

4. Against Effeminization. Sigmund Freud's Theory of Culture between Male Band Discourse and Antisemitism¹

The Rhetoric of Race and Gender

This chapter examines through various text extracts the implications that being Jewish and the “Jewish Question” had on Sigmund Freud’s theory of culture. The main focus falls on the influence of fin de siècle antisemitic discourses that conceived of the Jewish difference in terms of gender-determined distinctions. According to this conception, Jewish men were seen as unmanly or effeminate and therefore unfit to become good doctors or scientists. Moreover, their entry into the public sphere – that is, their attempt at assimilation – was looked upon as threatening the entire gender order. My analysis is in line with several older studies on Freud’s confrontation with the antisemitism prevalent in his time – for example, Carl Schorske’s reconstruction of antisemitic pressures on Freud’s work (1973), Jacques Le Rider’s study on antisemitism, antifeminism and the gender crises in fin de siècle Vienna using the case of Otto Weininger (1982), and Peter Gay’s biography of Freud (1987).

But the works that have treated most thoroughly the effect of the prevailing early twentieth century medicalization of antisemitism on Freud’s work are two early studies by Sander Gilman *The Case of Sigmund Freud: Medicine and Identity at the Fin de Siècle* (1993a) and *Freud, Race and Gender* (1993b). The scientific antisemitism prominent in medicine at the time aimed, among other things, at portraying male Jews as effeminate and diseased. They were denied the possession of masculinity and thus too the aptitude to be a scientist.

1 The translations of this chapter is done by Jonathan Uhlener.

Freud's personal and scientific struggle to define a "heroic" Jewish masculinity was therefore closely linked throughout his life, up to and including his late work on *Moses and Monotheism* (*Der Mann Moses*, 1939), with his fight against the dominant antisemitism. As Gilman observes:

To understand the complex issue of what Jewishness meant to Freud, it is necessary to examine the implications of the stereotype of the Jewish male, especially the Eastern Jewish male, in the science of his time. The very term "Jew" is as much as a category of gender, masculine, as it is of race. The relationship between the Jew and that of the woman (as parallel categories to the Christian and the male) became a central element in the structuring of Jewish identity. (Gilman 1993b: 8)

As we have already seen in Chapter one, Gilman and Daniel Boyarin also examine psychoanalysis in the context of "Freud's Jewish Question" (Geller 2007: 17). Both view Freud's theory of "normal," that is, heterosexual masculinity, as a reaction to the *fin de siècle* antisemitic dispositive of effeminization, but in very different ways. Gilman sees Freud's longing for masculinity as the product of a universalizing shift: "it is the concept of gender into which the anxiety of the Jewish body and mind are displaced" (Gilman 1993b: 11), while Boyarin (1995) interprets Freud's construction of the heroic-heterosexual Jew as a homophobic reaction to the antisemitic stereotype of the effeminate-homosexual Jew. Geller in turn recognizes in Freud's "ideal of the fighting Jew – of masculine Judaism" (2008: 159) above all an act of defense and outdoing. For all three researchers, the enterprise of Freudian psychoanalysis is the struggle of an assimilated Jew from Eastern Europe for "heroic," "Aryan" masculinity, and thus for recognition as a scientist and citizen with the same rights as others.

The present chapter places Freud's theory of the founding of cultures, particularly the model of the civilization-establishing community, the male associations or clan of brothers, in the context of the antisemitic discourses of the time. As shown from different perspectives in Chapters two and three, around 1900 political masculinity had become a battleground of German identity politics. The first step in this chapter will be to place Freud's theory of the founding of cultures in the context of contemporary debates and discourses in religious studies and anthropology. This reflection on the history of scholarship is then supplemented by considering the influence that virulent discourses and political activities in German-speaking countries of the time about and of male bands (*Männerbünde*) had on Freud's cultural theory. Attempting to

place Freudian psychoanalysis also in the context of turn-of-the-century antisemitism and homophobia does not, of course, amount to a biographical reduction. To quote Boyarin, it is rather “to put psychoanalysis on a Foucauldian couch of culture and poetics of critique” (1995: 137, note 1).

Context within the History of Scholarship

The research perspective of the *performative turn* in cultural studies (Fischer-Lichte 2008) brought about a renaissance in the theory of ritual at the end of the 19th and beginning of 20th centuries. The development of the modern academic canon of subjects around 1900 not only in religious studies, comparative anthropology, ethnology and folklore, but also sociology and theater studies, was already unfolding in colonial contact zones and in productive engagement with indigenous rituals (cf. Brunotte 2017).

It was the religious studies scholar from South Africa, David Chidester who began to relocate the discipline of comparative religion in the context of colonial frontier discourses. While his earlier book, *Savage Systems* (1996), explores comparative religion in a colonized periphery and his newer study *Empire of Religion* (2014) focuses on the metropolitan center, both books apply the same fruitful methodological and theoretical approach. *Savage Systems* argues that “comparative religion was at the forefront of the production of knowledge within these new power relations” (Chidester 1996: 1). The researcher later shows that a frontier comparative religious studies *avant la lettre* was already practiced by European travellers, missionaries, settlers, and colonial agents in open frontier zones and closed systems of colonial domination. With reference to Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of the colonial contact zone (Pratt 1992), for Chidester the colonial frontier was a fiercely contested zone “where knowledge was produced and impacted in both directions” (Chidester 2014: xiv); it was a space in which to explore and dominate indigenous societies (the colonies) and to understand recent developments in Europe. Ever since the rise of merchant capitalism and colonialism, knowledge of “alien” religions and indigenous civilizations had been inextricably linked to the project of European expansion, while also fostering discourses on similarity and difference. With reference to Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (1912-1913), therefore, we can and must ask to what extent the theory of the then under the keyword of *totemism* much discussed founding act of violence, patricide, and the cannibalistic act as well as the later ritual sacrifice of the “primal horde” (*Urhorde*),

which was developed in comparative religious studies around 1900, also possessed a contemporary diagnostic potential.

In view of the possibility that a new reading of classical turn-of-the-century theories of ritual, freed from the theoretical trench warfare of the time, could prove productive, the only slight interest within psychoanalysis to take up again Freud's contribution to the theory of sacrifice, ritual and culture is astonishing. Thus, the editor of the book *Hundert Jahre Totem und Taboo*, Eberhard Haas, emphasizes "that this discussion has shifted from the internal space of psychoanalysis to other cultural sciences" (Haas 2012: 7). Religious studies and cultural theory, for example, re-discovered Freud's reflections on sacrifice and ritual. In 1972, two important studies were published that focused on the subject of religion and sacrificial violence and recognized the importance of *Totem und Taboo*. In *Homo Necans* (1972), the Swiss classicist Walter Burkert examined ancient Greek sacrificial rituals and their recurring patterns of action going back to the time of hunter-gather societies; and in *Violence and the Sacred* (1972), the French Romance and cultural studies, scholar René Girard developed a cultural theory of the mimetic crisis and the scapegoat. While the foundations of their theories of sacrificial violence could not be more different, both scholars nevertheless confirmed Freud's hypothesis of an original founding act of violence and of a sacrificial cult. At the same time, we now know that *Totem und Taboo* cannot be understood merely as a contribution to the prehistory of the human species and ethnology. It is also and especially a text about the indissoluble intertwining of modernity and the "archaic," of civilization and violence:

Freud himself had a very high opinion of this last essay [i.e., *Totem und Taboo*, U.B.], both as regards its content and its form. It contains his hypothesis of the primal horde and the killing of the primal father and elaborates his theory tracing from them the origins of almost the whole of later social and cultural institutions. He told his present translator, probably in 1921, that he regarded it as his best written work. (Strachey 1955, The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud [hereafter cited as SE followed by volume and page number], 13: xi)

But what exactly made the psychoanalyst believe so strongly in the "truth" of *Totem und Taboo* that he repeatedly applied its theory of culture, right through to his work on *Moses and Monotheism*? Mario Erdheim has suggested reading *Totem und Taboo* as a cultural-theoretical essay on collective violence, its internalization and ritualization, and its recurrence in modern times. Freud's cul-

tural theory was “not about the savages over there, but about the savages here, not from the earliest beginnings of society, but since the establishment of our own institutions” (Erdheim 1992: 23). If we follow this reading, then, in addition to the central theme of patricide and regicide, we must also consider that of the establishment of culture by the clan of brothers. In general, of course, Freud’s text goes beyond this. His “scientific myth” of patricide and brotherhood ties in first of all with the religious tradition of myths of origin, which, beginning with the biblical myth of Cain and Abel, themselves reflect on the relationship between crisis, founding violence, and ethics. At the same time, *Totem and Taboo* belongs to the Enlightenment tradition of the socio-philosophical narratives of foundation, in which authors such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke speculate about the relationship between deadly savagery and civil self-government. Like these socio-philosophical essays, the phylogenetic narrative of psychoanalysis is and remains a scientific myth about the founding acts of culture.

Around 1900, at a time when the utopias of progress were being shaken by the massively developing potential for violence in the so-called civilized societies of modernity, Freud set at the beginning of the “prehistory of the species” an act of murder, and then sought the erotic forces that create culture and upon which all sociality rests. At the origin of human culture and all higher social orders, *Totem and Taboo* posits an egalitarian male society, thus adopting the Enlightenment postulate of fraternity. This male society is supposed to function as a collective *doppelgänger* of the family hero Oedipus. Freud thus combined his reflections on the ontogenesis of incest, patricide, and self-control with an imaginary phylogeny of humanity. In doing so, he proceeded from the colonial ethnographic knowledge of his time: *Totem and Taboo*’s theoretical narrative of foundation, which will be the subject of the first part of this chapter, is in constant critical discussion with, above all, the theoretical systematizations of this material by religious studies scholars, ethnologists, anthropologists, and sociologists such as William Robertson Smith, James George Frazer, J.J. Atkinson, Andrew Lang and Edward Westermarck, Gustave Le Bon, and Émile Durkheim. When Freud ends the book with the famous sentence from Goethe’s *Faust*, “In the beginning was the Deed” (Freud, 1953-74, SE, 13: 161), he confidently placed himself alongside the then new anti-idealistic approaches in the theory of religion advocated by Robertson Smith, Jane E. Harrison, and Émile Durkheim, which focused on the social

performance of collective rituals.² Like Darwin in his construct of the “primal horde,” these researchers set forth evolutionistically coded founding scenarios; presented as originary models of society and figures of communalization and domination, they communicated with topical questions of modernization in the guise of origin myths. Hans Kippenberg rightly sees the “presentation of the history of religion closely interwoven with the diagnosis of the dangers of modern civilization [...] in this early study of religion” (Kippenberg 1997: 269). As in the pioneering sociological works of contemporaries such as Ferdinand Tönnies, and Max Weber, or those of the ethnologist and folklorist Heinrich Schurtz, the previously mentioned religious studies researchers were concerned with performative practices and cohesive forces of society, community, and family – but also with the crowd, the (male) band, and forms of traditional and charismatic authority. However, Freud wrote his patchwork story of the primal horde and clan of brothers also in the face of *fin-de-siècle* cultural and scientific antisemitism, whose subtle effect on his work emanated from the brutal political antisemitism of the Christian Social Party, which had governed Vienna under the Lord Mayor Karl Lueger since 1897.

As already mentioned in Chapter two, the social model, the male fantasy, and the right-wing populist battle cry of the male band (*Männerbund*) was initially linked to German colonial undertakings in Africa (especially to ethnographic material from “German Southwest”, today’s Namibia and “German East Africa”, today’s Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi). In 1902, Heinrich Schurtz, who was an assistant at the Bremer Übersee-Museum, published the book *Altersklassen und Männerbünde* (Age-Classes and Male Bands), introducing to ethnological research the concept and social model of the male band, alliance, or society. He believed that his findings in indigenous (then called “primitive”) societies in Africa and all over the world were equally relevant to European societies and subtitled his bestselling book, “A Depiction of the Fundamental Forms of Society,” staking an obvious claim to universal significance. Evolutionary theorists had interpreted male societies in contemporary indigenous African cultures as merely “prehistorical” forerunners of European civilization. Schurtz’s thesis, which was enthusiastically received in Germany and Austria, differed from this interpretation in two respects: first,

2 Freud omits Harrison from the ranks of his “predecessors.” Her work is mentioned here, however, because she was of crucial importance as a theorist of ritualism. For further information about Harrison, see Brunotte 2013 and 2015.

Schurtz included examples of male bonding from 19th century Germany; secondly, he called on his readers to appropriate the primitive colonial model of elite “male societies” in order to solve the modern problem created by the gender crisis and women’s suffrage. His construct of the primitive “male society” saw male bands and secret societies as associated with the initiation of boys, bound together by religion and cultic practices, watching over the communal norms and directing the cult of the dead (*Totenkult*). In Schurtz’s model of male bands, evidently conceived in opposition to Bachofen’s idea of “mother right” and of traditional patriarchal domination, political masculinity attained socio-cultural relevance and power.

As Chapter two has explained from a different perspective, it was especially the young Berlin lay analyst Hans Blüher who popularized the ethnological discourse of the male band. In the 1910s, he became a bestselling author as an historian and theorist of the *Wandervogel* movement. Sexualizing Schurtz’s ethnographic theories, he declared a homoerotic male society to be the chief engine of all higher cultural development. In its ethnic-national turn, particularly after 1918, misogynistic male band discourse increasingly took on antisemitic features. It now shifted from the indigenous cultures of the African continent (known to Schurtz via ethnographic findings from the German colonies), to an imaginary primordial Germanic warrior band. At the same time, Blüher and other adherents of the male band thesis radicalized the racist distinction, already virulent in the cultural discourse of the day, between “effeminate, Jewish homosexuality” and “virile, healthy, Aryan inversion.” After the loss of the German colonies, the figure of the Germanic cult and warrior community gained explosive political power in the Weimar Republic, in which neo-Germanic leagues and “hordes” were becoming more and more active. Freud’s cultural theory, especially his concept of the “primal horde” and the “clan of brothers,” reacted, as this chapter is intended to show, in an overdetermined way to these developments.

Like *doppelgänger*s, both social formations, the primordial horde and the clan of brothers, pervade Freud’s cultural-theoretical and religious-philosophical texts from *Totem and Taboo* (1912-13) and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) to *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). The description of the clan of brothers is thereby marked by an ambivalence: it fluctuates between murderous cannibalistic mob and a civilization-founding contractual community. The clan of brothers stands in *doppelgänger*-like proximity to the primal horde in some places, only to assume the role of its direct, democratic opponent in others.

Against Circumcision: Oedipus as Hero of Masculinity

Recent poststructuralist, postcolonial, and gender-theoretical interpretations of Freud's psychoanalysis place the author and his work in the cultural-historical context of the *fin de siècle* period, which was marked by modern gender crises and antisemitism. As a result, not only has Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex, in particular the underlying assumption that castration anxiety is the eye of the needle through which all male development must pass and that women are constitutionally deficient beings, but also his theory about the foundations of culture has received a new interpretation. The latter intervention is mainly owing to the pioneering work of the American Freud researcher and religious studies scholar Jay Geller, which he presented in his books *On Freud's Jewish Body. Mitigating Circumcision* (2007) and *The Other Jewish Question* (2011). In the last twenty years or so, as mentioned in the introduction and in Chapter two, particularly Sander Gilman's *Freud, Race and Gender* and *The Case of Sigmund Freud* (both from 1993) and Daniel Boyarin's *Unheroic Conduct. The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (1997) have treated the extent to which the overdetermined gender and antisemitic ascriptions that shaped Jewish identity around 1900 consciously or unconsciously influenced Freud's work. The focus of these investigations fell on Freud's struggle for heroic, that is, normative-normalized (cf. Foucault 1990) and, above all, "hegemonic masculinity" (cf. Connell 1995/2005). Following this work and seeking to locate Freud's theory of religion and identity in the context of the political identity crises at the end of the 19th century, we must first note the double-bind in which an assimilated Central European Jew found himself: on the one hand, the European states demanded complete assimilation to the dominant culture, to the point of obliterating all signs of Jewishness; on the other hand, the antisemitic cultural discourse rested on the assumption that Jews are constitutionally incapable of overcoming their "sinister" difference. This difference was physically inscribed in the sex of Jewish men through circumcision. As Geller states:

In the imagination of Central Europe, a society in which individual identity and social cohesion are principally (but by no means exclusively) determined by sexual division of labor and its gender-coded spheres, "circumcised" male Jews are identified *with* (not *as*) men without penises, that is, *with* (not *as*) women. (Geller 2007: 199)

Freud, who felt himself to be a European citizen and identified himself with secular cultural values, especially the enthusiasm for Greek antiquity that marked the hegemonic culture, was keen to ensure that psychoanalysis should not be thought Jewish but instead acknowledged as a positivistic-objective and universal science. For him, the struggle for recognition was therefore also the struggle of a marginalized, that is, feminized, Jewish masculinity to take part in German hegemonic masculinity, which is imagined as neutral. At the same time, Freud described his position as a Jew struggling for recognition with the image of virile combat:

This is how he states it in his *self-portrayal* and repeats it in his 1926 address to the Viennese Jewish association B'nai B'rith: "Being Jewish had become indispensable for me on my difficult path in life [...]. [...] as a Jew, I was prepared to go into the opposition and to forego agreement with the "compact majority." (Geller 2008: 161)

In Freud's portrayals of his childhood and adolescence, too, "being Jewish is described as a test of masculinity imposed by the anti-Semitic majority" (ibid). This includes above all the traumatic childhood memory of his father's humiliation at the hands of Christian ruffians against whom the father was unable to defend himself. Drawing on Freud's work, especially the establishment of the Oedipus complex as a universal model of male psychological development, Boyarin reconstructs the "virile struggle" of an Eastern European Jew, who has come to Western Europe and tries to cleanse himself of the anti-semitic stigma of the "effeminate Jewish male" (Boyarin 1997: 27). For Boyarin, Freud's ignominious childhood memory of his father's unheroic behavior in his hometown of Freiberg even acquires the status of an "initiatory story of modernity" (ibid: 33). In the *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud sets a different memory of his youth before his "unheroic" father's reminiscence. It is of the Carthaginian general and hero of his boyhood Hannibal, who fought against the Roman Empire in the Punic Wars. If this was just a simple youthful crush at first, Freud later acknowledged consciously and all the more his admiration for the "Semitic hero":

But Hannibal [...] had been the favorite hero of my later school days. Like so many boys of that age, I had sympathized in the Punic wars not with the Romans but with the Carthaginians. And when in the higher classes I began to understand for the first time what it meant to belong to an alien race, and anti-semitic feelings among the other boys warned me that I must take up

a definite position, the figure of the Semitic general rose still higher in my esteem. To my youthful mind Hannibal and Rome symbolized the conflict between the tenacity of Jewry and the organization of the Catholic Church. And the increasing importance of the effects of the anti-semitic movement upon our emotional life helped to fix the thoughts and feelings of those early days. (Freud 1953, SE, 4: 196).

As if to tone down the trauma-inducing recollection of his father by identification with the victorious Carthaginian general, Freud frames his memory with a story about Hannibal:

I may have been ten or twelve years old, when my father began to take me with him on his walks and reveal to me his views upon things in the world we live in. Thus, it was on one of these occasions that he told me a story to show me how much better things were now than they had been in his days. "When I was a young man," he said, "I went for a walk one Saturday in the streets of your birthplace; I was well dressed and had a new fur cap on my head. A Christian came up to me and with a single blow knocked off my cap into the mud and shouted: 'Jew! Get off the pavement!' "And what did you do?" I asked. "I went into the roadway and picked up my cap", was his quiet reply. This stuck me as unheroic conduct on the part of the big, strong man who was holding the little boy by the hand. I contrasted this situation with another which fitted my feelings better: the scene in which Hannibal's father, Hamilcar Barca, made his boy swear before the household altar to take vengeance on the Romans. Ever since that time Hannibal had had a place in my phantasies. (Freud 1953, SE, 4: 197)

However much has been written about this Freudian anecdote, Boyarin argues that its status as an historical document has not hitherto been sufficiently appreciated. It bears witness to how much the shift of the Eastern Jewish population to the modern, Western-bourgeois way of life was linked to questions of *male gender*. At the turn of the century, male Jews were not only humiliated, according to Gilman (1993b), but were further at the same time feminized by the humiliation. Against this, Freud directed his own, psychoanalytic concept of gender. For this purpose, he went back to the religious tradition, not of course to the Jewish or Christian one, but to pagan religion of Greek antiquity – to the Greek myth of Oedipus. This story, which was to become fundamental to Freud's construction of hegemonic masculinity in Connell's sense (Connell 2005), is about a father "who refused to be dislodged

from a road" (Boyarin 1997: 39). The supposed stranger, who as the imaginary father in the psychoanalysis threatens castration, is killed in the myth by his heroic son Oedipus. Oedipus, who kills his father Laius unwittingly, also does not know that he has married his mother, Jocasta. For Gilman, Geller, and Boyarin, the invention of psychoanalysis, with the (at least initially) unambiguously heterosexual hero Oedipus, who desires his mother and hates his father, at its center, was also a defense against the antisemitic effeminization of Jewish men. According to the psychoanalytic theory, not only male Jewish bodies, marked as different by circumcision, were threatened by castration in Oedipal development; to become men, *all* boys must pass through the needle's eye of the castration threat. As described in detail in Chapter two, the production of sexualities called "perverse," "including the homosexual" and its pathologization, further radicalized the "racialization and gendering of antisemitism" (Gilman 1993b: 163). Gilman summarizes: "The image of the Jew and the image of the homosexual were parallel in the *fin de siècle* medical culture" (ibid). Thus, Freud attempted to consolidate his male identity in figures of heroic struggle against antisemitic hostility:

Probably the most vivid depiction of Jewish masculinity setting itself off against non-Jewish cowardice appears in the memory of Freud's son Martin of a summer excursion in 1901. He describes how his father confronted a crowd that blocked the path of Martin and his brother Oliver and showered them with anti-Semitic taunts: "Father, without a trace of hesitation, jumped out of the boat and marched towards the hostile crowd, always staying nicely in the middle of the street [...] ten men armed with sticks and umbrellas [and] the women in the background cheering the men on with shouts and gestures. In the meantime, father, swinging his stick, attacked the hostile crowd, which gave way and promptly dissolved, clearing the path for him." (Geller 2008:161-162).

The cultural and political significance of models of masculinity, especially for Jews interested in assimilation, who, like Freud, sought to free themselves from the stigma of the effeminized Jewish man, should indeed not be underestimated. Masculinity, also in the sense of an ideal self-government trained on the body images of antiquity and embodied in noble proportions, was, as George Mosse (1996) was one of the first to show, an ethical and aesthetic norm constitutive for the European process of nation-building. In addition, at the latest in the modern, partly antisemitic, race and gender-coded crisis debates of the *fin de siècle*, masculinity became a decisive reference category

for inclusion and exclusion. As shown in chapter three, the supposedly neutral, autonomous subject of the Enlightenment and later of the state and the nation was encoded from the start as heterosexual, white, and male. Along with his cultural masculinity, the sociability of the (male) Jew therefore also became problematic. Analogous to women, as Gilman emphasizes, or liable to queer/feminine connotations, as Boyarin (1997) and Geller (2007) point out, the Jewish man came culturally close to homosexuals defined as deviant. As an ultimately indefinable gender that fluctuated between “an abject, male or oversexed femininity, a homosexualized or ‘less-than-virile’ masculinity” (Boyarin 1997: 8), the male Jew put the entire bourgeois gender order into question.

Transformations of Violence in Sacrificial Ritual

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud forges an evolutionary link between Darwin's patriarchal “primal horde” and the bourgeois family, and between his own theory of the Oedipus complex and the origin of religion and culture. As a result, in the central theorem of his general theory of identity, the castration complex and castration no longer function as a metonymy of Jewish circumcision but as the needle's eye of “normal” and therefore “healthy,” that is, heterosexual German, masculinity. In Gilman's interpretation, Freud's theory of castrated femininity is a reaction to the antisemitism of the time. Instead of the Jewish man, women are now made to bear the stigma of castration. The merit of Gilman's reading, according to Stefanie von Schnurbein, is to “track down the diversity of the category of masculinity to the point [...] in Freud's work where the category gives itself out as most universalistic: in Freud's reflections on the castration and Oedipus complex and the deficient physical constitution of women” (Schnurbein 2005: 289).

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud derived not only the origin of religion but also the origin of social life and culture in general from the phylogenetic primal drama of father and sons. The idea of patricide or regicide therefore initially suggested itself as the central theme of his treatise. In this, Freud was moving in the mainstream of the ethnological and classical Greek and Roman research of his day. Karl-Heinz Kohl has pointed out the contemporary virulence of the topic not only in James George Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890) but also in research by orientalists, classical philologists, ethnologists, and anthropologists

around 1900. For Kohl, the regicide narrative is a “collective obsession” of the time:

What fascinated the ethnologists and scholars of the late 19th and early 20th centuries about sacred regicide was undoubtedly the fact that in this institution certain political constellations of their own epoch could be recognized as in a distorting mirror. The long 19th century, which according to Hobsbawm began with the French Revolution and ended with the assassination of the Austrian heir to the throne in Sarajevo, was not only an age of revolutions, but also of monarchies. Few epochs have seen the coming, and often enough the violent going, of so many kings and emperors. (Kohl 1999: 72-73)

In *Totem and Taboo*, along with the primal horde and patricide, the topos of the band of brothers assumes almost equal importance. Like the sociologist Émile Durkheim, Freud was on the lookout for what holds modern, increasingly divergent society together at its innermost core. Both had read Gustave Le Bon's *Psychologie des Foules* (*The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*) (1895), but each drew different conclusions from their readings. Both were interested in the interplay between social order, emotion(s), and religion, and followed the Biblical critic and Semitist William Robertson Smith in his theory of sacrifice as an act of communion between the worshippers and the god, symbolized and materialized in consuming the flesh and the blood of a sacred victim. This theory saw the earliest communal social form as produced first and foremost by the collective, totemic sacrificial feast – by an act of killing and communion. Both Durkheim and Freud, however, further adopted Edward Burnett Tylor's earlier theory of sacrifice, which was steeped in the totemism enthusiasm of the time. With reference to the role of violent killing and the common meal, they therefore also drew attention to the aspects of gift and (drive) renunciation in the sacrificial process. At this point at the latest, the scientific paths and interests of the two researchers parted ways, for, as Edward Evans-Pritchard (1968: 103-104) comments with polemical exaggeration: “For Freud the father is God, for Durkheim society.”

In fact, Freud's psychoanalytic enterprise can also be read as an attempt to save the traditional family, whose central position around 1900 was called into question by various modern developments, above all the youth movement, the *Wandervogel*, and various suffrage movements. Suppressed in Evans-Pritchard's polemic is the immense role that all the previously mentioned religious-sociological approaches give to the performative, group-emotional processes, which are borne by ritual communalization. For with

Robertson Smith, Harrison and especially Durkheim and his close colleague at the *Collège de Sociologie* Marcel Mauss, the focus of reflection on the theory of ritual shifted. From the (post) Enlightenment figure of Frazer's "primitive thinker," who seeks to control the natural law of fertility through rituals, researchers' interest moved to the communally "energized society." In Durkheim's view, this society not only represents itself in the event of the festal (sacrificial) ritual, but further, as it were, creates itself anew. Henrik Versnel gets to the heart of the idea thus: "[...] however the ritual may relate to external data like fertility of the soil, what counts is *what the participant himself experiences*, his own emotion. The mythical images, therefore, are products, first and foremost, of spontaneous, collective emotions" (Versnel 1993: 26). In these decidedly social-cultural approaches, external nature is more or less abandoned as a frame of reference for rituals in favor of an affectively and performatively formed social space. Rituals are emphatically treated as media of mass excitement, festive self-perception, (sacrificial) violence, and communalization.

Like the other pioneers of the theory of sacrifice, the establishment of culture and ritual, whose materials and approaches Freud put to use, he too starts from the construction of a "primitive" collective, which he localizes in Darwin's primal horde. To evade the reproach that this is a *petitio principii*, and that the rituals, which first create collective institutions, ethics and the experience of the sacred always actually presuppose them, Freud constructed his "scientific myth" of the primordial patricide. He then projected this myth onto the beginning of human history as the oedipal founding legend of civilization and society. As already observed, *Totem and Taboo* is also and especially a text about the indissoluble intertwining of modernity and the "archaic," civilization and violence. The so-called "primitiveness" of the original violence harbors the possibility of its return in the modern age.

In *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* (Freud, SE, 14), the culture theorist and mass psychologist Freud recognized the persistent virulence of regressive developments in modern culture in the fanatical war enthusiasm of 1914, as Andreas Hamburger observes: "What is noticed, but still unexplained, is the mass effect that brings about cultural regression and turns unconscious fantasies into a real 'gang of murderers'" (Hamburger 2005: 73). Freud will then examine the role of this regressive mass effect in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921). There he interprets the cultural relapse into barbarism that can occur through the medium of the masses in the form of a return of the archaic primal horde:

The leader of the group is still the dreaded primal father; the group still wishes to be governed by unrestricted force, it has an extreme passion for authority; in Le Bon's phrase it has a thirst for obedience. The primal father is the group ideal, which governs the ego in place of the ego ideal. (Freud SE, 17: 127)

Totem and Taboo first appeared in 1912/13 as a series of articles in *Imago*. Shortly before the outbreak of World War I, Freud presented his theory of modern, Christian society's indissoluble nexus with violence in the guise of a theory of a criminal act of archaic founding: as in the origin myths of the Bible, Greek mythology, and Romulus and Remus, at the beginning of the phylogenetic narrative of psychoanalysis stands murder. In *Totem and Taboo*, however, Freud also advocated the theory, inspired by Robertson Smith, that social organization, moral restrictions, and religion began with the *ritualization* of an archaic killing in a sacrificial communal cult.

Bringing Darwin's primal horde theory together with the findings of early ethnographic and archaeological research, Freud thus had two models of archaic social organization to account for the origin of society: on the one hand, the mythical father of the equally unverifiable mythical primal horde, who forced his sons into exogamy; and, on the other, early forms of democratic male bands. Freud writes:

The most primitive kind of organization that we actually come across – and one that is in force to this day in certain tribes – consists of **bands of males** [*Männnerverbände*]; these bands are composed of members with equal rights and are subject to restrictions of the totemistic system, including inheritance through the mother. (Freud SE, 13: 141, emphasis in original)

The question that Freud asks himself in the fourth chapter of *Totem and Taboo* is the following: "Can this form of organization have developed out of the other one? And, if so, along which lines?" (ibid). To answer the question, he adopts Atkinson's assumption in *Primal Law* (Atkinson 1903: 220–22; quoted in *Totem and Taboo*) that the sons excluded by the father band together to kill him. Freud then returns to the totemic sacrificial ritual: the killing of the sacrificial animal, which represents "God," and the communal meal. For Robertson Smith, the sacred act was first and foremost an act of fellowship between the deity and his worshipers, the "totem meal" a performative *communio* of believers with their god. In *Totem and Taboo* Freud directly quotes Robertson Smith: "It can be shown that, to begin with, sacrifice was nothing other than 'an act

of fellowship between the deity and his worshipers' [Smith 1894: 224; quoted in Freud SE, 13: 133]. For Freud, however, the homicide that preceded these festive communions of the sacrificial ritual gained a decisive importance. For this crime consists in the horde's killing the primal father and together cannibalistically feasting on his body, an act which the community of brothers then performatively repeats and puts into ritual form. This ritual form "... was the beginning of so many things – of social organization, of moral restrictions and religion" (ibid). Because, Freud continues, the collective act triggers the decisive, creative "sense of guilt and remorse" in the perpetrators (Freud, SE, 13: 144). The collective establishment of the new, ethically constituted body of society is possible only through the dynamic of this feeling of guilt, inspired by belated pangs of paternal love and "deferred obedience" (ibid: 145). In the ritual, the social body and the totem god of the father cult take the place of the dead body of the father. Freud makes not the mother's body, as Melanie Klein will later do (Klein 1962), but the body of the mythical father the receptacle of ambivalent endeavors. In agreement with Klein, however, for whom the feeling of guilt in the "depressive position" is the decisive engine of individual and cultural creation, we could also speak here of founding violence and reparation: "Society was now based on complicity in the common crime; religion was based on the sense of guilt and the remorse attaching to it; while morality was based partly on the exigencies of this society and partly on the penance by the sense of guilt." (Freud, SE, 13: 146) Freud, however, was concerned not only with a theory of foundational murder and its ritualization in the religious cult of father/god/totem and sacrifice, but also, as Mario Erdheim has emphasized, the "dialectic of rebellion and obedience" (Erdheim 1992: 38). We could even add, quoting the title of Klaus Heinrich's book, that the theory is about the "difficulty of saying 'no'" (1985), understood here as the problem of a successful revolution of the sons. The collective of the community of brothers, founded after the collective murder of the father-king, thereby also gained potency for a diagnosis of modernity.

At the beginning of human history, Freud set the bloody revolt of the sons and brothers. The ambivalence of the "no" to the father – that is, the simultaneity of hate and love – ultimately drives the sons into self-submission to the commandments of the dead. They renounce the women who were withheld from them by the primal father, thus avoiding mutual slaughter and building an ethically stable community based on their emotional bonds. And yet, at this point we must ask if the feeling of guilt is really sufficient to explain the collective renunciation of women and the binding forces of the new

self-government. Here Freud introduces “social fraternal feelings” (Freud, SE, 13: 146):

In addition to the affectionate spate of feelings towards the father transformed into remorse, the murderous tendencies remain, limited only by the “social fraternal feeling,” from which the “sanctification of the blood tie” and the imperative of solidarity, specifically the prohibition against fratricide, develop. (Hamburger 2005: 66)

But what are these decisive “social fraternal feelings,” which lead to the covenant and the contract with the dead father, and which Freud, unlike Enlightenment philosophers, rightly wants to explain with more than only the rational and utilitarian advantages of cooperation?

Self-Sacrifice and Self-Government

Through a patchwork of cultural-historical narratives, *Totem and Taboo* aims to confirm the ontogenetically developed oedipal pattern of male development as a collective, even phylogenetically, operative model. The posited connection between primitive primal horde and bourgeois family not only makes modern individuation overlap with the prehistoric foundational sacrifice, but also changes the meaning of the sacrifice itself. While Robertson Smith conceives of the sacrifice as a killing and a community meal within the frame of totemism, and René Girard sees the function and performance of the sacrificial ritual culminating in the transformation of destructive, chaotic violence into sacred, creative, and ultimately reconciling sacrificial violence, from the point of view of the individual members, the sons and brothers, it is an initiation ritual whose performative execution transforms the participants themselves – from a more or less closely connected group of “savage” cannibalistic sons, suppressed by the primal father, into a civil community of young men living in fraternal bonds. In the original German text of *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud even speaks, using religious-sounding terminology, of a *Brüdergemeinde* (communion of brothers) (Freud GW, 1972, 13: 136), which the English translation downplays by always speaking of a “community of brothers” (Freud SE, 18: 65–143). The newly constituted society is now based on the ability of this community of brothers to renounce their instincts and to govern themselves.

In the chapter on Odysseus in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), Adorno and Horkheimer argue in a very similar way about the formation of the individual. There the authors see the mythical foundation of the bourgeois subject prefigured in Odysseus' self-control and drive renunciation, especially in his adventure with the Sirens. Alluding to Max Weber's paradigm of the disenchantment of nature and the theory of a culture-founding renunciation of drives in *Totem and Taboo* (1912-13), they point to the figure of the sacrifice as primarily constituting the autonomous (male) self. For Adorno and Horkheimer, the shipwrecked traveler Odysseus is a link to a modern model of self-sacrifice, interwoven with the overcoming of a "crisis", which is represented as a story of the triumph of rational self-government. Famously symbolized in his adventure with the Sirens, Odysseus overcomes and disenchantments the mythical powers of nature and the religious past with the help of his cunning. Adorno and Horkheimer call his well-known ruse of self-preservation an "adaptation to death" (Adorno/Horkheimer 2002: 48). Bound to the mast of his ship and his comrades' ears plugged up with softened beeswax, the hero can listen to the fatally seductive song of the Sirens but is restrained from following his impulse to go to them, let alone to touch them. For Adorno and Horkheimer, "Odysseus bound" embodies a model of male subjectivity that is built on the disenchantment of nature – inner and outer nature. For them, Odysseus' heroic self-control and empowerment implies a model of constitutive self-sacrifice: sacrifice of the self found the self. In their own words: "The human being's mastery of itself, on which the self is founded, practically always involves the annihilation of the subject in whose service that mastery is maintained" (ibid: 43). It is the "internalization of the sacrifice," they continue, "which, as permanent self-suppression, performs the self-mutilation of the man in any case" (ibid: 43 and 56). The authors refer, of course, solely to the repression of the heterosexual libido, most obvious in the Siren episode. Freud proceeds in a very similar way in interpreting the father drama of his ancient hero Oedipus. When inventing the Oedipus complex, the psychoanalyst disregarded the bisexuality of Laius, whose pederastic actions are handed down in myths.³

3 In ancient mythology, Laius, later the father of Oedipus, was cursed by Pelops for making homosexual-pedophilic advances on his son Chrysippus.

Democratic Male Bands (Männerbünde) and Negation of the Mother

The primal patriarchal family, Freud was aware, is a myth. In view of the ethnological research of his time, he admitted in *Totem and Taboo* that the Darwinian primal horde, with its autocratic primal father at its center is a mythic conjecture: "This earliest state of society has never been an object of observation" (Freud SE vol. 13: 141). Yet not all the social collectives that participated in the founding acts were merely "scientific myths." Freud's theory of cultural institutions was based on the oldest known form of social organization at the time: the "bands of males; these bands are composed of members with equal rights and are subject to the restrictions of the totemistic system, including inheritance through the mother" (Freud SE, 13: 141). Contemporary ethnological research had twice discovered egalitarian male groups in non-European indigenous societies and brought to light numerous findings, not least the integration of these groups into matrilineal cultures. Here, to begin with, we should note the ethnological verification of Johann Jacob Bachofen's cultural and historical speculations on the archaic "matriarchy" (1861) by the Scottish ethnologist John McLennan in *Primitive Marriage* (1865). This ethnographic authentication of matrilineal systems shook the belief in the originality and naturalness of the monogamous-patriarchal family. Then, in 1877 Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society*, based on studies of the kinship structure and political organization of the North American Iroquois, succeeded in proving that acephalous societies, that is, those without a central authority, can function very well. And here, too, matrilineal inheritance was combined with equality within the (male) tribe, clan or group. "Morgan never wearies," notes Uwe Wesel, "of describing the freedom, equality, and brotherhood [of the Iroquois] and their deeply democratic character." (Wesel 1999: 22)

Because of its strong fixation on the culture-building relationship between father and son, and its author's compulsion to apply the Oedipus complex as a performative model of the individual and social development of manhood to the history of the species, Freud's analysis failed to appreciate the powerful and active role of the mother/mothers and her attached mother cults, which is well documented in myths and cultic lore. For Freud, "a longing for the father" (*Vatersehnsucht*) was "at the root of every form of religion" (Freud SE, 13: 149), and he was just as certain that the Oedipus complex contains the roots of religious feelings. Yet he admitted that, in the evolution from bands of brothers to patriarchy and father-religions, "a place is to be found for the great mother-goddesses, who may perhaps in general have preceded the father-gods" (ibid).

He granted the institutions of maternal law a certain, if unclear, role in the establishment of religion, ethics and social organization by the community of brothers. The collective establishment of the prohibition against incest after the murder of the primal father transforms the competitors, fighting for libidinal satisfaction and power, into an acephalous male community which first worshiped mother goddesses. "For a long time afterwards [the killing of the father], the social fraternal feelings, which were the basis of the whole transformation, continued to exercise a profound influence on the development of society [...]. The patriarchal horde was replaced in the first instance by the fraternal clan" (Freud SE, 13: 146).

The blind spot in Freud's theorizing (cf. di Censo 1996), which here again becomes apparent, extends not only to the "dark continent" of female sexualities but also to the hypotheses about matriarchal rule and mother cults suggested by the mythic material. In addition to Erich Neumann's phenomenological study *The Great Mother* (1974), Melanie Klein (1962), André Green (2004), and Julia Kristeva (1982) in particular studied the clue that Freud ignored. Missing from the drama of *Totem and Taboo*, which leads to the catastrophe that culminates in the killing of the king, are the women. They play a role solely as objects of the mythical struggle between father and sons: "A drama in which there are no women puts the absence of women center stage. [...] This systematic omission or reduction of the mothers to the incest taboo as a 'culturally necessary negation' is a further key to the interpretation" (Hamburger 2005: 70). In *Totem and Taboo*, only an "exclusive society of brothers creates structure," and in general the work confines itself to depicting the endeavor to "create an autonomous male order" (ibid).

In his theory of the founding of culture, Freud, as we have seen, repeatedly uses models of male-masculine communalization, ranging from the primal horde to the community of brothers. He thus intentionally adopts a powerful discursive and political topos of the time, the male band (*Männerbund*). The discourse about the male band around 1900 focused on the question of the binding emotional forces that constituted and held these bands together. In this discussion Freud played an active part, and not only through his correspondence with Hans Blüher and his reception of recent ethnological research. Following Geller's argument (2003 and 2007), we need a more complex reading, for the origins of the patchwork of human prehistory that Freud sewed together from *Totem and Taboo* to *Moses and Monotheism* lie less in British colonialism, contemporary ethnography, or Austrian family norms than in his theory of the foundation of culture, which should be seen as a reaction to the

then virulent male band discourse and the antisemitically tinged homophobic “male fantasies” (Theweleit [1977/1979]) that had penetrated as far as the Viennese metropolis.

Yet, as the tale traversed his corpus from *Totem and Taboo* to *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud would continually tinker with the relationship within the band of brothers, especially with the role played by homosexuality. [...] the changes in Freud’s depiction of homosexuality in his accounts of social origins – the increasingly sharp distinction between homosociality and homosexuality that ultimately culminated in the foreclosure of homosexuality from Freud’s narrative – may be connected with the anti-Semitic, *völkisch* turn of Männerbund theories as well as the racialization of homosexual identities. (Geller 2003: 90)

By 1900, normalized masculinity functioned as a central reference category for inclusion and exclusion. It is therefore not surprising that in the fierce debates about cultural crises of the time the supposedly moral “degeneration” of society is always at the same time described as a “male gender crisis” (Fout 1992: 388). As explained in Chapter three, “at the center of this was a feminization of culture that appeared nightmarish” (Bublitz 1998: 19; cf. Brunotte 2004). As a powerful cultural antidote against the threat, exacerbated in visionary male fantasies, a variety of youth movement-inspired youth groups, male societies and fellowships of comrades rose up around 1900 in Germany and invented the homoerotic male band as a new salvific form of community.

The Invention of the Neo-Germanic Male Band through Colonial Transfer

The male band, understood as a ritually produced, initiatory *communitas* in Victor Turner’s sense (1989), was, like Robertson Smith’s communion, a product of the “imaginary ethnography of the 19th century,” as the subtitle of Fritz Kramer’s book *Inverted Worlds* (1977) has it. Ethnographic research into ritual already found itself in the pull of *völkisch* discourse in Wilhelmine Germany and Lueger’s Vienna and thus under the pressure of expectation that its discoveries should contribute to inventing a Germanic counter-tradition radically opposed to modernity. Schurtz also had developed his consequential plea for the socially progressive role of male bands explicitly against the backdrop of the current European debates about the origin of the family, so-

ciety, and state, debates in which Freud also took part. According to Schurtz, neither kinship nor family unions but rather the voluntary “artificial unions” of young, unmarried men are the ultimate “bearers of almost all higher social development” (Schurtz 1902: 61). After the Great War, the “ritualist school” of German studies and classical archaeology in Vienna took up Schurtz’s hypothesis of male societies as dynamic forces of civilization. In a kind of scholarly version of colonial mimicry, non-European models of “savage” male societies, with their ecstatic initiation cults, warrior rituals and secretive cults of the dead, were projected onto early Germanic history. In a large-scale “reinvention of tradition” (Hobsbawm/Ranger 1983), researchers replaced the image of the naive Germanic peasant with that of the untamed, frenzied ancient Norse berserker. In German studies, this move to dress an allegedly primeval Germanic tradition in the costume of the colonial native began in 1927 with the “discovery” of the Germanic warrior band as a national identity myth by authors such as Lily Weiser and Otto Höfler. Drawing on the work of Schurtz, they imagined a sacred and heroic male band that sometimes transformed itself into a ferocious army of the dead. Höfler in fact broke completely with Schurtz’s universalist approach, which had not distinguished between male societies in the colonized regions and in Europe. He elevated the wild “Germanic Aryan” to the status of a unique phenomenon; for him, the ancient Germans could not be compared with a savage tribe at all. Höfler emphasized the special capacity for development among the “savage” Germanic tribes, owing in his view to the fact that “it is in these male bands that the most unique gift of the Nordic race has its home, the power to form states” (Höfler 1934: 357). Precisely this ethno-nationalist turn in theories about male bands led, after the defeat of 1918 and the loss of Germany’s colonies, to radicalizing the typological comparison of “healthy,” Aryan masculinity and “sick,” Jewish homosexuality. Geller summarizes:

In the wake of [...] the loss of Germany’s overseas colonies, some postwar German ideologues and ethnographers recolonized their tribal past with homogeneous communities led by cultic bands of male warriors, while others endeavored – far too successfully – to restore those idealized *Männerbünde* in the present. Moreover, [...] public dissemination of a racial typology of homosexualities [increased] the opposition between the healthy inversion characteristic of manly Germanic men and the decadent homosexuality of effeminate Jews. (Geller 2003: 90–91)

Both developments would influence not insignificantly Freud's theories about the role of Männerbünde and Männerverbände ("male bands and men's associations"), *Brüderclans* ("clans of brother"), *Brüdergemeinden* ("communities of brothers"), *totemistische Brüdergemeinschaften* ("totemistic brother communities") (Freud GW, 13: 151), or the "brother group" (*Brudermasse*: thus his choice of terms in the original German of *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* (Freud GW, 13: 136 and 151-152). Unfortunately, the English translation makes the nuances almost invisible (Freud SE, 18: 122 and 135).

It was, however, the Berlin Wandervogel and later bestselling author Hans Blüher who took up Schurtz's theory of the power of male bands to establish culture and first sexualized it and later made it antisemitic. To begin with, Blüher radicalized Schurtz's bourgeois theory of sociability, which was based on a neutral "sociability instinct" (Schurtz 1902) in men, by tracing the formation of male bands to male-masculine eros. He thus declares homoeroticism to be a culture-creating potency. In his *Familie und Männerbund* of 1918, Blüher writes:

An instinct to socialize, if something like this could even exist as an original, instinctual element, would contain the accidental, the occasional, the non-binding [...] We can already feel from afar that this concept is inadequate to explain the grave fate that came upon the human species. [...] The trace of the human formation of states reaches rather all the way down into eros [...]. Male bands [...] are products of sexuality, namely of male-masculine sexuality. (Blüher 1918: 21-22)

With this idea about the crucial role of male-masculine eros in the formation of communities and the founding of states, Blüher ultimately wanted to develop a cultural theory that was as fundamental as Freud's: not repressed or sublimated heterosexual eros or eros in general is the origin and engine of all higher cultural development, as psychoanalysis has it, but rather ennobled or transformed homoeroticism. Not the family but the male band is the nucleus of all higher civil associations.

Blüher and Freud: Homosexualities and the Longing for Masculinity

As John Neubauer (1996: 123-148) has reconstructed, Freud was in lively correspondence with Hans Blüher, twenty years his junior, at the time he was writing *Totem and Taboo*. In their letters they carried on a debate about the

psychological and cultural “nature” of homosexuality, especially in the German youth movement, but also in society at large. The twenty-three-year-old Blüher was one of the leading thinkers of the youth movement and the gay liberation movement *avant la lettre*. As shown in Chapter three, he also belonged to a group of various friendship circles [*männerbündische Zirkel*], which Andrew Hewitt (1996) and Claudia Bruns (2008) refer to as “masculinists.” From 1914 at the latest, these groups represented the previously mentioned clearly racially tinged binary concept of an Aryan, and hence pure, virile, “healthy” sexual inversion, and a Jewish, hence effeminate and “sick” homosexuality. Blüher had begun his career as an ardent admirer of Freud, whose *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) and *Civilized Sexual Morality* (1908) had made a lasting impression on him. In both texts, Freud speculates about the relationship between progressive renunciation of drives and cultural evolution. Blüher was particularly fascinated by Freud’s view that inverts or homosexuals should not be viewed as a “degenerate” group and therefore separate from the “normal” members of a culture, as was common in the medical-cultural discourse of the time, but that they represented rather a variant of sexuality which all human beings pass through at some stage in their development, since all human beings are fundamentally bisexual. In a part of footnote 1 in *Three essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, added in 1915, Freud wrote:

Psychoanalytical research is most decidedly opposed to any attempt at separating off homosexuals from the rest of mankind as a group of a special character. By studying sexual excitations other than those that are manifestly displayed, it has found that all human beings are capable of making homosexual object-choice and have in fact made one in their unconscious. [...] Thus, from the point of view of psychoanalysis the exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women is also a problem that needs elucidating and is not a self-evident fact. (Freud SE, 7: 145-146, note 1)

In the same essay, Freud not only emphasizes sociability but also, with a view to antiquity, the special intelligence and cultural achievement of homosexuals (Freud always uses the term “inverts”) in history. Blüher, who as a lay analyst interested in sexual science advocated depathologizing homosexuality, was fascinated by this position, which was very advanced for the time. In his first letters to the father of psychoanalysis, Blüher testified to his enthusiasm for

Freud's thought, which for him was a "true illumination."⁴ His reverence for the psychoanalyst was also justified by the fact that Freud vehemently opposed the common use of the term "degeneration" with regard to inversion and inverts. Freud writes:

The attribution of degeneracy in this connection is open to the objections which can be raised against the indiscriminate use of the word in general. [...] If we cast our eyes round a wider horizon, we shall come in two directions upon facts which make it impossible to regard inversion as a sign of degeneration ... one must almost say [that inversion is] an institution charged with important functions – among the people of antiquity at the height of their civilization. (Freud SE, 7: 138 and 139)

In his analysis, Geller links the debate between Freud and Blüher about the "health" of inversion and the culturally crucial role of homosexual sublimation with the concept of the "community of brothers," which changed significantly in Freud's work between 1912 and 1929. In *Totem and Taboo*, at the beginning of his reflections about the social fraternal feelings on which the first, democratic social form rests, Freud speaks of "homosexual feelings" as a binding agent of male bands. (Freud SE, 13: 144; 18: 124, note 1). As long as they were distinguished by their masculine character, Freud gives both the inverts and the democratic male associations of his foundation myth a positive connotation (cf. Brunotte 2004; Bruns 2011). Claudia Bruns therefore sees "[...] clear affinities" in Freud's early theories of homosexuality "to masculinist positions in the Männerbund discourse" (Bruns 2008: 300). In *Three Essays on Sexuality*, the psychoanalyst expressly distances himself from the thesis of the femininity of inverts, set forth at the time chiefly by Magnus Hirschfeld, and argues "that there can be no doubt that a large proportion of male inverts retain the mental quality of masculinity" (Freud SE, 7: 144). And he continues: "It is clear that in Greece, where the most masculine men were numbered among the inverts ..." (ibid). In 1905 Freud also speaks of the high cultural sociability of homosexuals when, again with a view to antiquity, he remarks that inverts should not be called "degenerate" because homosexuality is sometimes found in people "whose efficiency is unimpaired, and who are indeed distinguished by especially high intellectual development and ethical culture" (Freud SE, 7: 139). In 1908 Freud reaffirmed the positive assessment of homoeroticism

4 The correspondence was first published and annotated by John Neubauer in 1996; see Neubauer 1996: 123-148; here letter to Freud of May 2, 1912, ibid: 133.

when, in *Civilized Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness*, he wrote: “The constitution of people suffering from inversion – the homosexuals – is, indeed, often distinguished by their sexual instinct’s [*Trieb*, drive] possessing a special aptitude for cultural sublimation” (Freud SE, 9: 190). This position is easily recognized in *Totem and Taboo*’s depiction of homosexual bonds within the clan of brothers and their importance for the patricide and later the founding of culture. There Freud says that, after committing the fateful murder, the sons establish the prohibition against incest (and all other commandments and institutions) in order to continue the civil community that gave them the strength to act in the first place: “In this way they rescued the organization, which had made them strong – and which may have been based on homosexual feelings and acts, originating perhaps during the period of their expulsion” (Freud SE, 13: 144).

On the other hand, in one of his letters to Blüher and in other texts, Freud also speaks of the suffering of his inverted patients and their excessively strong identification with the mother, bringing with it the danger of feminization. In the end, he came close to adopting the then widespread thesis that inversion is caused by neurosis and that “healthy” psychological development must go beyond the phase of same-sex object choice. The question about the culture-creating function of male societies and the role of homosexuality therein will nevertheless occupy Freud into 1939 and *Moses and Monotheism*, not least because of the increasingly virulent Männerbund discourse in the society around him:

In particular, the development of the (homo)sexualised and later racialized version of the Männerbund initially disseminated by *Wandervogel* [...] Hans Blüher may explain the persistent return of Freud’s construct of the primal horde throughout the rest of his writing life. (Geller 2003: 94)

While Freud was working on *Totem and Taboo*, the young Blüher was writing his analysis of the contemporary generational strife. The sensational third volume of his *Wandervogel* trilogy was to appear in 1914 under the title *Die deutsche Wandervogelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen* (The German *Wandervogel* Movement as an Erotic Phenomenon), and Freud was one of the first outsiders to read the manuscript. But perhaps it is less this early reading than the increasingly ethno-nationalist and antisemitic political reality of male bands and men’s associations that explains the vacillation in Freud’s concept of the clan of brothers. The more clearly Blüher placed the inverted male bands at the center of his *völkisch* theory of state formation, the more clearly Freud distanced himself

from these discourses and thoughts. Moreover, Freud's and Blüher's disagreement about the "health" of invert was never resolved in their correspondence, above all because Freud ultimately clung to the neurotic genesis of homosexuality as an expression of an overly strong bond with the mother. That these tensions led to a break between the two owed chiefly to the previously mentioned political reasons. For Blüher came to espouse more and more openly misogynistic, antisemitic and ethno-nationalist positions. A quotation from the second volume of Blüher's main work, *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft*, (The Role of Eros in Male Society) published in 1921, illustrates the inextricable link between gendered, antisemitic and socio-political classifications and fault-lines in Männerbund discourse. Although already quoted in Chapter two, it bears repeating here:

With the Jews it is as follows: they suffer at one and the same time from a weakness in male-bonding [*Männerbundschwäche*] and a *hypertrophy of the family*. They are submerged in the family and familial relations, but as to the relations among men, the old saying holds true: *Judaeus Judaeo lupus*. Loyalty, unity, and bonding are no concern of the Jew. Consequently, where other people profit from a fruitful interaction of the two forms of socialization (i.e., the family and the *Männerbund*), with the Jews there is a sterile division. Nature has visited this fate upon them and thus they wander through history, cursed never to be a people [*Volk*], always to remain a mere race. They have lost their state. (Blüher 1919b: 170; emphases in the original; English translation in Hewitt 1996: 123, 125)

Geller argues that the mystery of the stateless survival of the Jews was for Blüher to be found in their devotion to sexuality and family. Here is the corroborating quotation from Blüher: "There are people who are simply exterminated as peoples and therefore disappear, but this cannot be the case with the Jews, for a secret process internal to their being as a people constantly displaces the energy typically directed toward male bonding onto the family. Consequently, the Jews maintain themselves as race through overemphasis of the family" (Blüher 1921: 170; English translation in Hewitt 1996: 125). Thus the "weakness of male bonding" amongst the Jews culminates for Blüher in the paradox of their simultaneous (heterosexual) hypersexualization and effeminization. After the break between Freud and Blüher, the latter wrote a series of anti-Jewish treatises, in which he describes Jewish thought as materialistic and corrupt. Thus, in *Secessio Judaica*, we read: "even [Freud's] valuable

thoughts become fruitful only when they pass through a German brain” (Blüher 1922: 24)

Brother Clan and Brother Group: the Importance of Homoerotic Bonds in Freud's Theory of Culture

At the beginning of human culture and all higher social orders there is an egalitarian male society. Fundamental passages on the theory of culture in *Totem and Taboo* revolve around the aggressive, socially creative, and emotional potentials of this form of organization, which Freud sometimes calls “male community” (*Männergemeinschaften*), sometimes “clan of brothers” (*Brüderclan*), sometimes “band of brothers” (*Brüderbund*), sometimes “communities of brothers” (*Brudergemeinde*), and, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, with a view to the jointly committed murder, even “brother mobs” (*Brudermasse*) (Freud GW, 13: 152).⁵ Unfortunately, as has already been noted, almost all the differently connoted terms for the *Brüderclan*, with the exception of “male bands” (*Männerbünde*), were translated into English as “community of brothers” or “clan of brothers.”

The clan of brothers runs through Freud's work from *Totem and Taboo* and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* to his late religious-philosophical essay *Moses and Monotheism*. In 1939, as a designation for these fraternities in this last work, Freud even makes use of the then highly charged term *Männergemeinschaft* (“male community”) (Freud 1965: 169; Freud SE, 23: 131). What kind of social and erotic feelings bond together male societies, and what indirect or open role homosexuality thereby plays, occupied his thoughts from the beginning. On page 144 of *Totem and Taboo*, he speaks plainly of “homosexual feelings” (Freud SE, 13: 144). A little further in the text, he avoids speaking of open homosexuality or even of homoeroticism as the bonding force of the community of brothers, and now emphasizes familial and homosocial feelings of solidarity as the elements upon which civil culture is based.⁶

The social fraternal feelings, which were the basis of the whole transformation, continued to exercise a profound influence on the development of so-

5 Inadequately rendered in SE as “brother groups.”

6 I use the term “homosocial” in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's sense; cf. Sedgwick, *Between Men*.

ciety. They found expression in the sanctification of the blood tie, in the emphasis upon the solidarity of all life within the same clan. (Freud SE, 13: 146)

The reference to the hatred of the father and the heterosexual desire for his wives as the prime motive for the crucial murder further diminishes the culture-creating potency of homosexual bonds. In the final section of *Totem and Taboo*, Freud then has his evolutionary model of cultural history culminate in the modern, oedipally-structured family with the father as its chief. We find a similar avoidance of homosexual libido and homoerotic ties in Freud's foundation narrative of the family hero Oedipus. Here, too, the psychoanalyst deals very selectively with the ancient mythical-literary material. Robin N. Mitchell-Boyask studied Freud's notes on the mythic sources and concluded: "The Oedipus he chose was the result of long and careful deliberation. Freud's exclusion of Laius's homosexuality and its consequences marks Freud's insistence on the experiences of the specifically Sophoclean hero and their implication for all individual men." (Mitchell-Boyask 1994: 34) In a separate chapter of *Group Psychology* on the subject of identification, Freud seeks to shed more light on the central hinge between individual and group psychology. The early oedipal father-identification serves thereby as both a model and an antidote for the dissolution of the individual ego in the mass, a concept which was tinged with feminine connotations even before Le Bon. For Le Bon, precisely the characteristic of pulling the bourgeois self into the maelstrom and delivering it to the unconscious and the emotions makes the masses feminine, because "[c]rowds are everywhere distinguished by feminine characteristics, but Latin crowds are the most feminine at all" (Le Bon 2002 [1896]: 13). By contrast, for Freud nothing is more important to emphasize about the father-identification than its masculinity. And in the same place we find a tellingly open remark about the menacing "feminine" attitude of the son. The young Oedipus can act the part of the destroyer of the sphinx and a resistance hero because:

We may say simply that he takes his father as his ideal. This behavior has nothing to do with a passive or feminine attitude towards his father (and towards males in general); it is on the contrary typically *masculine*. It fits very well with the Oedipus complex, for which it helps to prepare the way. (Freud SE, 18: 105)

In *Group Psychology*, which treats the analysis of modern mass formations, Freud returns to *Totem and Taboo's* primordial horde and clan theory of broth-

ers and sisters, and now parallels the primordial horde with the masses in order to explain the transformation from individual psychology into mass psychology:

The primal father had prevented his sons from satisfying their directly sexual impulsions; he forced them into abstinence and consequently into emotional ties with him and one another which could arise out of those of their impulsions that were inhibited in their sexual aim. He forced them, so to speak, into group psychology. (Freud SE, vol. 18: 141)

Here, Freud speaks of the fact that in the artificial masses, church, and army as well as in the masses in general, there “is no room for woman as sexual object” and “it seems certain that homosexual love is far more compatible with group ties, even when it takes the shape of uninhibited sexual impulses” (ibid). In a note in the same text, we now find a narrative about the drive-motivated patricide that qualifies the oedipal construction. No longer solely the desire for incest, but now also mutual homosexual desire and love triggered the impulse to parricide: “It may perhaps be also assumed that the sons, when they were driven out and separated from their father, advanced from identification with one another to homosexual object-love, and in this way won freedom to kill their father.” (ibid, note 1) The fluctuations in Freud’s conception of the clan of brothers and the affectional bonds at work therein, noticeable since *Totem and Taboo*, are reflected in *Group Psychology* not least in the choice of words. At the beginning of the German text, Freud speaks of “der Umwandlung der Vaterhorde in eine Brüdergemeinde” (Freud GW, 13: 136; “the transformation of the paternal horde into a community of brothers,” Freud S, 18: 122), *Brüdergemeinde* or “communion of brothers” being a seemingly religious term (Freud SE, 18: 122), and later, entirely following Robertson Smith, of the *Brüdergemeinschaft* (Freud GW, 13: 152; “totemic community of brothers,” Freud SE, 18: 135). If, however, we pursue the changing names of the “group of brothers” or “fraternal clan” throughout the text, the contrast between community of brothers and mob (German *Masse*) of brothers (in the English translation unfortunately always “group”) dissolves to the extent of their becoming completely identical at one point: the “fraternal clan” becomes the *Brudermasse* (Freud GW, 18: 152; “group of brothers,” Freud SE, 18: 135). Again, the English translation levels the important linguistic nuance. In the extreme case of the “mob of brothers,” the otherwise clearly drawn boundaries between “savage” primordial horde, feminine-tinged regressive crowd (cf. Le Bon) and a civiliz-

ing “male band” performatively establishing a society, are done away with in the original German.

In Freud’s narrative of the patricide that creates culture, the clan of brothers is supposed to pursue a decidedly *male game* (that is to say, a heterosexual one) of incestuous desire and father hatred. *Totem and Taboo* tells the tale of how the group of rebellious sons, on whose shoulders cultural development will rest, was strengthened by homoerotic social bonding. With this idea, Claudia Bruns also thinks that “he [Freud] tied in directly with Blüher” (Bruns 2008: 303). And in the previously cited comment in *Group Psychology*, Freud even speculated, as we have already seen, that the homosexual bonds of brotherhood could also have been a factor in triggering the impetus to patricide. At the moment in *Totem and Taboo*, when the ambivalence of the paternal bond leads to establishing the “father cult” and all ethical principles, Freud naturally no longer spoke of homoeroticism as the central binding agent, but rather only of “societal fraternal feelings” (Freud SE, 13: 146).

Fight against Antisemitism

In the renewed resurgence of the primordial horde theory in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud’s attempt to definitively cleanse the male band that created culture of all vestiges of homosexual and even homoerotic libido gained in explosive political force. In addition to the great religious-historical subject of the foundation of monotheistic father-religion by the people of Israel, the book, which was first published in its entirety in 1939 by an Amsterdam publisher, also treats the then highly topical question of the cultural reasons for antisemitism. In view of the powerful male band then ruling Germany, and as a response to its racist antisemitism, Freud was very keen to avoid any connection between psychoanalysis or the Jewish tradition with *Männerbund* ideologies.⁷ Geller has emphasized that Freud was concerned with two things: “to silence the association of male Jews with effeminate homosexuals,” but at the same time to “distan[c] himself and the Jewish people from the now Aryan-identified [...] Männerbund” (Geller 2003: 111).

7 While elements characteristic of the male band shaped the National Socialists and emerged particularly in the early days of the SA, historical research has in general refrained from classifying the NSDAP as a Männerbund; cf. Winter 2013.

According to *Moses and Monotheism*, the mob or clan of brothers of the “primitive” Israelite ex-slaves, a “stiff-necked people” (Freud SE, 23: 36) that resembles *Totem and Taboo*’s community of brothers, murdered their leader Moses. In the course of founding a religion, a civilized brother clan then concludes its covenant with God by establishing the Decalogue. This was the “triumph of intellectuality over sensuality, or strictly speaking, an instinctual renunciation [*Triebversicht*]” (Freud 1965: 150), “with all its necessary psychological consequences” (Freud SE, 23: 113). The spiritualizing effect of the imageless Jewish religion, Freud emphasizes, then helped the Israelites “to check the brutality and the tendency to violence which are apt to appear where the development of muscular strength is the popular ideal” (ibid: 115). In this variant of the story of patricide and the band of brothers, the sons’ heterosexual desires are now expressly stressed, and every hint of a possible homosexual bond is obliterated: “The lot of the sons was a hard one: if they roused their father’s jealousy they were killed or castrated or driven out. Their only resource was to collect together in small communities, to get themselves wives by robbery” (Freud SE, 23: 81). Thus every association of the Israelite band of brothers with homosexuality is erased. In this way, Freud eliminated from his theory of culture and religion any proximity to the homoerotically bonded Männerbund in Blüher’s sense.

Looking back from *Moses and Monotheism*, readers with an interest in religious studies in particular must be surprised that *Totem and Taboo* contains almost no reference to the Jewish religion. In this work, Christianity, as the religion of the son, seems to have emerged solely from pagan cults. Particularly symptomatic here is that the story of the *Akedah*, or binding of Isaac, which is fundamental to Judaism, is missing in Freud’s list of founding sacrificial myths of religion and culture. This is all the more striking as in the religious narrative God first demands the sacrifice of the only son, only then to relent at the last moment and allow substitution by a sacrificial animal and the commandment of circumcision. Thus, the story is not only about Abraham’s test of faith and the establishment of the covenant, but also about the binding of Isaac as one of the instituting legends of the fleshly signs of covenant that every Jewish man bears on his genitals – circumcision. In *Totem and Taboo*, the single mention of circumcision is found in a footnote on the death of Attis by castration (Freud SE, 13: 153, note 1). In *Moses and Monotheism*, circumcision is identified as an Egyptian tradition and thus relocated to a different culture. If Freud renders Jewish religious history and the Israelite culture of circumcision as good as invisible, he nevertheless gives them well-nigh central

importance in the psychoanalytic theory of antisemitism. For Freud, cultural antisemitism, which at the same time implies the effeminization of the Jewish man, rests among other things on the unconscious assumption of a connection between circumcision and castration. In a famous footnote in an *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year Old Boy* (1909), Freud boldly declares the circumcision of the Jews to be a psychological cause of antisemitism. The case study of little Hans was to play a role not only in the verification of the theory of the Oedipus complex, but also served in *Totem and Taboo* as a reference for the infantile return of totemism. Referring to Otto Weininger, Freud explains:

The castration complex is the deepest unconscious root of anti-Semitism; for even in the nursery little boys hear that a Jew has something cut off his penis – a piece of his penis, they think – and this gives them a right to despise Jews. And there is no stronger unconscious root for the same sense of superiority over women. Weininger, in a chapter [of *Sex and Character*] that has attracted much attention, treated Jews and women with equal hostility and overwhelmed them with the same insults. Being a neurotic, Weininger was completely under the sway of his infantile complexes; and from that standpoint what is common to Jews and women is their relation to the castration complex. (Freud SE, 10: 36, note 1)

The article about little Hans, who was actually the little Herbert Graf, is a case analysis that Freud carried out together with the child's father, Max Graf, a Jewish member of the Wednesday Psychological Society. In Freud's psychoanalysis, it was to gain the status of central empirical evidence for the correctness of the Oedipus complex as a universal model of normal male development. Thus, the positive emphasis on the homoerotic bonds of the male associations that founded civilization and the avoidance of everything Jewish in the religious-historical institution of circumcision in *Totem and Taboo* throw light on Freud's still epic struggle for assimilation and recognition around 1912/13. The blank space in *Totem and Taboo* points at the same time to Freud's postcolonial outsider position in Austro-German culture of the time. As Geller was the first to show, the role that male societies play in Freud's prehistory of culture and religion, and the question of what affects and emotions hold these societies together, cannot be separated from the historical context of an increasing antisemitism fed by Männerbund propaganda and male fantasies. They are also directed against the antisemitic feminization of the Jewish male:

The changes in Freud's depiction of homosexuality in his accounts of social origins – the increasingly sharp distinction between homosexuality and homosociality, which ultimately culminated in the foreclosure of homosexuality from Freud's narrative of origins – may be connected with the anti-Semitic, *völkisch* turn of *Männerbund* (male-band) theories as well as the racialization of homosexual identities. (Geller 2003: 90–91)

This chapter has placed Freud's cultural-theoretical reflections on foundational male associations, sacrifice, and patricide in historical context. It has focused on the various connotations of the social model of the clan of brothers and set them against the backdrop of waxing antisemitism. Following Erdheim's recommendation (1992), the chapter has read Freud's culture-theoretical essay *Totem and Taboo* with a view to its diagnostic power and as a reaction to his own time. After National Socialism had extended its domain to Austria, Freud had to complete *Moses and Monotheism*, his last commentary on (civilizing) foundational violence, on the community of brothers and the history on antisemitism, in London exile. In the end, the victorious "Aryan male band" and a murderous *völkisch* ideology had driven the father of psychoanalysis out of Vienna.

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