

**Drag Kings at the Totem Ball:  
The Erotics of Collective Representation in  
Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud**

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Politics has a sex because sex is our first politics, our first agency, our first subjection. Over the long sweep of history, collective representation, the capacity to stand for the collectivity, to speak in its name, has been gendered. Men have historically dominated the public sphere, their bodies massed, displayed and sacrificed as the primary medium and content of collective representation. Women are absent, off-stage, or more recently, play minor parts. If the public sphere, and the collective body conjured into symbol there, is male, it presumably has a penis; but the fact is that its sex, its erotic energies, have gone largely un-theorized. If we are to understand the logic of collective representation we must align its symbolization with its sex.

In this chapter, I wish to explore the sexuality of collective representation as achieved in ancient rituals as interpreted by Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud, the founders of sociology and psychoanalysis respectively. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* and *Totem and Taboo*, both studied the “totemism” of the aboriginal tribes of Australia which they argued was the simplest and hence the earliest religion. For both collective representation was the creation of a collective body through the individual bodies of men. While scholarship has accumulated requiring revision of the empirical materials upon which they based their theories, their theories are still studied and taught without reference to it, as modalities of thinking, as our own totemic representations.

For Durkheim, the human body is the essential site, medium and language of collective representation. Collective representation operates through symbolic incorporation, through ritual processes of embodiment. The leader, he writes, is “a group incarnated (1995:212). As against those who locate culture at the level of discourse, as a sign-system, Durkheim insists on its bodily practice, not as unconscious *habitus*, but as a conscious ritual. Collective representation derives its energy from the massing of human bodies; it inscribes the social on and in the flesh. Durkheim’s is not a theory grounded in cognition, as in Levi-Strauss who sought the taxonomic regularities of mythic culture in the structure of the mind, nor the new cognitivists who

search for the mental universals of conceptual order, nor the cognitivized incorporation at the center of Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990; Widick, 2003).

While Durkheim was empirically conscious of the sexuality of collective representation, that sex remained undeveloped analytically, theoretically unconscious. In contrast, Freud, who studied the same totemic representation would shock his peers by making its sexuality an explicit object of concern, but in the process would operate out of his own theoretical unconscious, the liberal, contractarian theories of his day, reducing the social to its sources within dyadic pairs. Durkheim and Freud are normally treated as mutually exclusive, wholly other, mutually profaning. I read them together through the totem to provoke a rethinking of the relation between the social and the sexual. Freud read and cited Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. As far as we know Durkheim never read Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, at least he never cited it or anything else Freud wrote. It's a pity. Sexualizing Durkheim and socializing Freud may open new ways to figure the social and its effervescent energies.

### Elementary Forms

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim did not simply locate the social origins of religious rite, he located the ritual origins of society. These collectivities were bounded, unified, and set in motion through totemic ritual. Each clan has its own totem, a unique species of animal or plant with which it understands itself as having a kinship, as being an ancestor. The clan members each regard the totem as sacred.

The totem, Durkheim argues, is the tangible form of an intangible "substance" (Durkheim, 1995: 191), "an anonymous and impersonal force" that diffuses through the universe. "By that principle," Durkheim writes: "are maintained the lives of the clan's people, the lives of the animals or plants of the totemic species, the lives of all things that are classified under the totem and participate in its nature." (Durkheim, 1995: 206).

The totem is a collective representation, both name and emblem, a physical representation that is the exclusive property of the group that claims kinship with it. They, and they alone, can wear its image and be buried beneath it. Each clan member carries the name of the totem. To name is not to label, but to identify in the sense that naming not only produces the identity of the named subject, but is "part of the being." (Durkheim, 1995: 114). That capacity to name has social origins. Unlike Levi-Strauss who will argue that the social is first classified through the properties of nature, Durkheim and Mauss argue that nature is hierarchically classified through the experience of the social, which is itself natural (Durkheim and Mauss, 1963; Martin, 2000).

But for Durkheim, not only is the totem a symbol—not a simple sign, a throwing together, as the etymology suggests--of divergent orders, the natural and the social, but

the representation of the first is productive of the second. It appropriately touches the flesh of those who are produced as a collectivity. Totemic naming is a performative action that touches the flesh and makes it collective, or rather makes the collectivity by touching the flesh. “For the primitive,” Durkheim writes, “the name is not simply a word, a mere combination of sounds; it is part of the being and, indeed an essential part.” The word is part of the thing, metonym, not metaphor.

Clan members imprint the totem on their flesh. The emblem is embodied through gashes, paints, tattoos, which are worn whenever the clan comes together. Durkheim’s account gives primary to writing, not speech, a material image, not a spoken word, a writing authoring and authorizing the self. He thus anticipates Michel de Certeau’s “scriptural economy,” his understanding that “there is no law that is not inscribed on bodies,” that the law “engraves itself on parchment made from the skin of its subjects.” De Certeau will claim that “[b]ooks are only metaphors of the body.” (1984: 140).

The strictest taboos pertain to the totemic representation, not to the species themselves. By giving primacy to the name, he anticipates Jacques Lacan’s semiotic psychoanalytic theory, in which the child becomes a subject by his entry into an authoritative language of kinship names, a language “unconscious in structure,” whose logic governs subjectivity and sexual combination. A child, Lacan argues, enters this language through the portal of “the name of the father,” through symbolic order, not biological parentage, the biological father’s authority, the “paternal function,” likewise being constituted by this language (Lacan, [1966] 1977: 65-68). For Durkheim that writing into the skin marks and mimes our dependence on its language, our perpetual and overwhelming debt.

Totemic representation is written in blood. Just as Christians drink the blood of Christ and the Israelites were sprinkled with blood of the covenant by Moses at Sinai, so, too, in totemic rituals, the men of the Arunta draw the sacred emblem of their totem on ground soaked in blood. When Arunta boys are initiated, the totemic image is subincised in their flesh, the blood collected and later used in rituals. Among the Binbinga, the blood on the knife used to write a boy into collective membership must be licked clean by the initiate. Adult members will open their veins, sprinkling the novitiate with their blood. The most sacred blood is that which flows from the penis during circumcision (Durkheim, 1995:137).

Representation is more powerful than reference, totemic symbol than totemic species. The representation of the totem, its drawing or figure, is more sacred than the totemic species itself, a relation homologous to the division Lacan will institute between the phallus and the penis (Lacan, 1977). The totem is first written on the individual body when that body is made a symbol of the collectivity, when that individual body is initiated, hailed as a subject, transformed into a representative of the group (Durkheim, 1995: 116). The initiated individuals are now part of the totem and

the totem part of them. Individual males can only align their individual bodies with the representation of the collectivity when they are able to represent the collectivity. Becoming a man is identical to becoming a member of the collectivity, becoming a member being identical with being allowed to mass with the other men around and through the totem. Acceding to this totemic language is an accession to the law, a politico-linguistic practice, by which an individual becomes a subject, a full individual by being incorporated into the collectivity.

In Durkheim's account, the social organization of the clan doesn't explain the totemic system. Social unity derives not from an observed social morphology, from how people exist materially on the land, but from a system of symbols that places them in relation to each other by the way it places them in relation to the species of nature. In the societies Durkheim is studying, totemic descent is predominantly inherited through the mother's line, matrilineally, while residence is organized through the father's house, patrilocally. (Durkheim, 1995: 104, 131, 185) This means that residential groups are composed of peoples who worship different totems. It is not through the sharing of a common physical space of sociality, but only through an imagined kinship with a common totem, a name and emblem that periodically brings the clan members together in ritual, that the clan takes form (Durkheim, 1995:234).

Durkheim's theory of collective representation is based on trinitarian architecture: collectivity, symbol, and an energy mediating the two. The totem, the god, is a symbol of society, because, Durkheim argues, the experience of society is the basis for the experience of god, the experience of the collectivity being the anonymous power that outlives us, one to which we bend without regard to our personal benefit or cost, one that penetrates our very being, that is in us, but not of us (Durkheim, 1995: 213-214).

Totemic rites are the occasion for the collective experience of the collectivity, for the experience of its energies, its "indefinite powers and anonymous forces" (1995: 201-202). Durkheim calls this energy "effervescence" (Durkheim, 1995: 213), something that suggests champagne or Alka-Seltzer, by which he means a contagious experience that depends upon contagion, the experience of which, he argues, is at the origin of the sacred and moral authority in general. The force of massing in collective rites, synchronous aggregation and movement around a symbol, is the source of the energies upon which the sacred depends. Collective rites register in people's bodies, take intense physical forms—men howl, move wildly about, have sexual relations with women that are normally forbidden, exhaust themselves.

They bring about such an intense hyper-excitement of physical and mental life as a whole," Durkheim writes, "that they cannot be borne for very long. The celebrant who takes the leading role eventually falls exhausted to the ground" (1995: 218). "[I]t is the nature of moral forces expressed merely by images that they cannot affect the human mind with any forcefulness without putting it outside itself, and plunging it into

a state describable as ‘ecstatic...[A] very intense social life always does a sort of violence to the individual’s body and mind and disrupts their normal functioning. This is why it can last only a limited time” (1995: 228).

Unlike Levi-Strauss’ structuralism, Durkheim’s taxonomic order is energized, set in motion, through desire, a passionate debt, an irresistible seduction, a proliferating gift which can never be repaid. Effervescent aggregation performs, expresses, mimes, indeed, is, the enabling powers of collective life, upon which not only does the finest within us depend, but from which we derive our meaning and our material existence, indeed which enables us to be. It is from this energy, transported within us, that not only religion, but all authority, is composed. Moral authority, an authority for which we have respect, whether of a person, a text, a practice, has the same origins as religion (Durkheim, 1995: 215). Authority derives not from reasoned consent or self-interested contract, but “because a certain psychic energy intrinsic to the idea we have of that person bends our will and turns it in the direction indicated” (Durkheim, 1995: 209). Swift and sure bodily punishments should thus be understood as special markings, signs that command respect, indicators that collective representation and its commands are to be obeyed instantly. These sanctions are signs of their sanctity as much as they are instruments by which to assure reasoned compliance. The countless acts of obedience are not simple behavioral information indicating that dissidence is dangerous, but they, too, function to maintain the intensity of that “psychic energy.” The threat of punishment is less important to maintaining compliance than the “mental representation” it signifies and solidifies. The violence heaped upon offenders of the law, of the prohibitions marking and protecting the most sacred things, is of the same symbolic economy as that which draws the group together and makes it one, the energy of collective effervescence. Violence signifies the effervescence which is its source. Neither punishment nor gift can be assimilated to a law.

For Durkheim God is a representation of moral authority within us, something which we understand is in us, but not of us (1995: 213). The process involves an unconscious transference, an external sociality is experienced internally through its intense physical and emotional effects. The complex sources of these effects eludes mental representation, eludes thought, and are projected on to some simple object like a totem or flag, to which the emotional energies of intense sociality attach themselves (1995:221, 230).

As opposed to those, like Levi-Strauss and the followers of the “linguistic turn,” who will later argue that the social is based on the model of language, Durkheim not only argues that the taxonomic order of language is derived the experience of the social, but that the social does not have its own language, indeed must exceed language. Society must speak, or more precisely write, indirectly, must translate. Durkheim prides himself on having discovered the gap between the sacred and the profane, which he unfortunately locates institutionally in the division between religious

and economic life, thereby barring the way to joining his theoretical framework to the enchanted symbolism—the fetishism of commodities, the transrationality of property, the spectacle of consumption-- likewise animating capitalism.

However, the *Elementary Forms* unveils an equally profound gap between the social and its representations. The sacred translates into symbols, symbols that both contain and constitute our social energies. Yet these energies, these forces, exceed their representations. “[I]t is in the nature of religious forces,” Durkheim writes, “to be incapable of full individualization.” (1995: 203). Society translates itself behind our backs, unconsciously. For Durkheim the job of the social analyst is to capture this translation and then to show how the dream, the fiction, is a productive part of the reality. Durkheim is arguing that a sociologist interprets social interpretation, there being no outside its text, here an animal fiction, beastly origin stories. Unlike Levi-Strauss who will locate the unconscious mental character of collective representation as taxonomic codes of language, codes founded on the transposition of attributes of natural objects, things “good to think with,” (Levi-Strauss, 1963: 18), Durkheim locates it in the non-representable, excessive experience of the social.

Like Ferdinand de Saussure, who attended his lectures (Alexander, 1988:4), Durkheim argues that language makes thought possible, not the other way around. But by refusing psychology, Durkheim also opens the way to the logic of Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction, to a self which can never be self-present to its signs, signs in which the self is always already inscribed, in short, to *différance* (Derrida, 1992). However, Durkheim points to a social, hermeneutical phenomenology of the flesh as its ground, quite unlike Derrida, who builds religion’s two sources—the experience of faith and the sacred—from a structure of bodily experience which is not experienced, an experience mediated through bodily metaphors without flesh (Derrida, [1996] 1998). The desire of presence would be to be, to have, a body, to be both subject and object, to be present in one’s body, for the body not to be set apart as a sign of one’s self.

In the empirical materials, Durkheim repeatedly emphasizes the human body’s role in social signification, in the generation not only of collective representation but of the collectivity represented. Human body and totem reference each other, participate in each other’s nature, they are co-substantial. Totemic representation is a ritual poesis. Durkheim’s human body is not just Bourdieu’s classificatory “writing pad,” but a desirous, energized, existential phenomenological basis of social authority. Durkheim thus echoes the work of Frederich Nietzsche for whom concept is metaphor, in that we can never have access to the essence of things, only their metaphors, metaphors grounded in the bodily experience of pleasure and pain (Kofman, [1983] 1993: 6-22). For Durkheim, authority not only has a body but must be embodied. It does not, indeed cannot, operate through the mind alone. Neither rationality, the balance sheet of interested compliance and dissent, nor categorical cognition, are sufficient. Simply registering a totemic image is not enough to “affect the human mind with any

forcefulness” (1995: 228). Moral force depends in its origins on “delirium,” “ecstasy,” “violence to the individual’s body and mind.”

Contrary to the certainty that science makes religion increasingly untenable, to the Kantian separation of reason and faith, Durkheim argues that religion made science possible, because it enabled us to understand that humans and the natural world were made of the same “essence,” that the same forces regulated both our behavior and those of the natural world (1995: 238). The logic of collective representation makes us consubstantial with the world through the ways in which men are consubstantial with each other. Durkheim locates the very origin of conceptual and causal thought in this embodied experience of oneness. The understanding of internal ties between external objects originates in our ability to “join together what the senses put asunder,” the conceptualization of “internal connections” between things being derived from our experience of the internal connection between men, “a hyperexcitation of intellectual forces,” driven by our “natural taste for unrestrained assimilations” (1995: 239, 241). Our capacity for rationality, our ability to presuppose cause and effect in the world, depends on this original collective representation, that versus Hume, science does not derive from sense perception alone, and versus Kant, cause and effect, the connection of one thing to another, the ability to “establish relationships between things that make them appear to us as functions of one another and as vibrating sympathetically in accordance with an internal law this is rooted in their nature” (1995: 239) need not presume a priori’s in the nature of our consciousness, but rather derive them from the sociological a priori of social representation itself.

There is no epistemological gap between religion and science. “Today as in the past, to explain is to show how a thing participates in one or several other things.” (1995: 240). Science, like religion, operates through assimilations and divisions which cannot be derived from sense perception alone. This would be Hedeigger’s point in his notion of the “ground plan” (1977), one taken up as well in Foucault’s *Order of Things* ([1966, 1970). For Durkheim, however, there is a fire at the birth of thought. “Creating a whole world of ideals, through which the world of sensed realities seemed transfigured, would require a hyperexcitation of intellectual forces that is possible only in and through society.” Reason has socially sensuous origins.

That the totem is a symbol of the collectivity does not mean then that it is merely an expression of the collectivity, a cultural reflection of its social existence, of its density, its bounded interactions. The symbol rather is integral to the formation of the collectivity. Through the totemic symbol, unique and exclusive, individuals engage in a communication that ends “in a communion—that is, in a fusion of all the individual feelings into a common one” (1995: 231). “The appearance of this resultant [the symbol] notifies individuals that they are in unison and brings home to them their moral unity. It is by shouting the same cry, saying the same words and performing the same action in regard to the same object that they arrive at and experience agreement”

(1995: 232). The symbol of the collectivity is necessary to produce collective consciousness, consciousness that they are a collectivity.

The clan member experiences a kinship with the totem, he “participates in its nature,” is composed of the same substance. The clan member and the totem, the person and the animal, the body and the symbol, are consubstantial. The clan member is the symbol made flesh, an embodied symbol. And it is through their flesh, their bodies, that the individuals perform the collective symbol into a collectivity, by massing their bodies, moving in unison around and with the symbol (1995: 232).

In totemic rites, collective consciousness requires that the body itself become a symbol, an instance of the collective body, by “participating” in the symbol by which it knows itself, by a physical fusion of body and symbol. The collectivity is a collective body, a group of individual bodies which periodically experience themselves as one body. The experience of collectivity derives from the common movement, from ritual interaction with the totemic object. Common bodily movement, Durkheim asserts, symbolize the totemic representation “only because they have helped to form them. Without symbols...social feelings could have only an unstable existence” (1995: 232).

The alchemy of the social has a circular circuit. An interaction generates an energy, which registers inside us, an energy imperfectly translated into symbolic form, a form which is nonetheless necessary to set the interaction and its energies into motion. This shuttling back and forth between representation and reality, as Durkheim recognizes, is an exclusively male mimesis. The unremarked fact in Durkheim’s tale is that the collectivity is a fusion of naked men (Durkheim, 1995: 310). It is men, and men alone, moving, massing, touching, screaming, in that moment of ritual ecstasy, of delirium, overturning every convention. If the clan members are of the same substance of the totem, then the totemic ritual must be a performance of that consubstantiality, not just of each man with that of his totem, but more importantly for the social constitution, with each other. The energy of the totemic principle is homosocial, bonding between men.

Durkheim made the daring argument that the same energies animating the crowds who made the French revolution powered the totemic rites of the aboriginals, that the same energy, or effervescence, made collective representation possible in both cases. He thereby recognized the relation between the sexualized delirium of the totemic rite and the violence of the revolutionary crowd. Durkheim thus refuses to distinguish between the moral authority of sovereigns and saints, assimilating aboriginal totemic rite to the passions of the French revolution. He thus suggests not the restricted project of a sociology of religion, but the more capacious project of a religious sociology, one that will be taken up by the *College de Sociologie* in 1937-1939 (Falasca-Zamponi, 2001; Richman, 2002).

Collective representation is a massing of bodies. As Elias Canetti would point out with respect to the crowds of modern mass politics, their essential attribute was a

desire to grow, a love of density (highest at the moment of “discharge” into an open crowd) (Canetti, 1973: 32). What struck Canetti about the crowd was its physicality, its making many bodies into one, by suspending men’s natural aversion to physical contact with other men, “the repugnance to being touched.” In the modern crowd, what men feared now becomes what they most desire (1973:15-16). Just as Durkheim derived the sacred, and the signification of shared consubstantiality of totem and clan, from the effervescent massing of male bodies, Canetti argued that the energies derived from tactility among men in common movement in the dense crowds of modern politics were the template for all demands of equality (1973:32-34), a theme that would later be taken up by Tambiah (1996).

How might the sex of that ecstasy figure into the constitution of the social? Why is it that the self-same revolutionary crowds which Durkheim understood as an all-male chorus, whose virile ecstasies produced the rights of man, Gustav LeBon and others saw as corrosive, irrational, feminine forces tending towards decomposition (Falasca-Zamponi, 1997)? How can it be that the energies of the rites of collective representation are interpreted as both masculine and feminine? Is it simply a matter of political positionality, that those who discern their social necessity and revolutionary productivity are comfortable with their maleness, while those who fear their disruptive potential conjure them as feminine forces?

As Durkheim recognizes, this shuttling back and forth between representation and reality is an exclusively male mimesis. Even though the totem is passed through their line, women were forbidden from participating in these sacred rites, forbidden from taking the totem on to their skins, even from witness it through their eyes (Durkheim, 1995: 125, 132, 384). Is the exclusion of women from collective representation due simply to the logic of masculine domination, to their status as socially fissiparous objects of desire? It is men, and men alone, moving, massing, touching, screaming, in that moment of ritual ecstasy. The effervescent collectivity, Durkheim points out, is a fusion of naked men (1995: 310). If the clan members are of the same substance as the totem, then the totemic ritual must be a performance of that consubstantiality, not just of each man with his totem, but more importantly for the social constitution, with each other.

Effervescence is associated with violation. In Durkheim’s account the communion of men around the symbol leads to a sudden dissolution of individual and even collective male property rights in particular women, individual men who are men by their property rights to particular women (1995: 218-219). In signifying and generating the energies of the social in the violation of its codes, Durkheim anticipates not only anthropologists, like Edmund Leach, who pointed that the sacrality of founding patriarchs and sovereigns, like Abraham and David, is marked by their ability to violate sexual laws of incest and endogamy (Leach, 1985), but political theorists like Carl Schmitt who locate sovereign authority in the political decision on the

“exception,” an authority which cannot be assimilated to the law to determine a collective enemy and to suspend the law (Schmitt ([1932] 1996), and what Jacques Derrida would subsequently refer to the mystical basis of state authority, an originary violence that can never be subordinated to or derived from the law (([1990] 2002). The way in which Durkheim implicates bodily violation in the sacred and renders it socially productive puts him in stark contrast to his American interpreters who would confine the sacred to civic ritual, rendering it abstract, depriving it of its inherent transgressive and thus transformative possibilities (Bellah, 1967, Shils, 1975).

While Schmitt and Derrida emphasizes an originary, extra-legal violence in collective representation, Durkheim points to the procreative, life-giving powers of the totem. The totem with which men identify their bodies is a fantastic bi-sexual organ, not just playing the role of phallic propagation, of inseminating powerful seed between the loins of maidens, but placing whole embryos there, man and woman in one organ, the woman reduced to an incubator, a warm hotel room. The totemic myths locate the first ancestors as unborn, Adamically arriving in this universe from outside the wombs of women. The first Arunta ancestors, the Alcheringa, are known as the “uncreated ones” (1995:250). Wherever these incarnations of the totemic principle alight, their bodies took form as rocks, trees, or water holes. It is here that the *churingas*, pieces of wood or stone with images of the totem engraved upon them, are stored, sacred places, safe havens, refuges where conflicts are proscribed. The *churinga* is believed to have extraordinary powers, to heal, to secure fertility, to make strong those who are kin with the species represented, and to make weak and enfeeble their enemies. These sites contain the embryos of babies which enter the women of the appropriate marriage class through the hip (1995: 253-254). Totemic discourse thus gives the men extra-uterine, feminine powers, as though the totem’s passage through the womb, through the female line, brought the female function along with it, lodging it there in the symbolic logic of the totem. Ancestors can throw the *churinga*, a stone with an image on it, into the body of a woman where it takes human form.

If the totem can penetrate the female body with such procreative powers, is the totemic ritual powered simply by male identification with the totem, or does this massing carry another logic, that of penetration, of not simply being the totem, but of having and being had by the totem? Durkheim makes clear that society is constituted through common submission, in the taking inside something which is in us, but not of us. “For society, that unique source of all that is sacred, is not satisfied to move us from outside and to affect us transitorily, it organizes itself lastingly within us.” (1995: 266)

The reproduction of the sacred totem is a masculine fertilization, an all-male sexual act. In *Intichiuma* ceremonies, the men of the Arunta and other clans take responsibility for assuring the reproduction of the totemic species. At the ancestral abodes, they inseminate the world with dust, sand, seeds, sparks from those sites, often

mixed with their own blood (1995: 330-337). Spencer and Gillen reports that the chief of the Wonkgongaru, ancestors of a fish, enters a water hole, allowing the blood to flow from a puncture in his scrotum (1904:336). For this rite to assure the totem's reproduction, the men must typically eat just a little of the totem's substance (1904: 338-341). The taboo is violated, the totem taken inside. "There is no positive rite," Durkheim writes, "that does not fundamentally constitute a veritable sacrilege" (1995: 342). But it is not here a sacrificial death at the heart of life. The ancestors ate regularly of the totem; they cannot, they do not, explain why. The Unmatjera believe that if a man were to eat too much during this rite, "he would swell up and die" (Spencer and Gillen, 1904: 324). A man impregnates and is impregnated. Spencer and Gillen report that in every tribe they studied, young men endured a subincision of their penises, slitting it open from the base to its tip, in parallel with the "rite of cutting open the vagina...practiced upon the young women (1904: 133). Like the totem, the initiate is a man-woman, separate totems for men and women being a relatively rare and later development (1995: 166-168)

If individual women give birth to individual bodies, groups of men procreate collective bodies. The first is heterosexual across the boundaries of social groups; the second is homosocial. The woman takes inside a man's seed. What do the men take inside? Other men. Durkheim tells us that during moments of collective effervescence, when the collectivity takes physical form as a mass of men, the individual is filled with the collective, is no longer an individual self, but an embodiment of the collectivity. If the collectivity represented is a company of men, surely the energies that bind it must somehow derive from passionate affinity, a desire for and the pleasures of union with members of one's same sex. And if women are excluded from these rites, might a more dangerous boundary transgression than sexual exclusivity of marriage, incest taboos or exogamy be the inhibited aim energizing these dangerous rites? Might that have something to do with the strict prohibition against eating the totemic animal, a prohibition that only the most sacred men, long ago, could accomplish without harm? Might it also have something to do with the absolute boundary between the sacred and the profane?

### Totem and Tattoo: The Tabooed Freud

Durkheim never made sexuality part of the theoretical constitution of the social. Freud, on the other hand, pointed to the sexual, and indeed the homoerotic, origins of political authority. Within the sociological community, Freud is largely a tabooed ancestor, an undergraduate pleasure. Freud, like Durkheim, studied totemism, sought to locate the origins of the group, publishing *Totem and Taboo* in 1913, one year after the publication of Durkheim's study (Freud, [1913] 1946). Freud, the psychoanalyst, like Durkheim the sociologist, translates collective dreams, representations that imperfectly convert social experience into symbols, whose manifest content is always

inadequate relative to the thoughts and feelings condensed, displaced or refracted within them.

Freud argues that totemism and exogamy appear together, two of the strongest and earliest taboos, two forbidden forms of having: one cannot eat the totemic animal, nor have sexual relations with the women of one's own clan. Taboos do not derive from divine prohibition, nor are they justified. They have no known origin. They are punished automatically by "an inner, automatic arrangement." Freud, like Durkheim, works with an electric body. Tabooed objects radiate a "dangerous power," are "charged," an electricity transmitted by touch (1948: 27-31). "This power is inherent in all persons who are more or less prominent, such as kings, priests and the newly born; in all exceptional physical states, such as menstruation, puberty and birth; in everything sinister, like illness and death, and in everything connected with these conditions by virtue or contagion or dissemination" (1948: 31). Freud calls that energy libido, the energy of desire, an energy that binds the subject to the object world, an energy that can be redirected, or displaced, from its original object, concealed and occluded, but never lost ([1905] 2000: 83). It is an elementary economics.

Freud, too, argues that primitive religion contains the secret, not just of religion, but of modern authority. Just as Durkheim's totemic representations contain this energy, so do Freud's representatives of the collectivity--the kings and priests, "bearers of that mysterious and dangerous magic power which communicates itself by contact, like an electric charge, bringing death and destruction to any one not protected by a similar charge." (1948: 56) When the king touches intentionally, it heals; but when he is touched, it destroys. Arching between sovereign and subject, the energy is munificent; turned about, it blows the circuit box.

The taboos surrounding the powerful, which guard their approach through protocol, sequester them in sacred sites, give them great powers, yet hedge in their freedom with a dense web of etiquette originate, Freud argues, in the unconscious hostility, nay the murderous urges, their subjects harbor towards them. Our attitude towards the powerful is ambivalent—both veneration and hatred, love and a sense of persecution. Through taboo, we protect both them and ourselves from the aggression within us. Like Durkheim's sacred, taboo's current is alternating, the original meaning of the word being both holy and unclean (1948: 88-89).

Freud reads totemic ritual as symptom, an expression of a shared unconscious wish. The psychic economy governing taboos is similar to that which he observed in his obsessive neurotic patients who cannot explain why they forbid themselves from touching certain things because they believe that the power within them is contagious, that violation of the prohibition will lead inexorably to punishment, and therefore engage in all manner of rituals of purification and penance. In the case of obsessional neurosis, some desire is repressed, kept out of awareness, and although unavailable,

nonetheless makes its presence felt. It is this desire, Freud argues, that powers the prohibition, prohibition proportional to the inadmissible desire (1948:44).

For Freud the certainty of punishment prevents us from realizing that we, too, have desires to do what has been forbidden (1948: 46, 94). For Durkheim, in contrast, the swiftness and severity of punishment is an indicator of the social sacrality of that which had been violated, reflecting not the heterosexual pleasure individually denied, but the homosocial pleasures enabling social authority. Potential individual bodily pains are commensurate to the collective bodily pleasures generating that sacrality. Durkheim refuses the atomic individual of contractarian liberalism, locating the basis of the social in the group, while Freud, for all his irrational, divided eroticization of social relations, ultimately organizes that erotic logic through dyadic relations grounded in individuals competing over sexual objects, even if those individuals and the logic of that competition is socio-legal in nature.

The two taboos—against eating the totem and incestuous intercourse with the women, both daughters and mothers, of one’s family--parallel what Freud finds in his neurotic patients, namely an ambivalent desire to kill the father and to have sexual relations with the mother, the Oedipal complex. The Oedipal myth, in which a son unknowingly slays his father and sleeps with his mother, reveals, Freud argues, the unrealized and unrealizable desires of the unconscious, unspeakable murderous wishes that all sons carry toward their fathers as a result of their rivalrous love for their mothers, a rage born out of a frustrated desire to possess her exclusively.

The Oedipal complex is resolved ontogenetically through identification with the father, taking his prohibitive powers inside as conscience, or superego, renouncing the desire to possess the mother. In normal human development, the son resolves his desire to have the mother by choosing to be his father. Object choices are replaced by identifications, having the mother by being the father. If, for Durkheim, the totem is a symbol of masculine society, for Freud, it is a symbol of the primal father, a figure with whom the sons of each generation identify, a representation with which they align their bodies, as they enter into manhood, assume their role as representatives of the collectivity.

If Durkheim started with the simplest societies to find the elementary structures of our own religious thought, Freud went to the elemental and most common psychic disorders, assuming that the development of each individual recapitulates the history of the species. Little children, for example, believe that their wishes, their thoughts, have enormous power in the world, a conception identical to that which organizes magic, magic being akin to the play of children (1948: 109-110), a suspension of the distance separating the world of imagination from the world of objects. This belief in magic, “forcing the laws of psychic life upon the reality of things,” (1948:119) corresponded, Freud contended, to the first stage of individual development, in which sexual impulses are not directed to the external object world, but towards the self, the ego. Freud first

identified this autoeroticism as narcissism in his psychoanalytic biography of Leonardo da Vinci (1964). The magical, animistic thought of primitive peoples, Freud argued, reflected this infantile “sexualization” of thought. In the neurotic, who responds to the reality of thought, not of experience, one can see the earliest forms of society, where thinking had yet to be desiccated of desire, the renunciation of the “pleasure principle” necessary to science.

Our individual psychic structure, Freud argued, contains the deposits of collective history, inherited “psychic dispositions,” the contents of an unconscious “mass psyche” (1948: 204). Likewise in his studies of dreams, Freud points to common dreams which cannot be the product of individual experience (Roth, 1987: 142). In *Totem and Taboo* Freud locates that historical moment that has left its deposit as a “piece of inherited psychic property.” (1948: 43) The totemic taboo, he suggests, reflects an actual historical memory, a moment when men did what they desired. The Darwinian theory upon which he drew at that time argued that pre-historical men traveled in hordes, each led by a dominant man who kept all the women of his horde as his own. Freud also relied on the theories of William Robertson Smith (1846-1894), a scholar of the Old Testament, who had done work based on a traveler’s account on the totemism of the ancient tribes of the Sinai desert (Smith, 1969). Smith described how the group would tie up a camel on an altar of stones, circumambulating the tethered dromedary, until the leader drove in the first knife, his followers drinking the blood spurting out, after which they would all hack “off pieces of the quivering flesh and devouring them raw with such wild haste, that in the short interval between the rise of the day star . . . and the disappearance of its rays before the rising sun, the entire camel, body and bones, skin, blood and entrails is wholly devoured.” (Smith, 1969: 338). Smith, who influenced Durkheim as well, argued that these totemic rites, in which the members worshipped and actually consumed an animal they considered to be their ancient ancestor, was a means by which humans partook of the divine and thereby sacralized the social group, functioning to sustain its solidarity.

Identification precedes object choice as an affective modality, being before having (Roth, 1987). Freud argues that the proscribed totem is a projective substitute for the father, the ego ideal, here akin to children who identify with, yet project their hostility towards, and consequent fear of, their fathers on to animals (1948: 166-167). Through the ceremonial eating of the totem, the members of the clan affirm their consubstantiality, their being of the same substance or kinship, with each other and with the deity (1948: 178). The totemic ritual is then not only a performance of identity with the father; it is also, Freud contends, a violent assimilation, a having, not a being.

There is, Freud contends, a bloody moment in our history that accounts for this totemic sacrifice, a “great event with which culture began” (1948: 187). The

democracy of brothers has murderous origins. This great sociological bedtime story goes like this:

One day the expelled brothers joined forces, slew and ate the father, and thus put an end to the father horde. Together they dared and accomplished what would have remained impossible for them singly...Of course these cannibalistic savages ate their victim. The violent primal father had surely been the envied and feared model for each of the brothers. Now they accomplished their identification with him by devouring him and each acquired a part of his strength. The totem feast, which is perhaps mankind's first celebration, would be the repetition and commemoration of this memorable, criminal act with which so many things began, social organization, moral restrictions and religion. (1948: 183)

The totemic sacrifice represents the sons' victory over patriarchal power, or in later interpretations when the facticity of the event was suspended, their vanquishing of a perennial desire, not an historical act, to destroy the father, or the father's place. No wonder, Freud argued, the totemic sacrifice, the periodic sacrifice of the most sacred animal, indeed its eating, was always accomplished together, never alone; no wonder it was obligatory. All had to take responsibility for this murder.

The killed animal is first mourned and then celebrated, reflecting the sons' love of the father, an absent father who can now be safely loved, incorporated through identification in the form of the superego. Freud writes portentously, "The dead now became stronger than the living had been..." As in Durkheim's treatment of the social, this paternal corpse lives on inside of us, but is not of us. Christianity's success, Freud argues, derives from its supreme atonement for this murderous desire, this original sin, the son becoming a god, the children identifying themselves with him by ritual consumption of his body and blood (1948: 198-199). The social has criminal origins, scenes bloodied by forbidden love and death.

The wish to be like the father, to be omnipotent, does not die with the father, but rather grows, becoming "an ideal...having as a content the fullness of power and the freedom from restriction of the conquered primal father, as well as the willingness to subject themselves to him." (1948: 191-192). This father ideal is the basis of the gods and "godlike kings who transfer the patriarchal system to the state." (1948: 193). Sacrifice to the gods replaces totemic sacrifice. And to the state, instead of sacrificing totemic animals, we now sacrifice human kind. "It must be said that the revenge of the deposed and reinstated father has been very cruel; it culminated in the dominance of authority." (1948: 193). Generalized authority originates in ambivalent death wishes against patriarchal power. As in Durkheim, the structure of religious representation is the same as that of the modern state.

Sociality has a sexual organization. Freud links exogamy and totemism, totemism being the first definition of the social group within which sexual intercourse was denied. Freud pairs the prohibition of killing the totemic animal with the

prohibition of incestuous relations within the family (1948: 185). He argues that “the exogamy connected with the totem...makes it impossible for the man to have sexual union with all the women of his own group, with a number of females, therefore, who are not consanguineously related to him, by treating all these women like blood relations” (1948: 9). He cites Durkheim, who points out that according to totemic law, a son would be of the same totemic blood as that of his mother and sisters (1948: 156, 163). However Freud changes Durkheim’s causal logic. Unlike Freud, Durkheim, in his *Incest: The Nature and Origin of Taboo* ([1897] 1963), derived incest taboos not from profane heterosexual competition for the father’s women, but from a sexually unmarked revulsion at profane contact with the substance of one’s totem. In Durkheim’s account there is no foregone heteroerotic desire by the sons for their mothers or sisters. Referring to a “repression of incest,” Durkheim argued that the clan men experienced a “religious horror” at sexual contact with the menstrual blood, with their own substance. It is sexual revulsion at the social same, not social revulsion at the sexual other.

In the societies upon which Freud is building his argument, the totem is, as he himself recognizes, inherited matrilineally, while families are formed patrilocally (1948:158). Matrilineal inheritance sets up a strange sociological flaw in Freud’s argument. The totemic rite is of matrilineal kin, not patrilocal family (1948:175). In such cases it manages the consubstantiality of the sons with their mothers, not their fathers. The totemic taboo prevents sons from having sexual relations with the substance of their mothers, not their fathers. Although he recognizes this (1948:158), Freud insists on making the totem into a paternal symbol:

If the totem animal is the father, then the two taboo rules which constitute its nucleus,—not to kill the totem animal and not to use a woman belonging to the same totem for sexual purposes,—agree in content with the two crimes of Oedipus... (1948:171)

In fact, when sons eat their totem, they are eating the substance of their mother's line, not their father's. Freud has the sons eating the mother's totem, although he has remade him into a man, a "female" father substitute. The relationship between son and father is refigured as an oral relation between son and mother, a consumption which Freud describes, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, as the first ambivalent identification, in which food is both assimilated and destroyed as an external object, "a devouring affection" (Freud, 1959:47). The annual totemic sacrifice is an object-cathexis, a having of the father, not a being of the father. The cultural logic of the totemic sacrifice repudiates the Oedipal resolution in which paternal identification displaces maternal object-love. In this rite, the father is ritually allowed to become an object of the son's desire, identification symbolically realized through consumption (1948: 191), sacrifice making the introjection material.

There is, Freud surmises, a phylogenetic moment that is consonant with this unspeakable desire to have the father, or to be had by him. The desire to kill the father, Freud tells us, originates in a paternal proscription of his sons' intra-clan heterosexual relations. While we now effortlessly make the exogamous jump, in Freud's mythic text there is still an active pre-exogamous moment, unsettling for the sexuality of that paternal place. In both *Totem and Taboo* and the later *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, paternal proscription of sexual relations with the women of the clan passes to exogamy through homoerotic bonding. Freud locates the origins of the sons' collective organization, their ability to challenge the father's sexual monopoly, in "the homo-sexual feelings and activities which probably manifested themselves during the time of their banishment" (1948:186; 1959:72). The father's imposition of heterosexual austerities on his sons pushes them into mutual erotic identification, "into group psychology." After killing the primal father, the sons agree that all the clan's women would be denied them.

In *Totem and Taboo* Freud made homoerotics into a substitution for heteroerotics, one standing at the origin of the first social contract, the sons' renunciation of the women of the clan as sensuous objects, and their conversion into sexual property to be exchanged exogamously. If exogamous heterosexuality is an original consequence of social organization, endogamous homosexuality is its original source, the erotic face of its "mystical foundation" in Derridean terms. Freud never wavered on this foundational basis of modern social organization. Indeed, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* Freud makes heterosexual desire into an enemy of social organization, whereas "desexualized, sublimated homosexual love for other, which springs from work in common" is a "civilizing factor" (1959:44; see also [1905] 2000). There "is no room for woman as a sexual object," he writes, in the "great artificial groups" of society (1959: 94). The implication, of course, is that there is a place for men as sexual objects. "It seems certain," he writes, "that homosexual

love is far more compatible with group ties, even when it takes the shape of uninhibited sexual impulsion...” (1959: 95).

If in his mythico-history, Freud makes the homerotics of the brother clan the mediation between the primal horde and exogamous patriarchy, in his clinical studies he makes homoerotics integral to the formation of the male individual ego, to masculine identification, and to the psychic operation of authority more generally. Freud begins his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* with a discussion of “sexual aberrations,” pride of place among given to the “invert,” he (or she) who is deviant with respect to their sexual object. The relation between sexual instinct and sexual object, he argues, is contingent, “merely soldered together.” (Freud, [1905] 2000: 14). That we make people of the opposite sex our exclusive object choices is not then a fact of nature, but of culture, a “fumbling” libidinal trajectory. In his psychoanalytic biography of Leonardo da Vinci (1964), published three years before *Totem and Taboo*, Freud declares “everyone, even the most normal person, is capable of making a homosexual object-choice, and has done so at some time in his life, and either still adheres to it in his unconscious or else protects himself against it by vigorous counter-attitudes.”<sup>1</sup> For Freud symptoms are substitutes, or “transcriptions,” of repressed desires, the “negative of perversions” (2000:31). He makes the extraordinary generalization: “The unconscious mental life of all neurotics (without exception) shows inverted impulses, fixation of their libido upon persons of their own sex” (2000: 32). Civilization, a skein of neurotic symptoms, thus has a homoerotic constitution.

In the normative resolution of the Oedipal complex, a boy’s inability to have the mother as a sexual object is resolved through his ability to be the father, forbidden heterosexual desire retained and resolved through gender identification. But paternal identification also transmutes a homosexual object-choice, one that is at the heart of sociality. Just like the totemic clan the individual subject is formed through bodily representation. In *Ego and the Id*, Freud argues that the self—the ego—is first figured through an imagined body, a sexed morphological imaginary (1962:16). The imagined body in whose bounded image ego formation takes place during the “mirror stage” has a sex. The male self is both formed and sexed as a resolution of an inhabitation of the bodily form of paternal authority, an outside which is in us, but not of us, but the condition for our being. As Judith Butler has pointed out, this homoerotic loss initiates the ego as a perceptual object, as a container for reflexively turned, unavowable erotic desire and sadistic rage at its loss and uninhabitability (Butler, 1997: 132-150). That desire is both refused and retained in a melancholic gender identification, an ungrievable loss (1997:132-150). Men want to have the femininity they can never be and want to be the masculinity they can never have. The habitable space of gender is grounded in an uninhabitable space of sex. Paternal identification solves not one, but two problems in this sexual economy.

Group formation likewise operates through paternal identification, which, like his murder, is enabled through homoerotic solidarity among the sons. Immediately after explaining in *Group Psychology* that the introjected paternal object is a substitute for the libidinal object tie with the woman (1959: 50), Freud launches into the genesis of male homosexuality, the boy's failure to give up the mother as a cathected object, the "negative" Oedipal complex, the transformation of the male ego on the model of the female. Boy becomes girl mirroring the way in which Freud has the man, through the matrilineal totem, becoming woman. Group formation is quintessentially masculine, yet involves men being womanly.

In analyzing the paternal identification process at its heart, Freud stages two scenes of group formation: the primal horde and the hypnotist's gaze. In the other scene in which Freud conjures the group—hypnosis—he declares that this dyad is identical with group formation, group formation with two members (1959: 59). The hypnotic is uncanny, "something old and familiar that has undergone repression" and returns in unfamiliar guise. That something, Freud asserts, is the source of the taboo, a mysterious power. It is the performative power of the father's gaze, through which the ego comes into existence and through which it can be destroyed. The authority of the group, like that of the hypnotist, is an erotic penetration by the father, a cathected object brought inside. Hypnosis works when the son allows himself to be penetrated, when a man becomes womanly, when he responds to the command to "sleep," to withdraw all interest from the object world around him.

Rereading Freud's originary myth, the sons' rage then is not just over sensuous access to sisters and mother, who would be of the same substance according to totemic inheritance, but over another pain, the forbidden desire to be the sensuous object of the father's gaze, the desire to be the mother which is simultaneously a desire to be had by the father. Identification with the father then is also a homoerotic tie, a desire to have, resolved by a constriction to be, an internalization of another masculine bodily representation.

### The Sex of Collective Representation

"Moral authority," Durkheim writes, derives its power through "psychic properties, mythologized because "the influence of society...moves along channels that are too obscure and circuitous, and uses psychic mechanisms that are too complex, to be easily traced to the source" (1995: 210-211). Durkheim pointed to the pleasures of masculine assembly, whether in the corporate group or the totemic rite, as the energy animating collective representation, both its force and its formation. "Through effervescent assembly, man comes into "relations with extraordinary powers that excite him to the point of frenzy" (Durkheim, 1995: 220). He also argued that it was only through such energized aggregation that men became aware of their status as *homo duplex*, both individual and social, "the twofold nature in which he participates"

(1995:221). The totem, “the visible body of the god,” is thus an unconscious projection, the “body” of an unrecognized “Other,” a collective body that has penetrated into oneself, powered by a force of desire, something “set apart and forbidden (1995:44, 223).

Does psychoanalytic theory point to other “obscure channels” for moral authority? Both Durkheim and Freud give primacy to representation over referent, to images, to “psychic realities,” to the semiotic over the somatic. Both also, however, make somatics into a constituent of semiosis. Both operate through the medium of an unconscious process, the unspeakable impersonal anonymous force of masculine society on the one hand, and the unfulfilled and unfulfillable wish to be the father on the other.

And yet one cannot simply be folded one into the other. Freud starts with the sexual interests of individuals as determined by sons’ relations to female bodies as instruments of pleasure, the social being a misrecognized generalization of patriarchal authority. Durkheim, in contrast, starts with the sociality of a wider kin network, making interest, utility and calculation, a subsidiary form. Freud’s theory thus fuses bourgeois individualism and sexuality, not just the properties of sex, but to sex as property. He gives primacy to sexual possession, to possession of the other as an object, to pleasure as possession, to objects as the condition of an always alienated subjectivity.

Freud reads the totem through the shared experience of ambivalent renunciation, its social productivity being a medium to accommodate Oedipal guilt, transposed and generalized as authority. Freud thus starts—as do the liberal economists—with a distributive problem, with freedom foregone, sexual opportunity costs. Durkheim, in contrast, starts with a production function, an enabling, an empowerment, the totem’s producing the social as the social produces man, men sacrificing themselves to the totem as they produce the social. Totemic ritual mimes the human making of society and societal making of man (1995: 348-354). Without effervescent assembly, he writes, collective representation would “eventually disappear into the unconscious” (1995:349). For Durkheim, the symbolic logic of totemic representation lies in the reciprocal dependence of individual man and collective society, whereas in Freud, it lies in the ambivalent love of the father.

Both Freud and Durkheim make homosocial energy the basis of solidarity in complex groups. However Freud locates the origin of the social in a renunciation of heterosexual desire, while Durkheim makes its homoerotic expression a source of the social. Freud is here the individual instrumental, sexual Hobbesian, while it is Durkheim who makes the social, indeed the moral, derive from collective passion, “delirium” and “ecstasy” (1995: 228). If Freud locates the origin of the social in an original instrumental, contractual suppression of male heterosexual desire, Durkheim locates it rather in a recurrent expression of homosocial desire. If Durkheim’s

hermeneutic key to the totem is our unconscious debt as individuals to the social, Freud's is our unconscious internal aggression to the patriarch.

Freud derives the experience of consubstantiality of totem and man from a fleshy family, from the mother-child bond and the son's deferred identification with the father. Durkheim, in contrast, derives consubstantiality from the experience of a wider social, a representation of embodied oneness with other men. Freud's is an imaginary resolution to a scarce heterosexual economy, while Durkheim's is an imaginary expression of a fulfilled homosocial congress. In point of fact, Freud's clinical theory of individual development is more consistent with Durkheim's account of totemism than is his own historical mythology. And Durkheim, in turn, points to the truth, and indeed a liberatory aspect, of Freud's homoerotic theory. For what in Freud is a feminizing, violent subordination to masculine hierarchy, is, in Durkheim, a masculinizing, non-violent, non-hierarchical assimilation. Freud eroticizes power; Durkheim does not.

Both Durkheim and Freud make somatics into a constituent of semiosis, an immanent relation between individual and collective bodies, as metaphor, mechanics, and energetics of collective representation. We can align these two symbolic orders through the logic of incorporation, through society's "two bodies"—actually four—of individual and collective bodily representation and representative, of individual and collective subjects and their flesh. It is stunning, by its obviousness, that individual bodies arrive *ex machine* in Durkheim's account, an account not only without women, but without human babies, an infancy at the very center of psychoanalytic theory.<sup>2</sup> Yet it is the utter dependence of the individual on the society, its language and law, and the child on its parents, that constitutes their parallel and reciprocal sociality. Durkheim shows how the totemic clan is represented through the individual body of an animal or plant written into the individual male body, bodies the energy of whose massing both animates and represents the collectivity. If ironically Durkheim specifies the homoerotic logic of totemic identification, it is Freud who provides a psychological mechanism—unconscious bodily identification—by which that body might be incorporated into the self. The totem of the clan, being a higher order of social organization than the natal family, can then be read as an occupation of the place of the father recapitulating the sons' identification with the person of the father in the family. In structuralist terms, there is no contradiction between the two.

The anti-reductivist sociological hostility to psychoanalysis is only tenable if it is assumed that the individual is not already a social formation. The subject of psychoanalysis is itself a social construction, a polity inside the skin, built on the image of an other's body. In psychoanalytic theory, individuals inhabit two collective bodies, their own and that of the larger society. Both collective and individual bodies are bounded, set in motion as reflexive subjects, through an internalized authority, a sovereign within. For a boy, the ideal of authority is

typically represented by the father. The father enters this mechanism as symbol, as an authoritative ideal, an ideal of authority, not the person, but the place, of patriarchy. It is not surprising, then, that Freud introduces a collective subject—the collectivity that is an authoritative symbol—to this eroticized individual subject-making mechanism. Freud makes the loss of the ideal of a “country” a substitute for a lost person as well as itself a basis of melancholia, the loss of a collective symbolic object setting in motion the experience of ego loss (Freud 1962). Melancholia is a response to the loss of an ideal, of an individual or a collective subject, the one able to substitute for the other. This suggests that the two bodily egos, individual and collective, can each be a medium through which the other operates psychologically; that perceived threats to the individual subject, failures of the masculine self, can be acted out on a collective register, as efforts to masculinize the collectivity; and that perceived threats to the collective subject, incapacities of collective or national agency, might be countered and redressed through attempted reconstructions of the sexualized masculine self (Friedland, 2002). The transom of subject-formation—from individual to collective--works both ways.

Mindful of its ethnocentric, anachronistic dangers, I argue that psychoanalytic theory suggests other “psychic mechanisms” and the sexual truth of Durkheim’s collective representation, the pleasurable, yet forbidden, energies that power totemic projection.<sup>3</sup> Through the erotic logic of ambivalent identification and the embodied formation of the ego, it provides a mechanism by which social externality is internalized, a psychic structure critical to the operation of the social of which it is already a product. It suggests that for men a homoerotic charge animates the authority relation. There is thus a reason why friends and enemies of the mass, the crowd in the street, can both celebrate and denigrate it by identifying it as masculine and feminine, because it is both masculine and feminine. The gender of authority relations does not neatly align with its sexuality. There is a homoerotic secret to the division that inaugurates authority, a division that makes it both thrilling and shameful, necessary and difficult, independent of its instrumental effects, its ability to coordinate and produce the good things of life. The pure sacred is impure.

Normally the sons wear the totem, have it imprinted in the skin, written on their bodies—they are the father, or more precisely the paternal place—but they also occasionally take the totem into themselves, devour it: they have the father, and thereby assure the reproduction of the totemic species, which is the clan. The clan brothers eat the totem, become womanly, and here, in this moment of homoerotic identification, authority is born. Authority is a strange fusion of being and having, founded on an admixture of love and hatred, a pleasurable fear, precisely the combination of fascination and fear that Rudolph Otto would identify with the Holy (Otto, [1917], 1958).<sup>4</sup> Not just deferred heterosexual pleasure, then, but disavowed

homoerotic pleasure as well, is part of the constitution, part of the force of internalized authority. It follows that exclusion of women from collective representation is driven not simply negatively by heterosexual interest in male powers, but positively by desires for homosocial pleasures. Levi-Strauss' exchange of women as the currency of social cohesion, the use of women to prevent murder among men of different clans, becomes then a secondary moment. In the totemic rite, there is an accelerated exchange of women, the right to have superseded by the anterior property right as manifested as the right to give, to make a gift, if not to exchange. Freud's argument implies that this giving carries another charge, a mediated sexual exchange between men, which accords with its transgressive occurrence during the homosocial totemic rite, sexual congress with forbidden women substituting for that between men.

### Sexualizing Durkheim's Social

Durkheim intimated the sexualization of the social, effervescence as an eroticized sociality. If Durkheim did not theoretically engage the erotics of the sacred which he recognized empirically, some of his Parisian successors did. Founded in 1937 in the face of what they perceived as the enervated quality of parliamentary democracy, the stunning rise of fascism and the prospect of yet another European war, the short-lived College de Sociologie drew off Durkheim and Mauss's insistence that the effervescent sacred energized the social and its indeterminate transformations (Richman, 2002). Durkheim's collaborator Marcel Mauss's non-utilitarian treatment of the moral and sacred qualities of the gift and of sacrifice, was also formative (Wolin, 2004). The intellectual leaders of the College—Georges Bataille, Roger Caillois and Michel Leiris—sought those evanescent collective states of emotional violence out of which the fascists were building new virile national bodies, hoping to locate the social powers out of which liberating, oppositional forces might be fashioned. They too sought a new collective virility dimmed by parliamentary democracy and capitalist instrumentality. Indeed Durkheim and the College would be accused, by its positive valuation of an irrational solidarity, of having prepared the intellectual ground for fascism (Falasca-Zamponi, 2001; Wolin, 2004).

Declaring himself "ferociously religious," in the augural issue of his and Pierre Klossowski's *Acéphale* (June, 1936) presaging the formation of the College, Bataille wrote:

What we are starting is a war... The world to which we have belonged offers nothing to love outside of each individual insufficiency: its existence is limited to utility. A world that cannot be loved to the point of death—in the same way that a man loved a woman—represents only self-interest and the obligation to work... Existence is not only an agitated void, it is a dance that forces one to dance with fanaticism. (Bataille[1936] 1996c: 179).

What was required was a “sacred sociology,” one that saw the sacred as “determining the social structure,” that understood, quoting Kierkegaard, that politics would one day “show itself to be a religious movement” (Falasca-Zamponi, 2001). Kierkegaard, analyzing Abraham’s binding of his son for sacrifice, had pointed to the incommunicability of faith, its irreducibility to ethics, its “madness” ([1843] 1986). The College drew on the duality Durkheim had located inside the sacred itself: the pure sacred, understood as “guardians of physical and moral order, as well as dispensers of life, health, and all the qualities that men value,” and the impure sacred, “evil and impure powers, bringers of disorder, causes of death and sickness, instigators of sacrilege” (Durkheim: 1995:412; see Riley, this volume) Because Durkheim assumed the sacred objectified shared feelings of collective solidarity or threatened social dissolution and disorganization, of collective life and death, there was an “ambiguity of the sacred,” such that the pure could contaminate and the impure sanctify (1995:412-415).

If Durkheim emphasized the pure sacred, identified with the totemic rite, the College, and Bataille in particular, re-centered the effervescent social in the impure sacred, in transgression, in a “left” sacred opposing the instrumental powers of the “right” sacred, a move that would suffuse much of post-structuralist theory after the war. This was different than Jeffrey Alexander’s well-taken call to culturalize evil as a socially productive valuation, as opposed to the absence of the good (Alexander, 2003). Durkheim, Bataille claimed, had only been able to define the sacred negatively vis a vis the profane, identifying it with a particular form of sociality. Bataille claimed to identify the sacred positively as the “heterogeneous,” those forces which cannot be assimilated to a homogenous domain of commensurable objects--excessive, unproductive, unconscious—mobs, waste, madmen, dreams, corpses, dreams, and indeed the “force of a leader” ([1933], 1996b: 143). Bataille was impressed by fascism. “Just like early Islam, fascism represents the constitution of a total heterogeneous power whose manifest origin is to be found in the prevailing effervescence” (1996b: 153). It was only through heterogeneous forces that society could find a reason for being; Durkheim’s unities of sociality were insufficient to produce “the pure *having to be*” ([1933] 1996b:147). Collective authority depended on divine madness.

For Bataille, the logic of the sacred was to give oneself, to open oneself out, to move beyond instrumental calculability. Bataille drew on the sacrificial paradigm and the way it transformed the persons sacrificing:

Such an action would be characterized by the fact that it would have the power to liberate heterogenous elements and to break the habitual homogeneity of the individual, in the same way that vomiting would be opposed to its opposite, the communal eating of food. Sacrifice considered in its essential phase would only be the rejection of what had been appropriated by a person or by a group. Because

everything that is rejected from the human cycle is altered in an altogether troubling way, the sacred things that intervene at the end of the operation—the victim struck down in a pool of blood, the severed finger or ear, the torn-out eye—do not appreciably differ from vomited food. Repugnance is only one of the forms of stupor caused by a horrifying eruption, by the disgorging of a force that threatens to consume. The one who sacrifices is free—free to indulge in a similar disgorging, free, continuously identifying with the victim, to vomit his own being just as he has vomited a piece of himself or a bull, in other words free to throw himself sudden *outside of himself*, like a gall or an aissaouah.” (Bataille, 1996).

Here was a communicative irrationality.

For Bataille, the sacred’s first moment was located in that impure sacred, in our attraction to what most repulses, particularly to death, to the violated body and the corpse. Bataille read Freud ([1933] 1996b: 160). In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, published in 1920, Freud posited pleasure as a diminution of excitation, asserting the existence of an instinct to cancel this excitation, a cancellation whose logical end was death.<sup>5</sup> “[T]he “aim of all life,” Freud declared, “is death.” Bataille likely appropriated Freud’s theory to radicalize the self-transcendence of Durkheim’s effervescent assembly. Bataille thus located the end of social being in unproductive expenditure, *dépense*, not saving, investment or production, in the accumulation of power or wealth, which, he argued, are derivative from and subordinate to such expenditure (Bataille, [1933] 1996a; see also [1967] 1988).

The sacred, he argued, is constituted through loss, through expenditure, the sovereign operation. Activities like sacrifice, war, spectacle, communal feasts, and sexuality without “genital finality” were occasions affording such expenditure. The bourgeoisie’s hatred of expenditure combined with religion’s decline had opened the way to fascist militarism, its effervescence, the masses’ love of the leader, the purity of its sadism. “The affective flow that united [the leader]...with his followers...is a function of the common consciousness of increasingly *violent* and excessive energies and powers that accumulate in the person of the leader and through him become widely available” (Bataille: [1933] 1996b: 143). As Richard Wolin shows, Bataille esteemed Mussolini’s fascism, was drawn to fascist practices, sharing their disdain for parliamentary representation and their valorization of collective violence, seeking at one point to develop a left fascism, faced with the evident failure of the proletarian revolution (2004). This, of course, included an appreciation of war. War, Caillois, Bataille’s co-founder of the College, declared, was the modern equivalent of the festival, an occasion affording the excess necessary to revitalize the social order (Caillois, 1939, cited in Falasca-Zamponi, 2001). Bataille, too, celebrated collective violence, and war, as a social practice beyond calculation, capable of accessing the sacred, lifting humans beyond the status of mere things, expenditure. Durkheim’s

socially procreative erotics had become an aesthetics of violence, collective life made primordially through death.

In Bataille's last address to last meeting of the College in July 1939, after Hitler had already absorbed Austria and Czechoslovakia, when the French socialists were divided on the necessity of war, and the Hitler-Stalin pact was just a month away, he dared to speak, still, of sexual love as a model of social formation. "Love expresses a need for sacrifice: each unity must lose itself in some other, which exceeds it" (Bataille [1939] 1996: 250). The sacred derived from expenditure of man's substance, out of man's "need to expend a vital excess," out of a loss of oneself, this loss implying therefore the creation of a "laceration," "rip," or "wound." Like Freud, Bataille discerns the prospect of death inscribed in the very logic of love. It was out of this common desire for loss, for access to the sacred, to love excessively, Bataille argued, that social being was composed.

The implication was clear, the proliferation of sacrificial destruction, like eroticism unhinged from the "durable organization" of conjugality, was to flee this dilemma into "a measureless annihilation in a violent expenditure." "Just as eroticism slides without difficulty toward the orgy, sacrifice, becoming an end in itself, lays claim to universal value, beyond the narrowness of the community" (1996d:252). Hitler was at the door. Bataille spoke in the same month that Adolph Eichmann was appointed head of the Nazi's Prague office of emigration. The sacrifices had just begun.

Had the theoretical annihilation of the human as the foundation of the social prepared the way? It is the refusal to assimilate the death camp to a sacrificial logic that animates the Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben's critique of Bataille, for having failed to understand that the life, and hence its sacrifice, in which he grounds the sacred, and thus the sovereign, is, in fact, the outside inside of the state, the originary exclusion upon which both sovereignty and the state, particularly the modern state, is founded ([1995] 1998). Agamben refuses to derive sovereign power as a secularization of religion, locating it rather in a space created "prior" to that between religion and law, a space of exile and death that is neither political *bios* nor familial *zoe* (1998: 74, 90, 110). The content of sovereign power derives from an originary exclusion of what he calls bare life from both law and religion, which he condenses in the figure of *homo sacer*, the man who can be killed without it being a homicide and whose killing can never qualify as a sacrifice (1998: 83). It is this life, caught in the sovereign ban, declared outside the law and thus vulnerable to death, that is, he argues, the original sacred life and the referent of the sovereign decision. Bare life is "the earthly foundation of the state's legitimacy and sovereignty" (1998: 127). There is a link then between citizenship grounded in birth and the death camp. The ability to politicize *zoe* is the foundational sovereign right, the right to decide what life is worth

living. Agamben not only makes life-taking, rather than life-making, the sovereign foundation, he makes sado-masochism its central erotic axis.

For all his reversals, Bataille propounded a restricted sexual economy. He sought the heterogeneous in a new erotic cartography. In the image for *Acéphale* the headless male figure has a skull at his groin, its mouth located where the absent penis would have been located. In his fiction and his essays, Bataille liked to put the body's organs in anomalous, and thus repulsive, places. But in point of fact, the College de Sociologie was committed to a heterogeneous virility, relentlessly masculinist and heterosexual in theoretical orientation, a virility diminished by the individuating forces of democracy and capitalism. Although anal eroticism, as a paradigmatic form of unprocreative erotics, peppered Bataille's essays and fiction--see for example, "The Solar Anus," or "The Story of the Eye,"--the homoerotic had no role, let alone a privileged one, in his theoretical construction of the sacred.

Yet that homoeroticism was central to Nazism's rise. Bataille wrote on fascism just as Hitler was preparing the murderous destruction of the homosexual Ernst Rohm's SA, itself dominated by gay men. It is arguable that homoeroticism, an expenditure without biological product, might be integral to production of the sacred, the heterogeneity inside homogeneity, a central part of the "accursed share," necessary to the production of a social body. One of Bataille's favorite examples was the Aztec sacrifice, which, he argued, negated the human as thing, as use-value, the "accursed share, destined for violent consumption" (1988:59). "This was the price," he writes, "men paid to escape their downfall and remove the weight introduced in them by the avarice and cold calculation of the real order" (1988:61).

What Bataille likely did not know is that the sacrificial Aztec rite is grounded in a birth story of a nation and a god, a birth story where the boundary between male and female is ritually transgressed. The god Huitzilopochtli emerges from the female body of Coatlicue, impregnated by divine semen in the form of feathers, just as his enemies mount the Mount of the Serpent, enemies led by Coyolxauhqui, a woman warrior (Moctezuma, 1987: 50). A new collective body is born as Huitzilopotctli decapitates Coyolxauhqui with a serpent of fire, her body rolling down the mountain, falling into pieces (Carrasco, 1987: 134-135). This founding moment of gendered violence was built into the Templo Mayor, replicating the mountain where Huitzilopochtli was born, with an oval stone carving of the dismembered body of that woman warrior, Coyolxauhqui (Carrasco, 1987: 135). Warriors were brought here, sacrificed at the Temple's top, their bodies thrown down the steps, dismembered, eaten. Men, in their subordination to the Mexica, in their subjugation, become women, following the fleshy disassemblage, the deconstruction, of Coyolxauhqui, the woman warrior. And when the sacrificial victims fell to the bottom of the stairs, they would be cut apart to be consumed by Aztec men, men becoming one with the men they have transformed into women (see also Carrasco, 1999: 205-206).

The argument that there is often a homoerotic constitution to the sacred, and indeed to authority more generally, does not depend on ethnocentric psychoanalytic

projection, on my apparently unnatural mating of Durkheim and Freud. The ethnological, ethnographic, religious and political record provides ample evidence, which exceed the limits of this chapter.

### Beyond Social Theory's Anti-Climax

Durkheim did not theorize the erotics of the sacred because of the way in which he corporealized *homo duplex*, identifying the profane, non-social ego with the pleasures of the body, and the sacred social with the non-corporeal soul and the sacrifice of those pleasures, indeed, the infliction of pains up to and including sacrificial death (see, Durkheim, 1995: 315-32; Shilling, this volume). "The ideal beings to which cults are addressed are not alone in demanding of their servants a certain contempt for pain; society, too, is possible only at that price" (1995:321). However, *homo duplex*, in totemic rite at least, is not homologous with corporeality and spirituality, with individual pleasure and collectively imposed pain. It does however seem to align with the individuated heterosexual exchange of women between clans and the de-individuated homosexual massing of men within the clan. If sacred authority has a homoerotic constitution, if this is the impure sacred core of sovereign representation, then Bataille was wrong to argue that the sacred derives from the desire for loss. Rather it derives from the desire to lose the loss of paternal love. Could it be that the impassible divide between sacred and profane is partially grounded in the social organization of this sexuality, that the establishment of a collective domain outside the heterosexual family also generates and depends upon a separate domain of homoerotic pleasure and imagination? Is it possible that the establishment of the state is itself a sexual act, a double separation of two sexes, woman and man, heterosexual and homosexual, that the state not only has a sex, but is a sex?

It is not just Durkheim's installation as a totemic ancestor of post-structuralist varieties of cultural sociology that is at stake here. Contained within Durkheim's masterpiece is a call to make sociology of religion once again the discipline's central task, not as the study of the mechanics and regularities of an institutional sphere that still eludes theoretical definitions not inflected with theology, but the task of a religious sociology, the interpretation and explanation of the sacred in its constitutive role in the social. Thinking Durkheimian sociology and Freudian psychoanalysis together, as already intimated by the College de Sociologie, implies that this engagement with the sacred will involve not only an embodied, but a newly sexualized, social theory.<sup>6</sup> Theorists like Michael Taussig and Elaine Scarry have shown the socially productive powers of bodily techniques, precisely because they exceed language, pushing us towards metonymy and humanism respectively. In the case of the first, Taussig argues that magic's "implosive viscosity," its use of movement of indeterminate objects across the bodily frontier mimes, both concealing and reproducing, the sacred, "public" secret of "reality as really made up" (Taussig,

1998: 234). In the case of the second, bodily pain, because it cannot be translated into words, is used to substantiate unsubstantiable social truths through torture and war (Scarry, 1985).<sup>7</sup> Pierre Bourdieu (2001) and Michel Foucault (1990) have prepared the sexual ground, by showing the ways in which sexuality is socially constituted.<sup>8</sup> But it is time to move beyond reading the sexual through social categories, as an eroticization of domination, to try also to read the social through the sexual, to grasp the ways in which sexual, desiring bodies, imaginary identifications, and erotic energies, animate the formation of particular institutional practices and configurations. As Widick has pointed out (2003), Bourdieu himself increasingly moved towards the psychoanalytic in his later work, equating his *illusio* with libido ([1994] 1998:76), and then in *Pascalian Meditations* ([1997] 2000: 166), calling up Freud himself in order to understand “[t]he initial form of *illusio* is investment in the domestic space, the site of a complex process of socialization of the sexual and sexualization of the social.” Bourdieu called for the combination of sociology and, by implication, a psychoanalytic psychology, to accomplish this task. This is not to suggest that psychoanalysis is sufficient for understanding social life (Roth, 1987). However, the humans who inhabit sociological accounts--lacking in fantasy, unconsciousness, erotic passion, and thirst for the social gift—are patently inadequate to the world around us.

Sexual desire, and indeed sex itself, now stalks the sociological house. Its theoretical embrace will require us to grapple with feminist and queer theory not as a recognition of difference, but as a pathway into the erotic constitution of the social, to sexuality not as an attribute of persons, nor as immanent in textual formations, but as an institutional problem (Seidman, 1997; Grosz, 1995). The sex of social theory is at stake, the intimate relation between biology and cosmogony, individual and social bodies, pleasure and power. This theoretical task is of political moment, for around the world we face an often-violent politicization of religion, intense, often effervescent, collective identifications with God where sexual pleasure, the sexual meanings of manhood and womanhood, are at the center of the storm (Friedland, 2002; Juergensmeyer, 2000).

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<sup>1</sup> It is from Da Vinci's reference to Eros as the "preserver of all living things," that Freud will adopt the term as his own to denote sexual instincts (1964:17).

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Richard Widick for bringing this home to me.

<sup>3</sup> The dangers of presentist anachronism is no more or less grave for psychoanalytic theory than for social theory more general. Indeed sometimes the degrees of invisibility don't seem that different.

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<sup>4</sup> Freud would argue that strong fear, the extreme fear of the paranoid, could always be linked back to repressed homosexual fantasies (Freud, [1911] 1996). The paranoid, Freud declares, translates love of an external male object into hatred of that object, justifying that hatred by a sense of persecution. There is a psychic economy of paranoia in the constitution of authority.

<sup>5</sup> Caillois drew explicitly on this text. See Hollier, 1988: XVI.

<sup>6</sup> In writing about sexuality in this way, I am, mindful of the argument that sexuality is a historically specific discursive formation, a transformation of bodies, desire and pleasures into a unitary anatomical politics, that organizes hetero-homosexuality as well as gender (Foucault, 1978). I treat desire as an invested erotic relation to other bodies, including one's own, sexuality being the practice of that relation.

<sup>7</sup> Indeed, in the magic of the Waldemar Bogoras, Taussig points out "[t]he greatest trick of course was...to change one's sex, thanks to help from the spirits, a change that could well eventuate at least in the case of a man, in his taking male lovers or becoming married to a man. Such 'soft men,' as they were called, were feared for their magic more than unchanged men or women. (1996:228).

<sup>8</sup> Bourdieu's study, *Masculine Domination*, inadvertently sets up this problem by arguing on the one hand, that normal heterosexual male desire is an "eroticized domination," (2001:21), while on the other hand positing "love" as a "miraculous truce in which domination seems dominated (2001:110). The latter becomes a "secular substitute for God." The implication is that there is a eroticized domination in religious imagination.