Chapter 1

Virile and Valiant Anti-Fascists

Challenging the Myth of the Homosexual Nazi, 1934–1935

On the one-year anniversary of his grisly execution, the *Times* of London published a brief but remarkable in memoriam for the notorious Nazi leader and homosexual Captain Ernst Roehm: "In proud and most dear remembrance of Ernst Roehm, Capt., June 30, 1934."[1] At first glance, this remembrance notice appears unexceptional. The *Times* and other newspapers commonly published this type of note in the decades after World War I, when columns burst with "the names of those who were expected to be . . . leaders in the new century" but "'who had been obliterated' by the war." And as a "public way for remembering the passing of a loved one," short commemorative notes to lost husbands, sons, and fathers like Roehm's held "no hint of any glory of war."[2] In these ways, Roehm's memorial notice was perfectly unremarkable.

Yet, upon closer consideration, Roehm's remembrance in the *Times* is extraordinary in several ways. For one, that such a remembrance was afforded to a known homosexual in a manner both "proud" and "most dear" after his spectacular murder in the Nazis' 1934 blood purge is certainly unusual. For another, it is surprising that this note appeared in the *Times*—an English-language publication in a nation soon to be at war with the Nazis. Roehm's commemoration also appeared in a special in memoriam section intended for men lost in battle, suggesting that readers interpret his execution by his Nazi comrades as an act of war. Finally, this same note was placed on Roehm's behalf not only on the first anniversary of his death but annually for years thereafter.[3] Clearly, whoever mourned Roehm in the *Times* did not regard his life as a trifling fancy; they believed it was worthy of remembrance—and possibly celebration.

More broadly, as a public remembrance of the murdered Nazi captain, the *Times* note is also an outlier. Despite consternation over his 1934 execution in the global press, Roehm went relatively unremembered in the following years and received little scholarly or biographical scrutiny compared to other Nazi figures.[4] When Roehm was remembered, it was in one of two ways. In Nazi propaganda, Roehm was recalled as a homosexual traitor and a cautionary tale, reflecting how "the victors . . . shaped the writing of the history of June 30, 1934."[5] Meanwhile, Roehm's homosexuality was a useful, if intermittent, cudgel in US memory for berating the Nazis as morally perverse and psychotic. Interestingly, Roehm and the SA men who died at his side were almost never remembered as victims of the Nazi regime. But, as Roehm biographer Eleanor Hancock notes, these murders are "singula[r] in the history of Nazism" exactly because the "victims were themselves Nazis. Perhaps for this reason historians have not felt much of an obligation to them."[6]

But remembering Roehm and his men as victims *was* an important facet of early US homophile movement rhetoric in the months following the purge. In fact, a small cadre of US homophiles commemorated Roehm as a laudable martyr: an anti-Hitler and anti-fascist warrior struck down in a looming struggle against Nazi tyranny. Such a memory is peculiar, and perhaps even offensive from our modern perspective; his biographer asserts that Roehm was certainly not a martyr.[7] But in the summer of 1934, few American homosexuals knew much about Roehm, other than that he was a homosexual and the Nazis saw him as a sufficient threat to be eliminated. In other words, Roehm was a homosexual not to be trifled with. As a result, at least some US homosexuals of the 1930s found in Roehm a blank canvas on which they could project whatever intentions they wished. While a few homosexuals honored him by leaving flowers at his grave or praising him after his death, at least one American homosexual activist imbued Roehm with a proud and defiant homosexual character, circulating this memory among other homosexuals in the nascent, underground US homophile community.[8]

This activist was Henry Gerber, a founding member of Chicago's Society for Human Rights—the first documented US homosexual rights organization, created in 1924. A decade after the Society's dismemberment by the Chicago police and Gerber's arrest for lewd behavior, he moved to New York and embarked on a writing campaign in US and German periodicals to advance the homosexual cause. Among these writings was an essay he penned for the small US publication *Chanticleer* titled "Hitlerism and Homosexuality."[9] In the essay, Gerber sought to re-remember Roehm in the months after his

death, in contrast to his memory in Nazi propaganda and US news commentary. Instead, Gerber wielded memories of Roehm and his fellow homosexual SA officers as virile and valiant anti-fascist crusaders who fell as the first victims in the struggle against the Nazi regime. Simultaneously, Gerber used Roehm's memory to recast homosexuals more generally in the imaginations of his largely homosexual audience as the vanguard, fighting an imminent worldwide threat.

In this way, Gerber's rhetoric represents some of the earliest American remembrances of homosexual persecution by the Nazi regime. As we will discover, these remembrances shaped how a small portion of the nascent homophile community was encouraged to see itself in the 1930s United States. At the same time, Gerber's rhetoric demonstrates how such memories functioned—and whom it imagined as a homosexual victim—during the brief period after the rise of the Third Reich but before the revisions to Paragraph 175 and the creation of the pink triangle.

Consequential Homosexuals: Roehm and Gerber

Appreciating US homosexuals' earliest efforts to leverage the Nazi persecution of sexual minorities requires understanding both the subject (Roehm) and the author (Gerber) of these memories. In some ways, Roehm and Gerber shared much in common: they were both German-born, veterans, similarly aged, half-hearted anti-Semites, and relatively open homosexuals.[10] Each man also suffered for his desires in ways that would forever mark his legacy. But Roehm and Gerber were also quite different. Gerber was an armchair intellectual and avid writer, whereas Roehm was a bruising military man; Gerber was an avowed Communist who never approached real power, while Roehm brutalized Communists for years and reached the highest echelons of Nazism. And though both men suffered for expressing their homosexuality, Gerber's actions led to his arrest and marginalization, whereas Roehm's desires became increasingly public and volatile. Nonetheless, Roehm's rise to power and Gerber's quest for a new vision of homosexuality placed them on a rhetorical crash course, ultimately realized in Gerber's 1934 essay in *Chanticleer*.

The facts of Roehm's life and death are particularly important for appreciating Gerber's remembrance of the Nazi captain. Born in Munich in 1887, Roehm built a prestigious military career before becoming disillusioned after Germany's defeat in World War I. Compelled by its rabid anti-Communism

and masculinist order, Roehm joined what would become the Nazi Party in 1919.[11] Soon thereafter, Roehm met Hitler and quickly became an indispensable ally, particularly as a vital link to the Reichswehr—the German armed forces—from which the Nazis heavily recruited.[12] But his value to Hitler was perhaps best demonstrated during the Beer Hall Putsch in November 1923, when Roehm marched his paramilitary forces to the Munich War Ministry and occupied the building for sixteen hours. Within the day, the putsch had failed, but Roehm proved himself a key asset to Hitler.[13]

Unlike Hitler, Roehm escaped significant jail time for the putsch and resigned from politics. But when a paroled Hitler asked him to lead the SA as its chief of staff in 1931, Roehm again proved useful in leading the Nazis' antagonism toward their Communist enemies.[14] Roehm was an ideal SA leader: a trusted Hitlerite with military training and organizational skills, devoted to vanquishing Communist forces. While Roehm was also an anti-capitalist, he abhorred the Communists as a disorganized force that had to be eliminated, lest "Bolshevik chaos" rule Germany.[15] To that end, Roehm unleashed the disciplined SA as a brutal weapon against the Communists. By 1932, Communists and Nazis were engaged in open warfare on the streets. In June, at least eighty-two were killed and four hundred wounded in these battles in Prussia alone; in July, thirty-eight Nazis and thirty Communists were slain during larger riots.[16] Among such carnage, Roehm's SA also attacked strikebreakers, Jews, and Nazi political opponents, cultivating public displays of violence and intimidation that facilitated Hitler's rise to power.

However, as a Nazi-led Germany became more conceivable, Roehm's value to Hitler ebbed. Some contemporaneous journalists and historians attributed Roehm's change in fortune to his homosexuality—a view later promoted by Hitler himself.[17] But Roehm's sexuality appears to have mattered little. Hitler knew of it as early as 1925. And while some Nazi leaders loathed Roehm's sexual decadence, Hitler ignored it so long as it did not interfere with the party's rise.[18] When the German Socialist Party attempted and failed to make Roehm's sexual orientation an electoral liability, these homosexual concerns appeared moot.[19] Similarly, the long-held view that Roehm was vanquished for plotting a "second revolution" to overthrow Hitler is also inaccurate. Instead, historians today agree that "Hitler moved against the SA to retain army support . . . for the presidential succession."[20] Roehm was undone by his unpopular drive to incorporate the Reichswehr into the SA, an idea that Hitler rejected and that enraged the military leadership. Thus, the Reichswehr and other German elites supported Hitler's rise to chancellor

on the condition Roehm's SA be diminished. As a result, Hitler's political aims best explain Roehm's fate.[21]

Roehm's fall took place in the early morning of June 30, 1934 (later known as the Night of the Long Knives), when Hitler and the SS converged on the Hanslbauer Hotel in Bad Wiessee and placed him under arrest. As Roehm was delivered to a Munich prison, Hitler and his new leadership carried out acts of retribution against perceived political opponents, including numerous other SA leaders seen as loyal to Roehm. Ultimately, at least ninety people were brutally killed, and more than one thousand individuals were placed in protective custody.[22] The following day, Hitler offered Roehm the opportunity to commit suicide. When Roehm refused, he was shot dead, ending the tumultuous, homosexual life of a onetime Hitler intimate. In publicizing the event, Hitler and his remaining lieutenants found both Roehm's homosexuality and the false coup narrative to be appealing angles for distracting the German public from the violent elimination of so many political opponents. In a speech before the Reichstag just two weeks after the purge, Hitler himself derided the executed for their supposed "treason" and "depraved morals":

> The life which the Chief of Staff and with him a certain circle began to lead was from any National Socialist point of view intolerable. It was not only terrible that he himself and the circle of those that were devoted to him should violate all laws of decency and modest behaviour, it was still worse that now this poison began to spread in ever wider circles . . . gradually out of a certain common disposition of character there began to be formed within the SA . . . the kernel of a conspiracy directed not only against the normal views of a healthy people but also against the security of the State.[23]

Hitler's Reichstag speech marked one of the most significant public accounts of this discourse, though similar propaganda around the purge continued for years. Such regular denunciations successfully desecrated Roehm's memory and contributed to his erasure in the decades to follow.

But where many saw a traitor, Henry Gerber saw an opportunity to reconsider the homosexual as a historical figure. Unlike Roehm, much of Gerber's life appeared unremarkable. He was born in Bavaria in 1892, immigrated to Chicago in 1913, and served in the US Army during World War I (*AS*, 8–10). Thereafter, he sufficed on a modest income, was unmarried, had no children,

and lived alone, in relative obscurity, until his death in 1972 (*AS*, 167). But beneath this unassuming persona, Gerber hid the zeal of a homosexual advocate and the talents necessary to elevate Roehm's flawed legacy. These skills were threefold in nature. First and foremost, Gerber had accepted his homosexuality early in life, after a brief stint in a Chicago mental institution at the age of twenty-five (*AS*, 16). His incarceration only intensified his same-sex desires and practices—and his certainty that homosexuality was no crime. Second, Gerber was a proficient writer and publisher. He honed these expressive skills in the military, where he served as a printer and proofreader, and practiced them professionally and personally for most of his life (*AS*, 19, 55). Third, Gerber's military service afforded him a three-year posting in Koblenz after World War I (*AS*, 19). There, he gained firsthand experience with the percolating German homophile movement and became an avid consumer of both the homophile press and the work of Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld (*AS*, 24). When he returned stateside, Gerber maintained his subscriptions to German publications to the extent possible, giving him an unusual level of insight into successful homosexual organizing. Individually, many Americans had one or two of these experiences in the years after World War I, but Gerber was probably unique in bringing together all three to advance a new way of thinking as a homosexual in America.

The doomed Society for Human Rights and its short-lived periodical, *Friendship and Freedom*, were a manifestation of Gerber's unique alchemy; they would not be the last. Nearly ten years after his arrest and bankruptcy in Chicago, Gerber found himself in New York. He had grown cynical but continued to live a homosexual lifestyle amid New York's burgeoning homophile scene. There, Gerber also ran a successful pen pal service, *Contacts*, which brought in money during the Great Depression but also served as a cover for a network of homosexual letter writing, information sharing, friendship, and intimacy (*AS*, 58–65). In addition, Gerber once again found himself enmeshed in the publishing apparatus as a proofreader for the US Army's Recruiting Publicity Bureau. But he quickly grew tired of only reading the work of others. So, with some men he met through the Recruiting Publicity Bureau and *Contacts*, Gerber established the small monthly publication *Chanticleer* in January 1934 (*AS*, 69).

Unlike *Friendship and Freedom*, *Chanticleer* was not a declared homosexual periodical. It simply published on assorted topics of interest to its regular contributors (*AS*, 69). But *Chanticleer* was not hostile to homosexuality either. In fact, as a member of the publication's board and under his name, Gerber

regularly published pieces that addressed homosexuality or made same-sex desire their central theme.[24] While the subjects of the pieces varied, many of Gerber's essays fixated on what he saw as a widening social campaign disparaging homosexuals and facilitating their persecution. Among these articles was Gerber's commemoration of Roehm, written about three months after the Nazi purge. The piece would become a vivid example of Gerber's limited efforts to change the public conversation on homosexuality in the United States—one in which Hitler and the Nazis played an increasingly prominent role.

Confronting US Depictions of Nazi Homosexuality

While the Nazis spent much of late 1934 remembering Roehm and his men as contemptible homosexual traitors whom the heterosexual and moral Hitler had expelled from their ranks, Gerber was tracking an equally brazen but very different remembrance of these events circulating in the US press: that the Roehm purge confirmed a long-standing American belief that Hitler and National Socialism were at least compatible with, and perhaps indistinguishable from, homosexuality writ large. Gerber recognized the specifically American version of the Roehm story as a greater threat to the nascent US homophile community than the Nazis' preferred interpretation. As such, Gerber's efforts to remember Roehm differently in the months after his death were an attempt to disrupt the growing perception among heterosexual and homosexual Americans alike that homosexuals were naturally disposed to fascistic and tyrannical movements like Nazism.

Such claims were not limited to the months after Roehm's demise. In the early 1930s, before Hitler came to power and well before most Americans saw the future führer as a threat, a surprisingly wide and diverse set of texts already circulated the idea that the Nazi Party was a homosexual cabal. This was certainly true in Germany, where both implicit and explicit allegations of homosexuality had become a common tool across the political spectrum since the 1907 Eulenburg affair.[25] Given the profusion of these allegations—including the well-publicized and mostly accurate homosexual charges against Roehm after 1931—it did not take long for foreign correspondents, visiting writers, and members of the US intelligentsia to recirculate stateside similar homosexual allegations against the Nazis.

However, there was not a rush to make such allegations the subject of public discourse. For instance, when Sydney Wallach published accusations

of homosexuality among the Nazi leadership in his 1933 pamphlet *Hitler: Menace to Mankind*, a *Baltimore Sun* review syndicated in other US newspapers attacked Wallach for explicitly stating "the homo-sexual aspect of the Nazi movement which the press carefully avoids."[26] Similarly, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* lambasted Wallach's pamphlet as "an intemperate outburst against the Nazis, spreading their sins on the record for all to read."[27] As such, while stories about Roehm and other German homosexuals provided scandalous examples to portray all Nazis as homosexual, prudish gatekeepers within the US press corps strongly repudiated such allegations due to a general disposition against gossip and a specific reluctance to address the sordid subject of homosexuality.

But Americans readers did not rely exclusively on flagship newspapers to appraise the new movement sweeping Germany. Some Americans got their news from the era's popular scandal press, which freely reprinted homosexual accusations and similar sundry topics for a distinctly lower-brow audience. In fact, scandal, gossip, and exposé were the very stuff on which such papers' circulation and readership depended.[28] In 1934, New York (the new home of Henry Gerber) was perhaps the most notorious city for such vice publications, and few were as successful as *Broadway Brevities*. Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, *Brevities* made a name for itself as the source of intimate gossip. Exposing homosexuality was a favorite subject, as evident in such dramatic headlines as "Fags Balls Exposed," "Third Sex Plague Spreads Anew!," and "Queers Seek Succor!"[29] And while *Brevities* almost always focused its ire on American debauchery, the paper's attention soon turned to the young führer in waiting, Adolf Hitler.

After ending a five-year publishing hiatus in 1930, *Brevities* and its competitors began to make direct connections between Germany and homosexuality. For instance, the front page of a 1932 *Brevities* issue, published three months prior to Hitler's appointment as chancellor, led with the headline "Fags Ram Heinies!" (*AS*, 77). In this campy usage, *heinies* was slang for both buttocks and Germans (*AS*, 246n2). The full story drew on earlier Weimar-era gossip to assert that "the Germans are turning queerer and the [German] Army is getting stronger" (*AS*, 77). In a 1933 story supposedly extolling "the oceanward trek of our little friend, the fagot," on US sea vessels, *Brevities* attributed such homosexual exploits to the sailors' "Teutonic extraction. Just a bit of the Hitler influence, it seems."[30] A few months later, the *Broadway Tattler* printed a political cartoon mocking Hitler as a "pans[y]" while simultaneously criticizing new Nazi sterilization laws for use on "sex perverts" (*AS*, 77–78). Suffice

it to say, while highbrow newspapers refused to dabble in Nazi homosexual allegations, the lowbrow press and its readers quickly became adept recirculators of these allegations in US public discourse.

US-based political publications with anti-Hitler and anti-Nazi ideologies were another prominent site where homosexual allegations against the Nazis circulated in the early 1930s. Notable among them was the leftist and US Communist Party publication the *Daily Worker*. The writers and readers of the *Worker*, well versed in the clashes between the SA and Communist militants and the Nazis' subsequent internments of Communists in early concentration camps, were virulently anti-Nazi.[31] These American Communists had every reason to hate Hitler and were far quicker than other publishers to attack the Nazis in the starkest terms—including by characterizing their movement as homosexual. In doing so, the *Worker* had no reservations about merging gossip, innuendo, propaganda, opinion, and lies to make its point. Exemplary of these attacks was a 1932 *Worker* story reporting that a Hitlerite leader had allegedly resigned from the Nazi Party due to Roehm's homosexuality, which the newspaper reported as representing a wider "sexual corruption and demoralization existing in the Nazi headquarters."[32] Communist fury against the Nazis was also exemplified in a long exposé on Marinus van der Lubbe, the Nazis' patsy for the Reichstag fire, published in the *Worker* on September 28, 1933. The paper upbraided van der Lubbe repeatedly as a homosexual and faux Communist, one whose "intimate personal relations with high Hitlerite Officials . . . made him obedient and willing to play the firebug's part."[33] In the aftermath of the Roehm purge, the *Worker* again lambasted the Nazis as a "band of insane homosexual drug addicts" who "have to resort to sexual explanations for their bloody deeds."[34] When he recalled the Roehm purge months later, *Worker* writer Michael Gold called the Nazis hypocritical for their "great moral campaign . . . [to] purify Hitler's movement." Among a slew of other attacks, Gold asks readers, "Why should there be so many perverts among them?" He asserted that, because of their persecution, homosexuals "hate and despise society" and are "ready for the coward[']s road to revenge that the fascist movement offers."[35] Clearly, American readers sympathetic to Communism found plentiful support for the homosexual Nazi myth in their reading.

Meanwhile, some venerable left-leaning outlets like *The Nation* did publish accusations of homosexuality within the Nazi ranks at this time. Catering to an educated and intellectual reader, *The Nation* was a far more tepid promoter of this connection. For example, in a provocative piece in October 1932,

a writer in *The Nation* claimed, "I hesitate to bring up a matter which has been conscientiously avoided for many years by the Berlin correspondents. It is a conclusively established fact that many of his close friends, notably Captain Roehm, leader of the shock troops, are homosexual. About Adolf himself, as about the whole Brown House menagerie, there is a discouraging atmosphere of effeminacy which can scarcely have endeared him to that part of Germany which adores the blunt masculinity of Hindenburg and Schleicher."[36] While tamer than the claims levied in the scandal press or the *Worker*, *The Nation*'s accusations had a similar effect: construing Hitlerism and homosexuality as entirely linked in thought and deed in the US political imagination.

While *The Nation* may have been among the first to broach these accusations in respectable American journalism, it would not be the last. By the time the United States entered World War II in late 1941, characterizations of Nazis as homosexual had become not only acceptable in the press but also widespread across the American public. Even while American sentiments would not reach such heights for another decade, thousands of US readers were confronted with a rhetoric that maligned Nazi ideology as part and parcel with homosexuality by the mid-1930s—a practice most Americans viewed as sinful, criminal, perverse, or disturbed. Thus, the taint of homosexuality was quickly becoming a powerful tool for turning Americans against Nazi Germany.

At the same time, anti-Hitler homosexuals on the US home front worried the reverse was also true—that Hitlerism would soon intolerably taint homosexuals as pro-German, pro-Hitler, and, as such, anti-American. Disrupting this logic required a response—if not to turn it back, then to give US homosexuals an opportunity to imagine themselves otherwise. Into this breach stepped Gerber, armed with an unusual and potent new remembrance of Roehm and his compatriots as the Nazis' first homosexual victims.

Remembering Homosexuals as Valiant Anti-Fascists

"Hitlerism and Homosexuality" appeared in *Chanticleer* in September 1934.[37] In the essay, Gerber reconsiders Roehm's execution by the Nazis to critique the growing and problematic American viewpoint that homosexuality and Nazism were indistinguishable social phenomena. To that end, Gerber created a new public memory of Roehm and the other homosexual members of the SA murdered in the purge that countered the prevailing narratives about

them in American memory up to that point. Specifically, Gerber imagined an idealized Roehm whose life and death repudiated homosexuals' problematic representation in the US press and offered homosexuals a different vision of themselves—one that might nurture a nascent American homophile community before it could again be snuffed out.

Gerber faced significant challenges in this task. For instance, the readership of *Chanticleer* was admittedly small. While no known circulation numbers survive, we can surmise that the subscribers likely numbered in the hundreds at best. As a result, any essay published in *Chanticleer* was unlikely to change American public opinion. Gerber's views on homosexuality also fell far outside mainstream US political beliefs of the 1930s, and there is little reason to think his essay could induce a wider readership to accept homosexuals. As a result, at least one Gerber biographer suggests that *Chanticleer* was more of a vanity project, an outlet for "self-promulgators" like Gerber who had strong opinions to share but few illusions about tapping the vein of American public discourse (*AS*, 69–70). But who then did Gerber imagine his intended audience to be if not the mainstream heterosexual public? And what did he hope that commemorating Roehm for this audience would achieve?

In my assessment, the audience for Gerber's memory work in *Chanticleer* is best understood as a narrow, committed, and not-unknown group of homosexual and homophile readers. Two pieces of evidence support this interpretation. First, Gerber had good reason to believe that some *Chanticleer* readers were homosexual. Gerber biographers suggest that, as the circulation manager for *Chanticleer*, Gerber used the subscriber list for *Contacts*—his correspondence club—to promote subscriptions to the magazine (*AS*, 69–70). Since Gerber very well knew that correspondence clubs like *Contacts* "were important to many gay men's lives in the first half of the twentieth century," he was confident his article's readers included homosexuals among them (*AS*, 2). In fact, Gerber himself cultivated long-standing homosexual letter exchanges via *Contacts* members by placing ads for the club that specifically targeted such an audience (*AS*, 64). And it worked: in his own letter writing, Gerber made homosexual connections with several homosexual pen pals due to his publications in *Chanticleer* (*AS*, 2). Second, while Gerber successfully published letters and essays in mainstream newspapers, we know that he also submitted and published his writing in international homophile periodicals that targeted homosexual audiences. For instance, historian James Steakley noted that Gerber's *Friendship and Freedom* was pictured among other

homophile publications in a photograph in Hirschfeld's 1927 book chapter "Die Homosexualität."[38] Steakley and Jonathan Ned Katz have also shown that Gerber's writings appeared in German homophile publications in 1928, 1929, and 1930.[39] Gerber's biographer made similar claims (*AS*, 55–57). And later in life, Gerber would publish in the US homosexual magazine *ONE*.[40] Given Gerber's dual aims of cultivating a homosexual reading public with his magazine and targeting his ideas to homosexual audiences, it seems logical that he crafted "Hitlerism and Homosexuality" to address and persuade an American homosexual reading audience that he had captured in *Chanticleer*.

Nor should Gerber's essay be understood as addressing the prevailing homosexual-Nazi myth in the United States by happenstance. Rather, Gerber almost certainly recognized these discourses in real time and sought to address them explicitly. As we will see, Gerber's own references to *The Nation* in his essay supports this rationale. And Gerber's past as a Communist with roots in Chicago meant he likely also encountered these ideas in the Chicago-based *Daily Worker*. Similarly, as a 1930s New York resident, Gerber almost certainly came across *Broadway Brevities*. Collectively, this evidence suggests that Gerber wrote "Hitlerism and Homosexuality" as a direct rebuke to this pervading discourse.

Gerber sought to rehabilitate Roehm and his men for homophile public memory in *Chanticleer* with these points in mind. To this end, he deployed a two-part rhetorical strategy. First, Gerber disaggregated homosexuals from Hitlerism. Second, Gerber realigned homosexuality with anti-fascism and Communism while characterizing Roehm and the SA as virile and valiant warriors who deserved praise from their homophile contemporaries.

Discrediting Nazi Propaganda and US Press Memories

Gerber begins his powerful re-remembrance of Roehm in "Hitlerism and Homosexuality" by rejecting two earlier ways of remembering the deceased captain after his death. One of these memories was forwarded in Nazi propaganda, which depicted Roehm and the SA as homosexual traitors—figures to be despised and eliminated because of their moral failings and the threat they supposedly posed to the Nazi regime. The other memory was primarily shaped by the US press, depicting Roehm as evidence of a pervasive and deplorable homosexuality within both the Nazi leadership and the German nation. Of the two, the latter was particularly perilous for the nascent US homophile movement, which could ill afford to be maligned as somehow inherently fascist. But as shown in chapter 2, Hitler's construction of

the "homosexual traitor" trope also threatened an emerging US homosexual community, prompting Gerber to repudiate both charges against Roehm as hypocritical, illogical, and profit-driven.

Gerber's two-pronged attack on earlier Roehm remembrances begins by assailing the Nazis' claims that the purge was justified by the captain's homosexuality. For Gerber, this claim was farcical, given that it was simply impossible that Hitler had not known of Roehm's homosexuality for years: "A few weeks ago Herr Adolf Hitler, in part justified the bloody murder of his intimate friends with the accusation that his Chief of Staff of Nazi storm troops and his clique had been guilty of . . . sexual aberrations. It seems strange that Hitler should have found that out so late. After having been intimately associated with Roehm . . . he must have been well acquainted with Roehm's inclinations. But such a little slip of memory does not bother the great corporal."[41] Here, Gerber uses heavy sarcasm to indict Hitler's supposed surprise at the discovery that Roehm and other SA leaders were homosexual. In doing so, Gerber critiques Hitler as deceptive and untrustworthy. This charge becomes clearest when Gerber characterizes Hitler's evasion as "a little slip of memory," a tongue-in-cheek retort to Hitler's attempt to minimize a lie, which had yielded significant consequences, as mere forgetfulness (MFY, 27).

But Gerber goes even further to denigrate Hitler's remembrance of Roehm after the purge by strongly intimating that the führer is a hypocrite. More specifically, Gerber playfully implies that Hitler's disavowal of Roehm's desire for men was rooted in a shared erotic experience. By using the words *intimate* and *intimately* in the paragraph to describe the Hitler-Roehm relationship, Gerber alludes to narratives from the US press that the entire Nazi leadership was homosexual (MFY, 27). As we have discussed, there is no evidence to support this accusation or any reason to suspect Gerber believed Hitler was homosexual. Gerber never makes this claim explicitly, which would only contradict his aim to sever the rhetoric linking Hitlerism and homosexuality. Rather, Gerber's jibe against Hitler is more jocular and further depicts the soon-to-be führer—and perhaps even the entire Nazi leadership—as disingenuous and hypocritical on the entire subject of same-sex desire.

After undermining Nazi memories of Roehm as a homosexual traitor, Gerber turns to concerns closer to home: the growing false belief among Americans that homosexuals were Nazis and vice versa. In this vein, Gerber paraphrases the charges in *The Nation*, stating that "the whole Hitler movement was based on homosexual Greek attachment of men for each other" (MFY, 27). Cognizant that this charge must be contested, Gerber swiftly turns

his critical eye toward the claim's inconsistency and broader US press practices to disrupt this idea. Gerber points out that while *The Nation* suggests Americans remember Roehm as just another homosexual within Nazi ideology, the magazine simultaneously reveals the inconsistency of this claim. More specifically, Gerber amplifies *The Nation*'s broader argument that Hitler is rife with inconsistencies, what Gerber offhandedly calls "Hitler contradictions" (*MFY*, 27). By "Hitler contradictions," Gerber directs readers to what *The Nation* sees as Hitler's strange, illogical, and apparently incongruous choices during his rise to power. Exemplary of these contradictions, Gerber highlights how *The Nation* questions Hitler's decision to approve an attack on Dr. Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science and its subsequent burning of thousands of homosexual books and documents. In said contradiction, Hitler—perhaps himself a homosexual—would be complicit in the destruction of the world's largest archive of his own people's literature. In pointing this out, *The Nation* overlooks this contradiction as a unique oddity of Hitler.

But Gerber challenges this interpretation, critiquing *The Nation* for trying to explain away a deeper flaw in its own logic by pinning it on the personal failings of a single man. He argues that *The Nation* simply has its facts wrong. In reality, its underlying claim is incapable of supporting the interpretation that Nazi ideology is undergirded by male-male attraction. Gerber argues it makes no sense that a (possibly homosexual) "leader" like Hitler would send a "heterosexual mob, led by homosexuals [i.e., Nazis]," to persecute a "Jewish doctor working for the interests of homosexuals" (MFY, 27). Instead, Gerber has a simpler answer: Hitlerism is not undergirded by homosexuality at all. In that case, the Nazi sacking of the Institute for Sexual Science is better characterized as a *heterosexual* leader (i.e., Hitler) encouraging a mob of *heterosexual* men (i.e., Hitler and the Nazi acolytes) to attack and destroy a homosexual organization housing homosexual literature. Gerber suggests that this alternate interpretation is more sensible than *The Nation*'s theory and more consistent with the long history of capitalist societies persecuting homosexuals. The only flaw Gerber identifies in his own interpretation is that it undercuts the idea that Nazism is a homosexual movement. But, of course, this is *exactly* what Gerber aims to do, despite *The Nation*'s attempts to contort itself in knots to prove otherwise.

Gerber doubles down on the absurd nature of these supposed "Hitler contradictions" discussed in the US press (MFY, 27). He asserts that such inconsistencies are not authentic homosexual experiences but creations of a profit-motivated press, incentivized to instigate homosexual scandals and

condemn them immediately thereafter. Gerber berates "American journalists who profit from the publications of all the filthy details of heterosexual and homosexual perverts" (MFY, 27). He alludes first to the gossip press that fomented *The Nation*'s claims years earlier, scolding outlets that focus on the "'Pillars of Society' in Hollywood and New York" (MFY, 27). But Gerber also attacks "such a conservative and 'decent' paper as the *NY Times*," which revealed in its coverage of the purge salacious details about Roehm's "chief of police"—presumably Edmund Heines—who was "found in bed with a fair young man" (MFY, 27). Likewise, Gerber notes that "rumored" accounts of "homosexual orgies . . . around Roehm's headquarters" reported in the US press are easily understood as mere attempts to titillate readers and sell papers (MFY, 28). Most saliently, Gerber argues the coverage of the Roehm purge further illuminates that the conflation of Hitlerism with homosexuality is illusory: "newspapers of America were strangely compromised by this story," he states, because they could not decide whether to "praise the murderer Hitler for suppressing homosexuals" or "credit Roehm and his homosexual camorra" for confronting Hitlerism (MFY, 27). In the end, the papers "condemned both and saved their faces," proving Gerber's point: homosexual allegations in *Brevities*, *The Nation*, and the *New York Times* were unsupported by facts, driven only by profit (MFY, 27).

With these detailed indictments, Gerber dispatched with the two most prominent ways of remembering Roehm, arguing that these spurious interpretations were hypocritical, illogical fantasies created by a discredited US press corps. As a result, Gerber warns that press claims about homosexuality should be treated suspiciously across the board. Gerber's essay then moves forward by reimagining Roehm, his men, and homosexuals in general anew—in ways he deems necessary to secure a nascent US homophile movement.

Inventing Valiant and Virile Anti-Fascist Warriors

Having undercut prior memories of Roehm and the SA, Gerber spends the balance of "Hitlerism and Homosexuality" offering readers a dramatic reappraisal that recasts the homosexual captain and his men as masculine, anti-fascist warriors who died while valiantly attempting to overthrow the detestable Hitler. Gerber most explicitly reimagines Roehm as a fallen hero at the essay's end, where he suggests that "Roehm and his valiant men may have been defeated, but the homosexuals will go on fighting to rid the world of tyranny" (MFY, 29). But his powerful peroration builds on several smaller, ascending rhetorical moves from the essay's start.

It begins in the essay's first line, where Gerber defines homosexuals in general (and Roehm in particular) as antityrannical by constitution. Rather than accept Nazi and US press claims that homosexuals are naturally drawn to fascism, Gerber asserts that history shows homosexual relationships have always turned their practitioners against authoritarianism. To support that claim, Gerber introduces readers to an idea from Plato's *Banquet* (more commonly known as the *Symposium*), an ancient text that held powerful cachet in turn-of-the-century homosexual epistemologies for its explicit and favorable discussions of love between men. Here, Gerber quotes Plato's character Pausanias, who argues that male love (which Gerber interprets as homosexuality) cultivates antityrannical impulses between men in civic life: "love relations (between men) . . . are enemies of tyranny," for tyranny thrives when "there be between them (men) no strong bonds of friendship or fellowship" (MFY, 27, Gerber's parenthesis). On the contrary, in societies where these bonds do exist, in which "this (homosexual) love is so well able to tie" one man meaningfully to another, tyranny cannot prosper (MFY, 27). Gerber thus argues, via Plato, that if a society cultivates genuine and lasting love between men—one that can withstand the storms of partisanship and factionalism—it can never be dominated by a tyrant or dictator. Again, Gerber's claim debunks US press discourses that homosexuals were predisposed to fascism; without directly addressing this idea, Gerber defines homosexuality as the antithesis of fascism (i.e., antityrannical), and thereby a natural foe to Hitlerism.

After establishing this new definition, Gerber deduces that this universal principle about homosexuals applies to the particular case of Roehm and his SA comrades. Gerber continues that "there is nothing new under the sun" (MFY, 26) and affirms that Plato's "ancient statement" (MFY, 27) has repeatedly been shown to be true in contemporary times. Only then does Gerber connect homosexuality's antityrannical principle to the "recent happenings in modern Germany," which even the most news-averse US reader would recognize as referring to the June 1934 purge (MFY, 26). Nonetheless, Gerber eliminates any doubts about the "recent happenings" he references, confirming he means Hitler's "bloody murder of his intimate friends [i.e., Roehm]"—a crime that Hitler "in part justified" by invoking their "sexual aberrations" (MFY, 27). In doing so, Gerber compels his reader to make sense of Roehm's demise in a new way. Whereas previously, the US press attempted to cast Roehm as the leader of a homosexual cabal (i.e., the SA), murdered by a competing gang of homosexuals (i.e., Hitler and the remaining Nazis)—all

of whom were presented as fascistic—Gerber significantly recasts the roles. In his remembering, the Roehm purge was not the result of infighting among a vast, tyrannical Nazi-homosexual regime, but rather an explicitly anti-fascist homosexual faction battling a heterosexual tyrannical bloc. With this shift, Gerber alters key terms in readers' recollection of the purge from issues of sexual desire to each side's stance on tyranny. In this telling, as Plato insists, homosexuals abhor tyranny by their very nature. Thus, Gerber leaves readers with the inescapable interpretation that Roehm and his men were indeed homosexuals, but also brothers-in-arms determined to cast out a tyrant from their midst.

Gerber adds further rhetorical heft to this reimagining by aligning homosexuals with other segments of German society that similarly struggled against Nazi tyranny: Communists and atheists. Of the two, Gerber spends significantly more time on the Communist comparison. As mentioned above, the German Communist Party waged vicious street battles against the Nazis in its struggle for political power. This well-known fact made Communists a clear rival of the Nazis in some readers' minds, even if the finer points of their dispute were murky. If Gerber could persuade his readers both that Communists were antithetical to Nazis and that homosexuals like Roehm were akin to the Communists, then Roehm, his men, and homosexuals generally should be remembered as anti-Nazi and anti-fascist as well.

Gerber's attempted alignment of Roehm and the SA with the German Communists was odd. One primary reason Hitler valued Roehm and the SA was their involvement in brawling with the German Communist Party in the early 1930s and fostering political violence. Roehm's hands had been stained with the blood of dozens of German Communists, and he was viciously anti-Communist in both word and deed. Whether Gerber was aware of Roehm's anti-Communist bona fides is unclear, but this did not deter him from trying to equate the captain and the SA with Communists in their shared struggle against fascism. This may be why Gerber aligns Communism with homosexuals *generally*, rather than with Roehm as an individual. By doing so, Roehm could be indirectly aligned with Communism without ever being called a Communist himself.

Whereas Gerber earlier used deduction to label Roehm and his men antityrannical, here Gerber uses induction to align homosexuals and Communists. To work this appeal, Gerber applied his own beliefs and experiences regarding Communism to all homosexuals as a group. In 1934, Gerber was an avowed Communist and, in contrast to other Communists who saw

homosexuality as a social ill, he believed Communism was a natural ally of the homosexual cause. Gerber even made this point in other essays published in *Chanticleer* prior to "Hitlerism and Homosexuality," particularly one titled "Recent Homosexual Literature" from February 1934. There, Gerber argued that nations often decried as homes to "Bolshevic, Libertine, Swine" were destined to be places of homosexual "Free Love." In particular, Gerber argued that postrevolution Russia, "where the government is no longer capitalistic and is not bound to religious sex superstitions," is where "sex is free" and homosexuals would soon be embraced.[42] While a ludicrous suggestion in retrospect, Gerber was deeply invested in a shared future for Communism and homosexuality, rooted in his own experience.

These beliefs also appear in "Hitlerism and Homosexuality," where Gerber bemoans that the capitalist "persecution of homosexuals goes on," even as historical falsehoods against homosexuality have evaporated (MFY, 28). "No one," Gerber remarks, "has brought forth a plausible reason why homosexuals should be wiped out, except the age old reasoning which is also applied to atheism and communism, that it is contrary to the welfare of the state (the profit and exploitation system of capitalists)." He adds, "With the waning of capitalism . . . the opposition of the governments to homosexuals will also wane" (MFY, 28–29). As a result, Gerber announces that "you cannot, therefore, blame the homosexual, if they throw in their support with the communists and atheists" (MFY, 29). In this previous sentence, the word *support* is key for affirming his larger point: for Gerber, homosexuals and Communists are allies, and each party must be recognized as opposed to Hitler, fascism, and tyranny.

Gerber further demonstrates a shared affinity between Communists and homosexuals in the essay's waning paragraphs. There, Gerber recounts efforts in the German legislature in 1929 to repeal Paragraph 175, highlighting how "the socialists and communists outvoted the nationalist and clerical party, and brought about repeal of the notorious paragraph 175 which punished homosexuals for their acts" (MFY, 29). Gerber is factually wrong here. Significant efforts were made to repeal Paragraph 175 that year, but the law was ultimately retained. In fact, the Nazis strengthened Paragraph 175 a few months after Gerber's essay was published, to the great detriment of male homosexuals—a subject discussed more in the chapter 2. But this fanciful retelling of Paragraph 175's false demise allowed Gerber to again disrupt US memories of homosexuals as Hitlerites, aligning homophiles with Communists in their shared pursuit of homosexual emancipation.

As we have seen, Gerber's primary task in the piece is rejecting the conflation of Hitlerism and homosexuality. But Gerber also does important rhetorical work by providing representationally deficient US homosexuals a praiseworthy figure with whom they might identify. To this end, Gerber expands the depictions of Roehm and his men in *Chanticleer* by assigning three different, affirmative virtues to their actions beyond anti-fascism. First, Gerber uses strategic characterizations to remember Roehm and the SA as warriors. The word *warrior* itself never appears in Gerber's texts, but he uses an array of laudable, alternative terms to cast Roehm in this light. For instance, Gerber uses several military phrases—describing the site of Roehm's capture as a "headquarters" (MFY, 28) rather than a *hotel*, and using his title and rank, "the Chief of Staff of Nazi storm troops" (MFY, 27)—to depict Roehm's actions as those of an ordered and trained unit of military service. Further, Gerber suggests at the essay's end that homosexuals will "go on fighting" against tyranny, much like Roehm and the SA (MFY, 29). Such a wording implies Roehm waged a battle against Hitler and minimizes the narrative that he was caught unaware by the führer. Importantly, all these terms avoid depicting Roehm and his men as either coup plotters or disgruntled mob. Instead, the word *mob* only appears once in the text, to characterize the Nazis' book burning at the Institute for Sexual Science (MFY, 27). Gerber thus distinguishes between the militant, systematic Roehm and the riotous, disorderly Hitlerites.

Second and related, Gerber remembers Roehm and his men in masculinist terminology. Most directly, Gerber wonders if they deserve credit "for being the only men in Germany virile enough to attempt to wipe out the unspeakable Hitler?" (MFY, 27). The masculine word *virile* here frames Roehm as a man of action, with sexual potency and stamina to boot. Similarly, Gerber uses the phrase *wipe out* in the same sentence to suggest the Nazi captain was just as likely to end Hitler's life in a bloody purge as he was to die in his own (MFY, 27). The word *camorra*, while indicating organized criminality, also conveys a sense of old-world chauvinism (MFY, 27). Combined, these depictions amplify the rhetoric of Roehm and his men as warriors by conflating masculinity and warfare. But Gerber's masculinist language also offers his audience a masculine image of homosexuality, which contrasted sharply with the dangerous indictment of male effeminacy that had become rampant during the post–Pansy Craze panic in New York City (*AS*, 82).

Third and finally, Gerber remembers the actions of Roehm and the men of the SA as honorable while condemning the acts of the Hitlerites as morally

bankrupt. The clearest terminological example in "Hitlerism and Homosexuality" occurs when Gerber labels Roehm and his men "valiant" (MFY, 29). A classical war adjective evoking stirring military struggle and the deep honor imbued in battle-tested men, "valiant" helped Gerber depict Roehm and company as role models for an often-maligned US homosexual minority. The term's classical uptake also alludes to Gerber's invocation of Plato earlier in the text, rooting his characterization of homosexuals in ancient values of the Western canon. Gerber adds to Roehm's honorable ethos here by aligning his acts with those of Hirschfeld, who is lauded for "dedicat[ing] his life to the liberation of enslaved homosexuals in all lands" (MFY, 27). Meanwhile, Gerber contrasted the honorable Roehm with the dubious Hitler, whom Gerber variously describes as an "erstwhile . . . friend," a leader who "acquiesced" to others, and finally a plain-old murderer (MFY, 27). Collectively, attributing fine and noteworthy virtues to the actions of Roehm and his murdered men only further provided Gerber rhetorical firepower for shoring up a nascent US homosexual community.

The fullest realization of Gerber's new memory of Roehm and his men—and its utility for Gerber's expressed desire to see US homosexuals get "smart," "get together," and organize (MFY, 28)—appears in the essay's final line, where his preferred memory of Roehm becomes clear. Yet this final line also reveals Gerber's broader aim to envision how a future US homosexual community might look by reshaping the memory of Ernst Roehm. Here, Gerber affirms his vision of Roehm but then pivots away from him, extending Roehm's virile, valiant, and anti-fascist credentials onto homosexuals in general. Acknowledging Roehm's death at the height of his epideictic appeal, Gerber suggests homosexuals "will go on fighting to rid the world of tyranny" in Roehm's absence (MFY, 29). This powerful act of rhetorical induction shifts from the specifics of Roehm to the more general figure of the homosexual. In such a move, Gerber assigns to all male homosexuals the honorable, masculine, antityrannical impulse he cultivated in Roehm—a need to refuse antidemocratic leaders and struggle against them, showing much the same "fight" as the fallen Roehm and his men. Gerber does not specifically state that the tyrant surviving homosexuals must fight is Hitler himself; by the essay's end, this point is self-evident. But Gerber completes his reframing of Roehm powerfully, setting up the dead homosexual captain at the head of an imagined army of virile homophile men, the vanguard in the coming battle for either an American century or an era of German despotism.

Conclusion

Despite Gerber's efforts to disentangle the figure of the homosexual from the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party, such equations exploded in US public discourse following Germany's declaration of war on the United States in 1941. The years following Gerber's essay would see a dramatic mainstreaming of the homosexuality-and-Hitlerism trope in the States. Now recognized as a confirmed national threat, the Nazis' moral decay circulated well beyond the scandalous anti-Nazi outlets of the early 1930s to countless local, regional, and national outlets of great esteem. For example, weeks after the United States entered the war, the *Tampa Tribune* posited that Hitler might be suffering from a form of "homosexual madness."[43] That angst was heightened further in June 1942, when a former Berlin bureau chief published a series of scandalous, syndicated newspaper articles about Hitler's sexuality that were echoed and amplified by other credible journalists.[44] Eventually, the US press extended Hitler's supposedly disturbed homosexuality to the entire Germany population, calling it a national neurosis endemic to "the most homosexual nation on earth."[45] Each of these claims exemplifies hundreds of other metastasizing conflations of homosexuality and Nazism in the American press between 1935 and 1945, which continued for decades after the war. Given the profusion of such comparisons, it seems clear that any effort by Gerber to stem the tide raging against US homosexuals through re-remembering Roehm failed spectacularly.

Yet, as previously discussed, Gerber's audience was almost certainly not the wider public, but an interested community of homosexual readers. As with many homosexual communities that remembered the Nazi persecution between 1934 and 1981, this memory work during the earliest years of the Nazis' rise to power was almost exclusively aimed at internal audiences to deal with internal challenges. In Gerber's case, the challenges affecting his internal audience were not dissimilar from those facing his external audience: the idea that homosexuals were, as a type, inherently fascistic and, as such, reprehensible. And while this message posed political problems for a nascent homosexual movement in the United States, it also presented inspirational and definitional obstacles for a community only beginning to see itself as such. Who, for instance, would want to claim an identity as an American homosexual if they believed homosexuality was anti-American? What kind of American homosexual community could be imagined if the Nazi

homosexuals, whom they were led to see as their kin, were criminally ruthless not only to other nations but also to each other as homosexuals? And what point did homosexual empowerment serve if it all led to a spectacularly bloody end marked by ridicule, violence, and suffering? For Gerber's readers, already experiencing their own growing persecution in the wake of the US post–Pansy Craze panic, his recuperation of Roehm was an important answer. He argued for a vision of homosexual community that was not only far different from the chimeras offered by the Nazis or the US press but also one that American homosexuals could embrace as powerful, virile, honorable, and implicitly anti-fascist. For this small but growing audience, Gerber presented a homosexual memory that, while lacking victory and optimism, still offered possibility and hope in an increasingly dark world.

In doing so, Gerber was participating in an often unattended to but powerful protoqueer reliance on memory as a resource for rhetorical action. As I have written about elsewhere, modern queer people's strategic decision to invoke memory in the face of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980s was actually part of a much longer lineage of LGBTQ+ predecessors who made memory a central tool in their rhetorical adventures, what I have termed a *queer return to memory*.[46] Gerber's reframing of Roehm, and particularly his reliance on the Greeks to help him do so, is emblematic of this longer rhetorical tradition among homosocials, homosexuals, and lesbian and gay activists. It is also notable in this instance because Gerber is doing this past-oriented work *before* the Holocaust—the twentieth-century event many histories of memory studies identify as the inaugurating moment of our wider social turn to memory work. As a result, Gerber's efforts highlighted in this chapter not only elucidates the already-established practices of homosocials, homosexuals, and lesbians and gays to depend on memory, but also provides compelling evidence of how remembering the Nazi persecution of homosexuals in particular did this work before (and therefore outside) the memory tradition centering the Holocaust. From a theoretical perspective, such a move promises larger considerations that I return to in the conclusion. But for now, this chapter shows once again that even at the earliest moment in which American homosexuals were remembering the persecution of their European homosexual compatriots, they were doing so as part of a much older, more comprehensive, and perhaps *distinctive* tradition of queer memory work.

Tracing the effectiveness of Roehm's alternate memory on this limited audience is nearly impossible. The homosexual community Gerber promised his imagined audience would not materialize in archivable discourse until the

1950s, even as at least some homosexual communities grew in size and scope over the intervening decades. Simultaneously, Gerber's text largely fell into oblivion soon after its 1934 publication. His work to organize and defend US homosexuals in the 1920s and '30s was almost completely unknown to early lesbian and gay activists of the 1950s until Gerber reconnected with the community via *ONE* magazine in 1953. Afterward, "Hitlerism and Homosexuality" would reemerge only in snippets, partially reproduced for the first time in Jonathan Ned Katz's groundbreaking *Gay American History* in 1976. Today, the full text remains available in only a few select archives and databases—largely unread except by LGBTQ+ historians.

Nonetheless, this initial attempt to remember homosexual victims of the Nazi regime has much to tell us about the specific project of using these memories in US homosexual rhetoric at its earliest stages. Gerber's efforts to infuse Roehm's memory with the spirit of a nascent homosexual politics as soon as three months following the captain's execution confirms two of this book's major themes: that US homosexuals and heterosexuals alike knew of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals in real time, and that homosexual activists deployed memories of these events to advance the community's aims almost from the moment they began. Gerber's admittedly limited case shows that early US homosexual activists were quick to see the threat posed by a rising Nazi tyranny and actively worked to align themselves against it. In 1934, this fact was far from certain. The Third Reich was in its infancy, its most horrendous acts of anti-Semitism and violence—events like Kristallnacht, which would ultimately shape many Americans' anti-Nazi perspectives—were years away. Meanwhile, the underlying structures of the Nazi ideology, such as anti-Semitism and racial segregation, were still shared by some Americans and Germans at the time.[47] The full horrors resulting from Nazi power could simply not be seen by most everyday Americans in this moment. But Gerber saw at least some of the Nazi threat for what it could become after Roehm's murder, named it tyranny in print, and sought to align American homosexuals—all homosexuals, in fact—against it, if for no other reason than to ensure a future for a US homosexual community whose growth might be indefinitely impeded otherwise.

Gerber's remembrance of Roehm also illustrates that where other scholars and activists have failed to see any meaningful attempt to advance a memory of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals in the United States before the 1970s, such memories were long present—if we are able to overcome our expectations about who counts as the Nazis' homosexual victims. For too

long, activists and scholars in search of such memories looked at the homosexual persecution with anachronistic eyes. On one hand, we searched for homosexual victims who emulated what most Americans today are taught to imagine Nazi victims to have looked like: victims molded in the image of the Jewish experience of the Holocaust and marked by ghettoization, camp internment, and mass extermination. On the other hand, searches for homosexual victims privileged sympathetic homosexual suffering. In a period when so many millions lost their lives to the Nazis, prioritizing the stories of victims whose humanity shines through seemed like the right thing to do. But neither Roehm nor his men massacred in the purge fit these descriptions. In the history of the Nazi regime, June 1934 marked the earliest months of the homosexual persecution. Mass roundups and arrests, fervent anti-homosexual laws, internment in camps—these terrors were months and years away. In fact, some scholars and survivors of the homosexual persecution mark the Roehm purge as the beginning of such targeted oppression.[48] In other words, in a theme I return to again in this book, seeking out homosexual victims of the Nazis for remembrance will always be stymied if we search for homosexual experiences that mirror those of the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis. By the same token, few at the time or in the decades since have characterized Roehm and his men as sympathetic victims of the Nazi regime. In effect, even though at least some of these men were homosexual, their ties to Nazism seem to have justified their persecution, at least for some. As a result, the Roehm purge is too often unrecognizable even today as an act of homosexual repression by the Nazis; nor can Roehm and the Brownshirts be seen as sympathetic victims. Both failings contributed to the false idea that even homosexuals themselves did not remember this persecution until decades later.

But if we widen memory's aperture to include American homosexuals like Gerber in September 1934, the Roehm purge and its remembrances in *Chanticleer* change that narrative. Rather than seeing a despicable homosexual Nazi who got what he deserved, we can see that members of a nascent homosexual community—desperate for representation and adrift in the fog of war about the events of the purge itself—made sense of both Roehm and his death with the facts they had and put them to meaningful rhetorical work on their own behalf. The image of Roehm presented by Gerber—of a consequential homosexual taking up arms against Hitler in a valiant and virile act of anti-fascism—is certainly hard to square today. But considered in its original context, this remembrance of Roehm—one that the in memoriam note

published in the *Times* suggests was not unique to Gerber—seems self-serving but also reasonable, plausible, and rooted in contemporary reporting. It also provides a new starting point from which we can trace wider practices of remembering the homosexual persecution by the Nazis by US homosexuals in the decades to come.

What did this image of Roehm and his men offered by Gerber portend for such memory work more generally? Narrow as it was, Gerber's memory of Roehm points to two key facets of remembering homosexual victims of the Nazi regime that reverberate throughout this book. First is the tendency of homosocial, homosexual, and lesbian and gay commemorators over several decades to remember homosexual victims as resisters of Nazi power. In Roehm's case, homosexual resistance to the Nazis is remembered in a form that was both active and militant: an imagined army of homosexuals, reminiscent of the infamous Sacred Band of Thebes, struck down in battle with Hitler's tyrannical forces. As we will see, different homosexual activists also remembered homosexuals persecuted by the Nazis with a similar framing of "resistance" between 1934 and 1981. However, none of these later activists imagined or marshaled this valiant warrior image of persecuted homosexuals in the same way as Gerber. This discrepancy is almost entirely explained by Gerber's partial view of what would become a much wider campaign of anti-homosexual terror in the years after "Hitlerism and Homosexuality" was published. As such, Gerber's remembrance of homosexual resistance emphasizes Roehm's military training, his masculinist disposition, and the Nazis' justification for the purge as preventing a threatened coup. By the next chapter, when these events are again taken up by homosexual activists in the late 1940s and '50s, a much fuller image of Nazi persecution takes precedence, while Roehm and his men's victimization falls almost entirely out of favor. But for Gerber, in September 1934, Roehm's fate embodied the Nazi persecution of homosexuals, and the ethos and actions of the captain and his men leading up to the purge defined the kind of resistance homosexuals of Gerber's time were asked to praise or emulate.

If Gerber's remembrance of Roehm is notable for first infusing memories of homosexuals persecuted by the Nazi regime with the rhetoric of resistance, it is also significant for emphasizing another facet of these events that failed to anticipate future challenges American homosexuals would face: the fearful specter of homosexuals as Communists or Communist targets. As this chapter has shown, this realignment (while factually suspect) was an effective way to depict homosexuals anew as anti-fascist. But as World War II ended

and the Cold War began, Gerber's efforts to equate homosexuality with Communism rather than fascism appear, in retrospect, potentially catastrophic. Shortly after the war, the US government, in a frenzy of anti-Communist fervor, turned on American homosexuals in explicit terms. As scholar David K. Johnson notes, this shift resulted in hearings, investigations, dismissals, and arrests of homosexuals in Washington, DC. Soon, the federal government had created a discourse in which "communists and queers" were "indistinguishable threats."[49] The suggestion that homosexuals were sympathetic to Communism or likely to be blackmailed by Communists was a chief barb in such attacks. The Lavender Scare summarizes these events alongside the Cuban internment of homosexuals, which prompted the first march by homosexuals on the White House. This turn against American homosexuals enabled by anti-Communist discourses was impossible for Gerber to imagine in September 1934, when homosexuals were facing very different and more immediate threats at home and abroad. But as I show in the next chapter, the changing nature of these dangers in the immediate postwar period led a new generation of homosexual activists—some of them also avowed Communists—to revisit memories of the Nazi persecution and its victims, using these recollections to attack the emerging anti-homosexual threats of their own era.