



Students, Sex and Politics in Imperial Germany

Konrad H. Jarausch

Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 17, No. 2, Sexuality in History (Apr., 1982),
285-303.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-0094%28198204%2917%3A2%3C285%3ASSAPII%3E2.0.CO%3B2-V>

Journal of Contemporary History is currently published by Sage Publications, Ltd..

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/sageltd.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Konrad H. Jarausch

Students, Sex and Politics in Imperial Germany

Although often linked by scandal, sex and politics appear to be poles apart in historical understanding. The growing literature on the sexual revolution (whenever it is supposed to have occurred) makes little reference to concurrent political developments. Similarly the older discussion of nationalism and the newer debate about illiberalism ignore contemporary sexual practices.¹ Despite psychohistorical attempts to link both spheres in singular individuals, the sexual basis of politics and the political framework of sexuality have rarely been noted, let alone explored. In a brilliant beginning, Michel Foucault recently attacked the myth of modern sexual repression and argued that *le discours sur le sexe* has broadened during the last century. In contrast, G.L. Mosse sees the sexual dimension of the bourgeois anti-bourgeois revolution differently: 'Nationalism not only helped to control sexuality, to re-inforce what society considered normal, but it also provided the means through which changing sexual attitudes could be absorbed and tamed into respectability.'² This conflict of opinion suggests a double question: how did liberal nationalism contribute to the Victorian 'onslaught of respectability?' and how did *völkisch* nationalism interact with the fin de siècle revolt against manners and morals which liberalized sexuality?

German students in the Empire offer an interesting case in point. Although they expanded greatly in numbers and included some of the new lower-middle class, academic youths still largely derived from the bourgeoisie of education, wealth and aspiration. Nationalist professorial instruction as well as corporate subculture dominated by drinking and duelling led to a reversal from the national liberalism to the illiberal nationalism of students after 1870.

At the same time libertinage of the seventeenth century gradually gave way to a more restricted sexuality which idolized a *Scharmante* without touching her and sought to sublimate male energy into *Wissenschaft*. Ironically, it was the liberal *Burschenschaft* which promulgated the 'chastity principle' against the lax morality of the conservative and elitist *Corps*.³ This essay therefore seeks to explore the contradictory connection between the development of student politics and the evolution of youthful sexual mores in three steps: what were Wilhelminian normative prescriptions about morality? How did German students actually behave towards the opposite sex? And what were adult and youthful responses to changing sexual standards and practices?

'The most singular state of social existence to be found in the bosom of civilized Europe' was the freedom of German students which extended not only towards learning but also towards their life-style. After years of cramming and intellectual effort in the *Gymnasium*, a young man escaped parental supervision upon entering a university and 'liberated puberty from years of repression'. The psychologist Max Marcuse saw great dangers and temptations because the rapidity of the transition left the freshman 'on the one hand full of sexual-erotic needs and images, and on the other hand ignorant of the contradictions and paradoxes between what fantasy or desires conjure up and real life demands as well as unenlightened about the most elementary requirements of sexual hygiene and ethics!' This lack of parental preparation (or indeed peer-group initiation) was aggravated by 'the necessity of renouncing for one decade that sexual expression, which under normal conditions must be considered most desirable for state, society and individual, namely marriage'. Because of his lack of economic independence it was 'completely impossible for a student to marry, if he understood the full implications' of this step. The young graduate was not much better off, because the probationary periods for law referendaries, medical interns, teaching trainees and theological candidates (not to mention *Privatdozenten*) postponed financial security and thereby their nubility until the early or mid-thirties. Moreover the 'stronger idealism' of academics and 'their preferred social position' prevented that uncomplicated sexuality found in the lower orders and forced youth to postpone or to transgress. Lack of opportunity reinforced bourgeois respectability in rendering the vaunted *Lebensfreiheit* of students hollow

in sexual respects.⁴

The normative adult solution to this dilemma of biological urge and social prohibition was generally the denunciation of 'sensual brutality' and the appeal: 'Renounce sexual relations!' In the cautionary literature, which treated the problem as 'a dark area... a disease which in the form of an abscess grows and spreads infection', three themes predominate. In his Breslau lectures (1895) the leading authority on German students, Theobald Ziegler, inveighed against 'drinking and whoring' in no uncertain terms: 'And in this mud and morass of uncleanness, dishonour, violence and hypocrisy German students muck about lustily.' The primary enemy of the moralists was prostitution, because it 'makes a considerable proportion of men physically ill... is the incubator of the meanest vice... and also a school of immorality' for later life. A second motif was the ubiquitous danger of venereal disease, usually depicted in lurid colours. Not only did it threaten the health of the student himself, but also that of his future wife and children: 'The sins of the fathers are visited upon the sons until the third or fourth generation.' Yet another argument was the moral corruption of the young academic, which not only reinforced the double standard ('a great injustice of the male sex against the female') but also ruined future marriages by divorcing tempting sexuality from boring respectability. 'You only know women from their base side and carry this curse into your own marriage...: You look down upon females because you once helped to render them despicable.' Against such youthful license, liberal academics appealed to the student sense of decency: 'I call upon the good elements among you not to be cowardly but to band together, organize a movement and sweep away the dirt in order to sharpen vigorously your code of honour.' Hence official academic doctrine insisted upon 'struggling against prostitution and immorality' through strict abstinence. Among adults the attempt to impose purity upon youth owed as much to Victorian liberal impulses as to pietistic or evangelical Christianity.⁵

The evolution of student attitudes towards sexuality is evident in the constitutions and proclamations of various associations. At the end of the eighteenth century the dichotomy between the duelling brawler of Jena (*Rennomist*) and the amorous beau of Leipzig (*Stutzer*) was challenged by the more stringent morals of the enlightenment-inspired *Orden*. The *Unitisten* denounced 'forbidden intercourse with the other sex [as a] dishonourable' vice. In the

Christian-German renewal of student spirit during the Wars of Liberation, libertinage appeared both immoral and unpatriotic: 'Exercise manhood and self-restraint, because mingling with whores and drunkards taints German blood and excesses are man's worst disgrace,' exhorted a pamphlet of the radical *Schwarzen* of Giessen. As a practical example of 'the renewal of student life' the *Urburschenschaft* broke not only with duelling and gambling, but also interpreted the principle of 'morality' rigorously as chastity at the university. While religious sentiment clearly contributed to the prohibition of pre-marital sexuality, nationalist fervour emphasized 'Christian-German training of all spiritual and physical talents for the service of the fatherland' and liberal aspirations sought to reform the sexual abuses of the older *Landsmannschaft*.⁶ When Metternichian persecution, indifference of university authorities and active resistance of traditionalist students blunted the renewal, positive Christian associations like the Protestant *Wingolf* and *Schwarzburgbund* began to denounce 'moral transgressions' after the middle of the century. For similarly conservative reasons, the Catholic colour-corporations (CV), associations (KV) and societies (*Unitas*) demanded *Sittlichkeit* from their members, thereby also promoting chastity. In contrast, traditionalist corporations denounced such 'moral arrogance' and left sexual behaviour to the individual as long as it did not compromise the group by violating elite standards. Within student subculture the campaign for morality, though absorbing patriotic and religious themes, was propelled most by reformist currents.⁷

The views of the university authorities and the policies of the state towards student sexuality were formally liberalized during the Empire but remained fundamentally ambivalent. In contrast to earlier prohibitions of prostitution or penalties against illegitimacy embodied in academic discipline, the government abandoned attempts to legislate personal behaviour in the liberal conviction that the majority of students were already of age and could be treated as adult: 'One should not deceive oneself about the maintenance of academic discipline. It can negatively prevent and penalize transgressions, but cannot positively force industriousness or ethical behaviour.' The Prussian student code of 1879 which 'abolished the previous legal privileges of students' in order to put them under regular civil law, included only the general paragraph: 'Academic discipline is charged with maintaining order, morality and honour among students.' The heated debates in the *Landtag* revolved

around traditional abuses such as duelling, drinking and running up debts as well as around modern dangers such as political agitation and radicalism, but dealt not at all with sexual immorality. More concerned with rebelliousness and 'violations of order, peace or of propriety' the Prussian student regulations therefore proscribed 'indecent behaviour, addiction to alcohol or creating a public nuisance', while ignoring sexual conduct as long as it remained private. The local university disciplinary authorities looked the other way and reacted merely when sexual escapades ended in some other civil disturbance such as a pitched battle between students and town louts or an insult to a police officer. Only occasionally would a rector distribute a handbill against venereal disease: 'The extramarital intercourse conflicts not only with higher ethical feelings but also creates dangers to health through its immorality. Therefore abstain!' As a result of liberal faith in self-control rather than in regimentation, students faced moral condemnation without enforcement or positive alternative.⁸

The actual practice of student sexuality was governed by the segregation of sexes (until 1896, when women were admitted as auditors) and by limitation of access to young women of appropriate class.⁹ A high-school graduate might arrive at a university town with a memento of female friendship; but he was largely reduced to looking from afar at the opposite sex during promenades, in public squares, etc. In some of the smaller cities there was also a certain amount of *Familienverkehr*, of contacts with families for those fortunate enough to possess an introduction. Some professors invited their favourite students to their houses, some needy individuals privately tutored bourgeois girls, while a few participated in dancing lessons. But on the whole, contact with upper- and middle-class daughters (or wives for that matter) was circumscribed and formalized. Illustrious noble houses or wealthy bourgeois families might give balls and ask some select students, especially from the socially exclusive *Corps*. Since the opportunities for meeting were few, the corporations themselves invited the higher daughters of the town to their *Kommerse*, their official celebrations, as a decorative *Damenflor* and as objects of ritual adulation in the *Damenrede* (an oration extolling their beauty). Though popular with *Couleurdamen* (affiliated girls), association balls or *Tanzkränzchen* were well-chaperoned and provided only fleeting moments for a few endearments or a stolen kiss. During the

long semester vacations former attachments at home might be renewed in lively entertainments, but the university was far and students, though well liked as romantic partners, were soon on their way again. Although one ought not to underestimate the ingenuity of thwarted drives, young academics had little opportunity for pre-marital sexual contact with females of their own social standing. Since marriage was out of the question, the rule was a long engagement with the admired, but also pitied *Studentenbraut* for whom the chief consolation was not experience but hope.¹⁰

A compromise in order to lessen this tension was the institution of the *Verhältnis*, the relationship. More stable and lasting than casual sex with a serving wench, this 'going steady' rested on a double misunderstanding. For 'the young, innocent little girls, who desire most of all to be loved or to love' the romantic ideal (and the faint hope of later marriage) sanctified sexual relations otherwise prohibited. For the boy the literary and sentimental deification of his partner often covered more practical advantages of the attachment: 'It is cheap, undemanding, domestic, loving and — healthy.' Usually the relationship was socially unequal with the student clearly superior to the sales girl or the *filia hospitalis*, daughter of the landlord. But it was still within the *petite bourgeoisie* and not like a fling with domestics, totally beyond the pale. Mutual sexual attraction was the basis for many such liaisons, since the difference in cultural horizon and personal aspiration rendered eventual marriage unlikely as long as it had to be approved by the boy's parents who had higher aims. Where rental codes were liberal, as in the big cities of Berlin, Munich and Leipzig, the bohemian *Konkubinat*, i.e. common law marriage, also began to appear around the turn of the century. Here a student and his partner (rarely also from the artistic world or a female student) set up common housekeeping. Since even the sentimental *Student Prince* does not end happily, the attachment was usually terminated by the young man's change of university, the hoary custom of the *peregrinatio academica*. While the departed lover often kept a warm memory of his naive and affectionate *Mädel*, the dissolution of the relationship was sometimes shattering for the girl and pushed her into prostitution. 'Ein bissel Lieb, ein bissel Treu und ein bissel Falschheit ist allweil dabei.'¹¹

An unwanted fruit of these attachments was often an illegitimate child, a further reason for the flight of the disconcerted father. The majority of students (and shop girls) were woefully ignorant of

available birth control methods and considered taking precautions as debasing a spontaneous and romantic *Verhältnis*. Demographic data suggest, interestingly enough, that noble or grand bourgeois women rarely carried illegitimate children to term, since they had the means and the information to obtain abortions. In contrast, lower-middle and lower-class women had recourse only to folk remedies and when these failed either accepted their off-spring stoically (as did proletarian girls) or desperately (as did *kleinbürgerliche* girls who risked expulsion from their homes for such a violation of bourgeois codes). Since there are no national illegitimacy figures indicating the precise profession of the father, one has to rely on a few straws in the wind. Max Marcuse reports that 11 of 333 illegitimate fathers in Charlottenburg were students and a different compilation of the *Bund für Mutterschutz* put the figure somewhat higher at 12 of 247 after the turn of the century. But there is firmer ground for the assertion that in 1906 the German university towns had the highest proportion of illegitimate children among live births:

Table 1
Illegitimacy as Proportion of Births

(1) Marburg 37.7%	(10) Würzburg 20.4%
(2) Giessen 32.7%	(11) Leipzig 18.8%
(3) Tübingen 32.2%	(12) Breslau 18.1%
(4) Greifswald 31.1%	(13) Rostock 17.4%
(5) München 26.7%	(14) Berlin 17.3%
(6) Heidelberg 25.4%	(15) Königsberg 16.4%
(7) Jena 24.2%	(16) Halle 15.1%
(8) Göttingen 23.7%	(17) Kiel 15.1%
(9) Bonn 21.7%	

Since the rate of illegitimacy for these university communities was double or triple that of surrounding cities, the association between student presence and extramarital births is quite strong, especially for the smaller towns. Because students were generally too poor and irresponsible to own up to these children, their birth was 'often disastrous for the female partner'.¹²

Another solution to the sexual problem was prostitution. Either anaesthetized by alcohol or in cold-blooded resolve to gratify their biological urge, students continued their traditional association

with whores, since this permitted release while upholding bourgeois morality. There was only a fine line separating a quick succession of affairs, based on presents, from the purchase of professional services. Students had often little difficulty in procuring a quick roll in the hay with an amateur after some gay conversation and a little reward. While in the eighteenth century university authorities had proscribed prostitution within city walls (and thereby forced it into neighbouring villages), by the Empire it had returned to university towns where bordellos flourished. Since the majority of high-school pupils still seem to have been chaste, sexual initiation sometimes occurred at the culmination of the *Abitur-Kommers*, the graduation celebration in which the pupils became men in every sense of the word. Contemporary accounts also refer to a formal *Geschlechtsabend* of student corporations, a compulsory sex evening, usually crowning a drinking bout. In 1891 an anonymous author inveighed against the custom in the liberal *Grenzboten*: 'Certain student associations weekly have their so-called official sex evening, where the youngest pledge and the oldest active is not only allowed but morally compelled to sin *in venere!*' When the Prussian Minister of Culture Zedlitz von Neukirch inquired into the matter, most university rectors remained mum and denied any knowledge. Only the eminent Göttingen classicist Wilamowitz von Moellendorff admitted that students did 'not live up to the demands which even a non-ascetic morality must make'. Especially the *Corps* 'have a certain reputation for debauchery' and he had no doubt that 'among students, too, frivolity and search for pleasure have increased'. The result was either disgust, confusion or cynicism.¹³

The price of prostitution was not only ethical, aesthetic and financial but also physical. Venereal disease claimed 'a frightful number of victims' among students. The estimate of a Berlin dermatologist who in 1900 put the proportion at about 80 percent, was greatly exaggerated. But a two-year survey of 600-700 members of the Berlin student health insurance by a Dr Blaschko found that a full 25 percent of its subscribers had been treated for VD during that period. If one adds an unspecified number of self-doctored and unreported cases, the dimensions of this problem become apparent. That such a large number was infected was due to 'incredible ignorance' about this topic, as a result of the moral taboo, as well as to 'the frivolity and lack of conscience' with which students treated the disease, occasionally even bragging about its ravages.¹⁴

When after the turn of the century the pervasiveness of venereal disease became a public scandal, debated in the Prussian *Landtag*, university authorities began to issue handbills, warning incoming freshmen. Old Boys like Walter Bloem cautioned corporation actives in 1906: 'It is absolutely essential that the Corps take their modern educational duty towards the young pledges more seriously so as to recognize the terrible danger of sexual diseases for the health of the nation and the individual.' While students gradually grew somewhat more aware of the risks of prostitution, official and adult prudishness prohibited any concerted action against VD and left treatment to the unfortunate infected individual. Even more stringent health controls of prostitutes could only temporarily lessen the 'almost unavoidable danger of infection' as long as there was no alternative to 'remaining sexually abstinent as long as possible'.¹⁵

How did student behaviour evolve in the last decades before 1914? One well-informed observer asserts that 'the revolution in the sexual attitudes and practices of students is immense and cannot be justified or explained sufficiently by changed circumstances'. However, the concurrent 'discovery of adolescence' by novelists and the beginning of a clinical literature on youth psychology indicate that the impression of rapid sexual liberation may be in part an optical illusion. Certainly the literary and thereby also normative image of the *Jüngling*, created a century earlier by the favourite middle-class poet Friedrich von Schiller, maintained its hold on poems and songs, and influenced youthful behaviour. 'Beautifully young, chaste of soul, idealistically aflame, defiantly bold, verging on the arrogant, sentimental and freedom loving', the ideal nevertheless lacked 'true love of women, but was rather dedicated to friendship and sworn to male adventures'. But an increasing 'demand of modern man for a harmonious unfolding of *all* his talents including an active sex life meeting his need for happiness' began to lift the cover of silence about sex and to encourage acting out such aspirations. Because the privatization of sexuality removed legal sanctions, youth started to assert itself against parental authority and hypocrisy, depicted in an outpouring of youth literature such as Frank Wedekind's famous *Spring Awakening*. 'There cannot be any doubt, therefore, that sexual torment was enormous for the youth of those days which stood half-way between strictest taboo and liberation.' Fragmentary evidence indicates that after the turn of the century, students increasingly

discovered their bodies and moved from fantasy (or masturbation) to occasional action. The psychic cost of this painful self-liberation was the growing separation of the spheres of *eros* (romantic love) and *sexus* (biological sexuality).¹⁶

The contradiction between Wilhelminian sexual morality and student practice prompted a variety of reactions. The policy of the Prussian government was ambivalent, since it left the erotic sphere to the private individual but at the same time upheld the double standard in public by stricter prohibition of pornography. When, for instance, Dr Magnus Hirschfeld in Berlin tried to explore sexual attitudes among academic youths through an opinion survey, the head of the university section of the Ministry of Culture, Friedrich Althoff, called it 'gross mischief'. Four corporation students, outraged about the invasion of their privacy, in 1903 sued the medical pioneer, whose sentence was upheld since his research was sponsored by a committee for the abolition of Paragraph 175 (prohibiting homosexuality). Instead of sex education, the government supported the campaign of the *Zentralausschuss zur Förderung der Volks- und Jugendspiele* to promote physical exercise as a substitute at the universities. Its chairman, Freiherr von Seckendorff, successfully appealed to Althoff, since 'academic youth is also about to join the ranks of fighters for the cherished value of national health and a fatherland capable of defending itself'. University rectors gradually built gymnasias and sports fields because they agreed that 'nervous unrest, bodily weakness and psychological depression' (Victorian euphemisms for sexual frustration) could be cured 'through regular sports and through simplicity of life-style'.¹⁷ Finally, an undercurrent of fear of immorality motivated traditionalist opposition to the admission of women to universities. But the government was more concerned with academic unemployment and eventually overcame even those scruples in 1899 and 1908. Although Hallensian medical students protested about the violation of modesty if females participated in anatomy instruction and clinical rounds, the Prussian Ministry of Culture maintained that there was no danger to academic order due to coeducation.¹⁸

Not surprisingly, students were as confused and divided about solutions to their sexual problems. While the majority accepted verbal purity and physical license, a progressive minority tried to 'reform student mores' throughout the nineteenth century. Never-

theless, the inertia of corporate subculture proved greater than well-meaning attempts in the 1870s 'to strive towards humanity on ethical and scholarly grounds'. This thwarted impulse resurfaced in 1883 in an attack of the *Burschenschaft* alumnus Konrad Küster against the departure of this erstwhile reform organization from its high moral standards. Not only compulsive drinking and duelling, which imitated the *Corps*, but also sexual permissiveness was anathema to him. When the *Burschenschaft* as such refused to mend its ways, the dissidents founded a small *Reformburschenschaft* (the ADB) which insisted on 'maintaining honour through purity in thought and deed, truthfulness in word and action'.¹⁹ A series of anti-corporatist pamphlets in the 1890s such as the melodramatic novella *Der tugend- und der lasterhafte Student* indicates the continuation of a minority sentiment for life-style reform. In 1904 this reform-puritanism led to the foundation of a special organization promoting abstinence. The *Akademische Bund Ethos* saw as its task the promotion of 'a more profound and noble attitude towards sexual life, the purification of the moral concepts of honour and the struggle against sexual excesses'. Sometimes encouraged by authorities, like the venerable historian Sybel, the *Bund Ethos* was never very popular, even though it adopted social anti-semitism to prove its 'German-national tendency'. In 1908 Protestant circles founded a German counterpart to the British *Bund Weissen Kreuzes*, similarly championing chastity. But the spirit of 'monkishness and flight from the world' reflected in these categorical denials of sexuality as 'immorality' could hardly bring any lasting success.²⁰

Other male and female students, however, began, to grope towards a freer sexual morality after the turn of the century. The growing preoccupation with sex, observed by doctors and writers, gradually forced the abandonment of silent repression and the development of a more realistic attitude towards biological needs. With the founding of the *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft* (1904), a clinical psychological literature slowly emerged, which argued that 'sexual abstinence is not the solution to the problem posed by sexuality' and proposed a reform of sexual ethics. These adult voices of concern found their greatest echo among the socially and politically progressive segment of German students. For the socialist radicals, Clara Zetkin equated the conflict of the sexes with the class struggle: 'Not women's emancipation, but the transformation of society from capitalism into socialism resolves

these contradictions'. Women had to become something more than 'a kind of beautiful luxury furniture, in the best case a stoic handmaiden, a loyally caring housemother'.²¹ Among the liberals of the *Freistudentenschaft* there was also 'unanimous sympathy for the aspirations of female students' leading to a 1906 resolution in favour of their full admission to universities. But more importantly, the free students were the only ones to invite academic women to join the manifold activity sections. Thereby they pioneered a more relaxed relationship than the 'cool reserve' of corporation students and female emancipators. Moreover, these reformists also dared to sponsor public lectures and discussions in mixed company on such topics as 'sexual education' (I. Bloch), 'infant sexuality' (Dr Moll), and 'sexual ethics' (Dr Eulenburg). Incensed by such frankness, rector Stumpf suspended the Berlin chapter in 1908, since 'social-democrats and extreme feminists spoke, and sexual topics once broached were also regularly discussed by female students'. Nevertheless, progressive opinion in the last prewar years became more and more convinced 'that this chasm between the soul and the senses has to be bridged'. In Helene Stöcker's words the solution was 'not abstinence, but responsibility'.²²

As a reaction to the perceived immorality of progressive students, the new Right among academic youth began to champion a nationalist puritanism. While the traditionalist *Corps* tolerated lax morals, small groups of religious students in the *Schwarzburgbund* insisted on applying 'Christian ethics' such as chastity. The new nationalism of the *Vereine Deutscher Studenten* (VDSSt) which swept the universities in the 1880s reinforced sexual illiberality. Acting out of 'idealism and religiosity' these self-proclaimed heirs of the *Burschenschaft* championed anti-semitism: 'Against what do we fight? Primarily against faithless Jewry which, with its unGerman, corrosive, brilliant mentality poisons our national soul, dedicated to ideals, and eats away the spiritual marrow and bone of our body politic.' Although spreading across most of the educated middle class, this virulent anti-semitism was initially cultural and political rather than racial.²³ Because the VDSSt wanted 'a strong monarchical state, a unified empire, vigorous social reform and a Christian nation', its constitution stressed political goals such as 'strengthening and clarifying of national consciousness in the entire German student body'. Nevertheless, Paragraph 21 also emphasized that 'the VDSSt expects all of its members to conduct a moral life', indicating that 'sexual abstinence' was considered a self-

evident part of 'sexual education'. Influenced by *völkisch* writers such as Langbehn or Lagarde and by Austrian extremists, the *Deutsch-völkischer Studentenverband*, founded in 1909, went one step further toward racial anti-semitism, and tried to admit only those students 'who have no Jewish blood in their veins'. Some writers of the new Right saw 'the sexual question as a matter of life and death for the German people. . . It is a national duty of the first rank to live healthily and morally.' Hence they urged: 'Through purity be strong.'²⁴

How did the unaffiliated student majority respond to the differentiation of organized advice in the last prewar decade? In contrast to literary images of the corporate *flotter Bursch*, more than half of academic youth was primarily interested in finishing its degree (*Brotstudenten*). Most came from the province of the university, were Protestant, had been educated at a *Gymnasium*, were overwhelmingly male and bourgeois, from the bureaucratic sector of the economy and of non-elite parents employed in lower-middle-class occupations, and studied in the philosophy faculty to become teachers. After the turn of the century, this 'average' student, who indulged in *Gemütlichkeit* (drinking) and *Fachsimpelei* (professional preparation) was confronted by an increase in pre-college sexual awareness and a heightened public discussion of sexuality at the university.²⁵ The generational conflict literature is both a reflection and a cause of growing sexual experimentation in the *Gymnasium*, since the discovery of adolescence is too pervasive to be a mere literary artifact. The brilliant satire by O.J. Bierbaum, *Stilpe*, subtitled 'a novel from the frog-perspective', dates the first kiss in a boarding-school at 13, the 'deliverance of masculinity' at 16³/₄ (with a kind whore) and the first *Verhältnis* three years later with a maid-servant before becoming a student.²⁶ This earlier maturation was somewhat held in check by the puritanism of the life-reforming Youth Movement, whose majority subscribed to the maxim of the poet Walter Flex: 'Stay pure and mature'. Once at the university the average student who was over twenty-one encountered a much franker discussion of sexual problems, and perhaps even an occasional clumsy attempt at sexual enlightenment. These conflicting pressures led to an 'overemphasis on sexuality' which confronted the majority with painful personal choices that could no longer be evaded by conforming to the traditional taboo.²⁷

While in a climate of academic illiberalism sexual repression appears predictable, the actual relationship between student subculture and sexuality was complex. To be sure, the idealization of cultivation, the *Bildung* of all human faculties, was directed at the mind and soul rather than the body. Moreover, the elitist (*bildungsaristokratische*) consciousness of the educated lifted them beyond most available sex-partners (given upper-middle-class guarding of daughters) and contributed a debasing quality to intercourse. Finally, the apolitical impulse of the cultured, which coupled disdain for politics with a reflex patriotism, made them conform to official double morality as necessary for public order. Nevertheless, intellectual and political currents influenced academic youth and created sequential cohorts with different preoccupations and attitudes. The post-liberal 1870s led to the anti-liberal and anti-semitic 1880s (in the VDSt); the socially concerned (and sometimes socialist) 1890s gave way to the imperialist (*Turnerschaft*) or progressive (*Freistudentenschaft*) 1900s before reaching the ambivalent life-reform (*Freischar*) or *völkisch* (*deutsch-völkischer Studentenverband*) last prewar years. At the same time German students displayed several remarkably stable basic orientations, which spawned a number of different organizations, but provided ideological continuity. On the campus left there was a usually puritan countertradition of reform that continued the initial *Burschenschaft* impulse; in the centre there was the mass of unaffiliated and lethargic *Brotstudenten* who only occasionally engaged in sex; on the right there was the dominant corporatist phalanx led by the *Corps* which practised double standards; and at the far right there were the various repressive new nationalists. Below all these distinctions flowed the tides of student sexuality which apparently ebbed until the 1880s, only to surge more powerfully after 1900.²⁸

What was, finally, the relationship between these changes in sexual morality and the rise of the new nationalism among academics? Although in the 'virgin field' of sexual history it is difficult to separate fact from fiction, the above evidence points towards a double transformation. During the Second Empire the progressive impulse of student life-reform, first enunciated by the *Burschenschaft*, gradually lost its sexual repressiveness and began to lead towards the liberation of sexual self-expression, limited by an ethic of individual responsibility. At the same time the cavalier permissiveness of traditional corporate subculture gradually gave way to the prudishness of the new *völkisch* right, intent on the 'purifica-

tion and ennobling of the character of family and race'. Since this change of attitudes in both political camps represents a reversal of fronts, it was dialectically related. The campaign of the new nationalists 'against the false dogma of free love' was in effect a triple negation of the license of the *Corps*, of the liberal politics of the old student reformers (like the ADB) and of the liberalized sexual attitudes of the new student progressives (in the *Freistudentenschaft*). Although the VDSSt and its successors succeeded in spreading anti-semitism through innovative propaganda, tight organization and infectious enthusiasm, their attempt to desexualize students through the ideal of male beauty and through appeals to nationalism was a resounding failure. It was opposed by advanced medical authorities like Sigmund Freud who argued that 'abstinence way beyond the twentieth year is no longer unproblematic for a young man and leads to other impairments, even where it does not bring on nervousness'. Moreover, it ran fundamentally counter to the overpowering biological urge of youth itself, preoccupied with the rediscovery of the body. Hence the new nationalism captured the allegiance of students not because, but rather in spite of its sexual ethics. While the victory of respectability among academics owed much to liberal impulses, the new nationalism came to the defence of the 'normal' when progressive opinion was beginning to grope towards a freer sexuality.²⁹

Notes

1. E. N. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York 1975); G. Stokes, 'The Undeveloped Theory of Nationalism', *World Politics*, 31 (1978), 150-160; and F. Stern, *The Failure of Illiberalism* (Chicago 1975).

2. M. Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité* (Paris 1976), 9-22; G.L. Mosse, *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (New York 1980), 12-13, and the first article of this issue.

3. K. H. Jarausch, *Students, Society and Politics in Imperial Germany: The Rise of Academic Illiberalism* (Princeton 1982); and O. Scheuer, 'Das studentische Liebesleben in der deutschen Vergangenheit', *Sexualprobleme: Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft und Sexualpolitik*, 6 (1910), 527-532, 606-615, 672-688.

4. W. Howitt, *Student Life in Germany* (Philadelphia 1842); M. Marcuse, 'Das Liebesleben des deutschen Studenten', *Sexualprobleme*, 4 (1908), 557-703 is the most perceptive contemporary discussion.

5. A. Ruge, *Kritische Betrachtungen und Darstellungen des deutschen Studentenlebens in seinen Grundzügen* (Tübingen 1906), 130f; T. Ziegler, *Der deutsche Student am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart 1895), 61-70; and such other pamphlets as H.T. Bauer, *Manneswürde und Mädchenehre. Ein Vortrag über die Sittlichkeit* (Göttingen 1895).

6. Scheuer, 'Liebesleben', 684ff; G. Heer, 'Die ältesten Urkunden zur Geschichte der allgemeinen deutschen Burschenschaft', *Quellen und Darstellungen zur Geschichte der Burschenschaft und der deutschen Einheitsbewegung*, 13: 68-131; and K. H. Jarausch, 'The Sources of German Student Unrest, 1815-1848', in L. Stone (ed.), *The University in Society* (Princeton 1974), 2: 533-569.

7. P. Seiffert, *Geschichte und Entwicklung der studentischen Verbände* (Breslau 1913). See also the authoritative F. Schulze and P. Ssymank, *Das deutsche Studententum von den ältesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich 1932), 222ff, 451; and M. Studier, 'Der Corpsstudent als Idealbild der wilhelminischen Ära' (Diss., Erlangen 1965), 123.

8. *Aktenstück* 22 and 57 and debate of the Prussian *Herrenhaus* of 6 and 21 February 1879 and session of the Prussian *Abgeordnetenhaus*, 19 and 20 February 1879, in the *Drucksachen* of the Upper House, 80-86, 150-158, the stenographic reports of the Upper House, 77-85, 262-264 and the stenographic reports of the Lower House, col. 1500-1519. Minister Puttkamer, *Vorschriften für die Studierenden der Landesuniversitäten* (Berlin 1879), especially paragraphs 25 and 26. *Flugblatt* Tuzcek, 13 December 1908 in Marburg University Archive (= MUA), 305a, Acc. 1950/9, No. 640, and Göttingen University Archive (= GUA), XF2 No. 635, vols. 1-5.

9. The evidential problem of determining actual sexual practices in the Victorian age is enormous. Academic memoirs are reticent. There are few quantitative indices (short of illegitimacy). But descriptions, especially in student novels, cluster into a series of patterns, each with its own name, which indicate stable institutions of subculture which may not have had official blessing, but existed nevertheless. See R. Kleissel, 'Der deutsche Studentenroman von der Romantik bis zum Ausbruch des Weltkrieges' (Diss., Vienna 1932), 130-217.

10. M. L. Gothhein, *Eberhard Gothhein* (Stuttgart 1931); H. Uhde-Bernays, *Im Lichte der Freiheit* (Frankfurt 1947); L. Heffter, *Beglückte Rückschau auf neun Jahrzehnte* (Freiburg 1952); A. Hoche, *Jahresringe* (Munich 1963). Typical is also G. Radbruch, *Der innere Weg* (Göttingen 1951) who recalls a Munich 'flirt, but nothing concrete'.

11. Student verse: 'A little love, a little faith, a little deception is always involved'. Marcuse, 'Liebesleben', 681-685; G. Samarow (pseud. Oskar Meding), *Die Saxoborussen* (Stuttgart 1903), one of the most successful nostalgic student novels. The *Student Prince* is based on W. Meyer-Förster's play, *Alt-Heidelberg* (Berlin 1902).

12. Figures tabulated according to Marcuse, 'Liebesleben', 686f. See also Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt (ed.), *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*, 29 (1908), 17. The prolific student journals were generally silent on this touchy issue, preferring charming portraits of social life. F. M. Ebeling, 'Berlin', *Burschenschaftliche Blätter*, 5 (1891/2), 158-184 and H. Schmitz, 'Bonn als Universitätsstadt', *Academia*, 12 (1899/1900), 372-376.

13. Scheuer, 'Liebesleben', 672ff; H. Egotinus, *Studentenherrlichkeit* (Munich 1904), 22-25; anon., 'Zum dunklen Kapitel der Kulturgeschichte', *Grenzboten*, 50 (1891), 607f; Zedlitz circular, 21 November 1891 and answers of university rectors, including Wilamowitz (12 December 1891), in Zentrales Staatsarchiv, Hist. Abt. II Merseburg (=STA), Rep. 76 Va, Sekt 1, Tit. XII, No. 31.

14. W. Ohr, *Leitsätze für die akademische Gegenwart* (Munich 1907), 6; 'Schwarze Zahlen aus dem Leben der Berliner Studentenschaft', *Reichsbote*, 9 November 1898; and Marcuse, 'Liebesleben', 695ff. The figures still seem somewhat high, but in a turn of the century survey of 3,709 Bohemian high-school graduates Dr H. Hecht found 295, i.e. 7.9 percent who had already contracted VD before entering the university. 'Verbreitung der Geschlechtskrankheiten an den Mittelschulen', *Zeitschrift für Bekämpfung der Geschlechtskrankheiten*, 8: 4.

15. Stenographic reports of the Prussian *Landtag*, 4 April 1913, vol. 569; 'Kömmilitonen!' GUA, XA No. 556, vol. 1; flyer in MUA, 305a, Acc. 1950/9, No. 640; W. Bloem, 'Zukunftsaufgaben der Korps', *Akademische Monatshefte*, 22 (1906), No. 11; Ziegler, *Deutscher Student*, 63 and Ohr, *Leitsätze*, 6.

16. Marcuse, 'Liebesleben', 697-698; H. H. Muchow, *Sexualreife und Sexualstruktur der Jugend* (Hamburg 1959), 27-40; S. Fishman, 'Suicide, Sex and the Discovery of the German Adolescent', *History of Education Quarterly*, 10 (1970), 170-188; and J. Gillis, *Youth and History* (New York 1974), 95ff.

17. Althoff note, 21 December 1903; clipping from *Berliner Morgenblatt*, 16 November 1904 in STA, Rep. 76 Va, Sekt 1, Tit. XII, No. 31. Seckendorff to Althoff, 28 April 1901 with memorandum of 26 April; 'Aufruf an die deutsche Studentenschaft', 21 March 1901, etc. in *ibid.* Rep. 92 (Althoff papers), A 1, No. 21.

18. Material in ZStA Me, Rep. 76 Va, Sekt 1, Tit. VIII, No. 8, volumes 1-12. See also the pamphlet literature listed in the catalogue of the Institut für Hochschulkunde (Würzburg, n.d.), E 973-1031 and Dr Carpin, *Frauenstudium, Sittlichkeit und Sozialreform* (Leipzig 1896). For the imposition of stricter controls on pornography see the forthcoming essay by G. Stark in *Central European History*.

19. Anon., *Zur Reform des Studentenlebens* (Königsberg 1872); C.F. Herfurth, *Was ist studentische Reform?* (Jena 1875); K. Küster's Tivoli speech, reprinted in *Jahrbuch des A.D.B.*, 1906, 6-19; *Satzungen der Burschenschaft Arminia zu Giessen* (Giessen 1885); and Schulze-Ssymank, *Deutsches Studententum*, 327ff, 355ff.

20. C. Müller, *Der tugend- und der lasterhafte Student 1890* (Leipzig 1890); *Satzungen des Akademischen Bund Ethos* (Berlin 1904); protest of Sally Loeb, 7 June 1907 and answer of Adolf Schmedding, 23 November, as well as note by Sybel, 10 February, all in MUA, 305a, Acc. 1950/9, No. 640. See also E. Seidel, *Der Bund des Weissen Kreuzes* (Dresden 1908) and the pamphlets in IHK catalogue, F 2525-2542.

21. Muchow, *Sexualreife*, 36 talks about *psychopathia sexualis*. Marcuse, 'Liebesleben', 702-703; C. Zetkin, *Der Student und das Weib* (Berlin 1899). Personal relations among socialist students were much freer than among traditionalists, but their number was quite small.

22. P. Ssymank, 'Der sechste deutsche Freistudententag', *Finkenblätter*, 2 (1906), 91-102; Schulze-Ssymank, *Deutsches Studententum*, 403-404; Rector Stumpf, 'Zur Geschichte der Freien Studentenschaft im Jahre 1907/8', in Berlin University Archive (=HUA), No. 746 and government response also in STA, Rep. 76Va, Sekt. 1, Tit. XII, No. 34; public lecture by Helene Stöcker on 'Sexual-

probleme der Studenten', sponsored by the *Bund für Mutterschutz* according to the report of the Berlin Police President of 29 November 1913, in STA, Rep. 76 Va, Sekt 1, Tit. XII, No. 31.

23. *Verfassung des Schwarzburgbundes* (Diesdorf n.d.) and F. Ulmer, *Der Schwarzburgbund und seine Verbindungen* (Rottenburg 1912); R. Heinze, 'Was wir wollen', *Akademische Blätter*, 1 (1886/7), 1-2; J. W., 'Der Kampf gegen den Indifferentismus', *ibid.*, 39-40; F. v. Zedlitz, 'Die Stellung des Kyffhäuser-Verbandes zur Judenfrage', *ibid.*, 2 (1887/8), 161-162; and H. v. Petersdorff, *Die Vereine Deutscher Studenten* (Leipzig 1900).

24. *Satzungen des Kyffhäuserverbandes* (n.p., n.d.) in MUA, 305a, Acc. 1954 16, No. 70; 'Das Vortragswesen des K.-V. im Wintersemester 1913/14', *Akademische Blätter*, 29 (1914/5) 75-76; *Satzungen des deutsch-völkischen Studentenverbands* (Berlin 1909) in HUA, No. 814; K. Endemann 'Der deutsche Student und die sexuelle Ethik', *Burschenschaftliche Bücherei*, 4, No. 7. Cf. also K. Korman, 'National- und Sozialpolitik', *Akademische Blätter*, 22 (1907/8), 185-186 and the forthcoming Berlin dissertation by N. Schaffercht.

25. K.H. Jarausch, 'The Social Transformation of the University: The Case of Prussia, 1865-1914', *Journal of Social History*, 12 (1979), 609-636; and 'Frequenz und Struktur. Zur Sozialgeschichte der Studenten im Kaiserreich', in P. Baumgart (ed.), *Bildungspolitik in Preussen zur Zeit des Kaiserreichs* (Stuttgart 1980), 119-149.

26. S. Fishman, 'Suicide, Sex and the Discovery of the German Adolescent', 170ff; and as one example O. J. Bierbaum, *Stilpe: Ein Roman aus der Froschperspektive* (Berlin and Leipzig 1897 to 1904) 5 vols, 42ff, 160ff., and 186.

27. Muchow, *Sexualreife*, 36, 48. For the vast literature on the *Wandervogel* cf. only W. Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (London 1962). The core of its impact lay in the *Gymnasium* years, not in the later university experience, since its organizational imprint there was remarkably slight.

28. For details on student subculture cf. Jarausch, *Students, Society and Politics*, chapters 5 and 7. Commemorative coffee-table books like P. Krause, 'O alte Burschenherrlichkeit.' *Die Studenten und ihr Brauchtum* (Graz 1980), 130-150 are silent on sex and, aside from colourful illustrations, tend to trivialize the subject.

29. L. Bullough, 'Sex in History: A Virgin Field', in his *Sex, Society and History* (New York 1976); Endemann, 'Deutscher Student', *passim*; Marcuse, 'Liebesleben', 701ff; and Jarausch, 'Liberal Education as Illiberal Socialization: The Case of Students in Imperial Germany', *Journal of Modern History*, 50 (1978), 609-630.

Konrad H. Jarausch

is Professor of History at the University of Missouri-Columbia. His most recent publication is *Students, Society and Politics in Imperial Germany: The Rise of Academic Illiberalism* (Princeton 1982) and

his volume on *The Transformation of Higher Learning, 1860-1930* will be published shortly.