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Table of Contents

1. **David Rapoport** - [The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11](#)
2. **Andrew McKenna** - [Scandal, Resentment, Idolatry: The Underground Psychology of Terrorism](#)
3. **Nils Zurawski** - [Girard among the Paramilitaries of Ulster: Identity, History, and Violence](#)
4. **Herbert Plutschow** - [Xunzi and the Ancient Chinese Philosophical Debate on Human Nature](#)
5. [Benchmarks](#)

[Return to Anthropoetics home page](#)

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The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11 [\(1\)](#)

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September 11, 2001 is the most destructive day in the long bloody history of rebel terrorism. The casualties and the economic damage were unprecedented. It could be the most important day too. President Bush declared a "war" to eliminate terror, [\(2\)](#) galvanizing a response that could reshape the international world.

Exactly 100 years ago, we heard a similar appeal. An Anarchist assassinated President William McKinley in September 1901, moving the new president Theodore Roosevelt to summon a worldwide crusade to exterminate terrorism everywhere. [\(3\)](#)

Will we succeed this time? No one knows, but even a brief acquaintance with the history of terrorism should make us more sensitive to the difficulties ahead. To this end, I will briefly describe rebel terrorism in the last 135 years to show how deeply implanted it has become in modern culture. The discussion is divided into two sections. The first describes the four waves of modern terror, and the other focuses on the international ingredients in each. I will discuss the political events triggering each wave, but lack space to enumerate the great and persistent domestic impacts.

Every state affected in the first wave, for example, radically transformed its police organizations. Plain-clothes police forces were created as indispensable tools to penetrate underground groups. The Russian Okhrana, Scotland Yard, and the FBI are conspicuous examples. [\(4\)](#) The new organizational form remains a permanent, perhaps indispensable, feature of modern life.

Terrorist tactics invariably produce rage and frustration, often driving governments to respond

in unanticipated, extraordinary, illegal, and destructive ways. Because a significant Jewish element, for example, was present in the several Russian terrorist movements, the Okhrana organized pogroms to intimidate the Jewish population, compelling many to flee to the West and to the Holy Land. Okhrana fabricated The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a book that helped stimulate a virulent anti-Semitism that went beyond Russia and continued for decades, and that influences the Christian and Islamic terrorist worlds still. [\(5\)](#)

Democratic states over-react too. President Theodore Roosevelt proposed sending all Anarchists back to their countries of origin, though many had not committed crimes and were opposed to terror. Roosevelt's proposal was not acted upon; but President Wilson authorized Attorney General Palmer (1919) to round up all Anarchists, though many committed no crimes, in order to ship them to the Soviet Union. That led to the 1920 Wall Street Bombing which then became the impetus for an immigration quota law making it much more difficult for persons from Southern and Eastern European states (the original home of most Anarchists) to immigrate to America for several decades.

The Waves

In the 1880s, an initial "Anarchist Wave" [\(6\)](#) appeared which continued for some 40 years. Its successor, the "Anti-Colonial Wave" began in the 1920s, and by the 1960s had largely disappeared. The late 1960s witnessed the birth of the "New Left Wave," which dissipated largely in the 90s leaving a few groups still active in Sri Lanka, Spain, France, Peru, and Columbia. The fourth or "Religious Wave" began in 1979, and, if it follows the pattern of its predecessors, it still has twenty to twenty-five years to run.

Revolution was the overriding aim in every wave, but revolution was understood differently in each. Most terrorist organizations have understood revolution as secession or national self-determination. This principle, that a people should govern itself, was bequeathed by the American and French Revolutions. (The French Revolution also introduced the term "terror" to our vocabulary. [\(7\)](#)) In leaving open the question of what constitutes a "people," the principle is very ambiguous and can lead to endless conflict.

Revolution is also seen to be a radical reconstruction of authority, and this objective was often combined with efforts to create a new state by destroying two or more existing ones. Often the three conceptions were combined in different ways, and all were affected by different pre-existing contexts, which makes it useful to give each wave a distinctive name. [\(8\)](#)

The first three waves lasted approximately 40 to 45 years, but the "New Left Wave" was somewhat abbreviated. The pattern suggests a human life cycle pattern, where dreams that inspire fathers lose their attractiveness for the sons. Clearly, the life cycle of the waves does not correspond to that of organizations. Organizations normally dissipate before the wave does,

though sometimes an organization survives its associated wave. The IRA, for example, is the oldest terrorist organization of the modern world; it began the anti-colonial wave in the 20's and is still here. By way of comparison, the average life of organizations in the third or "New Left" wave is two years.

The II of rebel terror is very ancient, going back at least to the first century. Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam produced the Thugs, Zealots, and Assassins respectively--names still used to designate terrorists. (9) Religion determined every purpose and tactic of this ancient form.

Significant examples of secular rebel terror appeared before the "Anarchist Wave" began. The United States, for example, experienced two major successful ones. The Sons of Liberty, provoked by the Stamp Act, organized mobs to tar and feather colonists still loyal to the king, (10) forcing many to flee the country and settle in Canada. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) forced the federal government to end Reconstruction. But the two American examples were time and country specific. They had no contemporary parallels and no emulators, because they "did their dirty work in secret and kept their mouths shut afterwards." (11)

In contrast, the Russian experience in the 1880s spread rapidly to other parts of Europe, the Americas, and Asia before reaching its peak and receding. Despite this extraordinary spread of activities, unlike the American examples, no first wave group achieved its goal. The three subsequent waves show similar, though not identical, patterns. Each begins in a different locale and the participating rebel groups often share purposes and tactics that distinguish them from participants in other waves. Local aims are common in all waves, but the crucial fact is that other states are simultaneously experiencing similar activities. The "Anti-Colonial Wave" produces the most successes, but they are few in number and, in every example, the achievement falls short of the stated aim, as we shall elaborate below.

Why does the first wave begin in the late 19th century? There may be many reasons, but two stand out: doctrine and technology. Russian writers, particularly Nechaev, Bakunin, and Kropotkin, created a doctrine or strategy for terror, an inheritance for successors to use, improve, and transmit. Participants, even those with different ultimate objectives, were now able to learn from each other. The distinctiveness of this pattern is brought home by comparing it with those of the ancient religious terrorists, who always stayed within their own religious traditions. Each religious tradition produced its own kind of terrorist, and sometimes their tactics were so uniform that they appear to be a form of ritual. But if one compares Nechaev's Revolutionary Catechism with the Training Manual Bin Laden wrote for Al-Qaeda, the paramount desire to learn from the experiences of both friends and enemies is clear. (12) The greatest tactical difference between them is that Nechaev understands women to be priceless assets, while Bin Laden defers to the Islamic tradition and employs men only. (13)

The transformation in communication and transportation patterns is the second reason that explains the timing and spread of the first wave. The telegraph, daily mass newspapers, and

railroads flourished in this period; and subsequently throughout the 20th century, technology continued to shrink time and space.

Strangely enough, the characteristics and possibilities of modern revolutionary terror were partly inspired by studying the intrigues of the Russians in the Balkans. The Czars employed assassins against Turkish officials. The Turks responded by massacring Christian subjects, massacres that provoked Christian uprisings and war fever in Russia. Publicity and provocation, not pure terror were the objectives of the Czarist atrocities, and these objectives were incorporated in systematic Anarchist efforts to put atrocities at the service of revolution.

Narodnaya Volya ("The People's Will"), the first terrorist group in the first wave, inherited a world where traditional revolutionaries seemed obsolete or irrelevant. No longer could pamphlets, books, meetings, demonstrations produce mass uprisings, and even revolutionaries described themselves as "idle word spillers"! A "new form of communication" was needed, one that would be heard and command respect. Terror filled that need; no one could ignore it, and repeated acts of terror would generate the polarization necessary for revolution.

The Anarchist doctrine has four major points: 1) Modern society contains huge reservoirs of latent ambivalence and hostility. [\(14\)](#) 2) Society muffles and diffuses them by devising moral conventions to generate guilt and provide channels for settling some grievances and securing personal amenities. 3) However, conventions can be explained historically, and therefore acts we deem to be immoral, our children will hail as noble efforts to liberate humanity. 4) Terror is the quickest and most effective means to destroy conventions. The perpetrator frees himself from the paralyzing grip of convention to become a different sort of person, and society's defenders will respond in ways that undermine the rules they claim are sacred. [\(15\)](#)

An incident, often identified as the inspiration for the turbulent decades to follow, illustrates the process envisaged. Vera Zasulich wounded a Russian police commander who abused prisoners taken in a demonstration. Throwing her weapon to the floor, she proclaimed that she was a terrorist, not a killer. [\(16\)](#) In effect, the ensuing trial quickly became that of the police chief. When the court freed her, crowds greeted the verdict with thunderous applause.

A successful campaign entailed learning how to fight and how to die, and the most admirable death occurred as a result of a court trial where one accepted responsibility, using the occasion to indict the regime. The Russian writer Stepniak described the terrorist as "noble, terrible, irresistibly fascinating, uniting the two sublimities of human grandeur, the martyr and the hero." Dynamite, a recent invention, was the weapon of choice for the male terrorist, because it usually killed the person who threw the bomb also, demonstrating that he was not an ordinary criminal. [\(17\)](#)

Terror was extra-normal violence or violence beyond the moral conventions regulating violence. Most specifically, the conventions violated were the rules of war designed to distinguish

combatants from non-combatants. Invariably, most onlookers would label the acts atrocities or outrages.

The rebels described themselves as terrorists, not guerrillas, tracing their lineage back to the French Revolution, and sometimes to the Order of Assassins in medieval Islam. They sought political targets with the potentiality to shake up public attitudes. [\(18\)](#)

Terrorism was a strategy, not an end. The specific tactics used depended upon both on the context and the rebel's political objectives. Judging a context so often in flux was both an art and a science.

What gave the creators of this strategy confidence that it would work? In this case, as in the later waves, the moving forces were major political events, which unexpectedly exposed new vulnerabilities of government. Hope was excited, and hope is always an indispensable lubricant of rebel activity. The turn of events that gave rebels evidence of Russian vulnerability was the dazzling effort of the young Czar Alexander II to transform the system virtually overnight. In one stroke of the pen (1861), he freed the serfs (one-third of the population) and gave them funds to buy land. Three years later he established limited local self-government, "westernized" the judicial system, relaxed censorship powers and control over education. Hopes were aroused but could not be fulfilled quickly enough--for example, the funds to subsidize the peasants to buy land proved to be insufficient--and in the wake of inevitable disappointment, systematic assassination campaigns largely against prominent officials began, culminating in the death of Alexander II himself.

Soon other groups in the Russian Empire emerged, focusing on assassinations and robbing banks to finance their activities. The Armenians (Hunchaks) and the Poles were first. Then the Balkans exploded where many groups (i.e., Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, Young Bosnia, and the Serbian Black Hand) found the boundaries of states recently torn out of the Ottoman Empire unsatisfactory. In the West, revolutionary Anarchists mounted assassination campaigns and helped stimulate comparable ones in India, such as the Maniktala Secret Society (1905). [\(19\)](#)

The Versailles Peace Treaty concluding World War I sparked the hope for the second or "Anti-Colonial Wave." The empires of the defeated states (which were mostly in Europe) were broken up by applying the principle of self-determination. Where independence was not immediately feasible, territories were understood to be "mandates" ultimately destined for independence. But the victors could not articulate the principle without also raising questions about the legitimacy of their own empires. The IRA emerged in the 1920s, and terrorist groups developed in all imperial domains except the Soviet after World War II. A variety of new states--Ireland, Israel, Cyprus, Yemen, Algeria...--emerged, and the wave receded as the empires it swept over dissolved.

Second wave tactics differed in some respects from those of first. Bank robberies were less common, partly because diaspora sources this time contributed more money. Most conspicuous was the lesson learned that assassinating prominent political figures was often counterproductive, and few attacks on the prominent occurred. One organization continued the old practice, Lehi (a Zionist revisionist group the British labeled the "Stern Gang") and it proved much less effective than competitors in the struggle for independence. Martyrdom so often linked to assassinating the prominent seemed less significant too. The new strategy was first to eliminate via systematic assassinations the police, a government's eyes and ears. Military units would replace them and would prove too clumsy to cope without producing counter-atrocities, increasing social support for the terrorists. If the process of atrocities and counter-atrocities was well planned, it worked nearly always to favor those perceived to be weak and without alternatives. [\(20\)](#)

Major energies went into guerrilla-like (hit and run) actions against troops, attacks that went beyond the rules of war, however, because weapons were concealed and the assailants had no identifying insignia. [\(21\)](#) Some groups (e.g., Irgun and IRA) made efforts to give warnings in order to limit civilian casualties. In some cases (e.g., Algeria) terror was one aspect of a more comprehensive rebellion dependent on guerrilla forces. Although an important ingredient in colonial dissolution, terrorist groups rarely achieved their original purposes. The IRA gained an Irish state but not one extending over the whole island. EOKA fought to unify Cyprus and Greece but had to settle for the state of Cyprus, which split in two afterwards and has remained so ever since. Begin's Irgun fought to gain the entire Palestine mandate but settled for partition rather than risk civil war among Jews.

Anti-colonial causes were legitimate to many more parties than the causes articulated in the first wave, and that created a definition problem. The term "terrorist" had accumulated so many abusive connotations that those identified as terrorists found that they had enormous political liabilities. Rebels stopped calling themselves terrorists. Lehi (the last organization to rely on assassinations) was also the last to characterize itself as a terrorist group. Menachem Begin, leader of the Irgun (Lehi's contemporary and rival), concentrating on purpose rather than means, described his people as "freedom fighters" struggling against government terror. So appealing did this self-description prove to be that all subsequent terrorist groups followed suit. Governments appreciated the political value of "appropriate" language too, and began to describe all violent rebels as terrorists. The media corrupted language further, refusing to use terms consistently in the hope of avoiding being seen by the public as blatantly partisan. Major American newspapers, for example, often described the same individuals in the same account, indeed sometimes in the same paragraph, alternatively as terrorists, guerrillas, and soldiers. [\(22\)](#)

The agonizing Vietnam War produced the psychological requisites for the third or "New Left Wave." The effectiveness of Vietcong terror against the American Goliath armed with modern technology kindled hopes that the Western heartland was vulnerable too. The war also stimulated an enormous ambivalence about the value of the existing system, especially among the young in the West.

Many groups in the "developed world" (e.g., American Weather Underground, West German RAF, Italian Red Brigades, Japanese Red Army, and the French Action Directe saw themselves as vanguards for the masses of the Third World where much hostility to the West already existed. The Soviets encouraged these groups in many different ways. In Latin America, revolutionary groups repeated a pattern visible in the first wave; they abandoned the countryside and came to the city where they would be noticed. Carlos Marighella, a major figure on the Latin American scene, produced *The MiniManual of the Urban Guerrilla*, a handbook of tactics comparable to Nechaev's *Revolutionary Catechism* in the first wave.

In the third wave, radicalism was often combined with nationalism, as in the Basque Nation and Liberty (ETA), the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), the Corsican National Liberation Front (FNLC), and the IRA. The pattern reminds us of the first wave, where Anarchists sometimes linked themselves to nationalist aspirations, notably in Indian, Armenian, and Macedonian groups. Although every early effort failed, the linkage was renewed for the obvious reason that self-determination always appeals to a larger constituency than radical aspirations, and over time self-determination obscured the radical programs initially embraced. Nonetheless, most failed quickly. The survivors did not make much headway, because the countries concerned (Turkey, Spain, and France) did not understand themselves to be colonial powers nor did they display the ambivalence necessary for the separatists to succeed.

When the Vietnam War ended in 1975, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) became the heroic model. Originating after three Arab armies collapsed, its very existence was a statement that terror offered more hope than conventional military forces. The central position of the PLO was augmented by three powerful circumstances; Israel, its chief enemy, was an integral part of the West, it got strong Soviet support, and it was able to provide facilities in Lebanon to train terrorists from many countries.

The term "international terrorism" (commonly used during the "Anarchist Wave") was revived to describe "New Left Wave" activities. [\(23\)](#) The revolutionary ethos created significant bonds between separate national groups. The PLO had provided extensive training facilities for other groups. The targets chosen reflected international dimensions. Some groups conducted more assaults abroad than on their home territories; the PLO, for example, was more active in Europe than on the West Bank, and sometimes more active in Europe than many European groups themselves. On their own soil, groups often struck targets with special international significance, especially Americans and their installations. Teams composed of different national groups cooperated in attacks; from the Munich Olympics massacre (1972) and the kidnapping of OPEC ministers (1975) to Uganda (1975) and Somalia (1977). Libya, Iraq, and Syria employed terrorists in other countries as foreign policy instruments.

Airline hijacking was the most novel tactic in this wave, and over a hundred occurred during the 1970s. Hijacking had an international character because foreign rather than domestic landing fields were more available to hijacked planes. Hijacking also reflected an impulse for spectacular

acts, a first wave theme abandoned in the second for more effective military-like strikes.

Planes were taken to get hostages, and hostage crises of various sorts dominated the era. The most memorable was the 1979 kidnapping of Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades. When his government refused to negotiate, Moro was brutally murdered and his body dumped in the streets. The Sandinistas took Nicaragua's congress hostage in 1978; an act so audacious that it sparked the popular insurrection that brought the Somoza regime down a year later. In Colombia the M-19 tried to duplicate the feat by seizing the Supreme Court, but the government killed more than 100 people, including 11 justices, rather than yield.

Strikes on foreign embassies began in the third wave, when the PLO attacked the Saudi Embassy in Khartoum (1973). The most recent was the attack of the Peruvian "Shining Path" (1996), which held 72 hostages in the Japanese Embassy for more than four months (1996-7) until a rescue operation killed every terrorist in the Embassy.

Kidnappings occurred in at least seventy-three countries and were especially important in Italy, Spain, and Latin America. In the fourteen years after 1968, there were numerous international incidents, 409 kidnappings, and 951 hostages taken. [\(24\)](#) Initially, hostages were taken to gain political leverage. But it was soon apparent that hostages (especially company executives) could provide much cash. Companies insured their executives, and the unintended consequence was that it made kidnapping more lucrative and easier to consummate on the kidnappers' terms. Informed observers estimate that some \$350 million were gained from the practice in the period.

Although bank robbing was not as significant as it was in the first wave, some striking examples materialized. In January 1976 the PLO together with their bitter rivals the Christian Phalange hired safe breakers to help them loot the vaults of the major banks in Beirut. Estimates range between \$50 and a \$100 million stolen. "Whatever the truth the robbery was large enough to earn a place in the Guinness Book of World Records as the biggest bank robbery of all time." [\(25\)](#)

The third wave began to ebb in the 1980s. Revolutionary terrorists were defeated in one country after another. Israel's invasion of Lebanon (1982) eliminated PLO facilities to train terrorist groups, and international counter-terrorist cooperation became increasingly effective.

The "religious wave" began in the same decade. In the three earlier waves, religious identity was always important; religious and ethnic identities often overlap, as the Armenian, Macedonian, Irish, Cypriot, Israeli, and Palestinian struggles illustrate. But the aim earlier was to create secular sovereign states, in principle no different from those present in the international world. Religion has a vastly different significance in the fourth wave, supplying justifications and organizing principles for the New World to be established.

Islam is the most important religion in this wave and will get special attention below. But we should remember that other religious communities produced terrorists too. Sikhs sought a religious state in the Punjab. Jewish terrorists attempted to blow up Islam's most sacred shrine in Jerusalem and waged an assassination campaign against Palestinian mayors. One religious settler murdered 29 worshippers in Abraham's tomb (Hebron, 1994) and a fundamentalist assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Rabin (1995). 1995 was also the year in which Aum Shinrikyo, a group that combined Buddhist, Christian, and Hindu religious themes, released nerve gas on the Tokyo subway, killing 12 and injuring 3000. A worldwide anxiety materialized over expectations that a new threshold in terrorist experience had materialized: various groups would be encouraged to use chemo-bio weapons soon, and each separate attack would produce casualties numbering tens of thousands.

Christian terrorism, based on racial interpretations of the Bible, emerged mostly in the amorphous American Christian Identity movement. In true millenarian fashion, armed rural communes composed of families would withdraw from the state to wait for the Second Coming and the great racial war that event would initiate. So far the level of Christian violence has been minimal, although some observers have associated the Identity movement with the Oklahoma City bombing (1995).

Three events in the Islamic world provided the dramatic political turning point, or necessary condition, for a new wave. The Iranian Revolution was the first. Street demonstrations disintegrated the Shah's armies and provided proof that religion now had more political appeal than the prevailing revolutionary ethos. Significantly, Iranian Marxists also active against the Shah could muster only meager support.

The Iranians inspired and helped Shiite terror movements elsewhere, in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Lebanon. Most important were the events in Lebanon where Shiites, influenced by the self-martyrdom tactic of the early Assassins, introduced suicide bombing. The result was surprising, perhaps even to the Lebanese themselves. American and other foreign troops who had entered the country after the 1982 Israeli invasion quickly left and never returned.

Later, in Afghanistan, Muslim resistance (partly due to US aid in bringing Sunni volunteers to the battlefield⁽²⁶⁾) forced the Soviets out, an event which became a crucial step in the stunning, unimaginable disintegration of the Soviet Union itself. Religion now manifested the ability to eliminate a secular super-power.

Iranian and Afghan events were unexpected, but a third ingredient to give religion its special significance was fully anticipated by believing Muslims. 1979 was the beginning of a new century according to the Muslim calendar, and the tradition is that a redeemer would come at that time, a tradition that had regularly sparked uprisings at the turn of Muslim centuries earlier. This tradition influenced the Iranian Revolution itself, which occurred in the crucial expected year and may even have intensified Afghan resistance. Certainly, it affected other events. Sunni Muslims stormed the Grand Mosque in Mecca in the first minutes of the new

century and 10,000 casualties resulted. Whatever the specific local causes, Sunni terrorism soon appeared in many states with large Islamic populations: Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Sunni groups competed with the PLO in strikes against Israel. Afghan veterans who had volunteered from all parts of the Islamic world returned home with the will, confidence, and training to begin terrorist operations against weak home governments.

Assassinations and hostage taking, common features of the third wave, persisted, but "suicide bombing" was the most striking and deadly tactical innovation. It reasserted the martyrdom theme of the first wave, neglected by its two successors. The achievements in Lebanon inspired one remaining secular group, the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, who used suicide bombing to give their ailing movement new life. The most spectacular Tamil act killed Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Despite the conventional wisdom that only a vision of rewards in Paradise could inspire such acts, the Tamils have used "suicide bombers" more than all Islamic groups put together![\(27\)](#)

Fourth wave groups, much more than their counterparts in the third wave, have made massive attacks against military and government installations. Americans, in particular, became frequent targets. An ambush in Somalia forced American troops, who had evacuated Lebanon, to abandon another mission. Suicide bomb attacks on military posts in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and an American destroyer went unanswered. Similarly, embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were struck, occasioning heavy casualties in the local populations. The responses were ineffective cruise missile strikes against suspected targets. In 1993, the first successful attack by foreign terrorists on American soil occurred, the first World Trade Center bombing. It was followed by unsuccessful efforts to coordinate new attacks in America on the eve of the new millennium.[\(28\)](#) Finally, the massive assaults on September 11 occurred, and the "war" against terror was launched.

The fourth wave produced an organization with a purpose and recruitment pattern unique in the history of terrorism; namely, Al Qaeda, led and financed by the Saudi Osama Bin Laden. It seeks to create a single state for all Muslims, a state that once existed, and one that would be governed by the Sharia, Islamic law. The aspiration resonates in the Sunni populations throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. In the past, every terrorist organization recruited from a single national base or people. Al Qaeda seeks members from all parts of the vast Sunni world, including those who have gone to live in the West, though Arabs, especially from Egypt and Saudi Arabia, supply most recruits. Its unity is enhanced by common experience in Afghanistan, where virtually all recruits had trained. The first step in achieving its goal would be to strengthen rebel Islamic groups in various states of the Sunni world, an effort Americans help frustrate by supporting existing states organized on national lines, which many see as residues of collapsed colonial empires. Eliminating American influence in these states is a precondition of reunification. Forcing the Americans to withdraw troops from Islam's holiest shrines is the first step, and the second is to exploit a general anger over American influence in the Palestinian and Iraqi questions. Since Al Qaeda achieved none of its objectives and the early attacks produced virtually no response, the September 11 attacks could be understood as a

desperate attempt to rejuvenate a failing cause by triggering indiscriminate American reactions. [\(29\)](#)

A Closer Look at International Dimensions

Although their relationships vary in each wave, there are four major international audiences for each terrorist group: foreign terrorist groups, diaspora populations, liberal sympathizers, and foreign governments. Vera Figner, who organized the foreign policy of Narodnaya Volya, appealed directly to three audiences. She identified totally with an international revolutionary tradition of socialists and Anarchists, [\(30\)](#) and developed good contacts with the Russian Diaspora community--an element hitherto "lost to the revolutionary tradition." By expressing her regret for the assassination of President Garfield, she tried to reach out to Western liberals, taking the occasion to emphasize that terror was always wrong in democratic states. [\(31\)](#) This statement alienated many radicals supporting her; indeed, it failed to convince all interested parties that she truly meant what she said. She made no direct efforts to shape the policies of foreign states, but diaspora and liberal communities worked to make their governments more sympathetic to the Russian terrorists. Russian foreign policies and Figner's political system in any case irritated other states. The offer of the Japanese to finance Russian terrorists during the Russo-Japanese War (1905) encouraged Indian terrorists to believe that the Japanese would help them, too. [\(32\)](#)

The 1890s became the "Golden Age of Assassination" in the West; monarchs, prime ministers, and presidents were struck down one after another. Most assassins were Anarchists who moved easily across international borders to assassinate foreign leaders, compelling affected governments to conclude that they had to share police information and cooperate to control borders. President Theodore Roosevelt seized the opportunity to call for the first international crusade to safeguard civilization.

Anarchy is a crime against the whole human race, and all mankind should band together against the Anarchist. His crimes should be made a crime against the law of nations . . . declared by treaties among all civilized powers. [\(33\)](#)

But three years later, when Germany and Russia urged states to convene in St. Petersburg to sign an international protocol to share police information, the US refused to come. Hostility to Germany, anxiety about involvement in European politics, and the fact that the US had no federal police force shaped that decision. Italy refused too, for a different but very revealing concern. If Anarchists were returned to their countries of origin, Italy's domestic troubles might be worse than its international ones!

The first great effort to deal with international terrorism failed largely because the interests and

priorities of states pulled them in different directions, and, indeed, as the 20th Century began, some states actively helped terrorist groups. Bulgaria gave substantial support to Macedonian terrorists in the Ottoman Empire, and the suspicion that Serbia helped the assassin of Archduke Franz Ferdinand was an important ingredient in launching World War I. Ironically, that assassination was crucial in stemming the first terrorist wave, and the deed might not have happened if Roosevelt's crusade had been successful a decade earlier.

The international ingredient in the next wave had a different shape. Terrorist leaders of different national groups acknowledged common bonds and heritage, but the heroes their literature invoked were overwhelmingly national ones. (34) The underlying assumption was that if one strengthened ties with foreign terrorist groups, abilities to use other international assets would be weakened.

The League of Nations drafted two conventions (1937) to cope with terrorism, but they were "political theatre," not serious efforts to deal with the problem, and never went into effect. (35) After World War II, the UN inherited the League's authority over international terror and over the mandates governed by colonial powers, territories that were now scenes of extensive terrorist activity. As the UN grew by admitting new states virtually all of which were former colonial territories, that body gave the anti-colonial sentiment more structure, focus, and opportunities. Significantly, UN debates regularly described anti-colonial terrorists as "freedom fighters."

Diaspora groups displayed abilities not seen in earlier waves. (36) The IRA received money, weapons, and volunteers from the Irish overseas, especially in America. The support of the U.S. government for Irish independence was partly dependent on Irish American influence too. Israeli groups got similar support from similar, especially American, diaspora sources. The Arab world gave the Algerian FLN crucial political support, and Arab states adjacent to Algeria offered sanctuaries and allowed their territories to be used as staging grounds for attacks. The Greek government sponsored the Cypriot uprising against the British, and as the revolt grew more successful, the more enraged Turkish Cypriots looked to Turkey for aid and received it. The Cyprus problem is still unresolved nearly a half century later.

The different Irish experiences illustrate how crucial influences are shaped by foreign perceptions of purpose and context. The first effort in the 20s, seen simply as an anti-colonial movement, gained the foreign support needed from Irish Americans and the US government to secure an Irish state. The supporting parties abandoned the IRA during its brief campaigns to bring Northern Ireland into the Republic during World War II, when a more important concern prevailed. Support from abroad did not materialize in the 50s during the Cold War. IRA activities in the early part of the "New Left Wave" had a Marxist element that affected the usual sources of diaspora support. The Cold War had to end before an American government showed serious interest in the issue again, when it initiated moves that may ultimately resolve the conflict.

The conventional wisdom is that international connections always provide a terrorist group with enormous advantages. This wisdom is deeply flawed. One important and not fully understood reason for the fact that the third wave was the shortest was that it was so dependent on unreliable international connections. The emphasis on the revolutionary bond alienated potential domestic and liberal constituencies, particularly during the Cold War. Soon it was found that the effort to foster operational cooperation between terrorist groups posed serious problems for the weaker ones. Thus the German Revolutionary Cells, partners of the Palestine Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in a variety of hijacking efforts, tried to get help from its partner to release German prisoners. But the Germans found themselves wholly "dependent on the will of Wadi Haddad and his group," whose agenda was very different from theirs after all, and the relationship soon terminated.⁽³⁷⁾ A member of another German group (2nd June) suggests that the group's obsession with the Palestinian cause induced it to attack a Jewish synagogue on the anniversary of Kristallnacht, a date often considered the beginning of the Holocaust. Such "stupidity," he says, alienated potential German constituencies.⁽³⁸⁾

Palestinian raids from Egyptian-occupied Gaza helped precipitate a disastrous war with Israel (1956), and Egypt was led to prevent the possibility that fidayeen raids would be launched from its territories ever again. A Palestinian raid from Syria brought the latter into the Six-Day War, and Syria ever afterwards kept a tight control on those operating from its territories. The third wave had one strikingly new international feature. Never before had one people become the favorite target of most groups. Approximately one third of the international attacks involved American targets. American economic, diplomatic, and military activities were visible in Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. The support the US gave governments under terrorist siege only intensified this proclivity.

From its inception in 1968, the PLO, a loose confederation, often found international ties unexpectedly expensive because they complicated existing divisions within the organization. In the 1970s, Abu Iyad, founding member and intelligence chief, wrote that the Palestinian cause was so important in Syrian and Iraqi domestic politics that those states captured organizations within the PLO to serve their own ends. The result was that it was even more difficult to settle for a limited goal as the Irgun and the EOKA had done earlier. Entanglements with Arab states created other problems for both parties similar to those in 1956 and 1967. When a PLO faction hijacked British and American planes to Jordan (1970) in the first effort to target non-Israelis, the Jordanian army devastated the Palestinians and the PLO lost its home. Finally, an attempt to assassinate an Israeli diplomat in Britain sparked the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, forcing the PLO to leave the home that gave it so much significance among foreign terrorist groups.

To maintain control over their own destiny, states began to sponsor their own groups, an activity unknown in the second wave, and a very costly one to the sponsors. In the 1980s, Britain severed diplomatic relations with Libya and Syria for sponsoring terrorism on British soil, and France broke with Iran when Iran refused to let the French interrogate its embassy staff about assassinations of Iranian émigrés. The limited value of state-sponsored terror was emphasized by Iraqi restraint during the Gulf War, despite widespread predictions that Iraqi

terrorists would flood Europe. If terror had materialized, it would have made bringing Saddam Hussein to trial for crimes a war aim, and the most plausible explanation for Hussein's uncharacteristic restraint is the desire to avoid that result.

During the third wave, states for the first time cooperated openly and formally in counter-terror efforts. The international cooperation of national police forces sought so desperately in the 1904 St. Petersburg Protocol finally materialized in the mid 1970s, when Trevi and Interpol were established. The Americans with British aid bombed Libya (1986) for the terrorist attacks it sponsored, and the European Community imposed an arms embargo. Two years later, evidence that Libya's agents were involved in the Pan Am crash in Lockerbie, Scotland led to a unanimous UN Security Council decision obliging Libya to extradite the suspects, and a decade later, when collective sanctions had their full effects, Libya complied. When compared with League and UN activities during the "Anti-Colonial Wave," the UN action in the Libya case signified a dramatic change.

Nonetheless, sometimes even close allies could not cooperate. France refused to extradite PLO, Red Brigade, and ETA suspects to West Germany, Italy, and Spain respectively. Italy spurned American requests to extradite a Palestinian suspect in the seizure of the Achille Lauro cruise ship in 1984. The U.S. in its turn has refused to extradite some IRA suspects. In 1988 Italy refused to extradite a Kurd sought by Turkey because Italian law forbids capital punishment and Turkish law does not. Events of this sort will not stop until the laws and interests of separate states are identical.

Finally, the breakdown of the Lebanese government gave the PLO an opportunity to become the first terrorist organization to train foreign groups. When the PLO fled Lebanon, its host (Tunisia) refused to let it continue that activity, and to a large extent the PLO's career as an effective terrorist organization was over. Ironically, as the Oslo Accords demonstrated, the PLO achieved more of its objectives when it became less dangerous.

Religion (the basis for the fourth wave) transcends the state bond. But groups from different mainstream religious traditions do not cooperate. Even traditional cleavages within a religion, Shia and Sunni for example, are sometimes intensified.

Within the same religion, particularly the same branch of that religion, the potentialities for cooperation affecting many interests may be great, particularly in the Islamic world where so many states exist. Whether or not the religious tie was crucial, the first successful strategic example of state-sponsored terror occurred during the fourth wave. Iran facilitated the suicide (self-martyrdom) bombings, which compelled foreign withdrawals in Lebanon. Inasmuch as the attacks were made by local elements on their own terrain, the targeted parties did not make retaliatory strikes at the sponsor. Al Qaeda's tactical strikes at the American installations and embassies were protected by the Afghan Taliban government's refusal to accept the UN ultimatum to force Al Qaeda to leave its bases. The religious ties may have been a crucial element in the decision. But whatever the reason, when the Taliban again refused to comply

after September 11, it suffered the consequences.

Resemblances between Al Qaeda and the PLO exist, but the differences are significant. While the PLO prior to the Oslo Agreements targeted Americans more than any other non-Israeli people, the US was not the principal target, as it seems to have been for Al Qaeda from the very beginning. The PLO trained elements of pre-existing groups but those groups retained their identity; Al Qaeda trains individuals committed to its goal from various places in the Sunni world, including the West. The PLO had a loose, divided form that caused it enormous trouble but gave it an ability to persevere. While Al Qaeda has created unique "sleeper cells" in areas to be targeted, it does seem like a single unit, and hence much more dangerous. But there is a flip side to this structural difference. Once their centers are destroyed, better-organized groups are more likely to quit fighting. [\(39\)](#)

Conclusion

My conclusion is brief. The September 11 attack has created a resolve in America and elsewhere to end international terror once and for all. The first step, the unexpectedly quick and decisive success of the Afghan intervention, was impressive. At this writing, Al Qaeda seems destroyed. Certainly a few attacks by existing cells may yet occur, but much more important is the fact that the territory to regroup elsewhere as an organization will not be available because no host will accept the inherent risks. The extraordinary unwillingness of the Taliban and Al Qaeda to fight will also have its effect on the ability to generate successor movements from Islamic fundamentalism.

But an acquaintance with modern history does not inspire confidence that there will be many more striking successes. Previous international efforts have always been difficult to sustain over time, and the present coalition may be running into similar problems now. Different state interests and priorities will have their effects as the resistance of other countries to the American effort to pinpoint Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as the "axis of evil" shows. Members of the coalition do not agree on how to apply the term. The issues of Kashmir and Israel are cases in point; it is clear that some states will encourage groups that others abhor.

Even if the fourth wave follows the path of its three predecessors soon, another inspiring cause for hope is likely to emerge unexpectedly, as it has four times in the past. This history shows that the inspiration for a terrorist wave may dry out in time, and that resistance can destroy organizations or make them ineffectual. But, alas, it also demonstrates that terrorists regularly invent new ways to conduct their activities.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this essay was published in *Current History*, Dec. 2001, 419-25. [\(back\)](#)

2. On September 20, the President told Congress that "any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded as a hostile regime. . . [The war] will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated." (My emphasis). [\(back\)](#)
3. See Richard B. Jensen, "The United States, International Policing the War against Anarchist Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, 1 (Spring 2001): 15-46. [\(back\)](#)
4. The Russian police prior to the rise of rebel terror also were not armed; they carried ceremonial sabers only. [\(back\)](#)
5. Pope Leo XII blamed Jews, Anarchists, Socialists, and Freemasons for the stream of assassinations that occurred in the 1890s. *New York Times*, September 6, 1901. [\(back\)](#)
6. Anarchists were the most dominant element in the first wave. But in the Balkans, Poland, the Ottoman Empire, India, those influenced by Anarchist strategy largely had separatist ends. [\(back\)](#)
7. The term "terror" originally referred to actions of the Revolutionary government that went beyond the rules regulating punishment to make a people fit to govern itself. [\(back\)](#)
8. We will ignore "single issue" groups, i.e. some suffragette elements at the beginning of the century or contemporary elements of the anti-abortion and green movements. [\(back\)](#)
9. See my "Fear and Trembling; Terror in Three Religious Traditions", *American Political Science Review* (78:3) 1984, 658-77. [\(back\)](#)
10. Henry Dawson, *The Sons of Liberty* (New York: Private Publication, 1959). [\(back\)](#)
11. Most groups in every wave except the fourth cite the American Revolution as worth emulating. But I know no reference to the Sons of Liberty or its tactics. [\(back\)](#)
12. See Jerry Post's edited versions of the Bin Laden work in *Terrorism and Political Violence* 14:2 (Summer 2002) forthcoming. It took time for this attitude to develop in Islam. If one compares Bin Laden's work with Faraj's *Neglected Duty*, a work used to justify the assassination of Egyptian President Sadat (1981), the two authors seem to be in two different worlds. Faraj cites no experience outside the Islamic tradition, and his most recent historical reference is to Napoleon's invasion of Europe! See my "Sacred Terror: A Case from Contemporary Islam" in Walter Reich ed. *Origins of Terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) pp. 103-130. [\(back\)](#)
13. The traditional still binding Islamic view is that women may participate in fighting only when no men are available. [\(back\)](#)
14. The French Revolution, in making us aware of the potentialities for perfection, was for the Anarchists the functional equivalent of the unredeemed divine promise for religious groups. [\(back\)](#)

15. An equivalent for this argument in religious millennial thought is that that the world must become impossibly bad before it could become unimaginably good. ([back](#))
 16. Adam B. Ulam, *In the Name of the People* (New York: Viking Press, 1977) p. 269. (my emphasis) ([back](#))
 17. The bomb was most significant in Russia. While Russian women were crucial in the organization, they were not allowed to throw the bomb, presumably because most bombers did not escape from the scene. Other terrorists used the bomb extensively, but chose other weapons as well. ([back](#))
 18. A guerrilla force has political objectives, as any army does, but it aims to weaken or destroy the enemy's military forces first. The terrorist strikes directly at the political sentiments that sustain his enemies. ([back](#))
 19. Peter Heehs, *Nationalism, Terrorism, and Communalism: Essays in Modern Indian History* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1998) Chapter 2. ([back](#))
 20. The strategy is superbly described in the film "Battle of Algiers," which is based on the memoirs of Saadi, who organized the battle. Attacks against the police occur whose responses are limited by rules governing criminal procedure. In desperation, the police set a bomb off in the Casbah, inadvertently exploding an ammunition dump killing Algerian women and children. A mob emerges screaming for revenge, and at this point the FLN has the moral warrant to attack civilians.
- There is another underlying element which makes rebel terrorism in a democratic world often have special weight. The atrocities of the strong always seem worse than that of the weak because it is believed the latter have no alternatives. ([back](#))
21. Guerrillas carry weapons openly and wear an identifying emblem, and we are obliged therefore to treat them as soldiers. ([back](#))
 22. For a more detailed discussion of the definition problem, see my "Politics of Atrocity" in *Terrorism: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Eds. Y. Alexander and S. Finger (New York: John Jay Press, 1997) p. 46ff. ([back](#))
 23. Most people using the term "international terrorism" thought that it was a product of the 60s and 70s. ([back](#))
 24. James Adams, *The Financing of Terror* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986) p. 192. ([back](#))
 25. *Ibid.*, p. 94. ([back](#))
 26. This was not the first time secular forces would help launch the careers of those who would become religious terrorists. Israel helped Hamas to get started, thinking that it would compete to weaken the PLO, and to check left-wing opposition, President Sadat released religious elements from prison who later assassinated him. ([back](#))
 27. From 1983 to 2000 the Tamils used suicide bombs 171 times while the combined total for all 13 Islamic groups using the tactic was 117. The figures were compiled by Yoram Schweitzer and cited by Ehud Sprinzak,

"Rational Fanatics," Foreign Policy, Oct. 2001, p. 69. [\(back\)](#)

28. Those attacks, as well as the expected ones which did not materialize, are discussed in a special forthcoming volume of Terrorism and Political Violence 14:1 (Spring 2002), edited by Jeffrey Kaplan. [\(back\)](#)

29. For a very interesting discussion of the circumstances which provoke American military responses to terrorist attacks, see Michele L. Mavesti, "Explaining the United States' Decision to Strike Back at Terrorists," Terrorism and Political Violence, 13:2 (Summer, 2001) pp. 85-106. [\(back\)](#)

30. For a more extensive discussion of Figner, see my "The International World as Some Terrorists Have Seen It: A Look at a Century of Memoirs" in my Inside Terrorist Organizations (London: Frank Cass, 2001) 2nd Ed. [\(back\)](#)

31. A disappointed office seeker, not an Anarchist, assassinated Garfield. [\(back\)](#)

32. Heehs, note 8. p. 4. [\(back\)](#)

33. See Richard B. Jensen, "The United States, International Policing the War against Anarchist Terrorism," Terrorism and Political Violence 13, 1 (Spring 2001): 19. [\(back\)](#)

34. See my "The International World..." op.cit. [\(back\)](#)

35. Martin David Dubin, "Great Britain and the Ant-Terrorist Conventions of 1937," Terrorism and Political Violence (V, I). Spring 1993 p.1. [\(back\)](#)

36. Irish-Americans have always given Irish rebels extensive support. The Fenian movement was born in American Civil War and sparked a rebellion in Ireland. [\(back\)](#)

37. Hans J. Klein in Jean M. Bourguereau, German Guerrilla: Terror, Rebel Reaction and Resistance (Orkney, U.K.: Sanday, 1981) p. 31. [\(back\)](#)

38. Michael Baumann, Terror or Love (New York: Grove Press, 1977) p. 61. [\(back\)](#)

39. The Spaniards, for example, conquered the Incas and Aztecs easily, but the U.S. had much more difficulty with the less powerful but highly decentralized native peoples resisting it. Contrary to the argument above, Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin contend that that Al Qaeda is a uniquely decentralized organization and therefore less likely to be disturbed by destroying the center. "America and the New Terrorism" Survival 42, 2 (September 2000): 156-77. [\(back\)](#)

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Scandal, Resentment, Idolatry: The Underground Psychology of Terrorism

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If I read Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* or Dostoevsky's *The Devils* I cannot help reflecting on how the characters in these books have continued to be reincarnated right down to our own times. (Italo Calvino)

After a day of writing, Dostoevsky used to go down to the local newspaper stand to consult the Russian and foreign press in search of incidents, events, faits divers, which he could use as material for his novels. This is not because he lacked imagination but because, on the contrary, he regularly found that his moral vision of human relations was being instantiated and validated by history. Occasionally he would find reports of an episode that he had already anticipated in his fiction, which leads us to reflect on the prophetic capabilities of great literary works. Something like this is what we encounter regarding the events of September 11: the author of *Demons*, in which a whole provincial city is set ablaze amidst the romantic and nihilistic synergies befuddling its inhabitants, would have derived grim satisfaction from reading about the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York and the attack on the Pentagon. André Glucksmann grasped this connection when he entitled his recent essay on the wider implications of those events *Dostoevsky in Manhattan*, which he concludes with an "éloge de la littérature" for its capacity to unveil cultural and historical energies that result in acts of nihilistic violence.

Glucksmann's study ranges over a vast political, ideological, and literary territory in order to connect the terrorists' motivations with the complex and contradictory forces active within the

culture under siege. He credits Flaubert as much as Dostoevsky with uncovering a more generalized and pandemic nihilism than the one we isolate around the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks. He rightly insists that by construing such violence as an outlandish exception we short-circuit our perception of the common ground we share with our violent antagonists. "Flaubert struggled early on with the difficulty of representing the ordinary nihilist in his banality. As soon as the latter is identified, he turns into the exception, shifting towards being the Other whose extraordinary otherness is a hedge against our turning back on ourselves" (95). In this essay I shall explore such a necessary return to ourselves as the terrorists' action warrants, as especially illuminated by Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*. Because his self-tormenting narrator takes on the entire cultural framework of his time and ours, debating violence and desire as issues for our self-understanding, such an exploration engages us in more general anthropological considerations.

The religious motivation of the terrorist is transparent and, on its own terms, irrefutable, since by definition its sacred inspiration and goal are exempt from all forms of human inquiry; its sanctions transcend all worldly jurisdiction, descending from a hieratic point of reference beyond the pale of human tribunals. Pre- or post-political in the sense of being unavailable to worldly negotiation, its violence is sacred in all that the latter term denotes as absolute, beyond appeal, unanswerable to human reason. So we rightly turn to the anthropological theory developed in René Girard's *Violence and the Sacred* to fathom the properly sacrificial--sacred-making--scenario within which such deeds are inscribed. But we also need to go beyond these groundbreaking insights, and to focus on the elemental role of resentment that is provided in Eric Gans's *Generative Anthropology* in order more fully to grasp the relations between nihilism and religion.

2

In the desacralized, secularized West, we regularly tend to write off the terrorists as religious fanatics whose motivations are alien to our culture, while occasionally recalling the dangers to civil society posed by some of our own indigenous fundamentalisms: Jim Jones, David Koresh, and, most recently, Timothy McVeigh. Uniquely or narrowly religious explanations do not suffice, as if cognitive mastery were achieved by portraying religion as the other and enemy of rationality and civil society. This is a view expressed by such eminent thinkers as Richard Rorty (e.g., *Philosophy and Social Hope*, ch. 11) and Steven Weinberg (*Facing Up: Science and its Cultural Adversaries*), whose only point of agreement, perhaps, is the need to expel religion from the councils of those bent on a scientific understanding of human experience. Yet mainstream Islam has unequivocally denounced the events of September 11. The political leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, President Khatami, has dissociated his religion from such terrorism by labeling it, at a speech at the UN in January 2002, as the work of nihilists with whom no culture can find common ground.

Nihilism is a mode of thinking that, since Nietzsche, we have been constrained to acknowledge as our own homegrown response to all transcendence, to all valuations. Nietzsche described it

as the will to nothing as preferable to no will at all. He viewed it as the destiny of Western philosophy, the consequence of a relentless truth-seeking process whose boundless inquiry ultimately erased all grounds for truth of any kind (On the Genealogy of Morals III, 27)--a process we may view as epitomized in the name we give to the New York site of the catastrophe, "ground zero."

The question prompted by nihilist terrorism, then, is: What do we in the West, or the US, have in common with the suicide bomber as the token of a type of behavior that we can see around us and imagine of ourselves, or in ourselves? What can we recall from our own experience that enables us to understand him and consequently to affiliate his seemingly outlandish impulses with those we can recognize as intimately our own? How, in this context, can we respond anthropo-logically, dispassionately and scientifically, to the cognitive imperative implied by the Roman adage *homo sum et nihil humani alienum puto*," which remains axiomatic for all interhuman inquiry? How, to borrow from Nietzsche's own phrasing, can we understand what is all-too-human about this exercise of apocalyptic violence in its appeal to hieratic and unanswerable transcendence?

Rather than go back over the ground covered by Glucksmann, I will focus on a recent article in the New Yorker magazine by the sometime Near Eastern specialist Jonathan Raban (he is the author of *Arabia: A Journey through the Labyrinth*), whose frankly autobiographical bias sheds more light on these questions than the notoriously sarcastic indignation of the French intellectual. Published under the rubric "Personal History," it is entitled "My Holy War: What do a vicar's son and a suicide bomber have in common?" and it brings jihad home to anyone capable of recalling the cultural stresses of the Vietnam era and its Cold War circumstances. What Raban does not do, and what I shall undertake here, is to connect his observations with significant strands in our Western literary heritage, wherein, as Gans and Girard alike have argued, we find the elements of a coherent anthropology, a "discovery procedure," as Gans calls it, in correlating human behavior with its cultural foundations. Mimetic anthropology is capacious enough to incorporate historical events and individual experience within its hermeneutic purview, and it owes more to the structural intuitions of tragedy, Greek or Shakespearean, than to the punctual observations of an Aristotle or an anthropological field worker. The theory is initially born of reflections on the novel, that uniquely Western literary genre generated by individualist and egalitarian energies of our society, whose vocation is to explore personal experience in the context of environing cultural forces over a narrative arc that draws meaning from their interaction; whose vocation, in sum, is to explore the meaning of history and culture as intimately experienced by its human participants.

3

After drawing numerous parallels between the actions and attitudes of Islamist terrorists and his own experience as the rebellious son of an Anglican vicar, Raban slyly proposes that John Walker Lindh, the wayward American convert to radical Islam who was captured while fighting for the Taliban against US forces in Afghanistan, should not be executed for treason--as

McVeigh was, to the permanent loss of any fuller understanding of him--but installed instead as the focus of a multidisciplinary university research project involving "psychologists, theologians, political scientists, and cultural historians." The project would aim at explaining "why the call to jihad answers so resonantly the yearnings of clever, unhappy, well-heeled young men, from Mill Valley and Luton as well as from Cairo and Jidda" (36), that is, from the "low rent, rootless, multilingual suburbs" (30) of Western cities no less than from Middle Eastern capitals. Raban's qualifiers designate a marginal and ambiguous space that can remind us of the underground from which Dostoevsky's narrator addresses us, while insisting that he has only "carried to extremes in my life what [we, his readers] have not dared to carry even half-way" (240).

Raban connects strands from his own antinuclear, antireligious, and antipaternal ("Oedipal," as he calls it) rage as a youth to the bitter anti-Western sentiments roiling on the margins of our culture on the part of certain ambivalent and ambiguous participants who have been in it but not of it. For what is striking in what we have learned so far about the hijack suspects is their strategic immersion in our culture and their tactical exploitation of its resources. They have benefited from its unique educational and technological opportunities and from its middle-class standard of living available only to a minority in their world, and have amply partaken of its consumerist amenities, as borne out by their credit card traces among us, "a forensic spoor," as Raban states, "of brand names across the length and breadth of the United States" (36).

The marginality we are dealing with here is not that of the oppressed themselves, but of those who, like many an American campus radical, seek their own identity and justification, and a sacralizing vocation, in taking up the cause of the oppressed from a position that is materially underwritten by the society of the oppressors, whom they effectively resemble in their cultural and socio-economic circumstances. This marginality is handily conceivable in terms of the foundational structure of Generative Anthropology, which configures social organization as a sacred center whose peripheral beholders are all rivals for its occupation or appropriation. Girard apprehends this symmetry in his own way, when, in his interview on *Le Monde* (November 6, 2001), he observes, "By their effectiveness, by the sophistication of the means employed, by the knowledge that they had of the United States, by their training, were not the authors of the attack at least somewhat American? Here we are in the middle of mimetic contagion." To analyze this contagion, I shall rely on Dostoevsky's *Notes*, which Glucksmann barely alludes to, although this seminal portrayal of an obscure conflict of rival doubles explores the ambivalence of mimesis in a manner that lends greater coherence to Raban's autobiographical observations.

The thematic content of the cultural center--Koranic paradise or material well-being, which is unmistakably held up as sacred for Americans--is less significant than the forces of attraction and repulsion deployed around it as the locus of significance in general. What maintains these forces in place, in dynamic equilibrium, is resentment, which, in Generative Anthropology's structural conception, names a double bind, a bond of doubles organizing social space. For, past the satisfaction of natural appetites in more "primitive" or originary circumstances, resentment continues to name both the attraction of the center as mediated by all the desires

surrounding it--there is no original, immediate sentiment on their part, nor anything essential about the center to arouse strong feeling in and of itself, such feeling being but a reaction to those in its vicinity--and its repulsion, which is experienced as a deprivation caused by all rivaling for it and therefore forbidding its attainment to one and all. Desire is deferred or imaginary appropriation, and resentment is the discomforting experience of deferred revenge against those who thwart the satisfaction of desire by obstructing that appropriation. Another name for the structural tension in these dynamics, one crucial to understanding the admixture of sacred and profane, of transcendent aspirations amidst the imminence of worldly desire, is scandal, which designates the neighbor-rival on the periphery as both model and obstacle to the fulfillment of desire.

4

Scandal is a term that has become more focal in Girard's later reflections on his own theory, as witness his most recent book, *Celui par qui le scandale arrive*. It derives from religious discourse, that of the Christian Bible. It applies generally to all phenomena of mimetic contagion and it communicates dialectically and sometimes synonymously with the notion of idolatry, as emphasized by Dawn Perlmutter in "Skandalon 2001: The Religious Practices of Modern Satanists and Terrorists" (*Anthropoetics* 7, 2). Idolatry names what the West's ineradicable Judaic heritage has taught us to repudiate as the worship of false gods, of ersatz divinity. It names at the institutional level what scandal names at the interpersonal level, something that we readily deplore in our neighbors' conduct, but that blinds us to our own mimetic contagion by it, our own involvement and complicity with it. We can describe scandal metaphorically as idolatry's dirty little secret, as it enables us to denounce the other's idolatry without any sense of its symmetry with our own. The skewed relations between idolatry, which is public, and scandal, which begins as a personal, affective reaction, help explain how our attention to visible and more spectacular institutional practices can hinder us from understanding our own relation to them.

Terrorist violence is a large-scale scandal in the sense that Girard has emphasized in that notion: because of its sacrificial, scapegoating indifference to the identity of its victims, it works as a mimetic entrapment, authorizing a vengeful reciprocity equally unnuanced in its wrath and symmetrically indifferent to its victims. This apprehension was widespread immediately after the terrorist attacks, as witnessed by the maxim widely circulated in email correspondence, and by the press as well, cautioning that "an eye for an eye is a recipe for blindness." The extensive circulation of this maxim suggests that the dangers of violent reciprocity are apparent to common-sense observers. What is counter-intuitive about Girard's basic insight is the well-nigh irresistible force of mimetic contagion that can convert observers into participants in a violence they formally deplore.

Mimetic reciprocity is a force so potent and pervasive as to require, in Girard's Dostoevskian view, something like a religious conversion, a radical change in disposition, to evade it, something resembling the pattern of fall and redemption that Western Christianity holds up as

paradigmatic for all creation. (1) It is a view worth serious consideration when we consider the alternative advised by Glucksmann, who counsels the virtues of self-control, autolimitation, as guided by the Greek notion of *aidos*, distanced recollection, whereby he disputes Soljenitsyn's religious exhortation for a sentiment *totalement perdu*: *l'humilité devant Dieu*. "Homer is more direct. It is in the face of noise and tears, blood and fury, that a sense of decency [la pudeur] recoils; it is from such naked horror that Achilles, Priam, and Homer himself take their distance" (243). But such a distance is only achieved after the carnage, when, among the ruins, it's too late, noise and tears, blood and fury being, as Homer clearly shows in the berserker rage of his combatants, the least likely climate for recollection or reflection of any kind whatsoever. (2) There is a fundamental misunderstanding here as to what propels annihilating violence, which Glucksmann typifies when, in his syncretic recourse to conflicting vocabularies, he cites Agamemnon's genocidal fury as expressing the "the death drive." "Let all Trojans disappear together, without mourning, without a trace. Let not one of them escape the thunder of death at our hand, not even the child in his mother's lap, not even those who flee" (19). The wrath of Achilles, driven by resentment against Agamemnon, is still more indiscriminate and devastating in its appeal to all divinities in destroying Greeks and Trojans alike, which Gans cites as a kind of "utopia" of violence: "Ah Father Zeus! Athena! Apollo! Let not one Trojan, not on Argive escape death, so that we two [Achilles and Patroclus] may emerge from the ruin to undo the sacred veil of Troy" (Iliad 16.95-100, cited in *The End of Culture* 247).

5

Raban's knowledge-oriented project is not likely to win over the retributionist and retaliatory mindset of our current Justice Department, as witness the vengeful and pointless execution of Timothy McVeigh, who might have served as a similar resource for human self-understanding. But the project is worth entertaining at greater length by readers of *Anthropoetics*, for which resentment, as thematized in the *Chronicles of Love and Resentment*, is a fundamental category of human relations. Absent the research opportunity proposed by Raban, we should recall that our university libraries, and any good bookstore, already dispose of a rich and telling archive on the subject of the "unearned righteousness" (33) that issues in anarchic violence on the part of ambivalently--which is to say, resentfully--marginal participants in Western culture. Raban does not appoint any literary critics, nor philosophers for that matter, to his research group (although that oversight is perhaps made up for by his inclusion of cultural historians). Nevertheless, it is particularly in the novel's interrogation of human interaction over time that we may expect to find significant parallels and explanatory keys for cognizance of this crisis-laden juncture in social relations. The life and works of Dostoevsky are very much to the point here. Like Raban's semi-confessional essay, they offer probing studies and a powerful critique of resentment as first-hand experience.

The same dynamics of resentment and self-hatred fueling a desire for retributive and, especially, redemptive violence that Raban uncovers in his own youthful rebellion and in the apocalyptic fantasies of radical Islamism are to be found in the young Dostoevsky. (3) His rejection by St. Petersburg literary circles inspired him to flirt with anarchist cells and won him

arrest, mock-execution, and exile, from which he emerged as a clairvoyant, even prophetic critic of romantic revolt and the nihilism it favors. The essential difference here lies in the redemption that the novelist gleaned from his catastrophic fall and his consequent painful and soul-wrenching sojourn among "the insulted and the injured." In *The House of the Dead*, Dostoevsky recorded his exile amidst common-law criminals whose cruelty and boorishness and just as stunning magnanimities must have quickened his sense of a common and complex humanity that the simplistic us/them schema of romantic revolt does not account for. As a result, he was able, beginning with *Notes from Underground*, to see and fully analyze the self-glorifying and self-defeating absurdity of his resentment, much as Raban reveals his own adolescent hubris. He saw it, moreover, as his introductory footnote to *Notes* insists, as a real function of historical circumstances, urging the reader to acknowledge the plausibility, the necessity, of his fictitious character "if we take into consideration the circumstances which lead to the formation of our society" (107). He meant, that is, his fiction as true to life: "don't tell me you don't know it!" the narrator admonishes the reader about his own fantasies (164). Granted, most realist fiction assumes this correspondence to actuality, but Dostoevsky's added emphasis, his thematic insistence here, adds a deliberately epistemic charge to his writing that calls for historical verification. His fiction, I think, diagnoses the disposition monitored by Raban in his own past and in the composite portrait he draws of the suicide bomber.

The decisive flaw in romantic rebellion, as Raban points out about himself and as a Muhammad Atta or a John Walker Lindh could never see, is the self-exiling rebel's need of his oppressors as a prop for his victimary theology, his symbiotic dependence on real or imagined persecution to authenticate his sacred identity, to consecrate his destiny:

A consciousness forged in conditions of tyranny [such as that of the terrorist students from Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and of Dostoevsky in tsarist Russia] is often liable to find tyranny wherever in the world it settles. Islamism--which by no means signifies Islam at large--needs oppression. A powerful sense of kufr [unbelief surrounding him] helps the believer to live in Western exile in the necessary state of chronic persecution, from which his theology was born, and on which its survival depends. (32-33)

6

The environing climate of unbelief is the shroud for a glorified body of convictions. This symbiosis, the opponent's need of a hostile milieu to sustain his belief, is a point brought out long ago by Sartre, when he distinguished, in his essay on Baudelaire and in *What is Literature*, the revolutionary from the rebel, who depends on the system in place to consolidate his oppositional and largely derivative identity that is forged over against it. This construction of an identity "over against," rather than on a free-standing foundation of its own, is how Dostoevsky presents the forging of modern self-consciousness, from the underground man's assertion, "Every decent man of our age is, and indeed has to be, a coward and a slave" (149), through Raskolnikov's somber broodings over his Napoleonic destiny in *Crime and Punishment*.

The pathology--literally: logos of suffering--we observe here is the one Nietzsche first observed of resentment as the basis of moral valuation: "the value-positing eye . . . needs a hostile external world" (Genealogy I, 10). That very hostility guarantees the integrity of his credo, which in turn protects the subject from feelings of inferiority, of self-hatred that Dostoevsky's narrator confesses (147) in his own failed rivalry with everyone around him. Whether or not we accept Nietzsche's genealogy--for Girard, Judaeo-Christianity provides a critique rather than a wellspring of resentment, which is ever more loosed upon the world with the discredit sown by our religious tradition on sacrificial solutions to mimetic violence--his description holds as a structural analysis, and in particular of the "priestly vengefulness" of the terrorist, "a grand politics of revenge, of a farseeing, subterranean, slowly advancing and premeditated revenge" of the kind that can lead up to explosive results. The sleeper cells are the natural habitat of "the man of resentment," whose "spirit loves hiding places, secret paths and back doors, everything covert entices him as his world, his security, his refreshment; he understands how to keep silent, how not to forget, how to wait, how to be provisionally self-deprecating and humble."

Self-effacement as a tactic is a recipe for conformity, such as the underground man exhibits in his impeccable dress code, and the terrorists in theirs. But its pressures can also, and of necessity, result in eruptions of incivility, such as the underground man recalls in dealing nastily with his clients as a petty bureaucrat (I, i). Raban describes the rude behavior recorded of the terrorists living among us, such as the famous row over a bill at Shuckum's Raw Bar and Grill, in terms that doubtless draw from his retrospective self-knowledge:

These are not displays of sullen adolescent aggression; they're moral gestures, designed to put the kuffar [unbelievers] in their rightful place. It's what certain angry, frustrated young men have always secretly dreamed of--a theology of rebellion, rooted in hostility and contempt. It also confers a heroic glamour on the everyday alienation felt by the immigrant--especially the male immigrant--who struggles to keep his head up in a foreign culture. (33)

To the underground man, culture or society as such is foreign to the extent that it fails to assent to his "moral superiority" (174), as he complains of his experience in school. So I think that considerable irony informs the disclaimer in Raban's first clause here, which I read somewhat as free indirect discourse. Elsewhere he describes his own youthful impudence in the same way he does here, and as flaunting the same sort of religious sanction. What is meant as moral gesture is no different from sullen adolescent aggression, (or, in other cases, of senescent aggression, such as we find in Sartre's rejection of the Nobel prize for literature, a gesture we can understand in terms of antibourgeois solidarity with the oppressed, as averred by the author, or, just as probably, as a display of his heroically oppositional posturing).

Claims of intention must give way to the evidence of structural effects. Resentment's sacralizing isolation masks an intraworldly grievance, which the narrator of *Notes* captures succinctly in the complaint, "I am one and they are all" (149). Heroic glamour as the inverted image of everyday alienation is just how Dostoevsky's narrator vaunts his own "moral superiority" to those he seeks to despise, which resonates in turn with the attitude that Raban impersonates in the Islamist visitor: "Your corrosive solitude is the measure of your invincible superiority to the kuffar, in their hell-bound ignorance and corruption" (33). In other words, as Dostoevsky's narrator affirms of his schoolmates, "They understood nothing. They had not the faintest idea of real life" (173). He will consecrate his superiority with appeals for "a more, so to speak, literary quarrel" with his social antagonists, his rivals for recognition, the "so to speak" qualifier betraying "literary" as a metaphor of transcendence (154). As a young man, he pursues his former schoolmates both despite and because of their indifference to him; he craves their approval, but he goads them to exclude him in mutual contempt, so that his allegiance to the "sublime and beautiful" (112) will be hallowed by the solitude in which he alone venerates it. The "sublime and beautiful"--always in quotes in the narrative, as befits a consciously mediated value--is a placeholder for the sacred, the esthetically disembodied remains of theological transcendence that Enlightenment desacralization has bequeathed to its Romantic successors.

In reconstructing the terrorist's conversion from hostile observer to belligerent participant against our culture in his resolution "to contribute his life to the cause of Allah," Raban has recourse to a time-honored formula for irrationality: "It's the business of religion to put two and two together and make five. The dialectic of purity and pollution led him to the 'noble obligation' of martyrdom" (34). In arguing desire's resistance to common sense, the underground man has recourse to the same arithmetic figure: while admitting "twice-two-makes-four" as irrefutable, he concludes with seeming whimsy that "twice-two-makes-five is sometimes a most charming little thing, too" (139). However, in matters of mimetic rivalry at issue here, the best equation is the loss of difference indicated by the formula "one plus one equals one" that designates the rivalry of mimetic doubles and that Sartre spelled out in *The Condemned of Altona* in his effort to describe violent symmetry.

What is dialectical about purity and pollution here is their interdependence and mutual reinforcement, each pole enhancing the pressure exerted by other. It is a dynamic comically illustrated throughout the *Notes* in the form of the narrator's cyclothymic bouts of self-exaltation and self-loathing, which only replicate intrapsychically his desire to dominate others and his consequent abasement before them, his abject appeal to their regard. Part I of the *Notes* is accordingly concerned with the narrator's internal contradictions, which Part II reveals as the corollary of his failed rivalry with others; the nihilism in Part I is shown in Part II to be a function of this rueful capitulation, his bungled rivalry with absolutely everyone--clients and classmates, peers and prostitutes, servants and Sunday strollers--whom he encounters in his social world.

Dostoevsky's failure as a terrorist made him a novelist, and the author of *Demons*--lately

translated with a foreword recommending Girard's book on the author as the best we have for correlating his life and works--has fully dramatized and diagnosed the nihilistic pathologies that we find confronting us today. A provincial town goes up in flames in the wake of delusional idealisms that are vengefully manipulated by the self-appointed head of a sleeper cell, whose revolutionary ideology masks the worshipful emulation of the local celebrity, Stavrogin. In the unlikely event that any of our Intelligence agencies award funding for Raban's research project, the Russian novelist's *Notes and Demons* should be required reading for all concerned.

8

Of course many journalists and commentators have cited resentment as chief among the factors motivating terrorist groups, but not in a way that opens up to fuller analysis or to generalizable conclusions about this peculiar kind of violence in our world, in which highly sophisticated weapons of mass destruction are available to tiny segments of its population, in which Western economic and scientific progress is hostage to its own technological genius. Glucksmann comes closer than most to the symmetry involved when he draws into proximity the Western pride our cities exhibit and a hybris anti-cité that draws its energies from its model (46). "The proud state and anti-statist pride devour each other," he states of le double nihilisme of enemy brothers that is redolent with rivalité mimétique (239-40). Glucksmann does not elaborate on the insight that Girard's vocabulary makes available to him. Yet we feel he is evoking the underground man when he describes the nihilist terrorist as wallowing "dans la nauséabonde et glauque jouissance du souffre-douleur" [in the nauseating, sea-green pleasure of the whipping-boy] (151).

Most journalistic commentary on resentment generally reads as follows: they resent us because we've got it so great and they do not, and, since it is a good thing to have it so great, they are the bad guys and must be destroyed wherever we can find them. Of course this begs the question of how to find them, since they can make themselves over to resemble us so well. But the main problem with this one-dimensional logic is that it expresses equally well how the terrorists, out of the spectacle of misery they identify with, see us, namely, as the bad guys. As long as this rigid good guy/bad guy scenario obtains, no cognitive progress can be made, and even military, political, and diplomatic solutions are susceptible to the mimetic contagion of scandal.

Journalistic evidence bears this out. Larry George documents presidential pronouncements on "the Evil One" with reference to Osama bin Laden that match the latter's statements about us almost word for word. The American president's Manichaeian gloss on Evil places him in a worrying symmetry with his adversaries. This impression is reinforced by the consultation of certain Islamist websites, such as the one that is host to an authority, Sayyid Qutb, whom Raban has consulted at length, and whom Walter Laqueur, a major historian of terrorism, has described as "a man of mediocre intelligence who did not produce a single new idea . . . [and who] preached a fanatic obscurantism" (127):

In the world there is only one party of God; all others are parties of Satan and rebellion. Those who believe fight in the cause of God, and those who disbelieve fight in the cause of rebellion. Then fight the allies of Satan; indeed, Satan's strategy is weak (3:78). (Milestones, Internet)

"God," we heard from the pulpit of the National Cathedral occupied by the president, "is not neutral" in this conflict. And we read in his remarks to the FBI, "the people who did this act on America . . . are evil people. They don't represent an ideology; they don't represent a legitimate political group of people. They are flat evil. That's all they can think about, is evil. As a nation of good folks, we're going to hunt them down" (cited by George). It is certainly good to hunt the terrorists down and make them answer for the horror they have wrought, but there is real moral danger in the terms vindicating the hunt, the danger of depending on their malefactions as presumptions of our own moral purity, as Nietzsche points out of resentment's derivative self-construction: "he has conceived 'the evil enemy,' 'the Evil one,' and this in fact is his basic concept, from which he then evolves, as an afterthought and pendant, a 'good one'--himself!"

There is no dearth, we know, of examples of this kind of rhetorical counterpoint. Structural analysis of the kind afforded by generative or mimetic anthropology allows us to see this evidence of parity, bifocally as it were, rather than to see the world through the unique lens of resentment, whose monocular vision flattens the world and blinds us to perspective on symmetries within it. Like the mimetic contagion of scandal, terrorist violence contaminates its survivors, encouraging violent reciprocity at the expense of the all-too-human messiness of politics or diplomacy.

9

Resentment as a structural concept is a powerful tool for understanding human relations. As an affect, a personal experience, it has a mostly negative valence; like envy, it is what we deplore on the part of others, of the losers in a competition we see as free, fair, and open. But within the global economic system--and the September 11 events establish irrevocably that we and our antagonists no less than our allies are in a one-world system, all of whose economic and social machinery is in play--the only thing that is open to appropriation on the part of some is the technological means of destroying the game entirely, as justified by raising the stakes to an absolute, transcendent level beyond this-worldly appeal. The very mobility of our technology, as it miniaturizes the means of massive destructiveness, has the inconvenient and ironic result of leveling the playing field, not in terms of economic redistribution but solely in those of colossal destructiveness. In sum, we live in a world, as Robert Kaplan sums it up, "that is closer and more dangerous than ever" (56). To the extent that a "global village" is in the making, the same principles and techniques of interpretation apply to its analysis as to the relatively more circumscribed and self-contained communities that anthropologists have studied in remoter and more traditional societies. Interpretation would focus on sacrificial practices, as countless earlier studies have done.

It may suffice at a certain level of analysis to observe, as Girard does in his interview in *Le Monde*, that terrorists resent us because we hold, as it were, all the high cards in the economic and industrial game, so that the only alternative that can occur to them is to overturn--or blow up--the gaming table, in a move induced by the superadditive of eternal reward for the purifying violence they engage. But such a remark can be unpacked with more specific attention to the dynamics of resentment as explored by Nietzsche and more fully by Dostoevsky.

The terrorist's vengeful strategy reflects clearly enough the psychology of "loser wins," whereby the winnings at the table are discounted by the loser as worthless by contrast with gains to be won at another, higher, ideal or transcendent level. The pathos of defeat in this world is ennobled by appeal to an eternal, unworldly set of values, much like the underground man's appeal to the "sublime and beautiful" or his pathetic yearning for "a more literary quarrel." It was Nietzsche's genius to detect the imposture, and later on to honor Dostoevsky as its narrator: moral victory is won at the price of this-worldly defeat that is fervently and eagerly paid by the losers, who would otherwise be mired in the contemplation of their own defeat, marooned in the narrator's "stink hole."

Imaginary victory over one's oppressors is for Nietzsche the genealogy of morals in general, the wellspring of transcendent values and of all religiosity, the metaphysically deferred vengeance of the defeated against their vanquishers. But Dostoevsky's text is more telling. The word for underground indicated by the title translates a space not exactly below the social plane but between the floorboards separating one plane from another, rather like the suburban space inhabited by the terrorists in the West. The genius of Dostoevsky's metaphor undoes the structural opposition--deconstructs it, literally--between high and low, between intellectual solitude and social promiscuity, upon which the narrator depends to nurture his resentments. A drama as imagined between hieratic transcendence and worldly imminence is revealed at the outset as taking place within the confines of the latter.

In his book on the novelist, Girard describes Dostoevsky's choice before the impasses of mimetic rivalry as either madness or genius (46); unfortunately, as we have learned, there is a third, suicidal, outlet for underground psychology, which is to lash out against the world in feats of more or less spectacular violence. This is what the narrator of *Notes* portrays in petto, in caricatural miniature, in his ludicrously long deferred clash on the street with an officer who unwittingly insulted him (II, i). Suicidal violence is more exactly or realistically portrayed in *Demons*, variously translated elsewhere as *The Devils*, and *The Possessed*, in the form of Kirilov's self-immolation, which is necessarily botched because it is parasitic upon the theism it repudiates. The novel's title, shorn of a definite article, does not refer explicitly to the perpetrators themselves but to demonic possession as a social phenomenon, as a collective dynamic, according to its Gospel accounts (see Girard, *The Scapegoat* XIII); it is a metaphor of interpersonal pathologies that lead to violence, possibly even cultural meltdown, in which all the energies of a society are complicit.

The genius of Nietzsche's analysis of resentment lies in its flexibility as an instrument of interpretation, even its reversibility. For it can be shown to apply to the philosopher as well. His painful failure to disenthral his own culture from its adherence to Christianity, and, more specifically, its reverence for Wagner, results in ever more shrill denunciations and parodic emulations of his successful rivals--witness the neo-prophetic style of Zarathustra--so that his last work, *Ecce Homo*, reads as an appeal to exalted identity as Christianity's (and Wagner's) vanquisher--"Hear me, do not mistake me for another" (Preface)--that is parasitic upon the sacred identity it would displace.

I add this excursus as evidence once again that the thematic content of desired--and thwarted--centrality is indifferent, at least in the modern world, which has mostly drained the center of its sacred content without being able to erase its positional attraction, the center being the necessary point around and in reference to which meaning and value--what is good or not good to desire--are established and organized. Anything can signify the object of desire. Western consumerist culture, with the US in the vanguard, does all it can to eroticize commodities so as to universalize their appeal to the consumer, who is induced to aspire to become the object of the desire that their possession is alleged to ensure. However much we may decry this process, it is a sound marketing strategy that owes more to the dynamic of desire itself than to any genius on the part of the strategists. The implicit motto is: "If it titillates, it retails," just as journalists obey the maxim: "If it bleeds, it leads" when they highlight news of violence as a sure way of attracting readers. In his preface to the English translation of his book on Dostoevsky, Girard describes as "obstacle addiction" (146, 152) the simultaneous attraction and repulsion exercised by mimetic models. It can just as well be called "scandal addiction." Scandal gratifies our craving for a sense of our own worth, a moral rectitude that is fashioned over against its transgressors rather than requiring any foundation of its own. Sex and violence, desire and destructiveness are anthropological constants, not topical issues for cultural reflection, and scandal is the form resentment takes in our attention to others' illicit participation in them.⁽⁴⁾ For it is easy, and personally edifying, to decry evils and abuses from the armchair tribunal provided by the press; it is also hypocritical, properly pharisaical, as that word has come to describe the judgment applied exclusively to others that may nonetheless redound to our own blame as well.

This insistent recourse to sex appeal will be important to remember when considering the reaction to our consumerism on the part of non-Western sojourners. But the object need not be erotic: brutally profane triumph is a scandal to the religious dissenter, the priestly ascetic in Nietzsche's original scenario, just as religious consensus is to Nietzsche's militant demystifier, or to any convinced atheist. This is what Raban describes in himself as the bearer of "a dissident creed, full of furious conviction and an inchoate, adolescent hunger for the battlefield . . . standing shoulder to shoulder with the world's oppressed, voicing our hatred of the belligerent power of the US and its puppet nations in the NATO alliance, we were bathed in personal glory"

(33). Armored in the "steel of true zealotry" against his vicar father's Anglo-Catholic theology, he describes his unbelief as that of "an angry fundamentalist with a lock on truth, and as militant in my own way as any fanatic with a holy book" (29). Substantive difference cedes to perceptions of structural symmetry in Raban's self-revelations. This is indeed what Nietzsche calls a transvaluation of values, but only as the metamorphosis of one form of hieratic centrality into another. On Raban's part, it is more properly a translation of antagonism into the perception of mimetic doubles--a perception, we note, that ever eluded the author of *Ecce Homo*.

When we turn to Raban's consultation of the foundational texts of Islamist terrorism, we find the same thematic dualism disguising mimetic contagion, the very fear of contagion by Western culture's impurities being the motor of antagonism here. He quotes from what he calls the "essential charter" (30) of the jihad movement, its "Mein Kampf," entitled *Milestones* (1964), by Sayyid Qutb, who toured the US between 1948 and 1950 before returning to Egypt to spread his ideas among the Muslim Brotherhood until his execution by Nasser in 1966 fairly canonized his writings with the crown of martyrdom.

11

Raban identifies the kernel of Qutb's thought as the historical parallel between the saving emergence of Islam amidst the reviled imperium of Rome and Persia in the Arab peninsula and the marginal place of Islam in the modern world:

Drinking, fornication, shopping, and vulgar entertainment were the chief pursuits of a morally bankrupt society sunk in jahiliyyah, the condition of ignorance, barbarism, and chaos from which the Arabs were providentially rescued by the gift of the Koran. . . . The twentieth century was a new jahiliyyah, and the great project of the Islamic revival was the restoration of the rule of Allah by force of arms. The coming jihad must be global in scale. Qutb wrote, "This religion is really a universal declaration of the freedom of man from servitude to other men and from servitude to his own desires. It is a declaration that sovereignty belongs to God alone and that He is the Lord of all the worlds." (30-31)

Victory over one's own desires is a leitmotiv of Qutb's admonitions; it is conceived as inseparable from victory in other domains, as Qutb describes it in another programmatic text:

Before a Muslim steps into the battlefield, he has already fought a great battle within himself against Satan--against his own desires and ambitions, his personal interests and inclinations, the interests of his own family and of his nation; against anything which is not from Islam; against every obstacle which comes into the way of worshipping Allah and the implementation of the Divine authority on earth, returning this authority to Allah and taking it away from the rebellious usurpers. ("Paving the way")

A lot of this harmonizes with the proscriptions uttered by Jesus about family and friends, the world of the flesh, that we find in Gospel accounts, which we know were obscurely influential in the articulation of Islam as a religious creed (Armstrong 8). But this emphasis on one's own desires is distinct from the Gospel's social focus, in which we find few examples of isolated sinfulness. As Raban notes, such wariness is more in line with the dissident Christianity of puritanism (30). From the perspective of mimetic theory, it is highly problematic, since this theory argues that our desires come to us from others as models. I shall return to this emphasis on Qutb's part, and to the misperceptions it foments.

Everywhere that God's unique sovereignty is not acknowledged and enforced is pervaded by Jahiliyyah, and ripe for burning, or at least for vehement spurning. The sense of this parallel with the former glories of Islam is especially pronounced in a brief text entitled "What are Arabs without Islam," where the aim of Jihad is "to save humanity from worshipping creatures," from idolatry, in sum:

There is only one place on earth which can be called the house of Islam, and it is that place where an Islamic state is established and the Sharia'ah [Koranic law] is the authority and God's laws are observed. . . . The rest of the world is the house of war. (cited by Raban 32)

Or "hostility," as another Web-based text translates the condition of living in Dur ul Harb, whose preferable opposite is Dur ul Islam, life under Koranic rule. What is meant here is not necessarily the actual clash of arms but the virtual ubiquity of corruption, pollution, impurity, disorder. The entire world where Islam is not practiced faithfully is an occasion of scandal, of offense, as the word scandal is frequently translated. (5) Such occasions are limitless for the confirmed Muslim vanguard which finds itself "marching through the vast ocean of Jahiliyyah which has encompassed the entire world. During its course, it should keep itself somewhat aloof from this all-encompassing Jahiliyyah and should also keep some ties with it" ("A Muslim's Nationality and his Belief")--because of the benefits that its scientific progress affords, and in terms of formal "contracts," treaties with non-Islamic states, for the sake of being able to be left alone and live in peace.

12

But these are the ties of a double bind. For the struggle, and the vigilance, required of the Islamic traveler is arduous and unrelenting; the danger of contagion is omnipresent, awesome: "it takes only a drop of the filth of disbelief to contaminate Islam in the West" (cited by Raban 32). Raban observes that "the word 'desire' ripples through 'Milestones,' and always, it seems, meaning the same thing:" sexual temptation, as instanced by some of the anecdotes in the narrative. The traveling Muslim sojourning in the land of disbelief and dutifully seeking to maintain his soul intact is surrounded by ubiquitous corruptions to whose appeal he has, for the

sake of his own salvation, developed a heightened sensitivity, an acute, even fierce attention. The journal *Nida'ul Islam*, which is published in a suburb of Sydney and which aims at expressing "the Jihad stream" amongst Islamic movements, warns against baby sitters, Christmas cards, an invitation for a drink after work (Raban 32).

Western secularization has meant the juridical separation of the private from the public as much as of the religious from the political. For the purist, this separation is a scandal everywhere it is encountered, which is to say everywhere in the West, with the result that "the personal is political," as the radical feminist slogan goes; the private is experienced as a forum of religious and cultural affront. This countercultural hybris anti-cité, as Glucksmann calls it, runs through Western culture (think of Rousseau, or Pol Pot, educated in Paris); it is ably formulated by a pair of journalists as a feature of what they call "Occidentalism," the anti-Western counterpart of a denigrating Orientalism that figures as largely in the texts of Spengler and Toynbee--and *Mein Kampf*--as it does in Islamic radicalism: "In big, anonymous cities, separation between the private and the public makes hypocrisy possible. . . . To an Islamic radical, then, urban hypocrisy is like keeping the West inside one like a worm rotting the apple from within" (Buruma and Margalit 5). The anonymity of cities is the result of demographics, of massive population density, but equally as much of their hospitality to the open and impersonal market forces which gave rise to them. This explains why "Occidentalism" is so much a feature of academic Humanities departments, heirs to an anti-market romanticism that is spelled out as a critique of hegemony, Eurocentrism, and so on. (6) Here the authors are describing a reaction to cosmopolitan features of Near Eastern capital cities. For the Islamic sojourner in the West, the worm is the apple in its entirety, devouring identity with the tip of a hat.

This all-or-nothing alternative is a recipe for defeat and self-destruction. Since there is nothing between all and nothing, anything, everything is a cause for alarm that cannot fail to engross the alarmist. Everything not the occasion of victory is one of defeat. Here we see scandal as the obverse rather than antagonist of idolatry, which is its partner and underwriter. This is a recipe for nihilism whose religious sanction, I think, is subordinate in its content to the apocalyptic violence it authorizes. Raban cites an exhortation of the Muslim Brotherhood's Hassan-al-Banna to "prepare for jihad and be lovers of death" (31) and ascribes "death's erotic allure" to the "Koran's worldly and sensual depiction of the hereafter," in a politically incorrect way that is bound to stir the ire of devout Muslims. But erotic allure is unnecessary to this zero-sum game, which in its own absolutist terms destines everything in the world to destruction in the name of a purity and innocence that no world can gratify. It is in this sense that the Islamist needs the impurity around him as a foil.

In many discussions of Jihad, an ambiguity surfaces as to whether the term refers to internal or external struggle, with Islamic apologists insisting that it only involves external aggression when the faith is outright menaced or aggressed. But for the Islamist abroad, the difference between internal and external collapses: everything without is an assault on religious interiority, everything within is experienced as a protest, a challenge, a wound. We need to imagine him as Dostoevsky's narrator endlessly roaming the streets of St. Petersburg, all the while scurrying

between floorboards, fantasizing deliriously implausible triumphs.

13

The simultaneous and mutually augmenting forces of attraction and repulsion exercising the psyche of the Muslim expatriate are nicely captured by Raban's description of Milestones' "intense, prurient disgust at the fallen morals of the modern city" (36). This is another way of describing how the object of desire, as designated by others, is an occasion of offense, or scandal, whose magnetic force is multiplied by the limitless number of models designating it, and where, as a result, the taboo operates as an incentive. To consciously forbid an object is a sure way of attending to it in all its allurements. As the narrator of Notes observes, if you tell yourself to stop thinking about polar bears, you will only think about polar bears. Desire so relentless and ardently deferred is desire intensified.

We noted earlier that the aim of Jihad in its earliest emergence is described by Qutb as a struggle against idolatry, an effort to "save humanity from worship of creatures." It is especially in the experience of the Muslim abroad that we perceive the synergy of idolatry and scandal as the proliferation of immoral objects--and models--of desire. Scandal is the unwitting face and voice of the idolater, ubiquitous in the media and in the commodities they purvey. To destroy the idolater and to destroy oneself are one and the same nihilistic consummation of the apple and the worm, especially when we see--as the terrorist does not--that the scandalized self mirrors the idolater he destroys.

I think we in the West should be grateful for the record of a foreigner's experience among us as an opportunity to perceive forces in our culture to which we are accustomed and therefore insensitive, forces hidden to us because we accept them as natural, not cultural. This is ever the anthropological appeal of travelogue fiction in which we are the exotica, in the tradition of Montesquieu's Persian Letters, which, too, sheds light on the promiscuity of desire among us, by contrast with the chastity secured in the seraglio, to which Usbek directs his astonished observations. Dostoevsky's Winter Notes on Summer Impressions is just such an ethnographic treasure, as it portrays to Western Europeans their ideological complacencies. But Montesquieu's masterpiece differs by another order of magnitude from the travel monologues of Dostoevsky and Qutb (the latter makes the West seem repulsive and threatening; the former's monologues in Diary of a Writer reflect political and cultural views bordering on the xenophobic). Its epistolary form conveys a contrasting interplay of viewpoints, through which it undermines the reliability of all its narrative voices. Its "objectivity," chimerical in our self-deprecating philosophy, is dialectical and performative rather than declarative and constative. Montesquieu's discourse does not, like philosophy since Descartes, obsess over the subject's relation to objects outside it, but analyzes the interaction of subjects in competition for objects, variously represented as cultural ascendancy and as satisfied desire. It culminates in a critique of ethnocentrism as such, in a methodology on skewed perspectives rather than in the expression of any one of them in particular. This is doubtless the epistemological advantage that prompted the author to indulge his sense of irony with the announcement, in a later

preface to his work, of his satisfaction that his bundle of letters was being perceived as a novel, an emerging genre which in his time was held inferior to most other forms of writing.

There is nothing essentially Islamic or Islamist about the dynamics of scandal as they issue in mimetic contagion, except perhaps in the purity of its dialectic. It is all too human in its obedience to the laws of mimetic desire as at once an attractive and repellent force, as the ever renewable occasion of scandal. The US has experienced this dynamic on a spectacular scale in the impeachment process of President Clinton. As Joel Black writes,

the most preposterous aspect of the investigation was the fact that the very same conservative politicians who just two years before had decried pornography in the arts and on the Internet and who had pushed for the Communications Decency Act were now insisting that the most lurid details of the affair be made public, regardless of the consequences. . . . It's as if Will [a noted conservative commentator] was trying to conjure up a visual image of Starr's verbal account, to use the report as a script for a porn film. And so it was that a columnist who was quick to condemn as obscene depictions on the Internet of ordinary anonymous individuals engaged in sex had no qualms about foisting upon the public the most graphic accounts of the sexual affairs of the president of the United States. (188-89)

14

Black appears here to be denouncing the investigators for hypocrisy, but the logic, the contradiction, is more insidious than that. Doubtless their primary motives were political, but we do not need to psychoanalyze the investigators and commentators to understand that the forces of repulsion incited by such sordid detail were complemented alluringly by the violation of intimacy that their relation required. Porn is porn, congressional or other, and the scandal of presidential wrongdoing--which throughout remained undecidably that of adultery or lying--was mirrored in the "intense, prurient disgust" displayed by investigators. The overall thesis of Black's book, *The Reality Effect: Film Culture and the Graphic Imperative*, is that as film, and all media with it, becomes more graphic, reality becomes more filmic (pp. 8-10); more and more experience falls prey to the explicit and implicit protocols of film culture, to mediated and mediatized scenarios, narrative modeling, imaginary identities, fanciful gratifications--and to spectacular displays of destruction.

An op-ed piece by Neil Gabler in the *New York Times* following the September 11 attack argued persuasively that it was itself modeled on the pyrotechnics of our disaster films, a point suggested as well by Jean Baudrillard in *Le Monde* ("L'Esprit du terrorisme," November 3).⁽⁷⁾ This cruel mockery is in fact a grotesque hypothesis unpleasant but perhaps necessary to envision. Film entertainment is the US's most successful export and it is perhaps inevitable, or at least not unlikely, that we reap in real life the images of horror that we sow with such gorgeous abandon among spectators around the globe. How could the refulgent pageantry of

destruction we deploy on screens worldwide fail to redound to our harm? We need to recall the root of imitari in imagery as we consider the consequences of projecting our culture and its commodified fanfare as a model for global development.

I am not describing a one-to-one ratio that we could perceive on a highway leading from cause to effect, but a triangular complex of inter-agency in which every object is the apex of a triangle whose base is occupied by desiring subjects--a configuration of whose byways of desire and idolatry the realist novel is the boldest explorer. Because our desire comes from unacknowledged and often non-deliberate sources, its representation, which we locate in an object, is liable to all manner of distortions and non-conscious manipulations. One man's icon, however "innocently" projected (they never truly are; our disaster films partake in an apocalyptic mythology of redemptive violence) is another man's idol, to be worshipped or abominated, and most often both, in cyclothymic oscillations whose key is to be found in the alternating bouts of self-exaltation and self-disgust with which Dostoevsky's narrator regales us. When he insists that we are only half-conscious versions of him, he underlines the ubiquitous role of mimetic modeling:

We have lost touch so much that occasionally we cannot help feeling a sort of disgust with "real life," and that is why we are so angry when people remind us of it. Why, we have gone so far that we look upon "real life" almost as a sort of burden, and we are all agreed that "life" as we find it in books is much better. And why do we make such a fuss sometimes? Why do we make fools of ourselves. What do we want? We don't know ourselves. . . . Why, we do not even know where we are to find real life, or what it is, or what it is called. Leave us alone without any books, and we shall at once get confused, lose ourselves in a maze, we shall not know what to cling to, what to hold on to, what to love and what to hate, what to respect and what to despise. (239-240)

Substitute the film and TV of our media age for books whose modeling role they have expanded astronomically, and we find Black's argument anticipated by Dostoevsky and implemented by the terrorists.

15

In the matter of presidential misconduct, pornography was not the investigators' conscious strategy in their insistence on literal depictions of graphic detail. But what prevails is the "strategy" of desire: mimetic, contagious, mediated, and above all scandal-bound, just as scandal operates as a double bind, beckoning and repelling desire at once, alluring and offending our sensibilities. I would say the same of the disaster-film character of the terrorists' attack. We are not talking here about a conscious decision or a rational choice, the opportunities for which are minute when arrayed against the oceanic swirl of initiatives that precede, environ, and structure one's attention. Dostoevsky's insistence on modeling is born out worldwide, where desire circulates amidst the galactic swarm of mediations that orchestrate an

open society rooted in consumerism. Here rational choice itself is advertised as an object of desire rather than its agent; its exercise is everywhere marketed as a distinguishing feature of the commodity on display, a discriminating mark of its discerning purchaser.

This we may call Emma's dilemma, Flaubert's character being at once for Gans the prototype of the modern suburban consumer (see his monograph on Madame Bovary) and for Glucksmann the prototype of the nihilistic terrorist: "Beneath the beach, the pavement. Beneath the reign of sentiment, blood, solitude, and death. Behind Emma, a field of ruins" (104). As Rowan Williams has observed, our consumer culture "overplays the role of the will in the construction of persons" (102), resulting in "'flattened landscapes' in our thinking about choices these days, a picture conditioned by seeing selves as if they were timeless desiring and deciding mechanisms." Williams would dissuade us from believing in such "an abstract self" (137). Dostoevsky's narrator describes St. Petersburg as the "most abstract city in the world," and I don't think he was alluding only to its hasty and brutal construction by Peter the Great; I think he had in mind the anonymity of desires circulating in its streets and byways, unmoored from history and traditions. Williams continues, "An abstract self is one that has no life in the lives, speech and perceptions of concrete others." This is what the socially interactive Part II of Notes brings to our understanding of the philosophically preoccupied narrator of Part I, who imagines himself addressing--and deriding--a vast audience. "A controlled self," writes Williams, "making its dispositions in a vacuum of supposed consumer freedom and determining the clothing in which it will appear, is a fiction, no less potent for being self-generated" (137-38). But it is far from being self-generated, its decentered broadcast being brought to us by others. This fiction is what Part II brings to our understanding of Part I, whose paean to desire in chapters 8 and 9 is later revealed as the pathetic remnant of the narrator's subjection to desires of others. Williams refers us to social science literature in his reflections here, but I find him writing a prescription for the novel when he states his aim to get us "to think through what it might be to be alive and concrete only 'in' an other, [since] just this thought is what our language and experience of being in time constantly invite us towards" (165). Philosophical critiques of a "punctual self" superabound these days, for example, Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self*, but Williams is more clearly insistent on "finding the self in the other" (111), on perceiving "the self's existence in others, the other's investment in my reality" (103). This is the reality that our best novels specialize in revealing, and recent events suggest that we ignore their anthropological value at our peril, as they concern the intersubjective--or in Girard's term, interdividual--dialectics of all valuation.

This critique of rational choice decisionism may recall the old style Marxist critique of old style liberalism, representing bourgeois freedom as an ideological construct, in sum, a mystification. Regardless of the totalitarian abuses of this critique, it points correctly to delusions of individual autonomy, of a sovereign subjectivity that the realist novel of Flaubert and Dostoevsky among others also questions, and that Baudelaire excoriated as auto-idolatrie. The post-romantic poet was no friend to socialisms of any kind; his unmasking the delusions of self-possession as those of his hypocrite lecteur is nourished by a Scriptural tradition that describes the sinner, which for the poet meant everyone, as someone who "so flatters himself in his mind that he knows not

his guilt. / In his mouth are mischief and deceit. / All wisdom is gone" (Ps 36).

16

Israel's reference to a radically Other divinity, with its concomitant ban on representation, on any earthly likeness, is meant to preserve its people from idolatry; it is a ban to which Islam is notoriously heir. Islamism stands out, by contrast, as a scandalized reaction to Western culture in its manifold idolatries. Raban helps us to see this, but we need Girard's notion of scandal to grasp the mimetic dimension of this reaction, its literally morbid fascination with its antagonist. Islamist terrorism is not medieval, as Raban rightly insists at the end of his essay; it's not even Islamic. It does not obey Koranic imperatives but the laws of desire, as explored by Dostoevsky, which, as we learn from Generative Anthropology, resentment inhabits more intimately than the worm does the apple.

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18

Notes

1. For the scriptural exegesis and theologies of this view, see James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin Through Easter Eyes*. In *Science and Faith*, Gans acknowledges the anthropological content of Judeo-Christian revelation, while resisting its theological authentication. ([back](#))

2. See Jonathan O'Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam* for correlations between Homer's portrayal and the modern experience of warfare. ([back](#))

3. I am relying throughout on Joseph Frank's four-volume biography of the author, especially vols. 1 and 2. ([back](#))

4. We already get a sense of this delusion in Proust's image of Mme de Verdurin's clicking her teeth reproachfully at alleged German atrocities in World War I, while emphatically enjoying her daily croissant and café au lait over the morning newspaper. ([back](#))

5. See McCracken and Bellinger for the notion of scandal-offense in Scripture as explored by Kierkegaard. ([back](#))

6. Anti-market humanism gets due attention in *Chronicles of Love and Resentment* 25, 47, 230, among others. ([back](#))

7. Baudrillard specifically alludes to J.G. Ballard's *Crash*, the novel whose film version provides a still for the cover of Black's book. ([back](#))

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Girard among the Paramilitaries of Ulster: Identity, History, and Violence⁽¹⁾

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From my title it almost looks as if René Girard has gotten into bad company. Rather, he is exactly in the right place.

Ulster or Northern Ireland has seen a long-lasting civil war with too many deaths, bereaved victims, and destruction. The core of the thirty years of low-level warfare, locally referred to as the "Troubles," is a sociopolitical conflict over identity, territory, and ideology. To understand the conflict one has to examine the different discourses of identity, the role of history in their construction, and the meaning and function of violence as essential to both the discourses' creation and their practical effect.

Although Girard has explicitly written on neither identity nor ethnicity, his analytical framework provides an excellent tool for examining these phenomena in a context of violent sociopolitical conflict. The reason this framework can be used for these purposes lies in three essential features of Girard's theory that are also essential elements of discourses of ethnicity or identity in general. These are:

1. The celebration, construction, and reenactment of origins

2. The use and narrative of violence

3. The importance of difference.

The concepts of origins, violence, and difference in Girard's theory support a philosophical and anthropological view of ethnicity; without specifically referring to the term ethnicity, they describe elementary structures of human societies. From this perspective we can analyze the phenomenon of ethnicity, focusing on the question "why does ethnicity work so convincingly?" and explore the "mechanisms" of successful identity formation. Unlike other resources that are only available on the level of group, social stratum, or class, these prerequisites appear to be constantly present even when they do not play a major role; it is this "deep structure" that makes ethnicity such a unique phenomenon and Girard's theory of such great help. These themes, which form the cornerstones of Girard's approach, also play a major role in many analyses of ethnicity.

2. Girard and the formation of identity

Difference, the most obvious of these themes, has been explicitly called a characteristic of ethnicity ever since Frederik Barth's seminal work on boundaries and identity formation (1969). Barth saw ethnicity as a dynamic relationship across borders describing an outside and an inside, "us" vs. "them," a dichotomy eminent in most discourses of identity, ethnicity, and nationalism. The fact that difference, as affirmed by ethnic or national groups, is primarily a narrative that can alter itself, and in many cases (as in the creation of nation-states) must be created from scratch, leads one to ask what mechanisms encourage or originally generate such differences. Furthermore, it is interesting to see how such differences are converted into traditions and retained, and, at the same time, to see which societal types are involved. Kapferer quite fittingly pointed out that "nationalism (as an ideology of identity) achieves much of its energy in the celebration of difference and of 'unique' experience" (1989:164).

This experience uniquely shared by a distinctive group of people to which Kapferer refers may also be described as the origin of a group. Every group seems to form what French anthropologist Jean-Loup Amselle (1990:38) calls an *ethnologie spontanée* to explain its origins, and may be said to utilize the logic of the scapegoat to establish its true origin and distinction from the "other." In his analysis of African ethnicity Amselle associates identity formation with the mechanism of the sacrificial cult. Ethnic myths and mythologies, legends, and national epics express in their underlying ideologies the origins and unique experiences (Kapferer) through which the establishment of individual identities and differences is shifted to an unspecified former time and thus ontologized and fixed permanently. Hence, myths of origin and tales of various kinds can be used to as the basis for an ideology, as in many forms of nationalism or ethnic identity, by which discrimination against other groups, their persecution, or their exclusion is justified. This brings up the third element of Girard's theory: violence and its connection to various forms of identity formation.

The meaning of violence is central to Girard's thesis because, without it, there is no origin and no differences, hence no community or society. Power and its control through the violence of ritual sacrifice is a central theme of many ethnic and national myths and thus essential for the identities linked to them. McKenna summarizes the dilemma of the relationship between violence, origin, and community (as well as, implicitly, the necessary differences) in Girard: "The beginning, the origin, is a myth, being a misrecognition of violence by itself. For Girard, this is the very function of sacrifice: erasing the human origins of violence in the very expulsion of the victim, in the sacralization of the victim whose divine violence dissimulates the community's own violence" (1992:90).

The function of sacrificial violence is to sacralize the victim, place it outside the society, and in so doing expel violence to the realm of the sacred in order to be safe from it. Rites are used to control mimetic violence through new violence which memorializes the original violence, soothing and deceiving the evil powers by constantly deferring to them. The true nature of ritual must escape its practitioners, according to Girard, since the "evil powers" themselves stem from the community. Ritual thinking can be successful only if it can replay the violence and its impact in its original form (cf. 1992:148). Hence the constant repetition of rituals and of violence to maintain order and communal cohesion.

* * *

With this theoretical background, I will endeavor to analyze the relationship between identity, history, and violence in the context of Northern Ireland. This combination of phenomena stands at the heart of many discourses in Ulster and its analysis suggests a new way of looking at violence and conflict in this particular context and beyond.

To any observer and researcher in this region, the role of myth, sacrifice, and violence becomes quite striking. Examination of the Republican iconography surrounding the hunger strikes and their protagonists, which is displayed in many murals and monuments throughout the Province, reveals a good deal about the narrations, discourses, and actual use of violence by one of the conflicting parties. Violence in Northern Ireland is indeed woven into the social landscape, as Allen Feldman (1998:223) puts it, and forms of violent action such as punishment beatings can be seen in this context, as part of a wider social practice. Also the role and meaning of the term "community" as referred to by many is important. The community is often set against the state, either as a point of reference for violent action to defend the community against the other or as a justification for the very existence of the paramilitaries. A Girardian approach suggests new interpretations of the meanings and functions of violence in Northern Ireland.

3. Researching violence - interpreting oral history

The material from which this analysis takes its motivation was gathered during fieldwork in Northern Ireland between August 2000 and July 2001. The main objective of this research was better to understand the relationship between violence and the formation of identity. Data was gathered in the form of open structured interviews, whose main focus was on how violence is rationalized, narrated, legitimized, and assessed by the very people who have been the subjects and objects of violent events.

In the following discussion I want to focus on the similarities of arguments brought forward by the interviewees, from both Republican and Loyalist sides. Given the differences in the use and arguments for violence and their political meaning, a focus on similarities requires that we look beyond the political sphere to examine the problem from a more fundamental point of view. To show what both sides have in common, I will focus on the way in which violence structures collective identities, both shaping history and using it as a resource.

Research of this kind raises a few methodological problems and challenges. Researching violence by interrogating the victims and perpetrators of violence will inevitably produce narratives that cannot be reduced to standard formulas; the subject is a "layered" phenomenon, as Nordstrom and Robben (1996) observe. The object of ethnographic study is represented in constructed frameworks of explanations, originating in cultural contexts but being made to appear as if they were natural or universal (cf. Nordstrom/Robben 1996:6). Only if they remain focused on the empirical subject can theoretical models and approaches be made to serve as frameworks for the interpretation of oral histories. Feldman (1991) has discussed most intriguingly the interpretation of these histories and the meaning of their construction in the context of Northern Ireland. He sees narration as a process that constructs the self (through the narratives of others) and also constructs an event anew by telling it, "as the event is not what happens, but what can be narrated" (1991:14). In this sense the excerpts presented below may be seen as constructs that emerged from experience in connection with political discourses impacting on them (cf. Feldman 1991:15, 1998:197f).

The texts chosen for the present analysis cover the whole spectrum of political discourses concerning paramilitaries. And although they sometimes appear to contradict each other, they must all be taken as discourses existing beside each other. We seek to understand why they exist and how they operate in relation to each other. There can very well exist a contest between interpretations of events and of the violent structures in which they originated (cf. Bryan 2000:10).

I have chosen to examine individual and collective memories of violence and violent experiences in Northern Ireland and analyze how these shape a sense of history and identity for different groups and individuals. I have therefore made narratives and interpretations of the origins of violence in Northern Ireland the center of attention. In analyzing the interviews, I focus on the role and function of physical violence in establishing, maintaining, and defending an identity defined by a given interpretation of history. Based on past events and their associated myths, current forms of these narratives of violent events can be found in rituals

and political strategies that are used to "reenact and remember the origins of a group" (Girard), create a resource for "maintaining communal independence and its laws against a state" (Clastres), and "shape perceptions of the body, the social space and their respective meanings in history" (Feldman).

The materials of oral history presented in this text are used to illustrate the discourses of violence and the different narratives of its legitimization. They are interpreted according to the theoretical framework of Girard, and, to a lesser extent, those of Pierre Clastres and Allen Feldman. To use three different approaches to the collected oral histories is to see the world in three different ways, as Aijmer (2000) points out. The late Pierre Clastres and Allen Feldman accompany and support Girard in this analysis: Clastres, on issues of state, violence, memory, and law; Feldman, on memory and violence, which for him are closely linked and represent a relationship essential to the narrative theme of defense and violence. It is Girard, however, who provides the main framework, as his theory allows us fully to grasp the nexus of violence and identity in the constructions of origins and the discourses of history.

4. The narrative of defense as the origin of violence in the Troubles

The rhetoric of violence used to "defend" oneself is linked to the many personal histories told about the Troubles. The ways of describing one such incident range from very personal accounts to more general, almost historic excursions, involving the individual's position and perspective. Although my questions were very open-ended, all interviewees chose to tell about violence that harmed them personally or as part of a collective entity, even when they stated that they were themselves involved in rioting, which is itself an act of violence. Irrespective of political, religious, and paramilitary affiliations, people on both sides felt under personal and cultural threat.

4.1. Ah, I was a child of ten or eleven and I mind the adults breaking up paving stones and things like that there, because the riots were taking place here in the city after the Civil Rights march. And there was a great fear within the city at that particular time that the Protestants were going to be burned out, intimidated out and attacked. (Loy. UDA/UFF, 43 m, Protestant) [\(2\)](#)

4.2 And in fact, it was, it was our own people that was murdered and when you hear it on the radio, and they recount reportings from the Inquiry, and you are listening to what it being said, there is just a pain (Rep. IRA, 38, f, Catholic).

4.3. I didn't believe there was such a thing as our own religion. You

had to fight for your own religion, do you understand what I'm saying, you had to fight to maintain your religion. So we eventually moved to a place called the Fountain, which is just over the bridge, which is surrounded again by all Catholics.

Nils: But you joined it somewhere back in the 70's, just because of...?

Interviewee: Just because of things that happened. I perceived that we were getting pushed back into the sea again. (Loy. UDA 45, m, Protestant).

4.4. I suppose, just, there is a lot of instances of sectarian agitation around that time. . . . Gradually as things progress you sort of become involved in things, and in your school . . . whenever you see action being taken against your own community and your community was just left standing on its own feet you have to become involved and take action.

Because they [the paramilitaries] come [from] working class people, they are the only people defending the working class protestant people (Loy. UVF, 30, m, Protestant).

4.5 There would have been rioting nearly every day or well, maybe every week and people getting shot all the time, bombs going off in the city centre regular. So there was this constant feeling of being under attack. I mean you always seemed to be, every time, as one incident ended, day something else would come up (Rep. IRA, 46, m, Catholic).

The statements, all describing the personal perception of what was happening in the early days of the Troubles, make it quite clear that the people felt threatened and that this threat was transformed for them and many others into some sort of violent engagement to defend themselves and their people and culture/religion. Crawford (1999) has also seen this as a major feature of his interviews among loyalist paramilitaries who state that, "yes we were reacting against republican violence; we didn't start it. It was counter-terrorism" (1999, p. 129). Violence is initially seen as purely defensive, to maintain or defend some sort of identity. Particular identities on both sides were developing into a source of reaction, because the general perception of their own identity became more and more linked to images of inferiority and negativity. Defensive violence was a way out of this dilemma and out of the situation in which they believed themselves to be.

This however also meant that identities had to be filled with new and constant meanings, to be

reliable, to be adaptable by the many different social and demographic groups that existed on both sides. They had to be reduced, essentialized, which turned them from dynamic resources into empty and static vessels.

Although "defending one's own territory," as one interviewee put it, was the main motivation, the violence didn't stay defensive at all; instead, this rationale was used to rationalize all subsequent, very often retaliatory, actions.

4.6 So I didn't need to sit down and think about the rights and wrongs of committing violence and violence was being acted upon me. Every day it was being acted upon my community, every day. . . . What I needed was to think how can I stop what is happening to my community, and the lesson was that might be right, whoever inflicts the most. (Rep. IRA, 46, m, Catholic)

4.7 Another boy in the hospital to go to. But what justifies all this killing? That's why our side. We went on the defensive. We took it to them. Do you understand what I'm saying? They were giving it to us, so we decided we'll take it to them. (Loy. UDA 45, m. Protestant)

4.8 There was no way back. Everything was escalating at that stage then and then you had the counter then . . . the Protestant community. . . the Protestant paramilitaries were counter-attacking on the attacks the IRA were doing and Republican splinter groups. (Loy. UDA/UFF, 43 m, Protestant)

4.9 We only had two/three years of that before the cease fire was called, so at that time I was very happy the cease fire didn't . . . I believe we shouldn't have called the cease fire until we really have made the Republicans paid for what they have done. At that time, you had a generation that was coming of age and was moving into positions in leadership that were pushing older people out, that weren't prepared to go the full length (Loy. UVF, 38, m, Protestant).

4.10 It was unavoidable [to become involved in the conflict] because of the conditions which the nationalists were living in. (Rep. IRA, late 40s, m. Catholic)

Identity and violence are intimately linked in these testimonies, where violence is a means to maintain and defend an identity. The meaning of identity in the context of Northern Ireland very much stressed the factor of difference from an "other" who was indeed threatening this identity. Violence served to maintain this difference or to remind people of its importance.

Hence, violent counter-attacks are rationalized as a legitimate form of defense. The origins of the current conflict are traced back to the defense of one's identity; retaliation becomes a way of reconstructing history over and over, tracing it back to the initial defensive act.

Thus individual and collective histories are dependent on the cycle of violence that has its origin in the retaliatory practices deemed necessary for defensive purposes. Feldman (1998:200) also notes the relationship between revenge, violence, and memory, and states that violence has become the means to inscribe social memory onto the social landscape. In his analysis of the role violence plays in establishing a social order, Clastres (1976 and 1994) points out that violence is a mechanism through which societies' laws are "re-engraved upon the bodies of the individual members," a metaphor that is masterfully developed in Franz Kafka's "Penal Colony." Violence links society's present with its history, as it hands down the laws of society and projects parts of the tradition onto the body, for example, in initiation rites. The retaliatory cycle of violence seems impossible to break, as the formation of republicanism and loyalism, the two foremost identities in the conflict, depends on this cycle as a motor of tradition and identity construction. The refusal to recognize violence as a problem defines what Girard calls *méconnaissance*, whereby the societies/communities are able to avoid any responsibilities and instead focus on their retaliatory practices. Feldman sees in this violent relationship between the two parties that make up the cycle a mimetic reciprocity that does not establish hierarchy and hegemony. As Girard points out, without any sacrificial rite to break the cycle, the many can never become one; hence in the Northern Irish context no solution to the sectarian tit-for-tat can emerge from within (1991:258f).

It is violence itself which is sacralized here. Girard notes that in historical texts the dimension of the divine is present only in reference to honoring the victim, not in reference to violence (1988:60). This secularizing development necessarily leads to a crisis that must in the end destroy modern societies, since they require an ever increasing number of victims to unify the community. For McKenna, the violence that is a consequence of such a development can only continue to exist through terror(ism) (Girard 1988:169; 1997:113; McKenna 1992:159): "Terrorism exhibits the vocation of the state to violence in its relatively pure form; being as Dispot observes, its 'aesthetic' form, 'plus étatique que l'Etat.' (58). If terrorism is the last religion which kills, it is because, as Girard argues, the religious as such is sacrificial. It is never more lethal than when its transcendence is dethroned and democratized" (McKenna 1992:159).

Feldman suggests a similar reading of the sectarian killings in Northern Ireland, whereby the victim becomes both a sacred victim for one community, as expressed in the many mural and commemoration rituals, and a simulacrum of the Other who has killed. Feldman stresses that the killing of an individual is always an attack on the community, as it is commensurate in its political and polluting impact to the forced movements of entire communities; an essential discovery of paramilitary practice is that terror has its own circuits of amplification that do not require material destruction on a large scale (1991:78f). In this context, many people in Northern Ireland would say that the conflict was not severe enough to have been resolved earlier. But the key to the relationship between identity, violence, and the construction of

history can only be found through examining the role and make-up of the communities in the context of the conflict.

5. Community, history, origins, and the state

The community, as the main subject of the attacks, becomes the central feature in many narratives of violence and maintenance of one's identity. History is an essential part of the fabric out of which these communities are constructed.

"Community" in an Northern Irish context has many different meanings. It may include the community of Northern Ireland as a whole, as well as the two (opposing) religious communities, or the tight and rather cohesive (mostly working-class) neighborhoods throughout Northern Ireland. Sometimes large estates, sometimes only a few streets are called "a community." Although varying in setup, geography, and politics throughout the Province, local communities are a prime source of identity and a common point of reference. These smallest units should not be forgotten when analyzing the relation of community in general to the state as the unit diametrically opposed to it.

Violence as a means to maintain the independence and autonomy of one's own community is especially important when it comes into conflict with the state's attempts to impose law and order, which tend to be viewed as denying the community its independent power to maintain order inside its own borders. Law and order within various communities have been (and still are) enforced with punishment beatings (cf. Knox/Monaghan 2000), mostly carried out by paramilitaries on behalf of the community. As many of the interviewed paramilitaries pointed out to me, they were asked to do this by the people in their respective communities; this in turn made them the bearers of law and order and set them against the state, the entity that would normally fill this role in other modern Western democracies.

The violence used to maintain the integrity of a given community can be interpreted in two ways. Both interpretations are applicable here and highlight different narratives and discourses of violence and its legitimization. As punishment beatings are almost always carried out on members of the same community, the idea of a scapegoat, central to Girard's theory, suggests itself. The victim is chosen because of his or her offences against the community, which sees him or her as a threat. There seem to be no individual perceptions of crime--also referred to as anti-social behavior--but rather a dominant collective one, in which anything done to one member is seen as a threat against the collectivity. In beating, mutilating, or shooting the victim/scapegoat, the community can reaffirm its own integrity, and, by expelling the victim, once again reestablish a sense of identity. Furthermore, the perpetrators carrying out the beating come to symbolize this identity, as it is through their action that identity is kept intact.

Where Girard's theory explains the choice of the victim and the function of a scapegoat, Clastres' approach would examine the inner dynamics of such communities to explain their

difficult relation to the state in Northern Ireland. Clastres sees violence as a necessary means to the unity and autonomy of a society, especially in those societies that opt "against a state," that is, that choose or opt to be stateless (1994:149). To use violence to punish independently of the institutions of the state is to opt out of the state and its institutions. This makes the end of violence more unlikely, since no higher institutions exist (or are able and effective enough) to regulate and eventually stop this cycle of violence. As Girard pointed out, humanity evolves from ritual with its surrounding myths and sacred meanings to profane institutions without violence losing its role, even though it has lost its cultural meaning. Although there are state institutions in Northern Ireland, these prove to be unable to provide the necessary level of integration, security, and resources to generate an overall identity, culture, and tradition. For a long time now the respective communities have been the prime bearers of culture and tradition. Identity comes from the Protestant and Catholic communities, which can be labeled as two distinctive ethnic groups, each generating a social memory (cf. Jarman 1997:6).

5.1 As I was growing up I was experiencing what it was like to live as a nationalist in the north but I also was from what history I knew, right, not the history you learnt at school, but like what your community passes on to you and you know all of these things that have happened to the community in the past and sort of the position you're in (Rep. IRA, 46, m, Catholic).

5.2 It is more or less the circumstances dictate the way your life goes. And I suppose you could divorce yourself from it, but if you are in a working class loyalist community, you are part of that community, so therefore the whole community moves that way, and if you are still part of that community you have to go that way. There were some conscious decisions, but a lot is the community (Loy. UVF, 30, m, Protestant).

History is embedded in the notion of community. Being Republican or a member of Orange Order is often passed down through the family and this tradition is often used to make sense of a felt loss or perceived threat.

5.3 I grew up in a Republican family. I was a Republican, I was a member of the Republican movement, albeit the junior movement but long before the Troubles, these present Troubles actually started, which was in 1969. I was a member of Na Fianna Éireann in 1966 so I mean I had a very in-depth Republican background and breeding. My father had been interned for six years in the 1940's (Rep. IRA, end 40s, m. Catholic)

5.4 I've been a member of the Orange Order since I was born. My family were all, --my great, great granda was a master of the lodge. My granda, my father, my father's brothers, my brother, my mother, my grandmother, two of my sisters have been mistresses of the lodge. My uncles. Orangism is part of me. I don't know anything different. . . Orangism to me is not an add on. It's an integral part of me. It gave me my values today, my church, my Orangism. It gave me my values. (Loy. m, 55, Protestant)

The opposition of the two groups is seen in historic terms, that is, as something that has always been there. But the accounts given of social memories are not so much recollections of the past as part of the present understanding of the past that provides justification for today's antagonistic relationship between Protestants and Catholics (cf. Jarman 1997:5). Hatred and the threat represented by the other are seen as being part of the tradition of each of their cultures. Given the cohesive nature of these communities, there seems to be no way out of this thinking and its often brutal consequences.

5.5 The important part about that was when we came back, I indicated to them that there was a possibility that if funding came, we might get that group up to N. Ireland. They plagued me literally daily, they stopped me in the door, 'when are they coming up.' So there was a connection there. Even though historically and religiously they would be enemies (Loy. m, 55, Protestant).

5.6 It's something that's been bred in them for centuries and it's something that a lot of middle-of-the-road unionists would recognise and say well this is a problem here. Sectarianism in unionism and the way they see nationalists, Irish people has been taught to them over the centuries and it's going to be very, very hard to eradicate that from their culture. (Rep. IRA, 46, m. Catholic)

The individual stand of my interview partners, when telling about experiences of violence, was always embedded in a narrative of collective history that explained the start of the Troubles. It never started somewhere at random, but always incorporated the "tale of origins" as seen from a Loyalist or Republican perspective. Memory in Northern Ireland is not about a distinct linear history, but itself becomes a generator of meaning, as Jarman argues (1997:7). Events therein are lacking an obvious ordered narrative form. Social memories removed from their originating context are signifiers without signifieds. Hence there are various interpretations of the tensions building up to the 1969 riots, the no-go areas in Derry and the reaction of the state forces. There is a rough consensus about the relatively peaceful times before that, but polarity in explanations of everything that happened in the aftermath of the Civil Rights movement's rise and its suppression by the state forces. The riots of 1969/70 as well as the events of 1972 and thereafter are shared history with different interpretations and meanings. What the

Republicans see as the reaction of an oppressive state to the demands of the Catholic people for equal rights, the Loyalists interpret as the betrayal of the Protestant people by Britain in the face of Ireland's threat to continue where they left off in 1922 when Ireland was partitioned. Republicans use the events of the last thirty years to underline the unwillingness of the British state to respond to their demands; Loyalists see every change as a concession of the British state to the Catholics to their detriment. Both use their version to rationalize their use of violence and their will to continue if nothing appropriate happens. In examining this relationship, Frank Wright makes use of Girard's thesis of mimetic desire (1987). In a situation that he calls communal deterrence, where there is a balance between antagonistic groups that regulates their relationship, the desire for peace may disappear from view and rivalry become the main aspect of that relationship. Rivalry, as Wright notes (1987:121), generates excellent reasons for the next escalation and thus violence in itself breeds more violence.

Differences are more likely to be increased than liquidated in such a relationship, especially when the antagonism is experienced in the most threatening and aggravated acts of the "other," for example, through vigilante practices that reinforce this antagonism as they are themselves reinforced by it (1987:122).

While there are shared historical events with different interpretations, there is no agreed origin, as both groups claim that the origins of the conflict were the result of defense against the attacks of the other. Such a perception of history establishes origins that are basically retaliatory and antagonistic. Violence has become a main feature of culture, identity, and, indeed, history as founded on these origins. And even for people who claim that "history is not an interest to me" (Loy. UDA/UFF, 43 m, Protestant), the same narrative structures are used to explain an involvement in paramilitary activities and to rationalize their violence.

Although the recent conflict started only thirty years ago and its origins are seen as being a development of the politics of the 1960s, paramilitaries on both sides see themselves as being part of broader and older historical traditions. Thus does the Republican movement make use of the Easter Rising and its various protagonists. The IRA, with its own history of renewing and inheriting the original idea of a fight for freedom and self determination--from the IRA to the Provisional IRA (Provos or what we know as the IRA today), to the Continuity and to the Real IRA--sees its origins in the events of 1916.

The same can be said about the Ulster Volunteer Force and its origins before and during World War I. And here again history is seen through a narrative of violence and sacrifice, that of members of the original Ulster Volunteer Force, an illegitimate paramilitary group that wanted to keep Ulster British, who were incorporated into the 36th Ulster Regiment of the British army and gave their lives at the Battle of the Somme to defend Britain.

5.7 It is the same army that defended our country and backed Britain up in 1916-18 war in the battle of the Somme, so you were joining a

legitimate army, proper structures, Lord Carson and Craig and these people, it wasn't as if you were joining a gang of bandits. (Loy. UVF, m., mid 30s, Protestant).

Likewise, the Ulster Defense Association (UDA, founded in the early 1970s) sees itself "going back," linked with defense groups in the past. It seems necessary for these groups, despite the limited and rather recent origins of the Troubles, to establish a link to a more enduring history. In this perspective, the recent conflict becomes only a part of a larger condition that has been there for centuries. While the reaction might only be the result of recent events, the means chosen link the groups to a more distant past and therefore a more creditable rationale. Solutions that disregard this narrative are doomed to failure, as they do not take into account the history and thus the real identity of the groups. But these histories themselves are seen through narratives of violence; the establishment of the original paramilitary groups has its roots in conflict and war, or, in the terms of the involved parties, in strategies of defense.

6. Conclusion: Community-History-Identity-Violence

History in the Northern Ireland conflict is largely made up of social memory that is constantly reinterpreted and generates social meaning. It traces back the group's origin and constructs it at the same time. The relationship between identity, violence, and history must therefore be described as a vicious circle that without mediation from a third party can only very slowly take on a non-violent direction.

Identity is formed through the community in its various meanings, traditions, and cultural traits. As these communities and their identities have become threatened, defensive violence is seen as necessary to the maintenance of one's identity. This also holds true for most of the offensive attacks, as they can be understood as defensive or at worst retaliatory acts of violence. Violence becomes a trait without which cultural identity would not exist or would be in danger of annihilation.

History, especially in the last thirty years, is primarily seen and continuously narrated as a history of violence, that is, violence as inflicted upon oneself and one's community. Because history, as expressed in the larger context of the group's traditions, values, and identities, has become threatened, violence comes to be not only part of history but also the means to maintain it.

Just as violence, in the form of defensive action, retrospectively establishes the origins of the conflict, it also serves to maintain the history that was felt to be under threat. This leads to a cycle of retribution and retaliation that makes it impossible today to detach history from violence. Violence originates in the perception of a history under threat and at the same time safeguards this same history, as it also provides the fabric from which a collective identity is woven.

The only possible way out of this crisis is therefore through negotiation, by means of which the features of the different identities may be brought forward and violence come to be seen for what it is, destructive and exclusive. A way out can be found only in strategies that stop blaming others and leave the control of the discourse of identity to the community independently of the paramilitaries--not excluding them from the process, but clearly pointing out their role. As long as violence structures identity, a way out of the cycle of defense and attack, blame, and retaliation cannot be found. There is no neutral third party who can break the cycle. Violence here is originary only for each group; it is never a unifying violence for all. The state, which normally takes on the role of the neutral third party, is here itself part of the crisis, which may be seen as creating an anomic situation in a Durkheimian sense. There are no rituals to replace the violence with, no overall accepted legal system that would work to that end. In this reading Northern Ireland finds itself in a situation of sacrificial crisis and communal deterrence in which violence, although at the heart of historical narratives and the social memories of the ethnic groups and their identities, ultimately threatens their very integrity and existence. The people of Northern Ireland must put an end to communal deterrence and the perception of the other as a competitor and come to a general understanding of communal reciprocity, where the gain of one does not mean the loss of the other. But this cannot be achieved by the communities alone; it must involve the institutions of the state, which have until now acted weakly in political governance, if not in the exercise of military power.

Notes

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2. All numbered citations are from interviews recorded by myself between Aug. 2000 and July 2001 in Northern Ireland. The persons are identified by their affiliation, age, gender and religious denomination. Rep = Republican/IRA (Irish Republican Army); Loy. = Loyalist; UDA = Ulster Defense Association; UFF = Ulster Freedom Fighters, a name taken on by the persons involved in killing actions of the UDA, the combat groups of the UDA; UVF = Ulster Volunteer Force. ([back](#))

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Xunzi and the Ancient Chinese Philosophical Debate on Human Nature

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It took an event of extremely tragic proportions such as the Holocaust for Western thinkers to begin to reverse our traditional understanding of man as innately good but corruptible by the environment to the more sobering postmodern understanding that man is evil with a potential for good. Despite the sporadic emergence of such negative views of mankind, we had to wait until the latter half of the twentieth century for this view to receive at least some academic attention. After World War II, the Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, a disciple of Sigmund Freud, warned us of the dangers of man to himself. The war experience but also his realization that revolutions create violent vacuums in the political and social order opened his eyes to man's violent nature and to the likelihood that man needs order to protect him from himself. This negative understanding of human civilization as a protective process of deferring human violence may seem indeed revolutionary. However, such controversy is nothing new to man's understanding of himself; it already appeared in ancient myth. Like the Adam and Eve myth, a number of cultures explained the birth of civilization negatively, as a violation of taboo, whereas other myths and the religious institutions that developed out of them explained it positively, as divine intervention. It is needless to point out that the latter view came to dominate our ways of understanding our institutions until recently. The violence of the twentieth century, however, reminded some Western intellectuals of the possibly negative beginnings of our civilization.

Unlike those of the West, Chinese thinkers carried this negative understanding of the human from myth into the historical state-forming periods. During the Spring and Autumn (770-481) and Warring States (480-221) periods, many Chinese intellectuals and political advisors to

kings and princes engaged each other in a lively debate about human nature and its significance for, and impact on, the state. The following is meant to further the debate on generative anthropology with a discussion of this approximately two-thousand-three-hundred-year-old debate.

As I understand it, Rene Girard and Eric Gans's generative anthropology is basically a reflection on human violence caused by man's mimetic desire and the resentment it generates. According to this view, human civilization developed as an effort to defer resentment and violence by channeling them into institutions intended to protect us from them. Humans defer violence into such artificially created institutions as language, ritual, religion, law and ultimately the state.

2

I wish to start my discussion where I left it in my article, "Ancient Chinese Sacrificial Practice in the Light of Generative Anthropology" (Anthropoetics 1, 2 [December 1995]). Given the extent to which the first two historical dynasties of ancient China, Shang (c. 1570-1045 BCE) and Western Zhou (1045-771 BCE) practiced human sacrifice, a fact for which there is archeological evidence in both oracle bone inscriptions and mass graves of sacrificial victims discovered in recent decades, I proposed to define these dynasties as sacrificial states according to the terms set forth by generative anthropology. (1) However, human sacrifice disappeared as a state ritual in the subsequent Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. (2) Though practiced privately, the sacrifice of human victims came to be replaced at the state level by straw or clay puppets of the kind Chinese archeologists recently unearthed at the foot of Qin's (221-207 BCE) first emperor, and/or by animal sacrifice, the latter practiced in fact until the end of China's last dynasty, the Qing (1644-1912).

The reasons for the discontinuation of human sacrifice are unknown but open to speculation. Ancient Chinese philosophers ignore ritual bloodletting but emphasize instead ritual morality as the foundation of state. Xunzi (Hsun tzu, ca. 310-ca. 215 BCE) presents funeral ritual, that is, ancestral rites requiring blood sacrifice in ancient times, as the basis for ritual morality and good citizenship. In the world, those who obey the dictates of ritual will achieve order; those who turn against them will suffer disorder, as Xunzi wrote in his Discussion of Rites. (3)

This shift from a sacrificial to a moral ritual is particularly evident in the philosophical debates stretching from the Spring and Autumn period to the end of the Warring States period and beyond. None of the other prominent Spring and Autumn and Warring States period philosophers: Confucius (Kong Fuzi, 551-479), Mozi, (ca. 480-390), Mencius (Meng Zi, ca. 382-300) Zhuangzi (ca. 365-280), and Han Feizi (d. 233) took issue with human sacrifice, however they may have deviated from each other in their opinions about the principles of statehood and good citizenship. This may have been because these philosophers realized the moral potential ritual creates in humans, namely respect, loyalty, love, reverence, and frugality, not to mention its potential for philosophical debate on social and political issues.

While they were idealizing the first dynasties and their wise rulers, it seems enigmatic, however, that none of these philosophers even so much as mentions human sacrifice, not even as a negative, no-longer-desirable state-supporting ritual. They write as if such sacrifice had never existed. They ignore the fact that the wise Yao, Shun, Yu, King Tang of Shang, Wen and Wu of Zhou, whom they all idealized as the fathers of good statehood, actually practiced human sacrifice. (4) The philosophers stress the kings' moral qualities--virtues they themselves recommended to their contemporaries--rather than the sacrificial violence these kings had perpetrated. They prefer to render these sage kings meaningful to their own contemporary socio-political needs and to use them as metaphors for what they believed the ideal state to be in their own times.

The breakdown of the unified dynasties of Shang and Zhou into a number of separate, independent, and often violently competing states prompted these philosophers to look back upon the Shang and Zhou dynasties as the ideal foundation of the kind of unified peaceful state they themselves envisioned. A peaceful and prosperous China, for them, had to be a unified China a la Shang and Zhou and not the China divided into violently competing "Warring States." In order to achieve the ideal unified China, these philosophers, often employed by the state as government advisers, advocated what they believed, each in his own way, to be the moral qualities necessary for the kind of citizenship they all considered essential to the state. None of them even remotely considered anything but ritual and morality to be the ideal foundation of state.

3

These philosophers all agreed on yet another premise. They all felt that moral virtue, whether innate or acquired through education, must be cultivated under state guidance. Morality and state depended on each other; one could not exist without the other. Whether this morality was given at birth or not, a controversial question for some of them, as we shall see below, they all agreed that this cultivation, more or less synonymous with learning, is indeed essential to state order. One had to learn to be a good citizen, whether or not the tendency for good moral citizenship is believed innate or acquired.

Another common feature one discovers in all these philosophers is the debate on statecraft, that is, they asked themselves fundamental questions as to how a state should be organized: what should be the relationship of rulers and ruled in a network of reciprocal duties and responsibilities, which they all believed to depend on morality. What is unique in the history of human civilization at that time is that these philosophers preferred to debate socio-political morality, as it were, rather than engaging in metaphysical speculations; that is, they placed man and not the gods at the center of the state. Some, it is true, used the supernatural as a metaphor for the state, but their debates were worldly rather than metaphysical. Xunzi himself proposed that good government brings about heavenly blessings. Xunzi and his contemporaries refused to rely on the supernatural to the extent we observe in most other ancient states. For

reasons we do not always understand, they preferred to concentrate on the socio-political foundation of the state, that is, on the socio-political dimensions of ritual morality.

Among these philosophical debates, there is one particularly relevant to the discourse of generative anthropology: the debate on human nature. This debate centered on two prominent philosophers: Mencius and Xunzi, although others sporadically nurtured the debate with their own views. Idealist that he was, Mencius believed in the innate goodness of man. He believed that man's ability to learn how to be a good and responsible citizen stems from and thrives upon his innate goodness. If man were not innately good, Mencius argued, how could he possibly learn to be a good citizen? However, Xunzi maintained that man is bad and that the state needs to control and guide him to becoming a good citizen. Mencius nevertheless maintained that the individual must cultivate and the state must nurture, guide, and help maintain his goodness. For Xunzi a man without a state was a wild man, one who could not possibly be civilized, whereas Mencius seems to have believed in the basic goodness of even a stateless person.

This debate is not one conducted from extreme opposites as it may seem at first sight, for both Mencius and Xunzi concurred that man must practice his goodness consciously and conscientiously regardless of whether it comes to him by birth or from the state. Living in a state meant living for the sake of the state; it presupposed being good. Both agreed that man has the ability, whether by birth or inclination, to be good. Yet, unlike Xunzi, Mencius did not believe in a state-enforced morality; morality had to come more from the heart than from the state. For him, a child is good; thus, in order to be a worthy citizen, man should carry his childlike naiveté and simplicity into his adulthood. According to the more realistic Xunzi, however, the state must contain man's behavior and dictate the moral principles necessary for its interests and survival. Since man's nature is evil, it must wait for a teacher before it can become upright, and for the guidance of ritual principles before it can become orderly. [\(5\)](#) I understand this "teacher" to be the state or its representative; he teaches in the interest of the state, of the common good. Xunzi maintained that the two important ritual principles, namely, courtesy in interpersonal relations and the humility of controlling one's personal instincts and desires, must be imposed by the state. They are not innate. If man does not possess ritual principles, his behavior will be chaotic. Xunzi taught that if man does not understand these principles, he will be wild and irresponsible. For him, man is evil, and, arguing against Mencius, he claims that man's goodness is not a gift of nature, but the result of conscious activity of being in a state. [\(6\)](#)

4

As others had done before him, Xunzi justified his negative views of man through the sage kings of antiquity, the ultimate legitimizing authorities. Xunzi maintains that they had been able to create an ideal statehood precisely because they operated not on an idealized understanding of man as innately good as much as on the realization that man's nature is evil, deciding

instead to provide an example of good, moral leadership. According to Xunzi, the wise kings were wise precisely because they understood that if man has no ritual principles to guide him, he will be perverse, violent, and disorderly. Accordingly, Xunzi taught that the wise kings created ritual principles in such a way as to reform man's emotional nature and make it upright, and to train, transform, and guide it into the proper channels. [\(7\)](#) These kings were wise because they themselves provided the example of such enlightened conduct. Xunzi argues against Mencius that if man were indeed good, we could dispense with sage kings and forget about ritual principles. [\(8\)](#)

In his explanations of man's evil nature, we find Xunzi amazingly close to the ongoing debate in generative anthropology. Desire is the main cause of man's evil nature, Xunzi argued. Unbound desire is inimical to the state. Desire and morality are incompatible. Any man who follows his nature and indulges his emotions will inevitably violate the forms and rules of society and will end up as a criminal. [\(9\)](#)

The nature of man is such that he is born with a fondness for profit. If he indulges in this fondness, it will lead him into wrangling and strife, and all sense of courtesy and humility will disappear. He is born with a feeling of envy and hate, and if he indulges in these, they will lead him into violence and crime, and all sense of loyalty and good faith will disappear. [\(10\)](#) Here Xunzi comes close to GA's notion of the deferral of desire. For Xunzi, man defers his desires within a ritual. If a man concentrates upon fulfilling ritual principles, then he may satisfy both his human desires and the demands of ritual; but if he concentrates only upon fulfilling his desires, then he will end by satisfying neither. [\(11\)](#)

Ritual for Xunzi seems to fulfill a dual purpose: it both defers and satisfies desire. Desire unbound by ritual constraints creates disorder, preventing one from satisfying one's desires. It was most likely this deferring quality of ritual that led ancient Chinese philosophers to consider ritual as the foundation of the state. If the state fails to channel human desire through ritual restraints, it will crumble. Xunzi elaborates this point further:

Man is born with desires. If his desires are not satisfied for him, he cannot but seek some means to satisfy them himself. If there are no limits and degrees to his seeking, then he will inevitably fall to wrangling with other men. From wrangling comes disorder and from disorder comes exhaustion. The ancient kings hated such disorder, and therefore they established ritual and right in order to curb it, to train man's desires and to provide for their satisfaction. [\(12\)](#)

Xunzi believed that, under proper government control, desires can be channeled to the benefit of the state. All those who maintain that desires must be lessened before there can be orderly government, he maintains, fail to consider whether desires can be controlled, but merely deplore the fact that they are so numerous. [\(13\)](#) Desire is not necessarily disruptive to the

state, as many of Xunzi's contemporaries claimed. For him a successful state is one that effectively controls human desire through the self-controlling mechanisms of morality and outside pressures he calls "environment." [\(14\)](#)

5

Morality was the key to controlling desire. Xunzi understood morality as a self-controlling mechanism. Although a man's desires may be excessive, his actions need not be so, because the mind will stop them short. If the dictates of the mind are in accord with just principles, then, even if the desires are manifold, what harm will this be to good government? [\(15\)](#) For Xunzi, government authority and self-control were the keys to good citizenship and the foundation of an orderly, peaceful state.

In his philosophy, Xunzi responded to what seems to have been a common debate to which other Chinese philosophers contributed. Shen Tao and Sung Chien, for example, emphasized self-control, that is, human passivity and self-generated elimination of desire, over government control. Han Feizi of the legalist school, on the other hand, put the emphasis squarely on the side of government. For him, all must be under government control; the state will ruin itself unless it controls the people through law.

In sum, ancient Chinese philosophers agreed on a number of fundamental premises: they concurred in their emphasis on benevolent government as a unifying source. Another such premise is education: they all thought it necessary for man to be educated in order for him to practice and cultivate a morality of good citizenship. They all felt that the morality of each individual citizen contributes to state welfare and that the rulers should set the example. None of these philosophers thought that domination by sheer force can constitute an ideal and lasting state. A stable state was only possible as a reciprocal endeavor; the rulers provide the example to which the ruled respond positively by individual morality and good will. Some advocated more or less total state control over mind and behavior. In the debate between Mencius and Xunzi, a debate between idealism and realism of sorts, all aimed in fact at the same end: the restoration of a united China under a strong but benevolent dynasty.

The subsequent unified Chinese dynasties profited from one or another of these philosophical debates. The state of Qin that unified China in 221 inspired itself from the legalist school founded by Han Feizi, a disciple of Xunzi. The Han who came into power in 207 marked a return to the less radical schools of Confucianism. Later philosophers continued the debate, which became a philosophical tradition. It shaped Chinese historiography. Beginning in the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) it was customary practice to portray the last king(s) or emperor(s) of the preceding state or dynasty as evil (something that justified dynastic change), and to portray the founders of new dynasties as moral examples. Chinese histories explain political change as a struggle between good and evil. The last rulers mark a movement away from the moral examples set by the founding fathers and a return to the evil, violent instincts of man.

The founding fathers, in contrast, establish peace and order by diverting human energy towards peaceful ends.

This debate was carried on in Vietnam, Korea, and Japan, especially after these countries adopted Chinese-style governments. In Japan this happened roughly in the mid-seventh century, but there is much earlier evidence of the influence of Chinese statecraft. In none of the Japanese imperial tombs, which archeologists date back to the third through the sixth centuries, do we find sacrificial burials; we find only such clay substitutes such as recently uncovered by the thousands on the bottom of the tomb of the first emperor of Qin (r. 221-207). However, stories of human sacrifice, usually portrayed as self-sacrifice to counter the dangers of flooding, are widespread. Human bones have been unearthed in riverbanks, dikes, bridgeheads and, as late as the seventeenth century, at strategic points of castle walls. Such sacrificial practice, however, could no longer be public; it could only be practiced in secret. The many hito-bashira (human pillar) legends suggest a widespread sacrificial practice, but it is also conceivable, especially in cases lacking archeological evidence, that storytelling was in itself a substitute for human sacrifice. The existence of storytelling as a substitute for ritual is now common knowledge among scholars of mythology and folklore.

6

The Chinese-style government established in Japan by the mid-seventh century prompted the Japanese to look up to China as a model in practically all important state matters, but also to continue the Chinese philosophical debate on political morality and good citizenship. The Japanese state developed in a combination of Chinese Confucianism, legalism, and, as is evident in Japanese political behavior and punitive practice, on Xunzi's realistic warnings that a strong and successful state is necessary to contain man's evil nature.

7

Notes

1. More than 1200 sacrificial pits were unearthed in 1934-1935 in the area of An Yang, the capital of Shang. In 1976, archaeologists discovered 191 pits containing more than 1200 victims. ([back](#))
2. The latest law prohibiting human sacrifice was promulgated by Qin in 384 BCE. ([back](#))
3. Hsun tzu, Basic Writings, tr. Burton Watson (Columbia University Press, 1963) p. 94. ([back](#))
4. Yao: legendary wise king of antiquity
Shun: legendary wise king of antiquity
King Tang of Shang: dynastic founder
King Wen of Zhou (r. 1099-1050 BCE), dynastic founder

King Wu of Zhou (r. 1049/45-1043 BCE), dynastic founder ([back](#))

5. Hsun tzu, Basic Writings, p. 158. ([back](#))

6. P. 157. ([back](#))

7. P. 163. ([back](#))

8. P. 163. ([back](#))

9. P. 157. ([back](#))

10. P. 157. ([back](#))

11. P. 91. ([back](#))

12. P. 89. ([back](#))

13. P. 150. ([back](#))

14. P. 171. ([back](#))

15. P. 151. ([back](#))

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Anthropoetics VIII, 1

Benchmarks

Although it was not planned as a special number, it is not surprising that three of the four articles in our first issue put together after September 11 deal with different aspects of terrorism. To lead it off, we are very happy to publish an article by UCLA's **David Rapoport**, the West's pioneering scholar of terrorism, that puts contemporary terrorism in its historical context. Of our other two articles on the subject, **Andrew McKenna's** (his second in **Anthropoetics**) connects Islamic terrorism with the very Western resentment of Dostoevsky's *Possessed*, and **Nils Zurawski's**--our first article based directly on ethnographic research--demonstrates the applicability of the theory of mimetic desire to the language of the perpetrators and victims of terror in Northern Ireland. Rounding out the issue, **Herbert Plutschow**, in an article adapted from his talk at the March 2002 **GA-Postcolonial Studies** colloquium, analyzes the mimetic insights of an earlier era. This is Herbert's fourth Anthropoetics article.

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[Return to Anthropoetics home page](#) | [Return to Anthropoetics VIII, 1](#)

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