INTRODUCTION

When I imagine the stream of my ancestors standing behind me, I see my adoptive parents, my biological parents, and I see my queer ancestors.
—Jasco Viethues

ON AN ORDINARY CORNER in West Berlin in the late 1950s, the photographer Herbert Tobias chatted up a boy. In his late teens or early twenties—it's difficult to tell from the photographs he'd take over the next several days—the youth was one of many pickups on the stroll in the Cold War city. He would be immortalized two decades later, not once, but twice, in the gay magazine *him applaus*, where readers learned about the weekend they spent together taking baths, having sex, and frolicking in the company of an unknown actress, there along for the ride.[1] The Manfred photo series, as we'll see in chapter 2, raises a host of questions about queer life in the aftermath of fascism in a divided city at the center of the Cold War. But it is instructive in other ways too for the way it challenges us to think more capaciously about how people lived, loved, and lost in the queer past. An association that came quite naturally for Christopher Isherwood in 1929 when he wrote "Berlin Meant Boys" is difficult to countenance today with our heightened sensibilities around consent,

power, and overt expressions of queer desire. It doesn't matter that, at the time these photos were taken, the age of consent was higher for same-sex activity than for straight sex, making boys out of twenty-year-old men.[2] What is interesting is the near unthinkability of intergenerational sex in the gay scene, at least in the main, despite our seemingly prurient age.[3]

This has a history, it turns out, and is central to the story of sexual liberation. But it has also been forgotten. *The Queer Art of History* brings it back into view. Amid the life-altering gains of the second half of the twentieth century, queer claims to the public sphere have papered over the sex of things in favor of a vision of activism and opposition where the messiness of sexual transgression is increasingly written out.[4] It has been sacrificed for several core necessities: an end to illegality and persecution, equal treatment under the law, and unencumbered access to the rights and provisions of citizenship. With the example of Germany, I will show that it is also a response to the institutionalization of LGBTQIA communities generally around the construction of good and bad kin, with some taken up as models of a new civic ideal, while others have been marginalized as a challenge to the norms of respectability. Visibility brought legibility, yet what became legible was not always queer. The gradual embrace of a liberal rights-based framework from the 1970s onward came on the backs of stratifications of race, class, and gender presentation that continue to stigmatize nonnormative kinships today. It traded the radical oppositionality of postwar queerness for a seat at the table. But all is not lost. We can resurrect the potency of these "beautiful inconsistencies" by focusing on queer kinship itself, understood broadly as the coalitions, attachments, hookups, and solidarities of choice and necessity that made up queer life after fascism.[5] The reasons for doing so are not just historiographical; they are urgent.

The memory of the emancipatory projects of the post-1945 period is increasingly under attack, a feature of the deradicalization of social movements generally as well as an organized effort on the part of the populist Right to unmake the gains of the New Left. The two phenomena are not unrelated, and both threaten the democratic aims of social justice, of which queer and trans* worldmaking is a part. This book charts how this has come about and suggests ways that critical historical research and writing can recast the marginalization of transgressive, racialized, and intersectional queer and trans* lives that form part of the contemporary moment. Until we develop methodologies for better understanding the ways in which liberation for some came as violence for others—with race, class, and gender

presentation often serving as citizenship's condition of possibility—we overlook the important ways attachments and alliances of kinship provide alternatives to the "markets and morals" sovereignty and subject making of liberal modernity.[6]

To do this, we have to revisit how we write about identity. As LGBTQIA lives have been mainstreamed and protected by legislation in many parts of the world, history writing has moved away from the destabilization of identity and toward embracing it. It wasn't always that way. In the wake of the linguistic and cultural turn, inspired by the work of Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick, and Michel Foucault, historians called for complex historical explanations of the sexual past to counter the origin stories of social movement–driven histories.[7] Instead of documenting "the evidence of experience" of forebears and ancestors, we were to linger over the conditions that made racialized, queer, and trans* people invisible in the first place.[8] But as Laura Doan and Jin Haritaworn have cautioned in radically different projects, in our quest for queer kin, we have forgotten that the critical work we do is to disturb the practice of essentialism, of seeing queerness unidimensionally, as inherently wed to progressive causes, always on the side of right.[9] Minoritarian impulses are everywhere we look today, and while they help anchor experiences still very much under threat, they can also invoke new universalisms that gloss over the different modalities of situatedness and power that also make up social groups.[10] Not only do we let slip the different inequalities that continue to mark queer and trans* entry into the mainstream—most profoundly around race—but we fail to appreciate what solidarity and coalition building actually looked like when and where it did surface. With queer, feminist, trans*, and intersectional paradigms increasingly up against the wall, it is imperative that we draw lessons from kin formations good and bad to both rediscover and redeploy the radical potential of queer as a politics, analytic, and way of life.

A focus on kinship exposes the power and contradictions of queerness not as an identity category but as a set of relations produced by and through shifting and unequal dynamics of power.[11] Kinship networks and ties, historical affiliations as well as intellectual ones, focus attention on homogenization both within and beyond queer communities, unearthing alternative legacies as a way forward. Thinking about queerness relationally allows us to linger over how certain lives, stories, and ways of being are legitimized while examining what this means for other expressions of solidarity, gender expression, and desire in the past as well as today. If we take a more expansive approach to

the range of emotional, political, and intellectual attachments that bind people in opposition to norms, we ask new questions about the successes, failures, and ambivalences of queer activism as we know it.[12]

In Germany, there were countless examples of intersectional queer kinship attachments among gays, lesbians, sexual dissidents, poor and racialized men and women, feminists, and trans* people. There was Elli, the leather-clad butch lesbian bar owner with questionable ties to the Nazis, who sheltered queer and sex worker patrons in 1950s West Berlin. Across the Iron Curtain, East Germany's most famous transvestite (her term), Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, hosted queer dissidents in her suburban villa while sometimes informing on them. Gays and lesbians organized together as well as apart to raise awareness about the persecution of same-sex sexuality in the Third Reich while feminists and lesbian separatists joined forces to lobby for access to abortion and against misogynist media campaigns. Meanwhile, students, artists, and activists tested the boundaries of acceptability within and outside the gay movement, politicizing pedophilia and intergenerational sex and opposing what they saw as assimilation at all costs. That it is hard for us to imagine these entanglements shows how siloed our view of the queer past has become. This book asks: How did we get here? What purpose did these projects once serve? and, critically, Where should we go from here? This last question is all the more imperative as we weather new culture wars that use history as a tool of organized forgetting, separating us from the struggles waged by queer and trans* people and their allies for a more just world.[13]

How might examples from German history aid us in recognizing the problems as well as the possibilities of solidarity building beyond the symbolic purchase of sexology and Nazi persecution, which has a hallowed place in the global queer historical imaginary? Focused around select case studies from East, West, reunited, and contemporary Germany, and the generational changes in German memory culture around race, gender-nonconformity, and sexuality, this book suggests we all fall prey to an orthodoxy of our own when we invoke an identity politics that foregrounds identity but leaves the politics behind.[14]

Between celebrating decriminalization and attaining key social rights, there were and remain fundamental struggles around whose bodies, behaviors, and being belongs in today's Germany, where border policing takes on an entirely new meaning in the era of fortress Europe. A politics of claims making mobilized around siloed identities eschews the transformative power of queer kinship after fascism as queer and trans* people tested out new

possibilities for citizenship, love, and public and family life in the decades after World War II. It also fails to address the fundamental inequalities within and among groups themselves. When we layer in race, we see that queer's Other was not always heterosexuality. To get at this, we need a method that coaxes apart the ways our subjects are "differently queered," working against multiple and different forms of pathologization. Using a genealogical approach attuned to the critical interventions of Black feminist, Indigenous, and queer and trans* of color critique around the invisibilization of race, class, and gender presentation in our origin stories is imperative if we are to think anew about intersectional relationalities and the power of diverse and sometimes surprising kinship networks that guided how queer and trans* people lived their lives in turbulent times.[15] It allows us to appreciate the lengths to which people went to make change in both intimate and publicly political ways, and the profound challenges they have faced along the way.

The Intersectionality of Kinship

The main theme that winds through the book is the power of kinship as a way to understand the ambivalences of what David Eng has termed queer liberalism—that is, the empowerment of certain gay, lesbian, and trans* persons through selective rights to privacy, intimacy, and self-determination mediated by race.[16] As an analytic, queer kinship is conceptually nimble. Although it has been used to great effect in gauging filial formations, queer domesticity, and same-sex adoption, scholars of Black feminist and queer and trans* of color critique deploy it to pull apart normative notions of family and nation, placing emphasis on affinities across race and class as well as on the attachments and the affective ties that bind individuals to one another across time.[17] Attention turned to kinship in the 1990s and 2000s, when many Western democracies began debating civil union and gay marriage. Anthropologists and literary and queer theorists asked whether kinship was "always already heterosexual?" Could alternative same-sex and gender-nonconformist community formations retain an element of radicalism or were they destined to mimic reproductive ways of organizing—some would say surveilling—the social?[18] Some, like Lee Edelman and Leo Bersani, jettisoned the filial completely as antithetical to the queer project, while black feminists from Hortense Spillers to Saidiya Hartman and Sharon Patricia Holland pointed instead at kinship's double bind as an institution denied to racialized people through genocide and slavery, opening up new horizons of

possibility for relatedness defined differently. These "ethical and sentimental features" that linked diasporic subjects beyond any procreative imperative, in solidarity and salvation, served as a set of relations denied but also as a "technique of renewal." Attachments might serve as acts of resistance and retribution. In this way, kinship is not just biological or even social; it is multidirectional and perspectival. It excavates the past so as to map out new, alternative futures for folks denied the bonds of lineage.[19]

As Elizabeth Freeman contends, drawing on anthropologist David Schneider, these interventions move kinship away from something one *is* to something one *does*.[20] Denaturalizing kinship helps historicize the ties that bind in a broadened sense, facilitating our own entry into the practices and performances of others. It allows us to recognize how kinship networks, allegiances, and affiliations of varying sorts and degrees galvanized a sense of belonging and aided in the formalization of movements and claims making around the removal of antisodomy statutes and discriminatory practices. Unlike identity—tied up in a history of toleration and progress that fails to address the dynamics of exclusion that formed part of this story as well—kinship divulges queer's multiple horizons.[21] But kinship does other work as well. In uniting the stories of disparate people brought together by their shared, though different, experiences of marginalization, it expands queer studies beyond its white, cisgender moorings, providing interpretive space for intersectional critiques of the homologizing force of normativity in late liberalism. Kinship allows us to turn away from a politics of recognition toward the potentiality of the otherwise.[22]

There is a logic to focusing on Germany. Trumpeted as the birthplace of gay identity but also of sexology, its entanglements are part of the warp and weft of queer history and theory.[23] Those entanglements are social, in terms of actors on the ground, but they might also be understood as intellectual in terms of the mythic place of Germany within the global queer imaginary that links us all in kinship with this particular past. Insofar as countless discussions around sexual freedom before and after Nazism were birthed there too, it is the tie that binds us to the perniciousness of twentieth-century ideas around sexuality, taboo, and regulation and also to the different conceptualizations of what forms liberation might take. For some, it is a story that still needs to be told fulsomely, around the eugenic and racial underpinnings of early sexology and the continuation of policies of persecution after 1945. For others, that story has been stylized a certain way, around men's experiences chiefly, and instrumentalized as a success

when it might better be viewed as an opportunity to think about continuities of racism, sexism, and transphobia within the German democratic project itself. There is another layer, too, as the narrative of postwar liberalization has become subject to new scrutiny in the era of populism and #MeToo.[24] The need is great for a critical queer history that retains a focus on sexual self-determination, agency, and pleasure amid the possibilities and limits of toleration.

Here, it bears saying that the Right is not alone, or even always the loudest, in miscasting the past to make political points about identity in the present.[25] Laurie Marhoefer has put the lie to the thought that queer politics are always already progressive.[26] And what about gays who could not be properly gay, as Fatima El-Tayeb has stressed, about ethnocentricity in Europe's white queer communities and the outsider status of Muslims?[27] How does it happen that the gains of some come at the expense of others, and what role might our history writing play in changing how that comes about? I argue here that it is owed in part to the way our own histories fall back on certain conventions—conceptual as well as methodological—that cause us to reduce mutable ways of being in the world into hard and fast identities, rigid, legible, uncomplicated, stand-alone, and contained. This inability to see queer and trans* as a series of "perverse assemblages" of productively fraught emotions, stigma, relationships, actions, affiliations, and orientations that are themselves messy, contingent, entangled, and sometimes downright objectionable comes about when we look to the past for histories of confirmation instead of contestations around joy, love, danger, domination, assimilation, and desire.[28] We fall into the trap of telling stories of competing experience instead of commonalities and difference. Most of all, we fail to see queer and trans* lives as associative, as part of elaborate histories of relationality, of kinships bad as well as good, what Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate professor Kim TallBear calls "all my relations"—that is, the different paths we all take, together and apart, in our search for dignity, resilience, and community in the face of oppression.[29] In order to meet the challenge of backlash and repression, this book provides a tool set for how to think critically about the ties that bind us all to a complicated but no less discernible past as the ground for new sociopolitical futures.

As these chapters show, despite our best efforts to commemorate the victims of National Socialism and Cold War–era persecution to right past wrongs, we have inadvertently reproduced a rigid set of universalist identity categories that have limited whose lives are rendered legible in the past.[30]

This, together with a post-1945 narrative that emphasizes progress over adversity and integration over alterity has glossed over historic and continued tensions within and between queer and trans* communities themselves over the possibilities and boundaries of rights-based legislation and the memories of persecution that buttressed them. In addition to being a narrowed reading of twentieth-century queer sexuality and transgender history more generally, this gloss prevents us from recognizing moments of radical potential in coalition-building practices between and among unlikely groups, like the straight and queer-identified prostitutes huddled together in the ruins of postwar Berlin that sets the stage for the discussion ahead. By looking anew at what happened to the laws and policies regulating same-sex desire after Hitler, and how these have been remembered and re-recast in recent years, *The Queer Art of History* makes a larger argument about what is lost as well as gained by recovering histories of queer persecution, accommodation, resistance, and remembrance without a keener appreciation of the intersectionality of identity.

Kinship as Method

If kinship networks serve as the backbone of this broadened history of nonnormativity after World War II, the book achieves this by interweaving narratives of gender and sexual mutability, bringing together the lives of rent boys and prostitutes, artists and activists, and gender and sexual dissidents to tell an entangled history of same-sex desire, gender nonconformism, persecution and overcoming through the lens of kinship. I submit that existing approaches have produced neat and legible historical subjects at the expense of other, more complex narratives. This periodization, which centers certain experiences as determinative, turns on a teleology of change and progress that reinforces distinct medico-moral, juridical, social justice, racialized, and familial temporalities over the multiple, different, and sometimes problematic ways in which people have led their lives queerly. Looking back over the twentieth century and placing it on a path toward liberalization—one that culminates in the identity, rights, and commemorative movements of the early twenty-first century—is a pattern of argumentation that has coalesced into its own epistemic field, one in which historical actors move from shame to pride, through regulation to decriminalization, and from the margins to the mainstream with little attention to the epistemological and ontological costs of visibility and recognition in the first place. An intersectional analysis

of queer kinship shows that this was not the only path available. How we go about recovering this past is, therefore, critical.

But doing so requires drawing a distinction between the politics of visibility as queer genealogy and a genealogical critique of queer visibility. From Karl Ulrichs's definitional approach to naming "urnings" in law, to Magnus Hirschfeld's sexological Third Sex, to the defiance of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, whose autobiography, *I Am My Own Woman*, brought her life story to the Broadway stage, efforts to address inequality and inclusion revolve around modernity's fixation with seeing, naming, and categorizing the subject. Unlike medievalists and early modernists, whose liturgical, epistolary, literary, and iconographic texts have nudged them to think about sex for the ways it affects a number of knowledge relations—from affective to embodied, relational, cognitive, and physical interactions—modernists seem almost persuaded by the belief that the queer past is somehow fully discernible, a product of modern forms of categorization and display (see fig. I.1).[31] Governmental records, court and medical files, journalistic writing, and photography have afforded us a laser-like focus on what Nikolas Rose has called the politics of life itself—that is, the constitution of queer subject and self-formation through the lens of biopolitics and governmentality.[32] Even when we turn to more subjective sources, so-called ego-documents (photographs, diaries, letters), we still tend to analyze them for how they relate back to the medico-moral logics and temporalities of legal, medical, and state regulation and resistance instead of thinking about them as agents of meaning making in their own right with their own stories to tell about emotional and affective dwelling in history. The "discovery" of queer pasts, then, and their veneration at particular moments in time give us insight into the methods we use to render queer life discernible and our assumptions around what that publicness means in the first place.

But as we'll see with the discussion of photography especially in chapters 2 and 3, sex and gender also comprise bodily experiences, at once deeply subjective and material as well as situational. To get at these several layers, it is useful to think about queerness not just methodologically but conceptually, for what it means as a problem of representation (what aspects of sexuality and gender nonconformism may or may not be rendered or expressed within a given frame), of signification (how something comes to be known in the first place, through the categories at work in a given moment), of materiality (what bodies in fact do), and also of emotion (what it means to want, to desire, and what emotions are deemed valid or peripheral over time).[33] Viewing

FIG. I.1 Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, *Ich bin meine eigene Frau / I Am My Own Woman* (1992/1995).

queer history more expansively means thinking about how these pasts are constituted differently than our own as embodied, situated experiences in very specific conditions that vary, in their construction, across media as well. In other words, it means paying particular attention to how conceptualizations of the past are put to use by subsequent generations. Thinking about what sex, gender, and sexuality mean in their various incarnations requires looking simultaneously backward and forward chronologically for how queer selves existed in their own moment, how gay, lesbian, gender-nonconforming, and trans* people imagined new possibilities in their time, and how both of these have been drawn from and recast in subsequent iterations. It means turning away from the search for ancestors as coherent exemplars of a simple,

tangible past and thinking instead about identities as constituted sometimes partially, often transiently, as David Halperin once put it, with very little similarity to our own.[34] It also means thinking about how queer subjects and stories are manifested differently through the objects, texts, and visual and emotional traces that help give them shape, including how the sources themselves determine how these pasts are taken up by various audiences. It requires working with and against identity signifiers to see queer and trans* visibility as a complex system of representation—as a social, cultural, and epistemological phenomenon, one caught up in multidirectional forces, in their own time and ours, in each moment seeking definitional appeal. The payoff is not just great, it is essential to envisioning new possible starting points from which to organize a countermovement, sensitive to the fact that exclusions and hierarchies remain a feature of most communal relationships. Retaining a focus on intersectionality allows us to "see outside the presentism of the current emergency [which] can help us see escape routes that others have used in the past and that are still available to us."[35]

Of course, even the search for traces of the queer and trans* past has its own history, the result of profound shifts in historical practice made possible by gay and lesbian organizing, feminist history, the cultural turn, and the rise of queer theory and transgender studies in the 1990s and 2000s.[36] The tendency to use a recuperative lens is part and parcel of the "cultural politics of recognition," a way of politicizing identity against marginalization and forgetting.[37] Yet, as much as it lays a claim to being there and having the permanence of a past, I am not alone in seeing this as sometimes having a neutralizing effect on the power of gender nonconformity and sexuality as categories of analysis.[38] For one thing, it occludes the fact that invisibility itself is a form of representation, as with the illegible legibility of same-sex attraction among women that Carroll Smith-Rosenberg famously described so many years ago.[39] Among the many challenges of recuperative history is that it collapses two modes of being, which might happen coterminously—that of being invisible and also squarely in view. It also valorizes the latter over the former, with the unintended consequence of rerendering certain subjectivities outside history as a strategy with which to narrate power imbalances. The problem with representing lesbianism in this way is that it fails to create a space for "the productive possibilities of . . . derivation."[40] The same might be said for the mainstreaming of transgender studies in the largest sense, which obfuscates the fact that transsexual and transvestite were important signifiers across time, space, and geographies for much of

the twentieth century, especially in the non-English-speaking world.[41] In championing visibility uncritically, we fail to appreciate the spectrum of possibilities that variously mark people's lives at a given moment.

Queering Memory

How do we write, then, a history of subtlety and complexity, bearing in mind that our subjects live not just in between but also potentially within multiple coexisting temporalities that, when taken seriously, sometimes challenge the way we have come to periodize LGBTQIA history as moving unilaterally from abjection to acceptance? How might such a critical history help awaken us to the dangers of reproducing this homologized narrative through the very way we render our subjects into history in the first place with paradigms of recognition and representation that deny the larger social systems of power that undergird the conditions of possibility for some identities over others? What of the fraught, maybe even contradictory claims to rhetorical, imagistic, and textual space, the low buzzing hum of those whose presence is inaudible to us because we haven't adequately developed the tools to capture their frequency?[42]

With some thinking, I came to realize that this was partially a historiographical problem, and partially, too, a result of methodology. To some extent, through us, we had let the Gay Liberation movements tell their own history.[43] The result was a rich but protracted focus on social movements at the expense of other stories of being and becoming part of the queer, feminist, antiracist, and sexual avant-garde. For one glaring example, we've only just begun to think through the at times shared homoerotic genealogies that have also led to the New Right.[44] This, combined with the aftermath of the AIDs epidemic and the formulation of rights discourses around struggles for health care and protections under the law, has caused our attention to become even more narrowly focused on the legitimating structures of legal recognition. It was here that scholars like Jasbir Puar noted the emergence of a kind of homonationalism—that is, a hierarchalization of certain queer identities as hallmarks of progressivism.[45] Efforts to gain inclusion for some came at the expense of marginalizing others, positioning certain people as respectable citizens and others—often racialized, gender-fluid, and sexually dissonant people—as monstrous outsiders to the new order. For gender-nonconformity, it is even more complicated, with trans* people often seen as a sign of protolesbianism or protogayness, meaning they are almost included

so much as to no longer exist as trans*.[46] In history writing, as in the wider society, the terms of inclusion and exclusion have not simply been imposed from above. They have been perpetuated and affirmed from below as well, through the search for a shared language of affiliation and pathologization between marginalized people and groups and those seeking to tell their stories. This search for a queer sensibility in the past is therefore never fully separable from our own longings for connection to this community, our "impossible desire" to belong to this rich "queer diaspora."[47] We need to be mindful of what it is that draws us to our historical subjects, and how this shapes what we look for in the first place.[48] In this way, a focus on queer kinship brings with it the responsibility to interrogate our own relationship with the past and what we find there.[49]

A truly queered history is a matter not just of selecting better sources, then, but of how we read them in light of contemporary struggles. Our way forward must begin with a history of the present in a Foucauldian sense—that is, with a critical analysis of how the history of queer persecution in Germany has been taken up as a hallmark of white liberal citizenship, which more easily embraces certain victim groups (gay men) over others (lesbians, male prostitutes, trans* people, asocials, habitual criminals, racialized people, etc.). This has led us to write a restorative history, one that circles unendingly around histories of suffering, occlusion, and redemption over other histories, emotions, coalitions, subjectivities, temporalities, and horizons that have marked queer and trans* lives in the latter half of the twentieth century.[50] While history can sometimes be a blunt instrument with which to get at the full spectrum of experience, tapping into more radical and experimental approaches, drawing more extensively on other fields, and queering our own aspirations by being more deliberately self-reflexive is a crucial way forward.

The new universalism at the heart of contemporary discourses of queer citizenship is not just the product of our research methodologies. It is also the result of long-durée tensions within the history of German sexuality generally that hark back to earlier schisms between liberal versus radical elements in pre-Nazi sexology around gender, indeterminacy, immanence, consent, and respectability. As Jonah Garde points out in their essay in *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, the reluctance to question the Eurocentricity of knowledge claims continues to position medical notions of sexual deviance and gender nonconformity as central to modernity.[51] At the same time, this new universalism also echoes some of what legal scholars like Joe Fischel have argued about how even progressive pressure to recognize victimization and

redress sometimes inadvertently authorize and enforce new hierarchies that limit our ability to countenance nonpunitive narratives and outcomes.[52] As this book shows, tensions like these have continued to shape the post-1945, post-1989, and post-2001 arenas, enshrining certain groups as acceptable victims while leaving others to fight for their place in the historical register. More important still, the progress narratives have led to siloed histories, with the tale of queer persecution harnessed to a liberalization narrative that fails to account for unanticipated alliances, bad gays, monstrous others, and imperfect heroes.[53] *The Queer Art of History* asks what a queer history of Germany might look like if we were to question the memory of queer history as a story of moving—following Magnus Hirschfeld's dictum—through science (and persecution) to justice? What if we were to adopt an approach that centers our own assumptions over the past as well as our need to see history a certain way, as positivist, linear, uncomplicated, and to a degree unidimensional? If the history of persecution in Germany is not solely wedded to the Nazi past but instead extends backward and forward and into the present day through the persistence of structural racism and discomfort with difference, how might a queer critique of German memory formations aid us in figuring out a more ethical and compassionate way forward?

Kinship and the History of Desire

Kinship allows us to see coalition building in the past, but a focus on desire over regulation makes us revisit how we periodize change over time in the first place. The first three chapters reflect on ambivalences in the representation of deviance for queer and trans* worldmaking in the postwar period in an era marked by ongoing Nazi-era legislation, new sexual science around the frequency of same-sex attraction in adult relationships, decolonization, and a resurgent public sphere that included—for a time—magazines, photographs, sex aids, and print culture emboldening people in their search for gender and sexual self-determination. Instead of relying on the historiographical preoccupation with repression and resistance, these chapters shift the focus to the importance of boundary breaking and cross-group identifications for the unexpected allegiances they helped foster that built a foundation for the social, psychological, and legal changes of the coming decades. They take up the matter of chronology and periodization, specifically how to think about the 1950s as what I call a radical in-between—that is, a moment not just of survival, reaction, and transition but of possibility for those who sought the

promise of the erotic in their everyday lives. We often imagine a more libidinous, free sexual subjectivity as part of the era of post-1960s legal reforms, with the generational shift that spurred challenges to the status quo. But by reading our sources for the possibility that the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s manifested boundary-breaking queer desire, something else materializes too: complex and fluid histories of transgression that conjure up a host of unseemly associations—relationships of trust, kinship, and pleasure alongside shifting affinities that don't quite make sense from our current vantage point because we have lost touch with how to appreciate them. The question then becomes How have contemporaries then and now viewed this period of liminality and autonomy in a different way than we do? And what role might these simultaneous though different coarticulations play in how we think about the history of liberalization, emancipation, respectability, and citizenship as it evolves into the present day? The chapters on photography take the discussion forward and backward through time, back to the late war years and through to the 1970s, 1980s, and even the 2000s, to examine how the period between the war and 1968–69 has been represented and mobilized to buttress a particular telling of queer emergence that grafts onto discrete identities that formed the basis of claims making during the sexual revolution. They posit an alternative way to think about queer subjectivity, drawing on the insights of trans* and queer of color critique, as heterogeneous parts of "a shared horizon of struggle" articulated across difference, whose nonuniversalism has been forgotten in the shadow of its instrumentalization within the politics of gay and lesbian representation in East, West, and reunified Germany.[54] In chapters 4, 5, and 6 on national and international kinship networks and memory formations, we will see the way this bears out in the quest to highlight certain experiences over others in local, national, and transnational memory communities and art installations. I argue that kinship allows us to better understand the multiple pathways into the queer past, while mapping out the tensions around belonging in the queer present.

There is something else at work here that speaks to the larger question of the place of desire within the history of queer kinship tout court, and the ways in which we have, to quote Gayle Rubin, "thought about sex" conceptually as well as methodologically to the detriment of writing transgressive histories of pleasure. As with other chapters in this book, the context may be Germany, but how we broach the subject of the role of the erotic in shaping kinship carries import for us all today, in this world of resurgent nationalism, racial capitalism, and global income disparity.[55] When it came onto the

scene in the 1990s, queer theory was quick to celebrate the powerful place of transgressive desire in thinking about difference. For most adherents, this was never just an intellectual movement, a battle against structuralism and its discontents; it represented the search for a liberation of the senses alongside a wider societal critique. It was a condemnation of institutions of conformity and a hope for something utopian if as yet elusive, just out of reach. But there were already signs of schism, especially around the transgressive power of sexual dissonance and race.

In 1984 Rubin argued that contemporary feminism failed to adequately address the demands of sexual dissidents (prostitutes, "boy-lovers," gays, lesbians, and those who practice S&M), citing the raucous Barnard College conference that was interrupted by antipornography activists, part of the feminist sex wars of the 1980s.[56] Eve Sedgwick took a different tack to advocate for the disarticulation of gender from sexuality and also race in examinations of the unique importance of homosexuality and heterosexuality to the Western canon.[57] Further sedimenting this separationist impulse in queer theory, Michael Warner suggested in his introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet* that the inherent incommensurability between what he called the "genetic and erotic logics of race and gender" meant "queerness, race, and gender could never be brought into parallel alignment." As queerness is always already subject to moral opprobrium (as opposed to other categories of experience—his thinking), it bears a different and distinct relation "to liberal logics of choice and freedom."[58] Other, more integrationist accounts, like Judith Butler's, saw the cohesiveness of identity itself as the issue, with queer theory serving to break apart any claims to universality or coherence in favor of a more historically and situationally rooted subjectivity. Sexually transgressive desire was not a means to an end of radical worldmaking but it was a start. Yet, despite this openness to a richer analysis of the vicissitudes of difference that mark queer ways of experiencing bodies and pleasures, these approaches have also been taken to task. Critics point especially to their inattentiveness to parallel discussions in Black feminist studies and queer of color critique for how efforts to mark sexual difference often rest on racial markers and uncritical assumptions about transgressing the norms of hegemonic sexual practice and gender identity.[59] One can't think about sexual role play in BDSM, as an example, without recognizing that master/slave positions carry connotations well beyond the bedroom or play space. As Lorenz Weinberg shows in their fascinating discussion of tensions between lesbians and BDSM practitioners in 1980s and 1990s Germany, this was not lost

FIG. I.2 *Schwule Ladys* (Gay Ladies), 1986. © Krista Beinstein / Schwules Museum* Berlin.

on German feminists grappling with the boundaries between empowerment and shame while still very much in the shadow of patriarchy, genocide, and fascism.[60] This took visual form in the photography of the Austrian enfant terrible Krista Beinstein, whose sexually charged images of leather women with penises and shameless embrace of female desire was frequently read by second-wave feminists as too male-centric for the movement (see figure I.2).[61] Biddy Martin put it more plainly still in 1996: in queer writing, queer kinship is often cast as inherently transgressive and norm defying. This has the effect of not just obscuring how implicated gender and race are in how people create in-groups and out-groups through claims to representation and pleasure but suggesting they are "stagnant and ensnaring," propping up white radical alterity at the expense of exerting any power of their own.[62]

Still, we can't underestimate the power of the suggestion that to simply desire queerly was enough to serve as provocation for nonreproductive kinship.[63] Critics of this formulation, of the inherent radicalism of queer critique, have come at the question from many different angles. Some have

adopted a more materialist stance. Love—whether emotional or bodily—was not universally accessible to all women or men equally at all times in the past.[64] Others, like Michael Hames-Garcia in the searingly personal "Can Queer Theory Be Critical Theory?" questioned whether privileging queerness as a conduit for freedom smooths over "the collusion of desire with domination and oppression?"[65] All along, he averred, queer theory has struggled to meaningfully integrate race alongside class, gender, and sexuality beyond marginalization, paternalism, and mere tokenism. This disconnect has animated vibrant discussions around how to think about the relationships between categories of experience, with Sharon Patricia Holland endeavoring to bring back into view the legacy of Black women's writing to find points of convergence and divergence around race, the erotic, and "the project of belonging."[66] Let's not forget, too, that queer of color critique draws on woman of color feminism (itself an act of kinship) to explore how racist practice frequently operates as gender and sexual regulation within and beyond the nation state. As Roderick Ferguson reminds us, queer liberalism also buttresses racial capitalism by conjuring up visions of universality in opposition to complex, intersectional affiliations.[67] Finally, as the contributors to the roundtable in *Social Text*'s "Left of Queer" issue argue, we must not forget trans* modalities when approaching kinship in the erotic past. When we deny our own complicity in propping up foreclosed knowledge formations, we neglect valuable opportunities to think anew about the normativizing impulses within queer history writing itself, including assumptions around like-mindedness and homogeneity and also how queer identities and methods can themselves be totalizing and harmful.[68] As Jack Halberstam cheekily put it, "Without a critique of normativity, queer theory may well look a lot like straight thinking."[69]

So just how radical was this radical in-between? These chapters brim with possibility when we learn to read kinship for the particular alongside the universal, the erotic alongside the respectable. Such an approach positions us to view the queer past more suspiciously, as a product of diverse struggles and relations vying for articulation. An approach that views kinships as shifting and porous loosens the reins over history's normativizing impulse. The first three chapters do this by unearthing a myriad of affinities and boundary crossings with unruly teenagers—boys as well as girls, queer and straight—challenging together and sometimes apart hegemonic depictions of sexual propriety and life course as they remove themselves from the grid of maturation, family, and reproduction to find kinships of

relationality and choice. The affinities that developed between groups more often relegated to one identity category or another allow us to see the "willfully eccentric modes of being" that emerge beyond the social-sexual frames of the day.[70] There are crossings of other sorts as well, some through space and time. These chapters pick up on the traumas of German history—war, empire, racial aggression, displacement, and genocide—and linger over the way they might enable pleasures both desirable and in excess of community norms. In some instances, they probe the limits of queer organizing around such dissident subjects as the teenager, street youth, sex workers, and leather men for the way they shore up something unassimilable and risqué that deliberately, accidentally, or just by convention challenged the liberationist logics of the nascent gay and lesbian movement. In this sense they are keenly radical, as these examples of sex work, lesbian and queer community making, and fashion and fetish photography often sit together uneasily in the contemporary imagination. But they also might be read in other ways, more critically than I once did, to interrogate whether they also participate in a normativizing violence of their own, at the expense of other tellings and experiences.

In the next three chapters in the book, I ask along with Carolyn Dinshaw What if instead of collapsing time "through affective contact between marginalized people now and then" we might hold on to these tensions and strive instead to touch across temporal boundaries, mindful of our place in the current moment but conscious of the ruptures and disjunctions that mark how our subjects give voice to their predicaments in their own terms as well as ours?[71] Is it possible to foster a new kind of radical relationality, an ongoing sense of kinship and affinity with those in the past, based on difference over homologization, and recognizing—maybe even embracing—the physical, affective, though different ties that bind? This is not a plea for a new ground on which to situate queer history and desire. Rather, it is a call for a model of kinship forged around how we are oriented emotionally as well as intellectually toward the past, and how this search for same-sex desire and gender nonconformity historically might nudge us into remembering a fuller spectrum of queer histories in the present, including those "whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange and out of place" today.[72] This form of kinship is not about family formation. Instead, it underscores the enormous potential of a historical practice oriented around relationships of affiliation and encounter, be they intellectual, physical, libidinous, or emotional. It is the kind of caretaking that comes from living in "good relation" with

our pasts and futures, with the world around us, beyond the assimilationist scripts of respectability, family, inheritance, and child-rearing.[73] One need not inhabit queer or trans* subject positions to live in good relation to the queer and trans* past.

Ultimately, I argue that such a vision of intersectional queer kinship can only happen through a methodological reworking of how we write the history of nonconformism and desire. This includes ways we conceptualize queer emotions, how we emplot them, and how we think about normative representational models that underwent transformation through a process of disidentification—that is, the way marginalized people disrupt hegemonic categories like persecution in order to make room for pleasure.[74] It requires a "re-wiring of the senses" to harness our own bodies as vehicles of implication and interpretation so as to better appreciate the generative power of the erotic, whether danger or desire, as appreciable through the body as much as imprinted on it.[75] By centering the radical potential of the erotic as an embodied practice and listening to the lessons of women of color feminists, who already in the 1980s had challenged us to see through the allure of respectability and not settle for "the convenient, the shoddy, the conventionally expected, nor the merely safe," we may recognize the ways in which we have colluded with the liberal social contract in how we have imagined queer worldmaking.[76] Remembering in this sense is about orienting ourselves to think about how queer kinships have been recast through memory and memorialization and also in our historical practice itself.

I take up these questions through an exploration of vastly different examples of representation and remembering. While critical queer history has always been a history of the present insofar as contemporary struggles have served as the launchpad for the search for historical antecedents, we have not always written such histories as mindfully as we might. These chapters explore the push to tackle and then commemorate the Nazi persecution of LGBTQIA people in the immediate aftermath of the war, in the 1970s through the work of the gay liberation movement and its erstwhile cis-presenting and lesbian antifascist coagitators, then in different ways in East and West Germany and over the benchmark of 1989. I examine the sometimes incongruent temporal logics around the multiple rememberings of persecution and endeavors to periodize this anew, somewhat more open-endedly, with regard for the different sights, sounds, orientations, and bodily experiences of danger and desire that were produced at different moments and for different audiences. I do this by analyzing the undercommons, those who

fail to fit into the dominant representational paradigm, including migrants and refugees, street youth, trans* people, and non-cisgendered academic and radical lesbians who challenge the normative white/cis/male imaginary that has coalesced around the memory of the sex reformer and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld. I ponder, following Frank Moten and Stefano Harney, the urgency and ambivalences of radical world-building with the hope that a history of queer relationality might allow us to think anew about the ties that bind without simultaneously reproducing new criteria for exclusion.[77] I suggest that we think about positionality in order to expose the logics of middle-class white reproductive temporalities in how queer associations, belonging, futures, and identities are conceptualized at the end of the twentieth century, so as to imagine where we might go in the twenty-first.

A final note on positionality as method: some of these chapters offer deliberate reinterpretations of my earlier writing. Like Kobena Mercer's powerful reworking of his earlier response to Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of black bodies, they take up the challenge of revision, of historicizing one's own arguments and recasting them in light of changing questions and imperatives. In this regard, they take inspiration directly from antiracist critique, which has sharpened our thinking about the uneasy fit of racialized and otherwise nonnormative subjects in social movements, AIDS activism, and artistic production and representation in these last decades. I aim to bring back into view the idea of queer as provocation while simultaneously demonstrating citational and self-critical practices that serve, themselves, as a model of kinship as relationality, of "finding our way" across time and difference, between those in our midst and those who came before. In this sense, citation is indeed how we acknowledge our debt to our intellectual ancestors; it is how we build and affirm anew queer kinship and memory.[78] As Cathy Cohen puts it in returning to her own iconic article twenty years later, it is an attempt to find ways to think about queer as "a space for agitation across communities defined by 'the other' by the state and/or racial capitalism."[79] In asking us to consider the implications of a historical practice that stresses a particular narrative arc around representation and becoming without adequate consideration of the challenges posed by other forms of experience that might question the teleology of liberalization, the book makes a space for different conditions of possibility between fascism in the past and today, charting in the process alternative kinships, solidarities, and trajectories for collective claims making going forward.