were alarmed by what they perceived as sexually degenerate desires coming home. Civilian critics deflected blame on "foreign elements," whether enemy soldiers or urban Babylons, threatening Germany's moral fabric. But there were also popular suspicions that once healthy and upstanding German men corrupted good German women with licentious desires and sexual violence derived from their war experience. Journalist Hans-Georg Baumgarth argued in a polemical tract for the lay public that the war replaced bourgeois morality with "primitive" instincts that stimulated pathological sexual desires in both men and women of good social standing. Baumgarth observed that violent behavior replaced the sexual drives of even morally fit middle-class men, leading them to inflict violence on women through "bestial sexual acts."[22] He characterized returning veterans as animals, drunk on the violence unleashed by the war. However, he suggested that this was not unexpected, considering how violence had become normalized at the front. Instead, he was most shocked that women also succumbed to animalistic sexual behavior. Baumgarth argued that women possessed a latent irrational nature that was released by the brutality of the war and shattered traditional structures.[23] Baumgarth excused men who could not cope with frontline violence, but he suggested that women should have maintained the Wilhelmian expectation that they transcend their hysterical character to persevere through stress, including domestic violence, and provide the care and moral example needed to return the family to "normal."[24] The war, in Baumgarth's estimation,

was ultimately less threatening than women who abandoned prewar social expectations. Men could only recover their "normal" heterosexual, middle-class values and behaviors if women played their assigned roles as nurturers within the bourgeois family.

Magnus Hirschfeld also warned the postwar lay public that the war had indelibly brutalized the sexual drives of both men and women. Hirschfeld observed that heterosexual culture was in a state of crisis as a result of the war. Building on Freud's theories that the war stimulated preexisting psychosexual neuroses, Hirschfeld argued in *The Sexual History of the World War* (*Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges*) that the war created an overall atmosphere that allowed normally repressed sexual drives to manifest in both combat veterans and civilians. But the greatest threat to bourgeois sexuality was the explosion of postwar violence that he traced to the psychological experience of combat. The rise in sexual violence that men inflicted on women after the war destroyed relationships already strained by separation and privation.[25] Healthy sexual relationships were supplanted by sadistic behavior and escalating tensions that threatened to shatter relationships between men and women.[26]

Hirschfeld believed that the most effective way to counteract the repressed, debilitating neuroses that afflicted survivors of the war was to encourage greater opportunity for individuals to openly discuss all aspects of sexual desire and gain knowledge about sexuality. Collaborating with a community of doctors and human rights activists, Hirschfeld founded the Institute for Sexual Research in 1919 to provide sex education and counseling for thousands of visitors each year. Only a fraction of the file compiled by the institute, which was largely destroyed by the Nazis, survives to provide a glimpse into the everyday sexual concerns of visitors. One file provides a glimpse into how the institute's workshops were designed to facilitate dialogue between the sexes. Prior to a lecture on sexual health, doctors invited shy audience members to submit any questions about sex on small blue pieces of paper prior to the event. Their questions were carefully preserved, with practical inquiries like, "How does a man behave (*verhält sich*) so that his wife does not become pregnant?" Women also expressed concern about their husbands being emotionally and sexually unresponsive, and they asked how they could persuade their men to talk about their problems.[27] The institute encouraged women to assert their desires for sexual fulfillment.

Hirschfeld's advocacy for women's emancipation and sexual equality was criticized by competing sexologists, including the conservative doctor Albert Moll, who organized an International Society for Sex Research as a counter to Hirschfeld's institute. Moll denounced Hirschfeld as a "radical" whose work was unscientific and biased by Hirschfeld's Social Democratic leanings. Divisions between sexologists reached a fever pitch when Moll organized the Congress

for Sexual Research in 1926–27 as an alternative to Hirschfeld's internationally acclaimed Congress for Sexual Reform and the World League of Sexual Reform, which claimed a membership of 130,000 people.[28]

Though Moll's Congress for Sexual Research was dominated by infighting between sexologists who were deeply divided along theoretical and political lines, the media coverage of the event focused primarily on lectures that dealt with the effects of the war on sexual life and behavior. One of the lectures, by Dr. W. Schweisheimer, a medical expert on birth control, drew considerable media attention. Both the *Tägliche Rundschau* (*Daily Magazine*), a conservative newspaper with wide circulation, and Bavaria's extremely popular daily newspaper, the conservative *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten* (*Munich Daily News*), gave extensive coverage to Schweisheimer's lecture, where he argued that that "the desire for war (*Kriegsdrang*) was a manifestation of sexual instincts." The *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten* gave the most coverage and published the doctor's observation that war was essentially an excuse for men to display their manhood in an attempt to attract women. In addition, the popular paper published Schweisheimer's observation that though war was a male attempt to "show off" to women, war actually caused men to distance themselves from the opposite sex, as the experience of the trenches left men feeling remote, and they internalized this remoteness from loved ones.[29] This problem seemed to resonate, as it was becoming an ever-increasing topic not only in the popular press but also in everyday interactions between women and men returning from war.

Disappointing Homecomings

The perception that women and domestic life were no longer satisfying is a recurring theme in soldiers' accounts of returning home on leave or shortly after the war. Surviving soldiers' collections of *Feldpost* often ended in November 1918 with letters bursting with anticipation about the joy of coming home. Though many men did not document their first impressions on returning to their families and home towns, some of the files contain letters that carry on into the winter of 1918–19, and they offer a glimpse into what men felt as they made the transition out of the trenches. For many, that transition home was one of intense shock, as their image of home, often idealized as they fantasized about an alternative universe while in the trenches, collided with the reality of a desperate, fractured home front. Many realized that the war had altered them, and even if they desired to return to "normal," the traumatic effects of combat made it difficult for them to identify with family and loved ones. Many resented women for the perceived relative comforts of life at home, and veterans expressed that they felt emotionally estranged and even sentimental for the

universe of the trenches, or at least the comrades to whom they related more closely than to their wives and families.

Just after the war, former fighter pilot Rudolf Berthold reflected on the disillusionment he and his comrades felt with women upon returning home. *Hauptmann* (Captain) Berthold was one of Germany's most famous heroes, celebrated in popular magazines and postcards as a pillar of masculine strength. Surviving four years and multiple crashes and injuries as a fighter pilot, he was known as "Iron Man Berthold" for his fanatical devotion to duty and desire to remain at the front despite offers for a promotion to the general staff.[30] His comrades were in awe of his resilience, as he continued to fly despite a bullet wound in his right arm that never properly healed and caused him intense pain. He earned the *Pour le Mérite* medal, Germany's highest military honor, and eventually shot down 44 enemy aircraft. Berthold ended the war in a hospital recovering from an August 1918 crash, and when he recuperated, he returned home a fanatical nationalist who joined the *Freikorps* (Free Corps), a right-wing paramilitary organization consisting of men who never really demobilized but continued to fight against communists during the 1919 revolution. Berthold fought alongside his fellow officers in the Kapp Putsch, the failed right-wing attempt to overthrow the new democratic republic in 1920.[31] In a street battle in Harburg that March, he was captured, beaten, and killed by communists.

The months before his death were a period of not only political radicalization but also social alienation for Berthold. He felt an intense sense of belonging in his community of comrades and, like many veterans, never really made the psychological transition home. Paradoxically, Berthold idealized the comforts of domesticity, but he also felt alienated from it, both because the reality did not live up to his idealized image and because he felt incapable of returning to "normal." Berthold had had a fiancée since 1914, but his comrades recalled after the war that he barely spoke of her, and he refused to marry her after the war until he had finished fighting against the revolution.[32] His disillusionment with women is evident in his diary entries in the last year of his life. In January 1919, he wrote, "And still there is the woman, she who puts her stamp on the family life. The man comes home exhausted, does not find the same coziness (*Gemütlichkeit*) that he longed for, and flees it all, searching for diversions elsewhere. There he finds no peace, is dissatisfied and restless."[33] For some men, the idealized image of women and the domestic oasis disintegrated once they returned home. Berthold placed the blame for this collapse directly on the shoulders of women, who he argued betrayed men by transgressing their traditional roles. "In the future it's going to get much worse," Berthold wrote in his diary, "because now women are everywhere in public life." He perceived women who desired greater independence as disloyal and emotionally distant from men who needed comfort and sympathy. In contrast, the "real woman was

loyal and pure in her feelings," and her purity soothed the naturally "brutish" men coming home from war.[34] Women could only be emotionally supportive, Berthold observed, if they were subservient and passive.

Despite feeling betrayed by independent-minded women who abandoned their traditional roles, Berthold insisted that men came back from war with their masculinity intact. He pointed to the "upright character" and "tough exterior" of his idealized comrades as evidence that men were not only unshaken but actually invigorated and restored by the war, which brought out the inner qualities of stoicism, self-sacrifice, and determination.[35] Berthold contrasted revitalized masculinity with the declining character of women, whose deteriorating feminine qualities ultimately led to defeat. Like many veterans of his social-political orientation, Berthold believed socialists and Jews at home betrayed the loyal front soldiers just as they were on the verge of victory. Berthold's construction of the "stab in the back" theory also targeted what he saw as selfish women for bringing "disgrace and humiliation" to Germany. According to Berthold, women "forgot us [front soldiers] and with their constant complaints and whining they lost their faith in us."[36] The negative image of the complaining woman, a recurring figure in soldiers' letters and newspapers during the war, now became the scapegoat for men who felt they kept their side of the pact between the combat and home fronts.

The image of home that sustained men at the front collided dramatically with postwar reality. Like so many other veterans, infantryman Harry S. spent the war dreaming of his return home. Care packages and letters were his lifeline to an idealized domestic sphere. The Christmas package he received from his parents in 1917, he wrote, "gives me courage to bear the stress, danger and deprivations a little bit longer."[37] However, Harry became so accustomed to life at the front that by the time the war ended, "home" felt like a foreign place. In December 1918, writing from his barracks in a German town where he waited to be demobilized, he told his parents about how he often still thought about the comforts of home, but he was quite content with his barracks and "the pleasant warmth" he found with his comrades.[38] When his unit was dismantled and he was finally released from service the next month, he complained that Germany had descended into "a kind of disorder" of political revolution into which he observed one could "easily disappear without a trace."[39] The sense of comradeship that he had grown to rely on was fast disappearing in a society where he felt anonymous and without direction.

Even if men craved to be reunited with their wives and enjoy the nurturing domestic life, many had misgivings about the conditions of the society to which they would return. While the individualized home of wife and children still attracted the imaginations of brutalized front fighters, the *Heimat* itself seemed to be in collapse, threatening the integrity of domestic bliss. Infantryman

Jakob B., a railway worker from a small town in Hesse, survived two years of war with letters from his fiancée, Lina, encouraging him stay focused on the moment when they would be reunited. Though Jakob and Lina's letters, with their tortured grammar, reveal their lack of education compared to other veterans whose *Feldpost* survive, it is invaluable to get a working-class soldier's perspective. Lina told him that she believed their relationship would endure the deprivations of the long war because she and her husband enjoyed "real love" (*Rechtliebe*) in contrast to the "sham love" (*Scheinliebe*) that seemed to proliferate. She signed her letters, "I will love you always. I still love you today and will love you for all eternity," and he returned her devotions with similar declarations.[40] This bond served as Jakob's lifeline, as he imagined the home front as a precious haven from the brutality of the trenches. However, with the possibility of peace looming, Jakob B. wrote to Lina on November 3, 1918, about the dread he felt about returning to Germany. "Germany is dying out," he wrote, "every day there is much blood here [at the front] and there will be a fight to the finish as long as the hunger crisis [at home] lasts."[41] Here Jakob conflated the breakdown of the combat and home fronts. The dichotomy that they imagined existed between these two spheres, with one characterized by trauma and the other by love, had broken down with violence and hunger annihilating both worlds. Though Lina and Jakob desperately longed to create a safe sphere for each other through their love, and they would marry in 1920 and live until the 1950s, there was no world left untouched by the violence of war.

As they returned home in the last weeks of 1918, men expressed in their letters a desire to return to "normal," which many defined as a world in which women would nurture them with love and compassion. Felix F., whose four years of correspondence with his wife was examined in Chapter 3, had by the end of the war expressed a desire to forget everything about life in the trenches. Alienated from comrades with whom he did not feel comfortable intimating his fears, wracked by loneliness and despair, sick of the heroic ideal that demanded self-sacrifice, he believed that war had been in vain. Once he was reunited with his wife and children, he imagined that his life as it had been before the war would be restored with him as a patriarch once again in control.[42] However, he also felt tremendous anxiety about his homecoming. In one of his last letters, written on December 5, just before he arrived home, he wrote to his wife about how he felt about returning home, and he asked her to share her feelings about the greatly anticipated moment of return as well. Felix F. described the kind of image that kept replaying in his mind, but he admitted that he had difficulty imagining exactly how it would unfold. The moment seemed unreal to him after four years in the trenches. He thought she would not recognize him and that as he travelled through German train stations he would feel increasingly "like a tourist."[43]

Though Felix F. had been fixated for years on his homecoming and his belief that he would rediscover domestic bliss with his wife, once he faced the reality of demobilization, he expressed fears that revealed deep insecurities. His tense relationship with his wife persisted all the way up to homecoming. In his letter from December 14, 1918, only eight days before being released from duty so he could travel home, he scolded his wife, as he had done frequently throughout the war, for not writing to him.[44] While the image of home had given him sustenance in the trenches, he was apprehensive about whether his wife would live up to expectations that he nourished in his fantasies.

Men who emerged from the trenches found home to be a chaotic and incomprehensible place. In veterans' accounts of what they witnessed when they returned home in November–December 1918, many observed that the social and political unrest was accompanied by sexual disorder. In the case of Hermann B., whose letters home were described in Chapter 3, there was a sense of shock about what he perceived as the disintegrating prewar gender order, in particular the lack of sexual restraint, which he blamed on both men and women. In a letter he wrote to his parents one week before Christmas 1918, while quartered in a small German town on his way home, Hermann B. complained about the "tasteless salons of disgrace" and the young girls from town who threw themselves at soldiers and unashamedly spent the night with men in the barracks.[45] In the climate of "Bolshevist" revolution where there were no longer traditional social restraints, he bemoaned, men succumbed to degeneracy and hedonism. He described men who roamed the streets like "wild hordes set loose," and he feared that women could not even show themselves on the streets without risking rape. The scenes he witnessed led Hermann B. to believe that men needed to be strongly controlled. He concluded that "95% of all men who are 18–28 years old are basically just like cattle if they are not treated with violence and discipline and forced into obedience and work."[46] Such a pessimistic view of humanity reflected his perception that the war revealed the essentially primitive and degenerate nature of men and women.

Hermann B.'s disappointment with the brutalized state of humanity is interesting in light of a confession that he made to his parents. Having complained in several letters during the war that he experienced uncontrollable "anger" and stress, he admitted in his letters after the war that he was a nervous wreck. During the war, he had been hesitant to tell a doctor that he felt psychologically unhealthy, because he feared being stigmatized as weak and undisciplined. But as the war ended, he worked up the will to tell a military doctor about his psychological problems. He wrote that a doctor had diagnosed him as suffering a "nervous condition" (*Nervenleiden*) as a result of the long duration he spent in the trenches and an airplane crash that he survived a few months before the end of the war. It was recommended that he visit a "special doctor," but Hermann B.

was pessimistic about whether they could actually treat him.[47] He had complained to his parents for years about how he felt alienated from his comrades, and he was "depressed and frustrated with life."[48] Though he was finally coming home, he was left traumatized by the war experience and shocked by the moral depravity of his comrades and women at home.

Disappointment about homecoming occurred not only because men were apprehensive about whether their relationships with their wives would be the same. Many were also reluctant to separate themselves from their old comrades, with whom they had developed such powerful bonds in the trenches. Heinrich T., for example, who kept diaries from October 1914 all the way to the end of the war, felt a real sense of regret at the end of the war that he would have to leave his comrades. His diaries during the war years contained very few references to women, and when he did mention the opposite sex, they appeared only as nurses and servants.[49] He did not confide in his diary any emotional connections to women. Instead, he was most animated when he recounted his relationships with comrades, especially after he signed up for flight school in summer 1917. He included in his diary poems dedicated to his friendship with his "brothers" at the front and the pleasure he found after surviving a plane crash when he spent two hours with his buddies "talking in a manly way about things."[50] He proudly recounted how his flight trainer, a "top gun" (*Kanone*) who they all hero-worshipped, told him and his comrades "you can either fly another sortie this afternoon, or you can go into the town where the girls are," and the pilots all remained on flight duty. His close relationship to his comrades can be found in one entry where he recounted flying reconnaissance in formation with his buddies: "It gave me deep joy these days to find support from comrades through the sacrifice and collaborative work we did together."[51]

Like many officers at the end of the war, Heinrich T., a former businessman from Kiel, felt that the army and air force were undefeated, betrayed by socialists and Jews who he blamed for defeat and revolution.[52] His diary contained little reflection on his homecoming, though he did complain about women at the end of the war who treated him and his fellow pilots disrespectfully.[53] His diary is primarily filled with nostalgia for his comrades, and his file includes a twenty-page narrative he wrote in 1933 about his return to France to visit cemeteries and old sites where he served. The "graves of our comrades" moved him to reflect on his great experiences in the war, and he expressed a desire to ensure that their memory was not in vain by joining the National Socialist party and following "the word of the Führer and our new Germany."[54] For Heinrich T., the next war promised a community of comradeship that he had been longing for since 1918.

Politicized Masculinities: Categorizing and Controlling Manliness

The war had altered how acceptable it was for men to show their emotions. The new masculine paradigm that incorporated an emotionally sensitive, nurturing man who could show affection for his most reliable base of support, his comrades, became widely accepted across political lines after the war. This image of comradeship that integrated "feminine" and "masculine" traits can be found in interwar imagery of both the political right and left. For example, National Socialist notions of comradeship affirmed emotional bonding between men as a masculine ideal. In his 1919 memoir, *Jaws of Death—The German Soul in the World War*, Franz Schauwecker, a key figure in constructing notions of comradeship that influenced Nazi ideologues and their images of masculinity, stressed that ideal comrades showed empathy, tenderness, devotion, and love to other men. Schauwecker's glorification of "womanly" emotions had nothing to do with improving relationships between men and women; he was exclusively focused on promoting male bonding and affirming emotions between men in the idealized all-male community.[55] The political left, including the Social Democratic and Communist Parties, also adopted "comradeship" in their images of masculinity. The left idealized men who applied the bonds of comradeship discovered in the trenches in their postwar work for working-class emancipation.[56] Though the "new man" who emerged from the trenches was widely seen as an emotional being, competing political groups were deeply divided over the boundaries for acceptable affection, love, and weakness. The boundaries between strictly emotional versus physical expressions of "comradeship" would cause considerable anxiety, especially for the political right.

To illustrate how left- and right-wing activists attempted to define and control a new masculine image in the wake of the war, two sites of debate will be examined. First, competing political interpretations of "war hysteria" and the memory of the war revealed the political left and right's divergence over acceptable emotional responses to the war experience. Second, the public scandal over Nazi Stormtrooper Ernst Röhm highlighted tensions over boundaries between emotional and physical affection under the blanket of "comradeship."

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, they celebrated veterans as the "core" of the new national community.[57] However, there was a particular group of veterans whose emotional and psychological response to combat was deemed a threat to this national community. As of 1933, there were still 16,000 veterans diagnosed with mental illness, or "war hysteria," who had been recognized by the Weimar Republic as legitimate war victims and thus were eligible to earn pensions as war disabled. Building on conservative medical and political assumptions about these men, the Nazi regime saw "war hysterics" as unmanly shirkers and malingerers whose symptoms stemmed from congenital illness

rather than war-induced wounds.[58] In the eyes of Nazi leaders, these men failed to endure the key test of manhood: the psychological stress of combat. Further, they had failed to muster the willpower after the war to overcome their traumatic past. The alleged "effeminate" emotions of weakness and dependency displayed by these men were seen as incompatible with comradeship, even its more feminine, nurturing side. Symptoms of "war hysteria" were like a litany of "deviant" male emotions: chronic depression, uncontrollable anxiety, and overfixation on traumatic memories all reflected an image of a passive male that the Nazis tried to eradicate.[59]

The Nazi regime began an assault on these men first by expunging them in 1934 from pension rolls and revoking their status as war victims. Mentally traumatized veterans were treated as contagious social outsiders who would infect the national body with their hereditary defects. In demonizing "war hysterics," the newly established National Socialist War Victims Association (*Nationalsozialistische Kriegsopferversorgung*, NSKOV) focused their attacks on the emotional weakness of these men who threatened the martial image of the idealized soldier and the front community. Writing for the NSKOV's newspaper in 1934, one Nazi doctor at the University of Cologne described mentally ill veterans as "weak-nerved," selfish "egoists" who complained endlessly and tried to gain attention with "theatrical" crying fits and bouts of depression.[60] Dr. H. Koetzle from Stuttgart condemned the "pacifist" Weimar Republic for catering to psychopaths, "asocials," and whiners who simply wanted to shirk their duties to be productive members of society.[61] These "hysterical" men were thus perceived as an affront to the Nazis' officially sanctioned myth of the war experience and the basic premise of comradeship, which dictated that the empathy and support received from comrades, combined with strength of will and ability to sacrifice individual desires for the fatherland, should be sufficient to cope with the mental trials of combat. Symptoms of psychological breakdown were the wrong kinds of emotions for men who were supposed to be emboldened by war. After classifying "war hysterics" as "hereditarily ill" rather than as authentic war victims, the Nazi regime targeted these men for murder in the T-4 "Euthanasia" program, in which thousands of veterans of 1914–18 were killed as burdens on the nation.[62]

The Nazi persecution of mentally ill veterans was a renunciation of the Social Democratic Party's (SPD's) alleged coddling of "effeminate" war hysterics in the Weimar Republic. SPD activists during the Weimar years defended mentally traumatized veterans as legitimate war victims whose psychological breakdown was normal in the face of mass violence. In contrast to the political right, the political left, though deeply divided, deemphasized war as a prerequisite for masculinity. Similar to the right-wing memory of "comradeship" as an acceptable form of emotional bonding between men, left-wing activists affirmed soldierly

virtues of affection and empathy. But unlike their right-wing counterparts, the left, especially Social Democratic activists, argued that mentally traumatized men should be respected as legitimate victims whose emotional responses to combat were perfectly natural. Front veterans writing for the National Association of War Disabled (*Reichsbund der Kriegsbeschädigten*), Germany's largest war victim organization with more than 600,000 members, which was endorsed by the SPD, described mentally shattered veterans as empathetic symbols of war's destructive effects.[63] The nation was responsible for healing these men, and as one SPD leader observed in 1930, amid the sweeping pension cuts in the wake of the Great Depression, the real "weak nerves" could be found in the public's refusal to acknowledge the devastating effects of war on the minds of front soldiers.[64]

In contrast to right-wing veterans like Franz Schauwecker, SPD advocates saw the emotions of veterans not as superior, exclusive forms of male bonding but as essentially similar to the emotional experiences of women who endured total war. Women activists in the National Association for War Disabled compared the psychological wounds suffered by men at the front to women stressed by economic crisis and shortages on the home front. The "nervous breakdowns" suffered by women, SPD activist Martha Harnoß argued, ultimately united them with men who broke down in combat.[65] However, the SPD's attempt to build solidarity between men traumatized in war and women who suffered psychological privations on the home front ultimately failed in the wake of the party's failure to protect pensions amid chronic trimming of budgets. In addition, men resented the conflation of their psychological wounds with the suffering of women, whose experiences they saw as secondary in comparison to the anguish suffered in the trenches.[66]

The debate over traumatic neurosis highlighted the differences between acceptable and "deviant" emotions in veterans. "Feminine" emotions of empathy, compassion, and nurturing feelings for a fellow comrade were encouraged as part of "comradeship," while "effeminate" emotions of depression, fixation on traumatic memories, and complaining about one's economic decline were deemed abhorrent. This delicate balancing act over acceptable emotions is reflected in the political left's sometimes contradictory memories of the war as a brutalizing versus heroic experience, and left-wing imagery wavered between celebrations of martial masculinity and pacifist ideology. The Social Democratic–oriented *Reichsbund* and the left-wing paramilitary group *Der Reichsbanner* officially promoted antiwar politics but at the same time embraced images of "comradeship" that celebrated militant, warrior images of masculinity. This tension can be seen particularly in the left's culture of commemoration of the war, which espoused pacifist rhetoric and imagery but also appropriated nationalistic and militaristic constructions of masculinity.[67]

There was a thin line between acceptable and deviant emotions. While the image of the "effeminate" homosexual was an easily recognizable countertype before the war, the boundary between close comradeship and homosexual love seemed to blur in the interwar years. One of the most well-known publicly played-out controversies over emotions, masculinity, and the soldierly image can be found in the media uproar over the homosexual *Sturmabteilung* (SA Stormtrooper) leader and front veteran Ernst Röhm, a key figure in the Nazi party and one of Hitler's closest confidantes. A recipient of the Iron Cross first class who was wounded in the chest while fighting at Verdun in 1916, Röhm seemed the total antithesis of the effeminate homosexual stereotype, and the Nazis celebrated him as an embodiment of the soldierly ideal of martial masculinity. However, Röhm intimated to a doctor in 1924 that he finally recognized his homosexuality after experiencing same-sex feelings since his youth and during the war. Though Röhm did not deny his homosexuality publicly, his life was carefully compartmentalized, separating family members (who did not accept his sexuality), political colleagues (who were ambivalent at best), and his circle of homosexual friends.[68]

During the Weimar years, Röhm lived a balancing act between his role as a Nazi street brawler, where he basked in the comradeship of an all-male militarized community, and his sexual desires, which were condemned by his own party as abnormal and a threat to the Nazi racial ideal. For the Nazis, homosexuals were a threat to Germany's reproductive capabilities and racial health, and Nazi ideologues advocated an aggressive policy of promoting reproduction that conformed to their vision of a racially fit society. Feminists and homosexuals represented "Jewish" degeneracy in the eyes of Nazi leadership.[69] Röhm became a member of the most politically diverse homosexual rights organization, the League of Human Rights (BfM), in 1929. He was drawn to the organization because of their opposition to the state's criminalization of what he saw as innate human drives. While he shared the BfM's condemnation of antisodomy laws, Röhm's views on women and sexual politics were much more closely aligned to the right-wing homosexual organization led by Adolf Brand, the Community of the Self-Owned (GdE), as Röhm argued that women should be restricted to family and reproduction while men maintained their dominance in public life as virile, masculine defenders of the nation.[70]

Röhm was obsessed with the memory of the war experience and the image of the front fighter, which he saw as an antidote to a hollow façade of bourgeois society. In his autobiography, Röhm did not explicitly refer to his homosexuality, but in a thinly disguised critique of Paragraph 175 he referred broadly to allowing men to pursue their own "natural instincts," his desire to remove the "mask," and the tragic suicides of misunderstood and oppressed youth who were treated as criminals.[71] In this section of his memoir, Röhm wrote that

combat helped him to realize that the defenders of morality were the real criminals who had no stomach for war, the definitive testing ground that defined a man's worth:

> One is not so surprised to come across a clique of *völkisch* literary people. Most of them never served in the field and experienced the war from a "safe haven." The battle for "culture" and "morality" is far and away more comfortable and less dangerous than the murderous battlefield, where from time to time one can get shot at. Apart from that it looks good! The soldier turns away from this kind of false morality in disgust. What mattered to me in the field was not whether a soldier measured up to society's morals, but only whether he was a dependable man or not.
>
> An immoral man who achieves something is far more acceptable to me than a "morally upright" fellow who accomplishes nothing [. . .] If the state thinks it can regulate human instincts or divert them along other channels by the force of law that seems to me so amateurish and inappropriate that it does not surprise me to find that the lawmakers of this state are also the defenders of the social order.[72]

For Röhm, those who tried to uphold what he called "false morality" had not survived the test of battle and thus had no authority to control or set standards for behavior. The real men, in his view, were the masculine front fighters who emerged from the trenches, regardless of their sexual desires, and their experiences enabled them to transcend hypocritical bourgeois society.

Röhm's sexual orientation became part of a public debate in the months after the Nazi party made rapid electoral gains in the wake of the Great Depression. The scandal over Röhm highlighted conflicts between Weimar's competing political organizations over privacy and sexual orientation, as well as the acceptable lines between the comradely ideal and sexual deviance. Röhm's political enemies, in particular the Social Democrats, used his homosexuality as a lightning rod to denounce his moral character. The scandal over Röhm was fanned by the left-wing press during the election battles in 1931–32. In March 1932, the SPD's *Vorwärts* published an article about a young SA man corrupted by the homosexual leader of the Stormtroopers. The socialist *Münchener Post* had already published in 1931 an anonymous letter from a former Nazi who accused Röhm of being homosexual, and several lawsuits against Röhm made his homosexuality public knowledge.[73]

The Röhm case revealed that even the political left was still divided over whether one could actually be both a virile front fighter and a homosexual. While they shared the SPD's disdain for Röhm and the Nazis' antidemocratic agenda, the liberal-progressive homosexual organization WhK and the more moderate BfM, the organization to which Röhm paid membership dues,

defended Röhm's personal character, arguing that he was a victim of prejudice and hypocrisy, and that his sexual orientation should be a private matter that had no bearing on his moral qualifications for leadership. Friedrich Radszuweit, founder of the BfM, chastised what he saw as the Social Democratic Party's hypocritical homophobic motives. Radszuweit pointed to Röhm's status as a veteran as evidence that he was entitled to being treated as any other member of society, regardless of his sexual orientation. Radszuweit stressed that the party should be consistent in its commitment to treating homosexuality as a private issue, and he called on the left to confine its critiques to the Nazi party's political agenda. The Nazis' disdain for human rights, Radszuweit argued, including the rights of Jews and homosexuals, should be the focus of the left's critique of Hitler, not the Nazi party leaders' sexual orientations or hypocrisies.[74] BfM activist Paul Weber reminded the SPD of its long-standing commitment to decriminalizing homosexuality and noted that the SPD's leadership and rank and file consisted of numerous patriotic, upstanding homosexuals who were loyal to the SPD and its ongoing fight against Paragraph 175.[75]

After admonishing the SPD, Friedrich Radszuweit turned his attention to criticize the Nazi party's hatred of homosexuals. Radszuweit mocked Hitler's reference to homosexuality as a "Jewish pestilence" and suggested that because Hitler was "not very well informed about sexual matters [. . .] such a big political party should have a sexual science advisor."[76] After reviewing the history of homosexuality and pointing to the numerous examples of prominent homosexual warriors and cultural figures in history, including Frederick the Great, Radszuweit admonished Hitler for his antihomosexual rantings and for ignoring the reality of homosexuality in the ranks of the Nazi party. Röhm's connection to Hitler as an old comrade and political fighter must have run deep, Radszuweit speculated, for Hitler to have defended Röhm's character against homophobic critics. Referring to the role played by men like Röhm in the war, Radszuweit emphasized that homosexuals "have performed great things for their *Volk* and for their countries."[77] The presence of loyal party comrades in the Nazi movement, another BfM activist carefully pointed out, should be a lesson to the Nazis that homosexuals were productive members of society: "One should take note that the National Socialists have learned something from this scandal: that homosexuals are also capable and decent people who can be useful, and that these men are entitled to the same existence as so-called 'normal' citizens."[78] "Comradeship" and warrior values, according to BfM activists, were not the exclusive terrain of heterosexuals or the political far right.

For the nationalistic homosexual rights advocate Adolf Brand, Röhm's crossing the line from "comradeship" to physical love was entirely acceptable, even symbolic of Röhm's superiority as an emotionally liberated front fighter who remained uncorrupted by weak women. Brand used the Röhm case as a forum

for attacking what he saw as the bourgeois hypocrisy that infected the leadership of the left. When the SPD-leaning *Münchener Post* and *Vorwärts* reveled in reports that Röhm was a homosexual and fanned the flames of scandal, Adolf Brand charged to Röhm's defense. Röhm's case was a "textbook example" of how "petty bourgeois prejudices" dominated parliamentary politics. Empathizing with Röhm as a "victim," Brand expressed admiration for what he called Röhm's dedication as a fighter for the cause of homosexuals' struggle for recognition as normal members of society. Brand called on "decent and freedom-loving men" of all political parties, including the National Socialists, to give up their hypocritical obsession with the sexual morals of political leaders. Sexual orientation, Brand argued, was a "private thing" (*Privatsache*) that should not distract from the national debate and the goal of resurrecting the nation.[79] After 1933, the Nazis did not take Brand's views as a "private matter," and they banned all homosexual publications, including those of the GdE. Interestingly, as the Nazis escalated violence against homosexuals, the staunchly nationalistic war veteran Brand, who was actually married to a nurse he met in the Great War, was spared attack and likely protected by a Nazi confidant. Brand died in an Allied bombing raid in 1945.[80]

The Nazis were willing to incorporate some feminine characteristics into their notions of martial masculinity and comradeship, but they vehemently denied any suggestions of homosexual bonding in the memory of the front experience. Paradoxically, Röhm's case reflects the way in which veterans could embody the acceptable emotions inscribed in "comradeship," even if they crossed the line into taboo physical relationships. When Röhm came under fire in the 1931–32 scandals, Hitler frequently praised the Stormtrooper's masculine virtues, evidenced by his street-fighting skills and status as a veteran.[81] Nazi leaders could maintain a kind of cognitive dissonance as they compartmentalized Röhm's very pronounced martial masculinity and soldierly traits while ignoring rumors that his bonding with other men was not entirely within the boundaries of sanctioned comradeship. The public scandal over Röhm's homosexuality brought attention to the conundrum of distinguishing between "comradeship" and "friendship," the euphemism used by homosexual organizations for homosexual feelings and behavior. The fact that Röhm, such a pillar of steel-nerved, hardened warrior masculinity, could be both a good comrade and a "friend" perplexed those who imagined a dichotomy between the two. The war experience seemed to have rendered obsolete the notion of this strict bifurcation between emotional and sexual expressions of love between men.

Conclusion

The "spirit of 1914," which promised loyalty and bonding between men and women engaged in mutual sacrifice for the nation's survival, had eroded dramatically by 1918. As German men returned home at the end of the war, they faced a populace who feared them and perceived them as sexually pathological and emotionally damaged. Meanwhile, the image that men nourished of the domestic paradise while they endured the trenches collided with the reality of a shattered German society. With the male experience privileged over women's experiences at war, the patriarchal order remained intact after 1918. But if men assumed they would rediscover prewar psychological and emotional structures, or hoped that they could find comfort in a safe domestic time capsule, the real or imagined prewar world no longer existed unscathed.

Feeling isolated and disoriented by the chaotic social, political, and economic landscape of the immediate postwar years, many men longed for the emotional connection that had nurtured and sustained them while in the trenches—comradeship. The same men who had complained in their wartime letters about how lonely and detached they felt from their comrades sentimentalized after the war for the companionship of male friends and idealized emotional bonds that ostensibly existed at the front. Although it became the building block for reasserting a sense of martial masculinity and patriarchal dominance, "comradeship" held diverse meanings that complicated masculine norms and conflicted with the hegemonic image imposed in 1914. Both sides of the political spectrum tolerated and even encouraged the integration of "feminine" emotions into the comradely ideal. However, there was growing anxiety about whether comrades concealed deviant emotions, which included psychological weakness, a fixation on the traumatic experiences of the front, and depression over the haunting memories of the war. Replacing absent or ignorant women, comrades were expected to appropriate feminine feelings of compassion and emotional support to help their fellow front fighters make the transition home. However, "feminine" emotions of weakness and "hysteria" were condemned. This component of prewar hegemonic masculine ideals, remaining stoic in the face of fire, remained a key component of postwar masculinity.

The fine line between acceptable feminine emotions and deviant gender transgression stirred uneasiness about the image of the good comrade. Even the political left was apprehensive about emotional affection spilling over into physical affection between men, as the SPD's rhetoric about the personal life of their political enemy, Ernst Röhm, revealed. For the Nazis, Röhm's case presented a real dilemma for their prescribed notions of comradeship and masculinity. The infamous SA Stormtrooper perfectly fit the Nazis' image of martial masculinity; the steel-nerved ex-front fighter who saw violence as a religion

defined their soldierly ideal. Though the Nazis modified the 1914 warrior ideal to include love between comrades, their perception of a physical dimension of love between men as deviant remained consistent with prewar prejudices, which the Nazis would actually intensify as they expanded Paragraph 175 after 1933. The law was amended to include not only "blatant homosexual lovemaking" but also "the criminalization of every indecency between men," which was meant to include any form of suspicious touching and even licentious looks.[82] Feelings of "comradeship," though they signaled a new dimension to the masculine ideal since 1914, had to be carefully defined and controlled to ensure that men displayed only the emotions necessary to remain courageous warriors for the nation. Men perceived as self-indulgent, weak, and susceptible to individual desires, even if they had fought in the war, crossed from being acceptably "feminine" to hysterical and "effeminate" enemies of the nation.

Conclusion

To what degree was the hegemonic masculine image of 1914 actually hegemonic? Studies of masculinity that focus on military, medical, and political elites tend to locate dominant images of masculinity defined against clearly identifiable countertypes, including effeminate men. However, the dominant masculine ideal of the disciplined, self-sacrificing, sexually restrained front soldier had only limited appeal for men at the front. Though there was indeed a ubiquitous image of the "steel-nerved" front veteran that pervaded mass media in imperial Germany, the hegemonic warrior ideal was not universally accepted. Men at the front modified masculine norms to better reflect the reality of the trench experience. Their experiences in the trenches caused many to perceive the emotionally and sexually restrained warrior ideal as impractical or even inhumane in the context of frontline violence. Intense stress and dislocation tested the 1914 masculine image, and front soldiers had to reconstruct masculinity in a way that made sense in this unimaginable, terrifying environment.

Instead of emphasizing a dominant masculine ideal, it would be more useful and accurate for historians to investigate spectrums of masculinity. From the perspectives of ordinary men, there was a broad range of acceptable masculine traits, and soldiers' definitions of the masculine ideal were flexible. Front soldiers actively negotiated masculine norms set by military and medical elites, and their definitions of masculinity reflected subjective experiences and interpretations of what constituted a "good comrade." Individual conceptions of masculinity often eluded ideological concerns and fixed categories, making it difficult for historians to capture how men perceived themselves and prevailing norms.[1] Nevertheless, it is possible to reconstruct diverse masculinities through soldiers' narratives, which reflected a wide range of interpretations of the warrior ideal.

Front newspapers reflected how men embraced, often simultaneously, competing masculine images. Men definitely saw themselves as heroic, self-sacrificing, "good comrades," as historians have demonstrated.[2] But soldiers also used humor in trench newspapers to mock the suffocating heroic image, which dictated that they suppress their emotional needs and sexual desires. What had

once been defined as feminine, including expressions of emotion and vulnerability, seemed normal in the otherworldly trench universe. One of the most profound effects of the war can be found in how it altered the way men perceived and experienced emotions. The hegemonic warrior ideal may have been revered in front newspapers, especially those edited by army staff, and letters from the front. But in these same media, especially soldier-edited trench newspapers and letters written after men experienced trench warfare, soldiers expressed different attitudes about "feminine" and "weak" emotions. Even if they propped up the image of the stoic, tough, self-controlled warrior, they also desired emotional support, and they confessed feelings of fear, isolation, and the need for love. As men wavered between traditionally "masculine" and "feminine" emotions, they still considered themselves to be fulfilling their loyalty to the fatherland and the warrior ideal. They could be simultaneously tough and vulnerable, self-controlled enough to keep fighting but also honest with their feelings of fear and vulnerability, without betraying their duty to the nation.

Letters from the front also reveal a broad spectrum of masculinities. Historians should avoid identifying a common denominator or "authentic" masculine ideal, as men presented different images of themselves to different audiences. While some were comfortable with revealing vulnerability and fear to women at home, others did not confide their emotions to their wives and girlfriends. The experiential divide between home and combat fronts indeed put a widening gulf between men and women, and both populations nurtured resentments about the exceptional burdens they carried to survive. However, men did not just resent, as historians have shown in a number of national contexts, the alleged comforts enjoyed by women at home.[3] Some also envied and longed to adopt the "feminine" emotions that allowed a temporary escape from the "masculine" realities of war. Letters from the front became a haven where many men let down their masculine guard and tried to escape into a world characterized by fantasies of love and tenderness that removed them psychologically from the trenches. Not all men found emotional bonds with other men, the promise of "comradeship," to be adequate compensation for wartime stress. They tried, often desperately, to maintain close emotional ties with women at home, hoping to receive the love and affection that they needed to endure the front experience. Even if the experiential divide made it difficult for them to communicate with or relate to women, many continued to try to share their emotional turmoil.

Postwar constructions of the war experience offer an often distorted picture of the ways in which the war affected relations between men and women. Narratives from both the political right, including memoirs disseminated by veterans in the nationalistic *Freikorps* (*Free Corps*) and the *Stahlhelm* (*Steel Helmet*), as well as antiwar literature embraced by the political left, including

Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* or Ludwig Renn's *War*, portrayed men as increasingly estranged from women and more emotionally bonded with other men who shared their experience. However, wartime letters indicate that many men grew closer to women and even emotionally dependent on them. Letters by German soldiers reinforce scholarship dealing with British soldiers' letters, which reveal that even in the cases of men who felt they could not describe the horrors of war to loved ones at home, many still considered women to be their primary emotional connection.[4] They often intimated in *Feldpostbriefe* that they could confide in their wives and girlfriends feelings that they could not share with other men. Army newspapers and trench newspapers offered a wide range of depictions of women, from idealized, madonna-like nurses and mothers to objects of derision who were at best aloof to the stresses endured by men. However, letters often revealed much more nuanced perceptions of women as three-dimensional beings with whom men could intimate fear, love, and vulnerability as the war broke down their sense of security and their masculine image.

Historians have debated whether or not the war resulted in a breakdown or reinforcement of patriarchal power. On one hand, historians have pointed to the ways in which Germany's state and military apparatus intervened in private life, replacing the authority of fathers and eroding patriarchal control.[5] More recently, historians have developed a more nuanced approach, analyzing the paradox of a breakdown of male dominance, evidenced by the physical and psychological trauma of war that left many men economically dependent on women, and postwar reassertion of male control through the reconstruction of a hypermasculine, militarized patriarchal ideal that became the cornerstone of right-wing ideology and visions of national recovery.[6] Further, in terms of how men still perceived women as second-class citizens, and the ways in which men privileged their own experiences as more important in their memories of the war, the prewar gender order had remained largely unchanged.[7]

Despite the reassertion of patriarchal dominance, the war marked a subtle shift in how men perceived certain characteristics that had once been condemned as "feminine" and threatening to the male ideal. "Feminine" emotions like compassion and nurturing were elevated to the status of being essential to male survival in the face of mass violence, while "toughness" and emotional restraint were often derided as unrealistic and even suffocating. As insecurities and mutual resentment gradually drove a wedge between many men and women and intensified immediately after the war, men celebrated "softer" emotions as superior when they were shared between men who were privileged to have experienced the sacred war experience. The war did not result in emotional "leveling," where men acknowledged women's emotions as equal. Instead, men perceived a hierarchy in which they elevated their own emotions, even those

that were perceived as "weak" before the war, to a level of superiority as part of the reconstituted memory of a soldierly ideal, which often sterilized the brutal reality of the front experience.[8]

For men who felt that the psychological and physical effects of the war could only be understood by other men, they felt more comfortable intimating their powerful emotions to their male comrades. However, "comradeship" was not a fixed, monolithic concept. There were different forms of comradeship embraced by men at the front. In postwar memories of comradeship, veterans fused "feminine" traits of nurturing and compassion with "masculine" images of steel-nerved, tough soldiers ready to sacrifice themselves for the fatherland.[9] But their constructions of comradeship concealed more complex, diverse perceptions about male friendships that grew out of the war. Men became disillusioned with elements of the warrior ideal that emphasized self-sacrifice, as many felt entitled to pursue individual desires and pleasures, whether emotional or sexual, to compensate for the stressful war experience.

"Comradeship" thus needs to be defined subjectively by historians, with sensitivity to different interpretations of male bonding at the front. Officially prescribed notions of comradeship did not necessarily reflect how ordinary men defined comradeship or perceived their relationships with other men. Postwar constructions of comradeship set distinct boundaries concerning acceptable emotions between comrades. But when looking at evidence produced by ordinary men during the war, emotional bonds between men were much more complex and elusive. Instead of merely mimicking or integrating feminine traits, some men also fantasized about temporarily escaping male gender roles. They explored fantasies of becoming women on an emotional level, whether through cross-dressing or humor and entertainment that allowed a safe space for imagining that they possessed feminine emotional characteristics.

Ironically, men who imagined themselves as women actually reinforced the masculine–feminine dichotomy. On one hand, they constructed a fantasy that blended masculine and feminine characteristics in celebrating being both "good comrades" and "nurturing women." Although this might have suggested notions of an intermediary sex, these men created instead an imagined universe where they could temporarily live a fantasy of becoming women in order to alleviate the stress of being male. Instead of breaking down normative gender dichotomies, men played out stereotypical female roles in the otherwise all-male trench environment. These oscillations between "masculine" and "feminine" were temporary responses to the stress of war left out of postwar narratives on comradeship, but they reveal the degree to which the war tested men's abilities to adhere to strict gender norms.

The war also provoked a sexual crisis that poses challenges for historians, because the causes and nature of this crisis were constructed differently by

soldiers and civilians, whose experiences diverged over the course of the war. The hegemonic masculine ideal promoted an image of a sexually abstinent soldier who channeled his sexual energies into fighting for the fatherland. However, stress, dislocation from traditional social structures, and opportunities for sexual adventure meant that men sought and found new sexual experiences.[10] From the perspective of military and medical authorities, under pressure from civilian morality organizations, the threat to military fitness posed by the venereal disease epidemic was the core of the sexual crisis. The military walked a fine line as they attempted to contain this crisis by managing sexual behavior and regulating prostitution while at the same time controlling the home front's perception that just behind the combat front soldiers enjoyed a sexual Babylon in occupied territories.

The sexual crisis had another dimension: men were perceived by civilians to be not only physically damaged by VD but also morally damaged by the brutalizing effects of the war. While the war was supposed to heal men weakened by the "degenerate" prewar atmosphere, the war seemed to have the opposite effect—it turned some men into sexually depraved beings who unleashed sexual violence on women and children at home. Doctors tried to control this crisis by characterizing soldiers who committed rape on the home front as hereditarily or chronically degenerate men, but court records and psychiatric reports reveal fears that the war actually damaged otherwise normal men, and that the violence experienced at the front was spilling over into the home front through sexually brutalized soldiers who could not control their violent urges.

From the perspective of ordinary soldiers, the sexual crisis, and in turn the crisis of masculinity, was the failure of the heroic, self-sacrificing, abstinent ideal. Men expressed desires for not only emotional outlets but also sexual relief to alleviate the stress of war. Instead of repressing sexual desires, they saw these desires as a counterpoint to the strain of war, and many men felt entitled to sexual debauchery. Few discussed their sexual experiences and attitudes about sexuality in letters home. Many reassured love ones that they remained celibate and they condemned "foreign girls" for tempting German men. But a small number revealed in frank terms an interesting change in their perceptions about male sexuality. Interestingly, even men who had once embraced the puritanical image and condemned unbridled sexual licentiousness explained in letters home that the war had changed their thinking about sexual behavior. Even when front soldiers expressed disapproval of the bordellos, it was mainly because they resented the alleged comfort enjoyed by reserve troops who were closer to the houses of ill repute. They argued that men, especially those who faced death every day at the front, should be able to choose for themselves whether they would visit the brothels. They begrudged the burden of the heroic image that dictated

abstinence and asserted that men should have individual autonomy over their sexual behavior.

The war did not generate new gender identities or sexual behavior. Rather, it gave men space to experiment with and explore identities and behaviors. Sexual experiences and perceptions in wartime were extremely complex. While it is almost impossible to uncover the actual sexual practices of men at the front, the evidence does allow us to reconstruct how they *perceived* sexual behavior. Similar to the broad spectrum of how they perceived emotions in war, some felt the war had cut off their sexual instincts, while others expressed that the war invigorated their libido and inspired them to experiment. Trench newspapers reveal that men were fascinated with behaviors that transgressed dominant ideals, whether it was sexual promiscuity, to which many men felt entitled, or dissatisfaction with socially sanctioned sexual pleasures with wives at home. Sexual humor revealed weariness with both, as the alleged delights of promiscuous sex with Belgian and French women seemed hollow and the idealized image of the loyal housewife patiently waiting to reward her national hero, so prevalent in the official army newspaper, appeared as an object to be disdained, mocked, or mistrusted in trench newspapers. Accepted and prescribed sexual behaviors no longer seemed adequate in the chaotic universe in the trenches. Men expressed different views of how the war affected sexual norms, but there was a common denominator in that men began to perceive transgressive behaviors and emotions differently as a result of the war experience.

Perhaps the most dramatic emotional and sexual consequence of the war was the degree to which it made homosocial bonds between men accepted in the topsy-turvy universe of the trenches. Soldiers' perceptions of "effeminate" traits and "deviant" sexual behaviors changed during the course of the war, giving a path for innately homosexual men to assert their desires and behaviors as more acceptable in mainstream culture. Postwar attempts, especially by the Nazis, to recast homosocial and homosexual bonds as "deviant" suggest that changing perceptions brought on by the war were only temporary, or illusory. However, homosexual men believed that during the war they enjoyed greater respect from comrades within the environment of the trenches. As emotional bonds became more acceptable between men in the trenches, homosexual soldiers found a space in which their desires, condemned before the war as abnormal, could become more normalized and tolerated.

Histories of homosexuality in Germany, focusing primarily on pre-1914 origins of the gay rights movement, the "golden years" of gay culture under Weimar, and the persecution of homosexual men under National Socialism, have largely ignored 1914–18. This is problematic, because the war had a profound impact on not only the homosexual emancipation movement but also how homosexual men perceived the nature of homosexuality and masculinity.

The most influential figure in the early twentieth-century homosexual rights movement, Magnus Hirschfeld, theorized that homosexual men were a "third sex" that possessed essentially feminine characteristics. The war, he argued, gave homosexual men the opportunity to demonstrate their patriotism and abilities as defenders of the nation and an all-male environment in which homosexual men could earn tolerance and respect that would provide ammunition for the movement to dismantle Paragraph 175, the antisodomy law. Under the guise of "comradeship," which Hirschfeld observed had different emotional and erotic dimensions, homosexual men could assert their natural desires. However, though he respected the bravery of homosexual soldiers, and recognized that they possessed the masculine traits needed to be good fighters, he maintained that homosexual men were biologically different based on their essentially feminine nature. Interestingly, it was this very mixture of "feminine" and "masculine" traits, according to Hirschfeld, that potentially made the "third sex" such ideal soldiers. They could be tough fighters but also loving and compassionate, embodying in a single being the characteristics needed to survive in the trenches.

Hirschfeld's political significance as a leading proponent of homosexual rights continued after the war, but the homosexual rights movement, though unified in their opposition to Paragraph 175, was fractured over the nature and image of homosexual men. While Hirschfeld maintained the notion that homosexual men were an intermediary, partly effeminate, gender, many homosexual veterans saw this image as playing into the stereotypes held by a homophobic mainstream culture. The image of the hypermasculine, elite warrior galvanized homosexual veterans, who appropriated this ideal and applied it their vision of a militant movement that fought for civil rights and the dismantling of Paragraph 175. Homosexual veterans even made the case that male–male desire was more suited for war than heterosexual love, as homosexual men did not have to cope with separation from the feminine world. For the right-wing, nationalistic leader of the Community of the Self-Owned (GdE), Adolf Brand, this image of the elite, steel-nerved soldier was consistent with the GdE's prewar vision of superior, Spartan-like warriors who spearheaded a new patriarchal order. But for veterans allied with the more popular politically progressive and moderate organizations, this celebration of the masculine warrior represented a shift in how they conceptualized homosexual identity and culture. Ironically, this shift toward a more "masculine" image meant that homosexual activists, at least these veterans who embraced steel-helmeted masculinity, aligned themselves closely with a mainstream, even pre-1914 vision of the hegemonic ideal.

Like their heterosexual comrades who incorporated "feminine" traits, but not "effeminate" traits, of nurturing and love into their definition of comradeship, homosexual activists across the political spectrum celebrated a version of

masculinity that propped up a masculine ideal, modified with newly acceptable "feminine" emotions. However, the boundaries between acceptable emotional bonds and taboo expressions of physical affection still divided the increasingly politicized yet fragmented *Frontgemeinschaft* (front community) as it defined itself and the memory of the war in the interwar period. Prewar anxieties about "deviant" emotions and behaviors echoed in debates over whether "war hysterics," with their allegedly selfish inability to overcome the psychological stress of the sacred war experience, were "real men." Homosexual men were also perceived after the war as crossing the fine boundaries between acceptable versus deviant comrades. Though the proven, battle-scarred front fighter like Nazi Stormtrooper Ernst Röhm embodied the ideals of comradeship that had been elevated to cult-like status by right-wing ideologues like Franz Schauwecker of the *Stahlhelm* (*Steel Helmet*), ideologues in Röhm's own party could not accept comradeship with a physically erotic dimension. The nation's warriors could express some "feminine" emotions that reinforced their fighting spirit in war, but they could not cross into a zone defined as "effeminate" and a threat to the militarized male image and the racial health of the nation, which became the central organizing principle behind gender policies for the National Socialist regime.[11]

Postwar battles over masculinity highlight the anxieties and debates over the "new man" who emerged from the trenches. Especially in the wake of defeat, which many civilians blamed partly on soldiers caving in to individual desires and abandoning the spirit of self-sacrifice, rehabilitating damaged masculinity was equated with resuscitating the damaged nation. Political groups mobilized, through literature, commemorations, and rituals, to reconstruct an image of the self-sacrificing front fighter that would serve the political agenda of not only the right but also the left, albeit with competing meanings emphasizing either "heroism" or "victimization."[12] However, these post-1918 debates over manliness also concealed the complex and apparently contradictory ways in which men perceived masculinity in the otherworldly environment of Europe's central trauma: industrialized slaughter in the trenches.

It is crucial for historians to concentrate on how men in the war itself perceived masculine ideals, *before* postwar ideologues tried to plane down the alleged inconsistencies and complexities of wartime manliness. Indeed, sources produced between 1914 and 1918 are fraught with similar problems as postwar sources. Both reveal how men tried to present an image of themselves to various audiences, whether women at home or political constituencies, and this image building did not always reflect the complex reality of how the war had changed them. But the images that men presented through their letters home and in trench newspapers highlighted often contradictory, turbulent, inconsistent, and thus perhaps more reliable images and perceptions of masculinity than

what is found in postwar sources. Even if postwar sources indicate, from both sides of the political spectrum, that there was a resuscitation of hegemonic masculine ideals, sources produced during the war suggest that soldiers' perceptions of masculinity were much more diverse and nuanced.

As men returned home, memories of discordant and inexplicable behaviors that perhaps made sense in the bizarre universe of the trenches were gradually eclipsed by postwar ideological and social pressures. Postwar literature like Erich Maria Remarque's *The Road Back*, the sequel to *All Quiet on the Western Front* that chronicles the return home of trench survivors, reveals how impossible it was for men to explain, not only to family at home, but even to each other, the impact of the war experience. In the novel, the experience of comradeship that sustained men emotionally in the trenches seems to evaporate in the political and social tensions that reemerge after the war, but men are still nostalgic for what they perceive as the close bonds that existed at the front. Floundering and disillusioned in the postwar world, the novel's main character, Ernst, laments, "We had death too long for a companion; he was a swift player and every second the stakes touched the limit. It is this that has made us so fickle, so impatient, so bent upon the things of the moment; that now leaves us so empty, because here it has no place. And this emptiness makes us restless; we feel that people do not understand us, that mere love cannot help us. For there is an unbridged gulf fixed between soldiers and non-soldiers. We must fend for ourselves."[13] The war damaged these men and made them incapable of finding comfort in "mere love" after the war. Bizarrely, the trench experience had both numbed and stimulated their emotional lives. Unable to explain how they carved out a space for intimacy and tenderness within the brutality of the trench experience, whether with other men or with women, the 1914–18 generation struggled to assimilate their wartime emotional experiences with an alien postwar landscape. Like an addiction, they longed for that temporary and extraordinary world that heightened and perhaps deepened their emotions, where they felt intense love as an antidote to unfathomable pain and fear. The emotions and sense of intimacy they experienced at the front altered these men. But they struggled to explain these new emotions through the lens of dominant masculine ideals and the pressures of strict categories of masculinity that seemed increasingly obsolete in the wake of modern industrialized war.

Notes

Introduction

1. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 18 October 1914, Kriegsbriefe 353, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv-Kriegsarchiv Munich (henceforth BHAK).
2. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 25 May 1915, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
3. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 26 June 1915, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
4. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 25 September 1915, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
5. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 6 February 1916, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
6. A note in his file indicates that his letters from summer 1917 into 1918 are missing. But he survived until at least July 1918, based on a Stempel in his identification papers that are included in the file.
7. Bernd Hüppauf, "Langemarck, Verdun and the Myth of the New Man in Germany after the First World War," *War and Society* 6:2 (September 1988), 70–103.
8. Hegemonic conceptions of masculinity in modern European history, constructed in opposition to "countertypes," have been extensively analyzed. See, for example, George L. Mosse's *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); on dominant images of militarized masculinity, see Ute Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society* (New York: Berg, 2004), 170–99.
9. On the history of militarization in German society and its impact on constructions of masculinity, see Karen Hagemann, "Of 'Manly Valor' and 'German Honor': Nation, War and Masculinity in the Age of the Prussian Uprising against Napoleon," *Central European History*, 30:2 (1997), 187–220.
10. This approach is consistent with recent theoretical approaches inspired by sociologists and cultural historians: see John Tosh, "The History of Masculinity: An Outdated Concept?" in John H. Arnold and Sean Brody, eds., *What Is Masculinity? Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 17–34. Pioneer gender historians also stressed the importance of gender roles in practice, rather than just theory: see Joan Scott, "Rewriting History," in Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, and Margaret Collins Weitz, eds., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 19–30; and Margaret Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet, "The Double Helix," in *Behind the Lines*, 31–50.
11. On the dichotomy between discourse and experience that has shaped gender history since the "linguistic turn," see Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice:*

Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class and Citizenship (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 101–20.

12. Ute Planert, "Zwischen Alltag, Mentalität und Erinnerungskultur: Erfahrungsgeschichte an der Schwelle zum nationalen Zeitalter," in Nikolaus Buschmann and Horst Carl, eds., *Die Erfahrung des Krieges: Erfahrungsgeschichtliche Perspectiven von der Französischen Revolution bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001), 51–66. Scholarship on the experiences of war disabled has been particularly vital: see Sabine Kienitz, "'Fleischgewordenes Elend': Kriegsinvalidität und Körperbilder als Teil einer Erfahrungsgeschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges," in Nikolaus Buschmann and Horst Carl, eds., *Die Erfahrung des Krieges*, 215–38.
13. This book uses front newspapers collected at the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg (BAMF), which holds an extensive and diverse collection of issues. There were more than one hundred front newspapers published on the Western and Eastern fronts.
14. Robert L. Nelson, *German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
15. Anne Lipp, *Meinungslenkung im Krieg—Kriegserfahrungen deutscher Soldaten und ihre Deutung, 1914–1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2002), 273–75.
16. Lipp, *Meinungslenkung im Krieg*, 27–30; see also Nelson, *German Soldier Newspapers*, chapter 1. For further background on the newspapers, albeit published for propaganda purposes after 1933, see Karl Kurth, *Die deutschen Feld- und Schützengrabenzeitungen des Weltkrieges* (Leipzig: Robert Noske, 1937). For comparison to French trench newspapers, see Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War 1914–1918: National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War* (Oxford: Berg, 1992).
17. Lipp, 36–38.
18. Nelson, *German Soldier Newspapers*, 45–46.
19. Letters were found in Feldpostbriefe (letters from the front) and Nachlässe (estate) collections at the Bavarian Main Regional Archive-War Archive (Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv-Kriegsarchiv) in Munich, the Federal Archive-Military Archive (Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv) in Freiburg, the Special Collection from the World Wars at the Württemberg Regional Library (Sondersammlung Zeit der Weltkriege, Württembergische Landesbibliothek) in Stuttgart, and the Main Regional Archive Baden-Württemberg (Hauptstaatsarchiv Baden-Württemberg) in Stuttgart.
20. For an overview of different approaches to and problems with *Feldpost* analysis, see Bernd Ulrich, *Die Augenzeugen-Deutsche Feldpostbriefe in Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit, 1914–1933* (Essen: Klartext, 1997), 12–36.
21. This crucial issue is addressed by Benjamin Ziemann, though he also shows how useful case studies of particular social groups can be in *War Experiences in Rural Germany, 1914–1923* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), first published as *Front und Heimat: Ländliche Kriegsfahrungen im südlichen Bayern, 1914–1923* (Essen: Klartext, 1997).

22. Benjamin Ziemann, "Geschlechterbeziehungen in deutschen Feldpostbriefen des Ersten Weltkrieges," in Christa Hämmerle and Edith Sauerer, eds., *Briefkulturen und ihr Geschlecht—Zur Geschichte der privaten Korrespondenz vom 16. Jahrhundert bis heute* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2003), 261–65; see also Margit Sturm, "Lebenszeichen und Liebesbeweise aus dem Ersten Weltkrieg," in *Briefkulturen und ihr Geschlecht*, 237–60; and Christa Hämmerle, "'. . . wirf ihnen alles hin und schau, daß du fort kommst.' Die Feldpost eines Paares in der Geschlechter(un)ordnung des Ersten Weltkrieges," *Historische Anthropologie. Kultur-Gesellschaft-Alltag*, 6:3 (1998), 431–58.
23. Ulrich, *Die Augenzeugen*, 40.
24. Ibid., 40, 78.
25. A classic example of this is Witkop's collection of *German Student War Letters*, which was edited and reorganized during the war and in the interwar period to promote the "spirit of August 1914." See Philipp Witkop, ed., *Kriegsbriefe gefallener Studenten* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1928), for the English edition, see *German Student War Letters*, translated by A. F. Wedd (London: Methuen, 1929).
26. Jay Winter emphasizes the diversity of voices in German soldiers' letters in his introduction to *German Soldiers in the Great War: Letters and Eyewitness Accounts*, Bernd Ulrich and Benjamin Ziemann, eds. (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2010), 3. On postwar "myths of the war experience," see George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
27. Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the 20th Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 104. Winter offers an excellent analysis of how German soldiers' letters were used and edited to promote different cultural agendas.
28. Ziemann, "Geschlechterbeziehungen in deutschen Feldpostbriefen des Ersten Weltkrieges," 265. British soldiers also did not feel too restricted by censorship of letters—see Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 16.
29. For comparative analysis of the semantics and symbolism in British and German soldiers' letters, see Aribert Reimann, *Der grosse Krieg der Sprachen: Untersuchungen zur historischen Semantik in Deutschland und England zur Zeit des ersten Weltkriegs* (Essen: Klartext, 2000). On the importance of soldiers' letters in British culture, see Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: Bodley Head, 1990).
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Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

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9. Abschrift, Deutsche Zentrale für Jugendfürsorge to Kon. Bayerische Kriegs-Ministerium, 3 January 1915 [the date given on the form is "3. Januar 1914," but this is an error based on the Stempel giving by the K.B. Kriegs-Ministerium, which dates the document as 1915], Min. Kr., Bd. V/10103, BHAK.
10. Ibid.
11. On rapes committed by German soldiers in France and how they were reported in the press, see Ruth Harris, "The 'Child of the Barbarian': Rape, Race and Nationalism in France during the First World War," *Past & Present*, 141:1 (November 1993), 170–206.
12. Tanja Hommen, "'Sie hat sich nicht im Geringsten gewehrt.' Zur Kontinuität kultureller Deutungsmuster sexueller Gewalt seit dem Kaiserreich," in Christine Künzel, ed., *Unzucht, Notzucht, Vergewaltigung. Definitionen und Deutungen sexueller Gewalt von der Aufklärung bis heute* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2003), 130. See also Tanja Hommen, *Sittlichkeitsverbrechen. Sexuelle Gewalt im Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1999). Edward Ross Dickinson provides an insightful analysis of sexual tensions in imperial Germany, and the significance of Hommen's work, in "'A Dark, Impenetrable Wall of Complete Incomprehension': The Impossibility of Heterosexual Love in Imperial Germany," *Central European History*, 40:3 (2007), 470–95.
13. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, translated by James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961). For an in-depth analysis of psychoanalysts' responses to war neurosis, see Paul Lerner, *Hysterical Men: War Psychiatry and the Politics of Trauma, 1890–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 175–85.
14. Magnus Hirschfeld, *The Sexual History of the World War*, 30.
15. On Gaupp's role in medical debates over the origins of "war hysteria," see Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, chapter 3.
16. Report by Dr. Robert Gaupp, Direktor der K. Nervenklinik, Case file of Otto G., M79/1 Bü 11/54, Militärstrafverfahren, HSAS. The record does not cite the girl's specific age but only notes that she was "underage."
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Kgl. Württ. Gericht, 52. Inf.-Brig., Abt. III, Ludwigsburg, 20 March 1916, Case file of Otto G. M79/1 Bü 11/54, Militärstrafverfahren, HSAS.
20. Judges' report to the Reservelazarett VII Nervenstation Stuttgart, 25 January 1918, Case of Eduard F. M83/79, Militärstrafverfahren, HSAS.

21. Letter from Dr. Koschella, Reserve-Kazarett VII Stuttgart, Nervenstation Stuttgart, 23 April 1918, Case of Eduard F. M83/79, Militärstrafverfahren, HSAS.
22. Ibid.
23. Judges' report to the Reservelazarett VII Nervenstation Stuttgart, 25 January 1918, Case of Eduard F. M83/79, Militärstrafverfahren, HSAS. Eduard F. was released under a general military amnesty in November 1918 by soldiers' councils according to a 13 November 1918 document in this file.
24. Oberstabsarzt (name illegible) report to the Kgl. Württ Gericht desLandwehrinspektion, 10 June 1915, Case of Johann K., M83/Bü 97, Militärstrafverfahren, HSAS.
25. Judges' report, 28 September 1918, case of Franz B., M83/60, Militärstrafverfahren, HSAS.
26. Judges' report, Case of Heinrich B., Mil. Ger. 6790, BHAK.
27. Judges' report, 10 May 1917, Case of Eugen H., M78/Bü 110, Militärstrafverfahren, HSAS.
28. Judges' report, Gerichtsherrn der Landwehr-Inspektion Stuttgart, 3 October 1916, Case of Karl V. M79/Bü 183 Militärstrafverfahren, HSAS.
29. Judges' report, Gerichtsherrn der Landwehr-Inspektion Stuttgart, 11 September 1917, Case of French POW Emile F., M83/75, Militärstrafverfahren, HSAS.
30. Florence Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe*, vol. 2 (New York: Algora, 2004), 285. Tamagne includes the text of Paragraph 175 as well as the draft legislation, which did not gain approval in the Reichstag, to amend or change the law in the years before 1933.
31. Judges' report, Case of Konrad G., 1916, M79/Bü 11/48, Militärstrafverfahren, HSAS.
32. Judges' report, 1915 [precise date not given], Case of Friedrich S., M79/Bü 11/126, Militärstrafverfahren, HSAS.
33. Oeffentliche Sitzung des Feldkrieges Gerichts der k. 2. Division, Peronne, 30 December 1914, includes testimonies of eyewitnesses and accused, Case of Friedrich V., Mil. Ger./ 6466, BHAK. The witness testified that when they came upon Friedrich V., he told his buddy, "Ich glaube der vögelt das Pferd."
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. On the extensive medical debates over whether "war neurosis" originated in hereditary traits or the traumatic environment of the war, see Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, especially chapter 3.
37. Paul Plaut, "Psychographie des Kriegers," in Paul Plaut, Walter Ludwig, and E. Schiche, eds., *Beiträge zur Psychologie des Krieges* (Leipzig: Verlag von Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1920), 34, 46–47.
38. Ibid., 110–18. For a critical analysis of Plaut's methodology, see Bernd Ulrich, *Die Augenzeugen—Deutsche Feldpostbriefe in Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit, 1914–1933* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1997), 298–301. For more on the context of Plaut's work within debates over war neurosis, see Jason Crouthamel, *The Great War and German Memory: Society, Politics and Psychological Trauma* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 62–85.

39. On the sense of fatalism and emotional numbness reported by many soldiers in Plaut's study, see Alex Watson, "Self-Deception and Survival: Mental Coping Strategies on the Western Front, 1914–18," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41:2 (2006), 251.
40. Plaut, *Psychographie des Kriegers*, 102–3.
41. Ibid.
42. Ulrich, *Die Augenzeugen*, 189–90.
43. Letter from Hannes M., 2 December 1916, Kriegsbriefe 344, BHAK.
44. Letter from Hannes M., 23 November 1916 and 2 December 1916, Kriegsbriefe 344, BHAK.
45. Watson, "Self-Deception and Survival: Mental Coping Strategies on the Western Front, 1914–1918," 247–68.
46. Letter from Hans K., 16 August 1916, Kriegsbriefe 346/4, BHAK.
47. Letter from WB to Johann V., 2 July 1917, P10 Bü 1727, HSAS.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Letter from WB to Johann V., 12 July 1917, P10 Bü 172, HSAS.
51. Ibid. He closes: "Ich bleibe in Liebe—ihr ergebenes WB."
52. Report on Axel F., A Pr.Br. Rep. 030–02–05, Nr. 58, Stapo Ins. VII., Landesarchiv Berlin (henceborth LAB). Thanks to Daniel Brandl-Beck at the University of Queensland in Australia for making these police files from the Landesarchiv available to me. For his work on the gay emancipation movement and commercial culture in the Weimar and Nazi eras, see Daniel Brandl-Beck, "'Berlin from Behind': A History of 'Gay' Travel to Inter-War Berlin," PhD diss., University of Queensland, forthcoming.
53. Ibid.
54. Report on Fritz H. A Pr. Br. Rep. 030–02–05 Nr. 116, Stapo Ins. VII., LAB.
55. Report on Karl L. A Pr. Br. Rep. 030–02–05 Nr. 529, Stapo Ins. VII., Berlin, 21 July 1936, LAB.
56. Ibid.
57. Report on Albert H., A Pr. Br. Rep. 030–02–05 Nr. 125, Stapo C 3, Berlin, 27 November 1939, LAB.
58. Kühne, *Kameradschaft*, 62–67.

Chapter 3

1. Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks*, 183.
2. This attempt by men to continue to assert control over the domestic sphere can also be found in the case of British soldiers' letters. See Jessica Meyer, *Men of War*, 15–16.
3. See, for example, Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare* (New York: Basic, 2000).
4. This can be compared to British soldiers who, despite the powerful bonds of comradeship with men in the trenches, often found their primary emotional support from women. See Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War*, xi. For a fascinating case study of a French couple's war letters,

which also illustrates mutual emotional support, see Martha Hanna, *Your Death Would Be Mine: Paul and Marie Pireaud in the Great War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

5. "Zahle Gut," a series of cartoons in *Die Sappe*, 21 November 1915, PHD 12/45, BAMF.
6. Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany*, 117–18.
7. Letter from POW Alfred G. to his girlfriend Claire H, 28 February 1918, M750, Nr. 3, HSAS. Alfred's writing style is in a clipped, grammatically tortured state that has been translated with the goal of making it more readable.
8. Ibid.
9. Letter from Joseph S. to his wife, 14 November 1915, M750, Nr. 3, HSAS.
10. Ibid.
11. Letter from Wilhelm S. to his wife, 2 March 1917, M660/040, HSAS.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Poem by Wilhelm S.'s wife, undated, included in his file, M660/040, HSAS.
16. Ibid.
17. Letter from Carl G. to his parents, 25 August 1914, M660/85, Nr. 3, HSAS.
18. Letter from Carl G. to his parents, 3 September 1914, M660/85, Nr. 3, HSAS.
19. Letter from Hans W. to his parents, 5 April 1916, MSG 2/18171, BAMF.
20. Letter from Hans W. to his parents, 4 November 1917, MSG 2/18172, BAMF.
21. Letter from Arthur M. to his wife Therese, 12 November 1914, Bd. 370, Sondersammlung Zeit der Weltkriege, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart (henceforth WLS).
22. Letter from Arthur M. to his wife Therese, 15 November 1915, Bd. 370, WLS.
23. Letter from Friedrich B. to his wife, 2 November 1918, MSG 2/4739, BAMF.
24. Ibid.
25. Letter from Fritz S. to his wife, 12 November 1917, MSG 2/2324, BAMF.
26. Letters from Fritz S. to his wife, 11 and 12 November 1917, MSG 2/2324, BAMF.
27. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 18 October 1914, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
28. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 20 March 1915, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
29. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 25 May 1915, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
30. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 23 June 1915, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
31. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 26 June 1915, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
32. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 25 September 1915, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
33. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 9 July 1915, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
34. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 6 February 1916, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
35. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 6 December 1916, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
36. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 29 April 1917, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
37. Letter from Hannes M. to his wife Laura, 23 November 1916, Kriegsbriefe 344, BHAK.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.

40. Letter from Hannes M. to his wife Laura, 2 December 1916, Kriegsbriefe 344, BHAK.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Letter from Hannes M. to his wife Laura, 23 November 1916, Kriegsbriefe 344, BHAK.
44. Wilhelm K. diary entry [sometime between 22 and 25 August—his brother Helmut's postwar transcription is not clear] August 1916, M660/129, Nr. 1, HSAS.
45. Wilhelm K. letter to his brother Helmut, 25 August 1916, M660/129, Nr. 1, HSAS.
46. Wilhelm K. letter to Marie, 10 November 1916, M660/129, Nr. 1, HSAS.
47. Helmut K's notation before he transcribes a letter from Wilhelm, 25 August 1916, M660/129, Nr. 1, HSAS.
48. Letter from Otto L. to Berbel L, 15. November 1914, M660/147, Nr. 1–5, HSAS.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Letter from Otto L. to Berbel L, 20 January 1915, M660/147, Nr. 1–5, HSAS.
52. Hämmerle, "'You Let A Weeping Woman Call You Home?' Private Correspondences during the First World War in Austria and Germany," in Rebecca Earle, ed., *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600–1945* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 1999), 176.
53. Letter from Felix F. to his wife, Maria F., 18 October 1914, MSG 2/15022, BAMF.
54. Letter from Felix F. to his wife, 2 January 1916, MSG 2/15024, BAMF.
55. Letters from Felix F. to his wife, 3 January and 5 January 1916, MSG 2/15024, BAMF.
56. See, for example, letter from Felix F. to his wife, 25 February 1917, MSG 2/15025, BAMF.
57. Letter from Felix F. to his wife, 25 February 1917, MSG 2/15025, BAMF.
58. Letter from Felix F. to his wife, 25 February 1917, MSG 2/15025, BAMF.
59. Letter from Felix F. to his wife, 3 June 1917, MSG 2/15026, BAMF.
60. Letter from Felix F. to his wife, 5 January 1916, MSG 2/15024, BAMF.
61. Letter from Felix F. to his wife, 13 February 1918, MSG 2/15028, BAMF.
62. Letter from Felix F. to his wife, 6 March 1918, MSG 2/15028, BAMF.
63. Letter from Felix F. to his wife, 13 February 1918, MSG 2/15028, BAMF.
64. Letter from Felix F. to his wife, 14 March 1918, MSG 2/15028, BAMF.
65. Ibid.
66. Letter from Felix F. to his wife, 20 October 1918, MSG 2/15028, BAMF.
67. Letter from Felix F. to his wife, 5 December 1918, MSG 2/15028, BAMF.
68. Letter from Rudolf V. to his wife, Julie, 16 August 1914, MSG 2/2901, BAMF.
69. Letter from Rudolf V. to his wife, Julie, September 1914 (no exact date given), MSG 2/2901 BAMF. Rudolf V.'s letters are grammatically tortured. Run-on sentences have been given periods to make them more readable.
70. Letter from Rudolf V. to his wife, Julie, 4 August 1914, MSG 2/2901, BAMF.

71. Letter from Rudolf V. to his wife, Julie, 30 August 1914, MSG 2/2901, BAMF.
72. Letter from Rudolf V. to his wife, Julie, September 1914 (no specific date on the card), MSG 2/2901, BAMF.
73. Letter from Rudolf V. to his wife, Julie, 17 October 1914, MSG 2/2901, BAMF.
74. Letter from Rudolf V. to his wife, Julie, the handwritten pamphlets were included in 28 October 1914 letter, MSG 2/2901, BAMF.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid. This bundle of letters and essays is the last in his file.
77. Letter from Hermann D. to Ida, 7 September 1914, Bd. 5, WLS.
78. Letter from Hermann D. to Ida, 30 September 1914, Bd. 5, WLS.
79. Ibid. The original quote is a bit challenging to translate: "Du must nämlich nicht denken, dass das Männerwurde [sic] andauernd im Gange ist."
80. Letter from Hermann D. to Ida, 4 October 1914, Bd. 5, WLS.
81. Letter from Hermann D. to Ida, 11 October 1914, Bd. 5, WLS.
82. Ibid.
83. Letter from Hermann D. to Ida, 14 November 1914, Bd. 5, WLS.
84. Ibid.
85. Letter from Hermann D. to Ida, 3 March 1915, Bd. 5, WLS.
86. Letter from Hermann D. to Ida, 26 April 1915, Bd. 5, WLS.
87. Ibid.
88. *Unteroffizier*, often translated as "noncommissioned officer," was a term that included a broad category of lower ranks, including corporals and sergeants.
89. Letter from Hermann D. to Ida, 2 August 1915, Bd. 5, WLS.
90. Hermann D.'s last letter in this file was from April 1916. It is not clear whether he survived the war.
91. Letter from Fritz N. to Hildegard's father, 18 January 1917, Bd. 65, WLS.
92. Letter from Fritz N. to Hildegard, 10 February1917, Bd. 65, WLS.
93. Letter from Fritz N. to Hildegard, 23 April 1917, Bd. 65, WLS.
94. Letter from Fritz N. to Hildegard, 24 April 1917, Bd. 65, WLS.
95. Letter from Fritz N. to Hildegard, 20 April 1917, Bd. 65, WLS.
96. Letter from Fritz N. to Hildegard, 30 April 1917, Bd. 65, WLS.
97. Letter from Hildegard to Fritz N., 23 January 1918, Bd. 65, WLS.
98. Letter from Hildegard to Fritz N., 28 January 1918, Bd. 65, WLS.
99. See, for example, 9 February and 18 February 1918 letters from Fritz to Hilde—where he professes his love in a kind of stream of consciousness, Bd. 65, WLS.
100. Letter from Fritz N. to Hildegard, 11 March 1918, Bd. 66, WLS.
101. Letter from Hildegard to Fritz N, 30 May 1918, Bd. 66, WLS.
102. Letter from Hildegard to Fritz N., 1 February 1918, Bd. 66, WLS.
103. Letters from Hildegard to Fritz N., 24 and 25 March 1918, Bd. 66, WLS.
104. Letter from Hildegard to Fritz N., 10 August 1918, Bd. 66, WLS.
105. See, for example, her letter of October 1918 (no specific date given), Bd. 66, WLS.
106. The file indicates that Fritz N. lived until 1974, and Hildegard lived until 1982, Bd. 65, WLS.
107. Letter from Carl G. to his parents, 20 September 1914, M660/85, Nr. 3, HSAS.
108. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 6 June 1915, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.

109. Letter from Kurt K. to Lotte F., 15 July 1915, Kriegsbriefe 353, BHAK.
110. Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany*, 123.
111. This resentment of the "Etappenschweine" was particularly prevalent in media produced by left-wing organizations during and after the war. See Benjamin Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations: Republican War Veterans and Weimar Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 44–49.
112. Letter from Gottlieb H. (undated), pages 47–48, M660/119, Nr. 1, HSAS. It is not clear whether this was a letter or diary by Gottlieb H. The source in this Nachlass file is typed, probably postwar, and presented as a kind of memoir by him.
113. Ibid.
114. Letter from Hermann B. to his parents, 4 July 1917, MSG 2/18075, BAMF. Since 1916—see letter from 5 December 1916 in MSG 2/18074—he expressed fears that he was being censored, but his frank letters do not contain evidence of official censorship.
115. Letter from Hermann B. to his parents, 16 July and 8 August 1917, MSG 2/18075, BAMF.
116. Letter from Hermann B. to his parents, 29 November 1917, MSG 2/18075, BAMF.
117. Letter from Ernst to August S., 8 November 1917, MSG 2/19075, BAMF.
118. Letter from Ernst to August S., 8 November 1917, MSG 2/19075, BAMF. Ernst's letters to August throughout this file are filled with self-referential jokes and cryptic allusions. The original quote used here from the 8 November 1917 letter: "Bewahre Dir ja um 'Ihret willen.' Deine alte Jugend—Rosen-Farbe—Ärgere Dich nicht, dem 1. gibt das graue Haar und zweitens wird dadurch aus dem Hunde Dreck doch kein Schokoloden-Pudding!!" Thanks to Daniel Brandl-Beck at the University of Queensland for his expertise and generous help in translating this passage.
119. Letter from Hans W. to his sister, 17 May 1916, MSG 2/18171, BAMF.
120. Ibid.
121. Letter from Carl G. to his parents, 17 June 1917, M660/85, Nr. 3, HSAS.
122. Ibid.
123. Letter from Carl G. to his parents, 30 July 1917, M660/85, Nr. 3, HSAS.
124. Letter from Carl G. to his parents, 23 September 1917, M660/85, Nr. 3, HSAS.
125. Letters from Carl G. to his parents, 28 March and 14 April 1918, M660/85, Nr. 3, HSAS.
126. Letter from Carl G. to his parents, 10 September 1918, M660/85, Nr. 3, HSAS.
127. Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Vol. 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, translated by Stephen Conway (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

Chapter 4

1. On constructions of the "good comrade" versus the "other," see Robert L. Nelson, *German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War*, especially chapters 3 and 4.
2. Herzog, ed., *Brutality and Desire*, 5 (Herzog's introduction).

3. Thomas Kühne, "'. . . aus diesem Krieg werden nicht nur harte Männer heimkehren'—Kriegskameradschaft und Männlichkeit im 20. Jahrhundert," 174–91.
4. From Philip Witkop, ed., *German Students' War Letters*, forward by Jay Winter (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002 [1928]), 280.
5. Showalter, "Rivers and Sassoon: The Inscription of Male Gender Anxieties," 64.
6. Doris Kaufmann, "Science as Cultural Practice in the First World War and Weimar Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34:1 (January 1999), 125; on statistics for psychiatric patients in the regular army, see Robert Whalen, *Bitter Wounds: German Victims of the Great War, 1914–39* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 53.
7. On doctors' attempts to diagnose and treat "war hysteria," see Paul Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, chapter 3.
8. On the attempts of war neurotics to find social acceptance and economic integration, see Jason Crouthamel, *The Great War and German Memory: Society, Politics and Psychological Trauma, 1914–1945* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2009), chapters 1 and 2.
9. "Galerie berühmter Streitgenossen II," *Der kleine Brummer*, Nr. 3, Jahrgang II, 1915 and "Galerie berühmter Streitgenossen III," *Der kleine Brummer*, Nr. 4, Jahrgang II, 1915, PHD 12/57, BAMF.
10. Unteroffizier Henning, "Pflicht und Liebe," in *Scharfschützen-Warte*, Nr. 29, 4. April 1918, 365–367, PHD 12/49, *Soldatenzeitungen* collection, BAMF.
11. Ibid.
12. Crouthamel, *The Great War and German Memory*, 49.
13. Erich Kuttner, "Der 'Mann'," *Der Flieger*, Nr. 45, 14 October 1917, PHD18/6, BAMF.
14. Ibid.
15. The motif of the steel helmet as a fetishized symbol of martial masculinity is explored in the classic study by Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*.
16. "Der Stahlhelm," a cartoon in *Der Flieger*, Nr. 35, 2. Jahrgang, 23 June 1918, PHD 18/6, BAMF.
17. "Schein und Wirklichkeit," *Der Flieger*, Nr. 5, 2. Jahrgang, 25 November 1917, PHD 18/6, BAMF.
18. "Der Gute Kamerad," *Der Drahtverhau*, Nr. 5, November 1917, PHD 12/40, BAMF.
19. Ibid.
20. Flieger Beppler, "Ein süßes Verhältnis," *Der Flieger*, Nr. 35, 2. Jahrgang, 23 June 1918, PHD 18/6, BAMF.
21. Paul Göhre, *Wie ein Pfarrer Sozialdemokrat wurde* (Berlin: Vorwarts, 1906).
22. Paul Göhre, "Der Krieg und die Geschlechter," *Der Flieger*, Nr. 2, 2. Jahrgang, 30 December 1917, *Soldatenzeitungen* collection, PHD 18/6. BAMF. During the war, Göhre also published *Front und Heimat: Religiöses, Politisches und Sexuelles aus dem Schützengraben* (Jena: E. Diederichs, 1917).
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid. The unleashing of sexual drives and uncontrollable violence, from a psychoanalytical perspective, was also a major theme of Magnus Hirschfeld's work on

the war. See Hirschfeld's, *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Verlag für Sexualwissenschaft, Schneider, 1930).

25. Göhre, "Der Krieg und die Geschlechter," 2.
26. "Flieger Deckung" [part of series of cartoons], *Die Sappe*, Nr. 4, 21 November 1915, PHD 12/45, BAMF.
27. R. Voth, "Die fünf Bräute" *Kriegszeitung der 4ten Armee,* Nr. 274, 12. August 1917, PHD 8/49. BAMF.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid. The word "erobern" ("to conquer" or "to get hold of") is used in the text.
30. Ibid.
31. "Das spröde Reims," *Der kleine Brummer*, Nr. 2, II Jahrgang, 1915, PHD 12/57. BAMF.
32. "Im Konstantinopal," *Der kleine Brummer*, Nr. 4, Jahrgang 3, 1916, PHD 12/57. BAMF.
33. "Holdes Mariechen," *Der Flieger*, Nr. 16, 10 März 1917, PHD 18/6, BAMF.
34. Ernst Oehrlein, "Die Ersatzfrau," *Kriegszeitung der 4. Armee*, Beilage zu Nr. 349 der Kriegszeitung, 9 Mai 1918, PHD 8/49, BAMF.
35. Ibid.
36. On the ubiquitous "ersatz" economy, see Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany*, 263–75.
37. "Das Quartierbett," cartoon in *Liller Kriegszeitung*, Nr. 46, 14 December 1917, PHD 23/55, BAMF.
38. Richard Hannig, "Humorske—Jannette," *Die Sappe*, Nr. 13, 1 Mai 1916, PHD 12/45. BAMF.
39. Ibid.
40. Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 109–11.
41. Rainer Herrn, *Schnittmuster des Geschlechts—Transvestismus und Transsexualität in der frühen Sexualwissenschaft* (Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2005), 97.
42. "Der Eigenbrödler" is difficult to translate. "Der Eigenbrötler" is slang for a "loner" or a "maverick" (literally "one who bakes one's own bread"). It is used to describe someone who is unconventional. Strangely, the title of the newspaper is spelled slightly differently, with a "d" rather than a "t." It seems to be a "maverick's" play on the slang term. Thanks to Julia Köhne at Humboldt University, Berlin, for her expertise in translating this term.
43. Dr. Kauffmann, "Das kleine Theater des kaiserl. Militär-Genesungsheims Spa," *Der Eigenbrödler—Kriegszeitung für das kaiserl. Genesungsheim Spa*, No. 4, 1 Jahrgang, Okt.-Novemberheft 1917, 7–8, PHD 20/7, BAMF.
44. Ibid. For more on representations of gender transgression in front newspapers, see Jason Crouthamel, "Cross-Dressing for the Fatherland: Sexual Humor, Masculinity and German Soldiers in the First World War," *First World War Studies*, 2:2 (October 2011), 195–215.
45. "Neueste englische Mode," *Liller Kriegszeitung*, 6. Okt. 1917, PHD 23/55, *Soldatenzeitungen*, BAMF.
46. Peter Fritzsche, *A Nation of Fliers: German Aviation and the Popular Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), especially chapter 2.

47. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, "Flying and Killing—Military Masculinity in German Pilot Literature, 1914–1939," in Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, eds., *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 223–24.
48. "Fräulein Flieger," postcard Nr. 5001/1, Postkartenvertrieb W. Sanke, stamped *Feldpost*, 1918. Private collection. The entire Nr. 5001 series of these "Fräulein Flieger" postcards, about 15 different examples, contained various poses by women dressed as male airplane pilots.
49. "Fräulein Leutnant—Was kostet die Welt?," postcard 1035/II, publisher unknown, stamped 28. February 1916. Private collection.
50. "Die Kriegsfrau," postcard, Nr. OS B 1920, sent *Feldpost*, stamped October 25, 1917. Private collection.
51. "Der Waschtag," *Der Drahtverhau*, Nr. 20, 3 Jahrgang, April 1918. PHD 12/40, BAMF.
52. "Die Socken," *Der Drahtverhau*, Nr. 12, 3 Jahrgang, January 27, 1918 (Kaisers Geburtstag). PHD 12/40, BAMF.
53. Untitled cartoon in *Schützengrabenzeitung*, II. Batl. 19, Nr. 8, January 1916. PHD 12/46, BAMF.
54. Utffz. Nitsche, "Wir armen Männer!" *Der Flieger*, Nr. 35, 2. Jahrgang, 23 Juni 1918. PHD 18/6, BAMF. Thanks to Sandra Lustig for astutely identifying Lortzing's opera parodied by Nitsche.
55. Ibid.
56. "Frau Musika," *Scharfschützenwarte*, Nr. 30, 11 April 1918, 386–387. PHD 12/49, BAMF.
57. Magnus Hirschfeld, *The Sexual History of the War* (orig. 1941; Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2006), 131–36.
58. Ibid, 135–36.
59. See Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, "Flying and Killing: Military Masculinity in German Pilot Literature," in *Home/Front*, 205–32.
60. "Im Sommer in Ostende," *Der kleine Brummer*, Jahrgang 3, Heft 6, 1916. PHD 12/57, BAMF.
61. Ibid. Fritz says to Emil, "Emil, hier bett' ick mir erst mal in der Sonne."

Chapter 5

1. This alignment with more hegemonic, "masculine" forms of masculinity can be found in the discourse of the homosexual rights movement even before the war, as homosexual men tried to make themselves more accepted in mainstream culture. See Claudia Bruns, "The Politics of Masculinity in the (Homo-)Sexual Discourse, 1880–1920," in *German History*, 23:3 (July 2005), 306–20.
2. Beachy, "The German Invention of Homosexuality," 803.
3. James Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany* (Salem: Ayer, 1991), 25–31. On Berlin's flourishing gay culture, see Michael Bollé, ed., *Eldorado: Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin, 1850–1950: Geschichte, Alltag, und Kultur* (Berlin: Hentrich, 1984). For more on the criminalization of homosexuality in pre-1914 Germany, see John Fout, "Sexual Politics in

Wilhelmine Germany: The Male Gender Crisis, Moral Purity and Homophobia," in John Fout, ed., *Forbidden History: The State, Society, and the Regulation of Sexuality in Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 259–92.

4. Harry Oosterhuis and Hubert Kennedy, *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 1.
5. Steakley, 35.
6. Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform: 1920–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 16.
7. Oosterhuis and Kennedy, *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany*, 2.
8. Ibid., 14–16. See also Magnus Hirschfeld, *The Homosexuality of Men and Women*, translated by Michael A. Lombardi-Nash (Amherst: Prometheus, 2000), especially chapters 1–3.
9. Glenn Ramsey, "The Rites of Artgenossen: Contesting Homosexual Political Culture in Weimar Germany," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 17:1 (January 2008), 89. The name of Brand's organization is a challenge to translate into English. Though "Community of the Self-Owned" is used most frequently, the phrase more literally means "Community of Those who are Unique," or independent, or belonging to a group apart.
10. Oosterhuis and Kennedy, 2–4.
11. Ramsey, 89, 103.
12. Steakley, 44–46.
13. Oosterhuis and Kennedy, 3.
14. Steakley, 61.
15. Oosterhuis and Kennedy, 17–18.
16. Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks*, 177.
17. Jeffrey Schneider, "Soliciting Fantasies: Knowing and Not Knowing about Male Prostitution by Soldiers in Imperial Germany," in Scott Spector, Helmut Puff, and Dagmar Herzog, eds., *After "The History of Sexuality": German Genealogies with and beyond Foucault* (New York: Berghahn, 2012), 126–29.
18. Ibid., 134–35.
19. Schneider, "Soliciting Fantasies," 128–29.
20. Marcus Funck, "Ready for War? Conceptions of Military Manliness in the Prusso-German Officer Corps before the First World War," 43–68.
21. Robert Beachy, "To Police *and* Protect: The Surveillance of Homosexuality in Imperial Berlin," in Scott Spector, Helmut Puff, and Dagmar Herzog, eds., *After "The History of Sexuality,"* 115–20.
22. Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks*, 177. For an interesting comparison to the experiences of British homosexual men in the Second World War, see Emma Vickers, "'The Good Fellow': Negotiation, Remembrance and Recollection—Homosexuality in the British Armed Forces, 1939–1945," in Herzog, ed., *Brutality and Desire*, 109–35.
23. Case of Georg B., Judges' report, 21 February 1916, M280/Bü 1011, Militärstrafverfahren, HSAS.

24. Ibid. See letter in this file from Robert B. on behalf of his son, 2 June 1916, M280/Bü 1011, HSAS.
25. Ibid. See in this file letter from Gericht der Etappenkommandantur Nr., XIII AK. Tagesliste Nr. 2872, 28. January 1917, M280/Bü 1011, HSAS.
26. On perceptions of male sexuality as inherently coercive and violent, see Tanja Hommen, '"Sie hat sich nicht im Geringsten gewehrt.' Zur Kontinuität kulturel-ler Deutungsmuster sexueller Gewalt seit dem Kaiserreich," 130.
27. Case of Johann R., Militär Gericht 7273, Feldbericht, 21 February 1918, BHAK.
28. Beachy, "The German Invention of Homosexuality," 809.
29. Elena Mancini, *Magnus Hirschfeld and the Quest for Sexual Freedom*: *A History of the First International Sexual Freedom Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 110–13.
30. Jessica Butler, "Patriotism Glorified, Effeminacy Demonized: World War I Representations of Male Homosexuality in Magnus Hirschfeld's 'Aus der Kriegszeit,'" paper presented at the German Studies Association Conference, September 2012.
31. Hirschfeld, ed., *The Sexual History of the War* (translation of the 1941 edition; Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2006), 131.
32. Ibid., 135–36.
33. Magnus Hirschfeld, ed., *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges*, erster Band (Leipzig: Verlag für Sexualwissenschaft, Schneider, 1930), 274.
34. Ibid., 288.
35. Ibid., 296–97.
36. Hirschfeld, *The Sexual History of the War*, 135–36. On widespread anxieties over the normalization of homosexual behavior in the wake of the war, see Jason Crouthamel, "Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma: Soldiers and Sexual Disorder in World War I and Weimar Germany," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 17:1 (January 2008), 60–84.
37. Adolf Brand, "Nacktkultur und Homosexualität—Ein Sittlichkeitsprozeß mit politischem Hintergrunde," *Der Eigene—Zeitschrift für Freundschaft und Freiheit*, Jahrgang VII, Nr. 1, 15 November 1919, 1. Schwules Archiv-Museum Berlin (Henceforth SAB).
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., 3–4.
40. Ibid., 2–3.
41. G. P. Pfeiffer, *Männerheldentum und Kameradenliebe im Krieg: Eine Studie und Materialien-Sammlung* (Berlin: Adolf Brand Kunstverlag, 1925), translated by Hubert Kennedy in Harry Oosterhuis and Hubert Kennedy, eds., *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany* (New York: Harrington Park, 1991), 221.
42. Ibid., 221–23.
43. Ibid., 232.
44. Ibid., 231–32.
45. Ibid., 228.
46. Ibid., 225.

47. Von Matthisson, [no title given to poem], *Die Freundschaft*, 1. Jahrgang, Nr. 14, 1919, 1, SAB.
48. Georg Schöll, "Ruhe Sanft!" *Die Freundschaft*, 1. Jahrgang, Nr. 15, 1919, 2. SAB.
49. Ibid.
50. Ulli Herwig, "Des Eros Opfer," *Die Freundschaft*, 2. Jahrgang, Nr. 4, 1920, 1, SAB.
51. Bruno Vogel, *Alf*, translated by Samuel B. Johnson (East Haven, CT: Inbook, 1992 [1929]), 93–96.
52. H. A. Preiss, *Geschlechtliche Grausamkeiten liebestoller Menschen* (Frankfurt: Süddeutsche Verlaganstalt, 1921), 6.
53. Laurie Marhoefer, "Degeneration, Sexual Freedom and the Politics of the Weimar Republic, 1918–1933," *German Studies Review*, 34:3 (October 2011), 529–49. On the homosexual rights movement's use of the memory of the war to combat homophobia, see "'Comradeship' and 'Friendship': Masculinity and Militarization in Germany's Homosexual Emancipation Movement after the First World War," *Gender & History*, 23:1 (April 2011), 111–29.
54. B. Eden, "Wogegen kämpfen wir?" *Die Freundschaft*, 3. Jahrgang, Nr. 13, 1921, 2. SAB.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., 1–2.
57. Kurt, "Das Lied der Treue," *Die Freundschaft*, III Jahrgang, Nr. 16, 1921, 2. SAB.
58. On the sometimes precarious relationship between the parties of the left and the homosexual emancipation movement, see Manfred Herzer, "Communists, Social Democrats and the Homosexual Movement in the Weimar Republic," in Gert Hekma, Harry Oosterhuis, and James Steakley, eds., *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left* (New York: Harrington Park, 1995), 208–09.
59. Herzer, "Communists, Social Democrats and the Homosexual Movement in the Weimar Republic," 204.
60. Adolf Brand, "Was wir wollen," in *Satzung der Gemeinschaft der Eigenen* (Berlin: Die Gemeinschaft der Eigenen, 1925), translated as "What We Want" in Oosterhuis and Kennedy, 162–63.
61. See Edwin Bab, "Frauenbewegung und männliche Kultur," *Der Eigene*, 1903, and Adolf Brand "Was wir wollen," both found in Oosterhuis and Kennedy, 135–66.
62. The title of Brand's short-lived postwar periodical expresses this opposition to women's economic independence in its title: *Friendship and Freedom: A Pamphlet for Male Rights against Petty Bourgeois Morals, Clerical Dominance and Women's Economics* (*Freundschaft und Freiheit—Ein Blatt für Männerrechte gegen Spießbürgermoral, Pfaffenherrschaft, und Weiberwirtschaft*), herausgeber Adolf Brand, Nr. 8, 24 March 1921. SAB.
63. Claudia Bruns, *Politik des Eros—Der Männerbund in Wissenschaft, Politik und Jugendkultur, 1880–1934* (Köln, Böhlau Verlag, 2008), 388–403.
64. Geoffrey Giles, "The Institutionalization of Homosexual Panic in the Third Reich," in Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus, eds., *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 238.

65. Ibid.
66. Adolf Brand, "Nachtkultur und Homosexualität," Nr. 1, Jahrgang VII, 15 November 1919, 1, SAB.
67. Dr. Eduard von Mayer, "Versailles und der §175—Thesen zur deutschen Katastrophe," *Freundschaft und Freiheit*, Nr. 8, 24 März 1921, 1–3, SAB.
68. Oosterhuis and Kennedy, eds., *Homosexuality and Male-Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany*, 7. See also Plant, *The Pink Triangle*, 46–47.
69. Ramsey, "The Rites of the Artgenossen," 87–89.
70. Ramsey, 96–99.
71. Hans Leu, "Wie steht unsere Sache?" *Die Freundschaft*, Jahrgang 1920, Nr. 5, 1–2. SAB.
72. Grossmann, *Reforming Sex*, 16–17.
73. Ibid., 78–79.
74. Friedrich Radszuweit, "Geheimer Sanitätsrat Dr. Albert Moll über den Sexualforscherkongress," *Das Freundschaftsblatt*, 4. Jahrgang, Nr. 47, 19 November 1926, 2. SAB.
75. On pacifism in the left-wing women's movement, see Regina Braker, "Helene Stöcker's Pacifism in the Weimar Republic: Between Ideal and Reality," *Journal of Women's History*, 13:3 (Autumn 2001), 70–97.
76. Friedrich Radszuweit, "Reichswehr und Homosexualität!" *Das Freundschaftsblatt*, 4. Jahrgang, Nr. 6, 5 February 1926, 1, SAB.
77. Friedrich Radszuweit, "Offener Brief an den Reichswehrminister Herrn Dr. Geßler!" *Das Freundschaftsblatt*, 4. Jahrgang, Nr. 34, 20 August 1926, 1, SAB.
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79. Ibid., 2.
80. Friedrich Radszuweit, "Eingabe des Bundes für Menschenrecht E.V. an Reichspräsidenten von Hindenburg," *Das Freundschaftsblatt*, 4. Jahrgang, Nr. 48, 26 November 1926, 1, SAB.
81. Ibid.
82. A. Lange, "Totensonntag," *Die Freundschaft*, 1. Jahrgang, Nr. 15, 1919, 1. SAB.
83. Max Danielsen, "Mehr Mut—mehr Idealismus," *Die Freundschaft*, 1. Jahrgang, Nr. 18, 1919, 1–2. SAB.
84. Adolf Brand, "Abwehr und Angriff—Gustav Neumann 'Schweinereien' und anderes," *Eros—Zeitschrift für Freundschaft und Freiheit, Liebe und Lebenskunst*, Nr. 3, 1930, 21, SAB.
85. Kurt, "Manneswürde," *Die Freundschaft*, Jahrgang 1920, Nr. 16, 1, SAB.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid., 2.
89. Ibid.

Chapter 6

1. See, for example, Karin Hausen, "Die Sorge der Nation für ihre 'Kriegsopfer': Ein Bereich der Geschlechterpolitik während der Weimarer Republik," in Jürgen

Kocka, ed., *Von der Arbeiterbewegung zum modernen Sozialstaat* (Munich: Sauer Verlag), 1994, 719–40.

2. Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 136.
3. Erika Kuhlman, *Reconstructing Patriarchy after the Great War: Women, Gender and Postwar Reconciliation between Nations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 139–40. On the privileging of the memory of men in combat over the activities of women on the home front, see Karen Hagemann, "Home/Front: The Military, Violence and Gender Relations in the Age of the Two World Wars," in *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany*, 2. While historians long assumed that the war experience made a major contribution to women's emancipation, this has been complicated and brought into question, see Ute Frevert, *Women in German History* (Oxford: Berg, 1990), 151–67. On the reassertion of patriarchal control shortly after the war in France, see Steven C. Hause, "Minerva than Mars: The French Women's Rights Campaign and the First World War," in Margaret Randolph Higonnet, et al, eds., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 99–113.
4. On the widespread "strike" of soldiers at the front in the last months of the war, see Wilhelm Deist, "Verdeckter Militärstreik im Kriegsjahr 1918?" in Wolfram Wette, ed., *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes: Eine Militärgeschichte von unten* (Munich: Piper, 1992), 146–66. On the "stab in the back" legend, see Wilhelm Deist, "Der militärische Zusammenbruch des Kaiserreichs: Zur Realität der 'Dolchstosslegende," in Wilhelm Deist, ed., *Militär, Staat und Gesellschaft—Studien zur preussisch-deutschen Militärgeschichte* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1991), 211–33.
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7. Letter from Mitternachts-Mission Verein zur Fürsorge für die zuziehende männliche Jugend, Hamburg, to Reichspräsident Ebert, 25 Juli 1919, Nr. 51, R1501/111875, Maßregeln gegen Geschlechtskrankheiten, BAB.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. *Denkschrift über die gesundheitlichen Verhältnisse des deutschen Volkes in Jahre 1920/21* (Gedruckt in der Reichsdruckerei, Reichsgesundheitsamt, Berlin, 1922), R1501/109404, Gesundheitliche Schäden der Kriegs und Nachkriegszeit, BAB.
11. Letter from Staatsministerium, Abteilung des Innern, Meiningen to Der Geheimen Registratur des Reichsministeriums des Innern, 2 Dez. 1919, Nr. 188, R1501/111897, Maßregeln gegen Geschlechtskrankheiten, BAB.
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13. Letter from Landesregierung Greiz to the Reichsamt des Innern, 14 February 1919, Nr. 108, R1501/111897, Maßregeln gegen Geschlechtskrankheiten, BAB.
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15. Reichsgesetz zur Bekämpfung des Geschlechtskrankheiten, attached to report from Reichsminister des Innern, 12 November 1919, Nr. 103, R1501/111886, Maßregeln gegen Geschlechtskrankheiten, BAB.
16. Ibid. On similar forms of state intervention in interwar France, see also Peter Baldwin, *Contagion and the State in Europe, 1830–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 467.
17. Letter from the Reichsministerium des Innern, 8 July 1919, Nr. 51, R1501/111886, Maßregeln gegen Geschlechtskrankheiten, BAB.
18. Pamphlet from Der Deutsche Verein für ländliche Wohlfahrts- und Heimatpflege, included in letter from Der Reichsministerium des Innern to the collective Landesregierungen, 4 August 1921, Nr. 51, R1501/111877, Maßregeln gegen Geschlechtskrankheiten, BAB.
19. Report from the General-Stab, Rhein-Armee, Grosse Hauptquartier, 31 May 1921, Nr. 79, R1501/111877, Maßregeln gegen Geschlechtskrankheiten, BAB.
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21. Sandra Maß, *Weiße Helden, schwarze Krieger: Zur Geschichte kolonialer Männlichkeit in Deutschland 1918–1924* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2006), chapter 3.
22. Hans-Georg Baumgarth, *Das Geschlechtsleben im Kriege—Eine Rechtfertigung für viele Unglückliche* (Berlin: Rosen Verlag, 1919), 46–47. For more on postwar debates over sexual breakdown, see Jason Crouthamel, "Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma: Soldiers and Sexual 'Disorder' in World War I and Weimar Germany," in *Journal of History of Sexuality*, 17:1 January 2008, 60–84.
23. Ibid., 47.
24. Ibid.
25. Magnus Hirschfeld, ed., *Sexual-Katastrophen. Bilder aus dem modernen Geschlechts- und Eheleben* (Leipzig: A. H. Payne, 1926), 40–41.
26. Magnus Hirschfeld, *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges*, Zweiter Band (Leipzig: Verlag für Sexualwissenschaft, Schneider, 1930), 506.
27. Fragezettel bei Verhütungsvortäge [no dates given], R3901/8069/1, Institut für Sexualwissenschaft, BAB.
28. Plant, *The Pink Triangle*, 43.
29. "Erziehung und sexuelle Fragen," excerpts from Dr. Schweisheimer's lecture were published in both the *Tägliche Rundschau*, 16 October 1926, and the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, 17 October 1926, R1501/111178, Internationaler Kongress für Sexualforschung, BAB.
30. Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 1, 31–32.
31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., 32–33. In his psychoanalytical approach, Theweleit uses sources from Berthold's contemporaries to argue that his sexual energy was channeled into devotion to the nation and combat, and that his sense of masculinity was "dependent on the status of Germany, *not* on his actual relationship with a woman."
33. Rudolf Berthold, *Tagebuch*, 24 January 1919, 76–77, MSG 1/74, BAMF.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., 81.
36. Ibid.
37. Letter from Harry S. to his parents, 29 December 1917, Harry S. file, WLS.
38. Letter from Harry S. to his parents, 30 December 1918, Harry S. file, WLS.
39. Letter from Harry S. to his parents, 12 December 1919, Harry S. file, WLS.
40. Letter from Lina B. to Jakob B., 17 February 1918, Bd. 7, WLS.
41. Letter from Jakob B. to Lina B., 3 November 1918, Bd. 7, WLS.
42. Letters from Felix F. to his wife, 5 December 1918, MSG 2/15028, BAMF; see also his letters 25 February 1917, and15 March 1918 espousing his sense of loneliness, remoteness from comrades and longing to once again be the head of the household, all of which were analyzed in Chapter 3.
43. Letter from Felix F. to his wife, 5 December 1918, MSG 2/15028, BAMF.
44. Letters from Felix F. to his wife, 11 December 1918, MSG 2/15028, BAMF.
45. Letter from Hermann B. to his parents, 19 December 1918, MSG 2/18076, BAMF.
46. Letter from Hermann B. to his parents, 23 December 1918, MSG 2/18076, BAMF.
47. Ibid.
48. Letter from Hermann B. to his parents, 29 November 1917, MSG 2/18075, BAMF.
49. Heinrich T. Diary, see, for example, pages 41–43 and pages 72–73, MSG 2/1130, BAMF. His diary did not provide precise date headings, but only occasional references to dates.
50. Heinrich T. Diary, p. 45, MSG 2/1130, BAMF.
51. Heinrich T. Diary, pages 83–84, MSG 2/1130, BAMF.
52. Heinrich T. Diary, pages 41–43, MSG 2/1130, BAMF.
53. Heinrich T. Diary, p. 95, MSG 2/1130, BAMF.
54. Heinrich T. Diary, p. 125, MSG 2/1130, BAMF. His file indicates that during WWII he served on the Russian front and was awarded a *Ritterkreuz* (Knight's Cross).
55. For an excellent analysis of Schauwecker's concept of comradeship and "feminine" emotions, see Thomas Kühne, "Comradeship—Gender Confusion and Gender Order in the German Military, 1918–1945," in *Home/Front*, 234–35.
56. Benjamin Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations: Republican War Veterans and Weimar Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), chapter 2.
57. James M. Diehl, *The Thanks of the Fatherland* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 37–39.

58. For an analysis of the Nazi regime's treatment of psychologically disabled veterans of the Great War, see Jason Crouthamel, *The Great War and German Memory*, chapters 5 and 6.
59. Ibid., 159–64. On doctors' attempts to control the image of mentally traumatized war victims, see Julia Barbara Köhne, *Kriegshysteriker: Strategische Bilder und mediale Techniken militärpsychiatrischen Wissens, 1914—1920* (Hamburg: Matthiesen Verlag, 2009).
60. Prof. Dr. Haberland, "Hysterie," *Deutsche Kriegsopferversorgung*, 2. Jahrgang, Folge 6, March 1934, 16–17.
61. Dr. H. Koetzle, "Gedanken zur Reform des Reichsversorgungsrechts," *Deutsche Kriegsopferversorgung*, 2. Jahrgang Folge 1, Berlin, October 1933, 10.
62. Of the more than 150,000 victims of the T-4 program, it is not known exactly how many were veterans of the First World War. Recent research by Philipp Rauh shows that just over 7 percent of a representative sample of patient files were disabled war veterans. See Philipp Rauh, "Von Verdun nach Grafeneck: Die psychisch kranken Veteranen des Ersten Weltkrieges als Opfer der nationalsozialistischen Krankenmordaktion T4," in Babette Quinkert, Philipp Rauh, and Ulrike Winkler, eds., *Krieg und Psychiatrie, 1914–1950* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010), 70.
63. Christoph Pfändner, "Zensurskandal—Der Streit um den Remarqueschen Film, 'Im Westen Nichts Neues'," *Reichsbund—Organ des Reichsbundes der Kriegsbeschädigten, Kriegsteilnehmer und Kriegshinterbliebenen,* Nr. 24, 24 December 1930, 222. See also Max Mühlberger, "Bedeutende Kriegsbücher—Vergleichende Betrachtung nach ihrer Weltanschaulichen Stellung," *Reichsbund—Organ des Reichsbundes der Kriegsbeschädigten, Kriegsteilnehmer und Kriegshinterbliebenen*, Nr. 23, 10 December 1930, 215–16.
64. "Die Liquidierung der inneren Kriegslasten," *Reichsbund*, 25 January 1930.
65. Martha Harnoß, "Zur Heilbehandlung der Kriegerhinterbliebenen," *Reichsbund*, 1 May 1926.
66. For more on the political left's failure to win support from disabled veterans, see Jason Crouthamel, *The Great War and German Memory*, chapter 4; on German disabled veterans' resentments toward the Weimar Republic's pension system, see also Deborah Cohen, *Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 168–70.
67. Benjamin Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations: Republican War Veterans and Weimar Political Culture*, 3–4.
68. Eleanor Hancock, *Ernst Röhm: Hitler's SA Chief of Staff* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 88–89.
69. Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, chapter 6.
70. Ibid., 90. See also Eleanor Hancock, "'Only the Real, the True, the Masculine Held its Value': Ernst Röhm, Masculinity and Male Homosexuality," *Journal of the History of Homosexuality*, 8:4 (1998), 616–41.
71. Ernst Röhm, *The Memoirs of Ernst Röhm*, translated by Geoffrey Brooks, introduction by Eleanor Hancock (London: Frontline, 2012; original 1928, Munich), 170–71.
72. Ibid.

73. Florence Tamagne, *History of Homosexuality*, vol. 1, 288.
74. Friedrich Radszuweit, "Amor in braunen Haus," *Das Freundschaftsblatt*, 9. Jahrgang, Nr. 29, 23 July 1931, 1–2. SAB, see also Radszuweit's, "Huch Hitler," in *Das Freundschaftsblatt*, 9. Jg., Nr. 35, 3 September 1931, 1–2, SAB.
75. Paul Weber, "Erklärung des Parteivorstandes der SPD über Hauptmann Röhm," *Das Freundschaftsblatt*, 10. Jahrgang, Nr. 22, 1 Juni 1932, 1–2, SAB.
76. Friedrich Radszuweit, "Herrn Adolf Hitler, München," 9. Jg., No. 21, 6 August 1931, 1–2. SAB.
77. Ibid.
78. Paul Weber, "Erklärung des Parteivorstandes der SPD über Hauptmann Röhm, an den Bund Für Menschenrechte," *Das Freundschaftsblatt*, 10 Jg., No. 22, 2 Juni 1932, 1–2, SAB.
79. Adolf Brand, "Politische Galgenvogel—Ein Wort zum Fall Röhm," *Eros—Extrapost des Eigenen*, Nr. 2, 1931, 1–3. SAB.
80. Oosterhuis and Kennedy, *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany*, 7.
81. On Röhm's image in the eyes of his Nazi colleagues, see Geoffrey Giles, "The Institutionalization of Homosexual Panic in the Third Reich," in Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus, eds., *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 238–39.
82. Giles, "Homosexual Panic," 240–41.

Conclusion

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M.Kr.Bd. V/10103
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Friedrich V., Mil. Ger. 6466
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Bruno C., MSG 2/5903
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Erich E., MSG 2/14206
Erich W., MSG 2/10759
Ernst H., MSG 2/4101
Eugen K., MSG 2/5254
Felix F., MSG 2/15022–28
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Friedrich B., MSG 2/4739
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Fritz S., MSG 5257
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Georg E., MSG 2/311
Georg G., MSG 2/3600
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Hans A., MSG 2/11952
Hans S., MSG 2/19296–97
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Hermann B., MSG 2/18072–76
Hermann S., MSG 2/10310
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Hermann T., MSG 2/6629
Joseph S., MSG 2/12221
Karl-Ernst S., MSG 2/4427
Karl J., MSG 2/14785–86
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Leo B., MSG 2/19166–72
Michael L., MSG 2/11364
Otto C., MSG 2/13298–13301
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F. Roos, M22/367
Gustav Gruner, M22/366
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Alfred G., M750, Nr. 3
Gerhard [?], M750/1
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Friedrich S., M79/Bü 11/126
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Karl V., M79/Bü 183
Konrad G., 1916, M79/Bü 11/48
Otto G., M79/1 Bü 11/54
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Albert C., M660/316
Carl G., M660/85, Nr. 3
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Karl E., M660/060
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Walter G., M660/087
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Wilhelm S., M660/040
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