CHAPTER FIVE

The Romance of Socialism

Socialist Morality

If in West Germany the restoration of conservative Christian values with regard to sex, gender, and family relations was a primary means for dealing with the inheritance of Nazism, how did the self-styled antifascist regime of East Germany deal with the legacies of the Third Reich's sexual politics? In the Federal Republic of Germany, the Christian churches had considerable influence in shaping official sexual norms. How, by contrast, were sexual mores negotiated in the formally secularized German Democratic Republic? How were sexually conservative arguments advanced here without reference to God? And if the sexual liberalization of West Germany had depended significantly on market pressures, how in East Germany were liberal arguments put forth that nonetheless rejected the capitalist-driven sexual revolution in the West?

The unique situation of East Germany (post-Weimar, post-Nazi, but under Soviet-style communism) provides important and more generally relevant perspectives on the twentieth-century history of sexuality. This is not least because precisely the similarities with and differences from developments in West Germany foreground just how much social, political, and economic factors shape the seemingly natural realm of sexuality (as Marxist sexologists did not tire of pointing out; in this they were quite right). It is also because the particular trajectory of East German sexual politics lends new pertinence to Michel Foucault's shrewd observation that sexuality is "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power," a phenomenon that would be evident both in the way popular pressures forced concessions from the regime and in the regime's evolving efforts to woo its citizenry and solicit not only its compliance but also its love.[1]

Analyzing published writings about sex over the forty years of the German Democratic Republic's history gives us crucial insight into the GDR's "alternate modernity."[2] Such an examination also reveals new aspects of the complexities of interaction between regime and populace in a dictatorship. For although everything that made its way into print for public consumption was subject to control by the functionaries of the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, or SED), the perpetual struggles between regime and populace—and, indeed, often also the conflicts between different constituencies within the regime and the populace—were everywhere in evidence in the printed record. The government ceaselessly sought to persuade citizens of its point of view, and thus tried strategically to make arguments it thought might be effective, and to take up and preemptively counter potential objections wherever it could. Moreover, because of the severity of the censorship, and the limited number of permitted publications, social and political transformations can be clearly traced. The turn toward a socialist variant of sexual conservatism in the later 1950s and 1960s (part Stalinist, part ex-Nazi, part petty bourgeois) and the uneven but increasing liberalization from the mid- to late 1960s on and especially in the 1970s are evident in marriage and sex manuals, sexological articles and reference works, popular magazines, and sex education curricula. Both under Walter Ulbricht and (after 1971) Erich Honecker, the uppermost echelons of the SED regime were fairly conservative, even prudish, about sex. And so were a number of the experts—physicians, jurists, psychologists, and pedagogues—who lent their authority to the promotion of conservative values. But there were also in every decade, and over time ever more, individuals within the upper reaches of the SED, as well as quite a few professional experts on sex, who found opportunities to make their case for sex-affirmative attitudes.

Like conservatives, liberal authors articulated their own arguments within the constraints of the approved Marxist idiom. But East German sex liberals also frequently used that idiom against itself and tried to stretch its boundaries. Among other things, for example, these more liberal commentators appealed to the regime leadership's professed atheism by highlighting Christianity's traditional hostility to sex, cited iconic socialists like August Bebel to the effect that sex should be stripped of shamefulness, or interspersed quotations from Karl Marx with tips for intensifying sexual pleasure. Eventually, moreover, the negative counterexample of Nazism, which initially had proved an awkward obstacle to the SED as it sought to justify its own determination to raise reproductive rates, could be used by progressive East German activists to advance more sexually liberal attitudes.

In the meantime, although East Germans found their regime's propaganda transparently hypocritical, and while also that portion of the intellectual elite which in the first two decades of the nation's history had identified strongly with the antifascist and state-socialist project became over time decidedly disenchanted and alienated, both ordinary citizens and activist intellectuals shared many of the regime's announced values.[3] "Socialist morality" (*sozialistische Moral*), as it was called, and which referred to much more than sexual mores but also explicitly incorporated these, was not just a strict set of injunctions imposed on a reluctant and cynical populace. The ideals of socialist morality and the "socialist personality"

(*sozialistische Persönlichkeit*) were at once highly authoritarian concepts—mandating as they did certain character traits such as nonegoism and solidarity with others, personal responsibility and decency, nonmaterialism and commitment to progress—and terms subject to continual reformulation and contest, not only ones against which ordinary citizens could critically measure government initiatives but which they could make their own as well. Daily life in East Germany was profoundly affected by the pervasiveness of government monitoring of individuals' and groups' actions through the state security service, the Staatssicherheitsdienst (Stasi); the Stasi not only observed and reported on citizens' behavior and statements, but also—especially in the case of activists and intellectuals—maliciously intervened in private lives, spreading rumors, undermining individuals' self-esteem, and sowing mistrust between friends and even within marriages.[4] Yet mutual surveillance and punitive treatment of political dissidents and nonconformists also coexisted with considerable arbitration and compromises between government and citizens.[5]

"Socialist morality," then, also took on a life of its own and became a cluster of values that (notwithstanding privately expressed popular skepticism) all sides recurrently invoked, deployed, and argued over. It was no coincidence, for instance, that in the 1980s activists on behalf of sexual rights issues such as an end to discrimination of gays and lesbians succeeded precisely by putting their claims in the stiltedly pious terms preferred by the regime.[6] Indeed, and tellingly, one joke circulating in reunified Germany in the early 1990s was that only the supposedly thoroughly secularized East Germans, the *Ossis*, still adhered to the classic "Christian" values of nonmaterialism, care for others, and concern about social justice. The West Germans, the *Wessis*, had relinquished those values long ago.[7]

One thing that emerges with particular clarity from a reading of East German sexological and sex advice literature is further evidence that contemporaries did not consider Nazism particularly repressive with respect to sex. For example, and strikingly, commentators writing in the late 1940s and 1950s either treated developments during the Third Reich as being in unremarkable continuity with liberalizing processes underway since the early twentieth century (such as the prevalence of premarital sex, avid popular interest in sex technique books, and the acceptability of female initiative), or directly specified that Nazism had been sexually inciting. Thus, for instance, a prominent East Berlin gynecologist declared in 1956 that it was not just the war and its chaotic aftermath that had encouraged early premarital intercourse, for "we know from our own object lesson in the crucibles of the Third Reich [*Anschauungsunterricht in den Schmelztiegeln des Dritten Reiches*] (Hitler Youth, Labor Service, etc.) that also in Germany before the war the heterosexual activity of

young people, especially of working-class youth, indicated a dissolution of the sexual order that was largely congruent with Kinsey's numbers (Kinsey could show that more than half of the 16-year-old boys and two-thirds of the 20-year-old men had such experiences!)"[8] And Friedrich Heilmann, a leading member of the East German Ministry of Education, in a 1956 medical journal essay also reminded his readers that "Nazism . . . after all, brought with it dissolution and disintegration in the sexual arena as well," even as he allusively gestured to the phenomenon of Nazi homoeroticism when he defended the GDR's commitment to coeducation. Heilmann suggested that "convents, military training schools, girls' boarding schools, prisons, and, in the extreme case, the male communities of the SS and SA" conclusively demonstrated that the atmosphere produced by sex segregation was "never healthy."[9]

Meanwhile, authors from the 1950s through to the 1970s regularly complained about the deleterious impact of Christian negativity toward sex and worried that also East Germans, especially those in the older generations, had not yet fully overcome this legacy. "No religion could say no to the sexual more awfully than Christianity has," opined Heilmann.[10] At the same time, however, writings from the 1950s onward suggest that especially premarital but also extramarital sex was quite routine in the GDR.[11] Conservative authors in the 1950s and 1960s thus struggled to find properly socialist arguments for delaying the onset of premarital sex and for containing sex within marriage. (Simultaneously, however—and despite Heilmann's reference to the stock antifascist cliché of the queer Nazi—cruel and pathologizing attitudes toward homosexuality were, as in the West, transplanted practically wholesale from Nazism.) Yet while the SED regime had always defended premarital heterosexuality with the expectation that it would be premarital in the technical sense (i.e., that it would lead to marriage), in the early 1970s the regime shifted and began enthusiastically promoting the very ubiquity of uncommitted youth heterosexuality which 1960s empirical studies had forced it reluctantly to acknowledge. This was read at the time by Western observers as a clearly desperate measure to raise birthrates in the wake of the introduction of the pill and the legalization of first-trimester abortions. But the East German context suggests that even more important than demography was the regime's abiding anxious desire to bind young people emotionally to the socialist project.

Reading the evolution of debates about sex in East Germany in turn encourages the revision of assumptions now standard among historians and other social scientists about gender relations in East Germany. The Western feminist master narrative of East German women as lamentably doubly burdened by work force participation and domestic chores despite the formally egalitarian rhetoric of the regime is complicated by attention

to the history of sexuality. For instance, there is no question that East German women's growing economic independence from men profoundly affected heterosexual power dynamics. Taking sex seriously as a vital, consequential, and complex arena of human activity—as significant a matter as labor relations or political attitudes and, indeed, intricately interconnected with these—helps us see East German women as increasingly confident subjects with strong negotiating power vis-à-vis both their male partners and the state. It allows us as well to bring into view the distinctive egalitarian style of heterosexual masculinity developed among the younger generation in East Germany. Moreover, and crucially, as developments in the GDR in the 1970s and 1980s especially show, sex eventually became a crucial free space in this otherwise profoundly unfree society. Whether this indirectly strengthened the regime's control or should be read as a genuine democratic achievement is a question that remains open. Perhaps both are true.

Attention to the history of sexuality thus also alters our assessment of classic topics in East German historiography. It provides new insight into the divergent ways East and West Germany managed the Nazi past. It furthers our understanding of GDR citizens' gradual accommodation to life under SED communism. And finally, grasping the contours and the import of the sexual freedoms ultimately secured in the GDR helps to explain how the special sexual culture of the East would in the wake of German reunification become such an intense focus for East German nostalgia.

Recriminalizing Abortion

In the immediate aftermath of the war, in the Soviet zone of occupation, abortion was decriminalized. This development was the result of two main factors. One was the strong impulse to undo the harsh criminalization of abortion under Nazism. The other had to do with the extraordinary situation of chaos, crisis, and mass rapes of German women by Soviet soldiers, as well as hunger, homelessness, and generally wretched economic conditions. Permitting abortion under these circumstances was seen as a humanitarian imperative. Initially, the five eastern state governments reverted to the pre-Nazi German criminal code; abortion was technically still criminalized but far less brutally than it had been under the Nazis. Yet, at the same time, doctors were officially notified that abortions would be permitted also in cases of economic distress (the so-called social indication) and thus that they need not fear prosecution for performing abortions. In 1947 and 1948 this handling of the issue was formalized. Paragraph 218 was abolished in almost all Soviet-occupied jurisdictions.

It was common knowledge that abortion rates in the Soviet zone of occupation were exceedingly high. Those who could not find a doctor to perform a surgical abortion tended to rely on the (at once effective and dangerous) method of squirting soapy water through the cervix and thereby prompting a miscarriage.[12] While important work has been done by Atina Grossmann and others on the ways the one to two million rapes of German women by soldiers of the Soviet Red Army (far exceeding the numbers of rapes of German women by other Allied soldiers) contributed to the postwar authorities' willingness to tolerate abortions, this was not the full story as contemporaries interpreted it.[13] For while this explains why officials accepted abortions, it does not explain why so many women continued to seek them after 1945. And although the cataclysmic conditions of hunger and poverty were certainly mentioned by Soviet zone contemporaries, they did not suggest that this was the main cause for the heightened demand, either.

Some believed that it was the crushing defeat of Nazism that had caused massive emotional destabilization and moral disorientation. As one woman in Jena confided to her physician, so attached had she been to Nazism that "due to the war's outcome"—that is, the downfall of the Third Reich—she had experienced a "collapse of her entire way of looking at life." This had been accompanied by "lack of appetite, weight loss, life weariness," followed by "intimate acquaintanceship with a young man, abortion, and rupture of the relationship."[14] A physician in Leipzig was commenting as late as 1952 on the toll the experiences of war and military defeat had taken also on GDR citizens' private lives: "The wreckage field of the Second World War stretches into that region where interhuman relations are most frequently realized . . . namely into that of sexual life." Also among patients not physically traumatized by concrete injuries, "significant psychological problems" were often evident, and the incidence of sexual dysfunctions had grown substantially in the postwar years. "Not inconsiderable portions of the populace, with respect to their sexual lives," he averred, "have been cast into depression, helplessness, and . . . loss of moorings."[15] Yet other commentators simply tried to express, allusively but nonetheless with strong emotion, a generalized impression that the present they were experiencing felt like a kind of moral apocalypse.

Other contemporaries suggested either that the dynamics of total aggressive war or Nazi reproductive ideology itself had created conditions for a significant rise in casual sex and had spurred patterns of behavior that now continued after the war. One medical doctor, for example, remarking on the "frequently chaotic love relationships" evident all around him in the early GDR, explained the prevalence of postwar adultery with the observation that "in and after great wars, because of greediness for

life and terror of death, sexual drivenness [*Triebhaftigkeit*] grows out of control."[16] Another Soviet zone doctor offered an at once Freudian and antifascist analysis, suggesting that the fault lay with Nazism and the psychopathology of the German populace that had made Nazism possible. For this observer, the puzzle was why German women were having so much unprotected sex and almost compulsively getting pregnant, even while they were simultaneously desperate to avoid procreating. Admittedly, the price of condoms had risen exponentially since the collapse of the Third Reich. But this could not be the primary reason. Germans, he suggested, really were at odds with themselves over whether to reproduce. They had coped with their own insecurities by projecting their innermost sense of self-worth onto the collectivity of the German "race" and were now unconsciously still unable to become fully individuated, or to separate themselves from the collective psychopathological patterns laid down under Nazism. This explained the reluctance to use any kind of planning in sexual encounters.[17]

At the same time, however, just as Paragraph 218 was in the process of being formally abolished in 1947–48, leading members of the SED had already begun to push for recriminalization. The effort to recriminalize was due not least to demographic concerns; there was a pervasive worry that the Soviet zone would rapidly experience an insupportable shortage of labor power. The drive to recriminalize was evidently also an accommodation to the decision (under Joseph Stalin in 1936) to reverse the decriminalization of abortion in the Soviet Union that had initially been implemented by the Bolsheviks in the wake of the Russian Revolution. And a key dynamic in the Soviet zone of occupation and the early GDR involved setting aside the more sex-liberal communist perspectives inherited from Weimar in order to promote decidedly more conservative Stalinist attitudes.[18]

Yet the drive to recriminalize abortion also posed some tricky ideological dilemmas for the SED leadership. First, the prospect of recriminalization evoked the specter of Nazism all over again. Second, because of its constitutive anti-Christianity, the SED had to find arguments against abortion that did not involve recourse to church teachings. This was all the more important in view of the fact that at this moment in the western zones Christian, especially Catholic, journalists, politicians, and doctors were mobilizing in an antiabortion campaign that would successfully prevent decriminalization in the West.

While initially in the Soviet zone the populace had been actively educated about the harshness of Nazi abortion policy and its links to racism, already by 1947 members of the SED had begun to formulate arguments for recriminalization. For instance, in 1946 the leading women's magazine in the Soviet zone, *Für Dich* (For You), had denounced the Nazis'

preoccupation with procreation in no uncertain terms, making derogatory remarks both about the "poisonous" effects of "racial fanaticism" and the Nazis' treatment of women as no better than "baby-making machines."[19] But in 1947, state prosecutor Hilde Benjamin—later to become the much-feared minister of justice in the GDR—was already rejecting the slogan that had been advanced by communists and feminists in Weimar: "My body belongs to me" (*Mein Körper gehört mir*). Benjamin contended that the state absolutely had a right to intervene in women's lives, on the grounds that a society had a prerogative to "secure its progeny." Acutely aware that this sounded very much like Nazi rhetoric, Benjamin declared that the "misuse" of an idea under National Socialism was no reason permanently to discount its value. "After all, we still today speak of socialism, too!" she tartly observed. Meanwhile, however, Benjamin expressly rejected the Christian view that abortion was murder or that a fetus necessarily had a right to life. On the contrary, to criminalize abortion was to assure the right of "the polity as a whole" (*die Allgemeinheit*) to reproduce itself, and this polity could, in her view, be defined equally well as "the right of the society, the right of the [working] class, or the right of the people."[20] Precisely because the obsession with reproductivity had been such a central aspect of Nazism, the SED was forced openly to acknowledge the apparent similarities between fascist and purportedly antifascist demands and then to elaborate distinctions.[21]

The SED also, however, recognized that it had to make major concessions to women in return for depriving them of their reproductive freedom. The German Democratic Republic was founded in October 1949, and within less than a year, in September 1950, the GDR passed the "Law for the Protection of Mothers and Children and the Rights of Woman" (Gesetz über den Mutter- und Kinderschutz und die Rechte der Frau). This law recriminalized abortion, permitting abortion only in cases in which the mother's health or life was in severe danger ("medical indication") or in cases when an inheritable disease was likely to disable the child ("eugenic indication"). But it also guaranteed prenatal and maternity care and financial subsidies, removed all legal discrimination against unwed mothers, and announced the development of extensive state-run infant and childcare facilities. The unapologetically and openly expressed aim was to facilitate women's combined functions as workers *and* procreators; women's labor force participation was urgently needed, but so was their reproductive capacity. The SED well knew that the majority of women favored abortion rights. (As an internal SED document put it, "the mass of women sees [abortion] as morally a fully legitimate type of self-help, something understandable and self-evident.")[22] This consensus had to be countered. The text of the law boldly asserted that the law exemplified the full realization of women's equality. It also declared that

the social order of the GDR secured "happy motherhood," that "children are the future of the nation," and that "care for the children, the strengthening of the family and the encouragement of wealth in children [*Kinderreichtum*] is one of the main tasks of our democratic state."[23]

In Minister-President Otto Grotewohl's bald-faced defense of the law, which was not only printed and circulated but also served as the basis for propagandistic instructions sent to all of the SED-affiliated women's committees to help them respond forcefully to anticipated public resistance, the law was again presented as a great advance for women's rights. Not only did Grotewohl assert that abortion could be fatal for women, and thus that it was in women's best interest to have it recriminalized. He also frankly noted that the GDR was a predominantly female society and that in the twenty-five- to thirty-year age bracket there were twice as many women as men. This "unhealthy" disproportion, he said, could be rectified with each new birth, and women should "consciously" make an effort to get pregnant more often. Every woman should have more than two children, and Grotewohl also had no qualms about saying that the reason for this was that the state needed more workers. But like Benjamin before him, Grotewohl also struggled to distance the SED's interest in raising reproductive rates from both Christian and Nazi antiabortion arguments. The state, Grotewohl said, should reject the religious prohibition on abortion, for such a religious prohibition constituted "an invasion of the personal freedom of the individual." And at the same time he declared that "there is no comparison between the population politics of Hitler and that of the German Democratic Republic. Fascist population politics served the war and catastrophic decline [*Untergang*]; our population politics serves peace and prosperity."[24] The overt aim of the 1950 law, in short, was to raise reproductive levels in the GDR; the most immediate effect of the law, however, was that 60 percent of all abortions were once again performed illegally.[25]

The Sexual Evolution

There would be no sexual revolution in East Germany. Unlike West Germany, where the mid- to late 1960s saw a liberalization of the social and cultural landscape so dramatic that to many observers it seemed as though it had happened virtually overnight, East Germany experienced a far more gradual evolution of sexual mores. By the late 1960s, West Germany had been inundated by the commodification of sex in every facet of existence—from highly sexualized advertising to easily available hard-core pornography, from a constant stream of news reportage about sexual matters to sex enlightenment films and curricula and a culturewide discussion

of nudity, adultery, and group sex. Market-driven voyeurism had become an inescapable part of everyday life in the West. By contrast, and while East Germany entered a period of sexual conservatism in the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s in many respects comparable with the sexual conservatism of West Germany in those years, there were also already in the 1950s notable elements of liberality in the East which had no parallel in West Germany. These early liberal aspects of East German culture would have a decisive impact on the subsequent trajectory of sexual politics in the decades that followed.

In what did this liberality consist? One major difference between East and West Germany in the 1950s was not so much the extent of female labor force participation (since also in the West women worked outside the home to supplement the family's income, while in the East there were still numerous women, especially in the older generations, who were solely housewives), although it was indeed somewhat higher in the East. Rather, the difference lay in the combination of institutional structures and strong rhetorical support in the East that made women's work for wages not only possible but also much less guilt-inducing. The double burden of work for wages and household chores (or rather triple burden, if one added the demands of political participation in party- or workplace-linked organizations) did in the course of the 1950s influence East German women, too, to retreat to more part-time work. But there is no question that the psychological misery induced in so many West German women in the 1950s (and also later) by the idealization of faithful, homebound femininity and self-sacrificing wife- and motherhood was much less evident in the East. East German women were continually told that they should improve and develop themselves through further studies, and men were enjoined to support this. Indeed, already in the 1950s, East German men were encouraged to participate in housework and child-rearing, a suggestion only intermittently voiced in 1950s West Germany (where the main message from the government and popular magazines alike was that a wife's whole purpose was to create a warm and nurturing home for husband and children and to tend to her husband's psychic wounds after his stressful day at work). The idea that a man might be the house-husband and care for the baby and assist his wife through her studies was familiar enough in the East already in the mid-1950s that one author approvingly noted the phenomenon had become so prevalent a part of the landscape one could "already recognize a certain type."[26]

Beyond these economic and social factors, there were also the SED regime's clear stances in defense of both premarital heterosexual activity and unwed motherhood. West Germany too had technically abolished legal discrimination against illegitimate children. But in the East, a push to end social discrimination and bring an end to the culture of shame

surrounding illegitimacy was a genuine government objective. In the West, by contrast, with its officially Christianized political culture under Christian Democratic auspices, shaming was standard. Moreover, although in West and East alike premarital heterosexual intercourse was practiced by a large majority of the population, West Germany in the 1950s and early 1960s saw a major campaign against premarital sex. This campaign was not only promoted by the Protestant and Catholic churches through sermons and sex advice tracts running into millions of copies. Christian perspectives also informed government policy, teacher education, and school curricula, and popular West German magazines too reinforced the idea that good girls did not permit premarital sex and that a gentlemanly young man should respect this. Girls were told that if a boy really loved them, he would wait until the wedding day; the idea that girls might have desires of their own was simply not considered. Far from being a trivial matter, the postwar campaign to clean up German sexual mores was a core element in securing West German Christianity's antifascist moral authority, for during the Third Reich sexual matters had formed a main focus of conflict between the Nazis and the Catholic Church in particular and Nazis had continually ridiculed Christian prudery and opposition to premarital heterosexuality.

In the officially secularized East, by contrast, sex was not a main site for managing the legacies of Nazism because the East secured its antifascist status above all by emphasizing its anticapitalism. While fully aware of Nazism's encouragements to premarital sexual activity, the SED felt no particular need to break with this legacy, since it was congruent with popular values, which simply saw sex as the customary way to express love.[27] Instead, the main concern in the East was to bring some order into the postwar "chaotic love-relationships" by showing citizens that socialism provided the best conditions for lasting and happy love. (In fact, eastern authors frequently pointed out that sexual relationships really were more love-based and hence honorable in the East than in the West specifically because under socialism women did not need to "sell" themselves into marriage in order to support themselves.) In the East, then, discussion of sex was seen not so much as a means for mastering the past but rather as a means for orienting people toward the future—a future that was declared to be always already in the making, and which required all citizens' engaged participation. Socialism, it was constantly stressed, was steadily en route to perfection. And no sex advice text in the East was complete without reference either to the idea that only socialism provided the context for the most loving and satisfying marriages or to the notion that a couple's commitment to and struggle on behalf of socialism would enhance their romantic relationship.

While a number of East German doctors in the 1950s and 1960s counseled against premarital sex and/or cautioned that the East German government's support for illegitimate children should not be interpreted as direct encouragement to bear children out of wedlock, the overwhelming message from the government and from advice writers was that premarital heterosexual activity was both natural and normal. Medical doctor Hanns Schwarz, for example, in an SED-sponsored sex advice lecture delivered more than forty times throughout the East between 1952 and 1959 (and circulated in hundreds of thousands of copies), criticized promiscuity but otherwise energetically endorsed premarital sex and rejected "moralistic preachments" against it. "Sensuality," he told his listeners, "can be something glorious and positive," and should not be "branded as a sin by uptight people [*Mucker*]." All that mattered, according to Schwarz (as he revealed his heteronormativity) was that this sensual activity should occur between "two people of the opposite sex who in addition to physical attraction to each other are emotionally entwined, have similar ways of looking at the world, and have shared interests."[28] And in a book published in 1959, Schwarz again described sex as "the quintessence of being alive." Moreover, unlike more conservative East German writers who unreflectingly collapsed intercourse with reproduction, Schwarz declared forthrightly that "we as free people know that intercourse does not just serve the propagation of the human race, but also furthers pleasure very significantly."[29] A similar message was communicated by physician Rudolf Neubert's *Das neue Ehebuch* (The New Marriage Book, 1957), the single most popular East German advice book in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Although Neubert thought it advisable for teenagers between the ages of fourteen and eighteen to avoid "regular [*regelmässigen*] intercourse" (even as he was rather unclear what he meant by "regular"), he was completely in favor of premarital intercourse for the nineteen- to twenty-five-year-old set. "No one," he announced confidently, "will take moral offense if these matured people also love each other in the bodily sense." And this generosity extended also to nonmarital pregnancies. In Neubert's opinion, there was no need to rush into marriage. For as long as the child was "conceived and received in love, it is completely irrelevant when the parents marry."[30]

By the early 1960s, a government statement formalized the view that love made premarital sex permissible. The SED's memorandum on youth (*Jugendkommuniqué*) formulated in 1963 stated that "every true love between two young people deserves candid respect" and implicitly instructed parents and grandparents that they should be understanding of young couples' loving relationships also when these turned sexual. The GDR's gender egalitarianism and practice of coeducation, together with the incontrovertible fact that young people were simply experiencing

puberty at an earlier age than previous generations had, it was held, made support for young love both sensible *and* ethical. The "morality of the convent" was anathema, "prohibitions, prudery, secrecy, and punishment" were inappropriate. Romantic happiness was inspiring and life-enhancing. "True love belongs to youth the way youth belongs to socialism," the memorandum announced, and "To be socialist is to help young people toward life happiness and not to create tragedies." At the same time, the memorandum emphasized, the government was definitely not advocating indiscriminate sexual experimentation. Love relationships, it advised, should be "deep" (*tief*) and "clean" (*sauber*).[31]

Yet despite the SED's consistent commitment to female economic independence and professional advancement and despite its apparent acceptance of premarital heterosexual intercourse, the GDR in the 1950s and 1960s also developed a distinctively socialist and in many ways quite oppressive brand of sexual conservatism. What needs to be grasped, as the 1963 memorandum's language already implies, is the double quality of the messages sent about sex in the 1950s and 1960s. There was in numerous texts, in all the sympathy expressed for the inevitability of premarital sex, nonetheless a strongly normative expectation that this sex would be entered into in the context of a relationship heading toward marriage and, ideally, that sexual relations would not start until "psychological maturity" had been attained. Numerous advice writers expended considerable energy emphasizing the importance of delaying the onset of sexual relations until this "psychological maturity" was evident, even as they variously associated this term with the capability for long-term commitment, a willingness to become parents in case contraceptives failed, or the attainment of a certain level of education and hence the capacity for economic independence from one's own parents.

A fundamentally conservative attitude was also powerfully evident in the SED's notions of socialist virtue, the suspicion that private bliss might draw citizens away from socialism rather than toward it, and a generalized skepticism about the pursuit of pleasure as potentially depoliticizing. This, then, was the grounds for hectoring injunctions that lasting happiness was only possible when human beings involved themselves in political struggle. As, for example, divorce court judge Wolfhilde Diehrl put it in 1958 in her especially tendentious attack on pleasure-seeking, "there is no fulfillment of existence in an idyll set apart from human society," and although she conceded that "a healthy marital life is generally not possible without the harmony of bodily union," she nonetheless drew on the authority of examples from her work encountering unhappy couples to argue that excessive sexual activity caused severe psychological and physiological damage. "An unmastered indulgence [*ein unbeherrschtes Geniessen*], a perpetual stimulation of the nerves so that pleasure can

be achieved [*ein ständiges Aufpeitschen der Nerven zur Erreichung der Wollust*] and dissipation [*Ausschweifungen*] in sexual life," Diehrl declared in her frequently reprinted book, "rob people of joy, tension, and strength, drive them to perversities, cause bad moods and satiation. Such people show apathy in their dealings with others, enervation, indifference for one's own tasks and the problems of society." And to prove that lack of social concern also hurt the individual, Diehrl reinforced her point with a frightening tale of a couple that had had so much sex right after they were married that they became physically ill and also turned against each other. Only by redirecting them to their social responsibilities, she asserted, was the marriage rescued.[32]

Normativity made itself aggressively felt in other ways as well, as the recurrent rhetorical emphasis on "clean" relationships implied not only sexual fidelity but also a rejection of homosexuality. East German advice writers throughout the 1950s and 1960s did not only deem homosexuality a perversion, pathology, or deviance. They also often replicated the predominant Nazi analyses of homosexuality as they either asserted that most homosexuality resulted from seduction during the adolescent phase when sexual orientation was not yet fixed on the opposite sex and/or associated homosexuality with mental deficiency and crime.[33] In his book for young teens, for example, the oft-reprinted *Die Geschlechterfrage* (The Question of the Sexes, 1955), Rudolf Neubert pretended to be sensitive to the small minority of "true" homosexuals as he stated that homosexuality was sometimes caused by a "deformation of the inner glands" (*Missbildung der inneren Drüsen*) and went on to say that "these people are to be pitied just as much as those born with any other deformation." But Neubert also observed that even these congenital cases should be treated with hormone preparations, surgery (transplantation of "glandular tissue"), and above all psychotherapy (or, as he indicatively defined it, "pedagogic influencing by the doctor"). In addition, like Nazis before him and like so many in West and East Germany in the 1950s, Neubert insisted that while the number of true homosexuals was small, the number of those seduced in youth was larger. Yet even as he announced that homosexuality occurred primarily among "pleasure-addicted progeny of rich families" or "asocial elements from other social strata," Neubert also assured readers that the incidence of homosexuality was far less frequent in a "young, constructively developing" society like the GDR than it was in (presumably capitalist) societies in a state of "dissolution."[34]

In 1957 the SED quietly instructed police and judges no longer to prosecute or imprison adult men engaged in consensual homosexual activity, and this certainly marked an important contrast to the ongoing coordinated criminalization, replete with police raids and prison sentences, in West Germany.[35] And in 1968 the GDR abolished Paragraph 175, one

year ahead of the FRG's modification of 175. Yet at the same time, a newly introduced law, Paragraph 151, under the guise of "protection of youth," criminalized same-sex activity for *both* men and women if it occurred between someone over the age of eighteen and someone under the age of eighteen. SED officials strenuously sought to avoid the topic of homosexuality altogether, in a double inability to acknowledge that homosexuality existed at all in a socialist society and to acknowledge that there could be within socialism "marginal" groups of any sort that could not be integrated seamlessly into the social whole.[36] Throughout the 1960s, what little was written about homosexuality continued to treat it as a "perversion." This term, for example, was chosen by Gerhard and Danuta Weber in their popular advice book *Du und ich* (You and I, 1965)—the advice book most frequently consulted by East German youth in the mid- to late 1960s—as they advised young women not to marry homosexual men.[37] And because the SED was always apprehensive and anxious to keep from international attention any empirical data that could possibly be used against socialism by its "enemies," it was no surprise that research that was able to demonstrate an especially low incidence of youth homosexual activity in the GDR was published.[38] The official tendencies to denigrate homosexuality and attempt to steer youth away from it and above all to force youth caught in homosexual encounters to undergo coercive psychotherapy remained disturbing features of East German life throughout the 1950s and 1960s and well into the 1970s.[39]

Meanwhile, and all through the 1950s and 1960s, East German sex advice writers also struggled to find imaginative arguments for frightening young people away from "too early" heterosexual activity. In gynecologist Wolfgang Bretschneider's view, for instance, premarital intercourse should preferably be avoided altogether, and in his advice book for parents of teens, he provided a battery of arguments against it. Not only could premarital intercourse disrupt the proper psychological maturation process. Nor did he only feel compelled to point out that, although the GDR had equalized the status of illegitimate with legitimate children, it was nonetheless exceedingly difficult to parent a child alone. He also strategically argued that the contraception that would likely be used to prevent unwed motherhood tended in almost all cases to inhibit sensation, and he warned readers that this inhibition of sensation in turn could cause lasting sexual dysfunction. He further said that long-standing use of contraceptives could cause female infertility. Moreover, he declared, the "abnormal" locations in which most premarital intercourse occurred—park benches, courtyard corners, behind the bushes—and the accompanying anxieties about fear of discovery, were not well suited to the development of female sexual responsiveness in particular (even as elsewhere he downplayed the importance of that responsiveness and declared that female orgasm really was not as important as many women seemed to think it was). At the same time, Bretschneider also adopted, with only the slightest modification, ideas from the Swiss Protestant (and devout Christian) advice writer Theodor Bovet, whose writings were enormously influential in 1950s West Germany. For example, Bretschneider's recommendations to men to help them distract themselves from the desire to indulge in masturbation were lifted directly from Bovet. And Bretschneider's ideas about the deleterious impact of masturbation on the potential for marital happiness were also indistinguishable from those advanced in West German Catholic and Protestant advice writings. Girls were warned that they would have trouble transitioning from clitoral stimulation to vaginal sensation during intercourse, while boys were informed that "masturbation is a pitiful substitute for real love," and that "one remains stuck in oneself."[40] Socialist sexual conservatism, in short, and despite the critical asides about Christian sex hostility in most East German sex advice texts, appeared quite compatible with Christian sexual conservatism.

In part, then, as noted, the conservative tendencies of the 1950s and 1960s had their source in the profoundly conventional views of the German communist leadership and the directives coming from the Soviet Union. The conservative tendencies of the 1950s and 1960s can also in part be ascribed to both the public's and the government's worries about the still fairly desperate state of the economy, and the atmosphere this created in which regime arguments about the need to concentrate energies on the basic daily task of survival could appear plausible.[41] Rationing, for example, was not ended until 1958. The "brain drain" of qualified technocratic and professional elites that continued unabated throughout the 1950s until the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 not only increased regime paranoia but also exacerbated the difficulty of economic reconstruction after the combined devastations of wartime damage and Soviet appropriation of infrastructure, resources, and reparations payments. Basic consumer goods were frequently unavailable, and mismanagement and bad decisions in economic planning at the highest levels continually made production processes and their coordination uneven and unreliable.[42] The housing shortage remained acute well into the 1970s—even as, fascinatingly, a marriage book published in 1972 was still able to blame this on Nazism. (While encouraging its readers to have multichild families, the authors conceded that "there is without a doubt a contradiction between the demands of the society for larger families and the demands of families for larger living spaces." But alas, "after the terrible devastations of the fascist war our social means simply do not as yet permit us to offer every child-rich family anything like a four- or five-bedroom apartment—as much as we are making an effort to do this.")[43] Indeed,

there was hardly a sex advice text written that did not refer to the problems—self-consciousness, inadequate privacy—caused for young couples by the inevitable need to continue living with parents even after they had married (only once a child was born did most couples have a chance at a tiny apartment of their own).

In sum, then, it is no surprise that the 1950s and at least the first half of the 1960s in East Germany have been remembered by contemporaries as the dark ages of an enforced fixation with conventionality and respectability. As one man put it, the atmosphere was "thoroughly sterile, there was very little to delight the senses."[44] There was in that era "no public discourse about many questions related to sexuality," but rather a "self-disciplining morality, unfriendly to pleasure, chaste . . . ascetic or pseudo-ascetic, uptight, interventionist," the leading East German sexologist Kurt Starke recalled in the 1990s.[45] And the prominent West German sexologist Volkmar Sigusch, who lived in East Germany until he fled to the West in 1961, said "the climate in the East was horribly philistine [*furchtbar spiessig*]. You couldn't get more petty bourgeois or philistine than that. Ulbricht? Honecker? They were so narrow and provincial. All the liberal, sophisticated people had gone to the West."[46] Starke and others recollect a climate of intrusive supervision of private lives and public humiliation for any departure from the expected narrow norms. This was especially true for party members. Young people in party-run boarding schools were forbidden from forming into couples ("*keine Pärchenbildung*"), student dormitories were monitored at night to make sure no one was having sex, and also after marriage the SED wanted its functionaries to maintain stable and conformist arrangements.[47] If married functionaries had extramarital affairs or one-night stands, they were expected to confess all, and publicly castigate themselves and recommit to their spouses at a party forum.[48]

Yet at the same time, and all through the 1950s and 1960s, popular practices elicited significant regime concessions. Rates of illegal abortions, unwed teen motherhood (only at age eighteen was it legal to marry in the GDR), youthful divorces (especially among couples who had only married because a child was on the way), and even the strains on "student mothers" struggling to juggle childcare and professional development all caused consternation in SED circles and led the regime to reevaluate its priorities. Empirical studies ordered to assess these issues turned up incontrovertible evidence that each was a genuine social concern.[49] The government responded, among other things, by directing doctors already in 1965 to handle abortion requests more leniently and to consider a woman's psychological well-being in addition to her physical health.[50] And in a law that went into effect in 1966, family, marriage, and sex counseling centers were established throughout East Germany.[51] The experts involved in organizing these centers and coordinating continuing education for staff advanced some of the most progressive perspectives on sexuality in the GDR; they forged strong ties to the International Planned Parenthood Federation and sponsored conferences on sexuality that received respectful international notice. In turn, the issues that brought individuals and couples to these centers in ever-rising numbers—above all, worries about contraception and about sexual dissatisfaction within marriages—again created opportunities for professionals concerned with sexual matters to persuade the government that more expansive research, public education, and therapeutic services were needed.[52]

The second half of the 1960s saw a strong oscillation between conservative and liberal perspectives. On the one hand there were texts that explicitly reacted against what they found to be a too value-neutral tendency in early 1960s empirical studies and tried to find novel arguments for a return to sexual conservatism. (In this vein, for instance, experts warned of the deleterious impact especially on females of a sexual encounter experienced in a relationship not heading toward marriage. They used the idea that the female capacity for orgasm during coitus might be an acquired skill that took some practice as a reason to put off sex until a marriage partner had been found. Or they even declared outright that females under age twenty were simply unlikely to achieve sexual satisfaction so it was best not to try.)[53] On the other hand, in these years an increasing effort to present the German Democratic Republic as a desirable site for young romance was also evident. Sometimes both tendencies were combined, as for example when Heinrich Brückner proudly published his finding that more youth in the GDR than in the FRG felt that premarital abstinence was physically possible, even as he was also pleased to find that GDR youth had more sexological savvy than their Western counterparts.[54] A similar combination could be found in Klaus Trummer's 1966 advice book for young teens. While parents and teachers should never advance "the moral views of the convent," too-early intercourse would disturb an individual's psychological and intellectual development. At the same time, love was definitely better in the East, because "how people live together here is no longer determined by the laws of capitalism ('everyone is only looking out for himself')" and "love is not a commodity."[55]

Indeed, the comparison between East and West became a major motif in East German writings on sex after the mid-1960s—even as West Germans increasingly ignored the East. (This was an interesting departure from the powerful role anticommunist rhetoric had played in the West in the 1950s, as the West had sought to justify its efforts on behalf of female subordination and confinement within the domestic realm through constant rhetorical invocations of the purported horrors of female emancipation in the GDR.) It was almost as though now that the West was no

longer the stuffy place it had once been and had started to resemble a pleasure palace in sexual terms, the East needed to stress the sexual advantages of socialism. What was most noticeable in the efforts to disseminate a new socialist message about sex was an apparently urgent—if nonetheless also ambivalent—SED intention not to be perceived as overly puritanical.

Thus socialist ethicist Bernd Bittighöfer in an essay on youth and love from 1966 registered approval that more and more parents in East Germany were letting go of the remnants of bourgeois "prejudices" and "inhibitions." On the one hand, Bittighöfer declared himself in favor of "the moral cleanness of our socialist way of life" and expressly criticized the titillating material disseminated by West German radio and television. The West was, in his view, purveying "imperialist ideology," propagating "skepticism and anarchism in the realm of morality," encouraging "sexual excess" and "trivialization and brutalization of relations between the sexes," and—as he awkwardly put it—"stimulating adolescents' natural urge for recognition [*Geltung*] onesidedly in the sexual realm." Yet on the other hand, and significantly, premarital chastity was not his recommendation. This idea, he said, was "antiquated." And he went on to contend that "the satisfaction of the sexual drive is . . . one of the most elementary needs of human life-expression," and he invoked August Bebel's point that those who were prevented from satisfying drives that were so "closely connected with their innermost being" would be damaged in their development. "Fulfilling love," Bittighöfer concluded, "includes sexual union" and "is an essential element in personality development and fulfilled existence."[56]

A similar kind of uncertainty marked the government's approach to sex in literature. When the Central Committee of the SED met in 1965, for instance, it considered the apparent problem that East German writers increasingly included sex scenes that were not in tune with the regime's notions of socialist morality. Rather than strictly censoring narrative representations of sexual acts and encounters, the SED described itself as opposed to "prudery and prettification" (*Prüderie und Beschönigungstendenzen*). Once again, however, the message was mixed: such scenes should only be allowed if they occurred in a proper partnership or, if not, the narrative should in some way censure the characters' actions.[57]

In the face of the government's apparent disorientation through the 1960s and into the 1970s, progressive professionals concerned with sexuality, whether physicians or pedagogues, did their utmost to use the evidence of the populace's desires and difficulties as a wedge to influence the SED and to redirect national debate on sexual matters. Collectively, through their support for each other and through their publications, these professionals—notable among them Lykke Aresin, Peter G. Hesse, Karl-

Heinz Mehlan, and Siegfried Schnabl—managed to make open discussion of sexual matters possible. Hesse was an early and eloquent advocate of more broad-based public education about contraception, rejecting worries about a declining birthrate and insisting on the "higher" morality of sex free from fear; he subsequently provided a major service by organizing and coediting a massive three-volume encyclopedia of sexological knowledge, the first of its kind in the GDR.[58] Mehlan was singularly important in the liberalization of abortion law.[59] And Aresin was enormously influential in making the birth control pill widely acceptable and available in the GDR. She and Schnabl were also pioneers in the treatment of sexual dysfunctions and marital disharmony; following the work of such American sexologists as William Masters and Virginia Johnson, they created individual and couple therapy in the GDR. (Strikingly, it must be noted that rather than seeing these centers as potentially invasive institutions, couples flocked to them.)[60] Schnabl also conducted the theretofore largest empirical study on sexual dysfunction and sexual practices within marriage, based on interviews with and anonymous questionnaires answered by thirty-five hundred men and women. Aresin's and Schnabl's work was crucial in making issues of sexual conflict within marriages an acceptable subject for public discussion. Schnabl's sex advice book of 1969, *Mann und Frau intim* (Man and Woman Intimately), based on his research findings, became a runaway best seller. His reassuring, no-nonsense recommendations for facilitating female orgasmic response were the centerpiece of his broader campaign to affirm the joys and the importance of heterosexual sex apart from its potential reproductive consequences.[61] By the GDR's end in 1989, this book (together with a guide on gardening) had the highest sales of any book in the nation's history.

Above all, however, GDR citizens plainly carved out their own freedoms. Nude bathing, for example (known as FKK, for *Freikörperkultur*), became an important part of GDR culture. Starting in the middle of the 1960s nude bathing became acceptable for growing numbers of GDR citizens and by the 1970s full nudity was clearly the norm at GDR beaches, lakeside or oceanside. Early attempts by municipal authorities to prevent this practice were simply overridden by the adamant masses, who stripped and would not move. Nakedness for the whole family also within the home became increasingly standard practice as well, especially for that generation that had grown up together with the GDR; for their children, nudism simply became the cultural common sense. As subsequent studies showed, homes in which parent and child nakedness were routine tended also to be those in which parents advocated progressive attitudes about sex and where there was generally warm, trusting, and open parent-child communication; this second GDR generation was raised with far more liberal and tolerant perspectives toward all aspects of sexuality.

In an interview published in 1995, the Leipzig sexologist Kurt Starke evocatively summarized the gradual transformation of the GDR's sexual culture in this way:

> At the latest in the 1970s the citizens in the GDR started to defy all kinds of possible constrictions with respect to their partner- and sexual behavior. They became FKK fans. They birthed illegitimate children in droves. They handed in divorce papers when love had faded. They casually got involved with a co-worker if they felt like it. At some point kissing couples lay on the grass in Leipzig's Clara-Zetkin-Park or female students sunbathed naked, and no police intervened. The few sex enlightenment books that appeared were not disdained but rather passed from hand to hand and by no means secretly. Often they provided the occasion for conversations between parents and their adolescent children. All of this came together with the improvement of living conditions, for example, the creation of more housing; after all, one needs a place for living and loving. . . . This process was also combined with a more positive valuation of sexuality. An affirmative attitude toward sexuality developed, very connected with family and with love. So: somehow a romantic ideal.[62]

Still, it would take another decade before the gains claimed by many in the GDR in the course of the 1970s became fully visible to all. Starke's own research, conducted under the auspices of the Center for Youth Research in Leipzig together with the center's director, Walter Friedrich, and in creative circumvention of the regime's monitoring efforts, would play no small part in helping GDR citizens see for themselves their own achievements. And by the early 1980s, when Starke published *Junge Partner* (Young Partners, 1980) and, together with Friedrich, published *Liebe und Ehe bis 30* (Love and Marriage until Thirty, 1984), it became apparent that East German women in particular had not only been special objects of their government's solicitude but had successfully reconfigured their private relationships as well.

Female Fantasies

Just as there had been no momentous or spectacular sexual revolution in East Germany, so too there would be no large-scale and dramatic feminist protest movement or development of a women-centered counterculture. While especially in the course of the 1980s, a number of women's organizations were founded in the GDR, their self-definition was rarely feminist. To a great extent, feminism in East Germany was simply perceived by East German women as a redundancy.

The hesitancy about feminism felt by East German women was due in part to the state-sponsored advantages East Germany offered them. So

many of the desiderata West German feminists had to fight for in the 1970s—abortion rights, childcare facilities, economic independence, and professional respect—were things East German women by that point could largely take for granted. First-trimester abortions upon demand were legalized in 1972, an achievement never matched in the West. While West German women were continually encouraged to feel guilt if they placed their young children in daycare, and options to do so remained few and far between in any event, and while West German women constantly experienced motherhood and careers as conflicting, East German women increasingly tended to consider this combination fully manageable.

Another major impetus for the West German feminist movement was the pervasiveness of pornography and, more generally, the objectification of women's bodies in advertising and all media. Although available as contraband, pornography was illegal in the East; its distribution was severely limited. Whereas in the West, consumer capitalism functioned to a large degree via the (always distorted) representation of female sexuality, East German state socialism was not driven by this imperative. In East Germany, the populace did walk around naked, but nothing was being sold by this. Occasionally, products made in the GDR were advertised with a hint of sexual innuendo, and one popular magazine (*Das Magazin*) published a nude female centerfold every month, but these photographs were remarkably tame compared with representations in the West and generally lacked the lascivious look and the nonaverage bombshell bodies so prevalent in Western pornography. Meanwhile, the heterosexual male anxieties that both funded and were fostered by the pornography typically available in the West were not provoked in the same way in the East.

Yet another significant difference from the West was East Germany's state-sponsored insistence that men should respect women who were their superiors at work and that men should assist their female partners with household and childcare responsibilities. In both cases, and while the realization of these aims certainly remained imperfect, the standard set by the state had important consequences. East German women found themselves routinely in positions of authority and responsibility in work and public life. As the East German journal *Visite* (produced for Western visitors' consumption) exulted already in 1971, one-third of all judges in the GDR were female, "an impressive number that no capitalist country in the world can even approach." Every fourth school was run by a female principal. More than one thousand women were mayors—13 percent of all East German mayors (compared with less than one percent in West Germany). Hundreds of thousands of women held offices in unions; tens of thousands were members of production committees; thirteen hundred women were directors of industrial enterprises. And importantly, "sociological research shows that the majority of the workers take a female

as their superior just as seriously as they would a man." The essay also emphasized that only men's help with the household and childrearing made this socialist female emancipation possible. And, of course, *Visite* did not fail to conclude sonorously that these amazing female achievements were no miracle but rather due to "the socialist relations of production that set free the creative forces of all people. Where the exploitation of the human being has been overcome, where the driving force of the society is no longer the striving after profit but rather the coincidence of individual and social interests, there is no ground in which egoism, self-glorification and oppression of woman could grow."[63] But for all the unwarranted self-congratulation, there was nevertheless a significant enough element of truth to these claims. For East Germany did develop its own distinctive standards of masculinity and femininity. The ideals propounded by the leadership were more than just empty phrases; they were also practically approximated in the daily interplay between social conditions and individual negotiations.

As the *Visite* item already makes clear, however, the SED's audience was always also the GDR's own citizenry, whom it continually strove to persuade of socialism's inherent advantages over capitalist culture. Discussions of gender relations became a major site for the SED both to address the East German female population's concerns and simultaneously to route East German women's loyalties back to socialism. Didactic instructions to the citizenry about what gender equality concretely meant were offered in a plethora of venues and a variety of genres. A classic technique was the coordinated representation of popular sentiment via the publication of readers' letters in widely read magazines. So, for example, the women's magazine *Für Dich* in 1974 printed a letter from a woman whose husband had stayed home with their ill child (so that the woman would not have to miss her work) and who was distressed that her husband's colleagues and supervisors had castigated him for this dereliction of duty to his own job. The ensuing outpouring of readers' letters, the vast majority of which supported this couple's handling of the matter and expressed outrage that the husband's co-workers harbored such "antiquated" sexism (How dare they accuse this woman of being "a bad mother"? How dare they act like men's careers were more important than women's?), showed how strongly ordinary citizens had internalized East Germany's constitutional guarantee of gender equality. But, of course, this "spontaneous" reaction was also being managed, and the framing of the letters with editorial comment shows how concerned the magazine (and by extension the government) was precisely about the tenacity of the double standard it so loudly claimed was steadily disappearing. And yet once again, despite the obvious choreography, the changing standards were clearly evident as well. As one letter writer recommended, the only solution to the lingering resistances to gender equality was to raise the next generation of boys "so that they will in their later marriage see equal rights as something self-evident and not feel like they are being heroes if they help out in the household."[64]

Just as important a strategy was the effort to connect fantasies of romantic fulfillment with engagement on behalf of socialism by rewriting the conventional love plot to incorporate notions of gender egalitarianism and a new ideal of socialist manhood. Along these lines, for example, the weekly magazine *NBI* in 1971 carried a feature story about a young married couple that perfectly expressed the efforts of the SED not only pedagogically to instruct citizens on properly socialist gender relations but also, and above all, to suture individuals' aspirations for happiness in love to their love for socialism (fig. 5.1). Under the unambiguous title, "Two Declarations of Love" (*Zwei Liebeserklärungen*), the magazine recounted the courtship of pretty seventeen-year-old bookkeeper Carola and twenty-one-year-old village high school teacher Helmut Nachtigall. Situating the story politically, *NBI* informed readers that Helmut's father, a farmer, had been "the red in the village" (i.e., a long-standing leftist) and hence "after 1945" (i.e., the end of the Third Reich) had been elected by his peers to be the village mayor. *NBI* also noted that all four parents had enthusiastically supported the young couple's romance and that a year after the marriage the couple's daughter Ines was born. But the main drama of the tale was the support that Helmut, the parents and in-laws, the villagers, and both his and her co-workers gave Carola in her determined battle for self-improvement (she wanted to become a kindergarten teacher).[65]

Socialism, the *NBI* story emphasized, made such opportunity for self-betterment available to all women as well as men. Also Carola's mother had gotten further education and said, "We could never have had it so good in the old system." And socialism was what made possible the solidarity that facilitated individual achievement; the other farmhands in Carola's mother's brigade did her farmwork on top of their own so that she could study. All the more devastating, then, that Carola brought home a "D" as her first grade in her class on Marxism-Leninism; how could she face her courageous father-in-law or her mother's self-sacrificial comrades? But with the constant support of Helmut and everyone else, Carola worked her way from a "D" to an "A." "The husband and history teacher [Helmut] did not only helpfully reach for the dish-drying towel and the shopping bag, he also asked his colleague Thieme, the specialist for state-citizenship studies and history, to come home with him whenever he thought he might not be able to explain a particular problem comprehensibly enough for his wife." Not only did Carola start learning more methodically, but the material also started to make real sense to her. "She recognizes, as she gets deeper into it, how important it is for the socialist society to develop wise, happy, hardworking people."[66]

Figure 5.1. "Two Declarations of Love," *NBI*, April 1971, p. 12. (Reprinted by permission of the Berliner Verlag)

Finally, the joys of individual achievement and of experienced community lead Carola and Helmut to decide they want to become SED party members. Nine years after they went to the town hall to get married, they went back in the same building to make another life-long commitment: "I have made another promise for life . . . a promise for thousands and more than thousands, for whom I will be comrade and trusted person . . . for a life that is ever more worth living." Soon after, Carola became a kindergarten principal and Helmut loved her even more: "my wife, comrade, indefatigable fellow battler . . . the mother of our vivacious, diligent daughter." The essay even managed the delicate issue of the perpetual

housing shortage, recounting Carola's conversion from someone who angrily (and antisocialistically) did not comprehend why she was not being granted a larger apartment into someone thrilled—after she had become a party member—to be moving into a beautiful apartment in the same building as the kindergarten. Finally, the essay also incorporated the SED's endless refrain that things were perpetually in the process of getting better. As the essay concluded, "she [Carola] always has ideas for the future. For the future of the children in our city, our state. That is also a kind of declaration of love. To the society, in which we live."[67] Precisely the soap-operatic intricacy of the details was meant to facilitate readers' emotional involvement and identification, from the dream of nonconflictual cross-generational and neighborly relations to that of the ideal child. But the biggest appeal was "love." Readers might well have been disdainful of the SED's threadbare didacticism. But it would have been hard for many heterosexual females to remain unmoved by this vision of a smart and successful husband who loved a woman even more when she pursued her own career needs and goals—*and* who also shopped for dinner and cleaned up afterward.

This kind of strategic fantasy management was evident in full force a year later in *Für Dich*'s special issue on "Young Love." While the *NBI* story had emphasized romantic fulfillment while leaving the sexual aspects unspoken (although implied in the playfully affectionate photo portrait), *Für Dich* got right to the point. This special issue marked the moment when the SED officially endorsed a transformation in GDR youth culture that had been long since underway (figs. 5.2, 5.3). Premarital heterosexual activity, even if it was not heading toward marriage, was now deemed understandable and acceptable, as early as age sixteen. The issue included such items as responses to reader queries about relationship issues, treacly love poetry of the sort long favored by the East German populace and regime alike, a questionnaire readers could answer to figure out "who fits with each other," and an article praising sex education in East German (in contrast to West German) schools (among other things a West German pedagogue was quoted to the effect that "in the end our children know everything about male testicles and female ovaries. But they know nothing, really nothing at all, about love").[68] The issue included as well an article on the trials and tribulations of young marriages and their vulnerability to conflict and divorce, in which the expert commentator argued perceptively that precisely the fact that East German marriages were no longer a site for female economic dependence was what made these marriages so fragile. The high divorce rate among young East German marriages was thus recast as positive, because under socialism the maintenance of a marriage really had no other justification besides love.[69]

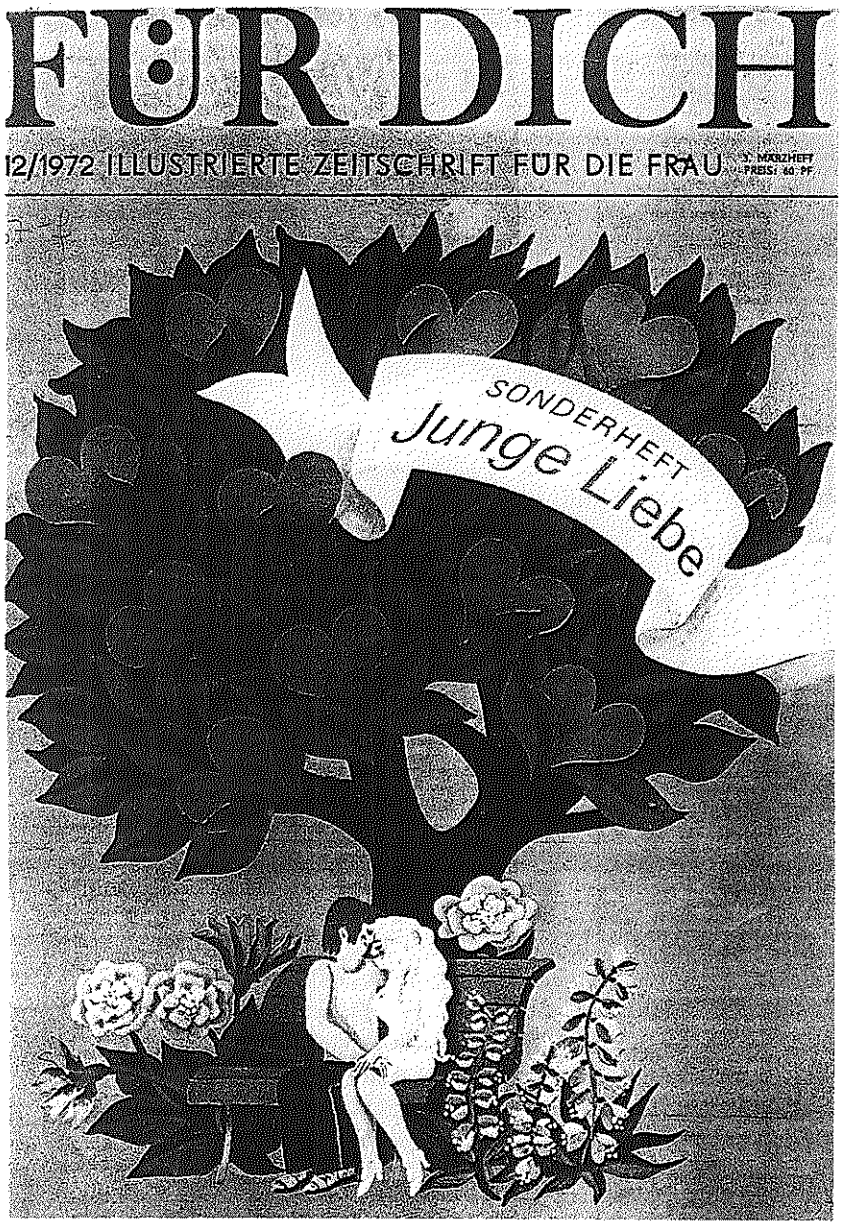

Figure 5.2. *Für Dich*, December 1972, cover page. Special issue on "Young Love." (Reprinted by permission of the Berliner Verlag)

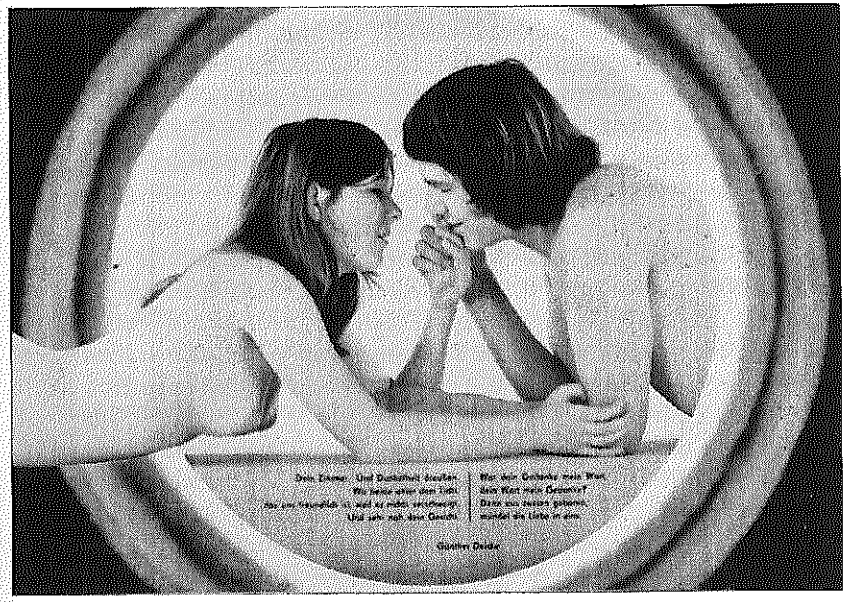

Figure 5.3. *Für Dich*, December 1972, pp. 24–25. The free verse caption (very typical also of love poetry in other popular East German magazines like *Das Magazin*) reads: "Your room. And darkness outside. We two under the light, that is friendly to us, because it hides nothing. And very close your face. Was your thought my word, your word my thought? For born of two, love makes of us one." (Reprinted by permission of the Berliner Verlag)

Analyzing the "fundamental" differences in capitalism's and socialism's approach to sex, the key matter was female emancipation. The "class enemy" with its "sex wave," *Für Dich* declared, was intent on using the "sex bomb" as a "multipurpose weapon above all against equal rights." Women in the West were degraded to the status of "lust object for the man"; this manipulation of public opinion was also designed to distract people and displace attention away from "napalm and hunger, exploitation and oppression." Socialism, by contrast, was about "life-joy" in all its dimensions, and socialism recognized that "the capacity for sensual pleasure . . . erotic cheer and blissful twosomeness do not develop by themselves but are always connected with everything that excites and stimulates us in the world that we are changing, and which in the first place makes it possible for love to grow in all its beauty."[70] Socialism, in short, was not just about better love; it was about better sex.

Indeed, meticulous and elaborate attention to intensifying female pleasure became the most significant innovation in East German sexological

writing in the 1970s and early 1980s. Nobody was more important in changing the level of public discussion on this matter than Siegfried Schnabl, not only through his accessible *Mann und Frau intim*, but also his companion guide for professionals, *Intimverhalten, Sexualstörungen, Persönlichkeit* (Intimate Behavior, Sexual Dysfunctions, Character, 1972) and through numerous articles in professional and popular journals. A movie version of his ideas was also made, sponsored by the Museum for Hygiene in Dresden, and shown in schools and at union gatherings. (In the key scene, a young couple is putting up wallpaper in their apartment and the husband asks the wife whether she has orgasms during sex with him. "An orgasm?" she says soberly, "rarely." The husband is crestfallen: "And all those years you never said anything?" The movie goes on to encourage couples to try different positions and above all to communicate about their desires.)[71]

Strikingly, Schnabl invoked the lessons of mid-twentieth-century German history to buttress his arguments for female sexual pleasure. For the first time, an East German sex advice writer broke with the assumption that the only kind of normal sex was penis-in-vagina penetration and that if contraceptives were used this would only be to space births and not to prevent conception permanently. Schnabl instead, and openly, rose to the defense of the very practices that so many experts had deemed problematic: not only "marital sex with contraception" and "nonmarital sex" but also, and explicitly, "heterosexual stimulation without intercourse . . . homosexual contacts, masturbation, etc." The inherited inhibitions of two thousand years of Christian indoctrination around these matters had caused so much damage, Schnabl said, it "cannot even be surveyed." And this is where German history proved so instructive; crucially, to lend extra moral force to his argument, and sounding very much like New Leftists and liberals in West Germany in the 1960s and early 1970s, Schnabl linked Christianity and Nazism. For Schnabl, Christianity and Nazism both advanced what he called a "stupid procreation-ideology" (*bornierte Zeugungsideologie*), based on a whole set of scientifically insupportable assumptions. Furthermore:

> German fascism found the ideology of fertility advanced by the religious communities quite useful, and it misused it for its predatory nationalism. The value of a woman was primarily measured by how many hereditarily healthy children she gave to "*Volk* and *Führer*." She became a reproductive machine, the family was degraded to a breeding institute. In order to subdue the other nations within the framework of the "New Order in Europe," the "master race" needed soldiers and people who would settle in the place of the decimated and partially exterminated peoples. This is why for example research and publications about birth control were forbidden under the threat of punishment, and voluntary abortion was persecuted with inhuman harshness.

Thus, and for the first time since 1946, an East German author deliberately rewrote the early SED's analysis of the possible lessons of Nazism for postwar sexual politics. Rather than insisting that socialism too required women to reproduce for it and that this in no way was a continuation of Nazi attitudes, Schnabl strategically called attention to the mutual enmeshment of Nazi racism and a set of notions about heterosexual sex and challenged ideas inherited from the Nazi era about the supposedly mutually beneficial relationships between female orgasm and female fertility. As Schnabl put it, the main purpose of sex was "pleasure and delight," and he sought to make nonreproductive sex under socialism and even "noncoital varieties of satisfaction" morally acceptable and more widely practiced.[72] And in this aim, he proved enormously influential. "It was probably to Schnabl's credit that the orgasm rates for women in East Germany went up the way they did," one East German woman remembered a decade after the fall of the Wall.[73]

The popular success of Schnabl's books led to widespread imitation as the East German sex advice market boomed. Sexually speaking, things were never quite the same for East Germans after Schnabl. The dramatic shift in tone and content was captured perfectly, for example, in Wolfgang Polte's *Unsere Ehe* (Our Marriage), whose eighth edition, published in 1980, incorporated detailed excurses on sexual practices written by Schnabl and by the physician Karl Hecht and his wife Tamara Hecht, an officer in the Ministry of Health.

Here again, the emphasis was on intensifying and proliferating female orgasms. Schnabl recommended manual stimulation of the clitoris and more emotional involvement on men's part as well as finding coital positions that would facilitate clitoral stimulation. The Hechts seconded these opinions but took the campaign for more and better female orgasms even further. Readers were informed rather grandiosely (and on unclear evidence) that under turn-of-the-century capitalism, women may have had ten or more children, "but many, maybe most of them, did not even once experience . . . an orgasm." But the Hechts also energetically dispelled a number of durable myths, among them the notion that women's arousal curves were slower than men's and the idea that women's libido was less pronounced than men's. On the contrary, they asserted, men's and women's desires were quite similar; differences were *individual*, not gender-related. They also rejected the decades-old obsession with simultaneous orgasms and assured readers that sequential ones could be great too (especially if the woman had hers first). Above all, they effused about women's capacity for multiple orgasms, and enthusiastically described "male partners with a strong capacity for self-control who succeed in having their wife achieve a rapid series of orgasms before they themselves ejaculate." Almost all female dysfunction, they asserted, had its source in male "clumsiness or lack of erotic ability." And any disinterest wives evinced in sex,

they slyly suggested, might be the result of exhaustion due to having to manage household chores alone in addition to their career and political engagement: "A man who does not help his professionally active wife either in the household or in childrearing need not be surprised if his wife displays disappearing levels of desire. A man would be just as disinterested if he was burdened in the same way."

Karl Hecht also raised directly—only to dismiss it—the inevitable concern that all this focus on the woman's pleasure might leave the man feeling stressed and unattended to. Does the man "gain nothing?" Hecht asked rhetorically. "Is he denying himself love-pleasure? On the contrary. It is not only that the man for a longer time himself moves continually at the border of a high blissful feeling; he also experiences with . . . joyful excitement the love gestures of his partner. Indeed, he experiences the togetherness in a different way, as a success experience, and his whole striving in the love act is concentrated solely on the beloved partner." With vintage SED-linguistic aplomb, moreover, and just in case any ordinary or official reader was on the verge of taking offense at the explicitness of his directives, Hecht abruptly segued into an extended discussion of Karl Marx's powerful affection for his wife Jenny, before once again returning to topic and providing specific tips for caressing the labia and rubbing saliva on nipples.[74]

This emphasis on heterosexual men improving their performance in bed was strongly assimilated in East Germany.[75] When Starke and Friedrich in 1984 published *Liebe und Sexualität bis 30*, based on extensive empirical research among East German youth, they not only found that young GDR women had their first orgasm on average at the age of sixteen or seventeen—and that already 70 percent of sixteen-year-olds had orgasmic experience—but also that two-thirds of all the young women surveyed had an orgasm "almost always" during sex, with another 18 percent declaring that they had one "often." In fact, the majority of informants—female and male alike—were very satisfied with their sex lives in general (and interestingly the authors found no differences in sexual experience or happiness between the Christian minority and the atheist majority). Moreover, the authors resolutely concluded that East German social conditions—"the sense of social security, equal educational and professional responsibilities, equal rights and possibilities for participating in and determining the life of society"—were preeminently responsible for the high rates of female pleasure. "The young women of today are in general more active and more discriminating, less inhibited and reticent, expecting to have their personality and wishes honored, striving much more self-confidently for higher sexual satisfaction," and "they are accustomed to demanding happiness in love . . . and to tasting it fully." These young women started having sex earlier, switched their partners more frequently, and enjoyed themselves more. And Starke and Friedrich were also convinced that whatever male ambivalence was still being expressed among the somewhat older men about this new state of affairs was just a passing phase of adjustment, since they found that such ambivalence had already disappeared almost entirely within the younger generation. Precisely those young men and women who had grown up in supportive families and in which the parents had been loving toward each other were the ones who were most secure in themselves and the most creative and experimental in their own love lives.[76] Nor were these conclusions contradicted by subsequent research. On the contrary, when the first comparative East-West German study of female students' sexual experiences was conducted in 1988, the results showed (to the Western scholar's amazement) that East German heterosexual women liked sex more (and experienced orgasms more frequently) than their West German counterparts.[77]

The East German experts' endless reiterations of the idea that socialism produced especially charmed conditions for mutually satisfying sex, in short, was not just a figment of their own fantasy lives. While Starke and Friedrich had also considered the introduction of the birth control pill as a key factor that made all this newfound female pleasure possible, the comparison with West Germany suggests that their argument about gender equality under socialism was far from insignificant. In the 1970s and 1980s, the West German feminist movement loudly proclaimed Western women's fury at heterosexual coital practices that left them cold and they made men's boorish and selfish behavior in bed a major public issue. During that same era, East German women made no such accusations; instead, they simply could (and did) break up with unsatisfactory men specifically because they possessed economic independence and because theirs was a social environment that treated singlehood, including single motherhood, as acceptable and feasible—and even a social norm. (By the end of the GDR, one in three children was born out of wedlock; in the FRG it was one in ten.)[78] Once East and West German women encountered each other more frequently after the collapse of the GDR, East German women could only roll their eyes and express astonishment at many West German heterosexual women's apparent lack of satisfaction with the men in their lives and at the fuss that Western feminists continued to make about sexual practices. "Those who enjoy it don't need to talk about it in public," one East German woman in her fifties said in exasperation in the 1990s, summarizing her feelings about her first experiences with West German feminists.[79] And also in the later 1990s a forty-something formerly East German woman proudly—almost patronizingly—announced: "East-women have more fun, everybody knows that [*Ost-Frauen haben mehr Spass, das weiss jeder*]. Orgasm rates were higher in

the East, all the studies show that." And then (revealing a misconception some easterners still had about the West), she added: "After all, it was a proletarian society. None of this bourgeois concern with chastity until the wedding night."[80]

Ostalgie

The collapse of the Wall in 1989 and the reunification of Germany under Western auspices in 1990 brought immediate change to the sexual culture of the East. The day after the Wall came down, entrepreneur Beate Uhse had her staff ship truckloads of sex toys and pornography into the five East German states; supply could not keep up with demand. Pornography shops proliferated, and easterners queued up for hours for a chance both finally to look and to purchase. "We felt like we'd been left out," one fortyish male East German librarian commented with both pathos and irony, and numerous comments made by easterners to West German reporters suggest much the same.[81] The long lines in front of pornography shops quickly became part of the standard self-congratulatory western narrative of communism's collapse, and western journalists gleefully seized upon each instance an East German articulated regret over a sex-commodity-deprived existence under socialism. Yet what got drowned out in these facile assumptions of Western superiority were more reflective East German voices that sought to articulate what had been valuable about East German sexual culture—as that culture itself began rapidly to dissolve.

There were indisputably gains made. It was not at all insignificant, for instance, that the collapse of East Germany helped liberalize major aspects of reunified Germany's sexual culture. While East German women's distress over the possible elimination of abortion rights was widely discussed in the media, some western feminists remained optimistic that the process of reunification might provide an opportunity for the West to adopt the more progressive East German arrangement. In large part, they were proven accurate. What resulted was a compromise; now all German women were granted first-trimester approval (standard in the East since 1972) if they agreed to preabortion counseling (as had been required in the West). Notably the process of reunification also provided the occasion for a new advance for gay rights, as—continuing a further legal liberalization implemented in the GDR in 1988—Paragraph 175 was finally abolished in all its dimensions in reunified Germany in 1994.

Yet for the most part, the former East German sexual culture found itself the object of condescending bemusement and ruthless ridicule as a cacophony of competing theories was promoted. The East German psychotherapist Hans-Joachim Maaz, for example, made a big name for himself with his book, *Der Gefühlsstau: Ein Psychogramm der DDR* (Emotional Congestion: A Psychological Diagnosis of the GDR, 1990), which caricatured his former fellow citizens as emotionally repressed and sexually deprived. "The GDR was a land with widespread sexual frustration," Maaz said, seeing this deficit of eastern life as a crucial symptom of a broader paranoia and psychic deformation induced by living under tightly controlled conditions and constant surveillance.[82] Contradictorily, others proposed that because there had not been much else to do in the East, and daily life had been so gray and monotonous, sex had emerged as a favorite pastime. Now, East Germans would have to learn to pull themselves together and acquire the work ethic necessary for success under capitalism. Rejecting as communist propaganda the notion that eastern women's reportedly higher orgasm rates might have their source in higher levels of female economic independence, for instance, the conservative tabloid *Bild* provided this countervailing analysis in May 1990: "Everywhere that human beings are offered nothing or very little—aside from much work and little pay—everywhere where there are few discos, restaurants, amusement parks, in other words few opportunities for entertainment—in all those places sex is practiced more frequently and more intensively."[83] Meanwhile, the East German habit of naked display at the beach was variously interpreted as quaint and odd, a trifle disturbing, or as (misplaced) compensation for easterners' lack of political independence. "Wasn't this FKK cult a kind of expression of your will to freedom?" a female reporter from Hamburg asked her younger East German colleagues, a question interpreted by the *Ossis* as yet one more exemplar of western snobbery and cluelessness.[84]

Above all, however, there was among easterners a profound sense of loss. The flood of Western pornography effectively demolished the eastern culture of nakedness. As West Germans rushed to stake out the beaches on the formerly East German shores of the Baltic Sea as they sought out cheap and beautiful vacation spots, they proceeded to take offense at the widespread nudity and insisted their children be spared the sight of guilelessly self-displaying *Ossis*. In effect, the West Germans achieved what the GDR police had failed to do decades earlier. Many East German women no longer felt safe going naked now that they were viewed with western men's "pornographically schooled gaze" (*pornographisch geschulter Blick*).[85] And they did begin to cover themselves. Indicatively, too, after they had sated their initial curiosity, many *Ossis* turned away in disappointment at the poor quality and (what they saw as) lack of genuine eroticism in the western porn products. (Already by 1995, two-thirds of the porn video shops that had opened in the formerly East German states shut their doors.)

Without a doubt, most devastating for the former East was a loss of economic security and the new idea that human worth would now be measured primarily by money. East German citizens felt enormous anxieties about the loss of jobs and social security, rising rents, and uncertain futures. Once it became clear that Germany would be reunified under western auspices (rather than developing some mutually worked out "third path") and once the full consequences of such westernization became apparent (it would not just mean easterners finally acquiring western goods and a strong currency and political freedoms, but a huge rise in unemployment and social instability), easterners scrambled to acquire new job skills and a whole new style of comporting themselves. These developments also had incalculable consequences on sexual relations. Many long-term East German relationships went into crisis; couples first clung together despite conflicts and then crashed as they struggled with varying degrees of success to reinvent themselves under new conditions.[86]

Little wonder, then, that the disappearing sexual ethos of the GDR quickly became an especially important site for *Ostalgie*—a popular coinage that joined together *Ost* (East) and *Nostalgie* (nostalgia). "In the East the clocks ran more slowly," the East German journalist Katrin Rohnstock remembered with retrospective longing in 1995. In the West, in her view, lust for capital had replaced desire for another person. With reference to capitalism's competitive climate, she said: "Eroticism feels with its fingertips, elbows destroy that. The pressure to achieve makes human beings sick and has a negative impact on sexuality."[87] Or as another formerly East German woman phrased it, as she explained that GDR sexuality was in some respects more emancipated than that of the West: "Money played no role. In the East, sex was not for sale."[88] The East German cultural historian Dietrich Mühlberg too emphasized in 1995 that "the cost-benefit analysis" so constantly employed in human interactions in the West "was largely absent" in the East and that this inevitably affected sexual relations and partnerships as well.[89] And the Magdeburg-based sexologist Carmen Beilfuss spoke of "the difficult path of love in the market economy."[90] Throughout the 1990s, and over and over, easterners (gay and straight alike) articulated the conviction that sex in the East had been more genuine and loving, more sensual and more gratifying—and less grounded in self-involvement—than West German sex.[91]

Whether these memories were fully accurate or not, there is no question that the GDR's sexual culture was remarkable, for it differed not only from capitalist West Germany but also from the rest of socialist Eastern Europe. While men in other Eastern European cultures were notorious for their "socialist machismo" (their patriarchalism and misogyny existing in counterpoint to gender-egalitarian Soviet bloc rhetoric), East German men's domesticity and self-confident comfort with strong women were both legendary.[92] Prostitution was relatively rare in the GDR, even while it was commonplace in Warsaw and Budapest. Homosexual men were thrown into prison in the Soviet Union and Romania up until the demise of communism; this had not occurred in the GDR since 1957. The Polish church was thoroughly homophobic; in the GDR, gays and lesbians—although certainly closely watched by the Stasi—were able to organize in the 1980s under church auspices.[93] In its rejection of prostitution and pornography, the GDR appeared prudish by Western standards. Yet precisely the absence of these two means of marketing sex allowed other liberties to flourish. The moralism and asceticism the SED tried to enforce was undermined by the very processes of secularization that the SED also fostered. In the end, there was something peculiarly *German* about East Germany, even if former East Germans did not necessarily recognize that. The easy relationships to nakedness and sexual matters had their source not least in a distinctive tradition going back to Weimar and even before.

Without a doubt, the West German sexual revolution had been perceived by the SED as a threat that needed to be countered. But the sexual liberalization in East Germany that happened from the mid-1960s on, and with growing force through the 1970s and 1980s, was *not* just an imitation of the West but took its own peculiar form not least because of a precursor liberalization that had already occurred in the otherwise so gloomy 1950s and early 1960s. While in West Germany the realm of sexuality repeatedly became the site for attempts to master the past of Nazism and the Holocaust, in East Germany the emphasis was always on what was yet to come—on the constant declaration that "the future belongs to socialism," a wishful prescription pretending to be a description.[94] Only once the GDR itself was a thing of the past did sexuality and memory in the GDR become firmly conjoined. All through the history of the GDR, there was in the SED the never-ending hope that the populace's affections might yet be won, if only the right formula of select consumer goods and managed freedoms were found. Love and sexuality became absolutely crucial elements in this struggle to win popular approval. The majority of the populace, however, never was taken in by the endlessly announced romance of socialism itself. Instead, it was the romance for which the GDR had indeed created important preconditions but which ultimately the people had simply claimed for themselves that became the eventual site for *Ostalgie*.