

# Introduction

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Like many recent explorations into the nature and content of masculine identity, as well as into specific sociohistorical and cultural conditions informing the construction of contemporary masculinity in American society, this anthology frames its analysis by asking, “What is a German man?” Those familiar with key American Men’s Studies scholars and their attempts to explore the properties of male consciousness understand that this seemingly perennial question is neither innocent nor academically arcane. Rather, it concerns itself with analyzing the shifting ethical, moral, and psychological contents of masculine identity in an effort to expose how patriarchal society employs conceptions of masculinity to exploit men for economic and political gain, and it uncovers the means by which men as a group maintain power over women and other less powerful groups. The question “What is a German man?” or, better still, how does he perform the power relations afforded to him as the privilege of his body—what Foucault has called “the political economy of the body”—thus concerns itself with examining a complicated existence that is at once privileged, exploited, and, most important, invisible.

Directing our attention to the production of masculine identity in postwar German society, we are confronted with a consciousness that may appear self-evident and stable, yet when analyzed through Men’s Studies theories, it immediately reveals itself as being historically in crisis, fragile as well as constructed. Only very recently has the German academy begun to question the lack of attention given to masculinity—the logic governing its invisibility—and its constant crisis. In doing so, a steady challenge to the “unity” of masculine identity has emerged in the German academy as a feminist intervention aimed at further challenging patriarchal structures. The possibility that theories of masculinity, or

Men's Studies, can serve as a form of feminist intervention becomes most clear in the analyses of literary masculinity, which constitute the final half of this book. But even before the academic theorizing of the middle and late 1990s, German boulevard newspapers and periodicals publishing special editions on "hidden masculine dilemmas" were already laying the groundwork for later scholarship on German men and masculinity. The need to begin with "common knowledges" about masculinity has always been central to Men's Studies. Here it is continued in the chapters of Klaus-Michael Bogdal and Klaus-Jürgen Bruder, who read popular and mass culture—translating it into what the Self Psychologist Heinz Kohut has termed "experience near metapsychological abstraction"—as "reliable seismographs for registering the processes of cultural change in everyday life," to borrow an expression from Bogdal.

In their analyses, the writers of this anthology make explicit that masculine identity is neither stable nor intransitory but rather is historically determined, thus subject to the material conditions of class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion. As Men's Studies scholars as diverse as Michael Kimmel, Harry Brod, and Elisabeth Badinter have stressed—and as Bogdal, Bruder, and Tilmann Moser also show here—an analysis of masculine identity must include an investigation of specific sociohistorical events that have conditioned that identity. By undertaking such examinations, we achieve a greater understanding of how historical events have affected men's lives. Moreover, we obtain an indispensable critical revision of why individual men, male-dominated organizations, and *Männerbünde* have reacted differently to destabilizing events. In short, we arrive at paths that lead to a conception of men's history.

The authors' stance vis-à-vis Germany's recent past forms a thread that runs throughout this collection. In order to make clearer the determinants and, consequently, the possible transformations of masculine identity in postwar society, the authors implicitly or explicitly take as their point of departure the psychic and material legacies of the Third Reich. This is not to undermine Moray McGowan's assertion that analyses of Turkish-German masculinities test the boundaries by which we can maintain that National Socialism has affected all men in Germany, for that is certainly the case. Nevertheless, in reading Moser's transcribed therapy sessions with a fifty-six-year-old son of an SS officer still fleshing out his relationship with his father, it becomes painfully obvious that one cannot talk of German masculine identity after 1945 without talking about fascism. Describing a trip to the concentration camp Sachsenhausen, where his father was stationed during World War II, Moser's patient relates:

I wanted to find some sort of trace and this is . . . (begins to cry silently again, sighs.)

Somehow it is really . . .

*Coughs, sounds as if he needs to throw up.*

It is as if he never returned again after '45, although he was still there till a year and a half ago and I gave speeches on his birthdays. (He senses the extent to which there exists an unknown, lost part of his father.) I was just reading your book, *Der Erlöser* (The savior). And you ask this patient what you would have to say in order for you to be, for a moment, an ideal father for him. I apparently had a momentary debilitation with this sentence (laughs a little) and had to read it about five times. The sentence is perhaps a little complex, but this is no reason why I should be slow in catching on. I thought then of what I would really want from my ideal father.

There is somehow . . .

*He pauses, breathes very deeply, sobs once, then a loud scream appears to want to come out, which he suppresses however.*

Therapist: Allow a sound to come out, too. These are almost sounds of panic, or cries of pain, that I believe I hear. Screams perhaps, or a type of high-pitched crying.

(Patient sobs loudly and convulsively, breathing and crying mix together. Yells, full of despairing rage:)

Patient: That you would talk to me for once!

(He cries again, but no longer silently as in the beginning; he shudders from crying. Though it seems he wants to calm himself as quickly as possible, he cries for a long time.) I don't want to hear anything about your past! (He wants to say: Don't be afraid. I won't dig up your guilt!) But you should talk to me for once: what affects you, what you think about me, what makes you happy. I never heard anything that came from inside of you.

*He no longer sounds enraged now, rather resigned and sad.*

I always had to guess what you . . .

*He sighs, it sounds as if he feels sick, one senses suppressed crying in his voice.*

This dense portrayal of the psychic legacies of National Socialism constitutes our first departure into a masculine problematic that is specifically German.

Further, Moser's and Bruder's analyses of the psychic legacies of National Socialism in postwar German society bring to light the historical conditions informing masculine identity and accordingly situate the in-

investigator within this recent history. Perhaps even more telling than the interpretations of literary images of masculinity in themselves are the forces informing the literary analyses. This becomes apparent only in reading the theoretical chapters of this book against the literary interpretations of masculine identity. Because the interpretation of literary images of masculinity are mediated by the postwar development of theory itself, we must also situate the investigator, and the investigator's methodologies, historically. By doing so, we begin to more closely define and chart postwar German masculine identity itself. Consequently, while Inge Stephan's analysis of the Cassandra motif in the works of Hans-Erich Nossack reveals a particular conservative reaction on the part of German men to the restructuring of gender relations in early postwar society, reading Moser against Stephan produces some surprising results.<sup>1</sup> Moser's theories would suggest that Nossack's depoliticizing, dehumanizing, and deintellectualizing of the literary character Cassandra (not to mention his strong identification with her) become simultaneously descriptive of the failure of the postwar German male intellectual himself—a failure in his masculinity kept silent by his masculinity. Suggesting that “Cassandra is the prototype of the intellectual,” and that both Cassandra and Odysseus “mark the endpoints of a spectrum” of power, Stephan's chapter explores the questions of why postwar male intellectuals—of which the two most striking examples are Peter Handke and Botho Strauß—turn conservative and renounce earlier, more emancipatory political philosophies, why they ignore radical theories of political processes in favor of the aestheticizing of the political, and why their works become critiques of language and not of power structures themselves. As Stephan's reading of Nossack's Cassandra suggests, and as Moser and Carl Pietzcker demand we consider, conservative conversions provide psychic compensation for narcissistic crises occasioned by the intellectual's inability to affect political processes. Finally, reading Moser's chapter against Stephan's, and against Barbara Kosta's analysis of the *Väterliteratur*, we see that this malaise, this conservative conversion of male intellectuals of the early postwar period and the '68 movement, is not really present in German women. German postwar feminist writing has yet, however, to seriously embrace the notion that the contents of male intellectuality—of which conversion to conservatism is probably the most easily recognized—may be conditioned by crises in masculinity.

By reading the theoretical examinations against the literary analyses, we also gain insight into the literary representation of the feminine in, among others, the works of the male writers Nossack, Borchert, Böll,

Andersch, and Meckel. It seems to me that the reason lies—and Stephan, Hans-Gerd Winter, and Russell West suggest this—in the relationship between the representation of the “feminine” and in the nature of trauma itself: identification with the phantasized maternal/feminine offers men a form of psychic compensation that guards against the painful fragmentation of the self in the moment of traumatization, and also later during potential moments of reliving traumatic experience. Union, merging, dreams of feminine love—these coping mechanisms enable the male, through dissociation, to create psychic cohesion in the moment of traumatic exposure. Bruder and West hold that, for men, the “meaning” of traumatization (“meaning” being, I contend, the transformation of somatic experience, that is, behaviors, flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, and so on, into linguistic and symbolic structures, into declarative or narrative memory) may only be reconstituted as a form of femininity precisely because it does not fit within culturally accepted models of masculinity: the hero, the nationalist-warrior, the neo-Nazi, the son of an SS man or any other military man for that matter, the sons of an entire generation of German men. Trauma remains split off from the self in the form of femininity.

Following Nossack’s experience of the bombing of Hamburg, Borchert’s portrayal of war, and Böll’s description of returning home, the sexualization of female relations also provides psychic cohesion during subsequent occurrences of fragmentation. Paradoxically, however, the experience of trauma destroys the potential for building a mature erotic relationship. Trauma extinguishes any real opportunity for mature erotic contact and replaces it with an axis of power relations—characterized by a rigid, extreme polarity—around which interactions turn. Sexualization becomes a means of keeping the self alive while also providing an agency for controlling the Other—an Other who might remind the subject of his traumatization, his lack of manliness. This might explain why Nossack both sexualizes and deerotizes the character of Cassandra. Certainly, Borchert’s and Böll’s powerful maternal imageries raise serious questions about the relationship between the portrayal of the feminine and the nature of trauma. Although sexualization is possible in Borchert’s texts, mature erotic contact is not, because merging with the Other, surrendering the self and allowing the boundaries of the self to become permeable without losing the self, is remindful of the original traumatic exposure itself. This is the paradox of the traumatized man who uses his masculinity to mask fragmentation—the maintenance of manhood at the expense of women. The psychic cohesion maintained through the feminine during type II traumatization—the humiliation,

the crystalline image of the event, the comeliness aiding the dissociative response, itself an aspect of the biphasic response—the sexualization guarding the subject against decompensation, perhaps a coping mechanism itself, brought on by flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, somatic sensations and dreams, the man fleeing his lover before union because her saving grace reminds him of original attempts to master incoming stimuli. As Moser and Winter make clear, and as Kosta and Stephan begin to suggest, traumatic exposure is one important factor informing the masculine identity of two generations of German men: the “National Socialist generation,” and its sons.<sup>2</sup>

By further reading the theoretical against the literary with an eye for the possible forces informing theoretical and literary examinations of masculinity, we must consider the subject of the study of masculinity in the German academy and Bogdal’s chapter, “Hard-Cold-Fast: Imagining Masculinity in the German Academy, Literature, and the Media.” For Bogdal, contemporary images of masculinity—of which the hypermasculinity of the nationalist-warrior is perhaps the most easily recognized—cannot simply be traced back to “the spirit of submission that characterized Wilhelminian society and fascism. Rather, these images have their roots in the eighteenth-century beginnings of bourgeois society.” And while it is important to understand that masculine identity is the product of sociohistorical processes reaching back to eighteenth-century German society and the constitution of the small family through the privatization of property and the accumulation of capital,<sup>3</sup> Bogdal reminds us that it is also necessary to historically situate the postwar scientific investigation of the sociohistorical processes of masculinity itself: its methodologies, assumptions, hypotheses, and dominant critical theories. Reading Bogdal, Kosta, and Moser together, we can conclude that German men of the ’68 generation still struggle with conflicts shaped by an educational tradition that publicly disavowed the persistence/importance of the image of the fascist hero, and at the same time forbade both educators and students to openly admit their fascination with the beauty and strength of the soldier-father. This prohibition did not lead to a working through of the attachment to the idealized image of the father but rather to a “derealization” (the Mitscherlichs) through a “strengthening” of ego processes.<sup>4</sup> This is one explanation for why the male ’68 generation is unable to break fully with the image of the fascist hero. Turning our attention toward the portrayal of the masculine in Moser’s chapter “Paralysis, Silence, and the Unknown SS-Father,” he offers another answer to the question of why German men of the “National Socialist generation” and their sons were unable to break fully

from fascist or conservative patriarchal conceptions of the hero. In my interview with Moser, he concludes that the '68 generation could not break with the fathers because such an act was forbidden by both fascism and the Christian commandment to honor thy father.

Furthermore, Bogdal's analysis of "Men's Studies" in the German academy compels us to ask what is at stake when the German university system marginalizes Men's Studies—if it is studied at all—by placing it under the moderation of "Gender Studies" or even "Feminist Studies." As long as the study of masculinity in Germany remains buried within Gender Studies or Feminist Studies, that is, as long as this form of criticism endures as women's labor, from which men are excluded, German men do not have to become the objects of their own investigation, and the constitution of masculinity in postwar society fails to be brought to their attention. This is why the practice of German feminism in the academy offers men a certain comfort—the comfort of not having to consciously confront themselves.

By reading Bogdal's examination of the German academy against Kosta's, we also see that the psychoanalytic literary criticism of the *Väterliteratur* must necessarily have its own history. Those familiar with the history of literary criticism surrounding the *Väterliteratur* realize, as Kosta does, that 1980s' and 1990s' literary critics have marshaled divergent psychoanalytic theories in order to interpret and diagnose the relationship between the generation of men responsible for the Holocaust and that generation's sons. Reading Bogdal against Kosta, we begin to discover historical moments in postwar society when theorists attempted postmortem to account for the transformation of conceptions of masculine identity from hard-cold (helpless) providers to "Softies" and back again.

Certainly, in the five years during which I have worked with the contributors to this anthology, it has become evident to me just how much work remains to be done in theorizing German masculinities and in creating social programs that employ Men's Studies to expose the traumatic etiologies of patriarchy.<sup>5</sup> This anthology, like any edited volume, is incomplete. Initiating a much needed area of study, it will, I hope, serve as an invitation to more enumerated analyses of postwar German masculinity. Clearly, more work must be done in the field of German-Jewish masculinities; such work could take its cue not only from the writings of Sander Gilman and Jeffrey Peck but also from the work of American-German Jewish writer Harry Brod, who clearly shows that the children of the National Socialist generation and the children of Holocaust survivors have so much in common.<sup>6</sup> Comprehensive research

into the sociopolitical and cultural conditions of gay men in postwar Germany likewise needs to be undertaken. I contend that Hans-Georg Stümke, in his work at the *Rosa Hilfe*, has made a profound inroad into the governmental wastelands that determine the lives of gay men in Germany. He has created a needed point of departure for researchers wishing to examine the political conditions under which gay men live.<sup>7</sup> I have often asked myself how an anthology on postwar German masculinity could be possible without an analysis of East German men, without considering the effects of forty years of East German socialism and its defeat. Perhaps future researchers will make forays into postwar East German history as literary critic Julia Hell has done.<sup>8</sup> Then, what about men of other—non-Turkish—ethnic minorities living in Germany?

Space also prevents me from representing analyses of class, labor, and globalization, and their effects on German men in Germany, yet such analyses are extremely important to Men's Studies. Exciting work is being done by economist and sociologist Maria Mies and political scientist Claudia von Werlhof in their analyses of Third World labor, workers' rights for women, the German military industrial complex, the global economy, and the role the German army will play in defending economic interests abroad in the form of "humanitarian," out-of-area deployments—what we might call a German "military humanism." The current transformation of German civil society from a social democracy to a privatized, deregulated, market-driven economy (in which German citizens will have only a restricted voice in the constitution of domestic and foreign policy) will not only have deep effects on the constitution of German labor in a federalized Europe but, more important, latent, militaristic, fascist identities will once again be required to protect German economic interests, if not to pave the way for enhanced German capital markets overseas. The globalization of German capital requires the militarization of German civil society in order to compensate male workers who are dispossessed of their ability to provide for their families, precisely because globalization necessitates that German labor be modeled according to Third World standards. The "perfect" German worker thus becomes a fifteen- to twenty-year-old female, uninsured, un-unionized, and vulnerable to industrial toxins—one who might, for example, work in Manhattan's garment district.

Additionally, as Maria Mies has shown, economic and military arming for globalization requires not only political and technical instruments but, above all, societal and *ideological acceptance*. First, it necessitates the normalization of war and brutality within German society under the longed-for belief that German society, free of its Nazi past,



should be allowed to protect itself. Second, it demands economic gain through a strengthened military and weapons industry (ironically, this is obtained by proclaiming that a strong military will bring about the equality of the sexes by allowing women to enter the *Bundeswehr* and take part in combat). Finally, it requires a defeated German male worker; it requires a Rambo.<sup>9</sup> Germany is currently the world's fifth largest manufacturer and exporter of weapons.<sup>10</sup> This is worth thinking about. It seems to me that investigations of how men maintain power over women and other less powerful groups must include examinations of class, labor, globalization, and militarization—analyses that were central to any creditable critique of German society and politics during the 1960s. Given more space, this anthology would have included works by von Werlhof and Mies,<sup>11</sup> for these two scholars have made it painfully clear that there can be no real critique of masculinity without a critique of capital.

## NOTES

1. Current Men's Studies scholarship tends to link historical crises in masculinity to renegotiations of gender relations as occasioned by changes in the structure and content of labor, in sociopolitical conditions, and so on. Historically, men have reacted to this restructuring in three ways: (1) *Pro-Male Backlash* is understood as a strengthening of political, economic, and cultural organizations favoring men's status in society; (2) *Anti-feminist backlash* is understood as men's attempts to take away women's rights through social, political, educational, and cultural programs; (3) *Pro-feminist support of women's causes* may be understood as political, economic, and private support by men of women and their causes. See Michael Kimmel, ed., *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1987), or Harry Brod, ed., *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987).
2. Additionally, the long and complex reforms that German society has employed since 1945 in order to rebuild itself and maintain its present-day democratic and capitalistic structures in post-unified society have required that German men assume different public and private roles in the everyday social reality of German postwar society. The generation of German males who blueprinted fascism or were its victims differed greatly from its children, who experienced at a young age the brutality of a total war as well as the reconstruction of German society during the Adenauer era. Still different from the German male who was old enough to take part in National Socialism and the '68 generation is a generation of German males born into a divided Germany of the 1960s and 1970s. Consequently, several broad typologies of masculine identity emerge from what is also an intergenerational analysis of the constitution of masculinity in postwar society.
3. George Mosse argues along similar lines when he shows how the "standard" for modern, aesthetic conceptions of normative, straight masculinity, of male beauty, may be traced back to eighteenth-century conceptions of Greek art as put forth in the writings of

Johann Joachim Winckelman. See George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

4. See Dan Bar-On, *Legacy of Silence: Encounters with Children of the Third Reich* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989) and Rafael Moses, ed., *Persistent Shadows of the Holocaust: The Meaning to Those Not Directly Affected* (Madison, Wisc.: International University Press, 1993).

5. A wonderful example of a program that considers conceptions of masculinity is “Kind im Zentrum,” created by Klaus-Jürgen Bruder in Berlin. “Kind im Zentrum” is dedicated to therapeutically treating both the victims and the perpetrators of child sexual abuse.

6. See Harry Brod, *Gender and Judaism: The Transformation of Tradition* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), or *A Mensch among Men: Explorations in Jewish Masculinity* (Freedom, Calif.: Crossing Press, 1988).

7. See Hans-Georg Stümke, *Homosexuelle in Deutschland. Eine politische Geschichte* (München: Beck, 1989).

8. See Julia Hell, *Post-Fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History, and the Literature of East Germany* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).

9. See Maria Mies, “Globalisierung-Militarisierung-Ramboisierung,” *Wieder “Helm ab zum Gebet”? Nein! Protest auf der Domplatte. Gegen Soldatengottesdienst, Aufrüstung und die Militarisierung der Gesellschaft*, Kay Hecht, ed. (Köln: Selbst Verlag, 1998).

10. *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, February 21, 2000, <<http://www.sipri.se/>>.

11. See Claudia von Werlhof, *Herren-Los. Herrschaft, Erkenntnis, Lebensform* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1996); Maria Mies and Claudia von Werlhof, *Frauen, die letzte Kolonie* (Zürich: Rotpunktverlag, 1992); Maria Mies, *The Subsistence Perspective: Beyond the Globalised Economy* (London: Zed Books, 1999) and *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed Books, 1991).