

“IT DOESN’T HAVE NICE STORIES IN IT, NO LOVE LETTERS, NO HAPPY
ENDINGS.”
HOMOSEXUALITY, THE HOLOCAUST, AND LITERATURE AS RESISTANCE

by
Phelan C. Tinsley

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Radford University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in the Department of English

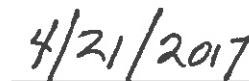
Thesis Advisor: Dr. Donald Secreast

April 2017

Copyright 2017, Phelan C. Tinsley



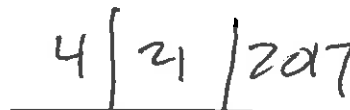
Dr. Donald Secreast
Thesis Advisor



Date



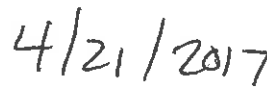
Dr. Moira P. Baker
Committee Member



Date



Dr. Michele Ren
Committee Member



Date

ABSTRACT

This project begins with a section dedicated to research that examines Martin Sherman's *Bent* and Leslea Newman's "A Letter to Harvey Milk." In that piece, I argue that both Sherman's play and Newman's short story work to counter the negative discourses surrounding contemporary homosexuality, thus classifying these two texts as forms of active resistance. The research process was eye-opening, but something continued to bother me the more I delved into the project. Scholars and critics expressed concern for the missing narratives and literature from homosexual victims of the Holocaust. The four pieces of fiction in this thesis focus on those narratives. I attempted to keep elements of resistance in all four short stories, as well as keeping to a theme about family and love. My stories portray actual horrors that homosexuals faced in pre-war Germany, as well as in the concentration camps.

The first two stories, "Else and Erich" and "Peter's Automat," explore the idea of creating family from friendship. "The German Volk, 1942" brings attention to the devastating effects that Nazi propaganda had on families with a homosexual child. Finally, "The Interviews" delves into a chosen family split apart after their imprisonment by the SS and Gestapo.

Many of the names and scenes in this fiction are taken from names, initials, and scenarios found in actual Nazi paperwork, documented in the book *Hidden Holocaust?: Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany, 1933-45*.

Phelan C. Tinsley
Department of English, 2017
Radford University

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although this project was forced to come together pretty quickly, it wouldn't have gone smoothly without the advice and guidance of my thesis advisor, Dr. Donald Secreast. Our meetings and conversations allowed for productive brainstorming and conversation, overall taking away much of the stress and anxiety I felt while working on my thesis.

I would also like to thank Dr. Michele Ren and Dr. Moira Baker for taking on the task of reading my work. Both Dr. Ren and Dr. Baker have been instrumental in my success as a Master's student, Graduate Teaching Fellow, and activist.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my best friends, Caitlyn Parker and Kelly Nickell. Without the full support and encouragement from these two wonderful women, I would have spent the last year napping with my cat. A special thanks goes to Caitlyn, for without her, I would never have applied to Radford's Master's Program in the first place. Here's to gettin' shit done.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Introduction	1
Else and Erich	15
Peter's Automat	26
The German Volk, 1942	39
The Interviews	49
Works Cited	63

INTRODUCTION

“Generally, it can be said that there are three types of struggles: either against forms of domination; against forms of exploitation ... or against that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way” (Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 781). Within these struggles exist the poetry, the music and songs, every type of literature that we call our favorites. They tell the stories of the systems of oppression that often remain in the background, masked behind creativity. Systems of oppression are constructed and placed upon society, sometimes crushing minorities. In an attempt to fight the power structures that bind them, minority writers create narratives that become resistance literature. Countering negative discourses is a mode in which literature becomes an act of resistance. Martin Sherman and Leslea Newman counter contemporary psychiatry and its attempt to keep homosexuality in the closet by creating relatable human characters. Before each publication these writers experienced the dictation of the law on their humanity. The texts they created then acted in defiance of, not only those prescribed norms, but of the laws from which they are derived. It is the job of literature to help persuade a positive change in culture. Kenji Yoshino, Professor of Constitutional Law, describes literature as persuading, while the law “coerces” (Yoshino 1758). Although Foucault does not see power as physical coercion, law is part of the ideology that seeks to shape human choices and actions. Perhaps this is why we often look to literature in order to understand culture. In literature, we are granted the opportunity to not only experience history, but also to experience texts that give the oppressed agency. It allows us to explore attached identities, breaking down stereotypical and perceived images of women, Natives, and homosexuals. Therefore, the literature created by those minorities, literature created by the oppressed as a form of active resistance, seeks to disrupt established social and cultural norms.

A little more than a decade before the Stonewall Riots¹, the homosexual community faced a crusade by psychiatry aimed at the destruction of the homosexual psyche. The 1950s began to give way to the creation of some of the first groups that started to spread anti-gay messages, which scrutinized the idea that homosexuals could maintain healthy relationships. Ten years after the Stonewall Riots, yet another barricade stood in the way of gay liberation—the discovery of AIDS. In the United States, homophobic reactions to the disease had created panic and the public eye looked towards the gay community. Discourses of the 1980s again questioned the validity of same-sex relationships and families. By helping analyze society’s homophobia, its consequences, and the need for gay males and lesbians to establish a family and loving relationships, Sherman’s *Bent* and Newman’s “A Letter to Harvey Milk” created a counter discourse to contemporary negative discourses on gay and lesbian relationships.

In the years leading to the publication of *Bent*, psychiatrists across the country were debating the effects of homosexuality on the public and the self. In 1972, psychiatrist and clinical professor of psychiatry, Charles Socarides, delved into the family unit, explaining that our “mammalian heritage while introduced to a web of social institutions ... led man to his sexual pattern—heterosexuality” (“The Sexual Deviations” 423). Socarides and other contemporary psychiatrists believed that homosexuality stemmed from a “faulty family constellation.” Blaming the emasculation of a father figure and the interference of mothers in their sons’ peer groups, homosexuality was declared outside of “normal sexual behavior” as “disordered sexual development” (“The Sexual Deviations” 420). The effects of Socarides’ anti-homosexual rhetoric helped shape a culture of fear and hate.

¹ In 1969, The Stonewall Riots took place at the Stonewall Inn, in Greenwich Village, New York. These riots are credited for the rebirth of the Gay Liberation Movement.

The internalization of contemporary homophobic discourses can be found in Martin Sherman's *Bent*. Published in 1979 in the United Kingdom, *Bent* is a play that follows Max, a man struggling to accept his homosexuality while living in pre-war Germany. Resistance appears as Sherman transforms his protagonists into victors, though they do not survive. John Clum explains that "oppression and resistance and survival and heroic making are the stuff of gay history" (169). Sherman's play uses the history of the persecution of homosexuals to tell a story of love, countering the discourses that suggest homosexuals cannot love.

From the beginning of the play, readers witness the results of contemporary American psychiatry on homosexual culture. According to Socarides, "the homosexual act promotes alleviation of feelings of emptiness and loss of self ... and must be continually repeated with 'fresh partners'" ("Psychotherapy with Male Homosexuals" 518). When the play begins, we are introduced to Rudy, Max's partner, and a blond man, Wolf. This man is a sexual partner whom Max picked up at a bar; he is later identified as Wolfgang Granz, an officer of the German military. Throughout their time together, Max and Rudy argue about Max's constant need for attention from other men. He is supplementing strictly physical relationships in place of relationships that provide emotional support, as well as physical, mirroring the surrounding discourses. Max has internalized the idea that homosexuals can only have temporarily satisfying sexual relationships.

Clum suggests that gay drama, such as *Bent*, is an "expression [of] the historical impulse" (169). Max and Horst then become heroes because of the oppression they faced and the way in which they resisted it. Even as a work of fiction, the play takes history head-on and exposes the brutality that gay men faced in concentration camps, while attacking the negative attitudes outside and away from the camps. Described in Clum's article are two impulses: 1) the anarchic

impulse that allows for straight society and its institutions to be ridiculed in favor of creative chaos, and 2) the domestic impulse—calling for assimilation through domestication (170). *Bent* actually exhibits both of these impulses. Clum claims that Sherman appeals to the domestic impulse by twisting it to include “assimilation through the assertion of conventional values” as Max strays from the bohemian “gay life” of 1930s Berlin to an “education in love” (175). I would argue that Sherman is using the anarchic impulse. He employs the anarchic impulse by claiming that sex between two men is just as natural as sex between a man and woman. Thus, the play exposes sexual impulses in homosexual couples, literally highlighting those impulses as a part of life and not as a sin that must be kept hidden deep in a closet. So Clum’s idea of Max straying from the “gay life” of Berlin, by the end of the play, leads him not merely to assimilate by accepting love, but by rebelling against that projected “gay life,” by taking on what is conventional to heterosexual couples and by asserting that gay men desire loving relationships just as straight men do. *Bent* then also validates the homosexual relationship and the companionship that it entails, calling attention to the fact that those relationships are not only about sex.

As noted before, *Bent* uses the history of the persecution of homosexuals to tell a story of love, but at the time nothing was really known about that history. The 1980s marked the beginning of research on the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. Still, so much was unanswered, but researchers estimated that “ten to fifteen thousand [homosexual] men had worn the pink triangle” (Heger 12). After *Bent* was published, the pink triangle became one of the most widespread symbols of the gay liberation movement (Seifert 94). The idea of reclaiming the pink triangle is important to remember when Max is finally able to embrace it after Horst’s death. That acceptance is a moment of liberation for him. What is important about *Bent* is that it

emphasizes “the element of pride over that of suffering, and its portrayal of the historical victims as victors while still preserving their suffering” (Hammermeister 23). Therefore, in the same scene of Max’s liberation, that also becomes a victory in pride. He is finally able to accept himself, and when he walks into the fence, meeting his death, which becomes a victory over his oppressors.

While some critics, such as Lev Raphael, a prominent LGBT figure in contemporary Jewish-American literature, suggest that *Bent* only reaffirms stereotypical images of homosexual men, it is clear to see that the relationships Max harbors, both familial and sexual, take him through an emotional journey that transforms him from a masochistic sexaholic into an understanding, self-accepting homosexual man. This progression is significant because at the time of *Bent*’s publication, Socarides published a second article, “Some Problems Encountered in the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Overt Male Homosexuality.” He suggests that what is lacking in homosexual relationships is the “ability to trust and to surrender the self to emotional experiences” (Socarides 517). Thus, the effects of Socarides’ assumptions on the homosexual community are internalized in Max, ultimately convincing him that “queers aren’t meant to love” (Sherman 61).

Max’s ability to love, to even accept love as a possibility, is questioned throughout the play. Contemporary psychiatry will suggest that “the essential ingredient of homosexuality is the unconscious and imperative need to pursue and experience sexual pleasure and orgasmic release” with members of the same sex (“...Overt Male Homosexuality” 508). Socarides explains that this is a temporary release, which may explain the notion of keeping a boy on the side while married to the opposite sex. Max’s Uncle Freddie does just that, and we witness Max’s willingness to do so. In an attempt to attain new identification papers for himself and Rudy, Max

tells Freddie that he will marry a woman and return home. He explains that if he wants a boy, he will rent one (Sherman 25). The idea of re-closeting himself exemplifies emotional resistance. While we are led to believe that Max cannot and will not love, this self-sacrifice proves otherwise, which contradicts the idea that homosexual love does not exist.

After being captured, Max's most important relationship, his relationship with Horst, develops while he is imprisoned in Dachau. This particular camp housed around 150 homosexual inmates in 1938. Richard Plant explains that, having been burned by the Nazis, many records and narratives are missing. How many homosexuals were actually held will remain uncertain and perhaps unknowable (Plant 153). Many of them may not have identified as homosexual at all, but rather they were imprisoned for their support of homosexuality. Horst, who is imprisoned for signing Magnus Hirschfeld's petition to decriminalize homosexuality, embodies the resistance Max needs in order to survive. Recognizing Max's internalized homophobia, Horst makes a constant effort to teach love and acceptance of themselves. At one point, he must explain to Max that Jews received the yellow star and homosexuals the pink triangle upon arriving in the camps. Max does not want the pink triangle because Horst tells him it is "the lowest" (Sherman 38). This is an example of Max internalizing homophobic discourses by acknowledging that being a homosexual makes him part of the lowest group of the lows.

Sherman's play exposed an injustice that led to an expansion of "historical culture, consisting of academic writing, commemorative ceremonies, the publications of memoirs and literary writings and the gradual inclusion of information on the fate of homosexuals in museums, libraries, and documentary TV productions" (Seifert 94). It is important to note that pre-war gay culture had flourished in Berlin in the 1920s and 1930s, but post-war life was thrown off by cultural repression and social hostility, due in part to US psychiatry. In "Inventing

History: Toward a Gay Holocaust Literature,” Kai Hammermeister explains that for homosexuals

...the fear did not end with the forces of liberation. They lived in continual fear of being re-arrested. Some were treated as repeat offenders after the war, under the same law against homosexuality, Paragraph 175 of the criminal code, which was originally put in place in 1871 and was revised and strengthened by the Nazis. The Nazi version of Paragraph 175 was, in fact, explicitly upheld in 1957 by the West German Supreme Court. Anti-gay laws and prejudice had existed before Hitler came to power, argued the court, and therefore couldn't be seen as peculiar to Nazi ideology. (20)

Although we know that they were in fact victims, homosexuals could never *claim* to be victims of the Holocaust, for they were in a perpetual state of victimization. Laws were not changed after the war and they were still very much persecuted for their homosexuality, so if they “came out” as victims of the Holocaust, they were “outing” themselves as homosexual and would then be imprisoned once more.

The loss of records illustrates a gap in history. We do know that the number of homosexuals in concentration camps accounted for a small minority, maybe one of the smallest. Groups also consisting of fewer men were “emigrants, race defilers, and armed force transfers” (Plant 153). In *Bent*, Max was sent to Dachau, which had only around 150 homosexual inmates in 1938. In 1986, when Plant's book, *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War against Homosexuals*, was published, the estimated number of gay males detained by the Nazis was around 15,000 (Plant 154). Proper representation of minority literature, for a long time, was hard to find because many media outlets followed the same rhetoric suppressing homosexual agency. The media

worked to portray gay men as disease carrying animals and not people with a sickness. When does a stereotype become propaganda? I think it is when you see and hear it more often than when someone is portrayed as an actual human being.

The struggle for legitimate homosexual relationships persisted in the United States. In 1977, a “born-again” Christian, Anita Bryant, campaigned to overturn an anti-discrimination law that protected gay men and lesbians in Dade County, Florida. She succeeded and later founded the first national anti-gay group in the United States, Save Our Children (“History of the Anti-Gay Movement since 1977”). Only a few years later, in 1982, Tom Brokaw reported that “scientists at the National Center for Disease Control ... released a study which shows that the lifestyle of some male homosexuals has triggered an epidemic of a rare form of cancer,” later identified as AIDS (SuchIsLifeVideos). The early years of the 1980s saw politicians claim that AIDS was “nature’s revenge on gay men,” while they contemplated the possibility of extermination (“History of the Anti-Gay Movement since 1977”). Contemporary discourses on homosexuality once again threatened same-sex family structures and relationships.

In 1988, when Leslea Newman published the short story “A Letter to Harvey Milk,” society asserted that a homosexual family structure could not exist. The story follows Harry, an older Jewish man, as he attends writing classes in his assisted living home. Together with his teacher, Barbara, a Jewish lesbian, they explore what it means to be part of a loving family, as well as how the reclamation of a symbol helps create that family.

Symbols of resistance are often reclaimed from oppressive structures. Foucault’s “The Subject and Power” explores modes of objectification that transform us into subjects (777). The oppressed adopt such symbols and transform them into a symbol of power, taking something that once objectified them and giving it subjectivity. Foucault explains that one of these modes is

called “dividing practices,” when the subject is “divided inside himself or divided from others” (778). This division is what the pink triangle was meant to do and that is what it does for Harry and his best friend, Izzie. Harry becomes upset when he notices “sewn onto [Barbara’s] bookbag an upside-down pink triangle.” He then asks, “What right does she have to walk in here with that, that thing on her bag, to remind us of what we been through?” (Newman 42). At one point, Harry’s friend, Izzie, comes knocking at his door. Izzie, who had been a prisoner in a Nazi camp, had just seen a man walking down the street wearing a pink triangle. The man reminded him of someone in the camps, Yussl, his best friend at the time, a friend with whom he fell in love. “A Letter to Harvey Milk” differs from *Bent* in that the same-sex relationship discussed involves two Jewish men who loved each other, but did not live as homosexuals before imprisonment (Seifert 122). Max lived a fairly open gay lifestyle before his imprisonment. He frequented bars, cruising for men. Horst also lived an open life, advocating for the decriminalization of homosexuality and identifying as homosexual. Izzie, as far as we know, never identified as homosexual. His same-sex encounter developed from a close friendship. Thus, his relationship with Yussl grew from pure admiration and love.

To Harry and Izzie, the pink triangle symbolizes a use of power that categorized individuals, imposing a law of truth that they and everyone around them must recognize (Foucault 781). Foucault examines the use of power and the application of power from Christian institutions, calling it the pastoral power (782). One of the most important aspects of this power involves “knowing the inside of people’s minds” and “exploring their souls ... making them reveal their innermost secrets,” implying a “knowledge of the conscience and the ability to direct it” (Foucault 783). In order to really expose those secrets, they must be given a face. That “face” evolves into a symbol that solidifies the existence of something no one would know existed

unless you told them. The use of the pink triangle and yellow star exposes the deepest of differences between people. Barbara's family was not accepting of those differences.

In a moment of trust, Barbara confides in Harry. She informs him that she is “thirty years old and no one in my family will talk to me because I'm gay” (Newman 39). She explains that it was all Harvey Milk's fault: “You know, when he died, what he said, ‘If a bullet enters my brain, let that bullet destroy every closet door;’” so when Milk died, she came out to everyone (Newman 39). The reclamation of the pink triangle for Barbara means the reclamation of a family in which she belongs; it is a reclamation of history. Foucault explains that “we have to know the historical conditions which motivate our conceptualization. We need a historical awareness of our present circumstance” (Foucault 778). The pink triangle becomes a symbol for the invisibility of gay history and the invisibility of steady, healthy relationships. Symbols are “socially rooted and socially supported in a way that individual stories are not,” communicating in a much more direct way (Yoshino 1770). The yellow star and pink triangle are intertwined for Barbara; both are a part of her identity. She informs Harry that her parents have not talked to her in eight years, explaining, “I couldn't help being gay, like I couldn't help being a Jew” (Newman 39). Harry struggles to keep his past hidden while Barbara fights to expose history's injustices. After finally sharing, Harry's story and the information he passes down becomes a torch for Barbara to carry.

At their core, symbols are “aggregations of desires and meanings that exist within a community” (Yoshino 1770). By sharing their most intimate heartaches and hardships, Harry and Barbara form a bond over shared history. The pink triangle then assumes another meaning for both of them—family. Harry questions why parents would abandon their child, referencing his daughter, who is not around. He then reminisces about the rest of his family, who have all long-

since passed. Harry ends his own story by telling his teacher, “Between parents and children, it’s not so easy. Believe me, I know. Don’t give up on them. One father, one mother, it’s all you got. If you were my tochter, I’d be proud of you” (47). Figuratively, Harry adopts Barbara, providing for her the love of a family she misses so badly. Newman’s short story appears amid homosexual panic due to the AIDS epidemic. She reminds readers of the injustices homosexuals still face. Her writing counters negative discourses imposed on the public, proving that gay men and lesbians are capable of forming lasting and loving relationships, both sexual and familial.

Harry’s letter to Milk opens a dialogue that sifts through the idea that a deeper connection exists between him and Barbara. Eventually the physical letter becomes the background; it becomes an added history in the story, allowing the actual story, Harry’s journey of being forced to relive a part of the past—Izzie’s past, to be the focal point. In that past, Yussl was discovered as homosexual and officers beat him close to death. He then looked Izzie in the eyes as if to say “save yourself. Me, I’m finished, but you, you got a chance to live through this and tell the world our story” (Newman 45). In an attempt to preserve their love, Yussl sacrifices that love. By telling the world, at least his (Harry’s) world, Izzie passes on a story that highlighted the importance of love. Izzie almost becomes a road block, hindering contemporary discussion of homosexuality, because here we have a scene in which a man commits a selfless act for his lover, who just happens to be another man. The love that Izzie and Yussl shared created that selflessness and vulnerability that can be found only in a deeply trusting relationship. However, their story also emphasizes the importance of reliving a past that deserves to be told. Reliving that past is ultimately what allows Harry to reveal his own vulnerability to Barbara. That is why a true history is so important—it creates empathy.

The foundations of literature are constructed in empathic moments. These are events inciting movements of resistance. “The gay Holocaust literature as it is now emerging is a literature of survival, of victory in defeat, and of dignity,” and this is why Hammermeister believes this type of literature could not have happened before a widespread gay liberation movement (23). Foucault tells us that the modern state should not be thought of as “an entity which was developed above individuals,” instead calling it “a very sophisticated structure” (“The Subject and Power” 783). This structure allows entrance under specific patterns, which dictates our cultural norms and oppressive powers. Works like *Bent* prove that what you are fighting for is not a struggle you alone experience. It reveals that the oppressor is not always a victor and that relationships are an important part of resistance when our humanity is put into question. In terms of power, “an ensemble of actions which induce others and follow from one another,” (Foucault, “The Subject and Power” 786) this sets in motion the possibility of a reversal of power created by minority resistance literature. “A Letter to Harvey Milk” highlights this notion. Leslea Newman takes the pink triangle, once a symbol of oppression and death, and projects onto it a world of emotion, of love, of anger, of fear, and of hope. The pink triangle then transforms into a symbol of resistance, absorbing oppressive culture and urging writers to challenge oppressive discourses. Martin Sherman once shared his inspiration for *Bent*, stating that he “saw a subject that was important to me as a gay man and as a Jew.” He continues with the realization that “if you are not politically free, you’re not free at all ... I think we have the responsibility to understand everybody’s suffering” (Seifert 108).

Literature allows for an understanding of the suffering that others endure. My research revealed a suffering that was almost forgotten. Like Sherman, as a gay man I believe everyone should know and get the chance to understand the long oppressive history of the LGBTQ

community and explore many of the discourses that helped shape the gay rights movement. I chose to examine *Bent* and “A Letter to Harvey Milk” because I wanted a better understanding of how literature can be seen as resistance. By employing a new historicist reading of these two texts, I was able to place them within the context of their contemporary discourses regarding homosexuality and the legitimacy of homosexual relationships. I wanted to reveal that homosexuals endured and will continue to endure oppressive culture that still seeks to erase our identities.

I once received a message from a long lost aunt. She wrote to tell me that “gay is not a noun, it’s an adjective that describes a sexual preference. Gay doesn’t define who a person is ... Who are you, really?” She went on to ask me to describe myself without using a sexual preference. My reply to her was that “I cannot do this.” I told her that being gay has shaped my life in ways that most people cannot and will not ever understand. I stressed to her that watching my fellow queers beaten to death has shaped my life. I explained that the love I have experienced as a gay man has shaped my life and I center my life on that love. I am me because I am gay—there is no discussing me without discussing that. My aunt was conditioned to still believe that my sexual orientation had nothing to do with the way I actually lived my life. Needless to say, it actually consumes my life.

The fiction presented in this thesis follows the relationships that can shape, and sometimes consume, homosexual identities. My first short story, “Else and Erich,” is set in post-war United States and follows Erich, as he remembers his best friend, Else, and the abuse she encountered, but also resisted, in a concentration camp. “Peter’s Automat,” the second story, sifts through a moment of despair as a family unit of four best friends is torn apart. Nazi propaganda tears at the seams of “The German Volk, 1942,” which brings attention to the devastating effects

that anti-homosexual propaganda had on families with potential homosexual-identifying children. Finally, “The Interviews” delves into a chosen family split apart after their imprisonment by the SS and Gestapo. This fourth and final story, also set in post-war United States, follows Henry and Emma as they illustrate the tragedies and exploitation witnessed within Nazi concentration camps.

Framing the fiction between two contemporary stories is to show that homosexuals still faced the oppressive culture that Nazis clung to, well after liberation from concentration camps. Survivors of the Holocaust never escaped the horrors and psychological damage of those camps and of the many ruthless officers in charge of them.

The stories I can tell about myself are nothing compared to the horrors that homosexuals faced in the past. I think that is important, however, because we cannot appreciate the progress the LGBTQ community has made since the Holocaust without acknowledging how good we have it now. We are reminded too often that we cannot ignore history, but we must humanize that history; give it a face and a home and a story. We must expose the mechanisms and the ideologies that constantly threaten our homes and the families that many wish to build. My wish is that my fiction does just that. I want to help chisel away at the walls and foundations of oppression. That is what resistance literature exemplifies. By exposing the injustices and the suffering that many majorities place upon the oppressed; by challenging unfair cultural images; by contesting laws that target certain groups of people; by loving and caring for those we do not always know; by changing the shape of literature; and by molding a world in which injustice does not exist: we resist. We persist.

Else and Erich

“I had a dream about her. She was my best friend, Else was.” I look out of the window into a gray sky. “In the ten years² I spent there, the camps y’know, she was the only person I could ever really connect with.”

I don’t know why I feel so, uh, compelled to tell this man, this young, good-looking man these personal details. Lonely I guess, or maybe I couldn’t resist those deep brown, young eyes. That stare of his I could feel across the room—always on me, always wanting something from me. Then I would always hear his legs crossing right before he asked me a question.

“Else?” He tilts his head. “Who is Else?”

I look over, shaking my head. “Let’s see here—1943. I had been at Flossenburg for a while. They called us ‘anti-socials.’” Pausing, cracking my knuckles, my chest was tight. “She didn’t deserve to be there, doc.”

He blinks and crosses his legs again. “Did any of you deserve to be there?”

“Well of course not! I wouldn’t wish any of that on my worst enemy.” Shrugging, I glance back to the window. “Wouldn’t wish that on anyone—now.”

“Now?” The doc asks, like I’m really going to tell him. “What does that mean? Now?”

“Look,” I turn to look him in the eye. “I just don’t think I’m so ready for this part.” I walk toward the brown leather sofa in front of him. “Discussing these, I don’t know, events is easy. It’s the people part that’s hard.”

The doc points at the sofa. “Have a seat Erich. Try to relax. The very fact that you came in ready to discuss your dream is proof you are ready to discuss her.”

² Noted in the book *Hidden Holocaust?: Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany, 1933-45*, an actual man, named Erich, had been interned in Flossenburg, Germany. According to records, he spent ten years in various concentration camps.

I scratch my elbow and take a seat. “I expected this to be a bit softer.” Sitting back, I start to picture Else’s face. “She came from Ravensbruck. Nobody knew why she was transferred or whatever.”

“Did you know?” Holding a pen to his lip, the doctor questioned, “Did she ever trust you to tell you?”

My foot taps the thick rug, stained yellow from years of footsteps and coffee spills. “Oh, yes, she told me. The whole damn hypocrisy of it all—makes me quite angry.”

I’ve been coming to Dr. Sargoff’s office for a few months. Decided not to keep this hurt pent up anymore. Those ten years were something else—something I never really wanted to relive. Then the dreams started. Every night I would wake up in cold sweats, sometimes screaming, begging for help. Funny thing is that it was never me who needed the help. It was always them, can you understand that? It was always people. People I could never help—at least that’s what Sargoff tells me. I could never have helped them.

Looking at the ceiling, trying not to make eye contact, “Do any of you understand what was going on? Any of you who dig around in our heads—do you ever understand it?” The ceiling is nice. I never expect to see copper ceilings with such detail on them. You can almost feel the veins in the ivy leaves as vines wrap around chubby cherub butts. I point up, “You believe in heaven, doctor?”

He looks at me, blinks, pausing for a second. “I do.”

“Maybe she’s there, then.” I laugh myself into a quick cough. “If you say she is.” I take a deep breath, spreading my arms across the back of the stiff sofa. “She was there for the brothel. They thought it’d fix them—lesbians y’know. They’d spin it like everything was there to rehabilitate us. I guess then they’d set us back out into the wilds of society.”

Sargoff uncrosses his legs. “But that isn’t what happened.”

“Well, not for everyone.” Tapping on the wooden frame of the sofa I look over at the doc and smirk. “I guess I got lucky.”

That luck didn’t stick with me long. I got out of a bad situation, sure, but too much had changed. I think many of us expected our lives to return to some sense of normalcy. Perhaps we would spend one less night out and one more night in, as friends, as family, as—people. But those of us who survived returned to a world that still turned its back on us. It had all changed. Our welcome was long-gone.

I leave Dr. Sargoff’s office too frustrated to continue talking about all of this with a stranger. My walk home often fits my mood. Among the heavy grey and black coats only a few specks of color splash through. Kids litter the schoolyard on my right. Their red and white caps stand out from the coffee-ground mulch and cold metals of the playground equipment. I wonder if they feel like I do. Probably not. They’re filled with sunshine and happiness and innocence. You know yellow used to be my favorite color. Fritz tells me I was a cliché because yellow always reminded me of warmth and sunlight and happiness. There was a lot of yellow in my dream. She was surrounded by it, wrapped in it—Else was. She looked at me in this dream and I saw her mouth “Why?”

My place is still new. I haven’t bothered to get a lot of furnishings, so it’s quite empty. I’ve never had to furnish a two-story home before. I was grateful, though, because it was certainly better than our housing in the camps. There, we were living in pig pens with a thin plank of wood for a bed. We were infested with fleas and other insects. Some died from the mosquito bites. Now, it’s like I’m living in luxury. What am I to do with extra rooms? Do I take up knitting or do I learn

to crochet? Do I buy a boxing ring? Or maybe I move Fritz in with me, finally. Well, he probably is the reason I'm still in the United States—still here.

I pause at the front door with my right hand gripping the handle. The left runs down along the brown-orange trim of the door. As I push through the door, light breaks in, shining along a wall of photographs. Fritz walks in from the kitchen.

“Hello, my love.”

He lunges forward and suddenly I'm wrapped in his arms. I clear my throat. “How was your evening, dear?”

Shaking his head, Fritz pushes me down into an old armchair. “Oh no.” The smell of musk drowns the air. “Did you discuss with the doctor your dream?”

“I couldn't.” Standing up, I unbutton the increasingly heavy coat weighing down my thoughts. “I just don't think I can tell a stranger, y'know?”

Fritz pulls the coat off my shoulders and tosses it aside. “Then maybe,” he kisses me, “you can tell me.”

“Yeah. I've got to tell someone.” I take off my shoes and leave them by the chair. “How about some tea?”

Fritz and I stumble to the kitchen, each trying to step on the others' heels. He's a very playful man. Good-looking, too. Chiseled jaw, soft black hair, and this ridiculous mustache he refuses to get rid of. Says it makes him look like he's got the answers—and he does. He knows how to talk around the pastors, sell a car, tip-toe around co-workers, and he's even better with dogs. That's on our list of must-haves if he ever moves in. I'm thinking dachshunds, he's hearing greyhound.

I build a fire as Fritz clears the sofa of old newspapers, revealing seafoam fabric. He sits and crosses his legs. Patting the middle cushion with his hand, “Come on. I’m ready when you are.”

“You have to let me get through this.” Folding my right leg under the left, I sit at the other end of the sofa. “I was out stacking bricks for repairs on the brothel foundation.”

I was interned in Flossenburg around 1943. My offense was loving a member of the same sex—so was hers. Else came from Potsdam where she lived with her partner, Margot. She was never sure the SS had any real proof of her relationship, but they took Else anyway. I remember the bricks were particularly hot that day—the day we met. There was a fight in her building and she was pushed out of the door.

I ran over to her and bent down. “You okay?”

Else sighed heavily. “I’m fine.” She pushed my arms away and dusted herself off. “I can take care of myself, guy.”

My hands flew up like I was under investigation. “I wasn’t...I just wanted to make sure there was no injury.”

Tears streamed down her face as she gazed up at me. “Thank you.”

She was nude from the waist up. I didn’t quite know how to react. To be honest I had never seen breasts up close like that. I felt kind of dirty—like I was being scolded by my mother for looking. “What, uh, what happened in there?”

Else crossed her arms to hide her body. “Officers picked who they were letting off this time. I guess the other women didn’t like it.”

“Letting off?” We backed into the shade of the building.

“Hey, guy,” she stepped in front of me. “I don’t know if I should be talking with you. Neither of us wants that trouble.”

“I’m Erich.” I held out my hand. “You are?”

“Walking away before we’re both murdered.”

I watched her tip-toe back into the building she was thrown from. Later I would find out that SS officers picked favorite women from the brothel and promised them freedom or shorter internment for favors.

The next day I was sent back to the brothel for foundation repairs with the other anti-socials. We look forward to work on this day only for the cloudy conditions and potential for rain. This is the only time the outside world reflects what is truly in our hearts as we work. I could hear yelling from the women inside. Sometimes it sounded pleasurable, but mostly these were screams for help. These were human beings, tortured human souls left suffering in the heat.

I began to roll my pant legs, hoping a cool breeze would comb through us all. I looked over at this new fella, Rudolf, Willy Rudolf. He hadn’t even started moving bricks and he was already dozing off. “Hey,” I kicked dirt at his feet. “You want to get beat, you better wake up.”

Willy shook his head and bent down for a brick. “I should be home. I should be elbow-deep in pompadours and pin curls.”

“First day?” I laughed. “What the hell’s a pompadour?”

“It’s hair. It’s a style.” He finally moved a brick. “I’m a stylist.

“Think you can do something for me?”

He laughed this time. “You? No.” With two bricks in his hands he pointed over to a woman sitting in a window. “Her? Yes.”

“Now she is also new here.” Picking up some dirt clods, I threw one at the window. “That’s Else. We go way back.”

Else peered through the window, and I motioned her to join us. Her eyes widened and she shook her head. A minute later one of the officers walked out, buttoning his belt. He waited for a moment, looked back into the dark building and watched another officer trot out. They laughed. Each congratulating the other with shoulder rubs and elbow jabs. Visibly uncomfortable, Else kept to the window with her hands frantically waving, sometimes covering her mouth—sometimes covering her eyes. Willy and I continued to mix mortar and stack bricks. He didn’t say much and I respected that. We were under enough pressure; I didn’t want to make him feel forced to do something else.

The wind blew cold that evening as the SS and other officers walked into the brothel. They ordered the place empty and demanded we all line up against the outside of the building. Most of the women who came out were topless. Some looked as if they had been crying. Others were expressionless.

Fifteen minutes later we heard the officers demand a clear path. As the crowd split, two officers walked out carrying a woman on a stretcher. Her head was covered with a sheet. The other officers formed a circle around the two pallbearers.

“Erich,” someone whispered. “Slide over here.”

It was Else. Stepping back, I moved down the line beside her. “What happened? Are you okay?”

She gritted her teeth. “I’m not taking this anymore, Erich.”

“What happened in there?” I looked down the line, making sure there were no officers. “Who is under that sheet?”

“I didn’t know her name.” Else’s chin fell to her chest. “I’ll never be able to erase that image.”

“What image? What happened?” I took her hand in mine. “Are you okay? Are you hurt?”

Else squeezed my hand tighter as I watched tears freckle her cheeks. “They killed her, Erich. They took a goddamn pillow an...and...” Her hand covered her mouth.

I stood silent for a moment, squeezing Else’s hand. In my mind I kept repeating “they smothered her, they smothered her, they smothered her.”

People died around there every day, which wasn’t shocking. I think what bothered me most was the fact that no one did anything as they watched two men brutalize this young girl. But they also shined light on our situation. A lot of us looked at the brothel as sort of comic relief. We knew bad things happened, but no one had been killed there.

Else let go of my hand and crossed her arms. “I have to fight back. Something has to be done.” She ran a hand through her hair, wiping sweat from her forehead in the process. “It’s got to stop, it’s all got to stop.”

“Else, you’ll get yourself killed. Just do what they tell you and try to survive.”

After that we were all sent back to housing. Willy didn’t speak. I didn’t speak. And another body was dragged out in front of us. We knew we were mortal. We knew we would all die in there. Forming relationships with one another just wasn’t a priority. Surviving didn’t mean making friends.

Else and I continued to talk whenever the opportunity allowed. Mostly we discussed the conditions of her new occupation. We mocked some of the officers who required women to affirm their masculinity. Many of the men used these women to work out frustrations they had with

superior officers. Some would end up fighting each other over who was able to take a certain girl first. They were animals. The whole goddamn system was orchestrated by animals.

Once the foundation was solid around the brothel, they had us dig holes close-by for the foundation of a new building. The days grew hot and our bodies started to litter the perimeter. Older men would reach the end of the day and just give up, having to be dragged back to the bunks; or they were dragged directly into graves. This went on for a few months—people came in and people went out.

The heat intensified and, like everyone else, I noticed Else getting thinner and thinner. One day I poked my head into a window of the brothel where I saw her sitting on a faded sky-blue stool, barely sturdy enough to hold her weight. I whispered, “Else, you alright?”

She stumbled to her feet and walked over to the window. “Tonight’s it, Erich.” Taking a seat she patted my cheek. “A few of us are prepared.”

“Else, don’t do this.” My hands shook. “We’ll be out of here soon. We have to be. Just keep hope among these people. Keep that fighting spirit, but keep it so you can survive and get out of here.”

“I’m done, Erich.” She lifted herself from the edge of the window and slid down the wall. “I’m done surviving. If I can’t get out of here now, I don’t plan to get out.”

“This is crazy. What the hell do you plan to do?”

Else leaned back, resting her head on the windowsill. “There are three of us. Every night an officer comes in, the same guy each night, and he picks one of us. He makes the other two hold up a sheet, blocking the rest of the girls from seeing what he does.” She shook her head and turned to look me in the eye. “This guy is one of the worst.”

I looked around for officers and guards. I saw no one, so I climbed through the window and gave Else a good squeeze. She kissed my cheek.

“Erich, thank you for keeping me alive as long as you have.”

“Fight hard, love.” I jumped out of the window and looked back at her, winking. “Fight hard.”

That night we heard a lot of scrambling—a lot of yelling. Those of us who could, moved closer to hear more, hoping to at least see something. I couldn’t get close enough. Static voices echoed through the buildings as officers tried to out-yell each other. As a man approached me, my ears rung from anxiety.

“Erich,” he stumbled. “It looks like that girl you talk to.”

My palms started to sweat. I could feel my body shake. “Else? What are they saying? What happened?” I tried to fight my way into the crowd, but I was very weak at that point in the evening. Hard labor and no food don’t quite mix.

“The boys up close say she tried to defect. But they got her.” His hands, blackened from constant work, rested on my shoulders. “She was still breathing, but barely.”

Another guy walked up to me. I shook his shoulders. “What about the other two? Did you see two more being carried out?”

“There was nobody else.” He sat on the ground. “Apparently she tried to fight back. The officers were yelling about Auschwitz and transfers.”

“A transfer?” I stepped back, leaning my head against the wall. “She’s getting out of here. She’s getting out.”

It wasn’t until I got out myself that I learned what was at Auschwitz. I found out that the other girls, the two who were supposed to carry out Else’s plan with her, decided to turn on her.

They notified the SS about her plan to fight back with the hopes of having their own internments shortened. So, she fought back all on her own.

Fritz scoots beside me. "I'm sure you were very proud."

I rest my head on his shoulder and a tear stains his pants. "I'll never not be proud."

Peter's Automat

It was Monday. Karl, dressed in his best black suit, walked along cobblestone pavers slapping snowflakes in front of his chest. Thick heels from his shoes echoed off the brick and stone houses. Just ahead of him, a man and woman, arms knotted, turned and stepped onto a newly constructed stoop. While the woman searched her long overcoat for a key, the man glanced back to his right. Karl looked over, used his hands to slick back his darkening hair and gave the man a nod. Karl noticed the man was missing his pinky finger on his right hand when the man's attention shifted back to his beautiful friend. She handed him a key and they walked through the door.

Naked trees lined the road Karl walked. He noticed each limb covered by a thin layer of ice—it allowed just enough glimmer under a speck of sunlight.

“Should've worn gloves. I knew I'd want them.” He took a moment to cup his hands and warm them with his breath. To his left, across the road, two young boys stacked a pile of pebbles. Every second or third pebble one of the boys would throw it at the feet of the other. Karl smiled at them.

He muttered, “Watch out kids. Shit is getting too bad for that type of behavior.” A piece of slicked-back hair fell into Karl's eye as it followed the church spire into the clouds. He inhaled and slowly released his breath. “You son-of-a-bitch.”

Four days earlier Karl and three others, Neuman, Dressler, and Alastair, had gathered at a local automat just down from Frankfurt Main. Peter's Automat was a meeting place the four frequented. Neuman and Karl had known each other since they were six years old. They rolled around in dirt piles, mixing mud-pies and playing house. Neuman was always the wife.

Dressler and Alastair met in college. Alastair came to Germany to escape an overbearing family. Originally from Leeds, his mother and father ran a shoeshine, eventually saving enough to send Alastair to school. They always projected his future onto him—a successful career in journalism, a wife, three children, one girl and two boys, and a lovely cottage nearby. Alastair updated his family once a month, vaguely filling them in on his life.

He and Dressler almost always arrived at the automat before Karl and Neuman. They would tiptoe back to the corner table, hidden from most of the public. Dressler usually bought coffee for the group, always making sure Alastair's had one spoon of sugar and two of cream.

"Details, details!" Dressler would exclaim. "It must be perfect for your majesty." He smiled as he placed the coffee in front of Alastair. "How'd you sleep last night, love?"

Alastair scooted a chair around for Dressler. "Here you are." He wiped the top of the ripped green leather and patted it. "A throne fit for," he paused, "Well, you."

Dressler dropped his jaw. "Excuse me? What is that supposed to mean?" The seat was cold and he could feel the chipping leather poking at his thighs. "You know, one day we'll treat this place to new seating. Right after we give it a proper name."

"A proper name?" Alastair sipped his coffee. "What would we call it? The Queen's Pub?"

"The Pub Fairy!" Dressler laughed, ramming his knee into the top of the table.

"Ow." Alastair rubbed the aching knot on Dressler's knee. "Suck it up, love! There are more important things to fret over." He pointed to the back of a newspaper another patron was reading. "There! A zoological aviary's roof shattered in last week's storm and several non-native birds escaped." Alastair shook his head. "A tragedy."

Karl and Neuman walked over to the table and pulled out their chairs. Neuman looked down at Alastair's hand still lying on Dressler's knee. "Jesus, can't you two keep it in a bedroom?"

"Aye!" Alastair retracted his hand and reached for his coffee. "Don't ya have anything better to worry about? What have you two been up to?"

"Guess who found himself a fella last night." Neuman gave his coffee a swirl and blew into his cup. "Karl here has apparently located the pederastic watering hole." Steam rose and swirled by his cold cheek. "Older fellas everywhere—looking."

Karl loosened a gray scarf around his neck. "Guys, I also heard that people are disappearing out there."

Alastair wrapped his hands around the cup of coffee to warm them. "Out where?"

"Just down the street here. Allegedly men are being tapped," he took a drink of coffee, "by authorities to help catch homosexuals."

Neuman chimed in. "So what the hell were you doing out there? You know cruising is going to get you killed one day, Karl." He used the back of his hand to wipe melting snow from his brow. "Ask Dressler over there."

Karl placed his hand over Dressler's mouth. "I don't need to hear anything. I get it." He looked around the automat. "We have to be careful. They're dropping the fist right on top of us."

Later that evening Alastair returned home with a letter in his hand. He walked through the front door and threw the letter in a pile of unopened mail littering a side table. He removed his coat and folded it over the back of a wooden bench. From the kitchen a sweet smell led him down a narrow hall. Along the right side of the wall, Alastair's homesickness hung in the form of the British flag. He turned the corner. "What is that there? It smells great."

After checking his fresh apple cake, Dressler closed the oven door. “This is something new I’m trying out.” He tugged on the faded yellow apron draped around his neck. “I think I want to be a baker. Is that something people decide to do?”

Alastair laughed. “I think you actually have to be able to bake in order to actually achieve that.”

“Here,” Dressler pulled a chair from the kitchen table. “Sit. I can tell something’s up.”

“Thanks.” Alastair sat down and tapped the table top with his fingertips. “I received a letter from my family today.”

“What did it say?”

“I don’t know.” Alastair stretched his legs out in front of him and started to unbutton his shirt. “I haven’t opened it yet. I don’t really want to.”

Dressler pulled another chair and placed it in front of the other. “Why not? It’ll probably be the same shit they always send.” The chair creaked. “Hello son, hope you’re well. Auntie Moneybags is with child and refuses to share her fortune. Uncle What’s-his-name has overdosed on cheap scotch. And finally, your mother won’t sleep with me anymore,” he laughed, “says your father.”

“Wow. Really?” Alastair placed his hand over his eyes. “You said that?”

“I’m just keeping things in perspective.”

“Check on your cake before you burn it.” Light from the growing moon frosted the trees outside of the kitchen window. Alastair stood up and pushed his chair back under the table. “I’m going to bathe. I’ll read the letter after.”

The moon rose higher, lighting the patches of leftover snow. Karl and Neuman sat on a faded turquoise sofa. Karl was wrapped in an old mustard woven blanket reading a newspaper article on Magnus Hirschfeld. Neuman sat with both legs crossed, his nose buried in an older copy of *Der Eigene* (*The Unique*).

Karl looked up from his paper. “Y’know, I wonder why they don’t just date.”

“Who?” Neuman glanced over.

“Alastair and Dressler.” After he tossed the newspaper onto the coffee table in front of them, Karl leaned back and put his hands behind his head. “They’re so close, they’re so cute. They’re already playing house.”

Neuman placed the journal he was reading on top of the newspaper. “Well that hardly constitutes a relationship.” He tapped Karl’s knee. “If that’s all it took then we should consider ourselves married.”

“Oh don’t make me laugh myself into death, Neuman.” His hands slipped apart as he sat up on the sofa. “We like boys too much for that nonsense.”

“Boys?” Neuman raised his eyebrow. “I like men. Don’t believe all that shit those newspapers tell you about us, Karl. It’s all bullshit anyway.”

“What are you reading over there?” Karl picked up the copy of *Der Eigene*. “What is this?”

“This is a journal for men of such high class as ourselves.”

“High class?” Lifting his pant leg, Karl revealed his sock. “I don’t think ragged socks quite scream high class.”

“It’s a journal for homosexuals, written by homosexuals.” He snatched the journal away from Karl. “Believe it or not, there are a lot more of us out there than we think.”

“Yes,” Karl stood up and paced the floor. “That’s why the police are filling our jail cells with *us*.” He walked over to the window and pulled the thick white curtains covering the window. “Listen, they’re staking out the automat and surrounding hangouts.”

Neuman leaned over and folded the blanket. “Who? Who is staking us out?”

“The police. They’ve taken two guys this week—three last week.”

“Karl, what are you doing that’ll get you arrested?” Gasping, Neuman stood up from the sofa. “Is it drugs?”

Karl laughed and walked over, hugging him. “No. Not drugs.” He grabbed Neuman’s cheeks and kissed his forehead. “Go to bed. Goodnight!” The stairs creaked with each step as Karl moped to bed.

*

The next morning Karl and Neuman met Alastair and Dressler at the automat. Karl’s chair clanged as he pulled it away from the table. Neuman struggled for a moment after his was caught on Dressler’s foot.

“They got another.” Alastair stirred his coffee. “Police apprehended a man, a suspected homosexual. I got a call this morning from a friend.”

Karl leaned forward. “We shouldn’t go out tonight, guys.”

Dressler straightened his back and pulled his chair closer to the table. “Alright, alright. Don’t distract them from our real issue, Alastair.” He leaned over and rubbed Alastair’s shoulder. “His parents want...”

Alastair interrupted. “Uh—” His eyes followed a stray hair waving on Neuman’s head. “They want me to move back home.” Hunched over his coffee his voice screeched. “They’ve found a girl for me to marry.”

“They *found* you a girl?” Neuman smacked the top of the table. “I didn’t realize Jane Austen was so close to your family.”

“It’s not something to laugh about, Neuman. My brother is already on his way to help me pack my things.”

Neuman slumped back in his chair. “Well this is crazy. You can’t just up and leave your life behind here.”

“I can’t very well go home and marry a stranger either.” Standing up, Alastair took one last drink of his coffee. “I’m going for a walk. I need to...to clear my head.”

Karl, Neuman, and Dressler yelled, “Be careful!”

*

Dressler paced the floor of the apartment after returning home from work. Picking up misplaced books and clothing, he wondered why Alastair wasn’t home yet. Each time he passed the coffee table, he glanced at the stack of newspapers lying on top of it. Those were stories that Alastair wanted to keep. He was obsessed with news. He was obsessed with telling stories that were never quite heard. Dressler grabbed the stack of papers and moved them over to the couch. After walking into the kitchen, he opened a cabinet under the sink and retrieved wood cleaner for the coffee table. Making his way back to the living room, he tugged at the British flag along the hall. He dripped the wood cleaner over the table. Before he was able to start wiping it away, there was a knock at the door.

Dressler stared for a moment. His forehead started to sweat as he inched his way over to the door. “Uh, who is it?”

A deep voice reverberated from the other side of the door. “Is this the residence of Alastair Brown?”

“Aye,” Dressler inched toward the door, placing his hand around the handle. “It is. May I inquire who’s asking?”

The man behind the door knocked louder. “Sir, can you open the door?”

Dressler thought it over for a second before opening the door. “Yes, sorry. What’s the problem?”

“Good evening sir. I’m Officer Weber.” He held out his hand to shake Dressler’s. “How do you know Mr. Brown?”

“Uh—we’re roommates.” Stepping out he closed the door. “Why? What’s going on?”

“We found Mr. Brown, this evening, incapacitated at a local eatery—Peter’s Automat.” The officer removed his hat. “We tried to wake Mr. Brown and when that didn’t work we transported him to St. Marie Hospital, where he later passed away.”

For a moment Dressler looked at the officer in silence. He leaned against the doorframe, shifting his focus to the officer’s chest patch. Four triangles danced with every breath the officer took. Two green. Two white. They danced around the golden eagle hatching a swastika.

“Th—thank you.” Dressler stood straight. “May I ask, uh, what happened?”

“Among Mr. Brown’s possessions was a straight razor covered with blood. Later inspection showed that he committed suicide.” Officer Weber placed his hat on his head. “I’m terribly sorry.”

Dressler shuffled back into the apartment. He walked over to a small dark cabinet filled with spirits, but the only thing that haunted him was a mixture of Goldwasser and Russian vodka. The vodka splashed over the edges of the glass as Dressler’s hand shook with anxiety. Without a breath, the stinging warmth of the alcohol bled down his throat. He hunched over the cabinet grasping the front corners. He began to weep.

Karl was sitting at the kitchen table slicing three potatoes. He delicately lined the thin slices around the edges of a baking dish. Over those, he poured just a smidge of melted butter before placing another line of potatoes around the dish. He layered another. And another. Finally he drizzled a layer of cream on top and placed the dish in the oven. After washing his hands, Karl gazed out of the window. Frost had blanketed most of the window panes, but as he peered through the broken crystals of ice, Dressler walked through the back gate. He tapped on the door.

“Come on in!” Karl turned from the window as Dressler scuffed through the door. “What brings you ‘round?”

Dressler wiped both eyes with gloved hands. “He’s gone, Karl.” He cupped his face in his hands and cried.

“What?” Karl pulled a chair nearby and draped himself on Dressler’s shoulders. “You mean his brother came and got him already?” He pulled Dressler up and over to the chair.

“No. No. The police came by my place...”

Karl smacked his own forehead. “They got him for cruising!”

Dressler erupted from his chair. “Goddammit Karl! He fucking killed himself! Do you always have to want to be right all the goddamn time?”

“He killed himself?” Karl collapsed into the chair. “Wh...why?”

“I don’t know. Dammit, I don’t know.” Dressler grabbed his gloves from the table. “I can’t be here right now. I’ve gotta get air.”

Before Karl could speak, the door slammed.

*

Dressler walked around the streets of Frankfurt holding back his tears. The zig-zagged walk led back to Peter’s Automat, where hours before, his best friend took his own life. Snow

peppered the sidewalk as he threw himself on a bench just outside the building. Across the street, standing under a street lamp, a young blonde man was approached by an older gray-bearded gentleman. Dressler watched as the gentleman placed his arm upon blondie's shoulder. He leaned into blondie's ear, whispered, and veered right down a dim alley. Blondie paused for a second, then pursued this grey-bearded gentleman.

The automat was closed. Police had erected a makeshift barrier from discarded shipping crates and weighed them down with bags of sand. Dressler couldn't move them all to get in if he wanted to. The idea did cross his mind. He wanted so badly to touch the chair, to be near the spot Alastair took his last breath. Instead, snow collected on top of splintering wood as Dressler peered expressionless through the automat window.

"It's awful, isn't it?" A voice crept behind him.

Dressler jerked around to face the stranger. "What?"

"The accident in there." The stranger dusted a space beside Dressler. "I wonder what would lead a man to do that to himself."

Dressler scowled at the man for a second. Before agreeing, he noticed the man was missing a finger on his right hand. "It must've been something important. Something he couldn't tell his real family."

"I'm Gunter." Gradually he slid his hand across the bench. Fingertips caressed Dressler's cold thigh as Gunter leaned close. His lips felt the tiny hairs standing on Dressler's ear. "Would you like to come with me?" Gunter whispered.

Dressler dragged his body back. Looking down at the sidewalk, he nodded his head. "You know what, yeah. Let's go." He stood and shook the snow off his coat.

Together they walked toward the same alley Dressler watched blondie wander through earlier. Gunter kept half a meter ahead snapping fingers to the beat of his footsteps. He was cheerful. “My ride’s right up here around the corner.”

Flashes of red light glittered the walls of the alley. Dressler spun around once and asked, “What’s with the lights?”

“Oh, those are my guys.” His feet started to move faster. Rounding the corner, he shot up a thumb and yelled to a man crouched by a trashcan. “We got another, boys!”

Dressler fumbled behind Gunter. “What the hell?”

In front of him, two members of the Orpo, the police force later absorbed as part of the SS, charged for his body; the largest one aimed right for his gut. He tried to brace himself reaching for the nearby trashcan. Before he could actually gain a grip on the rim of the can, another officer hammered his shoulders into Dressler’s knees. They collapsed into a mound of wriggling pieces of flesh and fabric. From nowhere, an officer’s club nailed him in the back of the head. It was a third officer’s knee pressed hard on Dressler’s neck.

The third officer kneeled to eye level with Dressler and took a quick breath. “You are being taken under charges in accordance to paragraph 175 of the Reich Penal Code under the supervision of the Reich Office for the Combatting of Homosexuality and Abortion.”

Dressler stopped struggling and fell limp. Feeling defeated, he let officers drag him into the back of an unmarked black vehicle where another man sat stooped over, bloodied from a fight. Dressler was shoved upright and back into the hard fabric of the seat. A quick glance around the interior revealed that his car-mate was one of his best friends—Neuman. He had been beaten after attempting to resist arrest. The same team of Orpo officers had just ended a cruising

sting down the street from the automat. After the door slammed against Dressler's shoulder, he and Neuman were taken away.

*

Monday morning brought an onslaught of high winds and rapid snow flurries. Down the street from Karl and Neuman's building, in a church bathed with golden glow from the street lamps and snow, Alastair Brown's body laid waiting for his family to claim. Snow dulled the thud of heels as Karl wandered down that same lit street. Karl gazed up as he walked, and above him perched a Gouldian finch, shaking the snow from its feathers. He smiled and kept walking until he reached the church steps. He stretched over the steps, touching every other one.

The church was darker than he expected, depressing, and cold. This wasn't how Karl expected it to be. He crept through the church, looking for a pastor or a priest or something. Large bronze chandeliers lined the ceiling. Each one was wedged between aging wooden support beams. The room smelled of wet stone and moss. Karl peeked through a cracked door into a large storage room. There he discovered a lanky, gray-bearded man straightening his red tie in a mirror.

Karl cleared his throat. "Excuse me, uh, father?"

"Pastor Ernst." He turned around and pushed his hand into Karl's. "How may I be of service to you?"

Taking a step back, Karl shook the pastor's hand. "I'm here to, I guess, claim a deceased friend."

Pastor Ernst squinted. He laced his fingers around a stretched gut more likely seen *on* the table of The Last Supper than at it. "You are not family?" He stepped back from Karl.

Karl followed him forward and leaned in towards the pastor's left shoulder. "Sir, you don't know what family is."

The German Volk, 1942

“To keep German youth pure requires the sharpest repudiation of homosexual offences, which are capable of destroying what education work constructs...”— The Reich Youth Leadership, Berlin.

Confidential!

Subject: Decree of the Fuhrer on keeping clean the SS and Police

1) In order to keep the SS and police clean of vermin with homosexual inclinations, the Fuhrer has resolved by a decree of 15 November 1941 that a member of the SS or Police who commits sex offences with another man or lets himself be abused for sex offences shall be punished with death, regardless of his age.³

My father joined the police when he was seventeen. He was a very dedicated man. In fact, I had never seen so much dedication from one person. He really tried to devote his life to protecting others. There were nights he came home late or not at all, and feeling betrayed by his tardiness, I'd say, “You've been gone far too long. Why don't you like us anymore?”

He'd get down on one knee and rest his hands on my shoulders, saying, “It's because I love you all, more than ever, that I stay out so late.” Then, every time, he'd tap me on the nose and say, “I have to keep bad guys off the streets so you can stay on them.”

I smiled and hugged him. “One day, I'll be just like you, daddy.”

³ Grau, Günter, Claudia Schoppmann, and Patrick Camiller. *Hidden Holocaust?: Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany, 1933-45*.

And I wanted to do that, but keeping bad guys off the street wasn't the problem. And that's not how I wanted change. We needed to start with why and how they became the bad guys. Besides, the relationships that officers formed were always said to be an odd type of sacred. I really didn't like that people compared them to a brotherhood; or a rite of manhood. It sounded medieval. Those people completely romanticized what being a part of the Orpo was.

However, at sixteen, I knew. I witnessed first-hand what the Gestapo, the SS, the police, and eventually, my father, were capable of. Perhaps it was only that moment in time, but I quickly lost the idea that those types of people were protectors or heroes.

They broke down my bedroom door and dragged me from the house. I was imprisoned with only one other man for seventy-two hours. The first forty-eight of which we stood nude and shivering. We were fed a plate of wet bread, presumably soaked in milk. That's not how I wanted my sixteenth year to end.

Confidential!

Subject: Decree of the Fuhrer on keeping clean the SS and Police

2) The Fuhrer's Decree is not being published, because that might give rise to misunderstandings.

Homosexual misconduct has been extremely rare in the ranks of the SS and Police. But it must be punished with ruthless severity, because the Fuhrer wants the SS and Police to remain absolutely pure. Every means must therefore be used to keep them clean of this dangerous and infectious plague.⁴

⁴ Grau, Günter, Claudia Schoppmann, and Patrick Camiller. *Hidden Holocaust?: Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany, 1933-45*.

I overheard my parents talking. Mother kept insisting we leave the country; father swore we'd be fine where we were.

“We will have help here.” He crossed his arms. “You can't leave and expect me to stay here without you and my kids.”

Mother untied a frilled apron that hung from her neck. “Frank,” she said, “you say you have to protect the city—well I have to protect my family.”

That was the first moment I really felt scared and doubted my future. They never would've had that conversation in front of me and my brother. I knew we would never be safe there, in that little wooden box of a home. We were kindling for the fire. Actually, I think I was kindling. My homosexuality poked at a fire that had been burning within my father.

He discovered I was a homosexual after his partner, Officer G. Hunter, caught me holding hands with Max Brown—a cheeky Brit who liked to turn tricks. We were holding hands, but you'd think by his reaction I had just stabbed someone. Trust me, I wasn't impaling anything. We were just meeting at a local dive that catered to boys like us. It was a place of magic; a place where any fantasy could come true. It was an escape.

Max walked up and handed me his beer, asking, “Are you having fun?”

I blushed immediately. “Uh, a little bit.” I had never talked to another man. “Thanks, but I don't drink.” I handed the beer back.

“Okay,” he said. “Tell me what you do, then.”

I looked away and smiled. “Well—“

“Wait. Let me guess.” He stroked his chin for a second. “This is your first time here and you don't quite feel comfortable telling a stranger your personal information?”

“Wow. Yeah, you're good.” I laughed.

“It’s a little loud in here.” Max grabbed my hand and led me outside. “There’s a park nearby, if you’d like to go for a walk.”

I hesitated, of course. “I don’t know about that. I’ve never done this kind of thing before.”

“There’s no ‘thing’ here. We’ll just talk.”

Max’s hand was still occupied by mine when, from behind a telephone booth, Officer Hunter cocked his flashlight.

“What the hell’s going on here, Max?”

I panicked and yanked my hand away. “I’ve got to go!”

Hunter shined the light at me as I ran toward home. “Kid! Get back here!”

No one ever spoke of my encounter with Max, but I felt the shadow that hung just above our heads at the dinner table. Father did everything in his power to avoid eye contact. We often passed dishes around, inciting awkward stomach noises. When it was my turn to fill my plate, father looked down into the dish as he passed it.

He spooned plaster-like potatoes on his plate. “Uh,” then he looked down at his own plate and paused. “Ah.”

I took the bowl and sighed. “Potatoes look good, mom.” I passed it over to her. She yanked her hand back after our fingers touched.

“Sorry, honey.” Then, as she abandoned the bowl, she pushed her chair away from the table. “I just—I—well.”

At that point my little brother sensed the situation was only escalating. Refusing to speak to me, he instead walked over to my mother, kissed her cheek, and told her goodnight. He did the same to my father. Then he passed me by.

I remained silent for a moment, waiting for the yelling to start. My dinner had grown cold and I wasn't too enthused about cold chicken. I stood up to take my plate and warm it in the oven.

"Sit down!" My dad jammed his fingers onto the tabletop. "You do not leave this table unless your mother and I excuse you."

I planted my butt back in that chair, but I couldn't let my brother get away with leaving. "Klaus excused himself, why can't I?" The plate dropped from my hand with a fragile thud. "I only wanted to heat my food again."

Mother wiped her mouth with a cloth napkin. "Please don't speak to your father like that." Her hand now covered her heart. "Our family cannot take much more of this."

My eyes rolled back. "More of what?"

"Since you—you became what you are." She stood from her chair and walked over to a buffet collecting dust in the corner. Cobwebs fell from the edge of a drawer as she opened it and reached in. "I've prayed and prayed for guidance, son," she dug around for a second and then pulled out a Bible. "But it's in God's hands now." The Bible was launched into the air and planted itself beside my potatoes. Mother walked away.

That was the last time I had dinner with my family. I began to eat where I spent most of my time after that—alone, in my bedroom. Eventually, I think dad let the power of being a public figure fill his head. After news of a potential promotion, he started speaking like a military general rather than an officer with two children. That transition happened much quicker than I thought it would. Secretly, I had hoped he would take everyone's advice, load the family into the car and start a new life. But, I never had such luck. Instead, I was forced to live alongside a man

who claimed to love his children equally, with a fist over my face and his arm around my brother's.

Confidential!

Subject: Decree of the Fuhrer on keeping clean the SS and Police

3) SS and Police courts are competent for the whole of the SS and Police with regard to offences of this kind committed after 15 November 1941. Offices of the SS and Police must therefore refer reports of this kind exclusively to the competent offices of the special SS and Police courts.⁵

The dedication to fighting for a greater good, which my father did possess, faded into something unrecognizable to me. It didn't take long for his anger to become a constant. Nobody was safe from his policing. I tried to figure out the reason for this change in him. It's possible he blamed society for my love of men. I think that idea came from his precious brotherhood. His comrades of the Orpo pressured him to quit, suggesting that we leave the country.

Dad's partner, Hunter, came over for dinner one night. I noticed that each time he visited, my mother blushed and then laced her fingers with his, upon his entering our home.

"Oh, Hunt," she said. "I'm so glad you could make it back."

However, this time, he looked serious.

"I really need to discuss something with you." He walked over to the dining table and pulled a chair back. "Please, sit."

⁵ Grau, Günter, Claudia Schoppmann, and Patrick Camiller. *Hidden Holocaust?: Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany, 1933-45*.

Mother walked over and pushed the chair aside. “What’s wrong?”

Hunter slicked his hair back. “You need to take the kids and get out of here. Things are going to get bad.”

“Leave? Without Frank?” She clutched the side of her powder-blue blouse. “I can’t do that, Hunt. What would my children do?”

“Listen,” he reached for mother’s hand. “I’ve arranged for the three of you to take the 6’o’clock train to Paris. Take it.”

That was our chance to escape—that was my only chance and in the moment’s passing was too abrupt to mourn.

Apparently, rumors swept through the Reichsfuhrer’s office. Rumors that suggested my homosexuality could spread to my father and then on to other members of the, now, SS and Gestapo. Growing concerns among father and his, suddenly righteous, band of brothers called for cleansing; something that would make a statement. Then, there was an announcement in the newspaper, barring foreigners from serving as police, Orpo, and SS. Even more macroaggressions appeared over the next few weeks, culminating with the endorsement of “No Jews” signs hanging in storefronts. My father then helped lead a task force dedicated to searching “suspicious” bags and clothing outside of those businesses. It was absolutely mad.

Both of my eyes were blackened the night they came for me. It was a month ago, I think. I had just gotten home from dinner with a friend. Father scowled at me over his newspaper.

“Were you out screwing around again, boy?” He snarled.

Crossing my arms, I continued walking. “Just had dinner.”

Halfway down the hall, I noticed my bedroom door was open. My heart paced faster as I peeked in and around the corner. Nothing looked out of place, so I closed the door behind me

and collapsed into my pillow. I remained there, falling in and out of sleep until I heard footsteps at my door. The clinging of keys caught my attention, followed by a shaking doorknob. Next I heard the door lock.

“Hello?” I yelled towards it. “Who’s there?”

“It’s okay, son.” My father’s voice vibrated the door. “They’ll be here. It’ll be over soon.”

I ran to the door and tried to force it open. “What are you doing?” I yelled. “Let me out!”

“You’ll get out in a few minutes.”

“What does that mean?” I began to cry. “What’s happening?”

My father pressed his cheek to the door.

“I’m protecting this family and this community. I can’t have you corrupting your brother, your friends, our neighbors. I can’t let your kind go unpunished for spreading disease. For threatening the German people.” He lifted his head from the door and started to walk away. “You will be cleansed, son.”

Confidential!

Subject: Decree of the Fuhrer on keeping clean the SS and Police

4) This order shall be verbally communicated to all members of the SS and Police, with notice that it is forbidden to give any information about it to anyone outside the SS or Police. The order should be read out and discussed in a special class to be given by the immediate superior.

It should be pointed out that all members of the SS and Police must be in the vanguard of the struggle to eradicate homosexuality in the German Volk. Superiors have a responsibility to

*ensure that the order is promptly made known to everyone joining the SS or Police. This order should also be repeatedly raised at future official classes or discussions.*⁶

My father was used as an example of a dedicated German. His superior officers dictated that all members of the Nazi Party should be willing to do as he did. This included reporting sissies and a willingness to protect his German countrymen by any means necessary; that even means throwing your own children into the volcano. They must also be righteous. Loud. Aggressive. Ruthless. Now, I'm no propaganda artist, but it sounded to me they should be animals. Come on, what else would so plainly seek to destroy its own kind? Barbarians.

“For the betterment of the SS and the safety of the Fuhrer,” father huffed. “We must cleanse the population of homosexuality. It is an unnatural causation of extinction.”

“Killing us will do nothing.” I gulped. “So long as humanity breeds, father, we will remain.” My feet slid forward as my back followed the wall down to the floor.

“Son, Albert, you are suffering from a disease.” He pointed down the line of cells. “You all suffer from this disease and right now the only effective way to treat it, to remain pure, is to put it out of its misery.”

Now I stand alongside those similar to, if not exactly like, me. We were rounded up like common stock, at the hands of my father. Who or what kind of monster would be so willing to sacrifice his own son? And what kind of cowards would let him?

They lined us up as if at auction. An officer stood at the end of a dimly lit hall and as we started toward him, the door by his side opened. We drowned in the last bit of sunlight we'd ever see.

⁶ Grau, Günter, Claudia Schoppmann, and Patrick Camiller. *Hidden Holocaust?: Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany, 1933-45*.

And there we stood, in our white cotton jumpsuits, collecting sand from the wind. Shadows slant on the clay wall behind us. It was a beautiful day. Not one cloud was in the sky. No snow was on the ground. No edelweiss blooms. I was terrified, but the breeze had an anomalous calming warmth that seemed to whisper my name. I looked toward the sky and thought to myself, “So this is how I make history? Death by firing squad.”

Signed: H. Himmler

The Reichsführer-SS and Head of the German Police⁷

⁷ Grau, Günter, Claudia Schoppmann, and Patrick Camiller. *Hidden Holocaust?: Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany, 1933-45*.

The Interviews

Henry:

I knew I liked boys when I was five years old. On the first day of summer my parents always loaded up the car and took my brother and me to the coast. There I'd watch all the different men march up and down the beach in their bathing-suits. Some bent over to pick through algae and sand, searching for shells or rings or something. I never quite understood why people wasted their time digging through garbage. But that's not garbage to everyone. For some, maybe for many, that's the only means to living.

It was on one of those family trips, when I was sixteen, that I met Hans. He was this blonde brute of a man. The first thing I noticed about him was the dark chest hair woven down the front of his body and into the top of his bathing-suit. He didn't quite have muscles, but he was thick like he had muscles. Oh, he was a hunk. When he walked by I was never sure if my drool had puddled around me or the wave had come in. I thought about him all day, all night, in the shower, you name it. I guess Hans was my first crush.

Down the beach pods of men like Hans drank and danced and hung from each other like ornaments. They always looked like they were having a great time. I wanted to join them. One afternoon, I set out to do just that. Half way down the beach, my mother came running up to me and grabbed my arm. She pulled me back to our tiny square on the sand and warned me to never wander off again. When I explained to her that I wanted to go be with Hans and his friends, she, well, she grimaced, and looked away from me. I asked her why she didn't want to let me be with them.

She looked over at me and under her breath she said, "They're dangerous."

Of course, I couldn't understand why she would say that. Their corner of the beach looked like it was all just fun and games—not dangerous at all. I tilted my head, kind of in disbelief, and I told her, “I like what they're doing. I want that too.” It was then I saw a fire in my mother's eyes that I had never seen before.

She grabbed both my hands, placed them together in my lap and took a deep breath. “No, you do not want that. Henry, they are no good.”

The next year my parents decided not to vacation. My father had just been laid off from work at the plant and my mother was pregnant. Home life really started to dip into deep end of the swimming hole. A month before, I had flunked out of school and my parents took that hard. They were more upset than I was. I never wanted to spend time at home because the constant presence of my father made living there quite unbearable. He was bitter over the loss of his job and took it out on everyone else. When he'd drink, he would threaten to take the baby from my mother and leave. No one knew just how much I wished for that to happen. I started to feel so inadequate hearing him mouth off, blaming everyone else for his problems. I began to internalize that. I was the reason he lost his job—my thoughts, my desires.

Halfway through the summer months I decided I needed that vacation. I gathered every bit of money I had saved and trekked toward the coast. Hitch-hiking got me most of the way before I climbed into a '34 Opel Blitz wagon. Those muddy tires led to salvation. And the last few miles to the beach made me very emotional. Beaches felt like home to me, a home in which I actually felt wanted. That beach, and the memory of Hans draped around some guy's neck, was my reason for living at the time. It led me to a new home, and a lot of us struggled with the idea of home. Once we found it, though, we clung to it. I never went back to my family.

Henry on the camp:

We weren't hidden there. We were quite exposed. We lost everything. When I arrived, I was beaten into submission for refusing to fall in line. An SS officer demanded we all line up so they could blacken our eyes and shave us bald. We had just spent twelve hours on our feet inside a freezing train; I wasn't standing for anyone. To my left was a mound of sand and dirt. It looked fresh, soft, like a roll of soft dough—so I sat on it. That officer jerked me up so fast I didn't even know he pushed me back down. I was okay. My teeth broke my fall.

Henry:

After arriving at the beach, I was desperate for a dip. The place was speckled with overflowing bodies and some too small to see. Everyone's pets, Bulldogs and Shepherds alike, were overtaken by waves and thrown back to shore with all their, now, dripping drooling sea-foamed smiles. As disgusting as it sounds, it didn't matter—they were happy. I completely understood how they felt. I, too, wanted to drip with joy. To feel the freedom of a life you enjoy. Without that realization, I don't think I would have made it as far as I did. At seventeen I wasn't ready to be on my own; I mean, I had just thrown the biggest tantrum and literally ran away from home; I still felt like a child scorned for wanting to play in the sand for five more minutes. Child or not, I did want to play in that sand.

Beaches around Lubeck were typically small, and it never felt like we were at the same beach twice. Knowing I couldn't possibly find the Hans of last year, I changed into my bathing-suit, carved a spot in the sand, and looked for the next best thing. Unfortunately, the next best thing was Emma. She was this wild, I guess you could say flamboyant, gal wandering along the

beach. Her shoes hung from her fingers as she dug her toes into each step in the sand. She seemed to be very much carefree. I already admired her.

Emma:

We were always told to act like a lady and dress like a lady; well, I didn't want to. I wanted a pair of overalls like my daddy. That's when I knew I liked girls; at about fifteen or sixteen. A small group of boys were trying to court me, but I kept shoving them off because I was courting Gretchen. Oh, she was five-foot, six-inches of dark-headed beauty. I loved watching her walk because only she could bounce and sway with the trees. She put waves in my ocean. What's better is that she felt the same way about me. We don't get that. Too often we're met with disgust and condemnation, so, it's nice to feel loved occasionally.

But, anyway, Henry eventually became my dearest friend. I was quite the pain in the ass for a while, but we knew that continuing to live with each other, posing to be married, you know, acting like we saw the world in each other, was the only way to survive. I asked him to move in with me that first day we met. He looked like such a little lost puppy, but I didn't judge him. I was still very much a lost muschi at that point. Anyway, he was sitting on the beach when a gust of wind blew my hat off my head. It ended up smacking Henry in the face and that's how we started talking. Honestly, I just wanted a roommate to split rent with and he was looking for a place to stay, so it worked.

He had nothing with him, and that night we became roommates. I know it had to make my neighbor go mad. She was quite nosey and concerned about the potential of two unmarried kids living together. There was my downfall—not bringing home a nice Jewish girl for my neighbor. Or maybe that was her downfall—she never had the right partners. I remember

bringing a girl home pretty early in the afternoon. Actually, we had just left her place, Anya's. But we walked up to the door, and I was fumbling around for a key, when she grabbed my hands so I'd stop searching, and she planted the longest, wettest kiss on me. I didn't care whether or not we got in, I would have taken her right there. I guess you could say that Anya was my first love. I mean, I had loved before; I loved Gretchen, but I really loved Anya. This wasn't a crush. Crushes flip your world on its side; loves rebuild the one you're in.

Emma in the camp:

Screeching breaks echoed and shook the mountains as the train lurched into the depot. We were thrown from a middle cart like bales of hay; like discarded furniture or bags of rice. We weren't those things; we were human beings, but I think we were the only ones who knew. Our lives didn't matter now. After we were removed from the train, they grabbed the girl who sat beside me. One officer took her hair in his fingers and forced her to her knees. She was crying. God, she couldn't have been more than sixteen or seventeen. He told her to stop whimpering or be punished.

I remember thinking, "She was just torn from her family. She's been given plenty to cry about." I knew I couldn't say it out loud; I told myself I needed to stay invisible to survive. That's just what I did, too. I never made friends. I mean—we weren't there to make friends, you know.

Unfortunately, that girl didn't stop. Officers gathered behind the prick who forced this girl to her knees. He slowly unlatched a gun holster on his right hip while continuing to watch a puddle form under this girl. She couldn't help it.

“She couldn’t help it,” I wanted to yell. Then, with an impulsive jerk, the officer ripped his pistol from its holster and fired one shot into her forehead.

Emma:

In the three years we cohabitated, not one person on our street asked if we were together. Maybe they just really didn’t care until they had to. I guess I don’t blame them, but I can’t say I’d do the same. Getting to where I am, here with you—I only survived because of my community. Here we are darling, it’s 1967 and we’re still fighting. So, giving my friend’s, ultimately my family’s whereabouts to authorities, was never a choice for me. Unlike my hetero-Christian neighbors, I had to survive, and in order to survive we needed to stick together.

Things around home had started getting pretty bad. Our street was assigned a nightly patrol group. They’d migrate through, shining their torches into alleys and behind bushes. Most everyone stayed indoors, too afraid to look anyone else in the eye. I didn’t want to do that. I wasn’t afraid of those fascist fucks. My goal was to escape to America, join the U.S. Army and go back kicking and screaming. Of course, that wasn’t my only goal. I was going to get out of there, and get Henry out of there. We were going to buy a house on the beach somewhere in California and just love and live the happiest lives we could and not have to watch over our shoulders.

Henry became paranoid. He’d never go near a window, explaining to me that the Nazis were developing new technologies to recognize faces. I told him he would have had to have done something first—it’s like a finger print. Of course, what did I know? I was just trying to comfort the guy. But, I guess he was kind of right. I spent hours at night watching out those windows. Watching as my neighbors slowly disappeared. Watching as herds of SS tore through doors and

dragged families out by their nightgowns, hair, appendages, whatever they could get a grip on. I was terrified because I knew any day it could be us. Let's face it, probably no one believed Henry and I were married. I mean for God's sake we never even so much as held hands.

The first week after Henry moved in, we held a housewarming party. Knowing that none of them could resist a chance for gifts, I invited all my friends and told them to bring their single friends. It didn't occur to me that all of my friends were lesbians whose friends were also lesbians. Needless to say, Henry was surprised. And I considered the party a success—we received a coffee maker.

Henry on the camp:

The thought of running away with Emma always flooded my mind. I planned escape routes, not just for us, but for the others in our camp. A large group of guys were behind me, but they wanted a leader and I wasn't quite sure I could be that. Sadly, I never had to make that decision. Wrongfully accused, self-made business man, Mortimer, exposed the plan. The SS stormed our bunks in the middle of the night, beating us with the ends of rifles. They dragged each-and-every person out in the mud for interrogation.

Face down, on my hands and knees, I couldn't help but think, "It's over. I'm dead."

The officers circled us and waited until SS General Karl Astel arrived. One officer spoke highly of this man, letting it slip that he was in direct contact with Himmler. We were screwed.

Astel ordered everyone to their feet. I was very tired and getting sick at the time with an awful cough. He walked over, I looked up into his eyes. I could tell he didn't care, that he had not an ounce of humanity. Fearful of what he'd do to me, I stumbled to my feet as he walked down the line. Stopping at Mortimer, Astel whispered something in his ear. Mortimer then broke

the line to stand side-by-side with him. My first thought was “Mortimer’s a spy,” but what happened next shocked us all.

An officer stood behind Mort with rifle in hand.

Astel howled, “Nehmen Sie sie heraus.” Take them out.

Most of us flinched thinking he meant us. Instantaneously, though, the officer standing behind Mortimer lifted his rifle and stomped the back of his legs. Mortimer fell to his feet, screaming. That officer continued to bash his knees with the end of the rifle. We all heard the bone crack with one giant swing. Mortimer kept grabbing at his legs and screaming. We didn’t want to see this, but we weren’t allowed to look away.

“Seine hände!” Astel ordered. His hands.

Two more officers joined in the beating, holding Mortimer’s arms down. Before he could even plead, his hands were smashed by the butt of the rifle. Over and over. A man standing at the end of the line watched, sobbing, and fell to his knees. One of the officers let go of Mortimer’s hand and then dragged him away. Mortimer writhed. I thought it was over. I hoped it was over. It wasn’t.

Emma:

When they knocked on our door, Henry panicked. He was a mess. I was sitting in an old armchair lighting a cigarette when the door was just destroyed. I don’t know what those guys had, but the splinters reached down the hall. It was such a loud noise—something we had never heard before, at least on the streets. Bastards didn’t even let me take a puff. They grabbed the cigarette from my hand and threw it into the fireplace. Then I found myself on the floor beside

Henry. He went down peacefully and I didn't want to make things worse for him, so after that I went peacefully. We were separated when they put us on the train.

I'd see glimpses of him as we all walked to and from our work assignments. Each week I could tell he was getting smaller and smaller. I was already tiny. Eventually we established a way to communicate. I'd write a short, very short message on damaged fabric, usually coming from someone's dirty uniform or the dead's. We'd slip it in the hands of friends and they'd slip it in hands of friends and somehow it always got to us. I never told him how bad it was for me. I figured he had it bad enough. Henry was sick for a while before his notes stopped coming. Occasionally, I heard from various people that he was still alive; he was just struggling. He didn't survive whatever he had.

I, myself, was faced with pain every day. Usually, between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., officers would lead us to a separate facility where they ordered us to undress. I wasn't always part of the group that went, but when girls never came back, they recruited others. The floors were littered with shredded fabric, feathers from pillows, broken glass, pebbles, blood—I could go on. When we walked through the door, the officers made jokes about the feathers, citing pillow fights. But I had seen what those fights were.

So, I slipped the ragged, black-from-dirt robe off my shoulders. I watched as an officer across the empty room made another girl do the same. She was slow. He slapped her. His hand met her face with such force that I gasped. Then I was slapped. A tooth pierced my bottom lip and I was now crying in sync with this girl. The officer ordered me onto a wooden platform disguised as a bed. Not enough padding in the world existed to make that thing comfortable, but I pretended.

I asked that predator hovering over me, "What's going to happen, officer?"

As his hand moved up my leg, he told me, “You are to call me Gruber—and smile.”

With a lump in my throat, I forced the only smile I could. “Okay, Gruber.”

Gruber’s hand crept higher up my thigh. I shook from fear when I felt his fingers jabbing around the edges of my vagina. My hands latched onto the thin padding underneath me. I suppose that wasn’t sexy for him, because he stopped everything to tell me to relax and enjoy it. My grip loosened and Gruber’s warm sloppy hands continued to haunt me. I was lying there, almost completely numb, staring at the ceiling.

I honestly think I was about to faint when the other girl in the room started to scream. She wasn’t going along with this twisted fantasy. The officer on top of her was frustrated and slapped her across the face once more. She must have had all she could handle at that point because she started to fight back. Her fists were flying through the air while she built the strength to kick the monster off. Gruber quickly forgot about me and ran over to the girl. He tried to grab her hands and force her flat on the bed. She kned his testicles and he backed away for a moment. Now, angry, he heaved himself on top of her. I saw a thin white fist fixed upon Gruber’s face. His nose was bleeding. At this point I had crawled to the corner and was watching this fight unfold.

Henry on the camp:

Officers kicked Mortimer over and over after he had curled into a ball. Astel stood over him, staring. He didn’t laugh, or cry; I don’t know if he even blinked. He motioned for an officer, who was holding his hands behind his back, to come closer. The officer swung his arms around, revealing a machete. Astel stepped back, letting others surround Mortimer. After stripping him of his clothes, an officer proceeded to grab his penis. He pulled on it while the machete wielding beast lifted his weapon and let it drop.

If I had eaten that day, I'm sure I would have been wearing it at that point. Mortimer passed out—most likely died that night. I hate the prick, sure, but I never wished that on anybody. I'll never understand why he was the one punished and we got nothing—I got nothing. At least nothing extra. We were led back to the bunks after that. No one spoke.

Emma on the camp:

Gruber struggled to reach for a pillow, placing it over the girl's face. She fought back hard as she could. I was rather surprised at the strength she had. I guess there was nothing left to lose at that point. She was exerting every last bit of adrenaline she had. Finally, she was able to kick Gruber off for the last time. When she jumped from the bed, I heard a loud bang, assuming it was her feet hitting the floor from the jump. I blinked and realized she had been shot. The first officer that had attacked shot her right in the chest. I didn't know what to do; I didn't want to be shot, but I watched her lie there, bleeding out, gasping for a breath. Gruber looked over at me and grinned.

“Go ahead,” he told me. “Take care of your lesbian lover.”

I crawled over to her, wiping her tears, I wept. I wanted to know if she was still there, you understand; had she already passed? She was still gasping when I started to gasp. Then I held her hand while we both cried. I asked her to tell me her name. But she never could.

That night, for the first time in months, I slept—I dreamed. I was back on the beach and I had hair down to my shoulder blades. Sand covered my toes as the waves washed into shore. Grey Heron squawked above me, dancing to the sea and back in hopes of catching supper. I looked around and sitting behind me, further up the beach, was Henry. He was under a rainbow

umbrella, lying on a towel and reading Isherwood. Looking up, he smiled at me and waved. I blew a kiss back to him as another wave washed my feet. Then, we both laughed.

That dream was a sign. It told me that I was going to get out of that camp and that I would be okay. I think it really showed me that I had a future and that Henry would make sure it happened. That dream got me through the next few weeks, or at least what felt like weeks, until the Americans arrived. That's also the same time my obsession for American women began. Soon after being liberated—ha! Soon after being liberated from the camp, my dreams started to involve a big-breasted blonde in her bathing-suit, passing me the American flag on a broken flagpole.

Henry on the camp:

When the Americans came, I was draped over my bunk, barely hanging on. Drool had dried and crusted on my mouth. I honestly don't know how long I had been like that, but had I known some sexy brute was going to save me, I would have cleaned up a bit. Nevertheless, we were getting saved. It really wouldn't have mattered if I had shit stains down my pants, we were getting saved. I was going home. Except, I didn't. I was brought here, to the United States. There was no more home for me in Germany. We were asked if we wanted to visit our former homes. I hesitated at the thought. Sadness was something I never wanted to feel again and I knew seeing my home, seeing our home, would bring about a tremendous depression I wasn't sure I could bring myself out of. This was my chance to start over and I was ready for it.

However, after liberation, it still seemed that who we were, morally, still meant all but nothing unless we invented some new persona. I had become so tired of pretending to be that chipper, busywork-loving whole person, though. Understand, I had problems. I needed someone

to talk to, knowing I could never truly tell anyone my story. So, this missing part of myself would always remain missing. It's quite interesting how we came here to escape the quicksands of prejudice; instead, we were only pulled half-way out and left dangling.

So, when I finally got settled here, I tried to find Emma. I had so many plans for us to get a house and pick up where we left off. With the limited resources I had, I circulated a monthly flyer with a description of Emma and my plea for help. Every newspaper within a hundred-mile radius was so tired of hearing from me. Every kind of ad agency within that hundred-miles was tired of hearing from me. My friends were tired of hearing about it all. No one understood and I knew no one would ever understand like Emma could. I looked for her, but I guess she never made it out of there. The thought crossed my mind when her notes stopped coming back to me in the camp, but she was my best friend—I didn't want to admit that to myself. I mourned her twice. My heart broke.

Emma:

I arrived in New York in the middle of summer. It was absolutely scorching outside; I couldn't believe it. The city was suffocating. At that point in my life, I didn't want to be around anyone at all and the only reason I even thought about New York was Henry. He loved the idea of coming across the Atlantic to see the rising skyscrapers. While I was trying to find a place to live, someone contacted me and wanted to help out. Candice, then, insisted on giving me a tour of the city. I wish I could have told Henry it wasn't all that great, so I moved to south Florida. He would kick my ass. But I did do what I told him I wanted to do—I bought a house on the beach.

Henry:

Southern California was a great place to live, but after a while I got tired of the desert. I decided that I'd take time to travel, finding a place to plant new roots after. For a while, I had planned to visit New York City. I actually brought that to fruition. I drove across the United States, a two-week drive, to see New York. And it wasn't that great. I think the history of the city, rather than the tourist attractions, was more appealing. The overcrowding of New York streets had me wishing for Midwest plains. I ruled out establishing a residence there and New York. Eventually I moved on to Fort Lauderdale. Here, I fell in love with another nice Jewish boy, like myself, and we are now beginning to discuss the idea of potentially adopting a daughter.

Works Cited

- Clum, John M. "'A Culture That Isn't Just Sexual': Dramatizing Gay Male History." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 41, no. 2, 1989, pp.169-89.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1. Vintage Books, 1978.
- . "The Subject and Power." pp. 777-795. ENGL 600 D2L Course,
<https://learn.radford.edu/d2l/home>. Accessed 11 March 2017.
- Grau, Günter, Claudia Schoppmann, and Patrick Camiller. *Hidden Holocaust?: Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany, 1933-45*. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1995.
- Hammermeister, Kai. "Inventing History: Toward a Gay Holocaust Literature." *The German Quarterly*, vol. 70, no. 1, 1997, pp. 18-26.
- "History of the Anti-Gay Movement since 1977." *Southern Poverty Law Center*,
<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2005/history-anti-gay-movement-1977>.
- Plant, Richard. *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War against Homosexuals*. New York: H. Holt, 1986.
- Raphael, Lev. "Deciphering the Gay Holocaust." *Harvard Gay & Lesbian Review*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1995, pp. 53-56.
- Seifert, Dorthe. "Between Silence and License: The Representation of the National Socialist Persecution of Homosexuality in Anglo-American Fiction and Film." *History & Memory*, pp. 94-129.
- Socarides, Charles W. "Some Problems Encountered in the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Overt Male Homosexuality." *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1979, pp. 506-20.

---. "The Sexual Deviations and the Diagnostic Manual." *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, vol. 32, no. 3, 1978, pp. 414-26.

SuchIsLifeVideos. "1982-1992 News Clips on HIV/AIDS (The First Ten Years)." *YouTube*, 29 May 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPO5wausim8>.

Yoshino, Kenji. "The Literary Argument for Heightened Scrutiny for Gays." *Columbia Law Review*, vol. 96, no. 7, 1996, pp. 1753-1834.