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# Aspects of Radical Gay Liberation Theory in West Germany's *Tuntenstreit*, 1973–1975

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## ABSTRACT

This article examines in depth the theoretical positions of the *Tuntenstreit* – a major theoretical dispute within the radical West German gay liberation movement in the 1970s. By working through archival material as well as the dispute's fundamental texts, it renders visible its often-neglected underlying theoretical motifs and, consequently, its idiosyncratic contribution to a 'gay theory'. Subsequently, it shows how questions of publicity and appearance – exemplified in the figure of the *Tunte* – were integrated into the revolutionary politics of the movement. This critical examination seeks to inform understandings and genealogies of West German gay liberation and its theory production.

A little more than fifty years ago, in June of 1973, the radical leftist homosexual action group West Berlin (*Homosexuelle Aktion West-berlin* (HAW)) organised a multi-day event on Pentecost titled, *The Oppression of Homosexuality Is Only a Particular Case of the General Oppression of Sexuality*.<sup>1</sup> In addition to film screenings, info-tables and panel discussions, gays and lesbians from all over West Germany were invited to take part in a demonstration in the city centre on 10 June. As was usual in Germany at the time, the couple of hundred protesters marched in orderly and disciplined lines after first gathering on Kurfürstendamm, one of Berlin's main avenues. With banners and signs reading, for instance, 'Being Gay is Fun!' activists demonstrated against the 'general oppression of sexuality'. They felt that not much had changed since the liberalisation of article 175 of the German Penal Code in 1969, which until then had prohibited *all* same-sex acts between men. Gays and lesbians were still being marginalised, discriminated against and excluded with hardly any means for political self-determination. HAW's Pentecost campaign called on activists to take to the streets, protest this miserable state of affairs and fight the oppression of (homo-) sexuality.<sup>2</sup> Among the many who joined the demonstration, there were, however, about a dozen activists from France and Italy who cared very little for German protest norms. The activists were mostly members

of the gay activist groups *Front Homosexuel D'Action Révolutionnaire* (FHAR) and *Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano*. They wore dresses, wigs and make-up, dancing and singing while – the audacity! – interacting with bystanders. At the same time, they mocked the political seriousness of the German activists, marching in military fashion alongside the demonstration and yelling among other things: 'We want a pink Volkswagen!'<sup>3</sup>

Many of the activists they derided reacted with hostility towards this rather playful, provocative and subversively cheerful way of demonstrating, regarding it as an exhibitionist carnival, a hedonistic and un-conveyable adaptation of 'female' behaviour, attributes, attire, etc.<sup>4</sup> But there were some who felt the need to also adopt forms of drag as their political praxis. After the Italian and French activists departed, serious conflicts and intense debates erupted within HAW. This dispute eventually culminated in the so-called *Tuntenstreit*: a strategic debate primarily concerned with (the appropriate means of) political emancipation.<sup>5</sup> From 1974 on, four main contributions were published in a back-and-forth fashion in West Germany's main left-wing journals at the time: *Kursbuch*, *Prokla* and *Argument*.<sup>6</sup> One faction of HAW argued the movement should focus on

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revolution through class struggle, while the other part, despite sharing their anticapitalistic intentions, countered that above all, the movement should engage in consciousness raising and eventually, in *distinctively* gay politics (of difference and visibility).<sup>7</sup> As the radical gay liberation movement was part of the radical New Left, its discussions, of course, reflected the specificities of the West German context, namely the ongoing disintegration of the anti-authoritarian socialist student movement after 1968. Generally, the emergence of the many authoritarian Marxist–Leninist or Maoist groups in West Germany during the 1970s is seen as a reaction to this disintegration, or more specifically, of the Socialist German Student’s Union (SDS) – the extra-parliamentary opposition’s most influential organisation. However, the rather desperate attempts to ‘solve the movement’s problems by way of rigidifying’ were not able to do away with the many tensions regarding political organisation, strategy, political objectives, etc.<sup>8</sup> To no surprise, similar tensions were also prevalent in the fractioning of HAW. For analytic purposes, I am going to refer in this article to those activists within HAW who held Marxist–Leninist positions, whose critique of political economy was based on a rather teleological interpretation of the philosophy of history, and who were influenced by or even members of West Berlin’s Socialist Unity Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Westberlin* (SEW)) as ‘dogmatic’ Marxists.<sup>9</sup> For the other faction, who were equally influenced by Marxist theory but advocated a rather unorthodox, more subjective approach which took into account their personal experiences and desires, I am going to borrow their self-designation: (political) *Tunten* or (male) ‘feminists’. Similarly to some strains of feminist thought and critical theory, the latter saw personal experiences as political, and focussed their theoretical thinking around them.<sup>10</sup> As part of the confrontation of these two factions, many discussions around which theoretical standpoint and political strategy to take were conducted very aggressively, resulting in ruptures and personal enmity as tensions and antagonisms pre-dating the *Tuntenstreit* also came to the fore.

The figure of the political *Tunte* became the focal point of the dispute precisely because it posed the question of political strategy *and* political form in a new way. Originally a dispute between members of HAW, the attempt to combine certain aesthetics with specific politics, or rather politicise subjectivities through means of aesthetics and (public) drag appearance, struck a nerve and reached far beyond West Berlin: It was quickly taken up by other gay liberation activists and had quite the influence on debates in other groups in West Germany (e.g. in Hamburg, Frankfurt or Bielefeld). In fact, it even sparked discussions within the gay and lesbian movement in East Berlin.<sup>11</sup>

However, for political *Tunten*, it was very important to distance themselves from what they thought of as unpolitical, ‘regular’ drag queens or cross-dressers: that is, other gay men who were also pejoratively referred to as *Tunten*, both outside and inside the gay community at the time.<sup>12</sup> But *political Tunten* did not intend to imitate women or femininity; rather, they took their way of gender presentation both as an exposition of an ‘inner femaleness’, and a critique of dominant ideas of masculinity/femininity.<sup>13</sup> The activists who considered themselves political *Tunten* rejected ‘straightforward female impersonation, in favour of adopting

elements of effeminate dress, style, speech, and mannerisms’, and wanted to appear intentionally grotesque, diva-esque and/or even trashy.<sup>14</sup> In fact, many explicitly wanted to be recognised as *men* breaking gender roles and patriarchal structures (in the form of a *Tunte*). As Bernhard Rosenkranz noted, *Tunten* ‘neither shaved off their beards nor plucked their eyebrows. On the contrary: dressing in women’s clothes despite these attributes of masculinity seemed a way to publicly reveal oneself as gay. ... Dressing up served to challenge gender roles, not to make a man into a perfect woman’.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, aesthetics, *public* appearance and experimenting with extravagant and flamboyant looks were just as important as the specific politics the *Tunte* represented or rather embodied, as it was precisely a *bodily* form of politics combined with a specific political attitude that made a political *Tunte*. The activists took delight and pleasure in being different and were happy to show and embody this difference ostentatiously *in public*.<sup>16</sup> Although this embodiment was often experienced as sensual and lustful, their sassy, provocative and highly uncompromising attitude must also be seen as a reaction to the discrimination and rejection they faced. Still, their interventions were equally self-affirming and empowering. For example, some of these *Tunten* would participate in or rather crash ‘regular’ drag shows in gay bars to stir up and play havoc with the respective gay scene. Looking back at such actions, one activist stated: ‘drag queens [i.e. those who would only try to imitate women] take themselves seriously, that is the problem, but during the day they are back at a bank counter in their suits. Hypocrisy. I truly enjoyed that these outright vain drag queens were applauded just a little, but when I came on, there was real clapping. ... I was an anti-drag queen’.<sup>17</sup>

So, although *Tunten* were not a homogenous group (in fact some refused to be considered part of the movement), it was precisely the political qualities, or rather the qualities of the political form, that marked the difference between what Polit-*Tunten* considered ‘regular’ drag queens, other effeminate gay men and them. In this way, *Tunten* politics may be read as a remarkable attempt to combine a specific theoretical perspective with a practical political form. But provocative and playful politics were also meant to set Polit-*Tunten* apart from the so-called ‘homophiles’, a term referring to homosexual activists whose politics aimed at integration and assimilation. While in 1950s and 1960s West Germany many homosexual activists referred to themselves as homophiles, the radical gay liberation activists of the 1970s used the term ‘homophile’ to characterise (and devalue) certain politics or activists, historical and contemporary, as non-revolutionary or reactionary.<sup>18</sup> To mark their difference to these politics, radical activists appropriated slur terms like *schwul* (gay) or *Tunte*, and were particularly looking for ways to politicise homosexuality in a more interventionist way via publicity and visibility.

In recent years, alongside the growing scholarly interest in 1970s gay liberation in Europe and North America in general, a handful of ground-breaking theoretical texts stemming from gay liberation (and feminist) movements of the time were rediscovered too. Both aspects seem to reflect at least some interest in the conceptual and theoretical works of these movements and the reciprocal relation between theory production and political

practice.<sup>19</sup> In the West German context of the 1970s, for instance, the peculiar influence of Frankfurt School critical theory on the voice-over commentary (written by activist Martin Dannecker) of Rosa von Praunheim's famous gay-manifesto film, *It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, but the Society in Which He Lives* (1971), has been thoroughly studied.<sup>20</sup> The film, besides being a major catalyst for gay liberation in West Germany, indeed stimulated many groups and activists to engage in theoretical endeavours and a continuous 'critique of society'.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, the focus of many of the landmark publications of recent years dealing with gay liberation in West Germany in the 1970s only allowed for a very limited engagement with the movements' concepts, ideas and theoretical discussions, even when the *Tuntenstreit* is explicitly mentioned. Patrick Henze's comprehensive oral history study of the 1970s, *Schwule Emanzipation und ihre Konflikte*, for example, focuses – in due consideration of archival material and organisational questions – on respective activists, their memories and stories, as well as on the impact gay liberation had on them. While the 'specific [conceptual] approaches to a gay emancipation that were characteristic to the German gay liberation movement' are pointed to in the closing remarks of his study, there is no detailed reconstruction of these approaches or their specificity.<sup>22</sup> Other studies like Ronald van Cleef's *A Tale of Two Movements?* and Craig Griffiths' *The Ambivalence of Gay Liberation* point to theoretical aspects of the movement as well, but are specifically looking at West German gay liberation as a new social movement. While van Cleef focuses more generally on its embeddedness within the German Left of the 1970s, Griffiths' study complicates the established from-shame-to-pride-narrative, by highlighting the ambivalences in activists' self-perception and the ways in which homosexuality was thought of and written about in public (and gay) media discourses. Equally, Jake Newsome's and Sébastien Tremblay's compelling studies both focus on transnational aspects of one of the movement's most important symbols, the pink triangle, but do also not really engage with the movement's theoretical and conceptual work in depth.

The aforementioned works do rightfully highlight the performative aspects, as well as the revolutionary aspirations of the figure of the *Polit-Tunte*. They also recognise the dispute's profound significance for the radical West German gay liberation movement, as well as the political importance of the *Tunten* faction's attempt to politicise gender roles, self-affirmation and visibility.<sup>23</sup> But despite recognising these in fact crucial aspects, forms of political organisation, networks, community building, discursive strategies and representation, among other things, are at the foreground of these studies. Thus, the *Tuntenstreit* is usually framed as an important but short-lived dispute about political strategy and forms of activism – eventually resulting in 'greater acceptance of both effeminate gays and the use of drag'.<sup>24</sup> Although there is nothing to disagree with here, it might (unintentionally) appear as if the theoretical or conceptual work of the movement is but a secondary aspect. The peculiarities of the dispute's theoretical motifs, how (elaborate) the activists' political strategies were conceptualised, what theoretical concepts they worked with or adapted, how and why the *Tunten* were able to confidently argue a politicisation of drag and appearance undermined (hetero-)sexual norms in a *revolutionary* way or what their theoretical work might say about

the movement and its social critique in general, remain rather understudied.

Therefore, this article engages in a rather extensive reconstruction of the conceptual framework while further pointing to some of the *theoretical* influences of the *Tuntenstreit* (e.g. different readings of Marx, critical theory and psychoanalysis). By using the example of the *Tuntenstreit*, this article also wants to illustrate the *fundamental* role theoretical and conceptual work played for radical gay liberation groups in West Germany – for it not only adds to but is necessary for a more complete understanding of their politics and self-assertion struggles.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, this article sets out to highlight the peculiarities, elaborateness and originality of this work as well as its reciprocal and synchronous relation with many of the movement's political actions. This is not taking anything away from the landmark works mentioned above. In fact, this article builds upon these works when it turns to the *Tuntenstreit* with a specific focus on its conceptual work. According to Michael Hardt, such a perspective also enables one to value *collective* processes of theorising, to acknowledge them as particular contributions to (critical) theory and to even trace the (complicated) relationship these contributions have to the present day. As will be made clear below, the *Tunten*'s conceptual and theoretical work revolved around a politicisation of the private, of subjectivities, gender roles and visibility that exceeded (but not necessarily disregarded) questions of civil rights and representation. Like Hardt, I would argue that their concept of political drag and subversive gender presentation entails an idea of individual emancipation, 'that is, releasing people from their chains in order to participate in the existing society', *as well as* of 'a radical transformation of that society, overturning its structures of domination and creating new institutions that foster freedom' – in other words, aiming to initiate 'a process of collective subjective transformation'.<sup>26</sup>

Often implicit, but important for this dispute, were questions around which theoretical category should inform critical theory and analysis (class or gender/sexuality) and what prominence be attributed to a critique of 'normality' (i.e. the juxtaposition of private and public, male domination, compulsory heterosexuality and masculinity, etc.). When the *Tuntenstreit* is primarily seen as an important watershed of the West German gay liberation movement (ultimately leading to a split of the HAW, one of the most influential groups), its conceptual and theoretical contents partly fade from the spotlight. But taking the *Tuntenstreit* as an early and profound *theoretical* dispute around the limits and potentials of certain theoretical registers (on the one hand, gender presentation and performance, class struggle on the other) sheds light on the rather short-lived, radical and wild thinking of radical gay activists, and helps to better understand the developments and political ruptures of the hothouse radical gay liberation in West Germany was a part of during the 1970s. After all, the reconstruction of a dispute dealing with whether liberation would be best achieved through gay activism or simply through class struggle will help to illuminate the interplay between political action and theory production of West Germany's radical gay liberation movement in and beyond its time. A detailed engagement with the *Tuntenstreit* might also highlight how in 1970s West Germany, categories of gender and sexuality were adopted within a framework of (gay liberationist) theory production that heavily relied on Marxist thought and terminology. In this sense, getting

a hold of the underlying theoretical motifs of the *Tuntenstreit* through an engagement with its main arguments – particularly over why and how homosexuality is oppressed in bourgeois capitalist society – might not only add to existing genealogies of the radical gay liberation movement in West Germany, but perhaps even to those some scholars call ‘gay theory’.<sup>27</sup> Short-lived as it might have been, the *Tuntenstreit* remains a part of the (history of the) present, and not simply because many of its questions and problems are still present in political and theoretical discussions today.<sup>28</sup>

Although much of the *Tuntenstreit* revolved around whether the oppression of (homo-)sexuality was an inherent feature of capitalist society or not, I want to take the ways in which the activists tried to answer to this issue, just as much as representing discreet (theoretical) perspectives on the question of visibility. Establishing forms of visibility was, despite all differences, one of the movement’s few points of consensus. To enable oneself to act politically, to even become an active subject within political discourse, it seemed mandatory for every activist to come out *publicly*; this is why many of the dispute’s aspects converge in this question. Coming out was seen as ‘a necessary first step towards liberating gays as a group from wider social stigmatization’.<sup>29</sup> The apparent need to position and politicise homosexuality in the public realm was reflected in many HAW publications, even pre-*Tuntenstreit* – the most (in-)famous probably being the so-called ‘feminist-paper’ from 1973.<sup>30</sup> There, the then newly found ‘feminist group’ of HAW (many of whom were later part of the *Tunten* faction) suggested to reclaim the *pink triangle* – the symbol that in Nazi Germany was used to label concentration camp prisoners who had been identified as gay by Nazi authorities – as a means to render homosexuality (and the continuity of its persecution) visible. By appropriating it as a symbol of protest against anti-gay oppression, the feminist paper anticipated some of the arguments around the political potential of public appearance and legibility in the *Tuntenstreit*.<sup>31</sup> Introducing the pink triangle as *the* symbol of gay liberation was mainly intended to facilitate self-affirmation, solidarity and historical consciousness among gays and lesbians. But besides that, it was also presented as a genuine possibility for ‘masculine’ or male presenting gay men, or others who did not feel able or confident to appear as a *Tunte*, to adhere to the group’s policy of being publicly recognisable as gay – by wearing a pink triangle badge. Provocative as their paper might have been, the feminist group felt such arguments were still in line with HAW’s preliminary declaration of principles from 1971, which stated that political action required ‘a new self-awareness, a self-affirmation of homosexuals ... overcoming cowardice and hypocrisy’.<sup>32</sup> Despite its importance for the dispute, the discussions around the pink triangle as a symbol for gay liberation did not play a major role in the *Tuntenstreit*, even though these do appear to be its point of departure. Yet, what exactly ensued from entering the public or, put differently, what the status of being a political subject enabled as well as obliged one to do, remained fiercely contested among the activists.<sup>33</sup>

As a whole, HAW took for granted that gaining collective self-confidence was the *sine qua non* for working politically, as was actively affirming sexual demands seen as ‘different from the “normal” ones dictated by society’.<sup>34</sup> What marked the particularity of the *Tunten* faction within HAW, however, was the emphasis on difference from the binary gender relations that underpinned

all norms regarding sexuality. A shift of perspective was already present in the ‘feminist paper’: ‘The sexual ... fixation of the man towards the woman and her oppression cannot exclusively be explained through the principal contradiction (social production and private appropriation). This mechanism is at least several thousand years older than capitalism: the first class oppression is the oppression of women by men!’<sup>35</sup> Drawing on this analysis, the *Tunten* faction saw fixed gender roles and norms as the main reason for the oppression of (homo-)sexuality, thus moving patriarchy into the centre of their analysis. In addition to having created a strict and gendered division of public and private spheres, patriarchy was perceived by the *Tunten* faction as a form of domination ‘which has been forcefully perpetuated since the genesis of private property and which has assigned sexuality as the medium for inheriting private property in “male” society’. And since patriarchy was based on forcing all ‘relations into the male–female dichotomy, everything that cannot be integrated into this opposition ... is labelled as “unnatural” – especially same-sex sexuality between men. Here, patriarchy no longer only refers to the ‘rule of fathers’.<sup>36</sup> Rather, it is conceptualised as a specific, *socially* constructed set of power relations and structures constituting a ‘normality’ (seemingly ‘natural’ or ‘normal’ behaviours, desires, etc.). In contemporary capitalism, these relations consisted of certain norms revolving around gender, sexuality and the nuclear family – the most obvious being male/masculine (role) behaviour, compulsory heterosexuality and the abjection of everything considered ‘female’.<sup>37</sup> The *Tunten* faction viewed this configuration as an expression of *bourgeois sexual morality*, a social condition they wanted to abolish altogether. Given the ongoing marginalisation and discrimination of homosexuality – despite processes of liberalisation (e.g. article 175 of the German Penal Code) – it becomes obvious why they tried to politicise gender relations, as well as forms of doing gender, via new subjectivities and forms of visibility in their desire to overcome bourgeois sexual morality:

The substance of this norm [bourgeois sexual morality] is aggressive, competitive masculinity – its sexuality, heterosexuality. Male normativity means that characteristics, behaviours, activities, emotions, professions, clothes that, in reality, are shaped by societal conditions were and are distributed to man and woman according *only* to biological difference. ... Women were made to *fit* the ‘master’s’ needs. Thus, heterosexuality can be understood as the patriarchally mediated unity of man and woman. ... *Tunten* just like emancipated women ... disturb this compulsory ‘harmony’ either by ‘non-male’ or ‘non-female’ behaviour, by calling the integrity of man into question.<sup>38</sup>

This calling into question through performing gender (mostly masculinity) *and* sexuality otherwise was, at least formally, still in accordance with HAW’s preliminary declaration of principles, where same-sex practices were considered a breach of bourgeois restrictions to sexuality as well.<sup>39</sup> Homosexuality in itself was seen as a direct threat to existing societal hierarchies and power relations, particularly patriarchal gender relations. Taking this idea even further, the *Tunten* faction claimed an impossibility

of integrating homosexuality into existing society because it represented 'a permanent attack on bourgeois sexual morality'.<sup>40</sup>

Their idea that homosexuality stood in strict contradiction to society's main norms and that, therefore, a liberation of homosexuality would lead to a transformation of society was based on the general assumption that the oppression of homosexuality intrinsically served capitalism and patriarchy. In this perspective, the oppression of homosexuality was 'not a particular case but an *expression* of the general oppression of sexuality' – a structural oppression that guaranteed the perpetuation of patriarchy's compulsory heterosexuality, its correlated gender relations and, consequently, through a gendered division of (alienated) labour, capitalist exploitation.<sup>41</sup>

The more dogmatic Marxist activists, on the contrary, argued 'that the specific oppression of homosexuality is *not* an inherent characteristic of capitalist society; that this phenomenon, inherited from pre-capitalist epochs, ... is dissolved in a process of harmonisation of this particular oppression with the general one of all those exploited'.<sup>42</sup> They claimed – in retrospect not without good reason – capital would (through continuous liberalisation) sooner rather than later recognise gays and lesbians' specific consumer needs as a profitable sphere of investment as well as their qualities as viable consumers.<sup>43</sup> In line with this sort of liberal faith in capitalism as the great equaliser, they implied that the oppression of homosexuality originated mostly from legal discrimination and consequently saw all forms of (public) drag as an unnecessary, unpolitical provocation, and an embodiment of petite-bourgeois ideology distracting the radical German Left from real, socio-economic problems by promoting a false understanding of emancipation: They argued that the 'Emancipatory demands of homosexuals are not able to go beyond bourgeois society. Even the most seemingly radical demand for a dissolution of traditional and rigidly opposed gender roles ... are in principle attainable in bourgeois society and at best utopian'.<sup>44</sup> As gayness was not considered to be a class feature, the more dogmatic activists concluded gay liberation groups only pursuing gay issues were incapable of participating in a genuine socialist struggle, and should therefore join the ranks of the working class and integrate into its struggle: 'It would be very foolish to confuse these processes [i.e. the dissolution of the rigid gender binary] with emancipation, which is *only* conceivable as liberation from exploitation and class rule'.<sup>45</sup> Seeking other ways of political emancipation was dismissed by pointing to the integrative and equalising forces of bourgeois society.

The *Tunten* faction's approach was met with a similar scepticism by the lesbian women of HAW. Acknowledging the *Tunten*'s calls to stand in solidarity and their general desire to align with the women's movement, the HAW women's group was generally more sympathetic towards the provocative aspects of *Tunten* politics and particularly their attempt to politicise gender relations. But as the HAW women noticed hardly any *serious* interest by the male feminists to engage with women's issues (like reproductive rights, bodily autonomy, countering the power of social imaginaries of women as mothers, economic inequalities and dependencies, uneven distribution of care work, etc.) or the sort of double discrimination they faced as women *and* as homosexuals, they were quite doubtful to whether *Tunten* politics could affect gender roles and relations substantially. Adding to

their scepticism, there was little reflection by the *Tunten* faction on the (at least implicit) identification of homosexual desire with gay male desire, of male sexuality with female sexuality, and on why many HAW women did not feel recognised. Although some of HAW's women saw potential in the transgressive qualities of politicised drag (i.e. adapting seemingly 'feminine' attributes and attire by (gay) men) to undermine patriarchal structures to some extent, others claimed such politics would, contrary to their intention, reproduce the violence of gender roles, and thus opposed or considered them inapplicable in a lesbian context.<sup>46</sup>

True, the conception of homosexuality's constant and fundamental opposition to 'normality' might seem a little far-fetched, just as the attempt to give a political form to the incommensurable, non-integrable aspects of desire and sexuality appears over-hasty. Moreover, the lack of awareness regarding gender(ed) differences is undoubtedly questionable. But it is still remarkable how this radical conceptualisation confidently insisted on an impossibility to integrate homosexuals *as* homosexuals: 'Individuals are integrated into reproductive processes *because* of their economic function and not *despite* their sexual "specificity"'.<sup>47</sup> For them, this specificity of homosexuality as a *desire* could simply not be integrated as labour force or through consumerism, hence all ideas of liberated homosexuality in an unfree society were rejected. All (legal) liberalisations were seen only as forms of toleration, of pseudo freedom not capable to account for homosexuality as a desire. The point here is certainly not to dismiss some of the valid critiques from above, but for now, to follow the *Tunten* faction's ideas and grasp the scope of these conceptualisations; for they also seem, contrary to their own tacit presuppositions, to transcend boundaries, identitarian as well as societal ones.

As, for them, homosexuality showcases the socially constructed nature of patriarchal imaginaries of a gender opposition, of a fixed gender binary – by and through its sheer existence as a fact *outside* of this binary (the 'permanent attack') – they also assumed an inherent and deconstructive non-integrability. This claim was in fact of substantial significance to the whole idea of the political (effectiveness of a) *Tunte* and of its political visibility. Irreducible for but implicit in this idea of homosexuality's fundamental opposition to bourgeois sexual morality, is the distinction between desire and identity which theoretically warrants for the non-integrable, fundamentally norm-subverting qualities of homosexuality (as desire).<sup>48</sup> In *this* way, homosexuality gets to be the rigorous antagonist to 'normality' (i.e. compulsory heterosexuality, the male/female binary, fixed gender roles and male domination), turning the process of making homosexuality public into a force of disintegration:

Under current circumstances the public disclosure of being gay contains an anti-social element. The insecurity of bourgeois consciousness stems also from the fact that homosexuality exists in spite of prohibition, persecution and taboo and has maintained its 'unnatural love life' throughout history.<sup>49</sup>

While, they argued, the spectre of homosexuality had already been haunting hetero-normality with its fundamentally norm-subverting qualities, its disintegrative forces would really unfold

in the process of *politicising* homosexuality publicly. Even though there is no direct reference in the *Tuntenstreit* to the term visibility, they are constantly thinking about the public sphere and the political relationship between public and private. As mentioned above, I want to read these ideas as a specific way to theorise radical visibility. Following the *Tunten* faction's ideas, one can think of visibility as not simply just representation, but as a form of political public action and as political potency: 'Homosexuals leaving their ghetto confront head-on those bourgeois norms, which regard the fulfilment of sexual desires, particularly same sex "fornication", as a purely private matter'.<sup>50</sup>

If it is true, that bourgeois sexual morality constantly confines its 'deviations' to the private sphere – not only individualising and depoliticising those 'deviations' but also obscuring itself and its discriminatory structures by marginalising its constitutive other – then the act of 'dragging' (homo-)sexuality into the public sphere becomes a political, even a revolutionary act: by showcasing the operating principles of dominant societal norms and unveiling the creation and reproduction of a specific 'normality'.<sup>51</sup>

For Polit-*Tunten*, making their non-heterosexuality public through new ways of appearance would subvert dominant organisational principles of society by exposing what is taken for granted. In this case, what sexuality seems to be after all: "Heterosexuality" is literally the name for sexuality in general. ... From these figures of speech, we see how the concept of Man is defined by the concept of the male'.<sup>52</sup> Aiming at exposing and simultaneously overturning these structures, the *Tunten* faction showed 'no interest in solving ... the homosexual issue as part of a minority issue' and were also 'not concerned with a justification of homosexuality or its effective integration into society'.<sup>53</sup> To put it otherwise, they were neither concerned with identity politics as part of a civil rights approach, nor with proposing (new) solutions to a seemingly familiar (minority) problem, but instead with a critique of what was being treated as problematic in general.

Here, it is important to recall where the *Tunten* faction saw the differences between Polit-*Tunten* and 'regular' (i.e. unpolitical) drag queens, especially since in hindsight the line between the two often seems rather blurred: Polit-*Tunten* saw the difference mainly in ways of public appearance (aesthetics) and attitude. They argued that 'regular' drag queens only imitated women – even in sometimes excessive or stereotypical ways – but did not play with or break stereotypical or cliché ideas of gender; and further that they would only use drag in the confines of private settings (e.g. at drag balls) in order to be able to seclude themselves back into their 'regular' bourgeois lives. Polit-*Tunten*, by contrast, 'objected to the idea of a "double life" that encouraged feelings of inferiority while re-enforcing the notion of some "normal" ideal'.<sup>54</sup> For them, homosexuality had to be always visible/recognisable. Contrary to this rather dogmatic demand, Polit-*Tunten* were not in drag all the time. But for them, their (political) attitude made all the difference as the politicisation of the private and the personal was seen as a constant (and not just a strategic) element of their politics. The refusal to play by the rules of 'normality', and to use the display of difference as a means of disrupting the division between private and public was the basis of their critique towards what they saw as unpolitical drag practices.<sup>55</sup> Such 'unpolitical forms' of drag (at parties or

balls) were not objected to because they showcased the performative qualities of gender or sometimes attempted to play with gender stereotypes, but precisely 'because it separated a realm of performance from that of reality' reproducing the division between public and private. In this context, I follow van Cleef's claim that maintaining visibility became somewhat mandatory for the Polit-*Tunten*'s political practice and self-understanding.<sup>56</sup> However, this was precisely because (homosexual) visibility for and in itself was seen as one means of *revolutionary* change.

Consequently, the *Tunten* faction claimed they were the ones 'concerned with an independent gay contribution to emancipation', whereas they accused the dogmatic Marxist faction to only see 'gay liberation as a special interest group' within a larger socialist struggle.<sup>57</sup> Instead, their contribution insisted on the rootedness of gender roles in societal and material conditions and, therefore, on their performativity and changeability, which they attempted to showcase through *specific* forms of public drag and gender mis- or re-performance by appropriating and breaking certain aspects of stereotypical ideas of gender. With such a concept of visibility, they tried to undermine 'the gender norms ... responsible for oppression' and highlighted *en passant* the crucial role patriarchy and misogyny played in discrimination against gays in general and against *Tunten* in particular.<sup>58</sup>

Although being a Polit-*Tunte* was seen as a specific (and very effective) form of public expression of one's homosexuality – and its non-integrative aspects – this way of being visible as different from 'normality' or perhaps even as being opposed to this 'normality' was not only a simple individual play with gender: its goal was in fact to create a rupture through which the coercive structures (as well as their economic basis) leading to the creation of seemingly natural gender roles should be brought to attention and, in the end, abolished. If at this point, we recall the example from the beginning of this text, we get an idea that crashing 'regular' drag shows may not only be understood as a means of provocation but also as an expression of the politicisation of the personal, of making it public. Even though it might be tempting to look at such actions only as individual ones with only limited impact, it might be more rewarding to consider them as part of an attempt to call into question the conditions under which one was able to be visible after all; that is, as an attempt to bridge the supposed contradiction between individual and collective emancipation.

I also consider the politics and aesthetics of Polit-*Tunten* as 'an expression of personal identity and a political act' of trying 'to achieve personal and societal visibility and liberation'.<sup>59</sup> But this needs further explanation: To view *Tunten* politics simply as subjectivist or voluntarist politics would result from an inaccurate engagement with these politics. Surely, their practices were subjectivist in the sense that they started from the individual, their needs and desires, but their focus on subjectivity was not a result of a lack of conceptual work or theoretical understanding – it was also a reaction to the movement's supposedly well-trodden paths and seemed necessary to enable new forms of politics. Of course, they were aware that needs and desires are mediated by the respective societal conditions, but they also wanted to allow themselves to break new political ground and politicise the everyday. The argument of a lacking collectivity is often made regarding the idea of norm subversion through performance,

especially when such practices are analysed via an oversimplified model of individual (on-stage) performers. But in this context, it is important to keep in mind the respective public sphere the *Tunten* faction had in mind: Indeed, the bourgeois public sphere claimed and always claims to be open and accessible to all, when it is in fact structured by multiple exclusions based on gender, race, class and/or sexuality.<sup>60</sup> Polit-*Tunten* took advantage of this claim and tried to take up space in this (rather hostile) and exclusionary public. For them, the exclusionary structures of bourgeois sexual morality were *essential* and necessary characteristics of the public sphere and, therefore, provided the conditions for the possibility of transformation. In this sense again, making homosexuality public became a struggle against a fundamental anti-gay public sphere and a radical challenge to its fundamental structures. Of course, re- and misinterpreting or rather doing gender otherwise takes place or rather takes a place in public.<sup>61</sup> *Tunten* politics constitutively referred to *the* public, because it was only *in* public, *through* public recognition that their politics could unfold their anticipated revolutionary potential. In this way, these efforts are also embedded in socialist traditions of collective action, constituting a counterpublic.

At the risk of proposing too benevolent a reading, their ideas conceptualised a revolutionary transformation of societal structures and even the possibility of an overarching redistribution or reorganisation of goods, privileges, relationships, etc. 'The radical gay liberation movement starts off with combining its work for its own, initially denied, bourgeois emancipation with criticizing the prevailing heterosexual norms, whose dissolution will become possible on a transformed social basis'.<sup>62</sup> As mentioned earlier, for the *Tunten* faction all norms were based on heterosexual, patriarchal structures which in turn were seen as fundamental aspects of capitalism and its specific way of distributing power, privileges and goods. Therefore, they saw their critique and their desire to get rid of these norms ('working for (and going beyond) one's bourgeois emancipation') also as an anticipation of a societal transformation that would enable not simply a dissolution of these norms altogether but the creation of completely new ones. In sum, a dissolution of one fundamental aspect of how society is organised, for them, also entailed a reorganisation of (power) relations and, consequently though implicitly, of the ways how means of social participation are distributed. An argument similar to what feminist scholars have called the dual character of counterpublics: internally creating 'a consciousness of community and solidarity' while externally challenging dominant societal structures 'through political activity and theoretical critique'.<sup>63</sup>

At this point, it should have become clearer here what exactly constituted the sociopolitical explosiveness and revolutionary character of *Tunten* politics: 'There are no natural, trans-historical gender roles, is what we want to hurl at the anti-gay public!'<sup>64</sup> Laying bare the performative character of gender, that every gender must constantly be performed and that the compulsion to do so is determined largely by societal power structures (i.e. capitalist and patriarchal relations), they wanted to abolish these structures and social divisions, and with them, the psychological, emotional, economic and, of course, sexual pauperisation they resulted in. As shown, they understood homosexuality as 'a matter challenging the main principles of class rule', meaning that a visible *and* politicised homosexuality became their lever for

abolishing existing gender roles, patriarchy, etc.<sup>65</sup> Their goal was not simply to engender a casting off of the tremendously heavy burden of enforced and imposed gender relations and their strict limits compelling everyone to always behave in a certain gendered and fixed identitarian way. Instead, their goal was to strike a severe blow to one of the integral principles of capitalism and its processes of (re-)production: the identification of individuals along the lines of gender and sexuality.

The *Tunten* faction were often confronted by rather dogmatic Marxist activists who were not as confident in the political potency of gender transgression – specifically arguing *all* drag practices were in fact either false immediacy, but in any case impossible to convey to the working class and an impediment to collective socialist emancipation.<sup>66</sup> Yet, they still insisted that conformity to mainstream ideas of gender would not help an emancipatory project but only reproduce societal divisions that needed to be fought:

The specific approach of male feminism, to appear wearing make-up, 'feminine' or with a *pink triangle*, is *one* means and simultaneously a necessity for gay men in order to rupture the imposed division between private and public, a division that has become second nature.<sup>67</sup>

For the *Tunten* faction, it was evident that an important part of bourgeois sexual morality was the (patriarchal) separation of the ('male') public from the ('female') private sphere resulting in a gendered division of labour and the production of respective gender roles (i.e. the male–female binary). Therefore, they argued that 'the oppression of homosexuals can be traced back to the inequality of the sexes and in turn to its economic causes' turning gender relations into a battle ground for transformation.<sup>68</sup> Here it becomes clear how they, despite being engaged thoroughly in materialist analysis, could at the same time criticise the dogmatic Marxist faction for their exclusive focus on class as the main category for analysis and their sole use of the terminology of 'scientific socialism'. From their perspective, such a focus was insufficient for a comprehensive understanding of the oppression of (homo-)sexuality. Their approach, by contrast, also relied heavily on Marxism but was influenced by feminist and psychoanalytical thought. To explain the role patriarchal structures and misogyny played in the aggressive disapproval of *Tunten* (also among homosexuals), they leaned on Martin Dannecker's and Reimut Reiche's psychoanalytical study *Der Gewöhnliche Homosexuelle* (The Ordinary Homosexual, 1974) where the manifestations of anti-gay sentiment among homosexuals are thought of as an expression of a lack of gay self-acceptance. Moreover, and often implicitly, *Tunten* made eclectic and critical use of ideas and critiques from West Germany's early second-wave feminism as well as international debates in feminist cultural anthropology (e.g. Margaret Mead). In a similar fashion, they engaged with French cultural theory, especially Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* and Guy Hocquenghem's *Homosexual Desire*.

These influences played into their claim that modern class society 'only reinforced the culturally already established distribution of gender roles and thereby provided the model for dividing

society into two classes'.<sup>69</sup> Thus, analysing the 'differentiation of gender roles' became central, arguing that the 'genesis of male "homosexuality" as a special category in the conceptual apparatus alongside "heterosexuality" is thus *only* possible through an analysis of the socio-cultural development of the oppression of women'.<sup>70</sup> Oversimplified analyses of class division and composition could not however 'demonstrate the degree and form of oppression [of homosexuality], but only different capabilities of evading negative sanctions'.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, they dismissed all hope for tolerance or acceptance by mainstream society as again reproducing the seemingly 'natural' societal divisions and 'socially produced terms such as "majority", "heterosexuality", etc'.<sup>72</sup> Restricting one's analysis to the principal contradiction between capital and labour, they claimed, meant abstracting from sensual, concrete experiences: ultimately leading to an integrationist, non-revolutionary, non-materialist position.

Although Polit-*Tunten* were at times sceptical of the movement's ability to 'achieve an all-around transformation of everyday practices' – imagined only possible 'beyond capitalism' – their struggle still started from everyday life and a politicisation of the personal where the liberation of homosexuality meant the liberation of everyone's sexuality: 'for heterosexuals and gays to recognise their respective sexualities only as different forms of a fully developed sexuality'.<sup>73</sup> However, starting from oneself was not only a fun endeavour but just as much about embracing the sometimes painful unknown: 'To experience what gayness is, you have to experiment, to risk yourself' – as another group of activists put it. Being constantly visible as gay in public was definitely a risk to one's physical integrity, one's job security, but also a risk to one's own ideas of gender.<sup>74</sup> Role models for this were, again, the Italian and French activists who 'took their *Tuntigkeit* for granted the same way the homophile HAW gays took their masculinity'.<sup>75</sup> Playing with gender roles and gender expectations by breaking stereotypical notions of gender was also a way to critically engage with one's own masculinity by actively embracing one's 'feminine attributes' and, in the end, counter male domination within oneself.<sup>76</sup> Polit-*Tunten* demonstrated that '[r]ole assignments [were] not based on biological gender differences ... but are socially constructed'.<sup>77</sup> Their at times desperate struggle was also directed at what they perceived as an obsession with masculinity within the gay liberation movement but even more so in the West German Left, where after the horrors of Nazism 'the bourgeois ideal of heterosexual masculinity [did] not survive in the image of the blue-eyed, blond, Parzival-like hero, but as a collective ideal of muscular virility ... men who know how to use a sickle, hammer or compass and, most definitely, the penis'.<sup>78</sup> For the *Tunten* faction, the apotheosis of masculinity within the (gay) Left was again a result of the dismissal of a politicisation of the personal, of gender relations, of sexuality and adhered to existing patriarchal structures. Thus, the strict division between the political and the private realm was seen as the main obstacle to abolishing the 'violent relationship between man and woman' as well as its ensuing 'all-around evolvement of sexuality'.<sup>79</sup>

Obviously, many of the above aspects call to mind other disputes within the (West German) Left during the 1970s, like feminism's fierce critiques of gender relations, patriarchal structures or traditional leftist concepts of revolution upholding the division between public and private. Given that it shares a lot of elements crucial to feminist thought, it might be tempting to refer to

the *Tunten* faction's thinking as idiosyncratic *gay feminism*. But considering its lack of serious interest in women's issues, its nearly exclusive focus on (male) homosexuality, and its claims that the figure of the *Tunte* was a way to render homosexuality, or rather certain gay men, visible, their feminism was, casually speaking, more gay than it was feminist.<sup>80</sup> Despite these oversights, and although this 'gay feminist' position and its critique did not prevail, in this article I have tried to illustrate why it is nevertheless rewarding to turn to the *Tunten* faction's thought: The reconstruction of their theoretical and conceptual efforts and their peculiar insistence on the incommensurable and non-integrative, sometimes even ambiguous and contradictory aspects of (homo-)sexuality adds not only to an understanding of West German gay liberation activists' practices (political, private or theoretical) but also how they related to their surrounding world and to themselves. The fact that their thinking was strongly underpinned by both the hypothesis of (sexual) oppression and hopes for liberation and social revolution, points to the high spirit of optimism of the 1970s while also illustrating how desires found their way into activist theory production. Both these aspects, in turn, inform understandings of the disappointments, the bitterness and withdrawals of some radical activists by the end of the 1970s, but may just as much broaden genealogies of gay liberation in West Germany and beyond.<sup>81</sup>

This article has emphasised how many of the *Tunten* faction's ideas resulted from a conceptualisation of a fundamental subversive (homosexual) desire and how they tried, on this basis, to create inherently political subjectivities enabling them to appear and act in the public sphere, to take up space and to be identified by and in public *as gay* (either as a Polit-*Tunte* or by wearing a pink triangle). In combination with the primary role they attributed to the gender binary in a patriarchally structured society and a rather strict concept of the public sphere structured by bourgeois sexual morality, they saw these practices as (potentially) *revolutionary*, as a direct confrontation to the West German (public and its) 'normality'. Such a conceptualisation of visibility exceeds claims to individual representation (in public, media, discourse, etc.) and identitarian fixation as it is, just like Polit-*Tunten* themselves, only peripherally concerned with legibility or acceptance (in or by mainstream society). Rather, it resembles a theoretical expression and reflection of a political *practice* of gender presentation which aimed to transform and to revolutionise the conditions under which matters of integration and acceptance pose themselves in the first place (i.e. the division of private and public, binary between sexes, patriarchy, gender relations etc.).<sup>82</sup> Therefore, one could argue that their way of politicising gender and gender presentation rather than perhaps representing a specific version of feminism partly anticipated aspects of contemporary *queer* theory and activism. Although this theorisation of publicity/visibility was neither unique nor singular to the *Tunten* faction, the context and the peculiar discussions around their somewhat eclectic (Freudo-)Marxist materialism seem reason enough to take their ideas for a specific contribution to radical gay leftist theory.<sup>83</sup> In fact, the dialectic of the activist's precarious relationship with the radical Left might have facilitated the necessity of independent and autonomous theorising efforts. Their constant navigating between individual emancipation and collective liberation, the continuous reflection upon political action and the ways in which being publicly recognisable as gay would in fact change social conditions, illuminate

the close and reciprocal relationship conceptual efforts had with their political practices and vice versa. Through a reconstruction of the *Tuntenstreit's* theoretical motifs, of the enormous amount of (collective) effort that must have been put into the texts as well as of the elaborateness of the argumentation, this article has tried to highlight theoretical or conceptual work not as a minor or secondary, but a core aspect of West German radical gay liberation at the time.

But in order to at least briefly outline some speculations on the relation between these theoretical efforts and today, it is first necessary to further situate the ways Polit-*Tunten* politicised (homosexual) desire within the developments of the (later) 1970s. It is important to notice how political discussions around desire, sexuality, identity and liberation, contested as they were in West Germany's gay liberation movement, shifted significantly. Some of its political aspirations even withered away. This was surely due to practical reasons and a result of political losses, disappointments, institutionalisations and a turn towards questions of the everyday, which are also reflected in certain changes in theorising and *thinking* about sexuality and desire: The most known theoretical expression of this development is probably Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*.<sup>84</sup> With Foucault's critique of the repression hypothesis, discussions shifted more and more to sexuality's entanglements with power and how the 'sexual revolution' which provided a language for politicising sexuality and subjectivity in a new way was also a gateway for homosexuality to again enter the realm of power and control – this time in the form of an identity.<sup>85</sup>

Some of these aspects might help with answering the question of why *Tunten* politics were not able to redeem the hopes for revolutionary change. A too heavy bet on the political qualities of coming out together with a strict (almost ontological) contra-position of homosexuality and bourgeois sexual morality led them to underestimate capitalism's integrative abilities and the entanglements with power – which were, in fact, aspects that the more dogmatic Marxist activists and later Foucault hinted to. Furthermore, they took rather lightly the danger of introducing an anti-normative normativity, insofar as they implicitly deemed certain subjectivities and actions as revolutionary while others were denounced (in this context e.g. as 'homophile'). Further, they perhaps overemphasised the subjective side of political action even if they conceptualised it as collective practice resulting in a rather vanguard, actionist approach to politics. But, like many other gay leftists (not only in West Germany), they hoped that the abjectness of homosexuality pointed to an inherent revolutionary potential that would not simply liberate gays and lesbians but herald *universal* transformation. Considering the persistent repression and rejection of homosexuality in 1970s West Germany, such conceptualisations do not seem completely unreasonable, even less so if one considers them a strategy to emphasise possibilities of subversion in a seemingly all-enclosing society. Such strategic arguments became common in the New Left as a response to the ongoing shifts and fragmentations of political struggles and (the loss of) respective revolutionary subjects. A famous example might be Herbert Marcuse's turn towards those 'outside the democratic process'; that is, marginalised groups, *outcasts* and *outsiders* to whom he ascribes a revolutionary potential. Because they were most at the mercy of capitalism's contradictions, he claimed, 'their opposition is

revolutionary even if their consciousness is not. Their opposition ... violates the rules of the game and, in doing so, reveals it as a rigged game'.<sup>86</sup> Despite their critical discussion of Marcuse, similarities are evident in the activists' conceptualisation of homosexuality as fundamentally subversive. However, crediting homosexual desire with the ability to showcase the construction of societal norms and an according 'normality' was not only a strategy of their social criticism but, as said above, an expression of how their own desires and wishes found a way into their thinking. At the same time, this aspect is at least precariously close to an essentialising of this revolutionary potential – and in that sense contradicting the Polit-*Tunten's* own analysis.<sup>87</sup> It is interesting in this context that they underestimated what Marcuse coined 'repressive desublimation' – processes of actual social and/or cultural liberalisations (e.g. sexual liberalisation) which in the guise of progress in fact support existing structures of domination by way of a (controlled, i.e. repressive) immediate satisfaction of needs, (controlled) allowance of certain transgressions, commodification of these liberalisations, etc.<sup>88</sup>

To take the *Tuntenstreit* as a history of the present, one needs to deeply and critically engage with the conceptual and theoretical work that makes up the activists' social criticism (including its conflicts and contradictions) *while* not disavowing (later) developments – especially when establishing a relation between these works to the present day. If for Hardt the somewhat uncanny familiarity of many 1970s social movements stems from the fact that 'they are so like us, with so many of the same dreams and problems' one could pose the question whether some of their aspects might still be seen as 'signs of undetonated energy from past revolutions'.<sup>89</sup> Joining Freeman here, I would contend that some 'dreams' of subversive and rebellious desires (similar to those in *Tunten* politics) still haunt the present, as they constantly point towards desire's polymorphic qualities and, hence, to the indeterminacy of concepts of sexual identity – even in today's highly individualised, diversified, compartmentalised and over- as well as desexualised capitalism in the Global North. If the Polit-*Tunten's* (theoretical) distinction between desire and identity and their insistence on the non-integrational, unsatisfied and incommensurable aspects of desire is not just an idiosyncrasy of their time but in fact haunts ours, being attentive to such spectres – or even taking *Tunten* politics for *Oneiroi* – helps to map out the relations between this particular form of *gay* theory production and contemporary discussions around queer theories and materialisms. Understood as (conceptual) interventions, as bound up in their historical situation as they might be, their peculiar ideas point to the lingering relevance of (re-)posing the question of a politicisation of desire and sexuality beyond the realm of identity politics. When the inherent ambiguity of desire they insisted upon is not pushed aside too easily, the question if and how desire eludes structures of power could help to navigate sexuality's entanglements with these structures while, at the same time, accounting for ongoing repression.<sup>90</sup>

Yet, to call the *Tunten* faction's theoretical and conceptual work queer materialism *avant la lettre* might be a bit far-fetched. But as they focussed their critique on binary gender relations, gender roles and structures of normativity (grounded in a materialist analysis of society), it is not surprising their political practice foregrounded aspects that they thought eluded and, eventually, undermined these very structures. Despite their sometimes lip-

service-like references to feminist or women's issues and the often one-sided focus on male homosexuality, their call to abolish (gender) binaries still indicates a desire to transcend such limitations. Just as their efforts to revolutionise the material conditions which are determining how one is able to *relate* to one another and to the surrounding world by seeking to give certain subjectivities a political form, entail elements of anti-identitarian politics.<sup>91</sup> So, if the Polit-*Tunten*'s concepts are seen as attempts, however unsuccessful and limited, to provide an answer to the pressing question of *such* a revolution's political subject and its appearance – in public spaces, as looks, as aesthetics – they indeed anticipated aspects of contemporary critical, queer (materialist) theory.<sup>92</sup> But, translating the *Tuntenstreit* to the present cannot mean to just take up or reactivate the Polit-*Tunten*'s ideas, even less to provide ready-made answers to contemporary problems: it is first and foremost about acknowledging the peculiar and dis/continuous relation to the present I have tried to outline here. Some of their dreams and imaginaries might feel ever so familiar because an emphatic collective (sexual) emancipation is indeed yet to come. This adjournment *sine die* seems to me the reason why aspects of the *Tuntenstreit* do have a claim to be signs of undetonated energy. If so, to put it with Walter Benjamin, that 'claim cannot be settled cheaply'.<sup>93</sup>

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> If not marked otherwise, all translations from German are my own. Throughout the 1970s, West German gay liberation groups organised circulating campaigns over Pentecost (not for religious reasons but rather because it is a national holiday).

<sup>2</sup> See brochure 'Pentecost Campaign', pp. 16–17, Schwules Museum\*, Berlin: SL HAW: Diskussionen und Öffentlichkeit Nr. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Egmont Fassbinder, 'Mein schönes "schwules" Schöneberg', in Johanna Muschelknautz and Petra Zwaka (eds), *Berlin-Schöneberg: Blicke ins Quartier. 1949–2000*, (Berlin: Janus, 2001), pp. 153–60, here p. 156.

<sup>4</sup> See 'Diskussion am Pfingstsonntag' in HAW info 12, pp. 17–18, Schwules Museum\*, Berlin: SL HAW: Struktur Nr. 9a; Ronald van Cleef, *A Tale of Two Movements? Gay Radicalism in West Germany, 1969–1989* (Berlin: Metropol, 2022), p. 79; or Craig Griffiths, *The Ambivalence of Gay Liberation: Male Homosexual Politics in 1970s West Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 166.

<sup>5</sup> The German term *Tunte* (pl. *Tunten*) – also among gays themselves – was and still is a slur term for (seemingly effeminate) gay men. It was, just as another slur term for gay men: *schwul*, appropriated by many gay activists in the 1970s. *Tunte* might be translated as queen or fairy, meaning that *Tuntenstreit* would then read queens' dispute. However, I chose not to translate the term as the specific political appropriation and the political figure seems to me very much bound to 1970s West Germany. Also, I want to take the activists' self-designation seriously.

<sup>6</sup> The three main texts were later republished by the first German gay publishing house with the title *Tuntenstreit*: Verlag Rosa Winkel (ed.), *Tuntenstreit: Theoriediskussion der Homosexuellen Aktion Westberlin* (Westberlin: Verlag Rosa Winkel, 1975). Just as its immediate precursors, like the so-called 'feminist paper', these articles were written by respective members of HAW (who were mostly (male) students with a middle-class background).

<sup>7</sup> While HAW was generally divided along these lines, individual activists were often not as clearly positioned. For instance, Frieda von Rechenberg, an influential *Tunte*, wrote an early yet sympathetic critique of *Tunten* politics: 'an meine schwestern in der feministengruppe', Schwules Museum\*, Berlin: SL HAW: Diskussionen und Öffentlichkeit Nr. 16. See also Patrick Henze, *Schwule Emanzipation und ihre Konflikte: Zur westdeutschen Schwulenbewegung der 1970er Jahre* (Berlin: Querverlag, 2019), p. 307.

<sup>8</sup> Benedikt Sepp, *Das Prinzip Bewegung. Theorie, Praxis und Radikalisierung in der West-Berliner Linken 1961–1972* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2023), p. 223. Meticulously, Sepp traces the subtle dogmatisation process of the anti-authoritarian student movement in West Germany and West Berlin which culminated in the formation of the first 'K-Gruppen' (various sectarian Marxist–Leninist, Maoist or communist groups).

<sup>9</sup> SEW was the sister party of and financed by GDR's Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED)). To a certain extent, SEW is comparable to the German Communist Party (DKP) in the FRG or even to some 'K-Gruppen'. For the mélange of leftist groups at the time see also: Timothy Scott Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties: The Antiauthoritarian Revolt, 1962–1978* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Later, the *Tunten* faction read and discussed works by Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and others. See Elmar Kraushaar, 'Für uns fing 1971 die Welt neu an', soziopolis, Hamburg (2021), <https://www.soziopolis.de/fuer-uns-fing-1971-die-welt-neu-an.html>.

<sup>11</sup> For Frankfurt, see Jannis Plastargias, *RotZSchwul: Der Beginn einer Bewegung (1971–1975)* (Berlin: Querverlag, 2015), pp. 39–40. For Hamburg, see Bernhard Rosenkranz and Gottfried Lorenz (eds), *Hamburg auf anderen Wegen. Die Geschichte des schwulen Lebens in der Hansestadt* (Hamburg: Lambda-Ed., 2005), pp. 154–55 and Bernhard Rosenkranz, 'Kerle mit Vollbart und Fummel', Berlin (2008), [http://www.gigi-online.de/Kerle\\_mit\\_Vollbart55.htm](http://www.gigi-online.de/Kerle_mit_Vollbart55.htm). For the GDR, see Teresa Tammer, 'Warme Brüder im Kalten Krieg: Die DDR-Schwulenbewegung und das geteilte Deutschland in den 1970er und 1980er Jahren' (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), pp. 146–48 or Josie McLellan, 'From Private Photography to Mass Circulation: The Queering of East German Visual Culture, 1968–1989', *Central European History* 48:3 (2015), pp. 405–23, esp. pp. 414–15. However, homosexual action groups in cities other than West Berlin were usually not as strongly divided.

<sup>12</sup> Martin Dannecker and Reimut Reiche, 'Die kollektive Neurose der Homosexuellen', *Leviathan* 2:1 (1973), pp. 61–79.

<sup>13</sup> Carsten Balzer, 'The Beauty and the Beast: Reflections about Socio-Historical and Subcultural Context of Drag Queens and "Tunten" in Berlin', *Journal of Homosexuality* 46:3–4 (2004), pp. 55–71, here p. 60.

<sup>14</sup> Griffiths, *The Ambivalence*, p. 168. Here, engaging with 'inner femaleness' or 'femininity' meant first and foremost showcasing or playing with appearance and gender presentation. For this reason, I agree with Griffiths, Evans and Tremblay in the decision not to speak of *Tunten* as trans\* activists or part of a trans\* subculture. Evans notes in this regard: 'Participants in the *Tuntenstreit* did not understand themselves as trans\*. One might certainly consider the *Tunte* as the embodiment of transing – that is, as a challenge to the supposed rootedness of gender. However, to claim sissies as trans\* in an identitarian sense overlooks the complicated place of drag in the homonormative politics of the German gay and labor movements.' See Jennifer V. Evans, *The Queer Art of History. Queer Kinship after Fascism* (Durham: Duke University Press,

- 2023), pp. 141–42. Also, see Sébastien Tremblay, *A Badge of Injury. The Pink Triangle as Global Symbol of Memory* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024), p. 35.
- <sup>15</sup> Rosenkranz, ‘Kerle mit Vollbart und Fummel’. See also Balzer, ‘Beauty and the Beast’, p. 60.
- <sup>16</sup> Henze, *Schwule Emanzipation*, pp. 277–80, or Balzer, ‘Beauty and the Beast’, p. 60.
- <sup>17</sup> Activist *Baby Jane* was interviewed by Henze. See Henze, *Schwule Emanzipation*, p. 277.
- <sup>18</sup> See for the history and the importance of the German homophile movement, Andreas Pretzel and Volker Weiß (eds), *Ohnmacht und Aufbegehren. Homosexuelle Männer in der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Hamburg: Männerschwarm, 2010).
- <sup>19</sup> For works with an explicit focus on 1970s West Germany’s gay liberation movement, see Janin Afken and Benedikt Wolf (eds), *Sexual Culture in Germany in the 1970s. A Golden Age for Queers?* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Griffiths, *The Ambivalence*; Henze, *Schwule Emanzipation*; van Cleef, *A Tale*; Jake Newsome, *Pink Triangle Legacies: Coming out of the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022); Tremblay, *A Badge of Injury*; Christopher Ewing, *The Color of Desire: The Queer Politics of Race in the Federal Republic of Germany after 1970* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2023); Andreas Pretzel and Volker Weiß (eds), *Rosa Radikale: Die Schwulenbewegung der 1970er Jahre* (Hamburg: Männerschwarm, 2012); Evans, *The Queer Art* or Benno Gammerl, *Anders Fühlen. Schwules und Lesbisches Leben in der Bundesrepublik. Eine Emotionengeschichte* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2019). For a general interest in theoretical or conceptual work from the 1970s, see Philipp Felsch, *The Summer of Theory: History of a Rebellion, 1960–1990* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021) or Michael Hardt, *The Subversive Seventies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023). For re-editions of gay liberationist texts, see for example Guy Hocquenghem, *Gay Liberation after May ’68* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022); Mario Mieli, *Towards a Gay Communism. Elements of a Homosexual Critique* (London: Pluto Press, 2019); Gay Left Collective, *Homosexuality: Power and Politics* (London: Verso, 2018); Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor (ed.), *How We Get Free. Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017). There certainly is a similar interest in feminist thought of the 1970s (see for example Silvia Federici, Monique Wittig, Shulamith Firestone).
- <sup>20</sup> See for example Patrick Henze, ‘Perversion of Society: Rosa von Praunheim and Martin Dannecker’s Film *It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, but the Society in Which He Lives* (1971) as the Initiation of the Golden Age of the Radical Left Gay Movement in West Germany’, in *Sexual Culture in Germany in the 1970s*, pp. 89–117; Henze, *Schwule Emanzipation*, pp. 153–183; or Rosa von Praunheim, ‘Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation in der er lebt oder “Das Glück auf der Toilette” – Nach dem Schwulenfilm’, in *Rosa Radikale*, pp. 33–38.
- <sup>21</sup> Henze, ‘Perversion of Society’, p. 97. Dannecker was one of the most important figures in the movement and, as many activists in Frankfurt’s influential group *RotZSchwul*, strongly influenced by Frankfurt School critical theory and Freudian psychoanalysis. Although aspects of Frankfurt School critical theory were discussed in many groups through the film or texts by influential figures like Dannecker, it is important to notice that it was not formative to all theory production – groups in other cities were influenced by other theories/theorists. See for example, the rather Marxist–Leninist working paper ‘Grundsatzaussage: Sexualität und Herrschaft’ by Homosexuelle Interessengemeinschaft Düsseldorf (HID) from 1973, *Centrum Schwule Geschichte, Ordner Nr. 270, as FB*.
- <sup>22</sup> Henze, *Schwule Emanzipation*, p. 361.
- <sup>23</sup> See van Cleef, *A Tale*, pp. 81–3; Henze, *Schwule Emanzipation*, pp. 312–14; Griffiths, *The Ambivalence*, pp. 167–68; Newsome, *Pink Triangle Legacies*, p. 90; or Tremblay, *A Badge of Injury*, pp. 34–7.
- <sup>24</sup> Van Cleef, *A Tale*, p. 83. See also Craig Griffiths, ‘Konkurrierende Pfade der Emanzipation. Der Tuntentstreit (1973–1975) und die Frage des “respektablen” Auftretens’, in *Rosa Radikale*, pp. 143–59, here p. 156.
- <sup>25</sup> Here Jeffrey Masten’s famous word comes to mind: ‘There can be no nuanced cultural history of early modern sex and gender without spelling out its terms’, see Jeffrey Masten, *Queer Philologies: Sex, Language, and Affect in Shakespeare’s Time* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2016), p. 16. The same could be said for a historiography of radical gay liberation: it needs a spelling out of its theory production.
- <sup>26</sup> Hardt, *The Subversive Seventies*, p. 9.
- <sup>27</sup> For an intriguing discussion of this term, see Mike Laufenberg, *Queere Theorien zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2022), pp. 55–66. See also Don Mager, ‘Gay Theories of Gender Role Deviance’, *SubStance* 14.1 (1985), pp. 32–48. Both, however, are using French and Italian gay liberation activists (i.e. Hocquenghem and Mieli) as prominent exponents.
- <sup>28</sup> I tend to think of ‘history of the present’ not so much in the sense of an updatability or compatibility with today’s discourses, but, with Foucault, rather as a history still present in peculiar ways, or, with Walter Benjamin, as a way of thinking about history that might ‘bring the present into a critical state’. See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, tr. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Belknap-Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 471.
- <sup>29</sup> Newsome, *Pink Triangle Legacies*, pp. 88–9.
- <sup>30</sup> ‘Feministengruppe der HAW: Feministenpapier’, 21 October 1973, Schwules Museum\*, Berlin: SL HAW: Arbeitsgruppen Nr. 25. This paper did not only anticipate aspects of the *Tuntentstreit* but also initiated many contentious discussions within HAW – even among members generally in favour of *Tuntent* politics (see also endnote 7).
- <sup>31</sup> The intense discussions about the pink triangle’s symbolic and (potential) political value in West Germany’s gay liberation movement started with the publication of Heinz Heger’s *The Men with the Pink Triangle* in 1972 – the first detailed account of the memories of a gay concentration camp prisoner. These discussions regained traction when AIDS activists (e.g. ACT-UP) made use of the pink triangle in the 1980s. Against the backdrop of the AIDS crisis visibility again became a means for political action and for survival, as reflected for instance in ACT-UP’s motto: Action = Life, Silence = Death.
- <sup>32</sup> ‘Vorläufige Grundsatzklärung der HAW’, 7 November 1971, p. 2, Stadtarchiv Münster (StdAMs), Rosa Geschichten. Schwul-lesbisches Archiv Münster Nr. 053.
- <sup>33</sup> Although the pink triangle is only referred to twice in the *Tuntentstreit* texts (each time in reference to the feminist paper), discussions around this symbol continued to be of great importance for the movement, particularly in Europe and North America. Both Newsome and Tremblay meticulously trace the many different (and sometimes problematic) re-appropriations of the pink triangle from a transnational perspective.
- <sup>34</sup> Helmut Ahrens et al., ‘Die Homosexualität in uns’, in *Tuntentstreit*, pp. 5–34, here p. 15.
- <sup>35</sup> ‘Feministenpapier’, p. 20, Schwules Museum\*, Berlin: SL HAW: Arbeitsgruppen Nr. 25.
- <sup>36</sup> Ahrens et al., ‘Die Homosexualität in uns’, p. 17.
- <sup>37</sup> See Mark Wiltzius, ‘Die “inneren Wirklichkeiten” der 2. deutschen Homosexuellenbewegung: Ein subjektiver Standpunkt’, in Willi Frieling (ed.), *Schwule Regungen – Schwule Bewegungen: Ein Lesebuch* (Berlin: Verlag Rosa Winkel, 1985), pp. 93–104, here p. 100. Similar conceptualisations were also present in 1970s feminist thought. For example, Monique Wittig describes ‘heterosexuality not as an institution, but as a political regime which rests on the submission and the appropriation of women’. See Monique Wittig, ‘Preface’, in

Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind and other Essays* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), xiii.) See also Silvia Federici, 'Wages against Housework', in Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), pp. 15–22 or Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (London: Verso, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', p. 27. The phrase 'Women were made to fit the "master's" needs' [Die Frau wurde vom 'Herr' auf seine Bedürfnisse zugeschnitten] works deliberately with the double meaning of the term 'Herr' (meaning master, referring to Hegel's master-slave dialectic (and implicitly to Marx' reading of it) [in German 'Herr'/'Knecht'] and meaning mister/gentleman, referring to men). This unfortunately gets lost in translation.

<sup>39</sup> 'Vorläufige Grundsatzklärung', pp. 1–2.

<sup>40</sup> Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', p. 16. See also 'Vorläufige Grundsatzklärung'.

<sup>41</sup> Gerhard Hoffmann and Reinhard v.d. Marwitz and Dieter Runze, 'Wie können Tunten Sozialisten sein? Zur Kritik der Homosexuellenunterdrückung', in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft durch Graf/Steglitz', in *Tuntenstreit*, pp. 69–106, here pp. 79–80; Hoffmann, Marwitz, Runze, 'Wie können Tunten Sozialisten sein?', pp. 85–90. See also Laufenberg, *Queere Theorien*, pp. 55–66.

<sup>42</sup> Thorsten Graf and Mimi Steglitz, 'Homosexuellenunterdrückung in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft', in *Tuntenstreit*, pp. 35–68, here p. 66 (emphasis added).

<sup>43</sup> Graf, Steglitz, 'Homosexuellenunterdrückung', pp. 50–2.

<sup>44</sup> Graf, Steglitz, 'Homosexuellenunterdrückung', p. 66.

<sup>45</sup> Thorsten Graf and Manfred Herzer, 'Zur neueren Diskussion über die Homosexualität', *Argument* 17:93 (1975), pp. 859–74, here p. 865 (emphasis added).

<sup>46</sup> See HAW-Frauengruppe, 'Über die lesbischen homosexuellen Männer', in HAW Info 15, pp. 3–4, HAW-Frauengruppe, 'Stellungnahme der haw-frauengruppe zum §218', in HAW Info 14, p. 16, Schwules Museum\*, Berlin: SL HAW: Struktur Nr. 9b or Henze, *Schwule Emanzipation*, pp. 144–49, pp. 321–35. HAW was one of the few groups in West Germany composed of men and women until the women's group decided to split in 1975 and founded *Lesbisches Aktionszentrum Westberlin* (LAZ). For its history see for example Lara Ledwa, *Mit schwulen Lesbengrüßen. Das Lesbische Aktionszentrum Westberlin (LAZ)* (Gießen: Psychosozial Verlag, 2019). Interestingly, calls for solidarity with the women's movement, or the US-American Black Panther movement for that matter, can be found in numerous HAW publications, but in-depth reflections on women's issues or questions of racism were few and far between.

<sup>47</sup> Hoffmann, Marwitz, Runze, 'Wie können Tunten Sozialisten sein?', p. 80, Fn. 30.

<sup>48</sup> Even though aspects of both sexual identity and desire seem to concur in the term *homosexuality* (Foucault's famous phrase comes to mind: 'The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species'), distinguishing between these two accounts for aspects of sexuality and desire that (at least to a certain extent) elude (identitarian) fixation or categorisation. This, to me, seems indispensable to make sense of their argument. Still, the activists identified as *Tunten* and as gay, but they were somewhat aware of the boundaries of identity categories. See for example Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', pp. 18–19.

<sup>49</sup> Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', p. 33. Such a passage – along with others like: 'Challenging the procreative intention underlying family ideology is precisely homosexuality's political issue' (ibid., p. 22) – seems to anticipate some elements of what is now called the 'antisocial' thesis in queer theory, as articulated for example in Lee Edelman's *No Future*. Although the *Tunten* did not reject homosexuality's ascribed negativity, contrary to Edelman, they did, however, strive

for a viable political future; not necessarily for a perfect social order, but in fact for (everyone's) happiness.

<sup>50</sup> Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', p. 31. Evans notes that gay visibility in Germany brought mainly legibility (meaning being legible by/for mainstream society) while the focus on liberal rights and visibility excluded and still excludes non-normative ways of queerness (Evans, *The Queer Art*, pp. 1–3). Although I would agree, the *Tuntenstreit* seems to at least complicate this assessment. Nevertheless, increased visibility opened up opportunities to create (institutionalised) community based social services to a certain extent. See Jonathan Bell (ed.), *Beyond the Politics of the Closet: Gay Rights and the American State Since the 1970s* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2020).

<sup>51</sup> This notion of critique is deeply entrenched in Marxist and critical theory's ideology critique (very prominent for example in Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*).

<sup>52</sup> Hoffmann, Marwitz, Runze, 'Wie können Tunten Sozialisten sein?', p. 72, Fn. 4a.

<sup>53</sup> Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', p. 31, p. 30.

<sup>54</sup> van Cleef, *A Tale*, p. 98.

<sup>55</sup> Wiltzius, 'Die "inneren Wirklichkeiten"', p. 100.

<sup>56</sup> van Cleef, *A Tale*, p. 98. See also Griffiths, *The Ambivalence*, p. 171 or Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', pp. 26–7; van Cleef, *A Tale*, p. 81.

<sup>57</sup> Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', p. 14. See also 'Erklärung der Feministischen Fraktion der HAW-Männergruppe', 23 October 1974, Schwules Museum\*, Berlin: SL HAW: Arbeitsgruppen Nr. 25.

<sup>58</sup> Griffiths, *The Ambivalence*, p. 170.

<sup>59</sup> Newsome, *Pink Triangle Legacies*, p. 90 (emphasis added).

<sup>60</sup> For this important (feminist) critique, see for example Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy' in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), pp. 109–42 or Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002).

<sup>61</sup> Uta Schirmer points towards the necessity of a *public*, but not exclusively subcultural, recognition for drag practices to have a *structural* political influence (even if this public has mixed abilities available to read those practices 'properly'). See Uta Schirmer, *Geschlecht anders gestalten: Drag Kinging, geschlechtliche Selbstverhältnisse und Wirklichkeiten* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010), pp. 163–68. Bini Adamczak discusses a very similar aspect in her reading of Butler, see Bini Adamczak, *Beziehungswise Revolution, 1917, 1968 und kommende* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 2017), pp. 234–37.

<sup>62</sup> Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', p. 31.

<sup>63</sup> Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics. Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 168.

<sup>64</sup> Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', p. 18. Griffiths seconds this: 'In criticizing what they perceived as the unquestioned masculinity of other gay activists, the male feminists were consciously treading in the footsteps of women's movement activists who had critiqued masculinity and misogyny on the part of male student movement leaders' (Griffiths, *The Ambivalence*, p. 175).

<sup>65</sup> Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', p. 17.

<sup>66</sup> Griffiths, 'Konkurrierende Pfade', pp. 148–49.

<sup>67</sup> Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', p. 29.

<sup>68</sup> Hoffmann, Marwitz, Runze, 'Wie können Tunten Sozialisten sein?', p. 76.

<sup>69</sup> Hoffmann, Marwitz, Runze, 'Wie können Tunten Sozialisten sein?', p. 90.

- <sup>70</sup> Hoffmann, Marwitz, Runze, 'Wie können Tunten Sozialisten sein?', p. 84, pp. 87–8 (emphasis added).
- <sup>71</sup> Hoffmann, Marwitz, Runze, 'Wie können Tunten Sozialisten sein?', p. 82.
- <sup>72</sup> Hoffmann, Marwitz, Runze, 'Wie können Tunten Sozialisten sein?', pp. 78–9.
- <sup>73</sup> Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', pp. 30–31, p. 32.
- <sup>74</sup> 'Bedürfnisfraktion der HAW', quoted in Henze, *Schwule Emanzipation*, p. 305; During the demonstration in Berlin in 1973 many activists felt the need to wear hoods not to be recognised by their employers and run the risk of losing their job. A very different example for experimenting with one's ideas of masculinity would be *RotZSchwul's* political drag dinner party (*Fummelessen*) where all participants had to dress up at home and walk through the city to the venue in drag. See Plastargias, *RotZSchwul*, pp. 39–40, p. 175.
- <sup>75</sup> Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', p. 14. *Tuntigkeit* would translate as queenliness, gaiety or faggotry.
- <sup>76</sup> For them, to fight capitalism meant 'also to fight the part in ourselves supporting this system'. See Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', p. 28.
- <sup>77</sup> Hoffmann, Marwitz, Runze, 'Wie können Tunten Sozialisten sein?', p. 84.
- <sup>78</sup> Hoffmann, Marwitz, Runze, 'Wie können Tunten Sozialisten sein?', pp. 97–8. See also Griffiths, 'Konkurrierende Pfade', p. 152 or van Cleef, *A Tale*, pp. 98–9.
- <sup>79</sup> Hoffmann, Marwitz, Runze, 'Wie können Tunten Sozialisten sein?', p. 83; Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', p. 30.
- <sup>80</sup> To be precise: it rendered mainly gay white men visible. Except for a short, ambivalent passage in 'Die Homosexualität in uns' about an encounter with two (presumably Turkish) 'guest workers' (in West Germany migrant workers were often referred to as 'guest workers' (*Gastarbeiter*) at the time), there is hardly any reflection on the relation between *Tunten* and questions of race or migration in the *Tuntenstreit*. While acknowledging the 'discriminatory situation' the migrant workers were in, the *Tunten's* account of the encounter remains stylised, distant and paternalistic. Still, it also becomes clear that there must have been curious personal encounters. Within the text's line of argument, the passage serves as an illustration of the conflicts that came with being a *Tunte*; it is, however, just as much an indication of how such encounters were structured by certain imaginaries of an orientalist sexuality. For this passage, see Ahrens et al., 'Die Homosexualität in uns', pp. 23–4 or Evans, *The Queer Art*, pp. 143–44. See also Ewing, *The Color of Desire* or Laurie Marhoefer, *Racism and the Making of Gay Rights: A Sexologist, His Student, and the Empire of Queer Love* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022).
- <sup>81</sup> See for example Elmar Kraushaar, 'Höhenflug und Absturz. Von Homolulu am Main nach Bonn in die Beethoven-Halle', in *Rosa Radikale*, pp. 80–90.
- <sup>82</sup> One might be reminded of Butler's claim made some 15 years later: '... the deconstruction of identity [by performing gender otherwise] is not the destruction of politics; rather, it establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articulated'. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 148.
- <sup>83</sup> Similar conceptualisations of political or revolutionary qualities of drag were also partly present in gay liberation groups in France, the United Kingdom or the United States, for example see Griffiths, *The Ambivalence*, p. 168. This is perhaps not too surprising, as the *Tunten* got their inspiration from French activists crashing the Pentecost demonstration and later, theoretical texts from French activists (e.g. Hocquenghem's *Homosexual Desire* or FHAR's *Rapport contre la normalité*) influenced their thinking.
- <sup>84</sup> The German translation was published as early as 1977. Didier Eribon points out that *History of Sexuality* was a direct response to radical gay liberation movements (as well as to figures like Deleuze/Guattari, Pasolini etc.). Foucault's intention, however, was to critically evaluate sexual liberation noting that repression was 'not the apt notion for thinking about the categories through which power produces "categories"', see Didier Eribon, *Insult and Making of the Gay Self* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 299. While there is still very little scholarly work done on the early reception of Foucault among gay activists in West Germany in the 1970s and 1980s, there are several hints to Foucault's influence on their thinking. See for example Kraushaar, 'Für uns fing 1971 die Welt neu an'. For the enormous influence on the Canadian gay liberation movement, see Steven Maynard, "'The Party with God": Michel Foucault, the Gay Left and the Work of Theory', *Cultural History* 5.2 (2016), pp. 122–52.
- <sup>85</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1. The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 15–51. For further developments, see for example Cathy J. Cohen, 'The Radical Potential of Queer? Twenty Years Later', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 25 (2019), pp. 140–44, or Volkmar Sigusch, 'The Neo Sexual Revolution', *Archives of Sexual Behaviour* 4 (1998), pp. 331–59; See also Samuel Clowes Huneke, *States of Liberation. Gay Men Between Dictatorship and Democracy in Cold War Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), p. 124. 'Such language [the language of a gay consciousness] envisioned a kind of gay person who had hitherto not existed, one for whom his (and, increasingly, her) sexuality was a prime consideration in the social, economic, and political decisions they made every day.'
- <sup>86</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 260–61.
- <sup>87</sup> See for example Hoffmann, Marwitz, Runze, 'Wie können Tunten Sozialisten sein?', pp. 92–3.
- <sup>88</sup> See Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, pp. 59–86. This is particularly interesting as Marcuse's idea is to some extent similar to what Foucault writes about in *History of Sexuality*, but must have been known to the activists. With regard to the German student movement, see for example Reimut Reiche, *Sexualität und Klassenkampf: Zur Abwehr repressiver Entsublimierung* (Frankfurt a/M: Verlag Neue Kritik, 1968).
- <sup>89</sup> Hardt, *Subversive Seventies*, p. 256; Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds. Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), xvi.
- <sup>90</sup> Making a similar point in a different context: Cathy J. Cohen, 'Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3 (1997), pp. 437–65.
- <sup>91</sup> This is similar to Adamczak's recent reconstruction of revolutions as constructors of new 'modes of relating' which transform societal conditions altogether. See Adamczak, *Beziehungweise Revolution*.
- <sup>92</sup> The few contemporary debates around political appearance(s) sometimes touch upon similar arguments – for example when Jacques Rancière (in *Disagreement*) reflects on the conditions under which those who have no part in society can appear at all. Since different occupy movements have shed a strong light on the question of public space and its political usage, there is a renewed discussion of the spacial aspect of appearance. See in this context Judith Butler, 'Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street', Vienna (2011), <https://transversal.at/transversal/1011/butler/en>.
- <sup>93</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 253–64, here p. 254.