



# **Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis (German and European Studies)**

*Laurie Marhoefer*

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Liberated, licentious, or merely liberal, the sexual freedoms of Germany's Weimar Republic have become legendary. The home of the world's first gay rights movement, the republic embodied a progressive, secular vision of sexual liberation. Immortalized – however misleadingly – in Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* and the musical *Cabaret*, Weimar's freedoms have become a touchstone for the politics of sexual emancipation.

Yet, as Laurie Marhoefer shows in *Sex and Weimar Republic*, those sexual freedoms were only obtained at the expense of a minority who were deemed sexually disordered. In Weimar Germany, the citizen's right to sexual freedom came with a duty to keep sexuality private, non-commercial, and respectable.

*Sex and the Weimar Republic* examines the rise of sexual tolerance through the debates which surrounded "immoral" sexuality: obscenity, male homosexuality, lesbianism, transgender identity, heterosexual promiscuity, and prostitution. It follows the sexual politics of a swath of Weimar society ranging from sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld to Nazi stormtrooper Ernst Röhm. Tracing the connections between toleration and regulation, Marhoefer's observations remain relevant to the politics of sexuality today.

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