

INTRODUCTION



A class of women ... in which homosexuality while fairly distinct, is only slightly marked, is formed by the women to whom the actively inverted woman is most attracted ... On the whole, they are women who are not very robust and well-developed, physically or nervously, and who are not well adapted for child-bearing, but who still possess many excellent qualities, and they are always womanly. One may perhaps say that they are the pick of the women whom the average man would pass by. No doubt this is often the reason why they are open to homosexual advances.
—Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion*, 1908

Femininity! A patriarchal hype if there ever was one – a phony ideal created by men, not by Lesbians.
—Linda Strega, ‘The Big Sell-out, Lesbian Femininity’, 1985

Research for this study of queer femininities began with rather a different purpose in mind. Inspired by a recently completed project on female masculinities in German and Dutch interwar literature, I turned my attention to some largely overlooked exchanges between queer women across the German and Dutch border in the period between the two World Wars. A brief note from a self-defined Dutch ‘transvestite’ located in a supplement of the queer German magazine *The Girlfriend* (*Die Freundin*, 1924–33), the traces of the romantic/erotic relationship that brought together Dada artist Hannah Höch and Dutch author Til Brugman, and the decision of German author Christa Winsloe to publish her novel *The Girl Manuela*

(*Das Mädchen Manuela*, 1933) in Amsterdam after the National Socialists assumed power led me to conclude that there must have been a productive social network of women exchanging sexual knowledges (and desires) across German and Dutch borders during this time. Following Foucault's oft-cited contention that sexuality came to be considered the 'truth of our being' at the end of the nineteenth century, I embarked on a project that conceived of identity as central to the experience of desire, asking how cross-cultural exchanges might have shaped sexual practices in the interwar era and to what extent the medico-political project of sexual codification taking place in Germany from the late nineteenth century onwards had influenced the ways in which queer women conceived of their desires in the Netherlands and beyond. Furthermore, I wondered how modern gender politics had disrupted existing conceptions of sexual desire, as well as the social imaginary of such intimacies, in two cultural contexts that had encountered two vastly different experiences of the so-called Great War.

With the aim of weaving together a richer tapestry of historical gendered enactments and exchanges by queer women in the first half of the twentieth century, I began a comparative project that took Berlin and Amsterdam as the key sociopolitical sites for investigation. The placement of Berlin as a site of erotic alterity has become an almost self-evident fact in histories about sexual practices and identities written since the 1980s. Certainly, in the years of relative economic stability between the two World Wars, queer life became a palpable part of the urban German landscape as never before. Bars and clubs catering to the tastes of queer audiences sprang up in Berlin in unprecedented numbers, literary and cinematic production brought nonheterosexual desires to a broader and increasingly sexually cognisant audience, and a medicosocial movement founded in the German capital in the late nineteenth century began more fervently to lobby for the political rights and social acceptance of same-sex loving persons. Yet, while the visibility of queer desires in Berlin during the interwar period – and concomitantly the German archive – is perhaps a convincing enough motive for positioning this city as central to a study concerning discourses of queer identity and desire, the case for considering Amsterdam as a springboard for such investigations is far less readily apparent. Indeed, in spite of the existence of a few suggestively Sapphic images of cigar-smoking, motorcycle-riding women in the Dutch archive, the masculine tones that provided the overture to sociopolitical discussions of female sexual alterity in Germany appeared to have failed to capture the Dutch cultural imagination to the same degree.¹ Conspicuously absent from fin-de-siècle debates concerning sexual morality in the Netherlands, and rendered invisible in the writings of the queer male activists rallying against the Dutch law that restricted same-sex desires, evidence of the ways in which queer women

in the Netherlands organized their lives and loves before the middle of the twentieth century remains frustratingly fragmentary. It is certainly for good reason that historian Judith Schuyf's extensive monograph on lesbian desire in the Netherlands refers to the topic as 'A Silent Conspiracy'.² In an earlier article, Schuyf touches on the significance of sexological discourses of gendered inversion to the formation of queer identities in Germany – identities that were shaped by the idea of an inborn reversal of gender traits. Following this theory, the female with same-sex desires was conceived of as a figure with a 'masculine soul, heaving in the female bosom'.³ The link between a congenital reversal of gendered characteristics and the desire for one's own sex meant that female same-sex desire was conceptualized in countries influenced by German sexological discourses primarily through a framework of visible masculinity and/or culturally specific gender deviance. Doctrines of somatic inversion were slow to take root in Dutch society, however, which suggests the existence of alternative sociocultural frameworks for the cultivation of queer identities and desires:

In Germany, lesbian women were conscious of an identity *as a lesbian*, and the form this identity took was the trademark of the German gay rights movement, Hirschfeld's Wissenschaftlich Humanitäres Komitee [*sic*] (WhK), the 'Third Sex' ... In The Netherlands [*sic*] lesbian women were, primarily, *women*. Thus, in the feminist magazines the discussion was about femininity.⁴

As Schuyf's above contention suggests, markers of masculinity in female-bodied subjects in the Netherlands during the interwar period were not yet primarily coded as a sign of sexual nonconformity. As such, transposing the focus of German sexological writings on gender inversion onto a Dutch historical context would mean to ignore the evidence that points to alternative queer modalities. Indeed, by discounting such alternatives in the search of something that aligned more readily with the dominant European discourses of sexuality and desire from the first half of the twentieth century, my original project risked falling into the trap 'of translating the unsaid into something we think we already know'.⁵ Motivated primarily by what Julian Carter identifies as a 'desire for the recognition of the present in the past', my initial point of departure therefore sought to conceptualize historical practices of female same-sex desire through a single sexological lens.⁶ Rather than foregrounding the signifiers of modern-day queerness in examinations of the past, an approach that Laura Doan already skilfully critiqued in her groundbreaking work *Disturbing Practices* (2013), this book attempts to explore instead how we might 'pose questions rather than provide answers about sexual identities we already know'.⁷ By decentralizing the sexological

invert from the study of queer female desires, I seek to find out what a focus on the construction of queer femininity might reveal about the myriad ways in which same-sex desire has been experienced and constructed by women in the past.

As I will argue throughout this book, the widespread acceptance of the masculine woman as the symbol of twentieth-century female queerness par excellence has led to an obscuring of queer feminine desires as a legitimate subject of historical study. Consequently, femininity has been undervalued in the examination of queer female subjectivities and neglected as a site of academic interest, even while explorations of queer (male) masculinities have flourished and thrived.⁸ As the so-called invisible gendered performance, femininity has historically been viewed through normativizing frameworks, even within queer studies, which has almost entirely disguised the critical potential of femininity in research into the sexual past. Less readily legible as queer in the archives, the sexual difference of feminine women often becomes visible only through the gender deviancy of their partners, those whose marked masculinity is invariably linked – as either cause or consequence – to an immutable desire for their own sex. At once everywhere and nowhere, the queer feminine woman thus confronts historians with a contradiction in terms. Nonetheless, the persistence and ubiquity of feminine-gendered expressions in queer communities during the early twentieth century and beyond means that it would be remiss to ignore the possibility that female queerness has been historically coded and understood in ways that were not exclusively masculine. To put it even more strongly: while femininity may, in several respects, obfuscate the project of locating experiences of female queerness in the past, by creating space for the discussion of femininity in the present, we can make infinite the gendered embodiments that might be considered queer and, as such, included in historical studies of same-sex desires. Indeed, it is crucial that we begin to move away from a history of love and lust between women that is consolidated singularly, as Sarah Cefai has observed, ‘around the image of the butch’.⁹ Only in this way might we fully appreciate the nuanced ways in which female same-sex desires have been constructed in historically specific periods. To this end, this study will explore the productive potential of revaluing gender ‘conformity’ with the aim of redressing the imbalance in research on female femininities in historical studies of queer genders and sexualities. By focusing specifically on queer female-bodied femininities – read through a range of German and Dutch sociocultural, sexological and literary texts published since 1880 – this project seeks not only to make queer feminine women visible as subjects of historical study within their own right, but also to contribute to the growing discussion surrounding the plurality of queer female experience through history. However, to take

femininity as the central lens through which to examine erotic and romantic desires between women also means to engage with femininity as an ideology that has long since been contested by queers and feminists alike. While the culturally bound debates relating to historical enactments of femininity will be discussed in Part I of this book, the complexities and contradictions inherent in the social imperative to reject ‘bad’ forms of femininity, one that has arguably served to preserve the vacuum in research about queer feminine desires to which I have just alluded, must first be acknowledged in order to appreciate the importance of this subject matter in the first instance and the need for its historical contextualization in the second. As the central tenets that form the critical study of femininity have largely resulted from a body of work emerging from North America, the following section will look specifically at those frameworks before applying the theoretical fruits of queer and feminist studies to the cultural contexts outlined above.

‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ Femininities

Against the backdrop of cultural conservatism that characterized vast areas of the United States in the second half of the twentieth century, Betty Friedan published a powerful critique of patriarchal forms of femininity. Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) speaks of the growing discontent many housewives were experiencing in the United States in their return to domesticity in the aftermath of the Second World War, capturing the spirit of a cultural moment. Presenting idealized forms of femininity in American society as a cultural practice that was fundamental to women’s oppression, Friedan claims that femininity had dominated women’s lives for centuries and had served to confine women ‘to the home [and] to keep us from developing and using our full personhood in society’.¹⁰ Cemented through capitalist enterprises such as ‘women’s magazines, the movies, the television commercials ... the mass media and the textbooks of psychology and sociology’ – discursive forms that will be analysed in this book – Friedan suggests that the thrall of the feminine mystique had become so absolute by the 1960s that ‘the highest value and the only commitment’ for women in North America had become ‘the fulfillment of their own femininity’.¹¹ The ‘mystique’ of the feminine, Friedan observes, was part of a blueprint that had been laid out guilefully for centuries. As part of a much broader social system, the pressures of femininity worked to instil a sense of shame in women who did not find completion in the domestic roles of wife and mother. However, in the wake of the civil rights movements emerging in the 1950s and 1960s, growing numbers of American women started to articulate their discontent with familial life and to question, along with Friedan,

whether their commitment to the ideals of femininity had indeed served to prevent them from becoming ‘fully human’.¹²

While Friedan’s study rails against the damaging potentials of those forms of femininity used to entrap women within domesticity and to prevent them from reaching their ‘full potential’ as human beings, it certainly does not call for a rejection of femininity outright. Rather, it posits a revaluation of what she considers a culturally devalued way of being: ‘the great mistake of Western culture, through most of its history, has been the undervaluation of ... femininity. It says femininity is so mysterious and intuitive and close to the creation and origin of life that man-made science may never be able to understand it’.¹³ Alongside a revision of traditional femininities, Friedan further suggests a development of ‘mutant’ forms of femininity in which the objectives of the marital union can be combined with the desires of women to fulfil their own creative ambitions. Casting aside an idealized form of femininity that weds women to the homestead, Friedan instead lays out her own ideal in which women’s creative impulses can be combined with more traditional feminine pursuits. In order to achieve this unification, Friedan argues that a woman ‘must think of herself as a human being first ... and make a life plan in terms of her own abilities, a commitment of her own to society, with which her commitments as wife and mother can be integrated’.¹⁴ Within Friedan’s framework, ‘bad’ femininities, then, are those that define female achievement only in terms of domestic success. However, ‘good’ femininities offer a radical futurity for those who dare to envision a life *alongside* domesticity: ‘Who knows what women can be when they are finally free to become themselves? Who knows what women’s intelligence will contribute when it can be nourished without denying love?’¹⁵ In presenting seemingly limitless possibilities for the future of (feminine) women’s social, political and sexual experiences, Friedan’s suggestion of mutant femininities arguably offers an early insurrection in the queering of gender norms. Yet, her framework fundamentally denies women one desire in its vision of a new feminist future: that for their own sex.

Speaking as the President of the National Organization for Women (NOW) at the First Congress to Unite Women in 1969, Friedan drew firm lines between the emerging women’s rights movement, and with it her vision for the future of femininity, and the ‘mannish’ and ‘man-hating’ lesbians who undermined the potential of such an organization to achieve sociopolitical change.¹⁶ Denouncing lesbians as a ‘lavender menace’, Friedan’s slight sparked a wave of lesbian-feminist critiques of gender roles – and, specifically, femininity – in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the writings that followed on the subject, queer feminists were seen to chew the meat provided to them by Friedan’s formative work, while leaving the bones of its heteronormativity ostensibly behind them, eschewing

the traditional butch-femme identities that had previously been so highly valued within North American and Western European lesbian subcultures after the Second World War.¹⁷ In their place, the concept of the woman-identified woman began to gain traction, which offered a more androgynous paradigm with which to resist the purportedly heterosexual practices of penetrative sex and binary desire. Adopting this designation, the separatist group Radicalesbians sought to repurpose the core argument of *The Feminine Mystique* along queer lines.¹⁸ Agreeing with Friedan's earlier contention that 'being 'feminine' and being a whole person are irreconcilable', the Radicalesbians' manifesto 'The Woman-Identified Woman' (1970) takes Friedan's critiques even further to link the core tenets of idealized forms of femininity to notions of slavery and race. Considering femininity to be something that is conferred upon women by men, the group defines the label as 'a slave status which makes us legitimate in the eyes of the society in which we live'.¹⁹ In this way, the Radicalesbians considered femininity to 'dehumanize' women, positioning them in a 'supportive/serving caste in relation to the master caste of men'.²⁰ While the group drew heavily on Friedan's theorizing, the Radicalesbians ultimately rejected the notion of mutant femininities, claiming that it was futile to try to bend the limits of a patriarchal performance to one's own will.²¹ Instead, they encouraged queer women to reject the practices associated with femininity altogether in order 'to achieve maximum autonomy in human expression'.²² During this project for erotic emancipation, it was not only femininity that was cast aside. Indeed, as Biddy Martin observes, lesbian separatists found 'male identification in virtually any expression of gendered style whether femme or butch'.²³ For this reason, any gender presentation that fell within male-identified systems or engaged in the notion of a 'false consciousness' was to be rejected. Within such a logic, not only was the stylistic presentation of queer feminine women to be disavowed – and, with it, their supposed support of a system that upheld masculine privilege and power – but 'thinking, acting, or looking like a man', as Esther Newton writes, was also considered to 'contradict lesbian feminism's first principle'.²⁴

During the early 1980s, activists and scholars such as Joan Nestle and Madeline Davis began to rebel against the devaluing of 'butch' and 'fem(me)' identities in their pro-sex, pro-femme writings. In a series of fierce debates that later became categorized as the 'sex wars', it soon became evident that femininity remained a key site of contention for many (queer and lesbian) feminists, who still believed the practice to be a form of patriarchal collusion. Amidst topics such as the supposed sexual subordination of women within BDSM subcultures and the harmful effects of pornography on women, activists and scholars such as Andrea Dworkin and Adrienne Rich criticized the 'damaging' revival of feminine gendered

expressions. Butch-femme relationships were once again cast as ‘het’ facsimiles and any kind of power inequality between lesbian women, whether through a division of domestic labour or during erotic play, was denounced as ‘weakening of lesbian politics’, with femininity itself being labelled the ultimate ‘self-betrayal’.²⁵ Writing of the butch oppression experienced by masculine-of-centre lesbians, self-defined ‘fem’ Linda Strega claimed that queer feminine women were sabotaging the fight for lesbian emancipation by adopting ‘het values and het identification’.²⁶ According to Strega, identifying as a ‘fem’ was to align oneself with the ‘enemy’, the greatest act of betrayal one could commit against the lesbian community and those visible butch figures within it. During the sex wars, then, the practice of femininity by queer women was rejected by several prominent radical lesbian-feminists as a display of ‘allegiance and orientation towards male values and desires’, which evidenced a lack of commitment to the fight for emancipation and functioned as a betrayal of one’s Sapphic sisters.²⁷ However, following the fierce defence of queer femininity by Joan Nestle, Madeline Davis and Amber Hollibaugh in the 1990s, a distinctive form of femme pride began to emerge. In Nestle’s collection *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader* (1992), for example, feminine garb and gestures are not reviled as the accessories of the butch betrayer but are instead used to create an intellectual space in which queer femininity can be read almost exclusively as a subversive act. Indeed, in a retrospective look at the creation of the collection itself, Davis claims that in utilizing heteropatriarchal gender norms to new effect, femmes might even be considered the ‘queerest of the queers’.²⁸ Echoing this sentiment, Mykel Johnson challenges the image of the apolitical femme that had plagued the lesbian movement from the 1970s by noting the distinctions in the ways in which homofemininities and heterofemininities are performed: ‘femme dykes, as well as butch dykes, fuck with gender. [They] are not passing as straight women. Lesbian femme is not the same as “feminine” ... A femme dyke is not trying to be discreet’.²⁹ In keeping with Butler’s troubling of gender, Johnson argues that performing femininity as a queer woman is about upsetting normative images by disrupting the assumed relationship between the *performer* and the *observer*: ‘Even if she is “beautiful” by ... male standards, a femme dyke may do something to disrupt the image, intentionally break the rules. And she breaks the cardinal rule: her audience is female, not male.’³⁰ In this troubling of the relationship between gendered performer and observer, both Davis and Johnson take pains to create queer femme subjectivities that are *distinct* from heterosexual forms of femininity, an observation that, as we will see in Chapter 6, was already being made by the interwar authors Anna Elisabet Weirauch and Josine Reuling. Indeed, in a climate in which heterosexual femininities were considered anathema to homosexual liberation, femmes were at

constant risk of their gendered performances being considered ‘a capitulation, a swamp, something maternal, ensnared and ensnaring’ rather than a radical or subversive act. This was especially true if a femme’s performance of femininity, as Biddy Martin suggests, was ‘not camped up or disavowed’.³¹

The impulse to distinguish between ‘het’ and queer forms of femininity gained greater significance in the face of the emergence of what Danae Clark terms ‘commodity lesbianism’ in the mid-1990s.³² During this time, the carefully carved lines between heterosexual and queer femininities increasingly began to blur, especially as those femme embodiments that had been held up as radical were co-opted into mainstream culture as quick-fire concepts in order to market music, magazines, films and fashion. Although the commodification of queerness was of course itself not a new construct, the dawning of a ‘decade in love with lesbianism’, as Ann Ciasullo characterizes it, served to create a paradoxical sexual landscape in which ‘designer dykes’ and ‘lipstick lesbians’ were both everywhere and nowhere.³³ In this contradictory cultural climate, lesbian lives were garnering more interest within mainstream media outlets than ever before, but the ‘luscious lesbians’ being depicted were, as Clark observes, considered increasingly to be ‘indistinguishable from straight women’.³⁴ During the 1990s, Ciasullo describes the growth of a ‘sanitized’ version of lesbianism across media outlets – an image that served to create, in turn, what Rosanne Kennedy acknowledges as ‘an absent presence’ of lesbian desire.³⁵ In this way, as Nestle concedes, it became all too ‘easy’ for queer communities ‘to lose curiosity about what made [femmes] sexual heretics’ in the first instance.³⁶ As a consequence, the label ‘lipstick lesbian’, as Lisa Walker notes, was soon adopted in queer communities as a slur to connote ‘an apolitical creature ... a lesbian who doesn’t want to be a dyke and doesn’t want to be associated with dykes’.³⁷ Indeed, already by the end of the 1990s, the radical *femme*-inity that had been put forth by Nestle and others was being dismissed as a naïve response to the powers of patriarchal commercialism and, as such, unconvincing as a political act.

Following more than a decade of commercialized queerness in the ironically termed ‘gay nineties’, the arrival of Showtime’s *The L Word* (2004–9) created an unparalleled platform for displays of queer female femininity. In doing so, the series struck upon several enduring conceptual nerves within lesbian and queer communities. Abounding with glamorous, middle-class and mainly white cis women, *The L Word*, like many other mainstream television shows, based its female characters on several recognizable archetypes of femininity. However, with storylines circling around themes of promiscuity, bisexuality and motherhood, the series openly tackled many of the charges that had been levied against queer feminine women since the early twentieth century. Yet, the centrality of feminine women in the series and the notable absence of traditionally butch characters led many critics from

the queer community to query the objectives of the directors, problematizing the validity of the performance of femininity for a queer audience:

Even as [*The L Word's*] characters wrestle with real-world lesbian issues, they do so garbed, coiffed, and made-up in the guise of feminine, heterosexual women – thereby not only defusing any potential threat or disruption of the heterosexual status quo, but also reifying the representation of all women as existing under the purview of the scopophilic male gaze.³⁸

The suggestion that the queer feminine women in the show were ‘made-up in the *guise* of feminine, heterosexual women’ and that this supposed impersonation of heterofemininity failed to ‘[defuse] any potential threat or disruption of the heterosexual status quo’ reinforces the anti-feminine sentiments that had persisted in queer communities since the 1970s. Furthermore, the focus on femininity being performed for the ‘scopophilic male gaze’ undermines Johnson’s earlier contention that queer women might play out their femininities specifically for the pleasure of *other queer women*. Such dismissals of the subversive potential of the queer femininities that have been performed (literally and figuratively) onscreen have had important implications for what has been considered worthy of critical attention – academic or otherwise – in relation to this watershed series. It remains telling, for example, that the distinctions between central character Tina Kennard’s embodiment of maternal femininity, Bette Porter’s dominant *Powerfrau* aesthetic and Helena Peabody’s high-class hyperfemininity have largely been ignored in favour of a blanket rejection of what has been considered a monolithic performance of femininity that serves only to make female same-sex desire palatable for nonqueer audiences. In this way, femininity is once again diffused as a legitimate queer gendered embodiment and read rather as an indication, as Walker suggests, of a feminine woman’s ‘desire to pass for straight and not of her desire for other women.’³⁹ Plagued by what Clare Hemmings has termed ‘a specter of straightness’, the alterity of femininity in the early 2000s continued to be rendered invisible by the apparent privilege of queer feminine women to pass as heterosexual.⁴⁰

At the time of writing, debates on issues of femininity remain heated within many feminist, lesbian and queer circles. Even with the reboot of Showtime’s series *The L Word* in 2019, which bears the alternate title *Generation Q*, there is still remarkably little that seems queer about femininity. Even while the femininity of its (now) older characters is described as ‘soapy’ and ‘overblown’ by the show’s critics, these labels appear to carry little of the camp cachet that Martin had earlier suggested might turn the performance of femininity into a subversive act. Instead, it is the body hair of androgynous and butch characters that has been praised by viewers as ‘relatable’ and ‘radical’, while queer femininity continues to be considered as part of the ‘time capsule that should

have stayed buried'.⁴¹ This is, of course, not to say that the growing visibility of butch and trans characters in the recent series presents an unwelcome change or that the – all too brief – acknowledgement of the colonizing actions of white queer people in Los Angeles does not mark the beginning of a crucial conversation about the effects of what Damaris Rose terms 'marginal gentrification' in North America. Rather, it reveals that the generosity that has recently been extended by viewers and critics to more reductive renderings of masculinity in the series is still yet to be afforded to its feminine characters, who continue to be the subject of ridicule and ire. Indeed, in spite of a welcome growth in recent years in scholarly interest on the subject of queer femininities, the refusal to read historical enactments of femininity as *equally* queer continues to preclude a valuable discussion of the critical potential of femininity within communities of women-who-desired-women in the past.⁴² The continued marginalization of femininity within queer communities, as Sarah Cefai notes, therefore 'problematically re-privileges [lesbian] masculinity as *less* invested in heteropatriarchy, as a more liberated mode of desire and identity'.⁴³ This is largely evidenced in the criticisms and acclaim received most recently by the writers of *The L Word: Generation Q*. The view that queer femininity continues to serve damaging patriarchal ideals colours not only the ways in which activists and theorists conceive of gender and sexual politics in the present, but also the ways in which historians have narrated the events of the queer past. Indeed, more than thirty years after the publication of Nestle's *The Persistent Desire*, it still remains possible to conclude that queer women have historically been 'the victims of a double dismissal: in the past they did not appear culturally different enough from heterosexual women to be seen as breaking gender taboos, and today they do not appear feminist enough, even in their historical context, to merit attention or respect for being ground-breaking women'.⁴⁴ What Nestle already identified in the 1990s as a cultural dismissal of femininity continues, then, to shape historical studies on the subject of queer desire. Indeed, even a cursory search for the figure of the femme in the context of German and Dutch queer history writing forces us to acknowledge that both the lack of attention and the respect for femininity that Nestle identifies have led to vast gaps in accumulated knowledge about the relationships between gender, sexuality and desire in the past.

Locating the Femme in Histories of Sexuality

In adopting a comparative approach for this study, I was struck by several differences in the traditions and preoccupations of German and Dutch historians of sexuality. To a greater degree, German historical research since

the 1970s has focused intensely on the construction of sexual subjectivities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with specific attention being paid to the fin-de-siècle, the interwar and the Nazi eras.⁴⁵ While much early German history writing on the subject of same-sex desire appears to have been committed to what Doan has termed the ‘recovery project’ agenda, there has since developed an advancing number of publications that have engaged with queer methodological practices, as will be discussed shortly.⁴⁶ Conversely, Dutch scholars have not taken up queer frameworks nearly so proactively. Indeed, the analysis of historical female same-sex experiences from a queer perspective has remained quite untouched as the subject of comprehensive research in Dutch contexts at the time of writing. Furthermore, while histories of sexuality in German contexts have focused on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, providing ample secondary source material to aid research into these periods, Dutch historical studies of same-sex desire have been concerned primarily with the period between the High Middle Ages and the eighteenth century.⁴⁷ Indeed, Anja van Kooten Niekerk and Sacha Wijmer’s socio-anthropological project *The Wrong Kind of Friendship: Lesbian Lives in the Years 1920–1960* (*Verkeerde vriendschap: lesbisch leven in de jaren 1920–1960*, 1985) and Judith Schuyf’s cultural historical study *A Silent Conspiracy: Lesbian Women in the Netherlands 1920–1970* (*Een stilzwijgende samenzwering: lesbische vrouwen in Nederland 1920–1970*, 1994) remain the only two monographs to have been published that focus on female same-sex desire in the Netherlands in the early twentieth century. Additionally, while several significant contributions have been published on queer female desires in Dutch-language collections and journals, very few have been translated into English or made available to non-Dutch speakers. With this present volume then, I hope to present a broad historical account of Dutch discourses of queer female desire to an English-speaking audience in the first monograph on queer female desire in the Dutch interbellum to appear since the 1990s.

In terms of female same-sex desire in German contexts, the figure of the masculine woman has come to dominate the field of study. This is largely unsurprising, given the unprecedented social anxiety around the ‘masculinization’ of women during the interwar era, as has been demonstrated admirably in Katie Sutton’s *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (2012). The preoccupation of contemporary German-speaking medicosocial discourses with the subject of gender deviance has resulted in an extensive collection of scientific and sociological documents, which are readily available for analysis both online and in archives. Heike Schader’s *Virile Women, Vamps, and Wild Violets* (2004) further provides a wealth of information to readers in relation to the periodicals printed for queer women during the Weimar era. Outlining the various forms of masculinities

and femininities depicted in the pages of these periodicals, Schader's study sheds light on the ways in which queer women gave new meaning to gender categories and blurred the lines between the binary designations of masculinity and femininity. However, while acknowledging the existence of queer femininities, Schader's research focus remains moored primarily to the concept of the masculine homosexual women. Furthermore, in terms of the production and structure of the magazines, Schader's study pays little attention to the types of discourses that are presented in the periodicals and how these themselves could be considered gendered genres. In exploring and comparing the nuances of literary writing and advertorials presented in these magazines, I aim to build on Schader's important discussions to focus on how what Hélène Cixous has coined *écriture féminine* has shaped the significances accorded to these magazines.

It is arguably Marti Lybeck's most recent exploration of the emergence of homosexual identities in Germany from 1890 to 1933 that has given most comprehensive attention to the struggles of negotiating femininity, gendered subjectivity and queer desire. *Desiring Emancipation* (2014) focuses specifically on the experiences of wealthy women from before the fin de siècle to the rise of National Socialism and addresses queer femininity at a time when the nonreproductive feminine subject was considered 'immoral, selfish, uncontrolled, fickle, vain, degenerate, and possibly evil'.⁴⁸ Lybeck's study provides significant insights into the fragility of class-bound gender formations by considering the ways in which bourgeois women transgressed notions of gender as desiring subjects. However, in its examination of periodicals, literature and records from women's clubs (*Frauenvereine*) during the 1920s, Lybeck's study nonetheless restricts itself to those women who 'saw themselves as a minority defined by congenital difference'.⁴⁹ Such women, Lybeck suggests, were able to shape a coherent social identity based on 'masculinity as the essence of the homosexual woman'.⁵⁰ By opening up this debate on class to explore more closely the nebulous relationship between femininity and homosexual desire, as well as those longings of aspirational white-collar workers depicted in magazines such as *The Girlfriend* (*Die Freundin*, 1924–33) and *Woman's Love* (*Frauenliebe*, 1926–32), my own study hopes to weave a further strand into the discussion stimulated by Lybeck's most recent contribution.

In terms of Dutch sociohistorical studies concerning queer women, Anja van Kooten Niekerk and Sacha Wijmer's sociological study *The Wrong Kind of Friendship* (1985) was stimulated by a range of sexual and psychoanalytical discourses that focus specifically on the image of the *manwijf* (mannish woman) between 1920 and 1960. Through a wide-ranging analysis, van Kooten Niekerk and Wijmer draw on – and corroborate – much of the work of Nestle and the pro-sex writers of their

time by presenting the image of historical female same-sex relationships in the Netherlands that conformed to traditional masculine-feminine dichotomies, resulting in 'butch' or 'femme' relationships. Yet, from the corpus on which the study is based – an impressive body of interviews with twenty-one women born between 1904 and 1936 – the shifting nature of women's sexual and gendered performances suggests that gendered and erotic roles between women were far more fluid than this initial binary might suggest. Interviewee Greet van Halteren explains, for example, that queer women were known to oscillate between gendered roles depending on the presentation of their desired partner. If a woman attempted to attract a masculine partner, for example, she would adopt a feminine appearance, irrespective of her preferred gender role. The opposite would be true of those women who attempted to attract feminine partners. Speaking of her friend 'Adri', van Halteren hints at the dynamism that existed within the binary:

To Greet's no small astonishment, Adri, one of her companions, fell in love with a 'real' masculine type, even more masculine than Adri was herself. This love resulted in Adri 'transforming' into a feminine woman '... I had never seen her like this, because before that point she had been a real boy. 'What *are* you?' I asked her. 'I've become a girl now', she said, 'because I have got such a nice girlfriend. Kid, I had to switch around again entirely'.⁵¹

Indeed, another interviewee, Hillie Seegers, termed herself a 'chameleon' in reference to her gender presentation, which depended on the role taken by her partner: 'in one relationship she was "feminine", in the other "masculine"'.⁵² While these comments may appear to shore up the constellation of 'butch + femme', van Halteren's remarks suggest that this dyad was perpetually in flux, shifting depending on the mode of desire and the expectations within any given context. Indeed, after Adri's relationship with her 'real' masculine partner ended, she 'saw no reason to stay "femme"' and returned to her masculine forms of presentation.⁵³ Therefore, gender embodiment was clearly not a fixed phenomenon during this time: a feminine woman could 'become' a masculine woman, just as a masculine woman could don feminine apparel and enact traditionally feminine roles, or even a combination of the two. Indeed, as ambulance driver Trix S. also mentions in the study, 'that's one of the things I learned to discover later: that the very masculine-looking women, who play that role beautifully, almost always turned out to be the most feminine women out there, but in a very different direction, namely in the form of care, dealing with children et cetera'.⁵⁴ Thus, while the masculine woman could legitimately embody maternal qualities, the feminine-presenting woman could equally act as the sexual initiator, taking on the traditionally 'active' masculine role. Despite suggestions that *even* masculine women – the chief subjects of van Kooten Niekerk and Wijmer's

study – engaged fluidly with their femininity, the sociologists do not engage with the critical potential of this gendered act in their work, or the significance of feminine gendered practices to the shaping of homosexual identities and communities in the Netherlands more broadly.

Building on this earlier sociological study, Schuyf's *A Silent Conspiracy* delves more deeply into the cultural and historical contexts that shaped women's social lives and desires in the Netherlands during the first half of the twentieth century. Without explicitly terming her practices as such, Schuyf deploys queer methods to close the gap between what she considers 'known' and 'unknown' qualities of lesbian desire. To craft a more nuanced narrative about what life may have been like for women-who-desired-women in the Netherlands, Schuyf analyses historical data about the experiences of unmarried female women during this time. While such an approach is undeniably important in furthering knowledge about 'what cannot be known', Schuyf's study stops short of engaging with the devaluation of the feminine within historiographical practices, or the consideration that this may be the reason why there is so little historical information about queer women during this period in the first instance, even in spite of the importance of femininity to many queer Dutch women. Furthermore, as the backdrop for the study, Schuyf charts the development of a sexual self-image as a lesbian that relies on the notion of a 'lesbian telos'. Here, the identity category 'lesbian' is situated as the uncontested culmination point of a woman's acknowledgement of her non-normative desires.⁵⁵ Although this framework is useful for those contexts in which lesbian is a known category, it remains unable to account for those women who, as this study will suggest, did not engage with the practice of sexual labelling, or, as Doan suggests, with women who 'had little sense of sexual selfhood or subjectivity' and who 'did not think to attach to themselves sexual labels or names'.⁵⁶

Labels and Names

The processes of categorizing and labelling gendered acts and sexual desires have been steeped in political and personal debate for more than a century. For the purposes of this book, the term 'queer' will be deployed to describe the desires of women for their own sex, as a descriptor for the methodological practices undergirding this project and as an adjective that is 'unaligned with any specific identity category'.⁵⁷ Used in this way, I hope to avoid the projection of identitarian terms, such as 'homosexual', 'lesbian' or 'bisexual', onto subjects who may not have recognized such concepts or identified their desires in such ways. Although employing the term 'queer' is certainly not unproblematic, I use it as a referent to acknowledge the diverse

manifestations of love between women without pinning down any of these enactments to a specific set of acts, expressions or identities. While Adrienne Rich's 'lesbian continuum' and Judith Roof's category 'lesbian-like' have been used in similar ways, and are able thus to define a wide scope of historical woman-woman relationships, these terms remain largely incongruous with the wider aims of this study, since they are still too closely linked to our present-day understandings of 'lesbianism'.⁵⁸ In spite of its anachronistic nature, 'queer' might be considered a more relevant descriptor for such a project because, in David Halperin's words, the term 'does not designate a class of already objectified pathologies or perversions ... it describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogenous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance'.⁵⁹ In a similar way, the 'precise extent and scope' of what constitutes desire cannot be delineated in this study in advance with any single or fixed meaning. While this book is not the place to engage in philosophical debates pertaining to the multiple meanings and problematics of desire, a brief outline of what this rubric means to this project should hopefully make the parameters of the term within this context clearer. Employing the term broadly, I conceive of desire as an interweaving project of personal needs, longings and wishes for specific persons, objects and outcomes that are built both upon erotic impulses and socially constructed demands. The lack of fixidity with which the category queer desire is employed enables the term, as Corie Hammers states, to reveal 'as fiction this hetero-productive logic as it eludes/disrupts representation/meaning altogether'.⁶⁰ The term 'desire' is therefore not restricted to the longing for – or engagement in – certain romantic, erotic and sexual practices, but further includes aspirations to sexual selfhood, community building, and emancipation, acceptance and desires that may appear to be incongruous with today's personal-political project of queerness, such as desires for the heteronormative institutions of marriage and childrearing, for instance, or for the assimilation and acceptance into heterosocial structures, for erotic and romantic monogamy and for engaging in hierarchical, binary relationships. Indeed, to draw on Lee Edelman's conceptualizations, much like the category 'queer', desire fundamentally 'depends for its energy, for its continuing power to grip us, on the impossibility of knowing its boundaries, of knowing its coherence as a state'.⁶¹

In keeping with my approaches to queerness and desire, I seek to make visible through my discursive analysis the existence of multiple expressions of queer femininity and desire in German and Dutch writing from the fin de siècle through to the Nazi era – expressions that were coloured not only by sexual preference but also by markers of class, marital status, religion, race and national belonging. While the literary narratives explored in Chapters 5 and 6 depict almost exclusively feminine identities that belong to the

sociocultural and educated elite, the periodicals considered in Chapters 3 and 4 include the voices and desires of the emerging white-collar classes and working women. The labels ‘working-class’, ‘white-collar’ and ‘elite’ had – and continue to have – diverse implications within the cultural contexts considered in this study. Although these terms will be fleshed out more fully in Chapter 1, the shifting nature of class categories is an important factor to bear in mind when building a sociohistorical narrative that draws on discourses from two distinct cultural contexts in the early twentieth century. In the most general Marxist sense, then, the terms ‘bourgeois’ and ‘elite’ are used in this book to refer to those who had the means to production as well as to those controlled the means of coercion, as well as those ‘middle- and upper-class women who had the independence and the means to pursue their interests and desires’.⁶² Particularly in terms of the German context, this category also includes those women who belonged to the realm of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, which comprised individuals who had achieved the required educational and cultural standard that enabled them to access the social circles of the bourgeoisie, even if they lacked the associated financial means of this group. However, with growing numbers of people being engaged as technical and clerical workers following the First World War, the ‘homogenous social character’ of what was known as the ‘middle classes’ had already been largely eroded in Germany by the 1920s.⁶³ Yet, even within this term, numerous distinctions could still be made. For example, the positions of sales girl and office personnel, as Helen Boak contends, were largely reserved for lower working-class girls, while administrative and bureaucratic roles, which demanded a higher level of education, were taken up by lower-middle and middle-class women who considered this kind of work less ‘demeaning’.⁶⁴ The German proletariat, who, in the broadest sense, sold physical labour for economic gain is the most underrepresented in studies of queer history. Although working-class women appear only infrequently in the literary and medical discourses represented in this volume, I hope to offer significant glimpses of them in the study of magazines aimed at (queer) women in Chapters 3 and 4.

In the Netherlands, the upper-class structure of the late nineteenth century was modelled largely on the German *Bürgertum*. The *haute bourgeoisie*, as Evert Hofstee explains, consisted of those individuals with exceptional wealth – which was protected largely through ‘inward’ marriages between the nobility and other wealthy families – and those with honourable representative functions. The middle-class category in the Netherlands, if indeed it can be described as such, became much broader in the twentieth century and shows similar splinters to those described in the German situation. Ruptures were formed primarily between what Hofstee defines as the ‘old middle class’ and the ‘new middle class’. The old middle class consisted of those families

who worked in agriculture, commerce and industry, whose understanding of wealth ‘in terms of property’ can be considered a class-unifying factor. However, levels of education and wealth varied considerably within this category. Unlike the old guard, the ‘new middle class’ understood wealth in terms of material gain. There was little ‘professional heredity’ within families belonging to the new middle class, who worked in industries supported by technological advancement and increasing levels of education. The porous nature each of these so-called class distinctions is acknowledged by Hofstee, who grants that: ‘It is possible that anyone [can belong] to the upper old middle class by profession, but that he [*sic*] is a nobleman by birth and a member of the upper new middle class by education.’⁶⁵ In terms of hard labour, distinctions were made in the Netherlands primarily between skilled and unskilled labourers, with the former receiving a ‘monthly salary’ and the latter receiving ‘a weekly wage’. Yet, as will be outlined in Chapter 1, it is perhaps better not to employ rigid class categories when discussing subjects and citizens in the Netherlands. Indeed, as Peter van Rooden maintains, ‘during the better part of the 20th century ... religion was probably a more important aspect of social identity than class or region’.⁶⁶ Certainly, the concept of pillarization – that is, the social segmentation of Dutch social, political and cultural life in accordance with political belief and/or religious denomination – played a much larger role in the structuring of Dutch society than class categories. For this reason, the discussion concerning Dutch discourses in this book will focus much less on class distinctions and will instead centralize the religious and political structuring of the ‘pillars’ in which these discourses emerged.

The discourses that shaped – and, in turn, were shaped by – the desires and femininities mentioned above in the early twentieth century have been rudimentarily distinguished in this book under the rubrics of *sociomedical*, *community* and *literary* discourses. Although the importance of visual culture to the creation of a queer aesthetic during this period cannot be overemphasized, the historical documents examined in this book are first and foremost textual.⁶⁷ Complementing the terminological fluidity I adopt in this study, I suggest that the discourses I examine should not be considered discrete categories, but genres that necessarily overlap and intersect. Undoubtedly, it is precisely these imbrications that are of most interest to this project. Thus, the term ‘discourse’ will be applied in this book in a broadly Foucauldian sense. In other words, I consider discourse to be a way of constituting knowledge about a specific subject – in this instance, knowledge about sexual pleasures and desires, as well as sexual and gendered subjects – and a process that is invariably linked to considerations of power and ‘Truth’. The systems of meaning that are created through certain productions of knowledge ultimately gain the currency of ‘Truth’ and govern

the ways in which our social worlds and social selves are organized (and controlled). Yet, as Foucault himself stated: ‘Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart.’⁶⁸ Thus, while this book cannot claim to offer a full representation of every existing textual discourse on femininity or queer desire in the interwar period, it expands on existing historical understandings of these experiences in two cultural contexts, by examining how specific expressions of these categories became possible under various regimes of power. In considering queer femininities to be sites of potential resistance to normalizing processes, gender is viewed in this volume in the most Butlerian sense – as a performative construct that becomes visible through a ‘sequence of acts’.⁶⁹ The category femininity is therefore only ever deployed as shorthand for a more complex assemblage of gendered performances, as Amy Goodloe suggests, which themselves are ‘situated in a web of multiple oppressions and identities’.⁷⁰ Despite the pitfalls that come with deploying the abovementioned labels and names, it must be acknowledged, as Gayle Rubin points out, that: ‘Our categories are important. We cannot organize a social life, political movement, or our individual identities and desires without them. The fact that categories ... never contain all the relevant “existing things” does not render them useless, only limited.’⁷¹

Queer Historiographical Methods

In almost forty years since the publication of van Kooten Niekerk and Wijmer’s sociological study on lesbian lives in the Netherlands, approaches to writing histories of same-sex desire have undergone radical reconceptualizations, catalysed primarily by the critical interventions of queer theorists and scholars. While such early studies can be characterized by an effort to make *visible* lesbians of the past, later studies have called into question the categorizations that had hitherto seemed axiomatic. In what has since been dubbed the homosexual ‘recovery agenda’, literary scholars and historians such as Lillian Faderman and Brigitte Eriksson sought to uncover desires that had been hidden from mainstream historical accounts, and presented invaluable research on the diverse forms of love and friendship between women that they claimed had existed from the ‘Renaissance to the present’.⁷² While this teleological approach has clear disadvantages from a queer perspective, these early studies were crucial in the admission of same-sex desiring subjects into the master historical narratives from which they had been elided and, as Doan has argued, were instrumental ‘in sustaining political identities and communities’ at a time when historical legitimization was vital for homosexual emancipation.⁷³ Offering insights into the social

organization of sex and desire in the past, the efforts of historians to project a universal image of lesbian experience across time and space has received considerable criticism, not least for the deployment of such narratives to achieve political ends, which traditionalists argue ‘jeopardizes the historian’s scholarly integrity’.⁷⁴ Not only have the scholarly integrity of recovery histories been subject to criticism, but so too have the methodological frameworks that underpin such approaches. While some opponents of minority histories have challenged the presumed existence of a universal lesbian narrative that passes over markers of race, gender and class, others have suggested that the ahistorical deployment of the category ‘lesbian’ neglects to account for the changing social and political implications that such classifications embody within specific historical moments.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the ‘ideal of telos’ that is presented in such histories through the construction of what Eve Sedgwick terms ‘narratives of supersession’ too easily ‘conscripts past sexual arrangements to modern categories’, as Valerie Traub has observed.⁷⁶ By constructing a history in which one ‘model of same-sex relations is superseded by another, which may again be superseded by another’, historians therefore risk ‘reinforcing a dangerous consensus of knowingness about the genuinely *unknown*’.⁷⁷

One of the fundamental distinctions between queer historical approaches and ‘ancestral’ approaches, as Jack Halberstam contends, is that queer methods seek an ‘application of what we do not know in the present to what we cannot know about the past’.⁷⁸ Based on what Sedgwick calls a ‘denaturalisation of the present’, Halberstam’s own practice of ‘perverse presentism’ applies both a ‘denaturalisation of the present but also an application of what we do not know in the present to what we cannot know about the past’.⁷⁹ To put this in more concrete terms and relating it back to Halberstam’s own study of queer female masculinities, it is suggested that since the relationship between masculinity and lesbianism is not fully understood today, there is no way that one can claim with any certainty to *know* that a woman who presented in a masculine manner in fin-de-siècle Europe marked a type of ‘proto-lesbian’. Instead, Halberstam suggests that by viewing subjects in the past through a lens of ‘perverse presentism’ historians might not only ‘[avoid] the trap of simply projecting contemporary understandings back in time’, but also ‘apply insights from the present to conundrums of the past’.⁸⁰ And, here, the converse almost certainly also applies. Thus, as an analytical tool and point of theoretical departure, queering as a historical method attempts to account for what Sedgwick describes as ‘the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or *can’t be* made) to signify monolithically’.⁸¹ Building on these ideas, Madhavi Menon’s practice of ‘unhistoricism’, or

'homohistory', further engages with the struggle Sedgwick recognizes as inherent in the exploration of 'lapses and excesses of meaning' by insisting that 'neither past nor present is capable of a full and mutually exclusive definition'.⁸² Rejecting what she terms 'the valorization of heterotemporality', which takes as its point of origin a supposedly known and stable 'present' in order to look back at the differences of the past, Menon instead favours the 'nonhetero, with all its connotations of sameness, similarity, proximity and anachronism'.⁸³ As can be seen from Menon's 'homohistory', Halberstam's 'perverse presentism' and Sedgwick's 'denaturalisation of the present', the methodological distinctions between queer and ancestral historiographical practices include a great deal of overlap. Certainly, the above survey should not be read as an attempt to dismiss the immeasurably valuable research that historians have undertaken under the banner of a 'recovery history' in favour of a newer and 'better' way of narrating the past. As Lisa Duggan already asserted in the powerful article 'The Discipline Problem' (1995), it is important that queer historians 'acknowledge their debt' to earlier modes of history writing, which have served to make queer historical practices possible.⁸⁴

As the fields outlined above have developed and diversified, many scholars have taken up the call for a more hybrid approach to the historicizing of sexual subjects. In one attempt to build bridges between various methods of narrating sexual history, Carolyn Dinshaw's *Getting Medieval* (1999) points to a coalition between the premodern (roughly from the fifteenth century to the eighteenth century) and the modern (that is, the late eighteenth century onwards) by exploring how seemingly disparate 'entities past and present' can 'touch' across time.⁸⁵ The notion of 'touches', 'vibrations' and 'coalitions' that can develop between textual documents of the past and present is a useful way not only of conceptualizing historical shifts, but also for 'using ideas of the past, creating relations with the past, touching in this way the past in ... efforts to build selves and communities now and into the future'.⁸⁶ Traub's chapter 'The Present Future of Lesbian Historiography' further tackles what Sedgwick termed 'narratives of supersession' and advocates a 'history that is attentive to the cyclical nature of certain recurrent sexual configurations'.⁸⁷ Sceptical of the idea that one historical form of organizing desires is displaced by another, Traub's 'cycles of salience' remain open to 'recurring patterns of identification, social statuses, behaviour, and meanings of women who erotically desired other women across large spans of time'.⁸⁸ Turning away altogether from the centralization of locating identitarian practices in the exploration of historical desires, Doan most recently proposed her model of 'queer critical history'. Like scholars such as Sedgwick and Traub before her, Doan's study highlights the dangers of seeking out sexual subjects of the past with the identitarian frameworks of the present. Drawing on both an

ancestral impulse to chart the experiences of same-sex love between women across time and a Sedgwickian practice of ‘denaturalising the present’, Doan’s model ultimately questions the efficacy of situating sexual identity as the premise for historical research into the sexual past. Suggesting instead that historians employ a practice of ‘queerness-as-method’ over the continual search for ‘queerness-as-being’, Doan’s methodological approach recognizes the importance of the impulse to explore historical sexual desires, yet promotes a distancing from our contemporary sexual categories to describe what we cannot know. In terms of the practices of this book, the contention that queer femininities have been overlooked largely suggests that this project forms part of a recovery agenda. Moreover, as this study is motivated by the devaluing of the feminine from the historical past, I must concede further that this study might also be considered what Carla Freccero terms ‘a political project for the present’.⁸⁹ Yet, while I duly acknowledge my debts to ‘ancestral’ approaches of narrating sexual history, the methodological approaches of this project remain unequivocally queer. By placing historical survey and archival research alongside literary and intertextual analysis, this study aims to provide multiple points of entry from which to examine historical desires that I consider to be often contradictory and always in flux. Furthermore, by reading queerly for the silences and omissions that have become characteristic of specifically feminine same-sex desires, this book hopes to remain open to ‘the gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances’ that may have informed the ways in which feminine women organized their desires for other women in the past.⁹⁰

Setting the Parameters for Historical Research

As David Halperin has suggested, the concept of human sexuality is ‘a distinctly modern production’.⁹¹ However, exactly what characterizes the supposed caesura between the emergence of ‘sexual modernity’ and the ‘premodern’ sexual world has achieved little scholarly consensus. For some historians, such as Rictor Norton and Randolph Trumbach, the establishment of a network of molly houses in the eighteenth century can already be classed as evidence of the origins of a modern (homo)sexual subculture. For others, such as Faderman and Smith-Rosenberg, early nineteenth-century romantic friendships must still be considered ‘premodern’ sexual formations, given the distinctly ‘modern’ impulse to categorize sexual desires that took place in the second half of the nineteenth century. Yet others have argued that one must return to the ‘lesbian-like’ medieval woman-woman relationships visible in Judith Bennett’s research to identify what Noreen Giffney, Michelle Sauer and Diane Watt term the ‘lesbian premodern’.

Foucault's oft-cited contention that sexuality came to be considered the 'truth of our being' at the end of the nineteenth century has been taken up widely by scholars of sexuality, and continues to influence the way in which we conceive of our sociosexual lives. The centrality of German-language sexological discourses to this project of sexual codification has been noted in several recent studies, including Robert Deam Tobin's *Peripheral Desires: The German Discovery of Sex* (2015), which charts the emergence of new vocabulary and science of human sexuality within German-speaking Western Europe, and Robert Beachy's *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (2014), which situates the German capital more specifically as the sexual homeland of modern identity politics. Yet, while many scholars have agreed with Foucault's thesis, there are those who propose revisions to the 'birthdate' of modern sexuality and contest the power Foucault accords to discourses of the male voices of sexual science. George Chauncey, for example, cautions scholars who assume that historical subjects uncritically internalized the discourses of sexual science, and observes that those who adopt the arguments of the latter give 'inordinate power to ideology as an autonomous social force ... oversimplify the complex dialectic between social conditions, ideology, and consciousness which produced gay identities, and ... belie the evidence of preexisting subcultures and identities'.⁹² Susan Lanser also engages critically with Foucault's work, by examining 'modernity' through the lens of the Sapphic in *The Sexuality of History* (2014). Conceiving of modernity as 'the instantiation of the Sapphic within a logic of possibility', Lanser foregrounds female same-sex desire within the historiographic endeavour to document experiences of modernity.⁹³ Although Lanser's study of Sapphic modernity spans the longue durée between the late sixteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century, her inversion of Foucault's historical framework is still a useful way to engage with the emergence of female sexual identities and desires across cultural borders in the early twentieth century. In terms of the aims of this current project, what Lanser terms a 'Sapphic episteme' might be divided into the categories 'available as object' and 'present as sexual subject'.⁹⁴

Through my examination of multiple textual discourses, it becomes possible to chart which knowledges enabled a logic of 'woman+woman' to emerge in my chosen social milieus, particularly in the sense of a self-defining sexual subject, which is clearly visible in Germany – both through the periodicals and literary discourses written for and by queer women – but not in the Netherlands. Indeed, as Jeffrey Weeks suggests, sexuality 'only exists through its social forms and social organization', which also means that discourses that facilitated the emergence of knowledges about queer desire 'for good and for ill' in Germany would be likely to have been received differently, and employed to different ends, in the Netherlands.⁹⁵

In creating the timeline for this research project, too, it quickly became evident that attempting to demarcate strict temporal boundaries across cultural borders for the emergence of discourses about queer desires was at best impracticable and at worst paradoxical to the aims of this project. It is for this reason that I divided my timeline into two. First, in looking at the way in which queer feminine women became available ‘as objects’, I consider a range of discourses that emerged from 1864 to 1939 in order to account for the shifts in sexological thinking, as well as the divergences that existed between the development of German and Dutch sociomedical discourses. Second, in looking at queer feminine women as sociosexual subjects, I focus on texts published between 1919 and 1940, and therefore write mostly of the interwar period. Of course, this is not to say that women were not engaged in philosophical or literary considerations pertaining to their desires prior to 1919 – only that the changes in the gendered landscape after the First World War resulted in the development of a range of sexual subcultures within which such discourses proliferated as never before, making this period of particular relevance and interest to this project. The violent implications of the Nazi regime on the organization of female same-sex desires has had to be considered beyond the remit of this study, although the relationship between fascism and queer femininity would no doubt offer vital insights to the ways in which same-sex desires were configured in times of conflict, given the prominence and significance accorded to femininity during this time.

Although invested in the cultural contextualization of the logics that enabled women to attach labels and names to their queer longings, this study is not concerned with pinpointing *when* the logic ‘woman+woman’ became available in German and Dutch contexts. Rather, the underlying assumption throughout this book will be that such a logic might *not* have been available to women and that they may have experienced their desires in ways that are beyond our current understandings. However, given the intensified interest in categorizing desires at the end of the nineteenth century in Germany, Part I of this book will be concerned with plotting the ways in which queer feminine woman became available as *objects* of study. Yet, the chief focus of this volume will be on how queer feminine women became present as *subjects* through textual productions published by, for and about queer persons. To tackle the issues outlined in this introduction, this book has been structured into three main parts. Each part will contain an extended introduction that will contextualize the historical documents under analysis. Given that sexuality, as Jeffrey Weeks suggests, can largely be considered a ‘fictional unity’ that is ‘a product of social and historical forces’, Chapter 1 will plot the development of Amsterdam and Berlin into modern urban centres, and will chart the ‘existential possibilities’ that were

available to feminine women in this period ‘beyond the roles of wife and mother’.⁹⁶ This will include accounts of the queer subcultures that existed in Amsterdam and Berlin, as well as a textual mapping of sexual ‘topographies’ that developed in each city. In Chapter 2, the outline of sociocultural discourses of desire will be complemented by a summary of the emergence of a *scientia sexualis*. Here I will consider specifically the role that sexual science played in the discursive construction of knowledge about queer feminine desires. Looking more closely at the conflicting ‘regimes of truth’ that were produced in sexological studies, this discussion will lay the groundwork for Part II of this book, which narrows its focus to an examination of the sociocultural and medicolegal discourses that became visible in queer periodicals. In Part II, I will focus on the degree to which the social norms and sexological narratives discussed in Part I were contested and revised by those who actively partook in the existing sexual communities in Amsterdam and Berlin. By examining the ways in which queer femininities were depicted across community publications, Part II will contribute to a strand of queer scholarship that, as Joanne Hollows suggests, challenges ‘the idea that the “feminine” is inherently worthless, trivial, and politically conservative’.⁹⁷ Looking at the magazines *The Girlfriend* and *Women’s Love* in Chapter 3, the role that feminine woman played in sexological articles, literary contributions and social commentaries printed in the magazines will be discussed, as well as the role that femininity played in the politics and the fissures that divided Berlin’s Sapphic subculture. Given the absence of queer periodicals for and by women in Dutch contexts, Chapter 4 will focus on two magazines that sat at the heart of Protestant and Catholic women’s communities, *The Young Woman* (*De jonge vrouw* 1924–35) and *Beatrijs* (*Beatrice* 1939–67), as well as two short-lived magazines produced by queer men that emerged during the interwar era: *We* (*Wij*, 1932) and *The Right to Live* (*Levensrecht* 1940–47). Looking at the links between magazines and organizations that valued masculine principles and ideals, further suggestions will be made about what the absence of queerness and femininity from these community discourses might tell us about the construction of queer female desire in the Netherlands during this period.

In Part III, the ways in which queer femininity became visible in literary writing by German and Dutch women authors will be examined. Considering the queer feminine women in the position of both ‘object’ and ‘subject’, I argue that it is possible to assess the influence of sexological discourses on women’s writing, while also appreciating the ways in which women writers challenged contemporary discourses about love between women by presenting their own conceptualizations and imaginings of queer femininity. Chapter 5 will therefore look at the role of the feminine ‘object’ in Eva Raedt-de Canter’s *Boarding School* (*Internaat*, 1930) and Christa

Winsloe's *The Girl Manuela* (*Das Mädchen Manuela*, 1933), and will explore the significance of erotic maternal feminine figures in stories of adolescent queer female desires. As a counterpoint to the previous chapter's engagement with tomboy longings, Chapter 6 will offer an insight into novels that placed the feminine woman at the centre of the narrative framework. Focusing on the importance of creating hierarchies of 'acceptable' desire in these novels, this final chapter will investigate the queer feminine woman as a 'nonlesbian' subject. When concluding this volume, I will weigh up the shifts taking place across the texts examined in Part II and Part III to consider what such writings might reveal to present-day readers about the overlaps and distinctions between the discourses examined in this study across cultural borders and time.

Notes

1. Indeed, as I will mention later, a cultural image for female queerness only developed after the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, during which there was a revival of the 1920s aesthetic with musical films such as *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (1967) and *Cabaret* (1972), as well as renewed stage performances of earlier queer 'boarding school' novels such as *Olivia* (1949) and *The Girl Manuela* (1933).
2. Trans.: 'Een stilzwijgende samenzwering'. Judith Schuyf, *Een stilzwijgende samenzwering: Lesbische vrouwen in Nederland 1920–1970* (The Hague: IISG, 1994).
3. Trans.: 'die männliche Seele im weiblichen Busen'. Richard Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der konträren Sexualempfindung. Eine medizinisch-gerichtliche Studie für Ärzte und Juristen* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1907), p. 297.
4. Emphasis in original. Judith Schuyf, 'Lesbian Emancipation in the Netherlands', in A.X. Naerssen (ed.), *Gay Life in Dutch Society* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1987), p. 21.
5. Laura Doan, *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality, and Women's Experience of Modern War*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 160.
6. Julian Carter, 'On Mother-Love: History, Queer Theory and Nonlesbian Identity', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14(1–2) (2005), 107–38 (at p. 108).
7. Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, p. 90.
8. Not only does the journal *Men and Masculinities* have no *Women and Femininities* equivalent, but there has also been little interest in taking up the subject of queer femininities in the German or Dutch historical contexts. For more on historical masculinities, see, for example: Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); Sarah Colvin and Peter Davies (eds), *Masculinities in German Culture* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008); Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011); Geertje Mak, *Mannelijke vrouwen: Over de grenzen van sekse in de negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1997).

9. Sarah Cefai, 'Navigating Silences, Disavowing Femininity and the Construction of Lesbian Identities' in *Geography and Gender Reconsidered: Women and Geography Study Group* (2004), 108–17 (at p. 112). Retrieved 23 May 2022 from <https://gfg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Cefai.pdf>.
10. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1963), p. 22.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 15 and 70.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 365.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 395.
16. Making recourse to the 'myth of the mannish lesbian', Friedan effectively forecloses any possibility of lesbians or queer women being engaged in the project of femininity or feminism. See: Esther Newton, 'The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman', *Signs* 9(4) (1984) 557–75.
17. See, for example, the foundational work of Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
18. The Radicalesbians initially termed their group the 'Lavender Menace' as a clap back to Friedan's rebuke. They then changed the name to 'Lesbian Liberation', before finally settling on Radicalesbians. See: Linda Rapp, 'Radicalesbians'. Retrieved 7 April 2022 from http://www.glbtqarchive.com/ssh/radicalesbians_S.pdf.
19. Radicalesbians, 'The Woman-Identified Woman' (1970), p. 3. Retrieved 7 April 2022 from <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/wlmpc/wlms01011>.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
21. This, as well as the notion of the inseparability of racism, sexism and homophobia, was later built on by Audre Lorde: 'For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never allow us to bring about genuine change.' See Audre Lorde, 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House', in Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (eds), *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), p. 27.
22. Radicalesbians, 'The Woman-Identified Woman', p. 3.
23. Biddy Martin, *Femininity Played Straight: The Significance of Being a Lesbian* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 3.
24. Newton, 'The Mythic Mannish Lesbian', p. 557.
25. Linda Strega, 'The Big Sell-out: Lesbian Femininity', *Lesbian Ethics* 1(3) (1985), 73–84.
26. In 2017, Strega republished her article on a fellow activist's blog and included a highly problematic paragraph that suggests that parents force 'transgenderism' upon tomboy girls who 'resist femininity' rather than 'accept her as a young Butch or a Lesbian'. See <https://bevjoradicallesbian.wordpress.com/2017/07/27/the-big-sell-out-lesbian-femininity-by-linda-strega> (retrieved 7 April 2022)
27. *Ibid.*
28. Madeline Davis 'Epilogue, Nine Years Later', in Joan Nestle (ed.), *The Persistent Desire* (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1992), p. 270.
29. Mykel Johnson 'Butchy Femme', in Nestle (ed.), *The Persistent Desire*, p. 397.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 397–98.
31. Martin, *Femininity Played Straight*, p. 73.
32. Danae Clark, 'Commodity Lesbianism', in Corey K Creekmur and Alexander Doty (eds), *Out in Culture: Gay, Lesbian and Queer Essays on Popular Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 484–500.

33. Ann M. Ciasullo, 'Making Her (In)Visible: Cultural Representations of Lesbianism and the Lesbian Body in the 1990s', *Feminist Studies* 27(3) (2001), 577–608 (at p. 605).
34. Here, one need only think of the now-famous cover image for *Vanity Fair* in which hyperfeminine, scantily clad, 'straight' Cindy Crawford straddles queer, masculine-of-centre musician k.d. lang, as the former leans in to shave off lang's fake foam beard. Toying with the notion of queer femininity, Crawford is ostensibly heterosexual. However, Lang's performance of masculinity is considered undoubtedly queer. It is also interesting to note that this suggestion was not considered from the alternative perspective – that is, that heterosexual women were increasingly indistinguishable from lesbian women, as was the case during the moral and sexual panics during the interwar era. See Ciasullo, 'Making Her (In)Visible', p. 602.
35. Rosanne Kennedy, 'The Gorgeous Lesbian in LA Law: The Present Absence?', in Diane Hamer and Belinda Budge (eds), *The Good, the Bad, and the Gorgeous* (London: Pandora Press, 1994), p. 141.
36. Joan Nestle, 'The Femme Question' in Nestle (ed.), *The Persistent Desire*, p. 140.
37. Of course, as well as her more general desire for/interest in woman-ness. Lisa M. Walker, 'How to Recognize a Lesbian: The Cultural Politics of Looking like What You Are', *Signs* 18(4) (1993), 866–90 (at pp. 881–82).
38. Kim Akass and Janet McCabe suggest even more strongly that 'the fact that the series was renewed for a second season only days after its first episode premiered in January 2004 is partly attributable to the fact that it did *not* show the full diversity of the gay community'. See Kim Akass and Janet McCabe, *Reading 'The L Word': Outing Contemporary Television* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2006), p. 4; Susan J. Wolfe and Lee Ann Roripaugh, 'Feminine Beauty and the Male Gaze in 'The L-Word'', *MP: An Online Feminist Journal* 1(4) (2006), 1–7 (at p. 5).
39. Walker, 'How to Recognize a Lesbian', pp. 881–82.
40. As Hemmings suggests, such privileges might include the queer feminine woman's unrestricted licence to traditional women's spaces, her ability to choose whether to disclose her sexual identity, and her embodiment of a gender and sexuality that is read and accepted as 'normal'. Yet, the perceived inequity between the ways in which the 'butch' and 'femme' women are valued in and by society has historically led to a dismissal of the issues faced by queer feminine women, such as sexual objectification, their exclusion from queer circles and their being held to the unrealistic societal standards that accompany enactments of 'normative' femininity. See Clare Hemmings, *Bisexual Spaces: A Geography of Sexuality and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 117.
41. Judy Berman, 'The L Word: Generation Q Is a Valiant Effort. But the Show Is a Time Capsule That Should Have Stayed Buried' (2019). Retrieved 7 April 2022 from <https://time.com/5744710/the-l-word-generation-q-review>.
42. See, for example, Jennifer Burke (ed.), *Visible: A Femmethology* (Ypsilanti, MI: Homofactus Press, 2009); Hannah McCann, *Queering Femininity: Sexuality, Feminism and the Politics of Presentation* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Rhea Ashley Hoskin and Katerina Hirschfeld, 'Beyond Aesthetics: A Femme Manifesto', *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender Culture, and Social Justice* 39(1) (2018), 85–87; Amber Jamilla Musser, *Sensual Excess: Queer Femininity and Brown Jouissance* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).
43. Cefai, 'Navigating Silences', p. 113.
44. Nestle, 'The Femme Question', p. 140.
45. Scholars such as Manfred Herzer, Ralph Dose, James Steakley, Claudia Schoppmann, Ilse Kokula, Christiane Leidinger and Marti Lybeck, among others, have contributed

- influential narratives to the historical discussion of same-sex desire in the German contexts.
46. Scott Spector et al. (eds), *After the History of Sexuality: German Genealogies with and Beyond Foucault* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012) and Clayton J. Whisnant, *Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2016) being only two of the more recent studies that adopt a queer methodological approach.
 47. See, for example: Dirk Jaap Noordam, *Risikante relaties: Vijf eeuwen homoseksualiteit in Nederland 1233–1733* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1995); Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol *Vrouwen in mannenkleren: de geschiedenis van een tegendraadse traditie Europa 1500–1800* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1989); Theo van der Meer, *De wesentlijke sonde van sodomie en andere vuyligheeden. Sodomietenvervolgingen in Amsterdam 1730–1811* (Amsterdam: Tabula, 1984); Arend H. Huussen, 'Sodomy in the Dutch Republic during the 18th Century', *Eighteenth Century Life* 9 (1985), 169–78; Peter Altena and Myriam Everard (eds), *Onbreekbare burgerharten. De historie van Betje Wolff en Aagje Deken* (Nijmegen: Ventilator, 2004); Geertje Mak, *Mannelijke vrouwen: Over de grenzen van sekse in de negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1997).
 48. Marti M. Lybeck, *Desiring Emancipation: New Women and Homosexuality in Germany 1890–1933* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014), p. 85.
 49. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
 50. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
 51. Trans.: '... Ik had haar nooit zo gezien, want ze was echt een jongetje vóór die tijd. Wát ben jij? Vroeg ik haar. Ik ben nu een meisje geworden, zei ze, want ik heb zo'n leuke vriendin. Meid, ik moest weer helemaal omschakelen.' Anja van Kooten Niekerk and Sacha Wijmer, *Verkeerde Vriendschap: Lesbisch leven in de Jaren 1920–1960* (Amsterdam: Feministische Uitgeverij Sara, 1985), p. 141.
 52. Trans.: 'in de ene relatie was ze "vrouwelijk", in de andere "mannelijk"'. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
 53. Trans.: 'Nadat de relatie was afgelopen, zag Adri geen reden om "femme" te blijven en keerde zij terug naar haar oude vertrouwde mannelijke rol'. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
 54. Trans.: 'dat is een van de dingen die ik later heb leren ontdekken, da de erg mannelijk uitzijende vrouwen, die dan ook nog prachtig die rol speelden, zich vrijwel altijd ontpopten als de meest vrouwelijke vrouwen die er waren, maar dan in een heel andere richting, namelijk in de vorm van verzorging, met kinderen omgaan enzovoort'. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
 55. By employing Barbara Ponse's theory of a 'gay trajectory' as a measurement of how women identified their desires in the past, Schuyf ultimately suggests that same-sex desires for women in the early twentieth century invariably resulted in a fixed sexual identity that was referred to using the category 'lesbian'. Schuyf, *Een stilzwijgende samenzwering*, p. 363.
 56. Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, p. 144.
 57. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
 58. Furthermore, as both the 'lesbian continuum' and the 'lesbian-like' romantic friendships have been deployed in ways that elide the erotic impulse between women, I do not consider them to be suitable categories for a study explicitly concerning desire and eroticism between women.
 59. David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 62.
 60. Corie Hammers, 'The Queer Logics of Sex/Desire and the "Missing" Discourse of Gender', *Sexualities* 18(7) (2015), 838–58.
 61. Lee Edelman, 'Queer Theory Unstating Desire', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2(4) (1995), 343–46 (at p. 345).

62. Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 307.
63. Maarten Prak, 'The Dutch Republic as a Bourgeois Society' *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review* 2(3) (2010), 107–39.
64. Helen Boak, *Women in the Weimar Republic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 150.
65. Evert Willem Hofstee and Gerrit Andries Kooy, 'Class Structure in the Netherlands.' Transcript of a lecture given at the 50th Anniversary Meeting of the American Sociological Society in Washington DC, 2 September 1955. Retrieved 7 April 2022 from <https://edepot.wur.nl/38393>.
66. Peter van Rooden, 'Long-Term Religious Developments in the Netherlands 1750–2000', in Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf (eds), *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 12.
67. For a more comprehensive discussion of the role of queer visual culture in the construction of sexual identities during the interwar era, see: Richard Dyer, *Now You See It: Studies in Lesbian and Gay Film* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Alice A. Kuzniar, *The Queer German Cinema* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Christoph Lorey and John L. Plews (eds), *Queering the Canon: Defying Sights in German Literature and Culture* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1998); Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Claude Summers, *The Queer Encyclopedia of the Visual Arts* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2004).
68. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 100–1.
69. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
70. Amy Goodloe, 'Queer Theory: Another "Battle of the Sexes?"' Retrieved 7 April 2022 from <http://amygoodloe.com/papers/lesbian-feminism-and-queer-theory-another-battle-of-the-sexes>.
71. Gayle Rubin, 'Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender and Boundaries' in Nestle (ed.), *The Persistent Desire*, p. 480.
72. See, for example, Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Women's Press, 1981); Lillian Faderman and Brigitte Eriksson (eds), *Lesbian-Feminism in Turn-of-the-Century Germany* (Tallahassee, FL: The Naiad Press, 1980).
73. Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, p. x.
74. However, such criticisms, as John Boswell identifies, overlook the undeniably political impulse of the original erasure of queer desire and other minority experiences from mainstream history writings, which itself cannot have stemmed from a purely scholarly interest in 'narrating history'. See John Boswell, 'Revolutions, Universals, and Sexual Categories', in Martin Duberman et al. (eds), *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: Meridian, 1989), pp. 17–37; Thomas Piontek, *Queering Gay and Lesbian Studies* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), p. 7.
75. Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, p. 54.
76. Valerie Traub, *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p. 61.
77. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 45.
78. Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, p. 53.
79. As outlined in *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick describes the process of a 'denaturalisation of the present' not only as an attempt to trouble the categories of

- gender and sexuality that are often taken for granted, but also to 'render less destructively presumable homosexuality as we know it today' (at p. 48).
80. Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, pp. 52–53.
 81. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 8.
 82. Madhavi Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare: Queer Theory in Shakespearean Literature and Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 3.
 83. Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon, 'Queering History', *PMLA* 120(5) (2005), 1608–17 (at p. 1609).
 84. Lisa Duggan, 'The Discipline Problem: Queer Theory Meets Gay and Lesbian History', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2(3) (1995), 179–91 (at p. 189).
 85. Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 12.
 86. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
 87. Valerie Traub, 'The Present Future of Lesbian Historiography', in Noreen Giffney et al. (eds), *The Lesbian Premodern: The New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 123.
 88. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
 89. Carla Freccero, 'The Queer Time of the Lesbian Premodern', in Giffney et al. (eds), *The Lesbian Premodern*, p. 62.
 90. Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, p. 8.
 91. David Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 29.
 92. George Chauncey, 'From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and the Changing Conceptualization of Female Deviance', *Salmagundi* 59 (1983), 114–46 (at p. 115).
 93. Susan Lanser, *The Sexuality of History: Modernity and the Sapphic 1565–1830* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 28.
 94. *Ibid.*, pp. 18–21.
 95. Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality*, 4th edn (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 34.
 96. *Ibid.*, p. 11; Kirsten Leng, 'Permutations of the Third Sex: Sexology, Subjectivity, and Antimaternalist Feminism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 40(1) (2014), 227–54 (at p. 228).
 97. Joanne Hollows, *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 33.