

The Pure and the Sodomite: Masculinity, Sexuality and Antisemitism in the Leo Frank Case

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Abstract:

By examining the Leo Frank case in respect to the perceived crisis in white premodern manhood, the article demonstrates the connection between changes in gender relation, as a result of industrialization and urbanization, and the rise of antisemitism. The environment of urban regions and the increasing number of female wage laborers undermined the male mastery of women which was an important component of premodern white manhood. Especially, the changes regarding sexuality, which resulted from growing autonomy of women, evoked a sentiment of emasculation among white men. This anger and bewilderment about losing control over subordinated women played an important part in the Leo Frank case. By attributing this loss of male mastery to "Jewish power," which was symbolized through "Jewish lusts," Jews became responsible for this development. This alleged responsibility contributed to the conviction that Leo Frank, and not Jim Conley, was the murderer of Mary Phagan. Since, in the antisemitic discourse, "the Jews" became responsible for the emasculation of white men, antisemitism was considered as a defensive measure against the perceived Jewish activities to reconstitute white manhood.

1 On August 16, 1915, a group of white citizens, who called themselves 'The Knights of Mary Phagan,' broke into the state prison farm of Georgia, kidnapped the detained, northern-born, Jewish factory superintendent and part owner of Atlanta's National Pencil Factory, Leo Frank and lynched him a few hours later. Before this horrible outrage occurred, the Leo Frank Case had occupied the people of Atlanta and of the whole United States of America for two years. The starting point for this two-year-long affaire was provided by the murder of the thirteen-year-old white Mary Phagan on the ground of the National Pencil Factory, where she had labored as a waged worker to support her family. After her corpse was found on April 27, 1913, the police of Atlanta, under great pressure from the publicity, hastily started the inquiry into the murder. Rumors that Mary Phagan had been raped before she was killed, sprawled through Atlanta and elevated popular outrage. Within a short time criminal investigations into the case focused on Leo Frank and Jim Conley, the latter an African-American who labored in the pencil factory and who had been in conflict with the law a few times before the murder of Mary Phagan. After being convicted of Mary Phagan's murder, Conley started to give evidence that Leo Frank had in fact been the murderer of the young woman and that he had just helped Frank to get rid of the corpse. The police and the state attorney accepted the information as true and used Conley as the key witness in the trial against Leo Frank.

2 After a long trial, which had aroused great attention and commotion among the population of Atlanta, Leo Frank was sentenced to capital punishment. Following this verdict,

Frank and his attorney appealed against this sentence as far as to the United States Supreme Court, but without success. After the denial of the appeal, supporters of Leo Frank, including journalists and editors of mainly Northern newspapers and journals, started a movement to achieve commutation. Starting in fall of 1914 this engagement resulted by October in a statement of William M. Smith, the lawyer of Jim Conley, in which he accused his own client as murderer of Mary Phagan. On June 21, 1915, Governor Slaton, after exactly grappling with the Leo Frank case and the including inconsistencies, reduced capital punishment of Leo Frank to life imprisonment (Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank* 114-125). Part of the population reacted with an exclamation of fury and blamed Slaton of committing “treachery.” Assuming that Slaton, as associate in the attorney’s office of Rosser, who acted as lawyer of Leo Frank in the case, was bribed, *The Jeffersonian*, a newspaper published in Georgia, concluded that “Jew money has debased us, bought us, and sold us – and laughs at us” (Anonymous, Old Paths 2).

3 This essay deals with the discourses concerning manhood and antisemitism in a political milieu, which is titled ‘reactionary populism’ by Nancy MacLean. MacLean subsumes to this idea all grassroots movements which attack the social and economic elites, but which also represent a political programme that is based on the subordination of other groups of people. (920) The leading spokesperson for such a “reactionary populism” in the Leo Frank case was Thomas E. Watson, who in his political views strongly adhered to the principles of Thomas Jefferson. William J. Bryan, who was supported at the beginning of his political career by *The Jeffersonian*, described the societal imaginations of Jefferson as a programme, based on the idea that “all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that, to secure these rights, governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. He believed that the people could be trusted to govern themselves” (671). At least in the understanding of Thomas E. Watson at the time of the Leo Frank case, this equality of all men did not merely count for only white men, but it moreover required the mastery of African Americans, Jews, Catholics, and women. This political view became clearly apparent in his approach to the Ku Klux Klan. On the one hand Watson justified the action of the Ku Klux Klan after the Civil War as a measure to “defend Southern homes, Southern women, Southern civilization” (Anonymous [Watson], Klux 5). On the other hand Watson had a great impact on the foundation of the second Klan by paving the way ideologically:

The North can rail itself hoarse, if it chooses to do so: but if the L.&N. Railroad, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, the Roman Catholic School-Book Trust, the Liquor Dealers’ Association, and the Paul Warburg Money Trust, doesn’t quit meddling with our business, increasing offices, raising taxes, and getting pardons and commutations for assassins, poisoners, and rapists who have a “pull,” *another Ku Klux Klan may be organized to restore Home Rule.* (Anonymous [Watson], Woodward 7)

4 The reactionary populist discourse dealing with the Leo Frank case provides an insight into important aspects of Southern white manhood at the beginning of the twentieth century. For example, the constellation of suspects and the conviction of Leo Frank appear to be very unusual and astonishing to the contemporary observer of New South history. Astonishing, because for two reasons: First, after the end of Reconstruction the white population of the South¹, concerned about losing their domination of African-Americans, propagated the myth of the ‘black beast rapist.’ According to the logic of this anti-black discourse, which also circulated in reactionary populist circles, Jim Conley would actually represent the typical African-American rapist and therefore it would have been logical to consider him as the culprit. Second, because it was totally unusual that a testimony of an African-American against a non-black citizen was regarded as sufficient. For that reason, the question comes up which social, economical and cultural changes occurred that induced reactionary populists to view a Jew a more adequate delinquent - respectively victim - than an African American in this case.

5 This essay posits that reactionary populism considered urbanization and industrialization, especially the consequential increase in female autonomy and changes in female sexuality, as a great threat to white premodern manhood and by attributing a large share of this development to “the Jews,” the resistance against them was regarded as a measure to reconstitute white Southern manhood.²

6 Because of the important part of Thomas E. Watson within the ‘reactionary populism,’ the journal *The Jeffersonian*, which Watson edited at the time of the Leo Frank affaire, is a very instructive source for examining the connection between manhood and antisemitism in “reactionary populism.”

Urbanization, Industrialization and the Erosion of White Premodern Manhood

7 Since the defeat of the Confederate Army in the Civil War, Southern society was subjected to a multitude of social, cultural and economic transformations, and these changes evoked an increased perception of crisis in manhood. The abolition of slavery, which had a central importance for the self-conception of white men, and the severe damage to their function as protector of white southern women, which was a result of the military reverse against the Union Army, attacked integral constituent parts of white manhood (Michel 145-147). Despite

¹ In this article, the phrase “the South” will be used as denomination of the states, which had declared their secession from the United States and built the Confederate States of America.

² Of course, it is not the intention of this article to state that the perceived crisis of masculinity was the only reason for an increasing antisemitism during the Leo Frank Case.

these occurrences and the temporary modifications of gender relations during the Civil War, the reconstitution of white manhood was accomplished during Reconstruction and in the centuries thereafter via segregation from the “black beast” and the promotion of being guardian of white women. By this means, mastery of African Americans and white women could be preserved as central aspects of white southern manhood. In 1901, one of the most prominent proponents and representatives of the New South, Daniel A. Tompkins, stated about white men: “The white man loves to control, and loves the person willing to be controlled by him. The negro readily submits to the master hand, admires and even loves it” (Janiewski 294). However, since the end of the nineteenth century, this great importance of mastery for white manhood became an increasing problem for a growing number of white men. Advancing industrialization and urbanization had an important impact on this development.

8 In the Old South, the economy was shaped overwhelmingly by large plantations and by smaller farms, which were operated by white yeomen procuring subsistence agriculture (Rabinowitz 5-6). The resulting freedom from supervision in production and work shaped the understanding of white manhood. The rural structure of the economy in interaction with bondage made larger urban regions dispensable. In the census of 1850, only thirty-four cities with a population of over 2,500 people were presented, most of them seaports for shipping commodities. But after the South was defeated in the Civil War and slavery was abolished, a change took place which began slowly in the economic structure. A great number of yeomen modified their mode of farming. Temporary high prices prompted them to cultivate solely cotton for the national and international market, instead of producing a variety of crops for their own requirements. With declining cotton prices, this decision should have had serious consequences for the farmers, but also for the societal development of the South, especially for the cities. A great number of yeomen got in debt, lost their farms, and as a final consequence moved to the growing quantity of cities and towns. These economic changes led to increasing urbanization. In the period between 1860 and 1910 the share of population who lived in urban places climbed from 6.9 percent to nearly 20 percent (Doyle 1-10).

9 Entwined with this development was the increasing industrialization of the South. Whereas in 1860, 21,000 firms were producing in the South, its number rose to 69,000 at the beginning of the twentieth century. The required workforce was not only supplied by ruined farmers, but also by their wives and children. Whole families migrated from rural areas into developing cities to work as industrial laborers. And because the wages paid were not sufficient to feed a family, wives and daughters had to support the family by earning money in the factories.

10 Atlanta, the main stage for the Leo Frank Case, was particularly strongly affected by these changes. As a spearhead of the urbanization and industrialization in the South, the population of the city exploded from 9,554 to 154,839 in the period between 1860 till 1910 (Doyle 15). Interwoven with this growth in population was a huge rise in industry, and therefore in the employment in the industrial sector, which was accompanied by a great increase in female wage labor. In 1919, women made up more than 25% of all workers in factories (Hickey 26).

11 This development led to severe changes in the structure of family. With the dependence on the wages of women and daughters and by working beyond the control of the patriarch, the female members of the family achieved a higher autonomy than they had ever before and undermined the “*patria potestas*” to a certain degree (Bardaglio 131). This attack on the mastery - and therefore on the manhood of the affected men - produced the discomfort of the advocates of premodern manhood and made them aspire to the past social and economic circumstances of the Old South, often embodied by veterans of the Confederate Army:

Only in memory can he visit again the scenes of his childhood, the home of father, mother, brothers, and sisters, where he roamed the hills and dales at his own sweet will, climbed the hickory, cherry and chestnut tree, chased Molly Cotton Tail, or the nimble squirrel, built traps for old Bob White and fished and bathed in the rippling brook, or to visit again the scenes of his young manhood, when he for the first time saw sweet Nellie home, or the home of his declining years when surrounded by children, grandchildren and the partner of his joys and sorrows, his best girls of sixties urged him on when duty called. How sweet she looked in her homespun dress, spun, woven and made with her own fair and nimble fingers. ... Sad, yes, sad indeed, that the old heroes of '61, who represented American manhood on the heights of Gettysburg and Malvern Hill and the chivalry of the South on the plains of Manassas, Sharpsburg and Franklin should thus have to pass away, but such is fate. (Andrews 11)

In addition to the general yearning for a society, in which the women rest at home doing domestic work and, hence, are under control of their husbands, another important aspect of premodern manhood, which men in urban regions had largely lost, was expressed in this reader's letter: the recreation in nature, and especially through hunting. Like Ted Ownby has shown, hunting incorporated values like freedom and excitement, which were central for rural white manhood in the South (27f.), and which were nearly impossible to realize in old style in the newly spreading urban regions.

12 But this nostalgia for a perceived better past, in which white men lived independently and practised mastery of women, does not explain why the perceived loss of manhood had contributed to the spread of antisemitism. A fundamental aspect of this connection was the association of ‘the Jews’ with industrialized capitalism, which caused the social and cultural

changes responsible for the pressure on premodern manhood.³ In the perception of reactionary populists, it was a result of the triumph of industrialized capitalism that the South had lost its own, previously agricultural character.

We are no longer the same: too many foreigners have come in, too many Montags and Einsteins have settled, locust-like on the green places. [...] Before the War, a Haas Finance Committee would not have had the audacity to set on foot a Big Money campaign, to defeat our Law, and cover our people with a tidal wave of slander. (Anonymous [Watson], Louisville 2)

By connecting “the Jews” with industrialized capitalism, they became responsible for the social changes that made proving manhood more and more impossible. The Jews were perceived as one of the leading aggressors against the mastery of white manhood. *Urbanization, industrialization, and sexuality*

13 In the Leo Frank Case, the bewilderment and anger of white premodern manhood, evolving from the changed socio-economic circumstances and the accompanying increasing independence of white young women, leading inter alia to an alteration of their sexual behaviour, had an important impact on the perception and reception of the Leo Frank Case and on the spread of antisemitism.

14 An essential aspect of southern white manhood was the control of the sexuality of people subordinated to the patriarch. In the decades before and at the time of the Leo Frank Case, the changes in the social order, caused by urbanization and increasing female wage labor, had a strong impact on the area of sexuality and intensified the perception of a crisis in premodern manhood. In the South, already during slavery but especially after the defeat in Civil War and the abolition of slavery, sexuality constituted an important way to uphold social stratification and the subordination of African-Americans, but also of white women. A focal point in the politics of sexuality had been the propagation of the purity and virtue of white women. In some sense, white women were construed as asexual. Frances Newman, a Southern author, flippantly remarked, that “in Georgia a woman was not supposed to know she was a virgin until she ceased to be one” (d’Emilio 186). This alleged purity of white women, and the supposition of rampant sexual desires of black men towards them, which was articulated in the construction of the “black beast rapist,” authorized white men to perceive themselves as guardians of white womanhood. The sad result of this delusion was an upsurge of violence against African-

³ Catholics were another social group suspected to undermine the social order of the South. They played an important part in the conspiracy theory of reactionary populism and were also suspected of abusing Protestant white young women. Referring to the alleged Catholic dominance Thomas E. Watson stated, that “our schools authorities seem to be absolutely owned by this Catholic Trust – a Trust which naturally wants to sell as many books as possible to the Protestants, but which, being Catholic, is rejoiced [sic] to see Protestant children kept out of the public schools” (Anonymous [Watson], Louisville 2).

Americans during Reconstruction and in the following decades. Over 3,386 African-Americans were murdered by white lynch mobs between 1882 and 1920 and these cruel acts of violence were most often justified in the public by citing the rape of white women by black men. However, the primary intention of these lynchings was the upholding of the subordinate status of African-Americans (Odem 28f.).

15 Besides African-Americans - although to a much lower degree - white women were the second social group, which had to pay a high price for the concept of sexual purity dominant in the South. It was a question of honor, and therefore of white premodern manhood, to preserve the purity of the daughters until marriage and to prevent physical contact of their daughters with the male sex. Every perceived sexual encounter called for a strict and often violent answer of the father to restore the honor of the family and to avert damage for his manhood. Even, from a present-day perspective, usual physical contact such as patting a shoulder of a girl could be received as assault on the sexual purity of the daughter, and were responded to violently (Klotter 124). This connection between male honor and female sexuality becomes even more apparent in the perception of rape. The sexual assault was less seen as a violation of a woman's physical integrity and her bodily autonomy than as an attack on her honor and on the honor of the household. Hence, every rape of a woman was perceived as an insult against manhood (Bardaglio 65).

16 Especially in the dynamically growing and increasingly industrialized Atlanta the undermining of the control over women and therefore of the "sexual purity" advanced. One aspect of the erosion of patriarchal control of female sexuality was forming in the new emerging factories. Some employers used their power of hiring and firing to intimidate and abuse female workers. (Simon 381) The frustration and rage of white working-class men, powerless against their employers, fortified racial hatred and sometimes led to violent attempts to protect and reconstitute the purity and virtue of white women.

17 Such an attempt was the three day furor against the African American population of Atlanta. The result of the Atlanta race riot of 1906, which received national and international attention, were at least 25 slayed and several dozens of bruised African Americans. This upheaval was brought about by rumors about four white women, sexually assaulted by black men (Burns 5).

18 This anger regarding the undermining of white manhood by losing control over the sexuality of the daughters within the bounds of the factories was also articulated in the Leo Frank case. The vehement opponents of female wage labor feared that the security and purity of white womanhood was endangered "when good-looking girls depend on their work for a

living, and take employment under Jewish libertines, like Leo Frank, they either have to submit to his lusts, leave his employment, and lose their lives, as Mary Phagan lost hers” (Anonymous [Watson], Woodward 7). Taking up the discourse circulating nationwide about sexual abuse of female workers by their employers, the antisemitic discourse realigned this narrative by claiming that Jewish employers were the sexual assaulters on their daughters.

19 Although there had never been any evidence for this assertion, the allegation that Mary Phagan was sexually abused before she was murdered circulated and endured persistently. Against the backdrop of evidence that Mary Phagan was sexually active, the alleged rape was the only possibility to retain the image of pure white womanhood, and therefore to retain the honor of white premodern manhood. Following this image of purity, the articles and readers’ letters, published in *The Jeffersonian*, construed Mary Phagan as a symbol of white purity. The secretary and treasurer of the ‘Committee on Raising Funds for Mary Phagan Monument,’ C.W. Arnes, wrote that “little Mary Phagan was a sweet pure, refined girl: and the greatest thing she had on his earth was her virtue; and all will agree that she gave up her life for her virtue” (Arnes 12). Again and again, the attributes of virtue and purity were repeated in connection with Mary Phagan. In the eyes of reactionary populists Mary Phagan was a model of virtue, who “looked as bright and fresh and clean as a flower of springtime” (Linkous 8). But it was not only this alleged act of martyrdom, which made Mary Phagan a symbol of pure white womanhood, and therefore a means of premodern manhood to propagate the gender relation of past times, which was now under threat, namely that white men had the absolute mastery over their wives and daughters.

20 A further important aspect in this portrayal of Mary Phagan as purity and morality personified was the description of her recreation and pastimes, which was clearly influenced by the reform discourse of the first decades of the twentieth century. At this time, reformers, both male and female, started a campaign against vice. They condemned the admittance of white women to public places like dance halls and theatres and tried to reverse the trend of increasing white female wage labor, because both the modern places of recreation and amusement and the new workplaces out of home were suspected to dissipate young women’s purity (Hickey 4). Tying in with the description of Mary Phagans immaculate sexual morality, the depiction of her pastimes seemed to be another counter model to the modern mores of industrialized society and the resulting changes in gender relation. Against this background, the depiction of Mary Phagan as “a little innocent Christian girl whose last act on this earth was to iron with her own hands the white dress that she expected to wear, next day, at the Bible school of First Christian

church” (Anonymous [Watson], Negro 2) has to be understood as a strategy for the reconstitution of the subordinated status of white women.

21 Another aspect of this strategy was the discursive connection of Mary Phagan to commemorative activities by referring to her intention of leaving her home on the day she was murdered “to see the Confederate Veterans parade their thinning, tottering lines through the streets of Atlanta, on Memorial Day” (Felton, 2).⁴ These commemorative activities provided the basis for the ‘Lost Cause.’ The integral contribution of the ‘Lost Cause’ to restore white men’s mastery of women was described by Sonya Michel with much apropos:

White women served the Lost Cause not only as architects and orchestrators of ritual and as spokespersons for its message, but also *as the message*. In person and as symbols, they came to embody the essence of the Old South that was to be recovered and defended. They were either unaware or unconcerned that the ideology they sought to promulgate once again positioned them as subordinate to men. (151)

22 By construing Mary Phagan as a pure and chaste “little girl,” who honored the courage, bravery and sacrifices of Southern white men in the Civil War, she became a symbol of the Old South, and therefore for the old gender relation, which upheld the mastery of white men. On this account, Mary Phagan became a “little Georgia heroine,” whose destiny needed to be a reminder for the following generations. For these purposes, the ‘Committee on Raising Funds for Mary Phagan Monument’ was founded and the collection of money to erect this monument was promoted by the treasurer and secretary as “a movement that every fair-minded man in Georgia should be interested in” (Arnes, untitled 12).

23 In the imagination of premodern manhood the antithesis to pure and virtuous Mary Phagan in this affaire was Leo Frank, whose representation in *The Jeffersonian* was flaunting antisemitic stereotypes and who was drawn as the counterpart to protective and honorable white Southern men. In this depiction of Leo Frank as the anti-type, his sexuality played a major, perhaps the preeminent role. The description of Leo Frank as a “libertine reprobate,” as a “sexual pervert” or as a “filthy and murderous Sodomite” permeated the reporting of the Leo Frank Case in *The Jeffersonian*. Innumerable rumors and assumptions about the sexuality of the Jewish superintendent circulated in Atlanta and were apprehended as evidence for his “degenerate proclivities.” One of these hearsays concerned the alleged sexual practices of Leo Frank, based on a testimony of a girl, “that she had a scar, *on the tenderest part of her thigh*,

⁴ This statement of “Mrs. W.H. Felton,” who in 1922 became the successor of Thomas E. Watson as senator, shows that also among white women of reactionary populism the want for reconstituting the old gender relations was common.

made by the teeth of Leo Frank” (Anonymous [Watson], Negro 3). This sensual horror and indignation of the readers was further increased by a statement about “sexual perverts”:

It is well known to the doctors, that a sexual pervert stops at nothing. Some of them are not aroused by women, at all. They crave boys, men, and even animals. Instances that are almost incredible are given in “Human Sexuality,” a book which none but doctors can procure. (Anonymous [Watson], Negro 15)

24 Another aspect of Leo Frank’s lusts was his apparently insatiable appetite for sexual intercourse with multiple young white women, who were employed in his factory and therefore were dependent. This fear of seduction and forced sexual relationships between female workers and their employers was a common motive in the regions of the USA progressing in urbanization and industrialization (Odem 16f.). But in the Leo Frank Case this concern combined with antisemitic knowledge which, at the time of this affaire, was also represented by prominent scholars like sociologists Edward A. Ross, who was inter alia professor of Stanford University and president of American Sociological Society. Ross claimed in his broadly-received book *The Old World in the New* that Jewish businessmen preferred “Gentile girls” instead of Jewesses (150). With this antisemitic cliché in mind, Thomas E. Watson, who explicitly referred to Edward A. Ross, stated that “Frank would creep around the ladies’ dressing room, while they were partly undressed, and leer at them with the disgusting look which the lascivious Jew is in the habit of casting upon young and pretty Gentile women” (Anonymous [Watson], Big Money Campaign 3). Indeed, this passage seems to contain at least a part of the ordinary behavior of Leo Frank towards his female workers. But ironically, at least if the statement of Irene Jackson, a worker in Atlanta’s National Pencil Factory, corresponded to Frank’s behaviour, the protectors of the purity of white womanhood lynched their ally. Admittedly, Jackson confirmed that Leo Frank had entered the dressing room without knocking, but only to end the flirting of female laborers with men on the streets (Hickey 36).

25 Important for the understanding of the nexus between reconstitution of manhood and antisemitism is, that the perceived sexual perversion of Leo Frank was not considered to be the result of a distorted individual person, but was attributed in different manners to “the Jews” as a race. This attribution of behavior to races was legitimized by a scientific racism which developed at the turn of the eighteenth century and eventually removed religious and philosophical argumentations to arrange races in a strict hierarchy since the 1850s (Finzsch 90f.). In the second half, and especially in the last decades of this century, an antisemitism based on racialistic reasoning spread in Europe, which claimed a connection between the physiognomy and the character and behavior of Jews. As Sander L. Gilman in *The Jew’s Body* depicts, this connection was so virulent in scientific, especially in medical antisemitic discourse,

that no “aspect of the representation of the Jewish body in that sphere, whether fabled or real, is free from the taint of the claim of the special nature of the Jewish body as a sign of the inherent difference of the Jew” (38). Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the author of the racist and antisemitic standard reference *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, was such a great proponent of categorization by means of physiognomic characteristics that he even differentiated between different phenotypes of Jews. But instead of concluding that there is no existence of a Jewish race, the inconsistency of “Jewish phenotypes” served him as evidence for the “degeneracy” of the Jewish race (440f.).

26 At the beginning of the twentieth century, “the knowledge” about the connection between character and physiognomy was common in the discourse of antisemitism in the United States. In the context of the Leo Frank case this correlation between body and mind appeared in the establishment of Jewish “perverted sexuality” in their physiognomy. It seems as if reactionary populists assumed that “the Jews” were provided with their special physicalness to indulge their extravagant sexuality:

These thick-lipped rakes glut their eyes upon handsome Gentile women, on the trains, on street cars, on the streets, in hotel balconies, and in the foyers of theatres. It fills a decent Gentile with murderous indignation, to see a red-mouthed Jew *undress a Gentile woman with his horrible eyes*. (Anonymous [Watson], Woodward 22)

27 The assumed knowledge about “Jewish sexuality” was so immense, deeply enrooted, and efficacious in the antisemitic discourse of reactionary populism that it obtained the character of evidence for the culpability of Leo Frank. The thinking was racialized in such a way that every assumed human race was furnished with a special kind of sexuality. And the knowledge about this diverging sexualities formed an additional evidence for reactionary populists that Leo Frank was the rapist and murderer of Mary Phagan.

28 The concept of civilization acts as the key to the understanding of the notion that different races act out different kinds of sexuality. As Gail Bederman has shown, civilization, in the understanding of the US-citizens at the turn of the century and in the first decades of the twentieth century, was a marker which attributed special characteristics to gender and race and was used by a variety of Americans to legitimate and to obtain white supremacy (Bederman 23). Whereas a few reactionary populists analogized Leo Frank’s sexuality with that of African-Americans by describing it as “the beastly lust of a savage beast” (Mullis, Carpet-Bagger 10), generally the sexualities of Jews and of African-Americans were understood as opposing each other with regard to civilization.

The vice of Sodom is the vice of civilization, not of barbarism. The sadistic monster is the rotten product of the higher race. All doctors will tell you so. ... A negro rapist would

have not needed to open his pocket-knife and cut her drawers all the way, on one leg. A negro rapist would have left the spermatozoa! No spermatozoa was found; but the girl's inner leg had been bared, and some sort of violence had been done to the vagina. (Anonymous [Watson], Negro 3)

In this "scientific" discourse, both, "the Jew" and "the African-American," are connected with a sexuality that differs sharply from that of civilized white men. But whereas the African-American sexuality was described as a result of remaining in barbarism, the Jewish one appeared as a "degenerated" product of civilization.

29 "Jewish sexuality" and "Jewish manhood" were not only described in absolute terms by biologizing but also by basing them in Jewish culture and history. For these purposes the Talmud was predestined. The Talmud is one of the most important scripts of Judaism and was developed in Ancient Palestine and Babylonia (Anonymous, Talmud 797). Again and again, it was the target of antisemitic abuses and attacks. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, some inflammatory opera such as August Rohling's *Der Talmudjude* were released in Germany and other countries in western and central Europe, the homestead of modern racial antisemitism. These scripts propagated the conviction that the Talmud legitimized Jews to act deviously against Gentiles. At the time of the Leo Frank case, such "knowledge" also circulated in the antisemitic society of Atlanta and was integrated in the narrative of "Jewish sexuality". With this in mind Thomas E. Watson wrote that the Talmud "glorified the crimes of ancient Jews against pregnant women and chaste daughters of Midianites and Cannanites" (Anonymous [Watson], State 1). The "degenerate" sexuality appeared to be inherent in the "Jewish nature", because in all historical ages and in several social systems Jews acted as violators of female chastity.

30 Herein, the constructions of Jewish and African-American menace to white womanhood resembled each other, despite the diversities which were a result of the different settings in "civilization". However there seems to be a difference in the production of these two anti-types of white Southern manhood, which perhaps made comprehensible that Leo Frank was considered the murderer of Mary Phagan in the antisemitic and racialistic reactionary populism.

31 According to the image of Jews in the antisemitic discourse, they were not only a menace to white pure womanhood because of their own sexual lusts and appetites for Gentile women but they were also noted as manipulators organizing "white slavery." Reactionary populists perceived Jews as pimps who "grow up with the ambition to find some Gentile girl to go out and 'work for them'" (Steiner 11). The fear that white young women were trapped and were forced to become prostitutes circulated throughout the United States of America in the late nineteenth century and during the first decades of the twentieth century. At the beginning

of twentieth century vice crusaders distributed tracts called *House of Bondage* or *The Girl That Disappears*. Furthermore films like *The Inside of White Slave Traffic* were produced to make the people attentive to the alleged destiny of young women (96f.). Within the antisemitic perception of “white slavery,” “the Jews” seemed to be the leading force in this morally condemned traffic, since they allegedly had almost a monopoly in this business. Franklin Steiner claimed in his reader’s letter that “anyone acquainted with the facts will tell you that they form fully ninety per cent of this class” (Steiner 11). Therefore, the undermining of “white female virtue” became another facet of the construction of “greedy Jews, who love money, and never know what it is to get enough” (Anonymous [Watson], Big Money Campaign 1). Adding the blame of prostituting white women, the discursive construction of Jews as the “destroyer of white womanhood” gained another facet.

32 The focal point in the perception of Jews as destroyers of white womanhood was the persuasion that Jews acted as manipulator of the miscegenation between white women and African American men. This idea of Jewish business jeopardizing white womanhood’s purity by supporting the desire of African-Americans’ for white women expressed itself in the perception of the saloons and restaurants dedicated to African-Americans’ pastime, mostly run and owned by Jews. Rumors spread that in these stores pictures of nude white women decorated the walls and hence were presented to the African Americans (Dinnerstein, Atlanta 181). More explicitly, this fear of white premodern manhood was articulated in the article “While Leo Frank Is Loafing at the State Farm, the Rich Jews Continue to Defame the People and the Courts of Georgia,” written by Thomas E. Watson:

The store referred to is the great Department Store, and mail-order house known as *R. H. MACY & CO.* *Nathan Strauss owns it, and he makes WHITE WOMEN THE SERVANTS OF NEGRO MEN IN IT.* (State Farm 5)

Beyond the accusation against Jews of undermining white men’s mastery in respect to the sexuality of subordinated persons, this statement also reveals the attribution of perceived white men’s emasculation to Jews in a broader sense: the ascription of Jewish involvement in the dissolution of the societal order of the South, and therefore of white supremacy.

The Perceived Destruction of White Womanhood as Symbolization of Jewish Power

33 In addition to the alleged sexual abuse of white women by Jews and the associated undermining of white men’s mastery, manhood and sexuality also played an important part on a more abstract level in the discourse of reactionary populism: as symbolization of alleged Jewish money and power, which threatened to destroy Georgia’s societal order. As Joan Scott

has shown, gender is not only an important element of social relations, but also a category expressing relations of power between competing forces (56).



Caricature published in *The Jeffersonian* (Anonymous, 2)

34 Since the defeat in Civil War Northern capital had streamed into the South and pushed forward the economic transformation towards industrialized capitalism. At the turn of the century, a lot of factories and companies, located in the South, were owned by Northern companies and capital. Economically the South was dependent on the North. Paul M. Gaston even describes the situation of the South as a colonial one (121). Among these Northern companies investing capital in the South, there had been some Jewish corporations.

35 In the antisemitic discourse this involvement of Jewish companies in the enforcement of capitalistic principles in the South appeared in the antisemitic stereotype of Jewish domination. The perception of a Jewish conspiracy causing the economic decline of the South, especially of the farmers, was already widespread during the 1880s and the 1890s (Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism* 49). The same thought patterns also circulated among reactionary populists during the Leo Frank case. Lee Green asserted in a reader's letter that "the Romanists and Jews have been allowed to rake in about all of the wealth, capture the public offices and corrupt the courts without interference" (10). Thomas E. Watson articulated this perceived subjugation of

Gentiles, and the resulting emasculation of white men by Jewish power *inter alia* as a result of “this Rothschild-Belmont corporation throwing its tentacles around the papers and politicians in Atlanta” (Daily Paper 7) or in other words that “the Jew-made Money Trust” (Memory 7) ruled the country. One indicator of this asserted Jewish power was the commutation of the capital punishment into lifelong imprisonment in the Leo Frank case. The perceived special status of the Jews was articulated in the insistence that “the Jews who live in Georgia must *come under the Laws*” as the Gentiles did it (Anonymous [Watson], Assassination 5).

36 Because of the centrality of independence and mastery for premodern manhood this alleged domination of Gentile men by Jews was perceived as emasculation. In this sense, reactionary populists claimed that “all men must bow to this new Money System, and all men must go for it for loans” (Anonymous [Watson], Memory 7). To express this perceived emasculation, reactionary populism accused ‘the Jews’ of abusing white womanhood in a metaphorical sense by complaining that the “grand old Empire State HAS BEEN RAPED” (Anonymous [Watson], Old Paths 1). Because of white men’s role as protector of white womanhood and its essential character in white premodern honor this stated rape implicated the call for defending Georgia against “the Jews.”

Antisemitic violence as reconstitution of manhood

37 In the mind of reactionary populism only two patterns existed for white Gentiles to react to the changed social, economic, and cultural situation which hit premodern white manhood so hard: the subordination to or the fight against contended Jewish mastery. Both of them were strongly gendered.

38 The first reaction, the alleged subordination, was attributed with weak manhood and even emasculation. Governor Slaton was considered as a representative of such a weak and feeble manhood. In the eyes of reactionary populists Slaton has proved himself by commuting the capital punishment into lifelong imprisonment as “the weak joint in our armor, the vulnerable heel that lets the fatality enter our body politic” (Anonymous [Watson], Old Paths1). This unmanly weakness of Slaton also appeared in the description of his decision-making procedure in the Leo Frank case, in which his wife was construed as the person making the decisions for her husband. In doing so Slaton appeared as the opposite of white premodern manhood with its mastery of women, he appeared as getting “behind his wife’s petticoats” (Anonymous [Watson], Treachery 3).

39 The second possibility to react to the ‘crisis’ of premodern manhood, resulting out of the perceived Jewish subjugation of the South, was to fight back and therefore to reconstitute

manhood. The connection between manhood and the soldier with its attributes of heroism, sacrifice, and battle readiness made a great impact on this. As already mentioned, violence played an important part in Southern premodern manhood, but also in the effort for reconstitution. This connection between violence and reconstitution of manhood became apparent in the legitimization of the lynching of Leo Frank by a mob of white men. By making recourse to the American revolution and the following independence of the United States, reactionary populists stated that "the 'mobs' were Liberty Boys in those days – the old days before we became lollywops, vegetarians, grape-juicers, and sissy-boys" (Anonymous [Watson], Mobs 6). In doing so, violence appeared as an integral part of manhood.

40 In the context of the rise of antisemitism and male reconstitution the reference to Confederate soldiers was essential, because it provided the "bowed" white men with a model of heroic fighting manhood. Analogizing the alleged invasion of "General Strauss, Colonel Haas, Major Ochs with their gang Gideonite sodomites" (Anonymous cited in: Anonymous [Thomas E. Watson] , Lambdin 1) with the invasion of the Union army during the Civil War, reactionary populists invoked Southern white men to raise up their arms, and get in line to defend the South against the offender. As one reader of *The Jeffersonian* wrote to Thomas E. Watson, he "felt like greasing up old Betsy and hitting the trail as [he] did in Johnson's Army in '64 and '65" (Anonymous cited in: Anonymous [Thomas E. Watson], Lambdin 1). In this desired battle, the denouement was not as important as the act of fighting itself which was considered as reconstituting premodern manhood. In this sense, Thomas E. Watson invoked that "this Belmont-Rothschild combine will never get *this State* under its dirty feet, without a fight that will be a memory for the next fifty years" (Harris 7).

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