had envisaged, the mindset of the "defensive peasantry" was vital in contributing to the *Volksgemeinschaft* in the occupied territories. Siemens also forcefully argues that the five SA generals who served as ambassadors in Southeast Europe played far more of a role in expediting the Holocaust in those areas than anyone previously thought.

Given his research prowess, specialist readers might wish that Siemens had said more about the topics he purposefully leaves to others, such as the Night of the Long Knives. The traditional explanation that Germans supported Hitler's first mass murder because it prevented a takeover by the thuggish SA, repeated here by Siemens, does not account for the many innocent people without links to the SA who were shot or beaten up that night, most prominent of whom was Elisabeth von Schleicher, the wife of former chancellor Kurt von Schleicher. Siemens's promised comparisons are also less robust than expected (77). Although he indicates that he will examine the SA in the context of other paramilitary organizations in Germany and Europe, the book contains little on either of those topics. Readers are offered compelling reasons why the SA grew, but far fewer insights as to why other paramilitary organizations failed. These shortcomings detract only marginally from a book that is now the standard by which all other works on the SA must be judged.

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The Seduction of Youth: Print Culture and Homosexual Rights in the Weimar Republic. By Javier Samper Vendrell. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020. Pp. 280. Paper $32.95. ISBN 978-1487525033.

There is a common misconception about the 1920s—typified by Germany's Weimar Republic (1919–1933)—that this time of topless cabaret, neon lights, glitz and glam was a great deal more libertine than it probably was. Of course, it makes for a good story, and TV shows like *Babylon Berlin* certainly play to this. But as a result, evidence of a seemingly much older cultural and moral conservatism can come as a surprise and remind us that attitudes toward morality and "proper" masculinity and femininity were and are generally slow to change. This should not dissuade us from exploring the avant-garde elements of these times—on the contrary, there is much to be learned from the tensions with which these moments were fraught.

Javier Samper Vendrell takes us into one such moment, where we expect a much-celebrated libertinism and find something altogether different. Vendrell explores the decade when the gay rights movement in Germany seemed poised finally to achieve decriminalization of same-sex sexual activity (punishable since the mid-nineteenth century under Paragraph 175 of the criminal code) and thus add to the list of postwar progressive changes that already included the lifting of government censorship, the end of (almost all) punishment for abortion, the sale of contraceptives from vending machines, and the new visibility of alternative sexualities—in short, the kind of libertinism we typically associate with the 1920s. Indeed, would anything else so clearly signal the dawn of a new, anti-Victorian (or anti-Wilhelmine) age as the decriminalization of same-sex intimacy?

But, for a variety of reasons, the movement faltered. Lawmakers finally decided on a minor and essentially meaningless revision to the law in 1929, and the Nazis in any case added their own draconian and violent addendum (Paragraph 175a) shortly after coming to power. To help us understand the rise and fall of the decriminalization effort, Vendrell sets up three protagonists, each working toward the expansion of gay rights or at least a gay cultural community: Adolf Brand's masculinist Community of the Special (which was not even really interested in decriminalization, seeing as it fought for legal recognition as a "vulgar undertaking" [155]); Magnus Hirschfeld's Scientific Humanitarian Committee, which advocated for progress through scientific research about the inherent normalness of same-sex attraction; and—Vendrell's focal point—Friedrich Radszuweit's League for Human Rights, which built a huge readership around its mostly low-brow and always titillating gay culture publications and sought to effect political change by demonstrating that homosexuals were as productive and respectable as heterosexuals.

Vendrell's skill is in weaving together sexology, psychology, criminology, politics, and close readings of popular culture to untangle the ways in which these gay rights organizations battled—often with each other—for decriminalization. Radszuweit, whom Vendrell frames as a businessman willing to compromise on everything for the sake of more readers and fame, is by the end of the book really more an antagonist than anything else. Though Vendrell at times admires the gay community Radszuweit's shrewd publishing house knitted together (and spends an excellent chapter detailing its impressive rise), his argument is that playing the "politics of respectability" (159) made Radszuweit a sellout and ultimately gave fodder to the homophobic majority of Weimar society that continued to be skeptical of gay men and their ability to integrate into society. Opposition to homosexuality was mostly based on what Germans feared (and were told by sexual scientists) was the sexual malleability of adolescents who, if seduced by lecherous, older gay men, would fail to reach proper heterosexual maturity and would lapse into homosexuality. This, opponents argued, was not something Germany could risk as it worked to recover from its disastrous defeat in the war, and so youths needed legal protection from "infectious" homosexuals in order to prevent a homosexual epidemic.

Vendrell thus casts the protection and seduction of youth as the core element of the story of 1920s gay rights, and this is a novel and compelling move. He argues that the major gay organization of the day—Radszuweit's League for Human Rights—hypocritically played along with middle-class morality by scolding intergenerational relationships while also using images and stories of so-called boy love (long a part of the "literary and artistic traditions of male same-sex love" [62]) to titillate readers and grow its readership. This was doubly damning: it revealed Radszuweit to be a shameless entrepreneur intent only on growing his own brand, and it "internalized some of the worst forms of homophobia into [its] rhetoric" (136) and "undermine[d] the visibility the movement had achieved" (152). Playing the politics of respectability and acquiescing to the moral and political arguments about the dangers of male prostitution and the need for a higher age of same-sex consent than for heterosexuals only reinforced the prevailing conflation of homosexuality and pederasty. The momentum for real change thus fizzled.

This is a clearly articulated, deeply and widely informative study. But I mention Vendrell's three "protagonists" because I do not think the book's structure really does justice to the author's analytical moves. The book reads, in many ways, like a collection of journal articles and not a drama, which is a shame because the elements for a more cohesive story are all there, tucked in between the topics of each chapter. Vendrell's best moments are when he

leaves the organizational philosophies of his protagonists behind and contextualizes specific ordinary people whose lives and identities were at stake. Gustav Wyneken, the headmaster convicted of inappropriate contact with his pupils but claiming in his defense to the end that he had done nothing immoral, would in many ways have made a good protagonist; or even Radszuweit the person (not the publishing house). As it is, the book's focus on publications and editorial infighting reads a little academic, and what could have been a fresh take on the drama of the fight for the decriminalization of homosexuality instead gets broken up into thematic chunks that seem like remnants of the dissertation process.

Nevertheless, the story Vendrell tells is eminently relevant to our contemporary world, where strategies for the growth of identity movements can differ and compete with each other, often to the detriment of their shared goals. *The Seduction of Youth* is indeed a "cautionary tale" (7) about the sacrifice a movement makes when it appeals to its inherent compatibility with hegemonic norms, and it is worth reading and pondering.

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Zentrale Peripherie. Biologische und medizinische Forschung in Berlin-Buch, 1930–1989. By Bernd Gausemeier. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2020. Pp. 535. Paper €79.00. ISBN 978-3515126076.

In his new book, Bernd Gausemeier provides an institutional history of the Buch research campus from its inception to the fall of the Berlin Wall. The translated title, *Central Periphery: Biological and Medical Research in Berlin-Buch, 1930–1989*, reveals a methodological playfulness. The author makes frequent use of inverted language—phrases such as "the long march to Buch" (35), "central plans, local conflicts" (141), and "falling behind through technology" (364), for example—to highlight some of the absurdities that become evident through his analytical examination of the development of Berlin-Buch into a center of German biomedical research. Readers will recognize this center today as the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine (MDC; Helmholtz Association of German Research Centers), which was the new name given in January 1992 to what had been the Central Institute for Molecular Biology under the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

Gausemeier's book is organized into three sections and fifteen chapters. He interprets the "long march to Buch" (35) in his first and shortest section, entitled "The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Brain Research from its Beginnings to 1945," as a tendency toward research centralization: "The inauguration of such a research clinic at an institution, which was previously seen as peripheral, represented a significant wartime development [in Germany], and it became significant for the role of the KWIBR [Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Brain Research]. On the one hand, the institute stood in the center of an ordering and encompassing network. On the other hand, the connection of its central brain collection with highly specialized clinical research, seen as a main characteristic of the KWIBR, did not really materialise . . . " (97; Engl. transl. by F.W.S.). While such analysis contributes new insights to an already well-researched area, further incorporation of existing literature on other "big science" endeavors would have improved the book's international contextualization.