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1

Seven Hundred Years of Fraternal Orders

Daniel Weinbren

For hundreds of years there has been an allure in popular culture to the notion of a band of brothers. From before Shakespeare's *Henry V*, through Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, to the twenty-first century TV mini-series *Band of Brothers*, the phrase has evoked images of men fiercely loyal to one another, united for a cause greater than themselves. This interest has not been reflected in concerted scholarly attention to the long-term influence of fraternal organizations. This chapter introduces the theme of the volume in a literature review and contextualizes the authors' contributions.

The aim of this work is to conceptualize fraternal organizations and to emphasize the significance of their roles in both transforming and being changed by European societies over many centuries. It explores the significance of the links between rituals, secrecy, hierarchy and the maintenance of gendered roles over a period of several hundred years enabling new comparisons to be made and wider social mores to be reconfigured. No single associational form can encompass British friendly societies, French fraternal bodies, Lerwick's 'Vikings' and Flemish 'parrot' shooters. However, if we classify them as siblings, the similar aspects of their responses to common threats and comparable opportunities emerge in a new light. There are studies of such bodies as the convent-based Youth Confraternity of the Purification of the Virgin (which had an important economic role and spread ideas about the importance of public, political and religious duties), the confraternities of early modern Florence and Bologna (which prepared abandoned children for civic life and family roles), the German regional student fraternities, *Landmannschaften* (with their duelling ritual and rules about the order of meetings and the colours to be worn on armbands and sashes) and the fraternal associations which helped men to form communities in nineteenth-century America.¹ In

netting together such organizations, issues about how fraternal societies have been understood within different communities can be assessed, and comparisons of networks and effectiveness can be considered through the prism of gender.

Some scholars have recognized the links between different fraternal elements, noting for example the importance of the links between guilds and Freemasonry.² David Montgomery concluded that for skilled men in North America, manliness was associated with support for fellow workers, that there was a 'mutualistic ethical code'.³ David Neave pointed out that 'frequently office-holding in a friendly society preceded or accompanied active involvement in a trade union'.⁴ Simon Cordery argued that 'historians have artificially segregated trade unions from friendly societies, examining the latter only in the context of working-class communities and ignoring or marginalizing the insurance provisions of the former'.⁵ However, in general, the overarching 'culture of co-operation and mutuality among English working people between 1790 and 1890', which Stephen Yeo perceived, has been linked infrequently to developments elsewhere in Europe or to a longer timespan.⁶ Concerned at such isolation, John Halstead and Andrew Prescott suggested that an important task of historians of different fraternal traditions was to engage in 'breaking the barriers'.⁷ Few texts on the various siblings within the brotherhood of fraternal bodies refer to one another. Many of the connections between family, home and work which have led historians to stress how trade unions have been associated with communities, in mining areas across Europe for example, have not been made of other fraternal bodies. By recognizing the strength of male bonds, sometimes across conventional social and class lines, it becomes clearer that in many cases not only is the warp of community strengthened by the weft of fraternal organizations' reciprocity, but that they cannot exist apart. Since the late nineteenth century, women have been permitted to join some of the fraternal orders which previously had been open only to men. The image of Winifred Baulk, a Provincial Grand Master (regional chair) of the Independent Order of Oddfellows, Manchester Unity in Hertfordshire in the 1950s, might have been composed in order to emphasize that women in positions of authority did not threaten the order (see Fig. 1.1). Nevertheless, despite her conformity to conventional dress codes within the order, the images of females as victims and virtues, portrayed on the apron, are in contrast to the stance of the wearer and throw into relief some of the gender tensions within fraternal orders.

Often fraternal bodies have been conceptualized as part of other debates about, for example, the creation of modern social ordering and class-



Figure 1.1 A member of the Independent Order of Oddfellows, Manchester Unity Friendly Society in her regalia, Winifred A. Baulk was a Provincial Grand Master in Hertfordshire in 1950. Permission to publish from Andy Durr, University of Sussex: Private Collection.

consciousness or the generation of a liberal consensus.⁸ Others have framed fraternal organizations in terms of health and welfare.⁹ Sheilagh Ogilvie has found material on the guilds in histories of technology, women's work, migration, Jewish occupations, illegitimacy and economic marginalization.¹⁰ Such works often place the organizations and the notion of a unifying fraternity on the periphery.¹¹ They have been categorized in other ways as well. Lynn Duménil made a distinction based on activities: '*expressive* organizations [...] directed primarily toward meeting the social and personal needs of their members, while *instrumental* organizations have specific [political or social] goals to accomplish'.¹² However, 'instrumental' societies frequently sought to meet the needs of members, often through rituals which were similar to those of 'expressive' bodies, while 'expressive' bodies often had specific social aims.

Unless the similarities and patterns of different fraternal organizations are clearly outlined, an attempt to merge them could lead to the creation of an amorphous ahistorical category. Beyond general, empirical observations (often noting that fraternal organizations have been formed for a variety of purposes, with mutual aid, Christianity, ritual, conviviality, singing and parades frequently being of importance) there has been a hesitation to outline common ground. While the Academic Society for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism noted that fraternal organizations 'share common features and inner dynamics', it has avoided a specific definition.¹³ Some scholars have focused on the mutual aid and life insurance associated with fraternal associations, others on the allure of ritual or the acquisition of social benefits. Recognizing that fraternal organizations embody the voluntary structured, gendered reciprocity built at the intersection of community, civility, charity and commerce should not undermine the perception of them as varied. To gain a better sense of the significance of fraternal organizations and to ensure that they are no longer conceptualized as marginal and divided does not require that all fraternal bodies be shoehorned into a single grand narrative.

There is a need to recognize that the model provided by fraternal organizations was often used to promote specific identities. Migrants, whether from the countryside to the town or from one country to another, often do not have easy access to relationships based on blood or marriage. Many felt a need to create what has been termed 'fictive' kin (that is, not related by blood or marriage) based on rituals or close friendship ties that replicate many of the rights and obligations associated with family ties. Peter Clark has stressed the importance of both internal and international migration to the development of associ-

ational culture.¹⁴ While Martin Gorsky also emphasized the importance to membership growth of migration to towns, fraternal associations, perhaps aimed at those left behind by their kin were also popular in the countryside.¹⁵ There were confraternities for Jews and for Jesuits, and friendly societies for French Huguenots in London and Germans in Bradford, England.¹⁶ In Wales the Irish settlers created their own friendly societies which promoted local and national patriotism.¹⁷ The United Irishmen also promoted national identity, the Orange Orders, representing Protestants were fraternal bodies largely in Ireland and Scotland, the Irish National Foresters' Association was open to men of any religion or class who were 'Irish by birth or descent' while the William the Fourth Society of Deptford, London excluded all Irish people.¹⁸ Members of the Philanthropic Iborites promoted the Welsh language within a fraternal framework while the German *Burschenschaftler* promoted notions of a nation of brothers-in-arms united against Jews.¹⁹ Roger Burt has indicated how far Masonic membership was an aid to migration to South Africa and Jessica Harland-Jacobs has demonstrated that Freemasonry spread with, and facilitated the work of, the British Empire.²⁰ Fraternal bodies offered practical, financial and emotional support to those who moved far from their homes.²¹ Many fraternal organizations were open only to those from specific regions or religious sects and many excluded the poor and women. It is not that one size needs to fit all but that the current demarcation lines and chronological compartmentalization and taxonomies do not always aid comprehension.²² While there appears to be a common inheritance from the guilds and a widespread sense of community based on notions of ancient wisdom and on benevolent actions and sentiments which exemplified fraternal societies' highest goals, there has never been a coherent single fraternal movement pulling in just one direction.

One common thread running through fraternal organizations is that they are often structured in terms of families, with siblings and parents. Many fraternal bodies emphasized their similarity to idealized notions of the family, perhaps in order to promote charitable, trusting sentiments and reciprocity. Those who employed kinship terms such as brethren and mother staked a claim to a lineage back to the Church (in which monks were brothers and the pope the Holy Father) and to the notion of kinship between those not related by blood or marriage. An important aspect of families was that members were given roles determined by gender. As fraternal organizations are a product of (and have informed) gendered societies, their support for male bonds across social and economic divides and their assertion of specific gender roles which marginalize women

from male civic structures have often been to the fore. However, there have been myriad ways in which fraternity assigned and reinforced gender roles.

When he addressed a conference of the Independent Order of Oddfellows, Manchester Unity, in England in 1842, James L. Ridgely of Baltimore referred to the 'members of one great family [...] children of one great parent' and suggested that American Oddfellows offered prayers 'for the welfare of the Mother', before he asked 'What had they received from Mother?'²³ The notion of maternal beneficence was reinforced by the Society's emblem: this featured Britannia attended by Europe, Asia and Africa, bestowing the Grand Charter upon the USA through a native American while the past officers' certificates included the arms of Australia, New Zealand, Cape Colony and the USA, these being 'the homes of many of our foremost members, whose connections with the mother country and with our Order is thus symbolised'.²⁴ The image of the family involved not merely rhetoric about international brotherhood but also metaphorical parental control from the organization which Ridgely called 'The Mother of the Order'. In 1867 the historian of the Independent Order of Oddfellows, Manchester Unity mentioned that the growth of the Unity had been 'for the benefit of the Brotherhood of the human family'.²⁵ Just as the family need not be presented as a 'black box', a free-standing, sealed system, so the notion of a fraternal organization can be conceptualized not as a separate, free-floating creation but as incessantly mobile sets of discursive, contingent relationships.²⁶ Indeed the notion of a distinction between the significance of fictive and real kin can be undermined by a broad conceptualization of fraternity. By using initiation rites, hierarchical structures, loyalty oaths and dress codes, many fraternal organizations sought to shape gender relations in ways which confirmed the dominance of men. However, fraternal organizations have also been employed by women to challenge such ideas. An acknowledgment of the diversity of positions adopted by fraternal organizations is not a denial of the commonality of their structured reciprocity; it is a recognition that from common roots within notions of community, civility, charity and commerce a variety of forms evolved.

In Chapter 3, Anne Winston-Allen shows how the religious orders of medieval Europe not only imposed a separation of men's and women's spheres in the most important cultural activities of that period, but also provided a context for the articulation of a distinctively female voice at an early date. It was when women were organized separately from men that they gained greater collective autonomy. She notes the evidence of patrons, rules, rituals and an 'emphasis on solidarity' among

thirteenth-century self-supporting communities of women headed by a grand mistress and also assesses the importance of the retelling of the creation stories by 'founding mothers'. She concludes that through these structured alliances, which echo and reinforce male constructions of fraternity, women could gain confidence, skills, and emotional and financial support.

In medieval and early modern Europe, religious orders, guilds and fraternities played a central role in economic life.²⁷ Guild members visited sick members, paid alms from a common chest, attended funerals, imposed fines on those who failed to attend or whose behaviour was not respectable, and often elected their officials and held annual feasts.²⁸ There is evidence of charitable feasts being held before the first millennium.²⁹ Some medieval parish guilds held annual banquets for paupers in honour of patron saints.³⁰ Whereas kin-based support was pervasive when extended households were prevalent, as nuclear families developed and prevailed, so there was an increased need for assistance in the event of difficulties. As Andrew Blaikie pointed out, researchers concur that 'nowhere in pre-industrial Europe could kin manage to support the poor alone and interdependencies always existed between families and a range of welfare organizations'.³¹ Young adult males were particularly likely to become victims of 'nuclear hardship' in early modern western Europe.³² The fraternal organizations which developed to meet their needs were not simply for insurance, indeed they 'modified' the insurance relationship with notions of gender and fellowship.³³

In England fraternal associations were integral to the gradual, long-sustained process of economic change which occurred between c. 1660 and c. 1800 because this economic shift relied on apprenticeship and service rather than kinships structures. By the age of 15 most people lived away from home, not with kin. The age of marriage was later than in many parts of southern Europe and many did not become parents until their late twenties. This enabled women to be more independent for longer periods of time, to have more choice in their selection of husbands and to be more likely to behave as economic partners within the marriages. Typically young men and women worked as servants for about a decade, while saving for their own marriages and households, and this led to greater age gaps between generations, less reliance on extended kin networks, and legal traditions that emphasized both spouses as producers of wealth, and allowed widows extensive rights over household property. The elderly were cared for through Poor Law provision. Social anxiety in the face of greater economic partnerships between men and women and the convergence of women's

and men's lives, created a 'heightened preoccupation with gender difference and female inferiority'.³⁴ As industrialization and urbanization increased and the population grew, men sought new identities within religion, politics, and new scientific discourses. They developed rituals of civility and connected in fresh ways the notion of reciprocity (which could both include and exclude) to commerce, to charity and to their communities. They made fraternal associations which promoted moral and ethical beliefs within an economy of properties and commodities part of their *habitus*. Through their support for trusting deals and business ties, their practices aided the flow of capital.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb saw the industrialization of the nineteenth century as a break from the past. The Reformation of the 1540s had seen the end of religious guilds in England: their property was confiscated and the Statute of Apprentices, 1563, removed their regulation of apprenticeships. The Webbs felt able to assert 'with confidence, that in no case did any Trade Union in the United Kingdom arise either directly or indirectly from descent from a Craft Guild'.³⁵ Others have appreciated that the craft guilds were maintained and their ideas spread. The guilds adapted to new economic conditions and were of considerable relevance to the regulation of trade during the eighteenth century.³⁶ In 1797 Frederick Eden remarked on the similarities between guilds and the friendly societies.³⁷ The late-nineteenth-century Registrar of Friendly Societies, Edward Brabrook, suggested that the small, simple village friendly society resembled the benefit system of the guilds; Joshua Toulmin Smith referred to the guilds' spirit of 'mutual self-help' and 'manly independence' and Cornelius Walford argued that the roots of modern insurance lay in the guilds.³⁸ In 1906, a leading member of the Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society stressed the similarities between his fraternal association and the guilds.³⁹ In 1926 John Clapham rhetorically argued that friendly societies' graveside duties and drinking were 'an old inheritance. Did not Anglo-Saxon guilds pay a subscription in malt?'⁴⁰ Edward Thompson argued that 'the friendly society helped to pick up and carry into the trade union movement the love of ceremony and the high sense of status of the craftsman's guild'.⁴¹ More recently Michael Walker has demonstrated that seventeenth-century friendly societies had 'the weight of guild heritage behind them' and Anthony Black has stressed the importance of mutual obligation to fraternal culture.⁴² Although medieval guilds were not the only source of traditions of banquets in honour of saints at which paupers were well treated, as Gorsky concluded 'guild mutualism was to be the template for the practices of later benefit clubs', and others concurred.⁴³

Sometimes accounts which stressed longevity implied inevitable progression. Despite the patronage, which can be found within trade unions and many other fraternal bodies, fraternal organizations have also been seen as mutual and self-administrating proto-democratic organizations. In 1919 Alice Clark argued that in England, while women's membership of guilds was often through marriage, guilds were a means by which women were able to participate in the market economy.⁴⁴ David Beito's assessment of the 160 oath-bound, lay-controlled voluntary confraternities of fifteenth-century London concluded that 'in theory and to a great extent in reality, confraternities were democratic and egalitarian'.⁴⁵ One of the arguments for the extension of the franchise in the UK in 1867 was that working men had demonstrated their acceptability through their associational activities.⁴⁶ The UK-based Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society recommended that members be sober and industrious in order to 'purchase your own electoral rights' while in 1869 a British MP argued that 'these societies are teaching men the duties of citizenship'.⁴⁷ In recognition of the training that fraternal associations could provide, one of the first Labour MPs in the UK explained in 1906 that he had 'graduated in the university of the friendly societies'.⁴⁸ Even the Mafia, multifunctional ritual brotherhoods focused on retaining and consolidating their political power, according to Letizia Paoli, had democratic internal structures.⁴⁹ The tradition of some fraternal bodies to elect leaders and hold votes on a variety of matters was seized upon by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commentators some perhaps eager to find roots for their political views. In late nineteenth-century Bristol there was a friendly society called the Guild of St Mary and St Joseph, and Guilds of Help were formed to 'minister to the needs of the honest poor' and promote thrift and self-help in Bradford (1904), Wimbledon (1907) and a number of other towns.⁵⁰ In his *Restoration of the Gild System* of 1906, Arthur Penty advocated a 'return' to artisanal production organized through guilds. A theory of guild socialism was developed and in 1915, the National Guilds League was formed in the UK.

Employing evidence from many local studies of guilds in London, Exeter, Shrewsbury, York and elsewhere, and alert to the importance of gender to the construction of fraternity, Andrew Prescott in Chapter 2 finds both continuities and discontinuities. He employs the English 'gild' returns of 1389 to challenge the view of medieval guilds as the embodiment of a pre-industrial equality of the sexes in the workplace. While most of the guilds he considered accepted women as members, they were excluded from positions of authority. Guilds, rather than being havens of communal, equitable self-help, were determined by local

and national state considerations, and often the prevalent masculine agenda of the period. They were not all striving for greater equality: rather, the English guilds' notion of fraternity, from which so much developed, reinforced particular inequalities between the sexes.

In the 1980s some stressed how far guilds limited women's participation in the labour market by, for example, excluding them from the accredited training required for independent work, and by forcing daughters, wives and widows out of workplaces.⁵¹ Building upon work in this century, which has emphasized the flexibility and variety within guilds, Ogilvie concluded that English and Dutch women's participation in the market economy was 'an important contributing factor to the industrious revolution beginning in north-west Europe in the later seventeenth century'.⁵² She also indicated that guilds restricted women's roles. While some guilds helped to enforce gender roles, the localities where women faced the fewest economic restrictions were those associated with early consumer and industrial changes.⁵³ Moreover, there was continued reinforcement of specific roles for men and women. In the Wildberg canton of early modern Württemberg, women were banned from becoming masters, though masters' widows were not, the discouragement of women being 'primarily to protect established male guild members from competition'.⁵⁴ The fraternal form offered uneven opportunities for commercial connections, charitable links and community engagement.

In her analysis of the role of women within fraternal organizations, Meg Twycross in Chapter 4 indicates how a sequence of paintings of a religious fraternal body, commissioned by the Archduchess of Austria in about 1615, can be employed to indicate the importance of the familial model to fraternal associations. The paintings depict a competition, organized by a fraternal body, the aim of which was to shoot a parrot-shaped target. One account of this event suggests that the wooden parrot was 'magically resuscitated'. In addition the winner, a childless archduchess, was presented as providing 'maternal care' for her staff. This echoes the emphasis on rebirth and illusion during initiation ceremonies of many fraternal organizations and their frequent references to members as brethren or parents. It also indicates that although fraternal organizations did not always proscribe women (in this case there was a role for a woman within a martial fraternity of male shooters), they could circumscribe them.

The tensions between the desire of men to exclude women and the recognition of the benefits of inclusion can be found in analyses of seventeenth-century France. While there were strong brotherhood traditions maintained by the journeymen who formed the *compagnon-*

nages, women were not entirely disengaged.⁵⁵ In the eighteenth century, Freemasons gained considerable cultural importance within France, and by the 1780s, as James Smith Allen demonstrates in Chapter 9, women held significant positions within Freemasonry and contributed to creating a new model of fraternal organization. This was in the face of campaigns in England and France to ensure that Freemasonry was exclusively for men. Róbert Péter and Robert Beachy in their chapters argue that biblical support for separate, gendered spheres, the legal status of women, the greater curiosity of women and their inability to keep secrets, were all employed as arguments for men retaining their own spaces. This was where, Róbert Péter suggests, men could exercise their own ‘femininity’ in private, allowing women to enter only to socialize. Robert Collis, however, in Chapter 6, points to the importance of women in symbolic roles. Although Lady Elizabeth Caryll, as the figurehead of ‘the most important Jacobite fraternity in the first half of the eighteenth century’ had a limited role, the organization influenced other fraternal organizations in regard to women’s participation. Some went on to permit women to vote and engage in the male-dominated pursuit of archery. Andreas Önnersfors’s Chapter 8 analysis of a beneficiary of patrilineal status, the ‘exceptional’, Anna von Balthasar, demonstrates even within a ‘remote province’ of Swedish Pomerania there was scope for women to become involved in a fraternal organization.

Although middle-class women were active within British households, in business and commerce and in the wider public arena, men and women were separated in new ways in early nineteenth-century middle-class family life, reinforced by Evangelical Christianity and clear gender roles.⁵⁶ Anna Clark has suggested that from the late eighteenth century as more and more mills and factories opened, increasingly men and women were separated from one another and male artisans cultivated a homosocial male culture which privileged their masculinity.⁵⁷ In the USA, as women gained greater control over the household and the children, and the notion of the family shifted, men retreated into fraternal organizations.⁵⁸ Fraternal organizations were part of the contestation over roles with gendering a key determinant of the construction, development and maintenance of such bodies.⁵⁹ In Chapter 11, a notion of complex, gendered interactions is bolstered by Máire Cross’s work on the socialist and feminist Flora Tristan, 1803–1844, who sought to use fraternal organizations to promote her political ideas. Through this engagement she stretched, and also strengthened, male-dominated associations. Mary Ann Clawson concluded that ‘the history of nineteenth-century fraternalism was thus one of negotiation and accommodation, as

well as domination, as men and women challenged each other's models of communal life'. For her:

The Masonic exclusion of women was consistent with the more general approach of the Enlightenment. [...] Even in the nineteenth-century world of supposedly separate spheres [...] a quintessentially masculine institution like the fraternal order, where men withdrew from women to create their own space, could not isolate itself from feminine disapproval and initiative.⁶⁰

Eric Hobsbawm also saw a change, concluding that there was no cultural division of labour between men and women. He proposed:

Toward the end of the 19th-century, we find a distinct tendency in Europe and North America to treat women as persons in the same sense of bourgeois society, analogous to males, and therefore analogous also as potential achievers [...] sometime in the last 20 or 30 years before World War I the role and behavior of women, as conceived in 19th-century bourgeois society, changed rapidly and substantially in several countries.⁶¹

Although Cathie Lloyd concluded that 'in the past the revolutionary, egalitarian idea of "fraternity" has reinforced the marginalization of women in France', fraternity has long been more than the forging of male alliances in the absence of women.⁶²

While families are often associated with love, membership of them has not always been defined in terms of affection. The word family is derived from the Latin for domestic slave, the servant of a household. When a wealthy Elizabethan father sat down to dinner, he would sit at the head of the table called a board, in a chair, the only one in the house, while his wife, children and servants – his household – sat on benches or stools. He was literally the chairman of the board. Similarly, fraternal organizations, echoing families, may have stressed their charitable aims but they too had commercial and entrepreneurial ambitions. Fraternal organizations promoted civility and commerce through offering opportunities for members to learn and practise the rules of business and networking in privacy and across social boundaries. Often the law offered only limited protection against defaulters. Payment in kind and credit were endemic to much of the economy. Fraternal organizations which emphasized the importance of honour and civility could help merchants to build trust with one another, and could help trade

unionists to build the solidarity required to ensure a pay rise. It was often within the fraternal association that members learnt how to interact on a formal basis. In the eighteenth century, John Brewer noted, 'affability, courtesy and reliability [...] oiled the wheels of commerce' while John Smail suggested that 'commercial honor was closely linked with masculinity'.⁶³ Freemasonry was 'the most pervasive and influential form of secular voluntary organization in most English towns' by the early eighteenth century, but there were many more fraternal bodies which supported families based on blood and marriage through the provision of that which is sometimes called fictive kinship.⁶⁴ Peter Clark's account of the rise of British associations in the early modern era illuminates the origins of friendly societies and their polycentric developmental pattern. He illustrated how ubiquitous was the concept of the voluntary society by citing the example of how in the eighteenth century heaven was visualized as one large friendly society.⁶⁵ An understanding of fraternal organizations is enhanced if it is recognized that the concepts of business ethic and polite society developed symbiotically with fraternal organizations.

While the value of deals struck through lodge membership can be difficult to measure, one business was dominated by fraternal bodies. In the Netherlands burial insurance was largely guild-based until the dissolution of the guilds in 1820. Mutual-aid organizations, often associated with guilds, continued to dominate the burial insurance market. In 1800 there were 248 such insurers out of a total of 254, the other six being commercial companies. A trade union scheme was established in 1840 and by 1890 there were 240 of these. The total number of mutual schemes was 699, or over 83 per cent of the total. Approximately half the population was covered by such schemes.⁶⁶ There was a similar dominance of the burials insurance market by friendly societies in the UK. The values, notions of civility and camaraderie, aided the growth in complexity of exchange relationships, which justified property rights and a modern state to protect and police those rights. David Beito noted of fraternal organizations in the USA that 'the successful climb up the degree ladder was the antebellum equivalent of building a good credit rating'.⁶⁷ Commerce also lay at the heart of the Cosa Nostra, the Sicilian Mafia. This has been described as 'a specific economic enterprise, an industry which produces, promotes and sells private protection. [...] [a] "brand name"'.⁶⁸ It also has oaths, codes and complex symbols and ceremonies, which stress that those involved are brothers. The skills developed in the lodge, of civil discourse, of strict procedures and hierarchies and of wealth collection and redistribution, were ones which could be required in male-dominated seats of national and local government. If

members could rely on other members not to make their secrets public, to be discreet about the indiscretions of brethren, then this could reinforce the idea of an elite community with its own codes and privileges. It could bolster the conceptualization of the fraternity as a 'network of strings that could be pulled' to use Meg Twycross's words.

Some of the formal rituals within the lodge and processions outside it reinforced the importance placed on civility, order and trust. This emphasis often involved a focus on the use of privileged knowledge: notably passwords and rituals. Many fraternal bodies have emphasized confidentiality and concealment:

What matters then, is not so much the particular thing that is kept secret as the fact that some kind of secret is created, and that it pertains to the prestige and privileges of a sex or age group within the larger society. The secret here is a separating or distancing mechanism between a leading and a subordinate group.⁶⁹

Although fraternal oath taking was marginalized in the UK in the nineteenth century, it was central to many societies and 'persisted well beyond the period of outright repression'.⁷⁰ The founder and first Grand Master Workman of the US-based labourers' fraternal organization, the Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor, Uriah Smith Stevens, was also a Freemason and member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. He 'saw in fraternal ritual the means to impose secrecy and create solidarity uniting workers in a bond of trust'.⁷¹ Secrecy is so central a concept to Bob James, who runs the Centre for Fraternal Studies, that he gave it considerable prominence in his definition of fraternal societies as 'societies which use, or have used in the recent past, coded regalia, secret passwords, ritual and signs, and which have had a philosophy of brotherhood or mutual aid'.⁷² As Róbert Péter has indicated, notions of secrecy were gendered and employed to justify the exclusion of women.

Much of the ritual of fraternal organizations was associated with gendered civility and the creation myths and popular re-enactments, which often excluded or marginalized women. Andreas Önnersfors noted ritual was sometimes employed as a reason for barring women from associational life on the grounds that it was too dangerous for them. In the UK the Druids claimed links with Moses, who won freedom with the help of his brother, while the Foresters connected themselves to Robin Hood, who led a group of men who strove for greater independence.⁷³ An important Masonic ritual involves a drama in which a dead man is resurrected and supported by his brethren, and many of the symbols of the

Orange Order and its sibling Protestant organizations, the Royal Arch Purple Chapter and the Royal Black Institution can also be seen as supportive of the notion of heroic men without women.⁷⁴ These myths embody deeper assumptions and indicate the perspectives of the narrators. References to Eden within societies' accounts of their origins may imply nostalgia for a simpler, honest natural world which required protection. These could exist alongside references to Themis the Greek Titaness of good counsel who was the embodiment of divine order, law, and custom. She had a daughter Astraea, who had weighing scales and who was closely associated with Nemesis who had a sword used for retribution against both bad deeds and also undeserved good fortune. The Roman goddess of justice had both scales and a sword. She also had a blindfold so she could not see the social class of defendants. She may have inherited the two items for measuring and enforcing justice from the Mesopotamian sun-god Shamesh, who is also portrayed with these. These classical and earlier images connected fraternal societies (for many adopted such emblems) to notions of justice and equity, civilized existence, right custom, proper procedure and social order. From the Roman goddess Iustitia, or the archangel Michael, who also has scales and a sword, members could draw the conclusion that as you sow, so shall you reap and that a higher, often female, force is in charge of ensuring the fair balance within reciprocal altruism. The ideas expressed within such stories do not demand consensus over meaning, indeed they thrive in conditions of pluralism and enable imaginative fluid understandings to be shaped.

Ritual has attracted people to fraternities, encouraged friendship, framed consideration of ethical issues, and reminded members of the ethos of their organization. Such considerations may have applied to women as well as men but, more often, while men were classified as brothers, women were sometimes mothers (a taxonomy attributed by, for example, Flora Tristan). Rituals and affirmations of brotherly love were important to the confidence and esteem of members. Malcolm Chase concluded that 'the place of ritual within guild life may well have been stronger in the early eighteenth century than at any time since the Reformation. [...] Elaborate ritual, hierarchy and the language of brotherhood was one means by which the frontier of skill was defended'.⁷⁵ Ritual has enhanced the lives of numerous members and evoked a variety of emotions in people, notably fear, awe and respect. Men could attend the lodge and, through the drama, both marginalize contemporary issues and express their nurturing and paternal emotion.

They could construct a version of familial relationships and fellowship and feel guided through their careers within the lodge. The myths, symbolic practices, public performances, ornate certificates and badges have helped to constitute and give meaning to notions of fraternity. They have advertised the fraternities, indicated the internal hierarchies and the routes to higher social status, and linked the different elements of the organizations' structured reciprocity.

The song, as Robert Beachy and James Smith Allen illustrate, was often at the heart of the fraternal organization and its complex interaction with social and gender control. As a form of communication it could aid the building of a civil community because it was orderly, yet flexible. Máire Cross has demonstrated that Flora Tristan was able to take the conviviality of the fraternal organization, one of the chief means by which it had helped promote gendered solidarity, and through a song contest, adapt it to her political and campaigning purposes. Across France there was a thriving tradition of using song to convey ideas. Flora Tristran employed this in order to encourage workers' unity, She also used well-established terms of fraternity (signing her letters 'your sister in humanity') to encourage women and men of the working class to unite. Although even a song written in support of her campaign called her not a sister but a 'dear girl', it was through the genre of fraternal songs that this daughter of a Spanish-Peruvian military aristocrat could bridge the social divisions between herself and the working people of France. In the UK, fraternal associations produced songbooks and attempted to regulate lyrics. A ruling in 1841 made by the UK's largest friendly society made it clear that a fine could be imposed for 'singing an indecent or political song, or giving an indecent or political toast or sentiment'.⁷⁶ When there was major dispute in 1844 within this body the brothers picked up their pens to make their case. There was 'a flood of scurrilous songs and pamphlets', complained the Independent Order of Oddfellows, Manchester Unity's historian, who also noted that thousands seceded into a newly-formed rival fraternal body in 1844.⁷⁷ In Lerwick, the singing of the Gallic song is an element of the regulation of Up Helly Aa.

Bill Needham, 1904–1983, joined the Manchester Unity Oddfellows in 1919. His recollections, recorded in the 1980s, suggest the importance of the public house, the continuing significance of secrecy and the mixture of formal regulations and boisterousness. His testimony provides an insight into how members understand their own past and that of their fraternal association and how respectable civility and rougher conviviality were often merged. Secrecy and rituals can be

perceived as aspects of civility and the community, and were often part of the mesh of fraternal organizations' ethos:

We had a monthly meeting and it was always held in a pub. [...] It was run properly then, with a full committee, secretary, the lot. [...] We always had a club room. [...] There used to be a member on the door and he were called the Tyler and nobody strange would get into that meeting because you had a secret sort of code. You would have to knock on the door with your first two knuckles, twice. The Tyler would be behind the door, fastened on the inside. He would open the door and say 'Brother Needham wishes to be admitted.'

Needham went on to recount how an initiate would be blindfolded and have a hot poker placed very near his bottom. He added 'We had quite a lot of laughs about that. It was alright for us as knew, but it was them that didn't know, you see!'.⁷⁸ While for many members of fraternities it was the business of the lodge which was of primary importance, for example health provision, and for others the social activities were central, ritual enveloped all of these. It could take members from the everyday world into a mystical place derived from mummery, Freemasonry, popular theatre and ideals associated with the Abrahamic faiths, particularly Christianity. Ritual was practised in order to comply with the rules, to demonstrate respect and affiliation, to satisfy emotional requirements and nourish relationships, to strengthen social bonds and for pleasure. It had practical applications, being useful for checking on the status of members, informing them of the ideals of the fraternity, structuring change and networks within the organization and uniting members across time and space in common activities. By sharing rituals, members were linked by a sense of exclusivity. It was not always the case that this involved the exclusion (or their inclusion as either second-class brethren or wives) of women. Nevertheless, that the thread of a gendered organization runs through many of them indicates the importance attached to particular notions of business dealings, and civil and civic order.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries fraternal bodies and charities within the UK shared a range of activities, functions, members and structures.⁷⁹ Members were likely to be familiar with both types of organization because many fraternal bodies had patrons who provided financial support and also because, even at the time when fraternal organizations had millions of members, many members often had to rely on kinship and charitable support during periods when the household

income was reduced.⁸⁰ Both charities and fraternal bodies sought to increase trust between members, or between clients and patrons, by placing upon them the triple obligation to give, to receive and to return the equivalent of that which had been received. Across Europe there were many Church-based fraternal bodies. In the UK many Christian charitable bodies, including the Salvation Army and numerous Sunday schools, ran their own friendly societies.⁸¹ In 1908 the Freemason Lord Baden Powell established a charity, the Scout Association, and in 1914 became president of an associated fraternal body, the first trustees of which were all peers: the Scouts Friendly Society. In Bristol, the Colston collecting societies, named after a local philanthropist, combined mutuality, charity and guild traditions and the Temple Lodge Benefit Society was both a Masonic lodge and a friendly society.⁸² Many fraternal bodies gave to charity and indeed mentioned charity as one of their principal aims. They sought to create a sense of brotherhood of obligation and of the possibility of reward for acts of kindness towards kin, however broadly defined. For some philanthropists, such as F. D. Mocatta, 'charity took the place of a family'.⁸³ Both charities and fraternal organizations generated solidarity and were often associated with social stability and the reduction of social divisions through the promotion of self-help, reciprocity and patronage. Both enjoyed rapid growth during periods of industrialization and urbanization. Many had similar structures and hierarchies, offering opportunities to gain respect, self-confidence, self-discipline and transferable skills. Recognition of their common roots in the guilds and their continuing common interest in institutionalizing benevolence through creating social relationships and mutual ties based on loyalty highlights the importance of charity to fraternal organizations. Charitable and fraternal bodies, some reliant on patronage, sought to transcend economic transfers between recipients and donors, or members, by building emotional and social relationships.

Ensuring that members have the opportunity to develop appropriate civic and civil attitudes has long been central to fraternity. Sometimes there was overt patronage with fraternal organizations being used to help promote the preoccupations of local elites. In sixteenth-century Bologna, patrician families used knowledge acquired through their roles as the patrons of confraternities to aid their construction of municipal welfare schemes.⁸⁴ More generally guilds were used by the Crown and town oligarchies in the Middle Ages to impose trade controls of various kinds. This became the basis of urban oligarchies, as in sixteenth-century Flanders. Examples of uneven symbiotic relationships between elites and fraternities can also be found at other times and places. In the

UK, female friendly societies were frequently subject to male patronage, often expressed through the Church or by wealthy men. Although the term 'fraternity' has been used to exclude women it can usefully be employed to assess women's friendly societies. Comparing a female friendly society in an English village largely owned by one family for whom the villagers worked, with the transcontinental affiliated orders, such as the Independent Order of Oddfellows, Manchester Unity, Daniel Weinbren in Chapter 10 finds sufficient similarities to argue that 'fraternity' is a term which can embrace them all. Patronage was not restricted to women. There were many patrons of male fraternal organizations, and interest in using notions of fraternity to promote quiescence continued into the twentieth century. Between 1903 and 1930 Henry Ford sought to marginalize the workplace fraternity of trade unions through his company-based fraternity. His house journal, *Ford Man*, argued that 'The attitude of the Ford Motor Company towards its employees is not paternal but fraternal. [...] Help the other fellow! That's the Ford spirit. A splendid spirit of co-operation.'⁸⁵ Its reciprocal philanthropic aims intersected with its engagement with commercial activities and its interest in developing the company's notions of civility and of communities.

Although Prescott concluded that British Freemasonry 'is rooted in the local community', in many ways fraternal organizations did not merely serve communities, they also created and nurtured them.⁸⁶ When Thompson defined the 'collectivist values' which distinguished early nineteenth-century English working-class organizations he focused on fraternal organizations and proposed that:

The friendly societies, found in so many diverse communities, were a unifying cultural influence. [...] Friendly societies did not 'proceed from' an idea: both the ideas and the institutions arose in response to certain common experiences. But the distinction is important. In the simple cellular structure of the friendly society, with its workaday ethos of mutual aid, we can see many features which were reproduced in more sophisticated and complex forms in trade unions. [...] It is indeed this collective self-consciousness, with its corresponding theory, institutions, discipline and community values which distinguishes the nineteenth-century working class from the eighteenth-century mob.⁸⁷

In making the case that experience precedes culture, that when a cluster of men recognize themselves as a coherent group this was done via

culture, he saw working-class culture in terms of a conscious commitment to communality. For Thompson fraternal organizations were 'crystallising an ethos of mutuality very much more widely diffused'.⁸⁸ Some fraternal organizations helped to forge the community of those engaged in the same trade. The similarity of guilds' rules among the weavers of London, Oxford, Marlborough and Beverley and the existence of merchant and craft guilds in different towns with reciprocal agreements with one another indicates that networks, the basis of communities, existed.⁸⁹ In 1815, the London-based men-only guild, the Society of Apothecaries, was licensed by statute to provide a system of education, assessment and registration.⁹⁰ This suggests that men could gain respectability and status for themselves and their communities through their fraternal organizations.

Fraternal organizations' reciprocity was also often built upon the pageantry associated with the maintenance of communities. Late medieval York, for example, had a plethora of crafts, fraternities and guilds which provided mutual support and promoted religious processions.⁹¹ While regulated in different ways from the parade portrayed in the evidence considered by Twycross, it is clear that public displays of collective enthusiasm have long contributed to the maintenance of fraternity and of gendered communities. Religious orders and guilds expressed their corporate being by establishing controlled spaces, whether the nunnery or the guildhall. They expressed their public character through processions. The Flemish example discussed by Twycross shows vividly the politics and hierarchies of these spaces. The parade to mark the opening of the Derby Arboretum in midland England in 1840 was led by the town councillors who were followed by fraternal organizations in strict hierarchical order. All the societies had at least one banner and the larger societies boasted several.⁹² During a royal visit to Lewes in England, the crowds were policed by officers of fraternal organizations.⁹³ On another parade to honour the King a newspaper reported 'The Independent Order of Oddfellows appeared the greatest in numbers, most respectable in appearance and most orderly in conduct of any of the numerous societies that attended on this occasion.'⁹⁴ Processions and parades, and private and public rituals, form a key activity for many fraternal bodies and were frequently promoted as a respectable, mediated means of allowing the working class access to public space. A report in *The Odd Fellow*, 1840, noted:

On the whole the inhabitants of Newport have never witnessed such a procession, nor was any procession ever honoured with so

many thousands of followers and spectators who were to be seen from every window fronting the streets as they passed.⁹⁵

Some thirty years later Sir George Young made a similar point about a different friendly society. Sometimes after a feast it was able to form a branch because 'because the people in the neighbourhood had observed the banners and decorations which were very pretty'.⁹⁶ In 1890 when a British cabinet minister made the case against a ban on street demonstrations he gave the example of friendly societies. He wrote that 'these men are the pick of the working classes, perfectly orderly with an excellent object in view. It would be disastrous to get the police in collision with them.'⁹⁷ There are numerous accounts of fraternal organizations' events which stressed the civility of these bodies and the decorum of their communities.⁹⁸

While the outward demonstration of fellowship, which enabled observers to see that members of the fraternal body loved one another, could aid both retention and recruitment, it was not always conventionally respectable. When in 1848, Thomas James Duffield, a Mason who kept a beer shop in south London, gave evidence in the court he claimed that he was a 'respectable character' who had been an Odd-fellow and had arranged an excursion on a steamboat for the Society. He added that he had left that organization following the 'riotous conduct on board the steamer' on the excursion when members of the Society 'threatened to throw the captain overboard'.⁹⁹ Echoes of this contrasting behaviour can be found in Pamela King's Chapter 12 analysis of the genesis of the Up Helly Aa celebrations. She suggests that Lerwick's all-male 'squads' are modelled on the Independent Order of Rechabites, a teetotal friendly society, and notes socially transgressive modes of conduct as well as the continuing importance of fraternal organizations' parades to communities. Many fraternal organizations' communities were marked by controlled conviviality which avoided the threat of excessive rumbustiousness or revelling by meeting such threats halfway.

Connecting notions of charity, commerce, civility and community under the umbrella of structured voluntary, gendered reciprocity illuminates the widespread importance attached to 'self-help', 'respect' and 'independence' and the discourse, articulated through legislation, of the 'deserving poor'. It is through recognizing both the brotherly connections and the sibling rivalry between, for example, trade unions and Freemasonry, that the importance of organized systems of mutual aid can be evaluated. As Pamela King points out, knowledge of Seville's Holy Week can inform an understanding of processions in Scotland.

Uniting an apparently disparate number of organizations within one portmanteau, that of an often class-transcendent structure which bolstered both instrumental, practical support and expressive, emotional support, has its problems. There have long been tensions between brotherhood and selectivity. Although members might have gained a sense of egalitarianism within the lodge, as Mary Clawson pointed out, 'fraternalism bases itself on the principle of exclusion, from which it derives much of its power'.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the studies collected here can be seen as written within a broad framework which recognizes both the commonality of fraternal organizations (without denying their individuality) and the ability of these bodies to assimilate members to dominant economic and social orders (while also being able to react against those mores). An emphasis on gendered reciprocity helps to ensure that there is appropriate recognition of women's active participation within fraternal organizations and how they were often able to exercise influence through alliances with men. This volume offers a means to better understand how fraternal organizations can transcend and also to reinforce social and gender boundaries and enable people to join together in order to, as James Smith Allen puts it, have 'a good deal of fun'.

Notes

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- 3 David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 13–14.
- 4 David Neave, 'Friendly Societies in Great Britain', in *Social Security Mutualism: The Comparative History of Mutual Benefit Societies*, ed. by Marcel van der Linden (Berne: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 41–64 (p. 60).
- 5 Simon Cordery, 'Friendly Societies and the British Labour Movement before 1914', *Journal of the Association of Historians in North Carolina*, 3 (1995), 38–51 (p. 39); Simon Cordery, 'Mutualism, Friendly Societies, and the Genesis of Railway Trade Unions', *Labour History Review*, 67 (2002), 263–79.

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- 10 Sheilagh Ogilvie, 'Rehabilitating the Guilds: A Reply', *Economic History Review*, 61 (2008), 175–82 (pp. 180–1).
- 11 Issues of taxonomy are considered in Daniel Weinbren, "'Imagined Families": Research on Friendly Societies', *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für die Geschichte der sozialen Bewegungen*, 27 (2002), 117–36, and in Daniel Weinbren and Bob James, 'Getting a Grip: The Roles of Friendly Societies in Australia and the UK Reappraised', *Labour History*, 88 (2005); 87–104.
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- 13 See <<http://equinoxjournals.com/equinoxdownloads/jrff1108flyer-v1.pdf>> [accessed 4 December 2009], society publicity.
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- Elliott Horowitz, 'Jewish Confraternal Piety in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara: Continuity and Change', in *The Politics of Ritual Kinship*, pp. 150–71.
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 - 18 Andrew Prescott, 'The Unlawful Societies Act of 1799', in *The Canonbury Papers, Volume I: The Social Impact of Freemasonry on the Modern Western World*, ed. by Matthew D. J. Scanlan (London: Canonbury Masonic Research Centre, 2002), pp. 116–34; John Walton, *Lancashire: A Social History, 1558–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 148–50; Anthony D. Buckley, "'On the Club": Friendly Societies in Ireland', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 14 (1987), 39–58.
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 - 25 Spry, p. 47.
 - 26 On this notion of the family, see Daniel Weinbren, 'The Roles of Families', in *Themes in Local and Regional History*, ed. by Ian Donnachie (Milton Keynes: Open University, forthcoming).
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