

Invisible Lines

Homosexuality, Fascism, and Psychoanalysis

Raymond van de Wiel

London Consortium, Birkbeck, University of London

The most outrageous attempt to conflate homosexuality and Nazism is pursued in *The Pink Swastika*, a 1995 book which claims to uncover ‘homosexuals as the true inventors of Nazism and the guiding force behind many Nazi atrocities.’ This book, popular in certain American Christian circles, fulminates against an ‘aggressive’ homosexual power that forces the moral majority into the acceptance of sodomy (a ‘corruption of the natural and moral orders of creation’) as a normal variant of human sexuality. These powerful actors also enforce a ‘politically correct’ whitewash in the media and academia of the conflation the book purportedly unveils.¹

Quite to the contrary, I would suggest, popular media and serious academic discourse have continuously reiterated this link between fascism and (male) homosexuality from its earliest conjecture in the early 1930s until the present day. Think only of the subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) cinematographic representations of Nazi officers as sadomasochists and homosexuals.² Or think of the implicit homophobia in many theories of totalitarianism or the historiographical speculations on Hitler’s sexual preference.³ The persistent re-inscription of these representational stereotypes have forged such a powerful connection that these days even progressive homosexuals are convinced that ‘many of the mainstream elements of gay culture (...) provide a swamp in which the fascist virus can thrive.’⁴

¹ Scott Lively and Kevin E. Abrams. (Sacramento CA: Veritas Aeterna Press, 2002 (4th edition)), pp. 3, 6, 9, and 12.

² Cf. Caroline Joan S. Picart and Jason Grant McKahan ‘*Apt Pupil*’s misogyny, homoeroticism and homophobia: sadomasochism and the Holocaust film’, *Jump Cut*, 45. <<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc45.2002/picart/index.html>> [accessed 28/12/06]. Besides *Apt Pupil* (1998) also *The Damned* (1968) and *The Night Porter* (1975) are cases in point of an explicit linkage between these three. Much more often, however, the portrayal is implicit and Nazi officers are portrayed as effeminate sadists or queer aesthetes.

³ See for instance Andrew Hewitt, *Political Inversions: Homosexuality, Fascism, & the Modernist Imaginary* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), esp. Chapter 2, on the Frankfurt School’s influential writings on Fascism. On Hitler, see for instance Lothar Machtan’s controversial Hitler biography *The Hidden Hitler* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

⁴ Johan Hari, ‘The strange, unexplored overlap between homosexuality and fascism’, *Attitude*, 24 June 2004. <<http://www.johannhari.com/archive/article.php?id=407>> [accessed on 21/12/06]

In this essay I will try to understand how this association between Homosexuality and fascism has emerged. I will identify several causes which coincided in the forging of this connection in the 1930s. Besides the obvious propagandist use of the association, I will also touch upon the actual attitudes of the Nazi's towards homosexuality. I will furthermore try to explain how psychoanalysis has helped to support this conflation. I hope, as a result, to present an image of the foundations of the connection that have supported its prevalence until the present day.

Because the identification of homosexuality with fascism seems to be restricted to male homosexuality and also because the psychoanalytic theory that I will refer to focuses exclusively on male homosexuality, I will in this essay not deal with questions pertaining to female homosexuality. Also, I will use the terms Nazism and fascism as interchangeable ones, although this is not entirely historically correct, because, especially in the communist rhetoric, and the work of psychoanalysts and cultural theorists influenced by Marxism, this was (and is) common use. Finally, because I focus on the emergence of the conflation, I have not included the British and American propaganda, nor given attention to the theoretical explanations of fascism by the influential Frankfurt School theorists, which, after its initial postulation in the early 1930s, have enthusiastically followed up on the connection and thereby fixed it firmly in the popular imagination and theoretical discourse.⁵

An important factor for the early speculations which have led to the conflation of fascism and homosexuality can be traced back to Hitler's long standing friendship with Ernst Röhm. Röhm, a career officer attaining the rank of captain during the first world war, joined, like many disillusioned soldiers, the so called *Freikorps*, a network of nationalistic anti-communist paramilitary groups loyal to the social democratic government of the nascent Weimar republic. The militia of which Röhm was adjutant had effected the downfall of the three month reign of Munich's revolutionary 'Councils Republic' in 1919, giving him prestige in *völkisch* circles in Munich. He met Hitler in 1919 at a rally of the Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (DAP) and took an immediate liking to him. In 1920 Röhm joined the party, which by then had been renamed NSDAP, and played an important role its formative years, providing it with money, (para)military contacts, its own defense league (later to become the SA), and weapons.⁶

Röhm was also homosexual, and, from the mid 1920s increasingly open about this fact, even, he wrote in a letter to a friend, tentatively 'proud' of it.⁷ This pride could be linked

⁵ About the Frankfurt School see Hewitt, chapter 2.

⁶ Machtan, pp. 105-8 and David Jablonsky 'Röhm and Hitler: The continuity of political-Military Discord', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23 (1988), 367-386 (pp. 367-8).

⁷ Machtan, p. 111.

to the influences of the nationalist ideal of the *Männerbund*⁸, an ideal that had its roots in the 18th century but had, although it never really disappeared, resurfaced at the beginning of the 20th century and was boosted by the experiences in the trenches of the first World War. It was an outspoken masculinist movement which celebrated male comradeship, courage, physical prowess and beauty, and patriotism. The ethnologist Heinrich Schurtz spoke of an 'instinctive sympathy' between men which needed to counter the lopsided 'female sphere' of the family that had gained too much power in Wilhelmine Germany.⁹ Instead an 'élite of men, firmly united among themselves' was seen as a precondition for a strong, pure, and virile German nation.

Although some people, notably Hans Blüher, a leading figure of the youth movement *Wandervogel*, spoke favorably about homoerotic undertones of male bonding, and others pointed approvingly to Hellenistic pedagogical traditions, the *Männerbund* should certainly not be seen as a homosexual movement. Although some homosexual groups did align themselves with the movement, it distanced itself sharply from the leading gay-rights movement headed by Magnus Hirschfeld, a well known and successful advocate a biological interpretation of homosexuality. The *Männerbund* was vehemently misogynist and adverse to everything effeminate, including effeminate homosexuals. Röhm, despite his homosexuality the paragon of this masculinist ideal, in his autobiography showed disdain for everything connected to bourgeois respectability and praised military honor and loyalty. The bond between soldiers was cemented with blood and was thus deeper than the marriage bond.¹⁰

It is in this militant nationalist and masculinist environment that the NSDAP germinated in the 1920s and its values had consequently become an integral part of the National Socialist philosophy. After spending a few years abroad, Hitler appointed Röhm chief of staff of the SA in 1931, after which the new leader assigned key positions within its leadership to friends and intimates, some of whom were rumored to be homosexuals themselves.¹¹ This was picked up by the anti-fascist left and social-democratic newspapers started writing stories that portrayed Nazi's as perverts and pederasts.¹² The official SDP party line, however, remained in favor of repealing paragraph 175 of the

⁸ I will use this term to indicate the masculinist traits apparent in Germany the early decades of the 20th century. I will sometimes also refer to it as a movement, although that term would imply too much a sense of organization.

⁹ See Harry Oosterhuis, 'Medicine, Male Bonding and Homosexuality in Nazi Germany', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 32:2 (1997), 187-205 (pp. 196-8). The following quote is from page 196.

¹⁰ Oosterhuis, p. 198. See also Hewitt, p. 80-88, Machtan, p. 108-9. Machtan quotes two former acquaintances of Röhm commenting positively upon his manly appearance on p. 112.

¹¹ Machtan, p. 185.

¹² See Harry Oosterhuis, 'The "Jews" of the Antifascist Left: Homosexuality and Socialist Resistance to Nazism', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 29:2/3 (1995), 227-257 (pp. 228-234).

penal code which penalized unnatural vices, as did the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD).

This changed after the Reichstag fire in February 1933, for which the Dutch communist Marinus van der Lubbe was arrested and sentenced. The Nazi's consequently asserted that the fire had been ordered by the Communist International. The communists defended themselves in a widely circulated pamphlet called the *Braunbuch über Reichstagbrand und Hitler-Terror*. In this book they pointed at the alleged homosexuality of Van der Lubbe, which enabled them to link him to the SA which supposedly had drawn him into its homosexual network. Also, Van der Lubbe had already left the communist party, and had turned to anarchism. In fact, the *Braunbuch* claimed, he had never been a true communist, at best a Trotskyite, because he had never really been able to disconnect himself from his petit bourgeois roots, and (because of the characteristics of vanity and self-aggrandizement that were attributed to homosexuality) was incapable of the necessary self-effacement for collective action based on proletarian class consciousness.¹³ Homosexuality was characterized as essentially 'unproletarian' and linked instead to the bourgeoisie, to anarchism, and, because of the 'homosexual SA clique' to fascism. Like the SPD before, the KPD consequently adopted a strong anti-Homosexual rhetoric.¹⁴

Harry Oosterhuis suggests that 'prejudice against homosexuality was part and parcel of socialist thinking on sexuality (...) and became even more deep rooted among Social Democrats and Communists in the course of their ideological and moral clash with National Socialism'.¹⁵ To substantiate this thesis he turns to the Marxist psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich and his magnum opus *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1930). I would argue, however, that Reich's equation of fascism with an 'unnatural', 'perverse, sadistic character' inherent in every individual is less caused by a Marxist analysis of homosexuality than it is (despite Freud's break with Reich) influenced by psychoanalysis.¹⁶ While Reich has written that he, out of frustration with Freud's analysis of group psychology, had turned to Engels's *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) looms over his work like an absent father.¹⁷ Engels twice condemns pederasty in the ancient Greek city states¹⁸, but Freud's work is structurally riddled with equivocal statements on

¹³ Hewitt, pp. 20-24.

¹⁴ Cf. Oosterhuis, 'The "Jews"', p. 232-3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

¹⁶ Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (London: Souvenir Press, 1972), trans. by Vincent R. Carfagnio, p. xii.

¹⁷ Eli Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), p. 221.

¹⁸ Cf. H. Kennedy, 'Johann Baptist von Schweitzer: The Queer Marx Loved to Hate', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 29:2/3 (1995), 69-96 (p. 69).

homosexuality which, as Christopher Lane points out, has led to two deductions amongst critics:

Freud either came to an honorable defense of homosexuals, granting them ‘a special aptitude for cultural sublimation,’ as he put it in 1908, or [...] he perpetuated a classical and Victorian stereotype that could tolerate homosexuality only in nonsexual forms.¹⁹

Freud’s thesis is that there is a clear albeit complex relation between social bonding and sublimated/inhibited sexual desire, especially *homosexual* desire. These (homo)erotic emotional/libidinal ties binds individual members of the group (*Masse* in German) to both other members and to the group’s leader. What Freud wants to understand theoretically is why group members seem to behave more uninhibited than individuals. He finds his answer in a regression of the members to earlier developmental stages of the human psyche where homoerotic object choices seem to be formed. In the process he also explains how ‘an almost insuperable repugnance’ can be formed, and he enumerates several examples, amongst which the hatred of the Aryan for the Semite. He concludes that ‘homosexual love is far more compatible with group ties’ than ‘love for women’ which would ‘break through the group ties of race, of national divisions, and of the social class system, and [...] thus produces important effects as a factor in civilization.’²⁰

It is often suggested that the idea that fascism is a ‘social-sexual phenomenon’ derives from Reich²¹, but Reich essentially reworks Freud’s thesis, although he focuses principally on the ‘horizontal’ ties and devotes much less attention to the group’s attachment to a leader. Reich’s positive outlook on humanity ultimately leads him to theorize a tripartite model of human psychology, with a ‘biological core’ hidden, as it were, by the unconscious—a biological core which is ‘natural’ and heterosexual. His description, however, of fascism as proscribing a repression of ‘natural’, genital ‘orgastic’ gratification in order to bind the masses, leading to a ‘regression along the line of passive and masochistic homosexuality’²² echoes Freud’s assertion in *Group Psychology* that ‘we are concerned here with love instincts which have been diverted

¹⁹ Christopher Lane, ‘Freud on Group Psychology: Shattering the Dream of a Common Culture’, in *Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Tim Dean and Christopher Lane (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 147-167 (p. 147).

²⁰ *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* 18 trans. under general editorship of James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955) 65-143 (p. 141).

²¹ See for instance Jason B. Jones, ‘Loving Civilization’s Discontents: Reich and *Jouissance*’, in *Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis*, op cit., 186-189 (p. 170).

²² Reich, pp. ix, 163. See also Jones, pp. 175-7.

from their original [sexual] aims', that is to say, *homosexual* love instincts diverted to form strong group ties.²³

This psychoanalytical rather than Marxist analysis (as far as it pertains to the conflation under scrutiny) then (despite the communist's break with Reich) gave 'scientific' credibility to the connection between homosexuality and fascism that arose in the anti-fascist propaganda war. Together, the 'factual revelations' by the left and the 'psychological explanation' (strengthened, as we will see, by Hitler's opportunistic use of the image created by this conflation) facilitated the recriminalization of homosexuality in Russia and the ensuing retroactive postulation of a fundamental incompatibility between homosexuality and communism which may have caused a certain homophobic bias in most post-war leftist theory, although here also the psychoanalytic influence seems to me to be more important.

Socialism and communism, although not free from the prejudices of its times, are not, as Oosterhuis seems to suggest, inherently homophobic. On the contrary, the Russian revolution had occasioned a remarkably enlightened period for homosexuals in the Western part of the Soviet Union when the idea that science and medicine are better instruments to deal with sodomy than the law (a formulation that most of the European left also, at least officially, supported until the early 1930s) was brought into practice.²⁴ In the early 1930s, however, things took a wrong turn for homosexuals. The purge of the Soviet communist party after the famine of 1933-1934 and its ensuing climate of suspicion of deviance and scapegoating of alleged decadence led to the litigation of homosexuality with the 'physically and morally depleted scions of the bourgeoisie', who allegedly plotted in salons to corrupt and divert pure and virile youths, soldiers and workers.²⁵ Although the eventual recriminalization that came into effect early in 1934 was clearly driven by divergent reasons, the fear that homosexual cliques were somehow susceptible to fascism or could easily be exploited by the Nazis, was certainly one of its prime motives.²⁶ It was clearly used as ammunition against fascism by Maksim Gor'kii who wrote that among the 'hundreds of facts speaking of the destructive, demoralizing effects of Fascism' homosexuality was one of the most revolting features. 'Destroy the homosexuals—Fascism will disappear,' he concluded his article that appeared in *Pravda* and *Izvestia* on May 23, 1934.²⁷

²³ Freud, p. 103. The parallels are even more striking when one compares their views on religion in the two books.

²⁴ Dan Healey, 'Homosexual Existence and Existing Socialism: New Light on the Repression of Male homosexuality in Stalin's Russia', *GLQ*, 8:3, (2002), pp. 249-378 (p. 355).

²⁵ Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2001), pp. 181-2, 189, 255. The following quotations are from pp. 189-90.

²⁶ Healey, 'Homosexual Existence', p. 363.

²⁷ Healey, 'Homosexual Desire', p. 189.

In an almost ironic coincidence, little more than a month after Göring's call to arms, Hitler, rhetorically at least, destroys the homosexuals, in order to *save* fascism. During the infamous 'night of the long knives' (30 June-1 July 1934) Hitler arrested Röhm and other SA leaders who were attending a meeting in a hotel near Munich. Hitler personally took command of the arrests, aided by the SS. Various historical sources speak of a 'homosexual atmosphere', of discovering 'two naked boys', and catching SA-commander Edmund Heines in bed with an '18 year old boy', although none of these sources are direct or impartial.²⁸ The arrests and consequent murders were the result of a growing schism between the Nazi party and the SA. When Hitler, however, explained this unlawful, retrospectively legalized, purge (which also affected other enemies of the state, estimated at 200 in total) in a Reichstag speech two weeks later, he focused mainly on the alleged homosexuality of the SA-top. He spoke of a small group of elements, not grown up with or loyal to the SA which were held together through a 'like disposition':

The behavior of these individual SA leaders [...] was false to National Socialist standards and often positively revolting. [...] The worst part of all was that gradually out of a common disposition of character there began to form within the SA a party which became the kernel of a conspiracy directed not only against the normal views of healthy people but also against the security of the State. The review which took place in the month May of promotions in certain SA districts led to the horrible realization that men without regard to services rendered to the National Socialist Party or the SA [were promoted] solely because they belonged to the circle of those possessing this special disposition.²⁹

Thus Hitler implicitly (and other Nazi-leaders, notably Goebbels, more explicitly³⁰) 'confirmed' what the Leftist Propaganda had repeated so often that most Germans, if not already convinced of homosexual activities in Nazi-organizations, at least had their doubts.³¹ This enormously strengthened the conjectured connection between the Nazism and homosexuality which was, until then, largely built upon meager suspicions, connections and imputations, buttressed only by the homosexuality of one Nazi-leader and a handful of incidents. Neither increased persecution of homosexuals that followed the Röhm-purge, nor the tightening of article 175 in 1935, could rub out this powerful image, an image that was further strengthened by Hitler's recurrent opportunistic use of

²⁸ Albert Speer wrote after the war about meeting Hitler the next day and Erich Kempka, Hitler's chauffeur told in a interview in 1946 that he had heard about the boy in Heines' room but not seen it himself.

<<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/GERnight.htm>> [accessed on 11/1/07]

²⁹ <<http://www.adolfhitler.ws/lib/speeches/text/340713.html>> [accessed on 14/1/07]

³⁰ Cf. Geoffrey J. Giles, 'The Denial of Homosexuality: Same-Sex Incidents in Himmler's SS and Police', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 11:1/2 (2002), 256-290 (p. 258n8).

³¹ James Steakly in his article 'Homosexuals and the Third Reich' claims that the 'Hitler Youth [...] was disparagingly referred to as Homo Youth throughout the Third Reich.'

<<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/pwh/steakley-nazis.html>> [accessed on 27/1/07]

charges of homosexuality to discredit political opponents inside (and outside) the party.³² It was also sustained by the ongoing indecisiveness of the Nazi's towards homosexuality.

During the Berlin Olympics in 1936 homosexual bars in Berlin were temporarily reopened because, apparently, the foreign guests were not to perceive Berlin as a 'sad' city. In that same year more than 5000 men were convicted for 'unnatural vices'.³³ Himmler, leader of the SS and one of the Nazi's most avid homophobes, regularly held speeches about the subject and repeatedly stated that it would be acceptable or even desirable to kill homosexuals. In 1938 he openly spoke of the death penalty for the homosexuals in the SS and police forces, but it took until 1941 before this measure came into effect. In the meanwhile several high-profile homosexual 'incidents' within the SS went unpunished.³⁴ Some Nazi's employed anti-Semitic terms to denounce homosexuality, calling it a 'typical Jewish vice', others contended that most offenders were 'Aryans'. While some homosexuals were castrated, others sent to prison and still others to concentration camps (it is estimated that between 5.000 and 15.000 people were incarcerated in camps for homosexuality). Many others, however, were sentenced to psychiatric and educational therapies.³⁵ While after 1934 the Nazi party seemed intent on eradicating homosexuality from public life, in 1937 an order was drawn up prohibiting unauthorized arrests of actors and artists.³⁶

At the roots of this indecisiveness lies, it seems, the contradiction that permeates the Nazi ideology. On the one hand it celebrated, as we have seen, comradeships between men as more valuable than conjugal relations, desiring 'to replicate within its own ranks the close male intimacy of the trenches of the First World War' which had proved to be so productive in the building of a strong, hierarchical organization.³⁷ On the other hand the Nazi leadership considered the strong ties in the all-male organizations as a danger because of the possibilities of a rapid expansion of the corrupting 'poison' of homosexuality. This not only ran counter to the population policy. As Rudolf Diels, chief of the Gestapo in the early 1930s, wrote in his memoirs:

[Hitler] lectured me on the role of homosexuality in history and politics. It had destroyed ancient Greece, he said. Once rife, it extended its contagious effects like an ineluctable law of nature to the best and most manly of characters, eliminating from the reproductive process precisely those men on whose offspring a nation depended. The immediate result of the vice was, however, that

³² Oosterhuis, 'Medicine', p. 189.

³³ The figure is quoted in Steakly.

³⁴ Giles, pp. 257, 263-5. Giles describes several of those incidents.

³⁵ Oosterhuis, *Medicine*, pp. 188-92.

³⁶ Giles, p. 259.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

unnatural passion swiftly became dominant in public affairs if it were allowed to spread unchecked.³⁸

In a Goebels's diary we find the following account of a 1938 conversation with Hitler:

[W]e came to speak of the State Theatre in Berlin. The Führer doesn't like Gustav Gründgens. He is too unmanly for him. [...] The homosexual [...] tends to undertake the selection of men according to the criminal or at least sick criteria but not their suitability. If you let him have his way, the whole state would become an organization of homosexuality in the long run, and not an organization of manly excellence. A real man will always put up resistance to such an attempt, if only for the reason that he sees in it an attack on his own possibilities of advancement. [...] The National Socialist state must be a manly state. It is built upon the firm foundations of a natural selection that repeats itself in a constant circle.³⁹

From these accounts we can isolate several overlapping and apparently contradicting ideas. First homosexuality can very well be combined with the masculine ideal, in fact it is an 'ineluctable law' that the 'best and most manly' will be effected by it. Thus there seems to be a sort of idealization of the homosexual character. Second, it is a contagious 'plague', especially dangerous, we learn from another passage, for the young: 'There is a certain time in youth when the sexual feelings of a boy can easily be influenced in the wrong direction; it is precisely boys in this age group whom homosexuals seduce'.⁴⁰ Third, 'unnatural passions' would be dominant if they were allowed to spread unchecked, implying that they should be 'checked' (but not eliminated). Fourth, a 'real man' will resist homosexual seductions, and finally, homosexuality will eventually threaten the stability of the National Socialist state because it would no longer be built on the principle of manly excellence and/or because it would not reproduce Aryan prowess.

These ideas singularly and in conjunction give us some insight in the contradictory Nazi policies on homosexuality. The theory that homosexuality was infectious was widely accepted until far into the 20th century.⁴¹ It led to the policy that special effort should be made to keep the all-male organizations of the Nazi's—and especially the Hitler Youth—'sane', or 'in check'. Outside these organizations persecution seemed to have been rather arbitrary. The statements and actions of the Nazi's point not so much to an outright hatred of homosexuality, but rather of a phobia, with which, I would like to emphasize, I do not

³⁸ Quoted in Steakly.

³⁹ Quoted in: Giles, pp. 266-7.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 267. Taken from a memorandum by Goebbels concerning the assertions from which I have quoted above.

⁴¹ Giles, p. 262-3n22.

want to imply that the Nazi's subconsciously 'were' homosexual and feared that this might come to the surface.⁴² Rather, it points towards a policy which is not meant to eradicate homosexuality as such, but only homosexual *behaviour*, that is to say, both actual homosexual activities and perceived homosexual characteristics such as effeminacy and vanity. There seems thus to be an invisible, but clear line separating homosocial (or even homoerotic) bonding from homosexual object choice. It is the former that should be unremittingly promoted, the latter that should equally assiduously be countered. Those that cross this line are not 'real' men, but rather weak men unable to control their physical urges, not the kind men on which a powerful organization can be built. In a syllogism that mirrors the communist denunciation of Van der Lubbe, this kind of 'weak' homosexual, because of his alleged inherent characteristics, would be incapable of the necessary self-effacement for collective action. Rather they would pursue their individual gains (their own revolutions, promotion of other homosexuals for services rendered, etc.).

In 1932 a homosexual SA member anonymously sent a letter to Hirschfeld's *Mitteilungen des Wissenschaftlich-Humanitären Komitees* which reflects this divergence between the weak and the strong 'homosexual' (although some of the thoughts developed of the letter might not officially have been approved of by the Nazi leadership):

We cherish the creative Eros: we fight no battle for the Eros of coitus, though we do not despise it. Since we feel that the sexual instinct is fundamental, we believe that a part of its energies can be sublimated without harm. This does not mean that we seek to repress. On the contrary. [Hirschfeld's] major political agitation—the petition to the German Reichstag—consists simply of the attempt to liberate the mouth, thighs, and backside of the invert. In the battle for these erogenous zones the mind and the soul—the human body in its entirety—has been forgotten.⁴³

It is a declaration of which some parts are surprisingly close to Freud's arguments and language in *Group Psychology* although its conclusion is obviously different. It is a nonsexual, or rather übersexual, conception of desire that directly binds the individual to a 'whole'—the group or state.⁴⁴ And like Freud the author implies that a little 'direct sexual impulsion' would not automatically break up the group ties as long as it is of a homosexual kind.⁴⁵ The reference to part-objects, apparently meant to refer to those who

⁴² Cf. Hewitt, p. 11-2.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 82-3. The petition to the Reichstag that the SA member writes about was a petition by Hirschfeld calling for a withdrawal of paragraph 175 of the penal code.

⁴⁴ Cf. Hewitt, p. 83.

⁴⁵ Freud, p. 141.

try to attain immediate gratification in a pre-social stage, suggests a rather acute knowledge of psychoanalytic theories.

Although the Nazi's characterized Freud's theories as 'soul-destroying exaggerations of the instinctual life' and publicly burned his books in 1933, psychoanalysis was certainly not formally forbidden. Not only was the Deutsche Psychoanalytische Gesellschaft, after the removal of its Jewish analysts, allowed to continue for some time under the aegis of the Nazi-controlled German Institute for Psychological Research and Psychotherapy, also several books on psychoanalysis were published as late as 1938.⁴⁶ It is very likely that Freud's analytical techniques were used to treat war-neurosis after the first World War, and thus would have been well known to a considerable number of people in the German army and in the *Freikorps*. Several theorists of the Männnerbund (notably Blüher) were familiar with Freud's theories.⁴⁷ It is likewise tenable that some people involved in the early days of the NSDAP were acquainted with Freud's *Group Psychology* and thus enthusiastically embraced and stimulated the proliferation of the ideas that were already current in the *völkisch* circles in which the party germinated. It is generally accepted that Hitler was influenced by the French social psychologist Gustav Le Bon, to whom Freud refers extensively in *Group Psychology*. Jay Gonen writes that it is 'quite likely that many Germans, including Hitler [...] had learned about Le Bon's ideas through Freud or through popularized reports about Freud and Le Bon', a claim which is not further substantiated.⁴⁸ What makes the text of *Group Psychology* especially interesting for the Nazi leadership is the almost practical advice about military organization in the chapter on artificial groups.⁴⁹ I do not rest my case on the direct acquaintance of influential Nazi members with Freud's essay or other works in which the theory of *Group Psychology* is incipient (such as the 'Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia' from 1911 in which he speaks of the conversion of a 'homosexual object choice' into '*esprit de corps*').⁵⁰ I only contend that the similarities is striking.

What I do contend, however, is that Freud's theories, and especially his equivocal statements regarding homosexuality in *Group Psychology*, have contributed considerably to the conflation of homosexuality and fascism. If it is not by direct application of his theories by Nazi's acquainted with them, which then would have led to their indecisive and sometimes contradictory policies, then at least it is through his influence on Blüher, on Reich and later on the theorists of the Frankfurt School. Despite the similarities

⁴⁶ Zvi Lothane, 'The Deal With the Devil to "Save" Psychoanalysis in Nazi Germany', *Psychoanalytic Review*, 88:2 (2001), 195-224 (p. 198).

⁴⁷ See Hewitt, p. 41.

⁴⁸ *The Roots of Nazi Psychology: Hitler Utopian Barbarism* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 200), p. 92.

⁴⁹ pp. 93-99.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Lane, p. 137.

between *Group Psychology* and the Nazi ideology and the surge in the research into social phenomena by psychoanalytically oriented theorists that has followed Freud's essay, Freud's essay has entirely been overlooked in the scholarship discussing the connections between homosexuality and fascism. I hope this historical essay will give impetus to a psychoanalytical reevaluation of the links between Freud's social theory and its influence on the bizarre and objectionable link that it has helped to forge between homosexuality and fascism.