

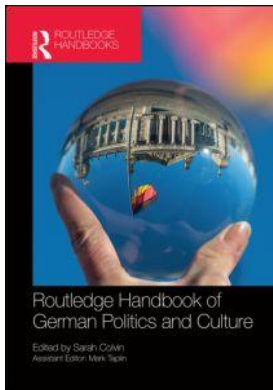
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Gender and sexuality

Clare Bielby and Frauke Matthes

Gender, sexuality, and Germanness

On 22 November 2005 Angela Merkel became Germany's first female chancellor, dubbed 'Miss Germany' by a national tabloid (*Bild*, 11 October 2005). Ten months previously, Ash Bayram had become the first woman of non-German descent to win the beauty contest of that title. In the run-up to the Berlin mayoral elections of June 2001, when he would be voted into office, Klaus Wowereit had declared, 'I'm gay and that's just fine'¹ ('Ich bin schwul, und das ist auch gut so'). The Berlin Republic of the 21st century seems a progressive nation as far as gender and sexuality are concerned: women can be voted into the highest political office, women and men with non-German backgrounds can achieve public acclaim, and being openly gay seems to do no harm to your political career.

Delve a little deeper, however, and the situation is less rosy. Wowereit's famous 'coming out' was not as freely volunteered as might be remembered,² and reflects an environment in which heterosexuality is still the norm (no politician needs to assert that being heterosexual is 'just fine'). Merkel's success is ascribed by some to feminism – the news magazine *Spiegel* described her chancellorship as a 'triumph of the German women's movement' ('Triumph der deutschen Frauenbewegung'; *Spiegel Online* 2005). Merkel herself, however, avoids being associated with feminism (see her comments in Schwarzer 2009; Ferree 2012: 201–2). And the continued existence of the 'Miss' competition, in Germany as elsewhere, is hardly evidence of progress, even if it can be won by a woman of non-German descent.

In the first decade of the new century, Germany underwent a number of significant political and sociocultural changes. Adjustments in its citizenship law in 2000, for example, mean that citizenship is no longer exclusively dependent on German descent (see Chapter 8). These days only 85 per cent of the German population (even less in major cities) is ethnically German, and ethnic minorities are much more visible than they were in the 1970s (Ferree 2012: 214). Events like 9/11 and the subsequent so-called 'war on terror' had further implications for discourses of German national belonging. It was around the beginning of the century that a shift in the public perception of migrants from Turkey, Germany's largest minority, from 'Turks' to 'Muslims' took place (Yildiz 2009: 474; Chin 2010: 577). Globally, Muslims have turned into 'a source of anxiety' (Yildiz 2009: 475) since 9/11, and this worldwide phenomenon

has specific implications in the German context, in which questions around who is inside and outside German culture (which has seen itself as predominately white and Christian) have dominated political discourse. Even the success in the FIFA World Cup of 2010 of the German men's football team, with its players from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, has helped unsettle the concept of 'Germanness' (see Stehle and Weber 2013), despite Merkel's claim that year that multiculturalism had failed in Germany (*Spiegel Online* 2010).

In this chapter, we explore the categories gender and sexuality as they intersect with class and ethnicity and with questions of national belonging in the Berlin Republic of the early 21st century. Rather than treating gender, sexuality, nationality, race, and class as 'identity categories', discursively constructed or otherwise,³ this chapter will explore them as something the body 'does' or 'feels', something that affects the body which, in turn, has an effect on the space that body inhabits, the bodies and other objects it comes into contact with, and the world in which that body operates (Ahmed 2004; Deleuze 1992). Poststructuralist theory regards gender, sexuality, and biological sex, but also nationality and ethnicity, as discursively constructed, as fluid and mutually constitutive;⁴ that is to say that how masculinity or the 'male' body is 'done' and 'felt' at any given moment is always also about how Germanness, ethnicity (including white Germanness), and class are being 'done' and 'felt'.

Today Germany is part of a transnational world and 'global mediascape' (Stehle 2012a: 3; Appadurai 1996) which shapes national discourses on gender and sexuality. At the fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, gender was defined as 'the target of equality policy' and gender mainstreaming became a 'central strategic idea' (Ferree 2012: 185). That was endorsed by the European Union two years later in its Treaty of Amsterdam, which named gender mainstreaming a 'primary strategy' (Ferree 2012: 188) and mandated that EU countries pass an anti-discrimination law to outlaw discrimination on the basis of gender, sexuality, nationality and ethnic origin, age, disability, worldview, language, and religion (Germany proved particularly resistant to this law, however, and passed it only in 2006, under Merkel).⁵ A paradigm shift attributable to the transnational context of the Berlin Republic has enabled new discursive framings of gender and sexuality: in Beijing in 1995 'gender'⁶ rather than 'women' became 'the key word' after feminists had argued successfully for the term on account of the multiplicity and fluidity it enabled (Ferree 2012: 184). The ground had been prepared in Germany by the poststructural approach to gender, sexuality, and the body that American scholars such as Judith Butler had introduced in the early 1990s. Butler's iconic *Gender Trouble* of 1990, in which she set out her ideas of gender as performative, was published in German in 1991 (as *Das Unbehagen der Geschlechter*; Butler 1991), and was hugely influential. Ferree attributes Butler's resonance, particularly amongst younger Germans, to the weakness of the 'macrostructural approaches' of German feminist theory in the context of 'centuries of slow change, deeply institutionalised patterns, and collective identities anchored in material positions'. Ferree also points to the 'increasingly widespread doubt about the unity of interests among women' after feminist interventions by the likes of black and disabled women who did not feel represented by largely white and middle-class feminists (2012: 179). Conceiving of gender as performative, Butler allowed feminists, amongst others, 'to think about choice and change in women's and men's lives' (Ferree 2012: 179). The impact of scholars such as Butler and, more recently, J. Jack Halberstam (1998, 2005) is evident in contemporary Berlin, a hub of the queer activist scene, where, as we will discuss, various – sometimes radical – genders, sexualities, and bodies are lived, felt, and performed, with repercussions for what Berlin and Germany have come to mean internationally.

Femininities in Germany

One of the opening scenes of Kutluğ Ataman's film *Lola and Bilidikid* (1998/1999, *Lola und Bilidikid*) plays with the fluidity of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and class: three Turkish-German transvestites calling themselves 'die Gastarbeiterinnen' (the (female) guest workers) perform in a queer bar in Berlin's Kreuzberg district. Playing with clichés of the oriental woman, the worker, and the devout Turkish housewife, they reveal femininity, race, ethnicity, and class to be something the body does, regardless of its biology, or something the body 'puts on' – quite literally here in terms of gender: the first sentence spoken by Kalipso, one of the 'Gastarbeiterinnen', in the film is, 'My tits? Where are my tits?' Femininity so overtly performed is clearly marked as drag, and that arguably leads the viewer to see the working-class and ethnic dimensions to the performance also as drag.

But what of more conventional or, to use R.W. Connell's term with regard to gender, 'hegemonic' forms of German femininity, such as motherhood (Connell 2005 [1995])? The authors of *Wir Alphamädchen* (*We Alpha Girls*; a publication to be seen in the context of new feminisms in Germany, as discussed below), refer critically to the 'Mutter-Kind-Symbiose made in Germany' (mother-child-symbiosis made in Germany) and the complex myth ('komplexer Mythos') of motherhood that exists nowhere as it does in Germany (Haaf *et al.* 2009 [2008]: 223, 164). Telling with regard to the cultural and ideological importance of motherhood is the existence of a word to denote a neglectful mother: "'Rabenmutter'", explains Efstratia Zafeirio, 'is a very German term which incidentally does not exist in any other language' ("Rabenmutter" ist schon eine sehr deutsche Bezeichnung, die übrigens in keiner anderen Sprache zu finden ist'; cited in Dorn 2006: 273). The central importance of, and emotional investment in, motherhood was clear in public reactions to the liberal family policy proposed by Christian Democrat Ursula von der Leyen, Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth from 2005 to 2009 (Ferree 2012: 206–13). In February 2007 she provoked a furore by demanding that the provision of state-financed crèches be extended, thereby breaking with the traditional model of German womanhood as housewife and mother typically propagated by her own party and its Bavarian counterpart, the CSU. Despite protest from within the CDU/CSU as well as from religious commentators, von der Leyen pursued this policy with tenacity. At her initiative, parental benefit (*Elterngeld*) was introduced in January 2007 to replace family allowance (*Erziehungsgeld*), with the stipulation that men take at least two months of the total 14 months as paternity leave for the couple to be eligible, thus further destabilising traditional understandings of gendered roles.

At around the same time, and arguably in response to the policies of von der Leyen, TV presenter Eva Herman (*Das Eva-Prinzip*, 2006; *The Eve Principle*) and journalist Frank Schirmacher were arguing that women should return to the home because of a decline in the national birth rate. In his non-fiction bestsellers *Das Methusalem-Komplott* (2004, *The Methuselah Plot*) and *Minimum* (2006), Schirmacher railed against the collapse of the German family and the fact that society was getting older, arguing that women should devote themselves to the private sphere. Herman, too, sees the responsibility for Germany's national fate with German women. She called for women to get in touch with their motherly, caring side and to fulfil the 'true purpose' ('wahre Bestimmung') divinely bestowed on them (2006: 27). As the authors of *Wir Alphamädchen* point out, that discussion can be understood as an antifeminist backlash: 'Suddenly a debate about Germans dying out became an argument about women's life roles' ('Plötzlich wurde aus der Debatte ums Aussterben der Deutschen ein Streit um die Lebensmodelle von Frauen'; Haaf *et al.* 2009 [2008]: 156). Even demographers see the framing

of this argument in demographic terms as a misrepresentation; societal problems, they claim, are being ‘demographised’. Moreover, according to economists, the number of children born has only a minimal impact on economic growth (Haaf *et al.* 2009 [2008]: 157). What might be at stake here is not so much the funding of pensions (tax-paying immigrants could help with that) but, it has been argued, the engagement of German women for the preservation of the German genetic makeup (‘Erhaltung des deutschen Genmaterials’; Buttewegge, cited in Haaf *et al.* 2009 [2008]: 157).

Haaf *et al.* are also critical of the discourse on women’s ‘choice’, particularly when it comes to decisions like giving up one’s job to devote oneself entirely to motherhood: women are far from on an equal footing with men with regard to making that ‘choice’, and only certain privileged women can afford the luxury of ‘choosing’ not to work. An increasing number of women, they argue, are returning to their domestic role as mothers because it is practically impossible both to have enough time to devote to one’s children and to have a career, despite the existence of so-called ‘new fathers’ who are supposedly more involved in childrearing, especially since the introduction of the new parental benefit scheme. The ideology and mythology still surrounding motherhood today, bolstered by more general historically and culturally rooted suspicions about the state’s role in childcare provision and the quality of that provision, mean that motherhood becomes, alongside one’s career, a ‘monster project’ (Haaf *et al.* 2009 [2008]: 168–70).

For women to succeed in their career, they need to break through the notorious glass ceiling. Although Germany has a female chancellor and prominent women like Ursula von der Leyen and Andrea Nahles in the cabinet, only 36.5 per cent of politicians in the Bundestag are women (web source 1). In the world of finance, a survey carried out by the Berlin initiative ‘Frauen in die Aufsichtsräte’ (2011; More women on the boards of directors) found that of 160 market-listed companies, only one had a female CEO and only 6.5 per cent of those on the board of directors were women (*Spiegel Online* 2011). These statistics lend credence to the calls for a Europe-wide female quota in major commercial enterprises, to which – after much heated debate in parliament – the German government is opposed, aiming instead for regulation at the national level (*Spiegel Online* 2013).

In this broad context, a younger generation of largely middle-class, white German women is, once again, withdrawing into the private realm. The ‘Biedermeier generation’ (Dostert 2010) displays a ‘longing for the idyll of the 1950s’ (‘Sehnsucht nach Fünfziger-Jahre-Idyll’; Haaf *et al.* 2009 [2008]: 21). Films like Ed Herzog’s *Schwesterherz* (2006; *Darling Sister*), in which career woman Anna gives up her job and finds fulfilment in married life, as well as the ARD docu-soap *Die Bräuteschule 1958* (2007; *Brides’ School 1958*), in which ten women are ‘taken back’ to 1958 and drilled in how to become domestic goddesses, propagate what can be called a new social conservatism. The German state has actively encouraged women – or rather certain women – to stay at home and look after their children. Germany’s *Ehegattensplitting* – tax breaks for the spouse who is the (main) breadwinner – has financially rewarded a traditionally heterosexual constellation of working husband and housewife. As of 2013, however, the constellation of working wife and housewife/working husband and househusband in same-sex partnerships is also eligible for *Ehegattensplitting*. Since August 2013 a controversial childcare supplement (*Betreuungsgeld*, €100 per month in 2013; €150 per month in 2014) has been paid to parents bringing up children of one to two years at home. This initiative appears to benefit financially privileged families in which one partner can afford not to work; those receiving Hartz IV (combined unemployment and social security benefits introduced in 2005) are not entitled to receive the new childcare supplement.

Feminist responses

It is in response to this, but also in the context of global feminist movements and developments in new media, that we can understand a new form of feminism in Germany, with *Wir Alphamädchen* (Haaf *et al.* 2009 [2008]), *Die neue F-Klasse* (Dorn 2006; *The New F-Class*), *Neue Deutsche Mädchen* (Hensel and Raether 2008; *New German Girls*), and the pop-feminist *Missy Magazine* (launched in 2008) leading the way.⁷ Haaf *et al.* speak of a ‘print hurricane’ (‘publizistische[n] Orkan’; 2009 [2008]: 9). Contributing to the discussion are German-language feminist blogs such as *Mädchenmannschaft* (*Girls’ Team*), founded by the authors of *Wir Alphamädchen* in 2007 (web source 2).⁸ Despite their varying quality,⁹ the print publications often appear with major publishing houses such as Rowohlt and Piper, suggesting a renewed need or desire (and hence a mainstream market) for feminism in 21st-century Germany, where until very recently post-feminism seemed to have become the new buzzword, and feminism largely meant the persona of Alice Schwarzer and her magazine *Emma*, published since 1977. The majority of new feminist publications seek to differentiate themselves from Schwarzer, and point to her tendency to focus on women as victims (of prostitution, porn, trafficking) and her negativity towards sex, most obvious in the ‘PornNo!’ campaign (Haaf *et al.* 2009 [2008]; Hensel and Raether 2008). What is more, they demonstrate an increasing desire for men – cis¹⁰ or otherwise – to play an active role in the feminist project, which constitutes quite a break with the Federal Republic’s feminist tradition of gender autonomy.¹¹

A more recent media hurricane occurred at the start of 2013, when a debate on everyday sexism in Germany raged, leading to an unusual degree of visibility for feminism. Journalist Laura Himmelreich’s article for the magazine *Stem* on Rainer Brüderle, parliamentary chairperson of Germany’s liberal party (FDP), exposed his sexist behaviour towards her. In response, a feminist blogger in Berlin, Anne Wizorek, started a Twitter stream with the hashtag ‘Aufschrei’ (outcry), inviting women to tweet their experiences of everyday sexism. The stream attracted over 60,000 tweets in the space of a few days, and Wizorek was invited on to the Günther Jauch political show to discuss that phenomenon.

Other recent examples of German feminisms in a global context include the various ‘ladyfests’ taking place in German cities since 2003, and annually in the case of Berlin’s LaD.I.Yfest. According to their website, ‘LaD.I.Yfest is a non-profit, “Do It Yourself” (D.I.Y.) festival of music, art, film, discussions, and workshops. It is organised and orchestrated on a voluntary basis by feminist woman/lesbian/trans* (wlt*) activists, artists and musicians of various genders’.¹² A more recent, controversial phenomenon embraced by certain German feminists is the so-called ‘SlutWalk’ (or ‘Sl*tWalk’), which started in Toronto in January 2011 after a representative of the Toronto police commented that ‘women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimized’ (web source 4). The first German SlutWalk, protesting against the idea that women and their appearance are responsible for rape, took place in July 2011 in Passau and was followed by SlutWalks in other cities, including Berlin, Munich, and Hamburg, on 13 August of that year. The term ‘slut’ and its potential to be reappropriated has been problematised, particularly by People of Colour activists, who point out that that term has a different and more complex history and present for black women.¹³ In the case of the Berlin SlutWalk this led to bitter disputes. Even more contested is the phenomenon ‘Femen’, a transnational group of feminists founded in Ukraine in 2008 and notorious for their topless protests. The group became active in Germany in the summer of 2012, and was celebrated by Schwarzer’s magazine *Emma* for its zero-tolerance approach to sex work and attitude to Islam (*EMMAonline* 2012). As part of their campaign ‘Fickt die Sexindustrie!’ (Fuck the sex industry!), Femen Germany staged a demonstration on Hamburg’s notorious Herbertstraße on 25 January 2013, two days before

International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The choice of date was no coincidence: the full title of the campaign was ‘Fickt die Sexindustrie – Der Sexindustriefaschismus des 21sten Jahrhunderts?’ (Fuck the sex industry – sex industry fascism of the 21st century?) where a swastika took the place of the ‘x’ in ‘Sexindustrie’. The group hung the words ‘Arbeit macht frei’, familiar from Auschwitz’s notorious arch, at the entry point to the street and carried banners with slogans such as ‘Prostitution is genocide’. That instrumentalisation and relativisation of the Holocaust and fascism provoked indignation both inside Germany and further afield (*e*vibes* 2013).

Femen Germany’s instrumentalisation of fascism and the Holocaust recalls a similar rhetorical flourish from Schwarzer a few years previously. Schwarzer identified the headscarf as ‘the flag of the campaign of the holy warriors’ (‘die Fahne des Feldzuges der Gotteskrieger’) and called ‘Islamic crusaders’ the ‘Fascists of the 21st century’ (‘[d]iese islamistischen Kreuzzügler [sind] die Faschisten des 21. Jahrhunderts’; Schwarzer 2002). This brings us to a discussion of discourses around Muslim gender relations, and Muslim women in particular. According to Rita Chin, ‘Muslim gender relations [. . .] now serve as the most telling symptom of the supposedly intractable clash between European civilisation and Islam’ (2010: 558). In that ‘gendered framing of difference’, the Muslim woman with her headscarf becomes ‘a key figure through which objections to Islamic cultural difference have been articulated’ (Chin 2010: 557–8). Although there are well educated, high-achieving Muslim women who, as an article in *Die Zeit* announced in 2010, wear the headscarf with ‘their head held high’ (Schüle 2010), the hip hop singer Sahira Awad being a popular example (*Islamische Zeitung* 2007), many feminists as well as sociologists have assumed that Muslim women have ‘virtually no room for individual agency’ (Chin 2010: 566). Following in the footsteps of sociological studies on Turkish women in Germany published in the 1970s and 1980s (Chin 2010: 564–70), Necla Kelek’s *Die fremde Braut* (2005; *The foreign bride*) gives what claims to be documentary insight into the living conditions of Muslim women in Germany, who live a life of abuse and oppression under Muslim patriarchy (see Yildiz 2009: 477–81). This kind of ‘melodramatic social critique’ exists in what is clearly a healthy market alongside autobiographical accounts or ‘victim testimonials’ (Cheesman 2007: 113–15) by battered Muslim women themselves, representatives of what Karin Yeşilada has termed the ‘geschundene Suleika’ (maltreated Suleika) (1997; see also Yildiz 2009: 481). These books feed into a discussion of the extent to which non-Western, religiously and culturally ‘different’ gender relations are compatible with supposedly Western, that is democratic, enlightened values, thus implicitly affirming white, middle-class, Christian German beliefs and practices (Yildiz 2009: 479). Notwithstanding former President Christian Wulff’s assertion that Islam belongs to Germany (Wulff 2010: 6), the debates surrounding Muslim gender practices can be read as an expression of national anxieties (Yildiz 2009: 481).

An interesting case study with regard to what might be termed ‘other’ femininities, that is non-traditionally German femininities, is the Turkish–German journalist, academic, actress, and rap artist Lady Bitch Ray (Reyhan Şahin) who was a media phenomenon for a brief time around 2007–08 (Stehle 2012a: 159). Lady Bitch Ray styled herself a ‘hypersexualized “ghetto bitch”’ (cited in Stehle 2012a: 158) and deconstructed clichés, found typically in male rap and hip hop, in explicitly sexual and highly ironic ways in her music. For Maria Stehle, Lady Bitch Ray is intentionally a highly perplexing character for Germany, in ‘[t]he combination of her criticism of German society and her emphasis on being Turkish’ (2012a: 160); ‘[h]er performances worked with and through clichés that are not only gendered, but simultaneously racialized and aimed to challenge the constructions of women, of “Turkish” women, and the co-construction of the Turkish macho-man’ (Stehle 2012b: 241). Journalists repeatedly homed in on the question of Lady Bitch Ray’s Turkishness and how she was received in the Turkish community.

Interestingly, she repeatedly asserted that it was ‘German society’ rather than Turks who had a problem with her (Stehle 2012a: 161): ‘The German society is all stuck up, they have a tree-trunk up their ass. And I pull that out, piece by piece’ (cited in Stehle 2012b: 241). That the phenomenon of Lady Bitch Ray was so short-lived might well suggest that what she represents, particularly in terms of the challenges posed to hegemonic constructions of gender, sexuality, and Germanness, is too radical. Stehle concludes: ‘The media frenzy over her performances confirms that Lady Bitch Ray uncovered taboos and for a short amount of time was granted the space to make her intervention; her silencing indicates, however, that ultimately, there is no space for a Turkish–German sexualized and feminist ghetto bitch in Germany’ (Stehle 2012a: 161).¹⁴

Masculinities and Germanness

It is not just with regard to Turkish and Muslim femininities that questions of national and cultural belonging are played out. In May 2012, following a botched procedure by a Muslim doctor, the Cologne district court determined that the circumcision of young boys for religious purposes is bodily harm. That provoked a heated debate about religious freedom in Germany, before, in December 2012, the German parliament passed draft legislation to allow the continued circumcision of Jewish and Muslim boys (web source 5). ‘Other’ masculinities, like ‘other’ femininities, have become a canvas on to which questions about Germanness can be projected and on which they can be played out. Following media reports of violence in schools in Berlin’s Neukölln district in 2006, as well as media coverage of the Paris riots of 2005, young immigrant men were cast in the German mainstream press as

sexist and violent – the ultimate perpetrator and the ultimate Other. In discourses about youth violence, the figure of the disenfranchised East–German (sic) Neo-Nazi vanished almost completely; roles for victims and perpetrators were recast. In short, young migrants did not *have* problems any longer, they *were* problems; the protected, contained, and instrumentalized other of the multicultural ideology was transformed into the violent ghetto Turk who cannot and does not want to integrate.

(Stehle 2012a: 14; emphasis in original)

It seems that Germany’s ‘other men’ play a vital new role in the country’s perception of itself as a modern, egalitarian, and democratic society.

More mainstream ‘German’ masculinities are contested in the face of these ethnic, cultural, and religious ‘others’. A threat to working-class masculinity, posed by queer masculinity, is explored (for example) in Angelina Maccarone’s film *Unveiled* (2005; *Fremde Haut*),¹⁵ in which a lesbian Iranian asylum seeker takes on the identity of a man in order to stay in Germany. The film unsettles a binary understanding of gender (Jeremiah 2011: 591), uncovering its constructedness. The main character’s unstable, ethnically ‘other’ (and queer) masculinity challenges German working-class white masculinity and thereby gets to the heart of anxieties in the face of the ethnic and fe/male other. In a similar vein, in conversation with the interview magazine *Galore*, German-Jewish writer Maxim Biller stated: ‘I consider Germans to be prudes – German men anyway’ (‘Ich halte die Deutschen für prüde – die deutschen Männer jedenfalls’; 2008: 25). Biller here destabilises ‘the historical German–Jewish opposition where “the Jew” served as a counter-image – a necessity even – in the construction of Germanness’ (Matthes 2012: 324). By subverting the power structures underlying the traditional ‘German–Other’ dyad in some of his fictional writing as well as newspaper columns, Biller, like Lady Bitch Ray, makes the fragility and the precariousness of contemporary German masculinity explicit.

In the context of the challenges posed by so-called ‘other’ masculinities, as well as the changes that ‘hegemonic’ German masculinity has undergone in recent years, there appears to be a certain anxiety about, or a will to discuss and pin down, German masculinities today. In January 2013, the English-language magazine *EXBERLINER* published a 14-page special feature on German men. The words ‘oh BOY!’ – a reference to a film of that name that is set in Berlin and focuses on failed German masculinity (2012) – are printed in large pink font on the front cover, above the face of the most recent Mister Germany (Figure 16.1). The feature includes an article on men as victims of domestic violence perpetrated by women (Riceburg 2013) and an article on how ‘new fathers’ are discriminated against when it comes to their custody rights (Obermueller 2013). It can, then, be read in the context of an antifeminist backlash. In the quiz ‘How much of a German man are you?’, the short blurb to describe those who have achieved the most points is as follows:

You choose function over fashion, reason over spontaneity and principles over romance. Post-war guilt and decades of German feminist upbringing have turned you into a proud, penny-pinching, pontificating *Sitzpinkler* [a man who sits down to urinate]. On the outside, you might come across as a little feminine [. . .] but in bed, your inner beast expresses itself. (EXBERLINER 2013)

Mister Germany, Jörn Kamphius, explains his preference for foreign women with explicit reference to German women’s emancipation: ‘It’s more to do with the personality of German women. They’re constantly trying to show how strong they are. I feel these women are not



Figure 16.1 Mr Germany

Courtesy of *EXBERLINER* www.exberliner.com

themselves and it makes me feel sad. Dealing with them takes too much energy' (O'Donovan and Castellví 2013). Kamphius is styled to present a clear example of 'metrosexual' masculinity: a straight man who pays careful attention to his appearance. His image on the front cover represents a form of masculinity that can be seen in a global context: internationally famous figures like David Beckham, but also the increasing visibility of queer masculinities, have influenced constructions of the masculine far beyond their immediate context.

Old role models no longer seem suitable, but at the same time they are still in place. Women remain at home in over half of German families in which the children are of school age and German wives earn on average only 18 per cent of the family income (Haaf *et al.* 2009 [2008]: 213). Nonetheless, a certain backlash is also emerging from within the Ministry of Family Affairs: in April 2010 Kristina Schröder, then Federal Minister for Family Affairs, pointed to the supposed discrimination that boys at German schools face after years of explicit support for girls (Spiewak 2010). On International Women's Day in 2012, the only public engagement Schröder accepted was an invitation to the ceremony celebrating the 'top fathers of the year' (Wichmann 2012). That should be read in the context of the greater involvement of fathers as part of the 'Elterngeld' policy and as a general encouragement for men to combine their careers with fatherhood more successfully; but it also underlines her political priorities.

A striking example of feminist backlash – a phenomenon that needs to be seen in a global context¹⁶ – is the launch of the German-language website 'wikiMANNia.org' in 2009. Founded on the assumption that women are privileged and men are disadvantaged in politics, law, and society, the aim is to share 'feminism-free knowledge' ('feminismusfreies Wissen') with others, especially 'free men', and to provide 'supporting arguments' ('Argumentationshilfe') for men fighting injustice in, for instance, the workplace, family law, or feminist criticism (web source 6). Probably alluding to the mythopoetic men's movements of the 1980s that developed as a response to feminist efforts of the 1970s and 1980s (Adams and Savran 2002: 5), this website reveals the anxieties that come with the destabilisation of traditional, long-established forms of masculinity.

Queering Germanness

Similar anxieties are evident, and again often couched in national terms, when it comes to what we might refer to as a queering of the traditional German family. In his column for the ultraconservative tabloid *Bild-Zeitung* of 23 August 2012, Franz Josef Wagner effectively tells queer Germans that they should be grateful for what they have: civil partnership, as of August 2001, but with fewer rights than married couples. Wagner invokes the nation: 'what a glorious time it is for you. Nobody locks you up, you love your partner, you are allowed to love them. You are German married partners [. . .]. We've become a better Germany' ('Was für eine glorreiche Zeit für Euch. Niemand steckt Euch ins Gefängnis, Ihr liebt Eure Partner, Ihr dürft sie lieben. Ihr seid deutsche Ehepartner [. . .]. Wir sind ein besseres Deutschland geworden'). But the idea that Germany's queers¹⁷ might overstep the mark, demanding the same rights as heterosexual partners, provokes in Wagner a certain queasiness: 'gay marriage vs. man-&-woman marriage. I don't feel well. Homosexuals, biologically speaking, can't have children' ('Homo-Ehe vs. Mann-&-Frau-Ehe. Ich fühle mich nicht wohl. Homosexuelle kriegen biologisch keine Kinder'; Mentz 2012). Queers, of course, do reproduce, as the existence of a term for queer families – 'rainbow families' ('Regenbogenfamilien') – testifies.¹⁸ In any case, family is not automatically based on biological relations. For some, that is the problem. CDU politician Katherina Reiche contrasts the German (heterosexual) family with same-sex partnerships,

which, for her, clearly do not count as families: ‘our future lies in the hand of families, not in same-sex partnerships’ (‘unsere Zukunft liegt in der Hand der Familien, nicht in gleichgeschlechtlichen Lebensgemeinschaften’; cited in Mayer 2012).

While Germany may have had an ‘out’ gay mayor of Berlin (Wowerit), an ‘out’ gay former foreign minister (Guido Westerwelle), civil partnerships, and even a lesbian wedding in mainstream soaps like *Verbotene Liebe* (Forbidden Love), Germany’s queer citizens do not have equal rights. A civil partnership is not the same as marriage, neither at the level of its cultural meaning nor at that of the rights that those partners have in more tangible terms. Unlike in some other European countries, gay partners are not allowed to adopt a child together; as of 2005, the non-biological parent is allowed to adopt the biological child of their civil partner (*Stiefkindadoption*) and, as determined by the Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) in February 2013, a civil partner may adopt an already adopted child (*Sukzessivadoption*) (Schmidt 2013). The Merkel-led CDU looks to be on its way to endorsing gay marriage, or at least to giving those in civil partnerships equal rights (Rietzschel 2013). Some question whether marriage is actually worth striving for, regardless of one’s sexual preference (compare Warner 1999), and ask why adoption and childrearing need to be carried out in the context of state-supported two-parent families at all. It is interesting to note that Germany’s Green party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) favours the introduction of parenthood for more than two parents (‘Mehrelternschaft’), which would mean that, in legal terms, a child could have up to four parents.

In fact, the majority of Germany’s queer citizens seem content to live socially quite conservative lives. Lisa Duggan has called this stance ‘homonormative’, defining it as follows: ‘A politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption’ (2002: 179). Germany’s lesbian magazine *L.MAG*, launched in 2003, regularly includes queer fashion, travel, and wedding features, moving one reader to complain of its similarity to an advertising pamphlet (‘wie ein Werbeblatt’; *L.MAG* May/June 2011: 5). *L.MAG* includes political articles and covers a range of political perspectives, but its tendency towards what Heidi Nast has termed ‘market virility’ (2002: 878) is unmistakable.

Writing in a US American context, Jasbir K. Puar, combining the terms ‘homonormative’ and ‘nationalism’, has coined the term ‘homonationalism’. She argues that in the context of the ‘war on terror’, certain homonormative subjects have been ‘folded into’ the national imaginary at the expense of other minorities in the USA and more broadly:

National recognition and inclusion [. . .] is contingent upon the segregation and disqualification of racial and sexual others from the national imaginary. At work in this dynamic is a form of sexual exceptionalism – the emergence of national homosexuality, what I term ‘homonationalism’ – that corresponds with the coming out of the exceptionalism of American empire.

(2007: 2)

By this logic, certain kinds of homosexuals are accepted as part of the national project at the expense of others. In the German context, a homonationalist stance is evident in Wagner’s assertions in the *Bild-Zeitung*, cited above (‘You are German [civilly] married partners [. . .] We’ve become a better Germany’). Same-sex relationships can also function as paradigmatic examples of German tolerance: Ferree notes that ‘same-sex relationships and gender equality are used for “teaching tolerance” to those who are framed as lacking it’ in the citizenship classes immigrants

are required to take in order to learn about modern European culture (Ferree 2012: 217–19; Brown 2010). Undergirding this strategy is the assumption that those immigrants come from always already homophobic Muslim cultures.

Judith Butler's decision to turn down the prize for civil courage awarded by CSD Berlin (Christopher Street Day, Berlin's gay pride) in June 2010 requires mention, not least because of the public attention it received. Butler turned down the award to take a stance against the racism of groups like Maneo (an emergency telephone line for gay men), which, according to Butler, was fighting homophobia through fighting against other minorities (Hamann 2010), and from which the CSD organising committee had failed to distance itself. In her speech at the event, she drew attention to homonationalism in Germany and elsewhere:

We've all noticed that homo-, bi-, lesbian-, trans-, queer- people can be used by those who want to wage war: cultural wars against migrants through cultivated Islamophobia and military wars against Iraq and Afghanistan. At such times and through these means we are recruited to nationalism and militarism.

(Wir haben alle bemerkt, dass Homo-, Bi-, Lesbisch-, Trans-, Queer-Leute benutzt werden können von jenen, die Kriege führen wollen, d. h. kulturelle Kriege gegen Migrant_innen durch forcierte Islamophobie und militärische Kriege gegen Irak und Afghanistan. Während dieser Zeit und durch diese Mittel werden wir rekrutiert für Nationalismus und Militarismus.)

(web source 7)

Butler pointed to groups active in Germany and Berlin to which she would have passed on the award if she had felt in a position to accept it, including GLADT (Gays & Lesbians aus der Türkei), LesMigraS, SUSPECT, and ReachOut, all of which play an active role in Berlin's alternative pride event, *Transgenialer CSD* (Transfabulous CSD).

Situating itself explicitly in the tradition of the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York's Christopher Street, Berlin's *Transgenialer CSD* emphatically declares itself: 'For the abolishment of the binary gender order! – against heteronormativity [. . .] against every trans*pathologisation! Recognition that homosexuality and transsexuality are reasons to grant asylum!! The right to stay for everyone! [. . .] Fight patriarchy and classism!!' ('Für die Abschaffung der Zweigeschlechterordnung! – gegen Heteronormativität [. . .] Gegen jede Trans*pathologisierung! Anerkennung von Homosexualität und Transsexualität als Asylgrund!! Bleiberecht für alle! [. . .] Patriarchat und Klassismus bekämpfen!!'; web source 8). That brings us on to the idea of 'trans', with its emphasis on liminality or, better, movement and crossing, with reference to the categories gender, sexuality, the body, but also nationality and ethnicity.

Questions of national, ethnic, religious, and class belonging as they intersect with questions of gender and sexuality are at the centre of a large body of recent cultural production. In the German context, it seems that brown bodies serve as a site on which issues of sex and gender can be played out, certainly in recent films such as *Lola and Bilidikid* and *Unveiled*. Here the idea of 'trans' in relation not only to gender, but also to nationality is of particular interest. 'Trans' allows us, as Christopher Clark has explored in his reading of *Lola and Bilidikid*, to describe 'a moment of in-betweenness, a liminal status that may represent a point in a process of transformation from one category to another' and to understand the 'instability of cultures' (2006: 556). Like 'queer', 'trans', with its emphasis on movement and crossing, enables us to regard sexuality, gender, and bodies, but also culture and nationality, as mutable.

A sense of liminality or movement with regard to gender and the body was apparent at the drag contest organised in 2011 by Berlin's queer magazine *Siegessäule*, where the winner was, according to that magazine,

a drag person who didn't seem to fit into the queen-king model: Kay P.Rinha, fat, bearded, makeup, showing lots of skin. Was that a plump woman, dressed up as a man who was dressed up as a woman? Or a man, who was a woman portraying a man?

(eine Drag-Person, die so gar nicht in die Queen-King-Schemata zu passen schien: Kay P.Rinha, dick, bärtig, geschminkt, viel Haut zeigend. War das jetzt eine füllige Frau, die sich als Mann verkleidet, der sich als Frau verkleidet? Oder ein Mann, der eine Frau war, die einen Mann darstellt?)

(Göbel 2012: 22)

As the combination of beard and makeup suggest and as the article's rhetorical questions further emphasise, distinctions between masculinity and femininity, but also between 'male' and



Figure 16.2 *Ansichtssache* (TROUBLE X)

Courtesy of www.trouble-x.info

‘female’ bodies, recede here. In fact, the body and gender identity – if we want to differentiate between the two at all – of performer Kay P.Rinha can more usefully be seen, following Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Puar (2007), as a queer ‘assemblage’. Berlin’s variety of sexual and gendered bodies emerges in an invitation to the queer sex party ‘be_cunt’ published in *Siegessäule*, embracing ‘women, lesbians, trans*, kings, dykes, ladys, genderfucks, femmes, tomboys, and everything in between’ (‘Frauen, Lesben, Trans*, Kings, Dykes, ladys, Genderfucks, Femmes, Tomboys und alles, was dazwischen liegt’; *Siegessäule*, July 2012: 52). As a patch, to sew onto one’s clothing and produced by gender-queer Berlin blogger, activist, and artist, TROUBLE X, asserts, the binary model when it comes to gendered bodies is *Ansichtssache* (a question of opinion) (see Figure 16.2).

While Berlin is probably not ‘post-gender’ (S.G. 2013: 10), any more than it is post-national, those adjectives might, with some qualification, come close to describing the politics of parts of its queer subculture. However, as Sara Ahmed notes, the very idea of movement and transgression, so central to queer’s self-understanding, is itself privileged: ‘The idealization of movement, or transformation of movement into a fetish, depends on the exclusion of others who are already positioned as *not free in the same way*’ (2004: 152, emphasis in original; see also Puar 2007: 22–3). Berlin is not the only city to have a thriving ‘international’ queer culture and activist scene where ‘international’ means largely white and Western. It is important to acknowledge the privileged nature of parts of that scene. ‘Queerness’ is not desirable or equally accessible to everybody, and it is even possible to talk about what might be termed ‘queer-normativity’.¹⁹ Whilst parts of Berlin’s queer scene might term themselves ‘international’ – *Siegessäule* declared it was ‘go[ing] international’ in November 2012 and now includes an English translation of its calendar of events as well as an English-language column aimed explicitly at ‘the international crowd’ – that understanding of ‘international’ is clearly skewed to the Western world. And visitors to Berlin’s queer bars and clubs, to its annual queer BDSM festivals, Folsom Europe and the Easter Conference, or to Berlin’s Pornfilmfestival, to name but some of Berlin’s attractions for queer tourists, are also overwhelmingly white and Western.

Berlin’s reputation as a centre of alternative sexualities, genders, and bodies can be traced back to the interwar Weimar period, when a gender-bending Marlene Dietrich donned top hat and suspenders in her iconic role as cabaret performer Lola-Lola in Josef von Sternberg’s *The Blue Angel* (1928); when sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld was fighting for gay rights and challenging the notion of binary gender and sexuality through his theory of sexual intermediary types (*sexuelle Zwischenstufen*) at the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft; when Otto Dix and Jeanne Mammen were painting Berlin’s queer subcultures in works like *Eldorado* (1927, Dix) and *Sie repräsentiert* (1927, She represents, Mammen). Then, like now, Berlin’s thriving queer subculture, as well as its reputation for that, was dependent on movement and crossing. Dietrich would go to Hollywood with Josef von Sternberg, where they would capitalise on and fortify Weimar Berlin’s reputation as a centre for queer sexualities and genders (see *Morocco*, 1930, in particular). Christopher Isherwood, resident in Berlin from 1929 to 1933, would retrospectively write *Goodbye to Berlin* (1989 [1939]) and *Mr Norris Changes Trains* (2001 [1935]), which would inspire the Broadway show and then film *Cabaret* (1972). That film has, perhaps more than any other cultural product, secured Weimar Berlin’s reputation as an international centre of decadent, alternative sexual practices, genders, and bodies. Berlin still capitalises on that reputation, not least to appeal to tourists, queer or otherwise. Dietrich features prominently and, somewhat fittingly, she seems particularly visible in transitory spaces associated with crossing, movement, and liminality: a large mural of Dietrich in top hat and tails greets the traveller as they walk towards Eberswalder Straße underground station on the U2 line (see Figure 16.3); over-the-shoulder bags with Dietrich’s face on them are available to buy from various tourist shops at



Figure 16.3 The Marlene Dietrich mural, Eberswalder Straße

Photograph by Clare Bielby 2013

central crossing points such as Alexanderplatz and Schönefeld airport, where it is one of the last things the traveller sees before they arrive at the departure gate.

Berlin's reputation for alternative genders and sexualities jars with the often still conservative gender politics and the ideological significance of motherhood in contemporary Germany, with which we began. And nonetheless a queer and feminist political scene is thriving in the Berlin Republic, with Berlin itself taking centre stage. It is striking that Berlin's reputation in this regard is dependent on trans(national) bodies, genders, and sexualities. As Ena Lind, DJ and editor of the queer-feminist publication *Bend Over*, asserts in a *Siegessäule* interview, questioned on Berlin's queer scene and whether that scene lives up to its reputation: 'Yes, absolutely. In my view that comes from the constant international exchange, precisely because of Berlin's reputation' ('Eindeutig ja. Meiner Meinung nach kommt das vom ständigen internationalen Austausch, eben wegen ihres Rufes') (*Siegessäule* 2012).

Notes

- 1 All translations are the authors'.
- 2 Wowerit was put under considerable pressure by his own party as well as by the press to 'come out' (see Fahrn 2007).
- 3 Jasbir K. Puar, for example, understands 'queerness' as 'not an identity nor an anti-identity, but an assemblage that is spatially and temporally contingent' in the context of the limitations of 'intersectional identitarian modes' (2007: 204).
- 4 Our approach draws on poststructuralist gender theory. See in particular Judith Butler (1990, 1993, 2004); and Tamar Mayer (2000).
- 5 This should not be seen as a feminist gesture, not least because the anti-discrimination law is highly ambivalent in feminist terms, given that gender is demoted to become just one difference amongst others (Ferree 2012: 190, 207).
- 6 The word 'gender' would normally be translated into German as 'Geschlechtsidentität', but because this is not an entirely satisfactory translation, the English/US term 'gender' tends to be used.
- 7 See also von Schirach (2007), Koch-Mehrin (2007), Eismann (2007), and Stöcker (2007).
- 8 As Haaf *et al.* argue, there is a great deal of potential in new technology for feminist activism, if women can find their way into the traditionally masculine domain of technology (2009 [2008]: 125–36).
- 9 *Neue Deutsche Mädchen* is a particularly weak example: particularly troubling is how the authors universalise from a white, socially privileged, heterosexual perspective without displaying any interest in women of other sexualities, ethnicities, or social positions. They do not describe their project as feminist.
- 10 'cis' with regard to gender denotes those who live with the gender they were assigned at birth.
- 11 As Myra Marx Ferree explores in her study *Varieties of Feminism*, one of the major differences between West German and US forms of second-wave feminism is the former's 'central feminist self-definition as "autonomous"'. Autonomy 'meant naming women as a group whose solidarity had a theoretical justification in their reproductive power and a practical implication in their collective self-determination [. . .] Autonomy also meant a political place that was no longer in thrall to a socialist party and allowed women to determine their own needs apart for [sic] the state's paternalistic care' (Ferree 2012: 22, 80).
- 12 The first ever ladyfest took place in Olympia, USA in 2000 and has its roots in the US Riot Grrrl movement of the early 90s (web source 3). The asterisk attached to 'trans' 'serves as a placeholder for a wide spectrum of identities, lifestyles, and concepts, including some that may not (wish to) allow themselves to be positioned in terms of gender' (Time and Franzen 2012: 22–3).
- 13 See, for example, 'An Open Letter from Black Women to the SlutWalk' (2011).
- 14 In 2012 Lady Bitch Ray brought out the book *Bitchism – Emanzipation: Integration, Masturbation*, which shows she is not completely 'silenced'.
- 15 The English-language title, *Unveiled*, is interesting. While it clearly has religious connotations, Emily Jeremiah has pointed out that it 'suggests a truth uncovered – the truth of the sexed body – [which] the film itself does not' (2011: 592).
- 16 See e.g. http://en.wikimannia.org/Main_Page (accessed 13 March 2013).
- 17 We use the term 'queer' to encompass a wide spectrum of non-heterosexual individuals, from those who consciously reject and/or 'queer' heteronormative ways of being to those whom Puar has termed 'disciplinary queers': 'liberal, homonormative, diasporic' (Puar 2007: xxvii).
- 18 The term 'Regenbogenfamilien' encompasses queer parents who adopt as well as those who use reproductive technologies such as AI/IVF or surrogacy.
- 19 On 'Lookism', a disdain for femininity, and normativity in the queer scene and elsewhere, see Göbel (2012).

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