Religious Terror and the Erotics of Exceptional Violence[1]

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Religion's re-entry into the public sphere been punctuated by spectacular episodes of organized violence, sometimes executed by a few men, and often by masses of them. This violence has been conducted overwhelmingly by men who wish to ground the policies and the identity of the nation-state in a particular religion, men backed by or belonging to movements that are, either explicitly or de facto, religious nationalists. Even where the nation state is not itself invested with theological value, as in the case of the mainstream radical Islam, including al-Qaeda, it is the Islamicization of existent nation-states that is their immediate objective. Thus the Taliban, with which Al-Qaeda was aligned, sought to create a federation of Islamic republics, not a unitary Islamic state.

Not infrequently the violence of their male activists who seek to defend a sacred territorial space is also directed at women, particularly the women of groups understood to threaten the boundedness and purity of the territorial nation-state. In the case of Orthodox Christian Serbian nationalist struggle in Bosnia-Herzogovinia, the two profanations were aligned. Serbians sought to recapture and expel the Albanian Muslims in Kosovo, the medieval center of Serbian nationalism, the site of the Serb patriarchate. According to Serbian nationalist history and literature, it was at the 14th century battle of Kosovo that the Ottoman Sultan destroyed Serbian sovereignty, martyring Prince Lazar. Lazar was identified as a Christ figure, the Muslims his murderer.[2] The Serbian nationalist projected their contemporary struggle with the Muslims back into this template, parading Prince Lazar's relics through the province. In 1989 Serb President Slobodan Milosevic spoke to up to two million pilgrims who assembled to commemorate the battle of Kosovo. Orthodox Christian Serb nationalists broadcast that the Bosnian Muslims were plotting to kidnap Christian women and confine them to their harems, that the Muslim Albanians had targeted Serbian women for rape. It would be the Christian Serbs who would systematically gang rape tens of thousands of Albanian women in special camps.[3] In 1999, Orthodox Serbs were alleging that the Muslims had destroyed or desecrated over seventy churches in Kosovo.[4]

This same conjunction of violations of sacred space and female bodies was in evidence in the Indian case. In the February, 2002 Gujarat riots, Hindu nationalists were passing by train through Godhra, Gujarat, returning from Ayodhya where they had been agitating for the construction of a Hindu temple on the site of the mosque their confreres in the movement had already razed. The local Muslims were provoked, it was said, by rumors that a Muslim girl had been abducted and/or molested.[5] As is common in these conflagrations, rumors circulated that Hindu girls had been raped (Kakar, 1996:47). The Hindu nationalist crowds responded by razing mosques and *dargahs*, graves shrine of a Muslim ascetic, often placing statues of Hanuman in these sites. Hindu nationalist mobs also gang raped large numbers of girls and women, in one case ripping up a pregnant woman's belly and cutting out the baby, these things not infrequently done in the presence of other family members,

and then burning their victims alive. As Pandey has shown, patterns of reciprocal rape and abduction of women were a common occurrence in the partition.[6] Indeed, some 75,000 women were estimated to have been raped or abducted in 1947

Religious violence is men killing in the name of God, extraordinary interventions into history that mime God's own often-violent incursions. What is so striking is that politicized religion in general, and religious nationalism in particular, is powered by a sexual imaginary, one, I will argue, not unrelated to God's exceptional power. Politicized religions—and the religious warriors in particular--are obsessed with sex, with the display of female flesh, with the regulation of sexual organs, with veils and sexual fidelity. Feminine flesh in particular attracts their ire.

Some very sophisticated analysts of radical Islam, for example, have argued that this preoccupation with sexuality is a tactic conditioned by political-economic constraints. Gilles Kepel, the comparative Islamicist, argues that politicized Islam turns to what he calls "morality" in order to avoid the clash of interests between its two core constituencies: the devout bourgeoisie and the young urban poor. "The Islamists intelligentsia's role," he writes, "was to gloss over this clash of social agendas and reconcile the two groups to the shared pursuit of power. The intellectuals did this by concentrating on the moral and cultural dimensions of religion" (2002:67).

Likewise, in accounting for the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in North Africa, Fatima Mernissi (1987) has pointed to the rapid increase of educated and employed women who not only compete with men for limited employment opportunities but are able to choose when they will marry and to exert more influence within their families on account of the monies they bring home. Fundamentalism is then understood as a way for men to win back money and power, for potential rulers to reduce unemployment. .

To argue that religious nationalism is just a cover for failed political economics by an opposition party or a governing regime, or even just masculine reaction is to miss religious nationalism's distinct ontology of state power, its derivation of authority from divine sources, its constitution of society as a faith-based familial order, and the integral relation between the two. Religious nationalism, including its violence, I will argue, is a sexual project, and necessarily so.

I write these words as Defense Secretary Rumsfeld apologizes on television for the sexual humiliation of Iraqi prisoners before they were interrogated. Iraqi men were stripped naked and forced to simulate homosexual acts, one being led naked by a woman soldier with a leash tied to his neck. Some men were actually sodomized. The American tactics, at variance with the Geneva Accords, we now know, were, in fact, approved at the very summit of the government. That sexual humiliation, the subordination of men into "womanly" positions, was used to gain access to secrets, indicates, I suspect, the hidden logic of the situation, not only for them, but for us. That it is sexual abuse that garners American outrage speaks to what is at stake in this struggle—manhood. Beyond their efficacy, that American soldiers sought to unman Iraqi prisoners is at least in part a reaction to the fear that Muslim men would appear to prove once again—after Lebanon, Somalia, Yemen--that their faith made them stronger than American men armed with the most awesome military powers. That manhood is the stake of stakes is indicated by the fact that killing, on purpose or by accident, does not outrage the Americans, nor apparently the Iraqis, nearly so much. Our eyes are on the sex of subjectivity.

The moral arithmetic of death is not enough to understand what is going on in Iraq, the struggle between a population that fights increasingly under the banner of Islam and the American forces who seek "infinite justice" under the banner of democracy. The Iraqi men and children who attacked the American contractors providing security for food deliveries on March 31, 2004 in Fallujah, a Sunni city, did so on Islamic grounds. For them killing the Americans was not enough.

Chanting "We redeem Islam with our blood," they dismembered the charred bodies and hacked them to pieces before hanging two of them from a bridge. It was this event that led to the American siege of Fallujah, a fateful moment in what appears to be the progressive implosion of the American project of democratizating Iraq. Death was not enough.

I write this as the *New York Times* reports that in England, Islamic clerics call on Muslims in the West to become Allah's sword. Sheik Omar Bakri Mohammad, living and preaching near London, the paper reports, "spent much of his time Thursday night regaling his young followers with the erotic delights of paradise—sweet kisses and the pleasures of bathing with scores of women—while he also preached the virtues of death in Islamic struggle as a ticket to paradise." (Tyler and Van Natta, Jr., 2004). It is important to remember that President Bush achieved sobriety, saved his marriage and his self-worth in the face of a collapsing Texas oil economy, and entry on the road towards political power through his participation in an all-male Bible study group in Midland, Texas which he joined in 1985. The President was "born again." For George Bush, Christianity and masculinity are tightly joined, both now being tested by irredentist Islam in Iraq.

Beyond death, there is a sex to this struggle between political theologies, one that touches our private parts, a relation between potency and power, a dimension about which it is difficult to speak, yet one that must be explored and understood if we are to make our way in this increasingly terrified world. Sex is our secret, too.

The Asexuality of Social Theory

That we fail to recognize, let alone understand, the sexuality of politicized religion has many intellectual sources. To have a sex, you need a body. The first obstacle is the omnipresence in social theory of the bodiless subject, the talking head, a cipher stuffed with preferences, the de-corporealization of the social subject as a deciding self or rational will—actors, agents, subjects, individuals without bodies. These bodies must know pleasure and pain, not as an abstract premise, as in neo-classical economics, but in determinate forms.

Pleasure seems to be the most embarrassing theoretical silence. Wounds, violations, tears, lack, loss, scars and, wounds fill the theoretical landscape. One looks in vain in most social theory for erections, orgasms, let alone laughter and cries of joy, a bodily love. Although Foucault invokes "bodies and pleasures" as a basis of critique, they are nowhere in evidence in his texts, he, who glories in agony, can't show a single kiss. Indeed, it is exceedingly rare to find sex, sexuality or erotics anyplace in anybody's index, confined as it is between the sheets, not the covers of our library books.

While Derrida's work on religious violence is full of biologistic metaphors—the auto-immune, the unscathed, the phallic—the physical body is absent and rigorously so as any kind of theoretical foundation. There is risk, Derrida writes, in giving flesh to *chora,* his womb-like figure for the unscathed, one of religion's two sources, "risks of anthropomorphism against which we wanted to protect ourselves." While he notes that those religious men who struggle against abstraction and delocalization attack the body, indeed the sexual body, what even he calls the "body proper" seems to function as a strange site, not a source, of social action, a kind of groundless ground for metaphors, themselves propertyless bodily sites, linguistic effects (Derrida, 2002; Borradori, 2003)..

Social theory has de-sensualized the human body, likely the result of Platonic, Pauline and Protestant dualisms, all of which understand the sensuous body as inimical to the status of the soul. Much of feminist theory is no different. The typical social theoretical assumption is that sexuality is a medium for the exercise of power, or a metaphor through which domination, particularly male

domination, is imagined and enacted. But what if erotic love is the template out of which social relationships—of sovereignty and religion particularly in this case--are partially constituted? What if the social is in some sense sexual?

For the social to have a sex, there is almost no place to go. One must look back to psychoanalytic theory, which is either dismissed in sociological circles as reductionist, non-verifiable and essentializing, or not paid any mind at all. In post-Freudian approaches, the sexual body is often made into a sign system that has no determinate relationship to the erotic body. Given that we in the West tend to think of religion as the negation and transcendence of the human body, of its sensuous flesh, as an anti-body, it is not surprising that we don't understand its politicized forms as a kind of erotics.

The political theoretical obstacles to understanding the sexual preoccupations of religious nationalism as anything more than a side-show, as perhaps having something to do with religion's asceticism in pursuit of otherworldly salvation, but having no bearing on religious nationalisms' political project, are equally great. Political theory does make of the human body a foundation. However, the body upon which political theory builds is overwhelmingly one vulnerable to death and the subordinate pains short of that death, the body that cannot be allowed to live, the body sacrificed, tortured, executed, the body the law would cut or put away.

Following Hobbes, political theorists have largely focused on the life-taking capacities of the sovereign, on the state's violence. Foucault, for example, writes of the classical sovereign:

> The sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing; he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring. The right which was formulated as the 'power of life and death' was in reality the right to take life and let live (Foucault, 1980: 136).

Sovereignty grounds itself in death.

<u>The College de Sociologie</u>

There is one non-psychoanalytic theoretical candidate for a sexualized social theory. This possibility, however, also cleaves towards collective life-making through the prospect of individual deaths. In the *Elementary Forms of Social Life,* Emile Durkheim intimated the sexualization of the social, effervescence as an eroticized sociality (Friedland, 2004). 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 Marcel Mauss's insistence that the effervescent sacred energized the social and its indeterminate transformations.

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 1936 augural issue of his and Pierre Klossowki's *Acéphale* 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] 1996: 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." 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) 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. Durkheim, Bataille asserted, 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], 1996: 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"

([1933]1996: 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] 1996:147). 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. 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. "[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] 1996; 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] 1996: 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" ([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" ([1939],1996:252). 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, and the mystical assimilation of love to death, prepared the way?

Homo Sacer

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. Life, what Agamben calls "bare life," is the originary exclusion upon which both sovereignty and the state, particularly the modern state, is founded ([1995] 1998).

To understand the force of Agamben's argument, one must understand its sources. Agamben draws on the political philosophical tradition that argues that the sovereign cannot be subsumed within the law, that it depends on an originary and on-going exception to the law, that in short, that lawful authority can never be dissociated from a foundational and persistent violence outside that law.

In this vein, Carl Schmitt, the German political theorist, is key. Schmitt ground state sovereignty in the exception, an authority outside the law to declare a collective enemy, a political threat to a mode of life presumed and called forth by the law. Schmitt identified the sovereign as the locus of order, or as he put it, the "point of ascription" (1985: 32) of legal norms, which cannot itself be derived from those norms. The sovereign must have the capacity to found the law and thereby to suspend it when the external conditions for its operation are under threat.

For Schmitt, sovereignty was a political theology, its foundations having everything to do with God. Indeed he argued that modern theories of the state are, in fact, "secularized theological concepts," (1985: 36), models of a transcendent ordering power. The Western state sovereign of the 17th and 18th centuries was built on the nominalist model of the singular transcendent God, an agent whose absolute powers are not exhausted by his ordained laws, who is thus free to make the sovereign decision, the miracle, the suspension of law, the law-giver not bound by the law. Schmitt understood the emergence of constitutional democracy in the 19th century, with its identity of ruler and ruled as a secularized deism. In deism, God is immanent in the world's lawfulness, in which the laws made by man are identified as analogues to natural laws, laws that can be applied without

exception, a God whose book of nature operates as second scripture, a state that can thus ground its authority and its laws in the nature of things. What disturbed Schmitt about the loss of this sovereign model in constitutional democracy is the loss of the political, which he understood as the decision on the exception, the authority which cannot be derived from law, to determine the situation where the law must be suspended, in short, the exercise of extraordinary violence.

From this perspective, religion is always potentially political because the state is itself a religious institution, one which likewise depends on a God-like capacity to create a collective order, a capacity and an order grounded in a metaphysical vision, in a cosmology in evidence in, but not reducible to, perceptible nature. When religious actors engage in political violence, they challenge the state's monopoly of legitimate violence, which is necessarily also a symbolic violence. Religious violence counters and thus parallels the violence inherent in the founding of the state's law, the performative power that has no precedent, nothing before or outside of it, what Jacques Derrida has called authority's mystical origin. "Here," he writes, "a silence is walled up in the violent structure of the founding act" (1990: 943).

> Its very moment of foundation or institution…the operation that consists of founding, inaugurating, justifying law (*droit*), making law, would consist of a coup de force, of a performative and there interpretative violence that in itself is neither just nor unjust and that no justice and no previous law with its founding anterior moment could guarantee or contradict or invalidate. No justificatory discourse could or should insure the role of metalanguage in relation to the performativity of institutive language or to its dominant interpretation (1990:943).

Violence is originary and integral to all moral authority, a violence tamed, converted into metaphor and regulation, made crescive, invisible, administrative, but there all the while. Such an approach opens a project of religious sociology, allowing us to understand the grand "terror war" as a clash of political theologies. Religious violence calls out and repeats that originary violence that can never be subordinated to or derived from the law, the violence of institution, a divine violence. Religious violence locates that zone beyond language that founds the state's truth and its legal authority.

<u>Between Sovereignty and Sacrifice</u>

Giorgio Agamben refuses sovereignty's religious genealogy. Carl Schmitt ground sovereign violence in the sovereign decision to defend a mode of life, "the normal situation," to define an enemy, and thus to imprison, exile and kill--even one's own, especially one's own--outside the law. The Italian political philosopher relocates the sovereign exception in the state's ability to seize hold of life itself. In contrast to Schmitt, Agamben thus 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).

For Agamben the content of sovereign power derives from an originary exclusion of what he calls "bare life" from both law and religion. Bare life is located at the threshold between *zoe* and the sovereign, the state of nature that Hobbes located both outside the sovereign order and at its very inside in the sovereign's own savage powers. Contrary to Foucault's periodized movement from sovereignty to the bio-power of governmentality, bare life, Agamben argues, is and always has been the content of sovereign power. And it is this double exclusion, he argues, that accounts for the duality—pure and the impure--that Durkheim had located inside the sacred itself, such that the pure could contaminate and the impure sanctify (1995:412-415).

Agamben derives and emblematizes bare life in the West through the Roman 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. This 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.

The modern nation state, Agamben points out, grounds sovereignty as it seizes hold of *zoe*, in a culturally unmediated biological people, not the People of the polis, attributing the status of citizenship to the biological fact of birth, if not of race, as well as bodily pleasure—the pursuit of happiness (1998: 127, 134, 177-178, 181). National sovereignty is thus the making of a collective body, one grounded in the biological body of the citizen.

The consequences of grounding sovereignty in this bare life, Agamben argues, have been monstrous: the proliferation and transformation of the exceptional power of the state as witnessed by the concentration camp, the refugee camp, and in its sweeter version, the humanitarian rescue and campaigns for human rights (1998: 142). America's decision to imprison its actual or suspected terrorists at Guantanamo Bay, in a prison camp located outside any sovereign state, is an apt example of the "exception" to which "bare life" is consigned in our times, warriors unhinged from any sovereign state are kept without the rights of warriors in a space that hovers beyond all sovereignty, neither here nor there.

Life and Death

Life and death are political concepts. It is just this life that politicized religion seizes upon, not as the right to life, as material existence, as bare life, but as spiritual being.[7] It is precisely the modern state's foundation in bare life, the sufficiency of birth, the primacy of bodily existence and the valorization of corporeal pleasure that religious nationalists recognize and refuse as the basis of state authority.

Sayyid Qutb is a pertinent example. Qutb, who was executed by Egyptian President Nasser in the 1950's, is the intellectual scion of the Muslim Brotherhood. His writings have been essential to the rise of radical Islam; indeed they had a major influence on Osama bin Laden who was mentored by Qutb's brother. In *Milestones,* his most influential political text, Qutb links sovereignties without God to natural, materialist understandings of procreation, which together reduce citizen men to their animal needs, to what Agamben called modernity's beast, the wolf-man (1966: 105, 109).[8] For Qutb man is not only more than animal, he is more than man. It is only through the decision to subordinate oneself to Allah, Qutb argues, that a community can place "the highest value on the 'humanity' of man."(1966: 81).

For Qutb, it is only by understanding the divinity involved in conception, in birth, in the making of life, that a Muslim can live a life worth living. Man's "creation," he writes, "is the result of the Will of Allah rather than of his father and mother. The father and mother may come together; but they cannot transform a sperm into a human being"(1966:74). God is there in the marriage bed, immanent at coitus and conception.

The modern nation state grounds citizenship in birth. Indeed the word "nation" derives etymologically from *natio* and *natus*, "birth" and "born," respectively. One fantastic collective creature grounds its identity in another ordinary human birth. However birth itself is absent in the material and symbolic forces from which Agamben composes sovereignty. Agamben rather grounds sovereignty in death. For Agamben the sovereign and bare life are a set. Agamben argues that the

state inscribes bare life as a vulnerability to be killed outside the law, matched by the sovereign's capacity to kill outside the law, to kill in a state of exception. "The sacredness of life...in fact originally expresses precisely both life's subjection to a power over death and life's irreparable exposure in the relation of abandonment" (1998: 83).

Zoe, Aristotle instructs us, refers to reproduction, to species life, a life organized in and through the *oikos*, the familial household. Agamben, like Foucault, derives sovereignty from the patriarchal family, locating the first instance of "right over life and death" in the formula *vitae necisque potestas*, the unconditional power of the father over his sons, which includes the right to kill them. It is this power, he writes, which "seems to define the very model of political power in general." (1988: 87-88). Agamben takes Brutus, who puts his sons to death, but adopts the Roman people in their place, as a "genealogical myth of sovereign power." "The magistrates imperium is nothing but the father's *vitae necisque potestas* extended to all citizens. There is no clearer way to say that the first foundation of political life is a life that may be killed…" (1988: 89).

For Agamben, the state appropriates *zoe* as bare life in its negation, its termination as a form of life not worth living. The sovereign outside the law begins as the absolute patriarchal right to recognize and to kill a child. Thus Agamben grounds sovereignty in the possibility of unmaking bodies, and in their separation from collective life, in the sovereign ban. He thereby effaces the *oikos*' sexual organization and erotic desire as a constitutive element in the organization of sovereignty. Life-making, the erotic energies and relations of reproduction, gets left behind in *zoe*'s inclusionary exclusion.

Agamben makes it clear that *homines sacres* are those who violate the boundaries, a pleb who attacks the tribune, a son his father, a man who erases the property line, somebody who steps outside the very structure of reality on which the law depends. Durkheim understood the sociological identity of the sovereign's authority and the totem's sacrality. Although he identified gradients of punishment as indicators of the sacrality of the boundary at stake, Durkheim was clear that those who violate the collective representation itself were subject to an immediate and automatic death that did not pass through the law, or indeed through any human intervention (Durkheim, 1995:304, 307). A death that was neither sacrifice, nor murder.

For Agamben bare life identifies a zone before the distinction between sacred and profane, between the religious and the juridical (1998: 74,83). Bare life, I would argue, would be life conjointly excluded by two sovereigns—divine and human. Bare life is not, as Agamben suggests, beyond the profane (1998:86), but the locus of a double profanity, a life outside, yet defined by its violation of and exclusion by two collective representations, each of which draw upon and depend upon the other. Bare life marks a refusal, not an absence, of the gods, a profanation fed by and feeding the sacred. The bare life that is set aside, the life not fit for sacrifice can only be imagined via that life which is.

But even if we look more closely at the Roman case from which Agamben derives his categories, not only is the making of bare life integral to the making of religion, bare life is itself religiously fashioned. *Homo sacer* is a life that does indeed belong to the gods, but cannot for that reason be sacrificed. The Romans distinguished between *religio¸* understood as the public honoring of the gods, and *superstitio*, unauthorized rites that wronged them, indeed the deployment of whose powers was understood to threaten the state itself. Roman sacrifice involved animals marked for sacrifice by the pouring of wine and meal over their heads before they were killed by slaves, their entrails then examined for omens, after which part of the animal was burnt and the rest consumed in a banquet (Beard, North and Price, 1998: 148).

For the Romans, human sacrifice was a forbidden *superstitio*, or magic, the barbarous habit of Gauls, Druids, Greeks, Celts and Carthaginians (Faubion, 2004; Beard et al, 1998a, 1998b). The Romans variously sought to ban it not only in Rome, but throughout the territories they controlled. *Homo sacer*, in fact, could not be sacrificed—by anybody. Thus *homo sacer*, life that may be killed, but not sacrificed, was life that was already constituted by religion in its legal exclusion as sacrifice. Such life is, if anything, as Agamben acknowledges, like the life of a child, a life that can be killed, but not sacrificed, particularly so when that child attacks the father. And so it was here again.

Agamben derives *homo sacer* as a truly political category in the right of the plebs, non-patrician by biological descent, those without patrons who first seceded from the political community in the 5th century b.c.e. Before the secession, unlike the patricians, the plebs could not be political "fathers," in the sense of *pater*, a Latin title given to all senators. They could not serve as priests. They were thus without collective representation, denied both political and priestly office. It is the plebs themselves, not just he who attacks their representative, who were denied representation within the making of law and the conduct of rite. *Homo sacer* refers to those whom the plebs historically swore, in a sacred oath, the *lex sacrata*, they would kill who injured in any way their collective representatives, the tribunes (Dumezil, 1970: 195). Thus *homo sacer* derives from an unauthorized, violent founding, from the division of collective representation, from the formation and domestication of an internal political enemy, in the internal division of the collective subject in an included exclusion. That inclusionary exclusion was also a religious exclusion.

The plebs located their institutions of collective representation outside the sacred boundaries of Rome, outside the pomerium, on the Aventine, the place where Remus saw six vultures as opposed to Romulus' sighting of twelve on the Palantine, in the place of the other brother. Here on the Aventine the plebs built a temple to Ceres, their protector, a goddess to whom the goods of any man who attacked the tribune would be dedicated. It is significant that Ceres, a foreign deity adopted by the Romans, was also a goddess of fertility, both agrarian and human, of marriage, indeed as Ceres Mater, the goddess of motherhood (Dumezil, 1970: Spaeth, 1996). Ceres was also a goddess of boundaries. Ceres, the goddess of fertility, was also associated with the law protecting the Romans against tyranny (Spaeth, 1996: 10). Ceres, the goddess of fertility, nonetheless embodied ritual chastity. *Homo sacer*, you will recall, is he who violates the boundaries. For the Romans the tyrant, he who proclaims the exception, the state of emergency, was both a religious and an erotic problem, a point to which we shall shortly return.

Agamben chooses death, not life, to ground sovereignty. Sovereignty has no sexual or erotic constitution. If Foucault, in his history of sexuality neglects religion, Agamben effaces sexuality. It is striking that the only time Agamben invokes the erotic is in his discussion of Marquis de Sade's boudoir, which, he points out, coincides with the inscription of birth in the polity, in which "the *theatrum politicum* as a theater of bare life, in which the very physiological life of bodies appears, through sexuality, as the pure political element." (1998: 134) Sadomasochism, he writes, is "precisely the technique of sexuality by which the bare life of a sexual partner is brought to light." His critique of democracy's latent thanatopolitics is itself grounded in a thanatopolitical theory.

But such a restriction is not warranted by the very Roman case upon which Agamben originates his model. There was an exception to the Roman rule forbidding ritual human killing, which still was not technically speaking a form of sacrifice. In the 3rd century b.c.e., when Rome faced conquest by Hannibal in the second Punic War, the Senate called for the burying alive of two Greeks and two Gauls. It also called for the live burial of vestal virgins who had been accused of unchastity (Beard, 1998: 81-82).[9] The foreigners were buried at the center; the virgins at the city's boundary. Female flesh marked the boundary, a boundary within which the sword could not go.

The rituals conducted by the Vestal virgins, their virginity and their guardianship of an undying flame were understood as a guarantee of both the fertility of the Roman race and the military security of Rome. The Vestals' sexual inviolability was metonymic of the city's boundary line, a boundary that divided two brothers—Romulus and Remus, a boundary across which even generals could not cross without laying down their arms. The Roman sovereign stood on a sexual space.

Sovereignty has a sexual constitution. The relation of sovereignty and *zoe*'s erotic and supernatural powers is ancient and perennial. Whether one looks at the Canaanite King, son of Baal with his erotic relations with Anat, the Aztec king's ritualized copulation with Teteo innan, "Mother of the Gods," followed by her sacrifice (Carrasco, 1999: 206), the classical sexual Hindu sacrifices of coronation, the Israelite association of divine kingship and fertility, the sovereign's powers are necessarily erotic, inseminating, proliferating, generative, the force of his arms inseparable from the force of life. Potency is a political term.

The making of life, the *zoe* excluded from the polis, is, in fact, inside the sovereign's authority. The sovereign's authority to unmake life exists because of his power to make it. Bare life is subject to death outside the logic of sacrifice, because life, reproductive species life, is invested with sovereign powers. In antiquity, the sexual relation is a relationship to the gods, to divine forces over which one can never have control. "In antiquity," Kathy Gaca writes, "sexual arousal, activity, and reproduction were in part immanent divine powers, not simply human forms of energy. Sexually aroused persons who make love and women who give birth share in and honor gods of sexuality and procreation…" (2003: 132). In both the Judaism of the Septuagint and the Prophets and in Pauline Christianity, permissible sexual conduct is one of the primary forms of religious service. Improper sex—adultery and incest—and sex with improper people, people who worship other gods and therefore whose sex is conducted under the auspices of those gods, are understood to have rebelled against God, to reject God's primacy and unity. Such sex is apostasy. Those men and women are to be set apart to be killed, their death neither a sacrifice nor a homicide. They have stepped outside the law; they are bare life. Sexuality is very early on a sovereign discourse. From Plato and the Pythagoreans to Philo and Paul, the social investment and organization of sexuality has always been a political project.

Sex and religion are co-implicated. Speaking of Islam, Bouhdiba writes, "The sexual relation of the couple takes up and amplifies a cosmic order that spills over on all sides. Procreation repeats creation. Love is a mimicry of the creative act of God" (1985:8). It is not just that sexuality is invested with religious meaning, one's relation to divinity is itself a sexualized relation. In Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions, God has an explicitly or implicitly erotic relation to his believers, whether in the Israelites worshipping other gods being condemned as "fornication" in Leviticus (Lev 20:6) and the Prophetic tradition which construes Israel as God's bride, the Pauline understanding of inappropriate sexuality as co-substantiality with the body of the whore as opposed to appropriate sexuality which renders one with the "limbs of Christ," (1 Corinthians 6:15).

In Islam, the heterosexual erotic provides a foretaste of the Paradise to which believers are ultimately to be delivered. "This earthly delight," wrote Imam Ghazli in his 12th century *The Revivification of Religious Sciences*, "imperfect because limited in time, is a powerful motivation to incite men to try and attain perfect delight, the eternal delight and therefore urges men to adore God so as to reach heaven." (Mernissi, 1987: 29). The Quranic verses (50,70,72,74) promise the believer virgins in Paradise, *Hur-al-'Ayn,* known as *Huri,* who are "sensual, youthful virgin females with large dark eyes, white skin, and a pliant character"(Wadud, 1999: 55). If the prospect of realizing a man's love of God is figured through heterosexual intercourse, Fatima Mernissi has pointed out that

Muslim men are reminded to make Allah present at the moment of ejaculation: "Praise be to God who created man from a drop of water." (1987: 114).

The Erotics of Exceptional Killing

These divine erotics have a bearing on the sovereign exception, back then and very much right now. Let us return to another state of exception, one as originary as the right of the Roman plebs, having won the right to elect a tribune, to ban anybody who attacked their collective representation. The Israelites are moving under the guidance of Moses from Egypt into the Promised Land, moving to take possession of a promised land. This lesson in political geography is a story about the erotic bodies of foreign women, their alluring flesh a figure for a foreign country, for the dangers of exile and the prospect of perfidious dispossession.

We are reading a religious text about ancient sex, a text which provided the theological basis for the first assassination of an Israeli Prime Minister in modern history. In November 1995, a devout Jewish nationalist, Yigal Amir, pumped two high-velocity, hollow point bullets through the chest of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Rabin had signed the Oslo Accords in 1993 with PLO chief, Yasser Arafat, accords that would lead to the ceding of territory and ultimately sovereignty over a huge chunk of the lands God had covenanted to the Jewish people.

In 1994, after Dr. Baruch Goldstein, a devout doctor from Kiryat Arba, had murdered scores of Muslims as they prayed in Hebron, the Labor government seriously broached the idea of removing Jewish settlers from the center of Hebron. It was from this city that King David, two thousand years ago, had launched his drive to unify the twelve tribes under his leadership, the city in which the originary patriarchs and matriarchs of Israel, the nation's birth parents, are buried. The prospect of dispossession pushed Amir into action. Seeking to defend Israel's territorial body, to prevent it being passed to foreigners, Yigal Amir killed the Jewish Prime Minister. He loved God too much.

Amir found the biblical rationale for his assassination in the Book of Numbers, specifically the twenty-fifth chapter in which the text explains that Moabite women were sexually luring the men of Israel into idolatrous rites, into the worship of Ba'al, the Canaanite god:

> While Israel dwelt in Shittim the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate, and bowed down to their gods. So Israel yoked himself to Ba'al of Pe'or. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel…(Numbers 25:1-3).

God instructs Moses to have the judges slay those men who have "yoked themselves to Ba'al," Israelite men who engage in sexual acts with women devoted to Baal (Gaca, 2003: 129). They would not stop their fornicating so God unleashed a plague that had already killed twenty-four thousand of their number.

An Israelite man, a certain Zimri, brought one of the foreign woman, a Mid'ianite named Cozbi, to his family in the sight of Moses and the community. Whether or not he actually made love with her in plain view, the prospect of intermarriage was evident. Pinchas (Phin'ehas), without obtaining legal authorization, took up a spear and killed both the Israelite man and the Mid'ianite woman. The text makes clear that he ran the spear "through the woman's womb" (Numbers 25:8).

To kill a Jew without authorization by a judicial process violates the Torah. Yet here, God stops the plague with which he was punishing the people and makes of a Pinchas' line a "perpetual priesthood." The act of sexual violence assuages God's "jealous anger" (Numbers 25:11). The Talmud records that while the elders condemned

Pinchas' act, God not only forgave the act, but rewarded it, for Pinchas "was zealous for my sake among them." It is significant, I think, that it is immediately after this moment, this punished penetration of a foreign woman, that God directs Moses to take a census of the "congregation" in order to divide the covenanted lands.

Just before assassinating the Prime Minister, a man who would give the land of Israel to foreigners, Yigal Amir read precisely this passage (Sprinzak, 1998: 281).[10] In Amir's view, one is obligated to kill a Jew who would give up his country in the same way that Pinchas killed a Jew who, moving homeward, chose to enter the body of a foreign woman, to worship another God. The constitution of bare life in a state of exception is joined to a divinized erotics, to *zoe* as sexual reproduction organized through bounded clans. It is a love story.

Like Jew, Like Arab

In the Israeli case, women's erotic powers, and particularly those of a foreign woman, are germane to the meaning of religious nationalist violence outside the law. It is striking that the gendered and erotic imaginary that justified the assassination of the Israeli sovereign is not without parallel among the forces who murdered the Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat in October, 1981. The military parade at which Sadat was killed commemorated Egypt's crossing the Suez Canal and smashing through Israel's Bar-Lev line in the Sinai. The 1973 war, unlike that in 1967, had been fought under the banner of Islam. To the horror of Sadat's Islamist enemies, that demonstration of Arab military power was subsequently converted into an Arab legitimation of infidel penetration into the lands of the *umma*, the Islamic community. Those lands, as the etymology of the word *umma* makes evident, are a woman, indeed a mother, Palestine part of that feminine flesh.[11]

Within Islam, the male defense of the honor of a woman's body assimilates easily to geo-politics. As Fatima Mernissi has pointed out, the Arabic words that hover about women's erotic bodies derive from military language. *Tabarruj*, an immodest mixing of sexes, a word used to urge the return of women to the home, comes from *burj*, meaning stronghold. *Muhasan*, referring to married people whose mutual sexual satisfaction protects them from temptation is derived from *hisn*, meaning fortress (Mernissi, 2002). Protecting woman's bodies from improper appropriation is a military project as well as a sacred project. *Haram*, the sacred, is the forbidden, a woman's flesh, a holy site.

The Muslim Brotherhood to whom Sadat had turned as an ally against the secular left broke with him after his historic visit to Jerusalem in 1977. In March, 1979, one and one half years before his assassination, Sadat signed the Camp David accords giving Israel its first diplomatic recognition within the Arab world. Now, in its aftermath, the Palestinians remained without a road to sovereignty and in 1980 the Israeli Knesset declared Jerusalem to be its united capital. The site from which the Prophet had made his miraculous night journey to Paradise had been forcibly assimilated to the sovereignty of the Jews. One of Islam's most sacred centers had been profaned, the *umma* dishonored.

A sovereign's power is read in gendered, erotic terms. Observers agree that radical Islam rose in the wake of Egypt's military defeat in 1967 (Saad El Din, Ibrahim, 1983). This defeat was also, however, widely experienced in sexual terms. Egyptian military powerlessness registered as a sexual incapacity, a failure of manhood. One Egyptian writer Abou Zeid compared the Egyptian inability to resist Israel, and hence to accept its peace, with their men's impotence vis a vis their own wives (Abu Zeid, 2000). Every time one Egyptian man

remembered the 1967 defeat, he admitted, he had to make love to his wife. It was as if, he declared, saying to the Jews, "you did not reach my bed. You did not reach every bed in Egypt."(Ayoub, 1995: 70). Yasser Ayoub, the Egyptian writer who recorded his statement, interprets Egyptian male demonstrations of sexual potency, indicated by the rising incidence of rape as a reflection of that sense of geo-political powerlessness.

Sadat's Islamist opponents experienced Egypt's peace treaty with Israel as a parallel seduction, a capitulation by impotent Arab men unable to resist the lures of this loose, alluring woman (Zeid, 2000: 38-39). As in the Israeli case, there is again the erotic body of the foreign woman, unbound by Allah, as image and flesh, a body that has managed to make its way into one's home, indeed into the home of the sovereign. In the aftermath of the October war of 1973, Sadat began to liberalize the Egyptian economy, a policy of *infitah,* or "opening." Sadat's Nasserist critic, Mohmed Heikel, speaks of how the flood of "new money," particularly capital investment by American banks like Chase Manhattan, was soon followed by imported foreign "luxury" goods (Heikel, 1983: 64).

The radical Muslims opposed Sadat's Open Door policy which both disengaged the state from the economy and promoted Egyptian entry into foreign capital and commodity markets. Their opposition derived in part from its contribution to a massive increase in income inequality, major price increases for basic necessities and a renewed emphasis on personal acquisitiveness (Saad El Din, 1983). This commodification, with the emergence of the supermarket and its proliferating goods, was seen simultaneously as a wanton materialism and a secularization. One of the Islamist targets was the introduction of "Mother's Day," which they denounced as an "atheistical feast." (Heikel, 1983: 133).

Sadat's "open door" was, however, also understood as an opening to seduction, the crossing of a sensual threshold. Integrating Egypt into Western consumer markets contributed to an eroticization of civil society, not only through the deluge of previously unavailable products designed to accentuate the physical attractiveness of women (lipsticks, perfumes, shampoos, revealing clothing), but of images of Western, particularly American, women, whose cladding violated every sense of propriety, and continues to do so today. Egyptian women, it was said, became obsessed with acquiring these "beautiful, soft and sensuous" products, whose acquisition made them emphasize their own sexual attractiveness and eroded their modesty Ayoub, 1995; Heikel, 1983).

"I am Khalid al-Islambuli, I have killed Pharaoh, and I do not fear death." So declared the organizer of Sadat's assassination, a 24 year-old highly educated officer son of a corporate lawyer, at the parade ground after his and his accomplices' deed (Kepel, 2003: 192, 210). Islambuli was a follower of Islamic Jihad, which drew both from Sayyid Qutb, the school-teacher Muslim Brotherhood theorist and 'Abd al-Salam Faraj, his electrician counterpart who founded its more radical successor, Islamic Jihad. If the first declared that any sovereign whose laws were not drawn according to the *shari'a* had to be considered an internal infidel regime, a throwback to pre-Islamic *jahiliyya*, the second propounded the Islamic duty of a violent jihad against an apostate regime.

Sadat's Islamic assassins must have identified with Qutb, understood that his fate could easily be their own, even as they drew from his theological interpretations. Within Qutb's Islamic imaginary, recognition of God's sovereignty and a woman's erotic seduction are countervailing forces. It was in 1954 in prison that Qutb, imprisoned and tortured along with dozens of other Muslim Brothers by Nasser in the wake of a Muslim Brother's assassination attempt on the his life, was told by one of his cell mates of a dream: "Tell Sayyid Qutb that in my

sura he will find what he seeks." (Kepl, 2003: 28). The *sura* in question refers to Joseph's imprisonment by Aziz after his wife has been foiled in her attempt to seduce him along with two other men. (12: 35-41) If Joseph had not seen "the argument of Allah," the text relates, he would have succumbed. This *sura*, revealed to the Prophet in Mecca before his departure for Medina, identifies Muhammad with Joseph, who will likewise be victorious because he believes in Allah. In the *sura* Joseph declares to his cellmates: "Those whom ye worship beside Him are but names which ye have named, ye and your fathers. Allah hath revealed no sanction for them. The decision rests with Allah only, Who hath commanded you that ye worship none save Him. This is the right religion, but most men know not "(12:40). Qutb now understood that Nasser did not know, demanding Muslims worship him instead.

In his multi-volume commentary, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, much of which was then composed in prison, Qutb implied that, in fact, Joseph had been more severely tested than the Prophet because of the attempted seduction by Aziz's wife. Joseph is a slave, an adopted son. For Qutb, the wife of Aziz stands in for the elite Egyptian women who are spoiled, immodest, sexually obsessed and liable to dishonor their husbands (Stowasser, 1994: 54-55). "The wife of Aziz," Qutb writes, "is a symbol and a replica for all contemporary Egyptian women who live in Jahili society."

Faraj not only provided Islambuli with his grenades and ammunition, it was his reading of Islamic history and the obligation of *jihad*, as expressed in his text, the *The Hidden Imperative*, that pointed Islambuli in the direction of political murder. In that text, Faraj compared Sadat's Egypt to that of the conquering Tartars, Mongols, or the Turkish ex-slave military leaders who ruled the 13th century Mamluk state with the legitimation of a weak *ulema*, all of which applied non-Islamic law (Kepel, 2003: 194-195). "Today's rulers are apostates from Islam, nourished at the table of colonialism, be it Crusader, Communist, or Zionist. All they have preserved of Islam is its name." When Faraj was asked about the morality of attacking an Egyptian President who was attempting to introduce democracy in Egypt, he replied: "What is this democracy you are talking about? Is it like the democracy in England where the House of Lords passes a law making homosexuality legal? Is that democracy?" (Heikel, 1983: 266).

Sadat was understood by the Islamists as a pre-Islamic "Pharaoh," a sovereign who would likewise use a weak *ulema* to legitimate his ceding of a portion of the *umma* to the infidel. It is not coincidental that in 1978, in the aftermath of President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, the Egyptian People's Assembly first formed a commission to determine the extent to which all of Egypt's laws conformed with the *shari'a* (Kepel, 2003: 184). The putatively Islamic sovereign who would allow the infidel into the *umma* was also the sovereign who would loosen Egyptian women from the control of their husbands.

In the eyes of the Islamists the regime's abdication of its responsibility to protect the women at home is related to its seduction by the woman abroad. At the same time that Egypt's peace treaty with Israel reached its culmination, Sadat's regime transformed Egyptian family law. That reform, finally passed in July, 1979, was very much shaped and supported by Sadat's wife, Jehan al Sadat, so much so that it was denounced by its opponents as "Jehan's law." (Al Sadat, 1993: 109). The new law required husbands to obtain the written permission of their first wives in the event that they wished to take a second wife, as permitted by Islam. Women who refused were entitled to divorce their husbands and to demand compensation. The new law required husbands who divorced women without their consent to pay compensation. In the event of divorce, it provided for rights of maternal custody in the husband's house until a boy attained

ten years and a girl fifteen years. The original proposal had gone even further making it legally impossible for a man to marry a second wife if the first wife refused.

That there could be any infringement on male rights of divorce, polygamy and paternal custody of the children in the event of divorce was adamantly refused by the Egyptian Islamists. These changes, it was said, would lead to the collapse of the family. It is striking that in the immediate aftermath of the peace treaty, the main newspapers were devoid of criticism of the peace treaty, even though a number of Sadat's ministers had resigned rather than accompany him to Jerusalem in 1977. In the wake of that visit, the Islamic radicals of the Jama'at Islamiyya did not physically attack the regime, rather concentrating their coercion on sexual transgressions by young couples and the showing of indecent films (Kepel, 2003: 205). (Islamists, likewise, attacked bars, nighclubs, department stores and cinemas" in the aftermath of the 1948 war establishing the state of Israel (Heikel, 1983: 123)). After 1979, public criticism and mobilization likewise focused not on the peace treaty but on the family reform, with demonstrations emanating from the students at Al Azhar, Egypt's premier Islamic university, demanding the "collapse of Jehan's law." Students at the university where Jehan was studying for her doctorate berated her for not dressing in a more modest manner (Al Sadat, 1993: 130). In the streets demonstrators chanted such things as the satirical rhyme: "We accept the leadership of Dayan but not that of Jehan."

Within all shades of political Islam, connections were effortlessly made between Egypt's peace with Israel, the adumbration and repression of Islam and the changing legal status of women. For the family law's Islamic opponents, that Jehan was the white daughter of a British mother was particularly significant. Anwar Sadat was understood by many, and not just his Islamic enemies, as having succumbed to the erotic lure of a "foreign" woman who claimed an inappropriate public place for herself, and through her, of being willing to transgress the *shari'a* with respect to the respective marriage rights of women. For Jehan, Sadat introduced the official title of "first lady," emulating the American presidents (Heikel, 1983). Whereas Nasser's wife had been publicly invisible, Jehan visited the troops in 1972 in the Sinai. Refusing Saudi Arabian protocols for diplomatic wives to remain in the plane until after ritual welcome was over, Jehan got off the plane, hand in hand with her husband. Despite the Arab League boycott of the films of Elizabeth Taylor, a converted Jewess and a prominent supporter of Israel, Jehan invited the actress to Egypt, cajoling her husband to interrupt his political schedule to fly across the country to meet with her in Ismailia, the city where Hassan al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood (Al Sadat, 1993). And to top it all off, Jehan did not prevent President Jimmy Carter from kissing her on the cheek when she visited the United States (Mansour, 2002).

Jehan Sadat's public political role would have naturally recalled the very foundations of the *umma*, a military defeat produced under the leadership of a woman. In the aftermath of Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem, there was a huge cry for women to return to their homes Abu Zeid, 2000: 79). A woman out of place, and particularly in the public sphere, is a dangerously energized trope in Islamic discourse, particularly in those textual forms with which the Islamic radicals who killed Sadat steeped themselves. According to Fatima Mernissi, Sadat's assassins partially ground their deed in the *hadith* surrounding the civil war that split the Islamic *umma* between the followers of Mua'wiyya Ibn Abi Sofian and Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet's son-in-law and the first male convert, installation as the fourth Caliph (Mernissi, 1991: 34). Those *hadith* are, of course, concerned not simply with the question of legitimate succession, and the legitimacy of opposing Ali, but of the role of Aisha, the Prophet's best-loved wife. Aisha was already suspect. As the fourteen year-old bride of the Prophet, Muhammad had chosen Aisha to

take to battle with him; having fallen off of her mount when she reached for a necklace, she had been discovered by another man and brought to the Prophet. Aisha was accused of adultery by, among others, Ali ibn Abi Talib, a charge of which she was cleared by divine revelation (Spellberg, 1994).

Aisha was a woman out of place. After the Prophet's death, it was Aisha who was among the most knowledgeable about the *hadith*, who instructed men how to pray and to fast. And most problematic for the Sunni community, it was Aisha who not only sided against Ali in the succession struggle, but actually led the troops into battle on a camel, a battle in which her forces were soundly defeated and she was taken prisoner. The Sunnis understand Aisha's political involvement as a terrible mistake for which she has repented. For Muslims the Prophet is, of course, an incomparable sovereign model. Sadat, the pious president, had his own Aisha, one whom he could not control, one who never repented. For the Islamists controlling the erotic body of a woman, resisting foreign eros, were part and parcel of the defense of the *umma*, a task at which Sadat had been seen to fail, a failure for which he paid with his life.

The erotic constitution of religious nationalist challenges to state authority, to exceptional violence outside the law, is not confined to the Abrahamic traditions. The politicized pilgrimages led by Hindu nationalists that finally led to the destruction of Ayodhya in 1992 and communal violence of a savagery not seen since Partition are a case in point. The BJP's 1990 *rath yatra*, or "chariot pilgrimage" was led by a white Toyota, decorated to suggest the chariot of warrior hero Arjuna, an eight-petaled lotus painted on its grill, the vaginal flower where Brahma dwells. BJP President Advani began the pilgrimage from Somnath, the site of the legendary Shiva temple, with its thirteen and a half foot lingam, its treasury stuffed with gold, silver and precious gems (Kakar, 1996: 48-51). Somnath was destroyed by the central Asian sultan, Mahmud, its lingam broken, its fragments made into the steps of the sultan's main mosque. If the pilgrimage began at the site of a broken lingam, it ended in Ayodhya, the site of the Ramjanmabhumi, the birthplace of Rama, destroyed in the 16th century, so the Hindu nationalists argue, by the first Moghul Emperor Babur in order to construct the Babri Masjid mosque in his honor. According to the Ramayana, denied the throne by his step-mother, tens of thousands of years ago Prince Rama, this seventh avatar of Vishnu, was exiled and his bride, Sita, whom he won in a princely tournament, was kidnapped by the evil King Ravana. Ram's re-conquered the still-chaste woman and his sovereignty in the same act. In 1992, the Hindu nationalists' phallic powers finally exploded in an orgy of bloodletting, destroying the Babri-Masjid mosque.

The Other Exception

As should be apparent by now Giorgio Agamben forgets begetting, reduces the patriarch's exceptional powers to a sovereign taker of children, not their maker, the one who loves and protects them, the one who will kill for them, indeed the one who will die for them, and they for him. Women are likewise irrelevant not only to the constitution of the public sphere, but to Agamben's theorization of it.

Agamben strips sovereignty of eros and indeed of care. Love, without reason, beyond and before the law, can also ground sovereignty. These consensual fusions of erotic love were not irrelevant to French revolutionary discourse. For Jean Jacques Rousseau, the foundational fabricator of the "general will," who stripped the public sphere of women, men's political relation to the state was founded not on reasoned consent, on subordination to sovereign violence, but on love. "[T]he authority the populace accords to those it loves and by it is loved,"

he wrote in *Discourse on Political Economy*, "is a hundred times more absolute than all the tyranny of usurpers."

Elisabeth Weber has likewise written of the "two faces of the law," which she locates in institution and address, of subjection and singularity (2003). How, she inquires, was it possible for Rabbi Aqiba to equate the "Song of Songs" with the "Holy of Holies," the central space of the Temple? How could he maintain that this erotic poem figuring God's sovereignty over Israel, a poem associated with Solomon's coronation and with Israel's national deliverance from bondage, was sufficient to guide the Jews in the absence of the Torah, a position later reiterated by Moses Mendelsohn and Franz Rosenzweig? Listen!

> Behold, you are beautiful, my love,
> Behold you are beautiful!
> Your eyes are doves
> behind your veil
> Your hair is like a flock of goats,
> moving down the slopes of Gilead.
> Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes
> that have come up from the washing,
> all of which bear twins,
> and not one among them is bereaved.
> Your lips are like a scarlet thread,
> and your mouth is lovely…..
>
> How sweet is your love, my sister,
> My bride!
> How much better is your love than wine,
> And the fragrance of your oils than any spice!
> Your lips distil nectar, my bride:
> Honey and milk are under your tongue…(Song of Solomon, 4:1-3, 10-11).

As Tina Turner sings, "what's love got to do with it?" Only in this case the "it" is the law. As Weber points out, the Song of Songs is replete with address, with the second, not the third person, replete in other words, with calls to the "you." The address, she argues, is the other "exception," a singular call also necessary to the institution of the law, here an erotic relation with a collective subject. Weber writes:

> This call can be exhausted as little as the fact that we were born. It has called us into a life of relation and infinite contingency and makes itself heard as the radical openness and vulnerability that is ours, and that is called being alive, an infinite finitude. It is this infinite finitude that the Song of Songs celebrates in its tireless interpellation of the beloved through descriptions of fragrance and taste…Without this address, the law is not. Without the infinite, immemorial call of the other, the law, including the Mosaic law, is not.

The sovereign God in whom religious nationalists would ground the sovereignty of their states, is not only a law-giver, who can deliver spectacular pains in its defense, but one who guarantees sometimes extraordinary birth, who rewards his followers with fertility, including collective birth, the one who not only takes, but who makes life, the one who loves his people

fiercely and jealously. Not just death, but erotic love and the birth in which it often issues provides an originary template for institution, for making place for the law and the collective subject who makes it their own. The religious nationalist model of state sovereignty, in short, is also a model of human procreation. Law and life both derive from an exceptional divine source. Its violence is but one side of its boundless love, its possessive desire, its exclusive demands.

It is this procreative God, this jealous lover of man, whom religious nationalists deploy to counter modernity's investments of eros. It is to the proliferation of a secularized sexuality, one subjected to state regulation, commodified incitement, and cultural sacralization, upon which religious nationalists seize. Religious nationalists seek to reinscribe God in response to modernity's sexualization of social life, a sexualization deriving from the making of sex into an object of government intervention on the one side and its elevation into a substitute divinity on the other.

For some of them, killing is part of a divine love affair.

Sacred Space, Sexual Space

Masculinity, like divinity, is without foundation. It is something fabricated, conjured, performed into existence. An exclusively male violence serves as its performance, an enactment, the capacity to deliver death, like life, its proof-text. Cross-culturally and trans-historically, one of the primary ways in which masculinity is known is through the capacity to control women as sexual property. Men become masculine subjects through their ability to control their sexual flesh, to defend women against penetration by other men. Controlling and defending female boundaries is at the core of masculinity.

This, I suspect, has something then do with another pattern in politicized religious violence. Religious nationalist mobilization, and that involving violence in particular, seems to mobilize around a perceived or imagined profanation, around efforts to repair violations of a sacred space. Often that violated sacred space is a religious center: the defense of the Kosovo's nationalist Orthodox sanctity from the Muslim, the explosion of the second Palestinian *intifada* spearheaded by Islamist currents in response to Ariel Sharon's parliamentary procession of the *har ha-bayit*, the Shah's intrusion on the Shi'ite seminar center of Qom, the Indian destruction of the Sikh temple complex at Amritsar seeking to destroy the Sikh separatist movement, the Gush Emunim's retaking of historic synagogues and burial sites, the Hindu nationalist BJP's destruction of the Babri Masjid mosque, the reclamation of the site of Ram, the foundational Hindu monarch.

Ron Hassner has pointed to sacred space's phenomenological indivisibility and exclusivity as a particularly productive sites through which to launch inherently polarizing, non-negotiable conflicts.[12] In a parallel profanation, the actual or imagined violation of women's bodies also plays a critical role in generating the collective engagement in religious violence. Woman's body appears to be religious nationalism's other sacred space. The sexuality of the second forces us to reconsider that of the first.

Violence, including violence towards women, expresses a masculinity at risk. The question then becomes: how is it that the defense of the nation becomes invested with such sexual meaning? In every case of religious nationalism, there is an acute sense that a nation's boundedness is at risk, whether the position of American troops in the *umma* or the nefarious circulation of international finance in the American Christian right and the postmillennial abortion bombers. Frequently the very territorial boundaries of the nation-state are in question. It is true for the Serbian nationalists in the wake of the break-up of the federation, Jewish nationalist settlers threatened by a secular government dependent on Arabs to rule that is unwilling to defend the lands covenanted to the Jews, in the case of India's Hindu nationalists by the Indian secular nationalists who have cast off the

nation's Hindu moorings and who have failed to maintain the territorial body of mother India, or the Ulster Protestant loyalists beleaguered by the "satanic deception" of the Papist Irish who threaten to engulf their territorial entity.

Religious nationalisms all focus their energies on the penetration and permeability of the boundaries of that territorial space whether by foreign investment, civil or foreign war, immigration, or global commodified culture. The state's territorial space is the material body of the nation, an imaginary collective subject. The nation's corporeal figuration is a commonplace. The defense of its integrity, as in all nationalist projects, is the medium through which the coherence, identity and power of the nation, as a collective subject, is known and narrated. That material body is typically figured as womanly. For both secular and religious nationalisms, unwanted penetration by other nations—their guns, their money, their culture, their people—is experienced as a feminization, a humiliating unmanning. For religious nationalists grounding the nation's sovereignty in religion, identifying with masculine divinity, is a strategy to restore the masculinity of the collective subject, a capacity demonstrated by their own ability to withstand great bodily danger, suffering, and death. It is also manifested by their ability to control and sometimes violate the flesh of women.

The barbarity of Balkan religious violence, the mating of piety and political blood lust, is not unique. It partakes of the same semiotic logic that we find in cases of exceptional violence around the world today. The large cold war is over. The smaller hot wars have just begun. Apparently they are being played out on women's sensuous skin.

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2 Michel A. Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 31-32

3 Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed*, 1996, pp. 22-23, 55.

4 "Crucified Kosovo," http://www.kosovo.com/crucified/default.htm#_catalog.

5 Kamdar, "The Struggle for India's Soul," 2002, p. 13.

6 Pandey, *Remembering Partition*, 2001, for e.g. pp. 106, 111. That these abductions were interpreted through the lens of Sita at the time is also clear. P. 166

7 Indeed, one could argue that politicized religion aims directly at each of the "positivities" of what Foucault has identified as the modern episteme—language, life and labor—each constituted by "man's" finitude—"the spatiality of the body, the yawning of desire, and the time of language." Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences,* (New York: Pantheon, 1971), p. 314. Politicized religion not only effaces man as the sovereign observer, it restores an anti-hermeneutic language, derives life from divinity restoring an origin to man, displaces death as the basis of value.

8 The negation of the transcendent God and the consequent grounding of political order in nature, has led, argues the great Islamist theorist Sayyid Qutb, to Communist ideologies where, he writes, "the basic needs of human beings are considered identical with those of animals, that is, food and drink, clothing, shelter, and sex." And to capitalist societies where "physical desires" reign supreme. Without God, citizens are animals.

9 Christine Thomas has suggested that these burials of the Gauls and Greeks may have constituted a kind of evocatio by which the Romans sought to win the favor their enemies gods through ritual practices with which they believed them associated. Private communication with the author, March 11, 2004.

10 It is striking that the residue of the racist Order who, operating on their own or in small groups to commit violence against Jews, blacks, homosexuals or abortion clinics, likewise call themselves the Phineas Priesthood. James Sterngold, "Man With a Past of Racial Hate Surrenders in Day Camp Attack," *The New York Times*,.August 12, 1999. Bufford Furrow, who shot five people at a Jewish community center was carrying a book by Richard Hoskins, who wrote a manifesto on the Phineas Priesthoodr. The book in Hoskin's car was in fact a book, *War Cycles/Peace Cycles*, which Hoskins said, dealt with the

history of usury and the role of the Jews in banking. As I have argued elsewhere, there is a semiotic relationship between monetary interest and abortion.

11 The etymology of umma is quite complex because Arabic was composed of a multitude of languages and dialectics. *Umma* connects to mother through the root, *amama*. In the Arabic of the Quran, *umma* variously refers to a group of believers or way of life, as well as to mother (both *umm* and *umma*). *Umm* also means the essence of a thing or the front of a thing. Personal communication from Ahmad Atassi, May 6, 2004.

12 Ron E. Hassner, "The Causes and Consequences of Conflicts Over Sacred Space," unpublished paper, Stanford University, May 7, 2002.