

Fig. 1. "Einst. Jetzt," *Der Floh* 39.40 (Okt. 1907): 4.

## Masculinity, Sexuality, and the German Nation: The Eulenburg Scandals and Kaiser Wilhelm II in Political Cartoons<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Between 1907 and 1909 the German public was regaled with daily revelations about the allegedly abnormal and effeminate sexuality displayed by the Kaiser's circle of friends and advisers, the generals, and the Imperial Chancellor. More than 350 political cartoons and substantially more detailed trial reports were placed in the public domain and were key to the development of certain discursive associations between masculinity, (homo)sexuality, and the nation. "What happened in camera in the courtroom at 1.30 p.m.," wrote the medical expert witness Magnus Hirschfeld in his court report,

was transmitted next day, with elaborations, to a large section of the left-wing and right-wing press. [...] It eventually ended up in innumerable local rags, was [...] taken up by the gutter press and thus [...] developed an immense power of suggestion among all circles of society. (Hirschfeld 4)<sup>2</sup>

It was not only in Germany that people poked fun at the allegedly homosexual tendencies of Germany's aristocracy and leading generals. All over Europe they became the butt of jokes. For example, an Austrian cartoon in the magazine *Der Floh*, published 6 October 1907, depicting two pairs of riding boots outside a closed door, suggested that a rendezvous was taking place here between two men. In a less decadent but apparently far distant past, there had once been a heterosexual pair of shoes (fig. 1). In fact, according to Hirschfeld, "nothing annoyed so many people as the circumstance that, in connection with [the trials], a slur was cast on the honour of our army and the discipline on which its greatness and reputation is based"

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Angela Davies (GHIL) / Jani Fulton. A shorter German version of this article was published in: Brunotte, Ulrike, and Rainer Herr (eds.): *Männlichkeiten und Moderne. Geschlecht in den Wissenskulturen um 1900*. Bielefeld 2008, 77-96.

<sup>2</sup> Unless indicated otherwise, the quotations from Hirschfeld, Harden, *Tägliche Rundschau*, and von Bülow were translated by Angela Davies.

(Hirschfeld 20). Germany's view of itself and its reputation seemed to be at stake. Obviously the honour of the nation was tied to particular forms of male behaviour which, over the course of the trials, were described in detail while being sexualized at the same time.

The exposure of homosexual desire in the leading circles around Wilhelm II served to criticise a particular unparliamentary political style, strongly associated with the Kaiser personally and his aristocratic circle, in terms of sexual codes as an expression of the state's lack of masculinity. The lack of real masculinity was not only linked with the decadent aristocracy but also presented as a pathological sexual abnormality and a sign of ill-health. Conversely, the bourgeoisie came to be seen as the guarantor of a soldierly, healthy masculinity and morality, and was promoted to the role of saviour of the fatherland. The prototypical counter-model was not just the aristocrat, but also the figure of the homosexual which, over just a few years, came to symbolize the threat of a feminization of the state and the German nation (zur Nieden, "Freundesliebe" 329-337; Baumgardt 21).

As a medical concept, homosexuality had not had a long history. For a long time, sodomy was regarded more as a sin and a vice than as a medical deviation from the norm. Not until the last third of the nineteenth century did medical men (working with homosexuals) attempt to establish their particular competence in distinguishing between healthy and unhealthy masculinity. The majority of doctors saw homosexual love as a pathological and perverse deviation from the norm. However, around 1900 Magnus Hirschfeld, a doctor from Berlin, actively advocated more tolerance for what was known as the third sex – in his view, a natural and innate condition for which one should be pitied, not punished. Incidentally, Hirschfeld set up the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee* in direct response to Oscar Wilde's conviction in London in 1895 and his imprisonment with hard labour for his infringement of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. In Germany, paragraph 175 of the penal code made immoral acts between men liable to punishment. Hirschfeld had launched a relatively successful petition against this paragraph, and his campaign found many sympathizers among bourgeois intellectuals. Yet despite the widespread effect of Hirschfeld's initiative and an explosion in the production of medical and scientific literature on contrary sexual feeling around 1900, it was really the trials around the sexual scandals that precipitated the public breakthrough of the modern concept of homosexuality. Instead of being a concealed sin, homosexuality became a widely discussed social topic.

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From the start, in the eyes of the German public, homosexuality was associated in a highly concrete and lasting way with high politics and a sort of conspiratorial male bonding, based on the assumption of a close connection between the political, social, and sexual order. Contemporaries found this plausible, largely because it was developed by a number of newly emerging fields of discourse at the same time, including sexology, ethnology, and psychoanalysis.<sup>3</sup> The position of ethnologist Ferdinand Karsch-Haack may be seen as typical of this trend. In 1911 he wrote: "Sexual love *may* not only [...] have a social impact [...] rather it *must*."<sup>4</sup> Thus, the type of sexual love practised says something about the sort of social organization that a group has imposed on itself.

This article tries to show how a discursive connection was built up historically between the construction of the collective and the individual subject in which masculinity and sexuality were central links. Caricatures played an important role in the process. In the fragmented German Confederation, political satire was subject to numerous censorship laws, its acuity and artistic qualities developing only slowly, in contrast to France and England. This changed after the foundation of the German Empire in 1871. By the end of the nineteenth century, magazines with a humorous or satirical bent were blossoming anew. This was in part due to the gradual loosening of censorship restrictions: by 1897, the number of prosecutions resulting from *Majestätsbeleidigung* (lèse-majesté), blasphemy, indecency or *grobem Unfug* (general mischief) sank continuously, to a total of only 14 in 1909 (Rebentisch 58-60).

Caricatures appear as spontaneous public reaction to public events which have not yet been fully processed (Steakley, *Freunde* 18), they expose elements of the cultural unconsciousness, allowing inferences about dominant mentalities and common attitudes regarding political and social events. Caricatures often claim to represent common sense positions, which, however, upon closer examination reveal themselves as being tied to contemporary moral attitudes or social and political beliefs and are subject to historical change. The caricatures related to the Eulenburg scandal have in common that while they appear to critique the aristocracy, they nevertheless uphold values such as national pride and security. They also appear to criticise the undermining of military discipline, but in doing so, retain an unquestioning, uncritical view of Prussian traditions. In mocking and ren-

3 On the connection of sexual and social order also cf. Coward 9-12; Bruns.

4 Karsch-Haack – in contrast to Benedict Friedlaender – did not assume that same-sex love could be explained by the general social predisposition of human kind (Karsch-Haack, *Das gleichgeschlechtliche Leben* 8, 659-660); on the controversy with Friedlaender cf. Karsch-Haack, *Beruhet die gleichgeschlechtliche Liebe auf Sozialibilität?*

dering problematic the modernist erosion of gender construction, they are also calling indirectly for its restitution (Steakley, *Freunde* 22).

In addition to allusions to male homosexuality, the cartoons which accompanied the scandal trials also reveal anti-Semitic reactions. This suggests a connection between the two exclusion strategies and shows the extent to which the categories of race, class, and gender permeated even the realm of high politics. In the following article, I will first describe the attacks of the bourgeois journalist Maximilian Harden on the *Liebenberger Tafelrunde*, a group surrounding Prince Philipp von Eulenburg-Hertefeld (1847-1921). Thereafter I shall analyse the course taken by the trials, and, finally, explore their ambivalent impact on and consequences for associations between masculinity, sexuality, and politics.

### Harden's Attacks on the *Liebenberger Tafelrunde*

From 1902, the Berlin journalist and publisher of *Die Zukunft*, one of Germany's most influential political weeklies, Maximilian Harden (real name: Maximilian Witkowski) (1861-1927) began deliberately collecting material to discredit Prince Eulenburg and his circle. Like Bismark, Harden had long considered Eulenburg's influence on the Kaiser politically questionable. In November 1906 Harden criticised the fact that Eulenburg took part in making appointments to high political office (Harden, "Präludium" 265), that he encouraged the Kaiser's tendency to favour an absolutist policy of personal rule (Harden, "Dies Irae" 302; Harden, "Präludium" 266), and that he contributed substantially to the Kaiser's pursuit of reckless, pacifist, and Francophile policies. In fact, during his time as a student and during the military career obligatory for one of his class, the Guards officer Philipp Friedrich Karl Alexander Botho Fürst zu Eulenburg and Hertefeld Graf von Sandels (1847-1921), son of a Prussian major and landowner in Königsberg, had already collected a circle of aristocratic friends which quickly became influential because of its contacts with Crown Prince Wilhelm Viktor Albert (later to be Kaiser Wilhelm II). In addition to Axel von Varnbüler, later to become embassy secretary, General Kuno von Moltke was among those at the heart of the circle.<sup>5</sup> All of its members belonged to the Prussian aristocracy and had pursued a military or diplomatic career. Moltke was aide-de-camp of the Emperor until 1902, and then town major of Berlin from 1905 to 1907. The men were linked by an extremely emotional and romantic friendship which, on their own testimony, differed from the socially dominant ideal of masculinity.<sup>6</sup> Taking romantic notions

5 On the members of the circle of friends cf. Hull, "Kaiser Wilhelm II." 194-195.

6 In this vein Axel von Varnbüler deliberates on the flawed societal ideal of masculinity in a letter from 1898, an ideal that the sensitive, literary-educated men like e.g. Dostojewskij may not be able to conform to (Hergemöller 707).

of friendship as a model, they played music and wrote poems together,<sup>7</sup> and used tender nicknames for each other, as the trials later revealed.

When Wilhelm II came to power in 1888, Eulenburg became one of Kaiser's most important advisers and his personal confidante (Röhl 134; Hull, "Kaiser Wilhelm II." 204-205). He had an important influence on the Kaiser's worldview, not least on his anti-Semitism (Hull, "Kaiser Wilhelm II." 215), and he succeeded in having his friends appointed to important political posts. Thus, he supported Bernhard von Bülow's appointment as Imperial Chancellor.

Eulenburg entertained the Kaiser at his estate, Liebenberg, near Templin (north of Berlin), providing hunting, singing, and theatrical performances which often degenerated into travesties. Burgrave (from 1900: Prince) Eberhard zu Dohna-Schlobitten (1846-1905) frequently played women's parts (Hergemöller 189), and the officer and theatre manager, Georg von Hülssen-Häselser (1858-1908), one of the Kaiser's former gambling partners, entertained the group with his performances as a prima ballerina in a tutu. In letters exchanged between the friends in this group, the Kaiser was often chummily called *das Liebchen* (sweetheart), as Harden's articles were to reveal to the German public.<sup>8</sup> Isabel V. Hull suspects that the Kaiser was seeking nourishment for his sensitive, cultivated side among the Liebenberg circle, while for outward show he liked to surround himself with the brilliance of soldierly masculinity (Hull, "Kaiser Wilhelm II." 204).

From 1906, Harden tried to increase the pressure on Eulenburg by publishing a series of articles in which he pointed to his so-called abnormal tendencies by calling him Phili, an allusion to the customs of the Liebenberg circle (Harden, "Präludium" 264-266). According to his own testimony, Harden was not interested in pursuing and exposing criminal offences against paragraph 175. In fact, in 1898 he was the first publisher to sign the petition of the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee* lobbying for the paragraph to be repealed (Steakley, "Iconography" 254). In his final statement at the Moltke-Harden trial, however, he distanced himself in principle from Hirschfeld's view of the equality of homosexuals:

Where several of them gather, they may cause harm unawares, especially at court, where normal men have a hard enough time. And if, as has become the fashion nowadays, the abnormal ones are praised as better, more noble human beings, then the healthy ones are driven to ruination. (Harden, "Schlussvortrag" 185)

In claiming that 'any man who has any feminine inclinations at all is absolutely unsuited for politics (cf. Harden, "Schlussvortrag" 185),' Harden was

7 Eulenburg's *Rosenlieder* (songs of roses) made him famous in Germany in the 1880s and 1890s. Moltke composed music for orchestra and regiment. Görtz and Hülksen staged dramas and comedies (Hull, "Kaiser Wilhelm II." 86).

8 This, for instance, was done in a letter by Axel von Varnbüler to Kuno von Moltke on 15 April 1898 (Röhl 128-129).

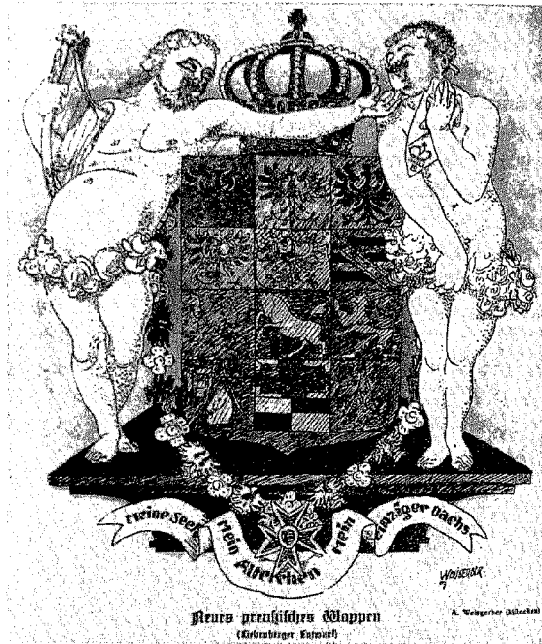


Fig. 2. "Neues Preussisches Wappen," *Jugend* 45 (1907): 1028.

alluding to the theory of the third sex (a female soul in a male body) and was in tune with the anti-feminist consensus in Germany at the time. Harden saw it as his patriotic duty to liberate the Kaiser from the unmanly, weak and womanly advisers who were keeping him from reality and thus preventing him from pursuing active *Realpolitik* (cf. Harden, "Schlussvortrag" 196). "In Germany our politics are much too soft and sweet," Harden wrote in the journal *Zukunft*. He demanded: "The German Kaiser should and must have *healthy* men around him!" (Harden qtd. in Sombart 40). Eulenburg was to be politically emasculated, and should "disappear from the limelight of German politics" (Harden, "Schlussvortrag" 192).

The Munich weekly journal *Die Jugend*, founded in 1896, was influential in literary and artistic circles, with satirical and critical texts featuring prominently. A cartoon (fig. 2) depicts the Liebenberg version of the Prussian coat of arms, alluding to the feminizing impact on the state of Eulenburg's circle. Two cherub-like angels, flanking the Prussian coat of arms, tickle, tease, and cuddle each other. They are naked except for garlands of roses. The figure on the left has a harp in its hand, an allusion to the romantic cult of friendship among the Liebenberg circle, where Eulenburg himself was often represented as the harpist. Below the coat of arms is a bande-

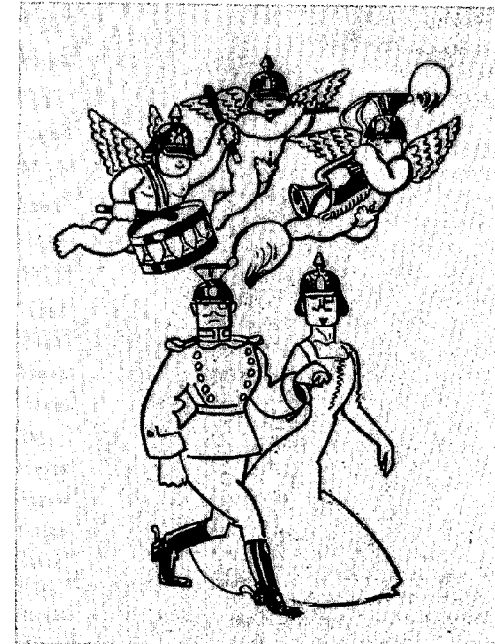


Fig. 3. No title, *Fantasio* 2.32 (1907): 473.

role on which the nicknames of the circle are inscribed: 'my soul, my dear old fellow, my only pup.' The image points to both the (violated) norm of soldierly masculinity and Prussian virtues such as austerity, harshness, and discipline.

Harden's political critique coalesced in the image of the effeminate homosexual that he developed more and more explicitly in a series of articles. The abnormal men around Eulenburg, he claimed, were forced "to hide their true nature from the world under a mask," and therefore suffered from a disturbed relationship with reality (Harden qtd. in Sombart 42). Their distorted perceptions and close contact with the French diplomat Raymond Lecomte, who was also, allegedly, sexually abnormal, left them incapable of recognizing the real extent of the threat which other European powers posed to their own nation and made them react aggressively abroad, as the Morocco crisis, for example, showed. In addition, members of the Liebenberg circle, it was claimed, surrounded the Kaiser on the inside, cutting him off from other advisers and encouraging him in a new absolutism.

When, in the most visible part of the state, men of abnormal feeling form a ring and attempt to encircle a soul not warned by experience, then this is an unhealthy

Der Retter des Vaterlandes.



Maximilian Harden: Was uns helfen kann? Gibt die Sozialdemokratie? O nein! Absolut nicht! – Weh uns aber eine Rettung. Die Einzig! Deutsches Volk! Schlebe dich zusammen. In dieser schweren Zeit! Und lies die „Zukunft“!

Fig. 4. “Der Retter des Vaterlandes,” *Der Wahre Jacob. Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Satire, Humor und Unterhaltung* (1908): 671.

situation; indeed, a highly dangerous one if a representative of foreign interests has been included in this encirclement. (Harden, “Schlussvortrag” 201)

Right before the eyes of an astonished public, the idea of an erotically motivated friendship circle heading the state was transformed into political reality in the *Kaiserreich*. This also attracted interest abroad. In the Paris journal *Fantasio* (fig. 3), the German male circle was represented as a same-sex couple getting married. Naked angels wearing military helmets were playing music at their wedding.

One year later, in the most widely-read Social-Democratic satirical newspaper *Der Wahre Jacob*, which had a circulation of 286 000 in 1910 (with continuously increasing readership until the First World War; Reben-

tisch 52), Maximilian Harden was to be mockingly proclaimed ‘the saviour of the fatherland’ (fig. 4) in the guise of a strict, arrogant teacher, who tried to pursue politics not with (Social Democratic) social criticism, but through scandalous revelations in his journal *Die Zukunft*.

### The Scandal Trials

The insinuations published in *Die Zukunft* immediately became the topic of conversation in the salons of the Berlin aristocracy. The reputation of court society and the officer corps seemed to be seriously endangered. After initial hesitation on the part of the Imperial Chancellor, von Bülow, the Kaiser was informed about the accusations directed against his closest friends, – but not until early May 1907 (Hull, *Entourage* 140-143; Mommsen 282). He was horrified and, somewhat hastily, demanded immediate remedy, even before the matter had been clarified. In consequence, the temporary dismissal of Moltke and Eulenburg was ordered. If we believe Harden’s report, this is what first drew wide public attention to the matter.

And now the opinion was quickly formed that something very strange must have come to light, something quite outrageous; otherwise these favourites, these respected gentlemen would not have been forced to leave office [...]. Now things moved at breakneck speed, and we experienced a real hullabaloo. A hundred newspapers proclaimed that these gentlemen were 175s [an allusion to paragraph 175] and similar. Suddenly, everyone had known everything all along. (Harden, “Schlussvortrag” 200)

Eulenburg and Moltke were ordered by the Kaiser to restore their damaged honour in an appropriate manner. After some hesitation, Moltke challenged Harden to a duel, but Harden declined (Röhl 129). Thereupon, Moltke brought private action against Harden for slander, whereupon the sensational trial Moltke *v.* Harden got underway. Eulenburg first attempted to restore his impugned honour more carefully by publishing a voluntary declaration in his home town of Prenzlau. As was to be expected, this brought no results at all (Mommsen 283). The popular, conservative, satirical Berlin weekly *Kladderadatsch*, which had a circulation between 40 000 and 50 000 at the turn of the century, regularly published caricatures of Wilhelm II. The magazine promptly featured a drawing of Themis – the Greek goddess of strict, incorruptible justice and law, who later was allegorised as Justitia with sword, scales and blindfold. In this caricature, however, she is tearing off her blindfold – which is to protect her from issuing partisan judgement – in amazement. The independence of the judiciary was so evidently in question, that the goddess of justice considered the wearing of the blindfold of non-partisanship as children’s game (blind man’s buff), and removed it in order to keep an eye on things, ironically by betraying her own principles. The caption read “Themis (removing her blindfold at last). Children, with



Themis (reißt sich endlich die Binde von den Augen).  
 »Kinder, bei dem ewigen Radau der Skandalprozesse lasse ich  
 nicht mehr »Blindekuh« mit mir spielen!«

Fig. 5. "Themis (reißt sich die Binde von den Augen)," *Kladderadatsch. Humo-  
 ristisch-satirisches Wochenblatt* 60.44 (1907): Supplementary Sheet 1, 1.



Fig. 6. "Non sarà un gran male se ...," *Pasquino. Re-  
 vista umoristica della settimana* 52.44 (1907): 4.

the eternal racket of the scandal trials, I won't let blind man's buff be played with me any more!"

On 23 October 1907, the case of Moltke *v.* Harden opened in the court of lay assessors in Berlin-Mitte. During the course of the trial, Moltke's divorced wife seriously incriminated him, and, as an expert witness, Hirschfeld testified that Moltke had a "homosexual predisposition of which he himself was unaware" (Hirschfeld 8).<sup>9</sup> During the taking of evidence, it also came out

<sup>9</sup> The fact that Hirschfeld made an effort to draw a fine difference between the "pronounced emotionally-ideal character" of Moltke's "homosexuality" and physically conducted sexuality was hardly perceived (Hirschfeld 8).

that sexual acts had taken place between men in certain regiments of the Guards.

When, on 29 October 1907, Harden was acquitted of having slandered Moltke as a homosexual, the scandal was complete, and the excitement was great not only among the aristocracy of Berlin (Mommssen 283). The Kaiser himself became the target of foreign cartoonists. On 2 November 1907, the Turin newspaper *Pasquino* published a cartoon depicting Wilhelm II wrapped in a long coat, running up a flight of stairs (fig. 6). But a small, fat pig in military uniform sitting on the emperor's long coat-tail and soiling it prevents his rapid progress. His Majesty is forced to tug at the coat, which is now irretrievably dirty. Underneath it we read: "Not such a bad thing [...] if the emperor's coat, so mucked up on the stairs to the throne, is shortened.

The *Tägliche Rundschau* commented as follows:

Rarely has the administration of justice in a modern state conducted a case that has poisoned public morals, destroyed the trust that the lower classes have in the upper classes and even in the throne, and exposed its own country to relentless pillorying from abroad to such an extent as Moltke v. Harden. (*Tägliche Rundschau* qtd. in Rogge 234)

Thus, in a speech he delivered to the German Reichstag on 28 November 1907, Chancellor von Bülow considered it necessary to deflect the attacks of the parliamentary deputies and to clearly distance the German Empire from conditions in ancient Rome in times of decay:

I reject any imputation that the German people and the German army are not completely healthy in their innermost core. Just as nobody can doubt the moral integrity of our imperial couple, whose family life provides such a wonderful model for the whole country, the German people is no Sodom, and conditions in the German army do not resemble those in the declining Roman Empire. And you can be sure that our Kaiser will not hesitate to sweep away anything that does not conform to the purity of his nature and his house (von Bülow qtd. in Höttsch 66).

Public indignation, paradoxically, was directed at the decadent upper classes and, with an anti-Semitic thrust, at the messengers bringing the bad news, Harden and Hirschfeld, who were both of Jewish background (Steakley, "Iconography" 242).

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the Austrian press, which was more openly anti-Semitic (Steakley, *Freunde* 112), published a drawing in the satirical Viennese journal *Kikeriki* on 10 November 1907 identifying Harden as Jewish (he had converted to Protestantism in 1878) and suggesting that he wanted to reforge the previously honourable German male group into a group of Jews (fig. 7). In the top part of the image we see Harden, a little elevated, with folded arms and a strict expression on his face, as the centre and wire-puller controlling a group of aristocrats who are dancing around him. The caption underlines the allusion to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories: "This is the ring that he has smashed –." Harden is thus presented as destroying a previously intact German world. In the lower part of the draw-



Fig. 7. "Die Politik des Juden Harden," *Kikeriki*. *Humoristisch-politisches Volksblatt* 47.90 (1907): 2.

ing, bearing the caption: "now he [Harden] wants to forge one like *this*," the German aristocrats have been transformed, and now bear the stereotyped negative Jewish features: hooked noses, curls, and pouting lips. Moreover, they are wearing dressing gowns, which additionally sexualizes them. While the aristocrats in the upper part of the image are not identified as homosexual, the way in which the Jews are represented in the bottom part is associated with sexual deviance from the norm. The link between Jewishness, sickness, and (sexual) perversion – in the context of the relatively recent medical concept of homosexuality – is thus reinforced and modernized. At the same time, its negative consequences for the German state, which supposedly the (depraved) Jews alone will soon rule, are demonstrated.

Given the increasing gravity of the crisis, Kaiser Wilhelm took action. He ensured Moltke's rehabilitation by personally ordering the judgement to be quashed, and demanding a retrial, this time as a criminal case. Officials

accepted that this flagrant violation of the law, which was attacked as such in cartoons (see fig. 6), was justified in the interests of the crown, and it produced the desired result as the judgment went to appeal.

During the two-week trial, which began on 18 December 1907, the main (female) witness was declared hysterical and therefore unreliable. Moltke and Eulenburg defended the spirit of male friendship (Steakley, "Iconography" 244), and Albert Moll, a medical doctor from Berlin, was retained as a new expert witness. He wrote a forensic report that cleared Moltke of the charge of homosexuality, whereupon Hirschfeld revised his own report.<sup>10</sup>

This time Harden was sentenced to four months' imprisonment and he had to pay the costs of the trial. To prevent Harden from appealing, Chancellor von Bülow stepped in and persuaded Moltke to make a public, formal statement in Harden's defence, claiming that he had acted only in the national interest. The cost of the trial, 40,000 marks, which Harden was meant to pay, was covered by the Imperial Chancellery. In the eyes of the Kaiser, General Kuno von Moltke was fully rehabilitated.

In the meantime, the publisher Adolf Brand had grasped the opportunity and also accused Chancellor von Bülow of homosexuality in an attempt to create support for the abolition of paragraph 175 of the penal code.<sup>11</sup> In his own words, Brand, a pioneer of homosexual emancipation who was inspired by fantasies of masculinity from antiquity, did not see his statement as a slur on von Bülow's honour because he had a positive opinion of men who, like himself, advocated erotic love between men. While Hirschfeld's sophistry had produced a system of sexual stages which ruled out any innocent friendship, Eulenburg's vision of ideal friendship between men, according to Brand, should be admired (Steakley, "Iconography" 243). Yet Brand's plea did not have the desired effect. In the meantime, the mood had changed and had turned against the bringers of bad news, who were seen as troublemakers.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the proceedings which von Bülow launched against Brand were wrapped up on a single day, 6 November 1907, by the Berlin regional court, which ruled in favour of von Bülow. Brand was the only person in the whole legal saga who was sentenced to prison, receiving an eighteen-month sentence (Steakley, "Iconography" 243).

10 Hirschfeld's contradictory reports on Moltke's homosexuality provoked public ridicule (Hirschfeld 4, 6, 21).

11 Brand claimed in court that von Bülow was to be made responsible for the persecution of the *Liebenberger Kreis* (Liebenberg circle) because von Bülow was prone to being blackmailed since he had maintained a homoerotic relationship with a subordinated chancellery clerk named Scheefel whom he had kissed during gatherings at Eulenburg's (Mommsen 285).

12 "The Brand v. Bülow trial made a mockery of justice, but the nation was gratified by its outcome and little inclines to scrutinize the procedure. [...] His [Brand's] Guilty verdict suggests that public opinion was beginning to rally around the established order and to turn against those Jewish and homosexual publicists who were increasingly perceived not as saviors but as rumormongers and purveyors of filth" (Steakley, "Iconography" 243).

Eulenburg had been called as a witness during this case, and had taken the chance to emphatically endorse romantic friendship between men, – only to deny, under oath, any obscenities or infringement of paragraph 175. Thus, in the eyes of aristocratic society he was rehabilitated, at least for the time being. Harden, however, did not abandon his pursuit of Eulenburg, and on 12 April he provoked another court case in Munich. This trial was beyond the Imperial Chancellor's influence, and Harden's intention was to convict Eulenburg of perjury. Harden actually managed to find two peasants from Starnberg who testified to having had homosexual relations with the prince (Mommsen 287). Thereupon, the case against Eulenburg was resumed in Berlin on 29 June 1908, and he was only able to avert imminent conviction by presenting a medical certificate certifying permanent incapacity. The case was suspended on 17 July 1908 and, after an unsuccessful attempt to revive it the following year (7 July 1909), during which Eulenburg suffered a heart attack in court, it was closed. Eulenburg, irrevocably discredited and isolated politically, retired to his estate in Liebenberg (Röhl 132).

### The Impact of the Scandals

During the scandals, the impugned masculinity of Germany's highest governing circles – the symbolic representatives of the German nation – had become a politically pressing problem. Sales of Harden's journal *Die Zukunft* sky-rocketed. In France, homosexuality was now jokingly called *vice allemand*, the German vice. In the international press as well as in Germany, numerous satires and cartoons were published alluding to the subject and contrasting a healthier past with the decadent present.<sup>13</sup> The creeping effeminization of the army and the threatened emasculation of the state became the central themes of Wilhelmine society.

Moreover, the scandal trials and their depiction in caricatures contributed significantly to linking the three discursive fields of politics, homosexuality, and male bonding. Initially marginal discourses, such as that concerning male bonding and homosexuality, which had been developed mainly in academic circles and by those affected, were now charged with greater importance for the nation and became a part of everyday political knowledge. The new awareness of homoerotic men's associations was given an unprecedented degree of reality and material substance by the court cases when Prussian justice officially classified politically influential aristocrats as homosexual individuals. The power of such political bundling seemed to derive directly from the abnormal sexuality of the men involved. The

13 Steakley (2004) and Jungblut (2003) offer a large selection of other caricatures.



fundamentally *sexual* structure of the social and political order thus seemed highly plausible.

To be sure, the displacement of political disagreements to the field of normality, biology, and sex did not have the effect Harden wanted in all areas. While it was successful in stripping the politically disagreeable adviser Eulenburg of his power, Harden's advocacy of a more progressive constitution, which in 1906 had been making headlines in the daily press (e.g. Harden, "Dies Irae" 291-292), was increasingly overshadowed by the scandals. The main objective was now the restitution of a weakened monarchy.

In terms of binary sexual logic, the national danger of effeminization had to be countered by a remasculization of politics. The public pressure strengthened the hardliners among the military advisers around Kaiser Wilhelm II (Hull, "Kaiser Wilhelm II." 212) and contributed to the consolidation of an aggressive political style in which a demonstration of militant masculinity was required as other forms of politics were delegitimized and associated with the suspicion of latent feminization (Hull, *Entourage* 296; Steakley, "Iconography" 233-236; Röhl 140).

Moreover, the scandal trials revealed the fierce competition between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy for political influence, which was played out in antithetical codes of masculinity and constructions of identity (Mosse 27-36). As the historian Marcus Funck has shown, court etiquette, which aristocratic officers were expected to observe, included forms of behaviour which, in bourgeois society, were explicitly described as feminine. These included, for example, the ability to dance perfectly, a dainty walk, dressing smartly, distinctive forms of politeness, and the use of refined language. What could be interpreted as unmasculine, homosexual, and in any case unwarlike behaviour in terms of the morality of bourgeois society, was for aristocratic officers in many cases nothing but part of the traditional behaviour required at court and of the aristocratic etiquette which had to be observed in the same minute detail as the military code.<sup>14</sup>

Rather than focusing on the genealogy of blood like the upper classes, the bourgeoisie had developed its growing social aspirations vis-à-vis the aristocracy (and the lower classes). Bourgeois criteria of sexual morality such as purity, controlling urges, and good behaviour contrasted with the excess and sexual amorality of the aristocracy (Steakley, "Iconography" 253). From this perspective, the bourgeois journalist Harden's exposure of a sexually abnormal liaison between an aristocratic officer and a peasant was to underline their own moral superiority and claim to power. Harden was well aware that his exposure of just "half a dozen degenerates" from the

14 Thus around 1900, it was not exceptional that dancing lessons took place at officers' messes of royal regiments in which two men danced together. In those luxurious regiments of aristocratic imprint the male body could be displayed among equals, but not in public (Funck 73-75).



„Das Bildnis des Dorian Gray.“ (Eine tolle Sache aus unserer High Life)  
 ... Das Bild, das fern von ihm verweilt hatte, war ihm unerträglich geworden. Aber als es um-  
 kehrte, um das Bild mit der Blüte zu versehen, da erregte sich ein Wunder: Das Porträt blieb unverletzt, er  
 selbst fiel als Opfer.

Fig. 8. "Das Bildnis des Dorian Gray," *Lustige Blätter. Schönstes brutes*  
*Witzblatt Deutschlands* 22.28 (1907): 1.

aristocracy could, in bourgeois public opinion, "speak against the health of a whole class" (Harden, "Schlussvortrag" 201). For Eulenburg and Moltke, close emotional ties between men had been compatible with the codes of behaviour of an aristocratic society for as long as chivalrous behaviour towards married women was permitted while sexual partners were drawn from members of the lower classes (Steakley, "Iconography" 253). Eulenburg could not and would not see himself in terms of modern categories as a homosexual individual because he did not recognize a concept of identity based on sexual orientation as applicable to himself. This becomes clear in a passage from a letter which Eulenburg wrote to Moltke on 10 June 1907:

In the moment when the freshest example of the modern age, a Harden, criticized our nature [*Wesen*], stripped our ideal friendship, laid bare the form of our thinking and feeling which we had justifiably regarded all our lives as something obvious and natural, in the moment, the modern age, laughing cold-bloodedly, broke our necks. [...] The new concepts of sensuality and love stamp our nature as weak, even unhealthily weak. And yet we were sensual [*sinnlich*], not any less so than the moderns. But this area was strictly segregated; it did not impose itself as an end in itself. (Eulenburg qtd. in Hull, "Kaiser Wilhelm II." 199)

The coding of male identity in terms of sexual orientation had achieved such normative power around the turn of the century that even high status and aristocratic background could not protect Eulenburg from being judged unmasculine and abnormal in terms of the new categories. The scandals, too, clearly demonstrated this. A cartoon alluding to Oscar Wilde's life and work published in *Lustige Blätter* of July 1907, a liberally-oriented German weekly magazine of humour and satire, shows an aristocrat sinking to the ground, sword in hand, in the attempt to wrestle down an image of himself that has become unbearable (fig. 8). A more appropriate image of the defeat of the aristocracy can hardly be found.

Male homosexuality – now visible to large sections of the population – mutated into a sickness which threatened society with cultural and political defeat (Steakley, "Iconography" 253-254). People complained that newspaper articles for the first time acquired a pornographic quality, which was seen mainly as a threat to the morality and purity of the youth. Many cartoons not only illustrate how strongly homosexuality was associated with treason and degeneration, but also contributed to the evocation and distribution of this connection themselves (see further ills. in Steakley, "Iconography" 258-263).

This also had an impact on the movement to emancipate homosexuals, which suffered serious setbacks. Instead of the repeal of paragraph 175 of the legal code, it was suggested to make it more stringent and to extend it to apply to women as well. The morality movement emerged strengthened from the trial years, and attacked attempts to emancipate not only homosexuals, but also women, more strongly than ever.<sup>15</sup> A Berlin cartoon of 26 November 1907 (fig. 9) shows Hirschfeld, identified as a Jew, as the anti-hero of the day. Depicted as a child with a large drum – rather like a mechanical toy – he is canvassing support for the repeal of paragraph 175.

In addition, the Eulenburg scandal encouraged men and women to reflect upon themselves in the light of the new knowledge. Lili von Elbe, Count Moltke's divorced wife, spoke for many when she said that at the beginning she would not have suspected her husband of homosexuality because she had known nothing about the existence of such a phenomenon. The Bavarian fisherman, Jakob Ernst, too, said that he had no real name for it. Forms of behaviour and attitudes which had previously been personal secrets or regarded as sins now appeared in a completely new light. They not only became known to many people, but were also highly suspect (Steakley, *Frennde* 170-171, 174-175). Parents suddenly had second thoughts about sending their sons to the army, or allowing them to move from the country to the city. In a cartoon published in the Berlin illustrated paper *Ullé* (fig. 10), which, in

15 Close to end of the series of scandals the sentiments of the very left had shifted as well to the disadvantage of the homosexuals (Steakley, "Iconography" 254-255).



Fig. 9. "Helden des Tages. III. Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld," *Lustige Blätter*. *Schönstes buntes Witzblatt Deutschlands* 22.48 (1907): 3.

contrast to *Lustigen Blätter* and *Kladderadatsch* was not a stand-alone publication, but was distributed free with the liberally-oriented newspaper *Berliner Tageblatt*, the army, once a school of life, became an institution offering opportunities for unusual sexual experiences with men, as the ambiguous reply of the young military serviceman indicates: "Wat ick da allens jelernt habe!" [Berlin dialect for: "Was ich da nicht alles gelernt habe!" (All the things I have learned!)]. In a similar vein, the Austrian magazine *Der Floh* caricatured the homosexual aspects of "German family life," with young men being warned of the "temptations of the big city" by their mothers (*Der Floh*, 39.40, 1907).

Despite the campaign for moral renewal, anti-Semitic undertones, increased military discipline, and concerns about national decline and bourgeois morals, this experience was based on a subtle dialectic (Steakley, "Iconography" 257). The new restrictions multiplied the possibilities of creating oneself as a highly sexual subject. This was reflected in a variety of new

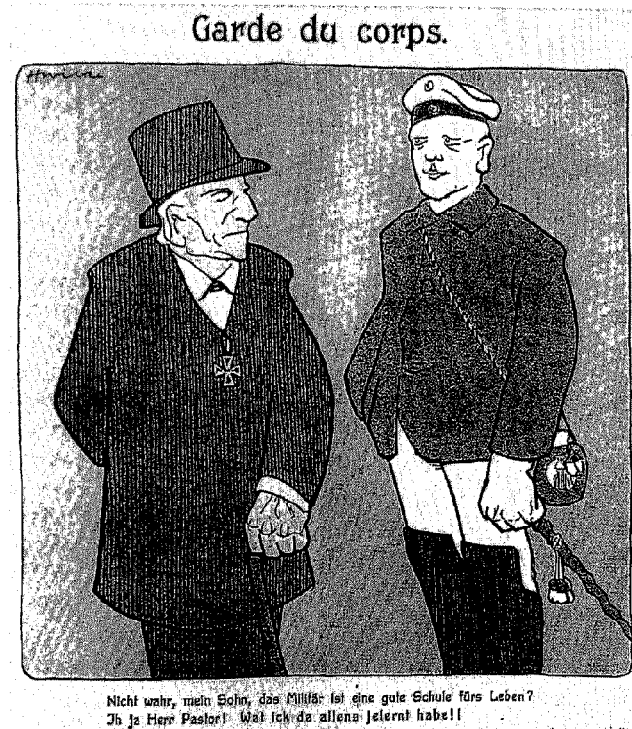


Fig. 10. "Garde du corps," *Ulk. Illustriertes Wochenblatt für Humor und Satire* 36.45 (1907): 1.

publications in the discipline of sexology and in subjectivization practices, particularly in the context of the reform movement.

The young *Wandervogel* movement, too, became more vigilant about possible homosexual behaviour in its own ranks, especially as, in the wake of the Eulenburg scandal trials, it had publicly been described as a pederasts' club. Reversing the negative social assessment of homosexuality, the Berlin writer, Hans Blüher, interpreted the patriotic youth movement as a homoerotic phenomenon in 1912 – a scandalous view which was widely discussed in public and which strongly influenced the association movement (Bruns, 267-386). Critics and opponents of the erotically charged male group model agreed that in its hidden laws, the state could be influenced by male homosexuality.

This explosive link between homosexuality and the state found a bloody echo in the Röhm putsch of 1934. The Nazi SA leader Ernst Röhm was murdered, along with more than 200 other people, by enemies within his

own party acting in the name of Hitler who had accused him of having planned a homosexual conspiracy (zur Nieden, *Homosexualität* 7-16, 147-192). For a generation that still remembered the Eulenburg scandals, this was entirely plausible, especially as, at the end of the Weimar Republic, the German Social Democratic Party and the left did not tire of attacking the National Socialists as a danger to the state because of their allegedly homosexual tendencies.

The various caricatures of the Eulenburg scandal were widely circulated both in Germany and internationally. They turned the idea of a homoerotic male group model into a political issue that was idealized by a minority and rejected as a national danger by the majority. However, the close discursive nexus between sexual and political order, which would remain powerful throughout the twentieth century, was not questioned.

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