POLITICS

OnlyFascism

The libidinal thrill in fascism: on the German far-right's sexy phantoms

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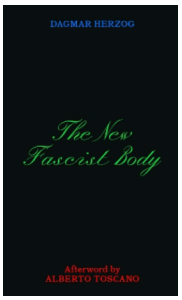
1 September 2026 | Published in Issue Twelve



The New Fascist Body
Dagmar Herzog
(Wirklichkeit Books, 2025)

Carina Brück, or « Cassie », has over 85k followers on Instagram. Several times a week, she posts videos of herself in front of German flags or wearing corsets or underwear in the German national colours. Sometimes, the tattoos on her body glitch out or her limbs move in eerie, unnatural ways, revealing that the videos have been edited with AI. The written messages added to many videos take aim at immigrants, trans people or leftists. Often, she signs off with a blue heart emoji, signalling support for the German far-right party, Alternative für Deutschland (the AfD). One typical post reads:

« Muslims hate pork, beer, dogs, bikinis, Jesus and freedom of speech. Why the hell are they coming to Germany? » Her caption tells viewers to check her linkinbio, which directs followers to her OnlyFans page.

Cassie is not alone. There are many like her, a recent report by *Correctiv* found 190 profiles belonging to 22 supposed women, with an audience of millions; a whole wave of influencers combining far-right messaging and sexualised content, using the combination to rile up their opponents and perform availability to the right kind of man. Many of these women do not appear to be actually located within Germany at all (platform location data show profiles run from Romania, Hungary, Thailand or the Philippines). Some are phantoms; spectres taunting Europe. Take Bella Albrecht. Her profile seems to have been deleted now, but in April 2026, far-right monitoring website *Belltower News* reported her feed showing her at the swimming pool, the gym, canvassing for the AfD, or stopping at a restaurant to eat a hefty-looking plate of Bavarian *Schweinshaxe*. « I love my daily portion of meat, » the caption read, « and vegans hate me for it. » But Bella Albrecht did not exist; she was entirely an AI creation. Nevertheless, her messaging and many of these other profiles appear to be deliberately coordinated. Both Bella and Cassie, for example, posted videos of themselves captioned with the sentence: « I want my children to say *Grüß Gott*, and not *Wallah*. » Occasionally, the captions are identical right down to the same spelling mistakes.

This mixture of artificial intelligence, false identities and digital sexuality might look, at first glance, like a uniquely 21st century disorder. But to readers of *The New Fascist Body* by the US historian Dagmar Herzog, the combination will carry a darker historical resonance. The pamphlet-sized work of barely eighty pages builds on her previous books, situating recent examples of the sexual politics of the AfD within the longer history of fascist sexuality.

Herzog argues that sex and fascism enjoy a closer relationship than is commonly thought. She claims it is actually one of the constitutive strategies of fascism (both today and during the Nazi period) to adopt a deliberately permissive, licentious stance in which (white) women's bodies are at once under threat from hostile forces — Muslims, Jews — while simultaneously being offered up as the reward for membership in the people's community. « The secret memo of fascism is not repression, » Herzog writes. « On the contrary, it's a message of permission, licence and impunity. » Often, she points out, the messaging wants to have it both ways: at once appearing to defend traditional values, whilst also inviting viewers to leer at and voyeuristically enjoy the nudity of women they are being invited to protect.

The book reproduces some visual examples of Herzog's thesis. An AfD poster for the 2019 Saxon state election shows a nude blonde woman chained to a radiator, staring in terror at something beyond the frame. The message emblazoned across her body is carefully positioned to cover a small section of her breasts: « Pepper spray doesn't always help. Good politics does. » Another campaign poster from the same year, this

time for the European elections, reproduces the 1866 painting *The Slave Market* by the French painter Jean-Léon Gérôme in which an Arab slave trader offers up a young naked white woman for inspection. The tagline reads: « So that Europe does not become 'Eurabia'. » In each case, the threat against women is itself pornographic in structure — the viewer is invited to dwell on the imperilled body even as they are being recruited to its defence. Herzog's argument is that this double standard is not new. As she wrote in her earlier and more expansive study of the same phenomenon, *Sex After Fascism* (2005): « The goal [of the Nazis] was not so much to suppress sexuality. Rather the aim was to reinvent it as the privilege of nondisabled, heterosexual 'Aryans' — all the while claiming to be 'cleaning up' sexual morality in Germany and overcoming the 'Jewish' legacy. »

Herzog's argument is timely, and the power of the book lies in giving us the analytical tools to make sense of moments that Germany itself seemed to struggle to process. One such example came in 2024, when footage emerged of blond-haired, white-shirted, fresh-faced young racists flashing Hitler salutes and chanting « *Deutschland den Deutschen, Ausländer raus* » to the melody of Gigi d'Agostino's « *L'amour toujours* » while partying on the North Frisian upscale holiday island of Sylt. The footage caused a stir in Germany, where mainstream opinion prefers to imagine overt fascist sympathies as belonging to its more left-behind eastern regions. Confronted with this cheerful, wealthy chauvinism, the country struggled to know what it was looking at. Herzog gives us the framework with which to discern the libidinal thrill in this new fascism. The Sylt video has since been repurposed by the AfD in an AI-generated music video which showed « 'Aryan' pilots and gyrating flight attendants cramming scores of abjected and depressed black and brown men onto hundreds of aeroplanes and sending them away into the blue sky. »

Another example of Herzog's thesis comes in the form of Lukreta*, an AfD supporting initiative that describes itself as an independent network of young women. If OnlyFans influencers like Cassie offer a heavier, more explicitly sexualised product, here the emphasis is on a more domestic, mimosa-drinking, girl-boss fascism. Boasting 34k followers on Instagram, the account often shows women in long white dresses or cradling pregnant bellies. It offers regular meetups, putting on workshops in photo

editing or content creation. Yet the femininity presented here also combines its hostility to outsiders with an erotic charge: one video shows a blonde woman facing away from the camera, wearing a white dressing gown open at the front, her bare shoulders framed by an alpine landscape. The text above her reads: « Girls just want mountain views and remigration. » Other romantic scenes are accompanied by snappy captions: « this and mass deportations » or « sun, summer and remigration ».

There is a dissonance here: the idyllic images appear to clash with the deliberate cruelty. Herzog demonstrates how the two apparently opposing elements can work in tandem — and how this has happened before. The Third Reich, too, implored its followers to embrace a modern, liberated sexual hedonism whose emphasis on health was directed against those elements of society deemed sick or degenerate. In this way, the Nazi party could position itself against both the conservative Christian establishment and urban « Jewish » corruption while embracing a permissiveness that touched many different domains: leisure, drugs, violence, sex. As Herzog has it: « no prior regime in history has ever so systematically set itself the task of stimulating and validating especially young people's (hetero)sexual desires — all the while denying precisely that this is what it was doing. »

A fuller version of Herzog's historical argument is articulated in *Sex After Fascism* (2005), where she took direct aim at the widespread misconception, prevalent since the 1960s, that Nazism was a sexually repressive system. Instead she points to examples such as the regime-endorsed advice manual *Geschlecht-Liebe-Ehe* (*Sex-Love-Marriage*, 1940), by Johannes Schultz, which emphasised the importance of orgasm and stated that « sexual desire and pleasure in women were absolutely normal and desirable: to encourage fear of sex in girls or to treat sex as something indecent was to have 'sinned' against female youth. » Or the official SS journal *Das Schwarze Korps*, which simultaneously condemned Weimar-era sexual sensationalism as Jewish degeneracy whilst taking a relaxed attitude towards pre- and extramarital heterosexuality, mocking its Christian critics and declaring that « original sin » was a « foreign » and « oriental » idea.

So, too, with the Nazi attitude to drugs. The regime condemned the cocaine and morphine use of the Weimar years as symptoms of Jewish urban decadence, then enthusiastically embraced its own pharmaceutical solution: Pervitin. « Hildebrand chocolates are always a delight » ran the slogan for a box of crystal meth-spiked treats. The Temmler company, which manufactured the drug, issued promotional material recommending that doctors prescribe women « four half-tablets every day long before bedtime, ten days a month for three months » in order to increase libido and sexual power.

But Herzog's argument is more than a charge of hypocrisy. It isn't enough to observe that these figures hold a different standard for their own behaviour than for their enemies'. Rather, hostility and desire are working together. The imagined disgust of the opponent fuels the pleasure. When the AI-created personality Bella Albrecht declares « I love my daily portion of meat » the libidinal thrill of her message arrives with the second half: « and the vegans hate me for it. »

There is one further domain where today's fascism seems to rhyme with its predecessors, and which Herzog identifies as the crucial sinew holding the fascist body together: its attitude to disability. The AfD have been consistent in their hostility on this point. As Herzog writes, in 2018 the party conducted an inquiry into the « (fabricated) issue of migrant families supposedly producing disproportionately more children with cognitive impairments because of the — again, imaginary — prevalence of 'incestuous' marriage between blood relatives among refugees. » They have also maintained consistent opposition to the inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream schools.

And yet the exact nature of the relationship between the aggressive « sexiness » of the right and this deliberate cruelty seems to puzzle Herzog. In her book of only eighty pages, she circles the question more than once: « What could possibly be the relationship between titillating sexiness and the nastiness towards children with learning disabilities? » She notices a structural relation but does not quite arrive at a resolution. In the closing pages of *The New Fascist Body*, the question is still there: « Why does the AfD put quite so much energy into pre-emptively resisting inclusion of

children with learning challenges in mainstream schools? What is it about? Why bother? » Eventually, Herzog arrives at the idea that the cruelty is the point. The « deliberate inculcation of unkindness » is part of the project of the far right, and this cruelty is libidinally related to the aggressive sexuality she has been tracing throughout. The argument is plausible, even if it is possible to feel that some key piece of connecting tissue is lacking: as though the jigsaw is missing one piece.

But perhaps it is better to read this rich, short book as a starting point for further investigation; there would be several potential avenues. The « sexy racism » Herzog outlines here mostly takes the female « fascist body » as its subject; one can imagine further material also being gleaned from the ways in which the right brings pressure to bear on men's bodies (looksmaxxing, the rise of supplements, the manosphere). Or else one could examine artificial intelligence itself: what are the political implications of this gleaming new unreality, and what does it do to our relationship with our own, unedited bodies?

On this last point, the book does offer some relevant historical material. Herzog elaborates on how illusory the ideal Aryan form was even during the Nazi period. « The dream of being strong, healthy, beautiful and smart was always just a *fantasy* of superiority — implemented in the case of the Nazis, through brutality. » She quotes the historian Gisela Bock: « The promised 'race', the 'master-Volk' was not a given, it was not the real-existing German Volk, rather [it] had yet to be produced.... » Herzog goes on to note that the gap between ideal and reality proved troubling even to the propagandists of national socialism. Reich Minister of Food and Agriculture Richard Walther Darré « hired photographer Anna Koppitz in 1939 to photograph the lithe bodies of pupils at the Reichsschule Burg Neuhaus to serve as 'racial role models'. » In their correspondence, however, Darré and Koppitz, « complained that it was just so difficult to find… 'young people of genuine racial value'. » The master race, it turned out, didn't always show up where you thought it should.

One final dimension of this fascist sexuality, touched on only briefly in *The New Fascist Body*, is its relationship to homosexuality. Increasingly, the far right's attitude to LGBT identity is not only one of hostility. After all, the AfD (as its members are quick to

point out whenever attention is brought to their many examples of homophobia) has a leader in Alice Weidel who is married to a woman — and who, as she has said publicly, does not want to be referred to as « queer ». But the manner in which this gay-but-not-queer sexual politics plays out follows a pattern whose combination of « incitement and disavowal » may appear familiar to readers of Herzog's book, with homosexual identities embraced only insofar as they can be made to serve the logic of exclusion.

The term for this rightward embrace of LGBT identity has been termed « homonationalism », a concept coined by the scholar Jasbir Puar to describe the process by which certain domesticated homosexual identities are recruited into the service of nationalist projects — particularly through the casting of racialised or Muslim communities as the true threat to sexual freedom. One of its progenitors, at least in Europe, was the Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn. In their alert, engaging history of homosexual villainy *Bad Gays* (2022), historians Ben Miller and Huw Lemmey finish their survey with Fortuyn, concluding that « Pim Fortuyn may be less a dismaying artifact of… gay politics in the West than a preview of its future. » And in hindsight, Fortuyn laid the template in many ways: an openly, flamboyantly gay politician, he was also the first in mainstream European politics to position the apparent tolerance of LGBT identity as a tool with which to denounce the supposed intolerance of Muslim immigrants, while also allowing that same identity to shield him from criticism (« Have I ever spoken to Muslims? I even sleep with them! », as he told one imam). It is no coincidence that he was also among the first far-rightists to openly embrace Israel, a country where the apparent intolerance for LGBT rights among its neighbours has since become an important propaganda weapon. As Miller and Lemmey explain in their book, Fortuyn was remarkably successful in the Netherlands — he was the leading candidate for prime minister in the then-upcoming elections when he was shot and killed outside a radio studio in Hilversum in May 2002. Two years later, in 2004, he was voted the greatest Dutchman ever to have lived in a state television poll.

And yet the far-right's apparent truce with LGBT identity is both uneasy and unevenly distributed. The « obsessive hostility » Herzog identifies has found a new target: trans people.

I live in Berlin, and a quick glance at the AfD's manifesto for the upcoming September elections shows them announcing that « the reality of biological sex must not be sacrificed on the altar of trans ideology », while simultaneously calling for a ban on gender language in schools and warning against what they term the « *Trans-Gender Hype* » threatening family cohesion. This perhaps is the troubling destabilising element that Alice Weidel refuses when she accepts a gay identity that contains no trace of « queerness ». There is an attempt to stimulate one area of sexual politics while directing a targeted hostility against another. What Herzog's argument ultimately suggests is that these two operations are not really separate, the thrill and the hostility

are the same thing. What is being sold — by the influencers, by the poster campaigns with their images of imperilled and barely clothed women, by the homonationalist politician denouncing Muslim intolerance — is not sexuality *alongside* the politics of exclusion, but sexuality *as* the politics of exclusion. The libidinal thrill and the cruelty work together.

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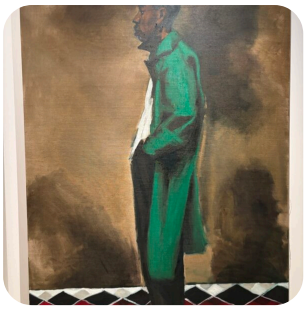

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