

other kinds of statistical data in the Reports were (and are) often overshadowed by Kinsey's data on homosexual behaviour and desires because of the connections that were drawn to national character and security.

American Sexual Character draws on an impressive amount of research. It uses a wide range of published, mass-market sources from the 1940s-60s, from handbooks to women's magazines, in addition to the massive Reports themselves. Non-specialist readers will particularly enjoy Reumann's use of the 1954 *A Cartoon Guide to the Kinsey Report*, which is itself a fascinating way to assess how the Reports' contents were being interpreted by mainstream American popular culture. Unfortunately her primary sources (other than the Kinsey Institute's collections) are not listed separately from the secondary material, making it more difficult to appreciate the number and variety of sources used in the book.

Other critiques that can be made of the book are few and minor. The work is a bit repetitive at times, but that can be said of most first monographs based on dissertations. The title is misleading in that large sections of the book do not mention Kinsey at all, and at times the connection to the Kinsey Reports seems tenuous. A more accurate (albeit less-marketable) subtitle would have been "Sex, Gender, and National Identity in the Era of Kinsey." One notable and questionable omission is that Reumann assumes the reader already knows the story of how Kinsey, a zoologist whose previous obsession was wasps, came to lead the most famous study of human sexuality to-date, as well as the controversies around his methodology and research subjects. It is clear that Reumann wanted to avoid the polarizing debates that have characterized biographical studies of Kinsey, and maintain a wider view that puts the Reports in context, but a few brief paragraphs would have gone a long way to making this book more accessible for a non-specialist. Nonetheless, this book gives the Kinsey Reports their due by putting them in their proper place in the history of Cold War sexuality, and is a welcome addition to the historiography.

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Harlan Greene. *The German Officer's Boy* (Madison, Wisconsin: Terrace Books, 2005).

The murder of German diplomat Ernst vom Rath by Herschel Grynszpan is a dramatic, yet seemingly inexplicable, historical event that has given rise to significant speculation. Vom Rath was a relatively low-level member of the German embassy staff in Paris. In ordinary times, his death might have become a minor diplomatic incident, but little more. The murder took place in 1938, however, by a young Jew. The Nazis caught hold of the issue, whipped up a propaganda frenzy around it, and subsequently used it as the excuse for

Kristallnacht, the pogrom known as the Night of Broken Glass. The evidence suggests that *Kristallnacht* would have happened anyway, but vom Rath's murder gave the Nazi leadership a specific reason to attack Germany's Jews.

Since the regime used vom Rath's murder as a justification for anti-Semitic violence, it seems important to know how and why it happened. Was it a premeditated act, an individual's outcry against German injustice? Grynszpan's family were Polish Jews who had just been expelled from Germany, and perhaps this motivated the 17-year-old's violent action against a German official. Vom Rath's murderer left no very clear explanation of his act, however, so it is impossible to be sure. The killing was an isolated incident, a murder like many others, for which the motivations remain unclear.

Harlan Greene has filled this historical void with fiction in *The German Officer's Boy*. Greene's account brings to life the circumstances surrounding vom Rath's murder, and in the process, argues that the killing was a partly accidental crime of passion. According to Greene, Grynszpan was at the end of his tether after months spent living illegally in France. Hearing about his family's expulsion, he came to the German embassy intending to use a gun to force the Ambassador to assist his relatives. If this failed, he planned to kill himself to make a public statement. Instead of seeing the Ambassador, however, he was shown into the office of vom Rath, whom he already knew well, for he and the German had been involved in a homosexual relationship. In a moment of passion, Grynszpan turned his gun on himself, but dropped it and shot vom Rath who later died in hospital.

The book's jacket tells us that Greene is the son of Holocaust survivors, and an author of both fiction and non-fiction books mainly dealing with the history of Charleston and other parts of South Carolina. He bases his argument about Grynszpan on the few surviving statements in which Grynszpan explained his actions. In confessions written in prison in 1942, Grynszpan said that he had been involved in a same-sex relationship with vom Rath, and that this had led to the killing.

For the most part, historians have downplayed Grynszpan's statements, viewing them as part of a clever plan devised by the murderer's lawyers to keep young Grynszpan alive. Once they had turned vom Rath into a martyr, the Nazis could ill afford to have his memory associated with homosexuality. Rather than risk information about the relationship coming out in a public trial, therefore, the affair was hushed up and Grynszpan stayed alive in prison.

Greene has taken Grynszpan's explanation at face value, and woven a plot around it that follows the young man from Germany to France, into the Parisian demimonde, and then into the arms of vom Rath. Perhaps Grynszpan initially hoped to use the diplomat to regularize his own situation in France, or help his family stay in Germany, but Greene believes that the two men fell in love.

The hypothesis that Grynszpan and vom Rath had a relationship is worth

exploring. Perhaps the strongest piece of evidence Greene uses is Goebbels' comment in his diary, on 5 April 1942, that while Grynszpan had initially claimed he did not know vom Rath, "Now he's changed his story and there's surfaced bits of evidence to support the possibility of relations between Grynszpan and vom Rath" (202). Unfortunately, Greene cites this incorrectly, writing that it dates from 24 March 1942. His translation of the diary (given above) is also rather liberal. The original reads "Nun existiert irgendein anonymer Brief irgendeines jüdischen Emigranten, der die Wahrscheinlichkeit eines homosexuellen Verkehrs zwischen Grünspan und vom Rath offenläßt." (See the entry for 5 April 1942 in Joseph Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher*, Elke Fröhlich, ed., Teil II: Diktate 1941-1945, Vol 4: April-June 1942, 51-52.) Other authors, notably Gerald Schwab, mention additional sources that confirm Grynszpan intended to use such a relationship as part of his defence. For example, Chapter nineteen of Gerald Schwab's, *The Day the Holocaust Began: the Odyssey of Herschel Grynszpan* focuses on how Grynszpan's expected defence influenced the Nazis' decision to postpone his trial.

The problem, however, is that even if it is clear Grynszpan intended to mention a relationship with vom Rath at his trial, that does not mean the relationship actually existed. The evidence to which Goebbels referred has yet to surface, and even if it did, it would likely be inconclusive. It is certainly possible that Grynszpan was telling the truth, but it is equally possible that he was not.

In such a situation, perhaps the best recourse is to write a work of fiction, as Greene has done. Greene's work is a vivid historical novel, and the author includes a short afterword that outlines where the borders of history and his fiction lie. A historian could wish for greater detail here, but in comparison, Andy Marino's *Herschel: The Boy Who Started World War II* is an equally speculative account of the same murder that makes greater claims to legitimacy as non-fiction. Greene's work gives a good sense of the frustrations of someone living in Grynszpan's situation, as an illegal young Jewish immigrant in 1938 Paris. It allows one to imagine how a relationship between such a person and diplomat vom Rath could have developed, and what it might have been like.

The book is an interesting experiment, though its value to the historian is difficult to judge. The suggestion that vom Rath and Grynszpan were lovers is certainly plausible, but due to lack of evidence, the book must remain fictional. Whether or not one chooses to use such a book in teaching, for instance, depends more than anything else on one's own comfort with historical fiction as a genre. Greene's work might make a valuable addition to a course on historical methods, where it could be read and discussed alongside more factual accounts of vom Rath's murder and its aftermath. It could not, however, replace an analytical work about homosexuality and Nazism, or anti-Semitism in the Third Reich. The 1999 film *Aimee und Jaguar*, directed by Max

Färberböck, might do as good a job, or better, of raising similar themes in an approachable, semi-fictional way.

In the end, it matters little whether Grynszpan was gay or not, just as it matters little that he was the particular man who shot vom Rath. The diplomat's death may have been a tragedy, but its importance lies not in the details, but in what happened afterward. The murder was just the excuse for *Kristallnacht*, not the cause, and the question of Grynszpan's sexuality mattered little to that event, if at all.

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Dagmar Herzog. *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Dagmar Herzog's *Sex after Fascism* is a detailed re-evaluation of the history and memory of sexuality in Germany since the Third Reich. Herzog categorically rejects the idea of Nazism as anti-sex. She argues that Nazi sexuality was marked by simultaneous "incitement and disavowal" (27). Specifically, while the Nazis rejected a supposedly libertine Weimar sexuality and harshly controlled the sexuality of those considered racially unfit, they also emphasised sexual emancipation and pleasure for those considered racially fit, encouraging condom use, women's sexual freedom, and pre and extra-marital sex.

Before the Sexual Revolution, Nazism was remembered in West Germany as sexually inciting, and this sexual liberalism was linked causally to Nazi genocide. With the post-war Christianisation of German politics, sexual conservatism came to dominate the West as a postfascist way of renouncing linkage to, complicity with, and pleasure under the former Nazi regime, for the people, the new state, and the churches. Yet the *Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (BRD) exhibited continuities with the Third Reich, including a eugenic, *völkisch*, and socially—if not politically—anti-Semitic worldview, and the continued criminalisation of abortion, pornography, and homosexuality (the latter two under the guise of protecting youth). Yet because most West Germans liked the sexual liberality they gained during Weimar to the Third Reich, conservative theory and liberal practice did not line up, with pre- and extra-marital sex, pregnancies, and abortion remaining common.

West Germany's Sexual Revolution depended on four main elements: the New Left; the 'sex wave' (i.e. the commercialisation of sex and the spread of a sexual consumer culture including pornography and sexualised advertising); the government's willingness to liberalise its policies *vis à vis* abortion, pornography, and homosexuality; and the advent of the pill. Arguing that the personal is political, the small but ever important New Left viewed sexual politics as inseparable from other politics, leading to their idea that the defeat of sexual