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Burning Sexual Subjects:
Books, Homophobia and the Nazi Destruction of the Institute of Sexual
Sciences in Berlin

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The Nazi book burnings are one of the defining moments both in the modern history of the book and twentieth-century history more broadly. Historians of Nazism have paid considerable attention to their role in the escalation of Nazi terror and its Anglo-American reception.¹ Other critiques of violence and hatred have similarly turned to the events of 1933 to ask what it is, to borrow the words of Rebecca Knuth, ‘about texts and libraries that puts them in the line of fire during social conflict?’² Knuth answers her own question by pointing to the crucial role of books in collective identity formation and its sustenance. ‘As the voice and memory of the targeted group’, she argues, ‘books and libraries are central to culture and identity [and] vital in sustaining a group’s uniqueness’.³ For Knuth and many other critics, books are the material correlative of an established cultural identity, and book burnings constitute the attempt to eradicate it. This line of investigation, which has productively examined the symbolism of burning books – including the fact that it has a limited function as an act of censorship – tends to focus on the losses incurred in the act of destruction. I want to turn attention to the remains: the documents and objects

which survived the Nazi attack on books in the raid on Magnus Hirschfeld's (1868-1935) Institute of Sexual Sciences in Berlin.

The Institute's library was the first point of attack in the series of events that have become known as the Nazi book burnings. As a centre of medico-scientific sexological research, it contributed to the production of a modern understanding of sexuality, while the Institute's public activities and political campaigning for the decriminalization of homosexuality shaped an usually affirmative space for queer culture in Berlin. There is some critical consensus that the Institute's association, via its founder, with both homosexuality and Jewishness, explains why it was the first place to be raided in the Nazi attack against books.⁴ Yet while historians of sexuality have rightly pointed out that the upsurge of violence against books was propelled by homophobia as well as antisemitism,⁵ many broader histories of the book burnings tend to dismiss the importance of homophobia as an analytical category.⁶ By examining the remnants that remained undestroyed in the events of May 1933, this chapter turns fresh attention to the homophobic underpinnings of the Nazi attack against Hirschfeld's Institute and its reception. It shows how the materiality of the books and papers under attack influenced how they were handled, and considers why and how some objects – notably a collection of questionnaires and a bronze statue – survived the events. The chapter argues that while an examination of the symbolism of the book burnings tells us something about the psychic structures that made these hateful acts appear necessary for the Nazi claim on power, the remnants that survived these events reveal how homophobia shaped the book burnings and their reception.

Books and Bodies at the Institute of Sexual Sciences

Hirschfeld established the Institute for Sexual Sciences in Berlin in July 1919 with the aim of building a space for ‘research, teaching, healing, and refuge’ that could ‘free the individual from physical ailments, psychological afflictions, and social deprivation’.⁷ The Institute was housed in the imposing former home of the German ambassador to France, which had been bought by Hirschfeld during the reshuffling of political power and property in the immediate aftermath of World War 1. Around the same time, Hirschfeld also set up the Magnus-Hirschfeld-Foundation, a charitable organization that would –together with donations from anonymous private supporters and Hirschfeld himself – provide the necessary funding for the Institute’s many activities. The Institute became most famous for Hirschfeld’s work on homosexuality and cross-dressing – he coined the term ‘transvestism’ in 1910.⁸ However, it supported a much wider range of activities including sex and marriage counseling services, the provision of sexual health clinics, advice on contraception and the development of medical, anthropological and psychological research on all aspects of gender and sexuality.⁹ In addition, it provided office space for feminist activists, sex reform journals and organizations such as the influential *World League for Sexual Reform*, which had been co-founded by Hirschfeld in 1921.¹⁰ Life at the Institute was characterized by the blurring of boundaries between professional and private space as it offered living accommodation for a number of people who worked there. Hirschfeld himself occupied rooms on the second floor with his partner Karl Giese; other rooms were rented out to permanent and temporary staff and visitors, some of whom, most famously perhaps the American writer

Christopher Isherwood and the English anthropologist Francis Turville-Petre, lived at the Institute for prolonged periods of time.¹¹

The Institute's location in Berlin put it physically and symbolically at the centre of both the German homosexual liberation movement and the efforts to suppress homosexuality in the country. Hirschfeld was one of the leading figures in the campaign for the abolishment of Paragraph 175, the legal statute that criminalized 'indecent acts' between men.¹² It had been introduced throughout Germany less than half a century before the Institute was set up. Following the founding of the German Empire in 1871, the anti-homosexuality legislation of Prussia, the most powerful of the independent German states, was introduced throughout the new nation. Hirschfeld's activism against this persecution of homosexuals, and his medical expertise on homosexuality, made him a well-known figure in the German and international press. The founding of the Institute further strengthened Hirschfeld's international reputation, even as the Institute's reform-oriented goals and ethnographic research methods cemented Hirschfeld's professional fallout both with avowedly 'apolitical' sexologists such as Albert Moll and Sigmund Freud's growing psychoanalytic movement.¹³

Books were central to the Institute's activities. By 1919, Hirschfeld had already published himself more than two dozens books, pamphlets and articles, which, while ranging from considerations of alcoholism to the psychology of war, mostly focused on aspects of same-sex sexuality.¹⁴ In 1914 he published his most comprehensive study, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* [homosexuality of man and woman], a tome of more than a thousand pages.

Hirschfeld's model of human sexuality was somatic, that is he understood both sexual desires and the manifestation of gender to be encoded in the body.¹⁵ He coined the concept of 'sexuelle Zwischenstufen' – 'sexual intermediaries' – to describe his idea that there exist infinite natural variations in sexual desires and bodies. At the same time, however, he also acknowledged the significance of social context on sexual development, and argued that the existence of different sexual customs around the world is indicative of the 'naturalness' of variations in sexual behaviour.¹⁶

The written word alone did not suffice in Hirschfeld's quest to record as many examples as possible of 'sexual intermediaries'. Next to a large library of published and unpublished works, his collections at the Institute also included objects such as sex toys and, more famously, a large number of photographs. Many of Berlin's cross-dressers and other 'sexual deviants' visited the Institute and had their picture taken there. These portraits were displayed alongside images of the Institute's transgender and intersex patients.¹⁷ Figure 1 indicates the range of photographs and how they were displayed. It shows that images of same-sex couples who posed together for the camera were displayed alongside staged photographs of cross-dressed women and men and close-ups of naked body parts. Critics have rightly questioned the ethics of turning bodies into objects of scientific study in this way and exposing them to the gaze of expert and lay viewers, a criticism which seems borne out in particular by the Institute's collection of close-ups of the genitals of transgender and intersex bodies.¹⁸ Yet the Institute's photographic collection also testifies to a more affirmative relationship between such 'scientific' photography and Berlin's sexual

subcultures. It documents the existence of a rich and thriving queer subculture in and beyond early twentieth century Berlin, not least enabled by the fact that Hirschfeld himself was a well known figure in Berlin's homosexual circles, which he frequented with his lover, and where he was also known under his cross-dressed name, 'Tante Magnesia'. The Institute's photographs contributed to the self-construction of this queer community even as many of the images clearly made use of a visual medical language that turned women and men into case studies.

A further function of the photographs was that they helped to transmit long and complex written texts to a wider audience. The images offered a kind of visual shorthand to Hirschfeld's theorization of 'sexual intermediaries', depicting at a glance phenomena which in their written exposition covered hundreds of pages of scientific writing. In contrast to the often forbidding size of his printed books, the photographs offered a more instantaneous access to Hirschfeld's work, revealing the variety of expressions –both clothed and naked – of the human body. This material helped to disseminate Hirschfeld's theories to a wider public. Some of the photographs were reproduced in Hirschfeld's publications such as the popular study of Berlin's sexual subcultures, *Berlins Drittes Geschlecht* [Berlin's Third Sex] (1904).¹⁹ Many others were put together on large but portable display panels. Used both as research data and to illustrate Hirschfeld's ideas, these panels with images of 'sexual intermediaries' were put on display at the Institute and also illustrated Hirschfeld's public lectures. The panels mediated encounters between the Institute's queer books and the wider

public who were introduced via the photographs to people who were what

Hirschfeld called 'anders als die anderen': different from the others.²⁰

Loose Paper

Where Hirschfeld tried to capture on print and photographic paper the somatic reality of sexual desire, the materiality of the texts on which these observations were recorded would inadvertently help to determine whether or not they survived the Nazi attack. The Institute was the first target in a series of Nazi offensives that led to the infamous 'book burnings' of 1933. It was raided on Saturday 6 May 1933, an event that inaugurated a new phase in the ever intensifying Nazi regime of terror. The attack, which followed months of Nazi observation and threats against the Institute, happened in two waves: in the morning, Nazi students entered the Institute and began the process of its physical destruction, followed in the afternoon by members of the S.A. who conducted a more systematic search and removed large parts of the Institute's library.²¹ The books and 'sexual intermediaries' display panels were loaded onto trucks, ready to be transported to their place of destruction.

On the surface, the attack appears to have been directed against all of the Institute's holdings. The so-called 'black list' of books, which guided the S.A., clearly instructed that Magnus Hirschfeld's 'sämtliche Schriften' [complete writings] be destroyed.²² However, eyewitnesses recall that there was a degree of selection in the process, which suggests that the raid was less about the literal erasure of all of the Institute holdings than it was concerned with the spectacular effects of invading and devastating a place that hitherto offered a safe space for

explorations of nonnormative sexualities. A contemporary observer, who was present during the raid, describes how after the indiscriminate vandalism of the morning, the S.A. in the afternoon took 'basket after basket of valuable books and manuscripts' including 'bound volumes of periodicals', 'the material belonging to the *World League for Sexual Reform*' and 'the whole edition of the journal *Sexus*'.²³ The eyewitness then notes that the Nazis also 'wanted to take away several thousand questionnaires ... but desisted when they were assured that these were simply medical histories'.²⁴ This remark points to a curious footnote in the history of the attack on the Institute: that many of its questionnaires would survive the raid despite the fact that they contained information about sexually 'deviant' women and men which overtly undermined the rigid sex/gender binary of the Nazi regime.²⁵

The questionnaires were one of the most famous and controversial aspects of Hirschfeld's work. He first developed what he called the 'Psychobiologischer Fragebogen' [psycho-biological questionnaire] in 1900 for use as a diagnostic tool in his clinic.²⁶ Containing a series of 127 or so questions that ranged from enquiries about language development in childhood to reflections on sexual preferences in adulthood, it was handed out to those of Hirschfeld's patients who directly or indirectly sought advice on issues relating to their own sexuality.²⁷

Hirschfeld was partly motivated by scientific concerns, aiming to collect statistical data on homosexual existence and to gain better insight into the lives of women and men whose desires and bodies exceeded heterosexual norms. He noted that many women and men found it nigh on impossible to discuss their concerns with him fully and openly. By giving them a printed questionnaire

which they could take home and fill in whenever they were ready to do so, Hirschfeld sought to alleviate the psychic restrictions imposed on the doctor-patient encounter by the fact that homosexuality was a social taboo. The questionnaire allowed patients to write down their thoughts in a collected, deliberate manner, revising them if necessary and, where appropriate, consulting with their parents or siblings about aspects of the family history or their own childhood.²⁸ In addition, Hirschfeld sent out the questionnaire to a number of sample groups – including, for instance, students at a technical college – in a bid to gather statistical information about the percentage of homosexual women and men in the population at large. By the time of the Nazi raid, he had collected more than 10,000 questionnaires, the longest of which was 360 hand-written pages long and had taken almost six months to complete.²⁹

The survival of much of this material has fuelled persistent and sometimes pernicious critical debates about the relationship between Nazism and homosexuality.³⁰ Some critics, including the Hirschfeld biographer Charlotte Wolff, and Erwin Haeberle, the editor of a new edition of Hirschfeld's main work, have speculated that the questionnaires and similar 'confessional' materials were deliberately spared in the raid so that they could be used later by the Gestapo to root out homosexuals.³¹ Haeberle goes as far as to suggest that what he calls 'the apparent destruction of the Institute' was in fact 'a cover operation to retrieve ... incriminating evidence against both prominent Nazi leaders and their opponents'.³² It is important to resist such neat explanations about a Nazi conspiracy against the Institute, for they all too easily lend themselves to being appropriated into incendiary claims about the alleged homosexual

underpinnings of the Nazi regime. The idea that, as Theodor Adorno put it, 'totalitarianism and homosexuality belong together'³³ first emerged during the Nazi reign, when opponents polemically attacked the regime by focusing on the homosexuality of S.A. leader Ernst Röhm, who was executed in the so-called 'purge' of 1934.³⁴ Adorno made his anti-homosexuality remarks in 1951 in observations on what he thought was the rise of a new kind of violent masculinity in postwar culture. However, other postwar commentators turned directly to Hirschfeld's work to insinuate that Nazism had been driven by the latent and apparent homosexuality of its leaders. The American lawyer Morris Leopold Ernst, for instance, who had defended James Joyce's *Ulysses* in the novel's U.S. obscenity trial, co-wrote with journalist David Loth a response to the publication of the Kinsey reports which curiously aligned homosexuality with Nazism by evoking Hirschfeld's questionnaires. Ernst and Loth cite Hirschfeld's findings to argue that while it is impossible to know 'just how big a proportion of his [Hirschfeld's] estimated million and half German homosexuals found their way into Nazi uniform ... a good many of them were attracted by the Nazi principles'.³⁵ By drawing on Hirschfeld's statistics about homosexuality to ponder what kind of person would be attracted to Nazism, the U.S. commentators thus employ a discursive slight of hand that implicitly links the homosexual sexologist with the Nazi perpetrators who destroyed his life work.

As the questionnaires established a reputation that would outlive the death of Hirschfeld's German sexology, it seems unlikely that the Nazi thugs would have deliberately spared such a contentious body of texts. According to the eyewitness account, the questionnaires remained largely unscathed because

they were seen to be ‘medical histories’, that is accounts of individual illness. This would suggest that their association with medicine protected these texts, and that medicine retained its authority even amidst the violent excess of the attack on the Institute. Yet this idea is somewhat undermined by the fact many of the Institute’s other medical texts were destroyed. While it may be impossible to explain fully the element of chance by which the questionnaires survived the raid, we can nevertheless gain a sense of the practical circumstance that aided their escape from Nazi destruction. For what distinguished the questionnaires from other medical books and manuscripts was less their content than their physical form: they consisted of a large volume of loose paper. According to estimates there existed at least 10,000 completed questionnaires, each of which was made up of multiple pages. Even if not all of them covered as many as 336 pages of handwriting, they still formed a formidable collection of paper. While photographic evidence of the raid and subsequent book burnings shows that individual sheets of paper were collected and thrown onto the fire, it seems possible that the practical difficulties involved in removing the large archive of unbound, handwritten questionnaires aided their serendipitous survival. Material concerns may have spared this intimate archive, then, despite, not because of, the fact that it documented the existence of German women and men whose lives, while embedded into the social fabric of the nation, fundamentally undermined the ‘Aryan’ ideal.

Handling Homosexual Texts

If materiality played a role in the selection of texts for destruction, their content influenced the way these materials were handled. By 1933, the Institute had

become a flagship organization for sexology, a field of investigation that was first formed in relation to nineteenth-century medico-forensic research but which soon became highly politicized, supporting homosexual rights activism as well as birth control and other sexual reform initiatives. Ludwig Levy-Lenz, a physician at the Institute who pioneered gender reassignment surgery, has suggested that the findings emerging from sexological research were the sole reason why the Institute was attacked by the Nazis. The 'purely scientific Institute was the first victim which fell to the new regime', he argues, because its members 'knew too much' about the taboo subject of sexuality generally and the sexual behaviours and proclivities of German women and men more specifically.³⁶ Levy-Lenz fails to mention that the Institute's association with sexology was further complicated by the fact that many leading sexologists – Hirschfeld included – were Jews.³⁷ Subsequent analyses of the events have suggested that the reason why Hirschfeld's Institute was, in the words of James Steakley, 'the first target' in the attempt to purge the nation of 'un-German spirit by destroying objectionable books' is precisely because of its association with both Jewishness and homosexuality.³⁸ For if, as Michael H. Kater has argued, 'the alleged bastardization of the "Aryan" race by Jews was [seen to be] a biological-medical problem by virtue of the entry of Jewish semen into the German female organism [and] it was also a moral one because of promiscuity', then the Institute's collection of texts on sexuality – many of them written by Jewish sexologists – exemplified the problem of sexual knowledge and the influence exercised by the 'Jewish' ideas about sexuality.³⁹

It is questionable, however, that the Nazi thugs who attacked the Institute were familiar with the data and detailed arguments about homosexuality, transvestism and other sexual behaviours and identities found in the Institute's collections. Slavoj Žižek, in his analysis of racial violence and the anti-Semitic pogroms has pointed out that such forms of collective violence are not propelled by 'reality in itself'.⁴⁰ 'What the perpetrators of the pogroms find intolerable and rage-provoking', he writes, 'is not the immediate reality of Jews, but ... the image/figure of the "Jew" which circulates and has been constructed in their tradition. The catch', he continues, 'is that one single individual cannot distinguish in any simple way between real Jews and their anti-Semitic image. ... What the anti-Semite tries to destroy when he attacks the Jew ... is this fantasmatic dimension.'⁴¹ Matters are complicated in the raid on the Institute where the image/target is 'deviant' blend of Jewishness and homosexuality. Next to the directive to destroy the 'Jewish ideas', the knowledge that the books and papers earmarked for destruction contained writing on homosexuality posed a particular problem for the management of the destruction of this material: how to handle it without being 'tainted' by homosexuality?

Photographs taken during the raid suggest that this question shaped how the attack was conducted and documented. Figure 2 indicates that the dissociation of Nazi men from books with homosexual content was taken seriously. The photograph shows a student and an SA man standing on top of a mountain of books. The picture is well lit and its symmetry suggests that it was carefully composed. Both men appear to be intently focused on the materials in front of them. The student is looking at a couple of pictures while the soldier is reading a

book. Closer inspection of the content makes clear that the photograph was staged in a way that sought to dissociate the Nazi men from the content of the materials in which they are so immersed. For the most prominent feature amidst the large quantity of hardbound books, cardboard folders and paperbacks is a number of photographs of topless women. These images, which are strategically based at the front of the book mountain and in the hands of the student, are highly untypical of the Institute's holdings, which focused much more significantly on depicting 'sexual intermediaries'. By making pornographic images of women its most prominent feature, this photograph of the raid heterosexualizes the materials which are handled by the Nazi men. If the picture is unusual in that Nazi propaganda and policy tended to decry and persecute both pornography and homosexuality, it nevertheless points toward the existence of homophobic anxieties that shaped the raid on Hirschfeld's Institute.⁴² While other photographs of the attack depict the raiders in the kind of collective state of euphoria that is often associated with group violence, here the depiction of topless women in Nazi hands creates a more restrained effect. It maintains the Institute's association with sexual immorality even as these images also ensure that the Nazi men who 'cleanse' the Institute of its holdings are dissociated from homosexuality.

Hirschfeld's Head

Hirschfeld witnessed the attacks of May 1933 from a distance, in the precarious safety of his French exile where he saw in a Paris cinema a newsreel of the raid and subsequent book burnings. Historical images of the Nazi book burnings have gained a degree of iconic status in twentieth-century historiography where they

have become synonymous with the Nazi attack on 'culture'. In Anglo-American popular discourse, the book burnings are seen as the moment when Nazi 'barbarism' revealed itself, inaugurating the escalation of the regime's reign of terror and anticipating the mass killings of the camps. However, in a recent reassessment of the contemporary reactions to the book burnings, historian Matthew Fishburn has shown that their impact on debates in the U.S. and U.K. was not immediate. He points out that famous responses such as the letter of then U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt to the American Bookseller's Association meeting in 1942, which includes the much-quoted line that 'People die, but books never die', were only gradually assembled into the neat narrative of condemnation that accompanies the images by which the book burnings are memorialized in Anglo-American culture today.⁴³ According to Fishburn, it was an article in *Life* magazine published in 1940 which brought together many of the words and images of disapproval that are today associated with Anglo-American responses to these event including the focus on the destruction of 'literature'.⁴⁴ While Fishburn rightly points out that a significant amount of the texts destroyed were non-literary, it is noteworthy that he does not mention that the first book burning was largely fuelled by materials removed from Hirschfeld's Institute. Yet few contemporary observers in 1933 would have failed to notice the key role played by Hirschfeld and the Institute – not least because during these events the physically absent Hirschfeld would be symbolically burnt at the stake.

Similar to the way the Institute was targeted because of its role as a repository of 'Jewish' sexual knowledge and related political ambitions for homosexual rights,

Hirschfeld himself was subjected to a double bind of Nazi hate-mongering and violence. Historian Dagmar Herzog, who has undertaken a detailed examination of how 'Nazis eager to advance a sexually conservative agenda drew on the ambivalent association of Jews with both sexual evil and sexual rights', has made a persuasive case for why Hirschfeld was a particular target.⁴⁵ 'Hirschfeld's contention that sexual orientation was biologically determined', she argues, 'and his widely reported success in organizing Germans in favour of the abolition of paragraph 175 were both labelled appalling [and] Hirschfeld distressed conservatives also because he promoted an ethics of consent'.⁴⁶ By the time the Nazis came to power in 1933, Hirschfeld had long become a figure of attack in rightwing discourses against both Jews and homosexuals. While most of the violence directed against him was verbal, he also suffered physical attacks, most famously surviving in 1920 a beating by rightwing thugs that had left him so severely injured that he was mistakenly declared dead.⁴⁷ Just over a decade later, in 1932, a portrait of Hirschfeld featured in a Nazi election poster as an example of Jewish and homosexual 'un-Germanness'. The poster, which was directed against Hitler's opponent Paul von Hindenburg, describes Hirschfeld as a 'famous expert witness in the courtroom and fighter against Paragraph 175', a statement which indicates that homosexuality itself retained a degree of unspeakability in Nazi propaganda even as it was acknowledged as a political concern. Hirschfeld is depicted alongside portraits of nine other Hitler opponents, ranging from members of the Social Democrats to MPs from the staunchly conservative Centre Party. They are brought together under the heading 'We vote for Hindenburg!', which is rendered in pseudo-Hebraicized font.⁴⁸ The images of these ten men are contrasted in the lower half of the poster with portraits of leading Nazis

including Herrmann Göring, 'Hauptmann Röhm' and 'Dr Goebbels', whose allegiance is pronounced in bold neo-Gothic lettering, which declares: 'We vote for Hitler!' At the bottom of the poster, even larger neo-Gothic writing exclaims: 'If you look at these heads, you will know where you belong!' The poster's divisive visual language insists on a distinction between 'Aryan' and 'non-Aryan' physiognomies, a distinction typical of Nazi polemic against Jews. Yet it is noteworthy that many of the Nazi opponents included here were, in fact, not Jewish. However, by likening them to the well known Jews Magnus Hirschfeld and Bernhard Weiss – the vice president of Berlin's police force – the poster makes a claim for the visibly 'un-German' facial features of these men.

A few months after the poster's circulation, Hirschfeld's head would again play a key role in the violent symbolism of the Nazi book burnings. A single, blurry photograph survives that shows a bronze sculpture of Hirschfeld's head being paraded through the streets of Berlin on 10 May 1933 (Figure 3). The bust, made by the Jewish sculptor Kurt Harald Isenstein (1898 -1980) and presented to Hirschfeld on his sixtieth birthday in 1928, had been removed during the raid on the Institute on 6 May.⁴⁹ Four days later it was carried through Berlin to be thrown onto the bonfire on Berlin Opernplatz. The famous left-wing author Erich Kästner, who witnessed these events and the burning of his own work that night, later described the sense of disturbance he felt at seeing how 'the head of a smashed up bust of Magnus Hirschfeld, staked high above the crowd, swayed to and fro' amidst the crowd that had congregated to watch the events.⁵⁰ The display of Hirschfeld's head in this way clearly heightens the threatening symbolism of the book burnings by reminding the audience of the link between

the human body and the textual corpus committed to the flames. But the carrying of the bust on a stake also tells us something about the psychic structures of hate and anti-homosexuality that underpinned these attacks. For while the stake partly serves as a means of display, ensuring that the Hirschfeld bust can be seen by as many spectators as possible, it also creates a distance between the bust and its bearers, avoiding direct touch to safeguard the Nazi men from homosexuality.

According to historians George Mosse and James Jones, 'the tossing of the bust of Hirschfeld into the flames is the sole instance where an image was burnt with the books'.⁵¹ What makes its role in these events even more extraordinary is the fact that it resisted destruction. Nazi film footage of the events on 10 May makes clear that some planning had gone into constructing the bonfire. It shows that in order to enable the burning of more than 10,000 books and other materials, the Nazis had stacked up numerous wooden palettes and filled them partly with books, constructing a solid framework for a bonfire that would need to be slow-burning yet well-ventilated.⁵² The footage also shows men and women, some in Nazi uniform, others in civilian clothes, move around the lit fire, throwing whole books at it as well as what look like the occasional individual sheet of paper or piece of cardboard, items that appear only just heavy enough to make the short flight towards the flames. The labour involved in this task creates visceral links amongst the perpetrators, and between them and the objects they destroy. In one scene, 28 seconds into the footage, we see a human chain passing books from an unseen place somewhere in the dark distance towards the fire, while in another scene we see a civilian in a shirt and tie gathering piles of books from the

ground and hurling them towards the flames. The voiceover explains that German students had 'collected' (eingesammelt) the books for burning. The camera then moves to Hitler's propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, who addresses the masses, trying to impress onto them what he calls the 'strong, great and symbolic undertaking [of] enthrust[ing] to the flames the intellectual garbage of the past'.⁵³ In an ironic twist of fate, this symbolic undertaking failed practically when it came to burning Hirschfeld.⁵⁴ For the bust of his head withstood the flames. It was found the day after the bonfire by a street cleaner who took it home and kept it safe until after the end of the Second World War, when he donated it to the Berlin Academy of Arts where it is on display today. Material circumstance aided this serendipitous survival as much as the street cleaner's initiative. For the sculpture of Hirschfeld's head was made from bronze, an alloy containing copper and tin. The melting point of bronze, which varies according to the ratio of its constituents, tends to be significantly higher – between 1,900 -2,100 Fahrenheit – than the temperature reached by burning paper, which goes up to around 1,500 Fahrenheit. Wood also burns around the 1,100-1,500 Fahrenheit mark, so the book bonfire simply did not get hot enough to melt the bust. The Hirschfeld bronze thus proved to be as impossible to destroy as the legacy of his ideas, which also survived the events on 1933.

Burn Marks

By attacking books the Nazi regime acknowledged the power of these small and apparently harmless objects. While books are rightly associated with the cultural life of a nation, the remnants that survived the attack on the library of Hirschfeld's Institute also serve as potent reminders that 'culture' has

vicissitudes that reach beyond the realms of art, literature and music. For a regime which sought to articulate itself in relation to an 'Aryan' identity, the Institute's collection of texts that testify to the existence of multiple identities and shifting identifications constituted a dangerous threat to the desired 'Aryan' norm. If, as Judith Butler has argued, subjectivity is defined by the fact that the process of identification is never complete, or, as she puts it, that identification 'can never be said to have taken place; identification does not belong to the world of events', then the sexological and related works are material reminders of the fact that the process of normative assertion is fraught.⁵⁵ The targeting and handling of the sexological texts at the Institute of Sexual Sciences reveal deeply entrenched cultural fantasies about homosexuality and a 'tradition of homophobia' that would retain currency far beyond the Nazi regime.⁵⁶ While it can be difficult to detangle the history of homophobia from other forms of hatred, a consideration of the materials which survived the attack on Hirschfeld's Institute nevertheless offers glimpses at the homophobic imprints of the Nazi assault on books.

¹ Influential studies in English of the book burnings include Leonidas E. Hill, 'The Nazi Attack on "Un-German" Literature, 1933-1945', in Jonathan Rose (ed.), *The Holocaust and the Book* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), pp. 9-46; J.M. Richie, 'The Nazi Book-Burning', *The Modern Language Review* Vol. 83, No 3 (1988), pp. 627-643; George Mosse and James Jones, 'Bookburning and the Betrayal of German Intellectuals', *New German Critique*, No. 31 (1984), pp. 143-155. For accounts of the contemporary UK and US reception of the book burnings see Matthew Fishburn, 'Books are Weapons: Wartime Responses to the Nazi Bookfires of 1933', *Book History*, Vol. 10 (2007), pp. 223-251; and Guy Stern, 'The Burning of the Books in Nazi Germany, 1933: The American Response', *Simon Wiesenthal Annual 2*, chapter 5. Available online: <http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=gvKVLcMVluG&b=395007> [last accessed 1 May 2013].

² Rebecca Knuth, *Burning Books and Leveling Libraries: Extremist Violence and Cultural Destruction* (Westport: Praeger, 2006), p. 2.

³ Rebecca Knuth, *Libricide: The Regime-Sponsored Destruction of Books and Libraries in the Twentieth Century* (Westport: Praeger, 2003), p. 9

⁴ See for example Matthew Fishburn, *Burning Books* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 41-43. For a recent consideration of the memorialization of Nazi victims with complex identities such as Hirschfeld see Christiane Wilke, 'Remembering Complexity? Memorials for Nazi Victims in Berlin', *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2013), pp. 136-156.

⁵ Erwin J. Haeberle, 'Swastika, Pink Triangle and Yellow Star: The Destruction of Sexology and the Persecution of Homosexuals in Nazi Germany', *The Journal of Sex Research*, Vol. 17, No 3 (1981), pp. 270-284; James D. Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany* (Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer, 1975); Stefan Micheler, trans. Patricia Szorbar, 'Homophobia, Propaganda and the Denunciation of Same-Sex Desiring Men under National Socialism', in Dagmar Herzog (ed.), *Sexuality and German Fascism* (London: Berghahn, 2005), pp. 95-130.

⁶ Richard J. Evans, for example, who in his influential *The Coming of the Third Reich* gives quite a full account of the raid on Hirschfeld's Institute, dismisses its significance when he claims that it 'was only one part, if the most spectacular, of a far more wide-ranging assault on what the Nazis portrayed as the Jewish movement to subvert the German family'. Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich: How the Nazis Destroyed Democracy and Seized Power in Germany* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 376.

⁷ The online exhibition of the Magnus Hirschfeld Society provides an excellent overview of the Institute's history: <http://www.hirschfeld.in-berlin.de/institut/en/ifsframe.html>.

⁸ Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Transvestiten: Eine Untersuchung über den erotischen Verkleidungstrieb* (Berlin: A. Pulvermacher, 1910).

⁹ The tensions at the Institute between homosexual reformers and the feminist movement are addressed by Atina Grossmann, 'Magnus Hirschfeld, Sexualreform

und die Neue Frau: Das Institut für Sexualwissenschaften und das Weimarer Berlin', in Elke-Vera Kotowski and Julius Schoeps (eds), *Magnus Hirschfeld: Ein Leben im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft, Politik und Gesellschaft* (Berlin: be.bra, 2004), pp. 201-2016.

¹⁰ See Reiner Herrn, 'Vom Traum zum Trauma: Das Institut für Sexualwissenschaft', in Kotowski and Schoeps (eds), *Magnus Hirschfeld*, pp. 173-199.

¹¹ Christopher Isherwood provides an account his life at the Institute in *Christopher and his Kind* ([1976] London: Vintage, 2012), pp. 15-19.

¹² John Fout, 'Sexual Politics in Wilhelmine Germany: The Male Gender Crisis, Moral Purity, and Homophobia', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vo. 2, No. 3 (1992), pp. 388-421.

¹³ See Volkmar Sigusch, 'The Sexologist Albert Moll -Between Sigmund Freud and Magnus Hirschfeld', *Medical History*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (2012), pp. 184-200.

¹⁴ They include a number of Hirschfeld's main studies of female and male same sex sexuality including *Sappho und Sokrates* (Leipzig: Max Spohr, 1896); *Der Urnische Mensch* (Leipzig: Max Spohr, 1903); *Berlins Drittes Geschlecht* (1904).

¹⁵ Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes*, Nachdruck der Erstauflage von 1914 mit einer kommentierten Einleitung von E.J. Haeberle (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984).

¹⁶ Hirschfeld's longest and today best known travelogue is his account of a two-year journey that took in the U.S. Asia and the Middle East which was written in German but more widely circulated in English translation due to the Nazi regulation of the German publishing industry. The British version of the book is Magnus Hirschfeld, *Women East and West: Impressions of a Sex Expert*, trans. Olive Green (London: W.Heinemann, 1935); the title of the U.S. version is Magnus Hirschfeld, *Men and Women: The World Journey of a Sexologist*, trans. O.P Green (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1935).

¹⁷ Susan Stryker discusses Hirschfeld's role in *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008), pp. 38 - 41.

¹⁸ For a recent discussion of medical practice see S. Creighton, J. Alderson, S. Brown and C.L. Minto, 'Medical Photography; Ethics, Consent, and the Intersex Patient', *BJU International*, Vol. 89, No. 1 (2002), pp. 67-71.

¹⁹ The 9th edition of the work has been re-issued in the 1990s as Magnus Hirschfeld, *Berlins Drittes Geschlecht*, edited Manfred Herzer (Berlin: Rosa Winkel, 1991).

²⁰ *Anders als die Anderen* (dir. Richard Oswald) is title of a film about homosexual blackmail released in German cinemas in 1919, in which Hirschfeld makes a guest appearance.

²¹ Good accounts of the destruction of the Institute include Knuth, *Burning Books and Leveling Libraries*, pp. 101-120; Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement*, pp. 103-105. See also Charlotte Wolff, *Magnus Hirschfeld: Portrait of a Pioneer in Sexology* (London: Quartet, 1986), pp. 376-79.

²² *Liste des schädlichen und unerwünschten Schrifttums*, Stand vom 31. Dezember 1938 (Leipzig, 1938). Published online:

http://www.berlin.de/rubrik/hauptstadt/verbannte_buecher/index.php

²³ World Committee for the Victims of Fascism, *The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1938), pp. 158-161.

²⁴ World Committee for the Victims of Fascism, *The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror*, pp. 158-161. See also Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement*, pp. 103-105.

²⁵ For a good overview of the issues at stake see Dagmar Herzog (ed.), *Sexuality and German Fascism* (London: Berghahn, 2005).

²⁶ The date is derived from Hirschfeld's own account in *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes*, published in 1914, in which he claims to have first drafted the questionnaire 'vor 14 Jahren': 14 years ago. Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes*, p. 2140. Elena Mancini in contrast claims that Hirschfeld developed the questionnaire in 1902 with his friend Hermann von Teschenberg. See her *Magnus Hirschfeld and the Quest for Sexual Freedom* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 174 n. 109.

²⁷ A sample questionnaire is included in Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes*, pp. 240-263.

²⁸ Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes*, p. 239.

²⁹ Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes*, p. 262.

³⁰ Andrew Hewitt has traced the complex ways in which homosexuality and fascism are bound via homophobia in his book *Political Inversions: Homosexuality, Fascism and the Modernist Imaginary* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). See also Elizabeth D. Heineman, 'Sexuality and Nazism: The Doubly Unspeakable?', in Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality and German Fascism* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2005), pp. 22-66.

³¹ Wolff, *Magnus Hirschfeld* p. 376; Haeberle, 'Swastika, Pink Triangle and Yellow Star', pp. 270-287. Haeberle re-published *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* in 1984 including a substantial new introduction which helped to make Hirschfeld's contribution better known amongst historians of sexuality.

³² Haeberle, 'Swastika, Pink Triangle and Yellow Star', p. 274.

³³ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 2005) p. 46. Adorno made these remarks in his observation on the increased and idealized representation of virile, strong 'he-men'. He argues that the 'pleasures of such men ... all have about them a latent violence'. But, he continues, their 'sadism is a lie ..., nothing other than repressed homosexuality presenting itself as the only approved form of heterosexuality'. (pp. 46-47).

³⁴ Elena Mancini provides an account of the Röhm affair in her *Magnus Hirschfeld*, pp. 127-132. See also Harry Oosterhuis' analysis of Nazi anxieties about intense homosociality, 'Male Bonding and Homosexuality in Nazi Germany', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vo. 32, No. 2 (1997), pp. 187- 205; and his "'Jews" of the Antifascist Left: Homosexuality and Social Resistance to Nazism', in Gert Hekma, Harry Oosterhuis and James Steakley (eds), *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left* (Binghamton, NY: Harrington Press, 1995), pp. 227-258.

³⁵ Morris Leopold Ernst and David Loth, *Sexual Behaviour and the Kinsey Report* (London: Falcon Press, 1949), p. 170. For more on the links between Nazism and homosexuality in postwar culture see Dorte Seifert, 'Silence and License: The Representations of the National Socialist Persecution of Homosexuality in Anglo-American Fiction and Film', *History and Memory*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2003), pp. 94-129.

³⁶ Cited in Haeberle, 'Swastika, Pink Triangle and Yellow Star', pp. 273-274

³⁷ Jewishness and sexology have been analysed by David Baile, 'The discipline of *Sexualwissenschaft* emerges in Germany, creating divergent notions of European Jewry', in Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes (eds), *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture 1096–1996* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 273–279; and Christina von Braun, 'Ist die Sexualwissenschaft eine 'jüdische' Wissenschaft?' in Kotowski and Schoeps (eds), *Magnus Hirschfeld*, pp. 255-269. See also Stephen Frosh's study *'Hate' and the Jewish Science: Anti-Semitism, Nazism and Psychoanalysis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

³⁸ Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement*, p.103

³⁹ Michael H. Kater, *Doctors Under Hitler* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p.179.

⁴⁰ Slavoj Žižek, *Violence* (London: Profile Books, 2009), p.57.

⁴¹ Žižek, *Violence*, p.57.

⁴² See for instance Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 60-63.

⁴³ Fishburn, 'Books are Weapons', p. 236.

⁴⁴ Fishburn, 'Books are Weapons', p. 227.

⁴⁵ Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Mortality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p.23

⁴⁶ Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, p.23

⁴⁷ Magnus Hirschfeld, 'Autobiographical Sketch', in Victor Robinson (ed.), *Encyclopedia Sexualis: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia-Dictionary of Sexual Sciences* (New York: Dingwall-Rock, 1936), pp. 317-321.

⁴⁸ 'Wir waehlen Hindenburg – Wir waehlen Hitler' Poster (1932). Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York, ID no: 2005.A40.

http://collection.mjhnyc.org/index.php?g=detail&action=search&object_id=6168 [last accessed 10 May 2013]

⁴⁹ See Hirschfeld's own account of events in Wolff, *Magnus Hirschfeld*, p. 379.

⁵⁰ Reprinted in J.M. Ritchie, 'The Nazi Book Burnings', p. 630.

⁵¹ Mosse and Jones, 'Bookburning and the Betrayal of German Intellectuals', p. 144.

⁵² The historical film footage can be accessed as *Books Burn As Goebbels Speaks*, Germany May 10, 1933 [German, 2:55] on the website of The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM):

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media fi.php?ModuleId=10005852&MediaId=158> The Museum contrasts this film with footage of an *Anti-Nazi Protest* through lower Manhattan, which was organized by the American Jewish Congress on 10 March 1933 to coincide with the book burning in Berlin [last accessed 10 May 2013].

⁵³ The translation is the English transcript provided by the USHMM:

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media fi.php?ModuleId=10005852&MediaId=158> [last accessed 10 May 2013].

⁵⁴ *Archive of Sexology*, [http://www2.hu-](http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/)

[berlin.de/sexology/GESUND/ARCHIV/COLLMHB.HTM](http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/GESUND/ARCHIV/COLLMHB.HTM). See also the archive of the Akademie der Künste:

http://www.adk.de/de/archiv/archivbestand/kunstsammlung/index.htm?hg=sammlung&we_objectID=1914 . [last accessed 10 May 2013].

⁵⁵ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 68.

⁵⁶ The phrase a 'tradition of homophobia' comes from Micheler, 'Homophobia, Propaganda and the Denunciation of Same-Sex Desiring Men under National Socialism', p. 98.