

## Chapter 6. Fantasies of Purity and Domination

When he quickens all things  
 To create bliss in the world,  
 His soft black sinuous lotus limbs  
 Begin the festival of love  
 And beautiful cowherd girls wildly  
 Wind him in their bodies.  
 Friend, in spring young Hari plays  
 Like erotic mood incarnate.

Jayadeva, Gitagovinda<sup>1</sup>

Narendra Modi, you have fucked the mother of [Muslims]  
 The volcano which was inactive for years has erupted  
 It has burnt the arse of [Muslims] and made them dance nude  
 We have untied the penises which were tied till now  
 Without castor oil in the arse we have made them cry...  
 Wake up Hindus, there are still [Muslims] alive around you  
 Learn from Panvad village where their mother was fucked  
 She was fucked standing while she kept shouting  
 She enjoyed the uncircumcised penis  
 With a Hindu government the Hindus have the power to annihilate [Muslims]  
 Kick them in the arse to drive them out of not only villages and  
 Cities but also the country.  
 (The word rendered "Muslims" (miyas) is a word meaning "mister" that is standardly used  
 to refer to Muslims.)

Pamphlet distributed in Gujarat during the riots

### I. Annihilating the Female

One of the most horrific aspects of the Gujarat massacre was the prevalence of rape and sexual torture. The typical tactic was first to rape or gang-rape the woman, then to torture her (for example by inserting large metal objects into her genitals), and then to set her on fire and kill her. Although the fact that most of the dead were incinerated and/or burned with lye makes a precise sex count of the bodies impossible, one mass grave that was discovered contained more than half female bodies. Many victims of rape and torture are also among the survivors who have testified, and women's organizations were among the first to go to take down evidence after the slaughter.

Women are often raped in wartime, and many women were raped during Partition. Nonetheless, witnesses insist that what happened in Gujarat was different -- more sadistic, more grotesque, in ways that call out for explanation. Historian Tanika Sarkar, who played a leading

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<sup>1</sup> Translation by Barbara Stoller Miller of the great twelfth-century erotic poem of Krishna's longing for Radha: Love Song of the Dark Lord: Jayadeva's Gitagovinda, ed. and trans. Barbara S. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, twentieth anniversary edition 1997).

role in investigating the events and interviewing witnesses, as member of the Concerned Citizens Tribunal, argued in an important article that the evident preoccupation with destroying women's sexual organs reveals "a dark sexual obsession about allegedly ultra-virile Muslim male bodies and overfertile Muslim female ones, that inspire[s] and sustain[s] the figures of paranoia and revenge."<sup>2</sup> This sexual obsession is evident in the hate literature circulated during the carnage, of which the "poem" that is this chapter's second epigraph is a typical example. The pamphlet's incitement to violence is indeed, as Sarkar says, suffused with anxiety about male sexuality. The subsequent treatment of women seems to enact a fantasy of sexual sadism far darker than mere revenge. In an affidavit submitted to the Commission of Enquiry in June 2002, leading feminist legal activist Flavia Agnes, who also played a role in gathering the testimony of female victims after the riots, testified that although sexual crime is a common part of communal violence, the "scale and extent of atrocities perpetrated upon innocent Muslim women during the recent violence, far exceeds any reported sexual crime during any previous riots in the country in the post-independence period."<sup>3</sup>

The idea of male sexuality expressed by the hate pamphlet is all the more horrific when it is juxtaposed to a highly traditional Hindu depiction of male sexuality, as in my first epigraph, from Hinduism's great erotic/religious poem, Jayadeva's twelfth-century lyric about the god Krishna and his love of the cowherd Radha. It could hardly be maintained that the rapists in Gujarat were enacting ancient Hindu traditions: for surely nothing could be further from Krishna's delight in erotic play, his sinuous sensuousness, than the pamphlet's equation of the sex act with destructive violence, and nothing further from the sexual behavior of Krishna than the assailants' actions, as they murder women by inserting surrogate metal penises into their bodies.

Could these differences themselves be significant? Could the aggressors be inspired, to some extent at least, by shame at their own culture of masculinity, seen as too sensuous, too unaggressive, too playful? In The Home and the World, Tagore's Sandip discovered with shame a certain softness in himself that prevents him from overwhelming Bimala by force. He wishes for

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<sup>2</sup> Tanika Sarkar, "Semiotics of Terror: Muslim Children and Women in Hindu Rashtra," Economic and Political Weekly, July 13, 2002, 2872—2876.

<sup>3</sup> Flavia Agnes, "Affidavit," in Of Lofty Claims and Muffled Voices, ed. Flavia Agnes (Bombay: Majlis, 2002), 69.

a style of masculinity that he associates with his British rulers and with the difference between the sensuousness of Indian music and the sound of a British military band. He associates his own failure to exemplify the British style of masculinity with the shame of being a subject.

Shame and aggression about the sensuous and receptive aspects of erotic life are omnipresent in the politics of the Hindu right – from the strange obsession with an alleged population explosion in the Muslim community<sup>4</sup> to the militantly puritanical condemnation of scholarship that highlights the sex lives of the Hindu gods. What men of the Hindu right seem to want in their own families is a fecund purity, as babies, numerous and clean, arrive more or less out of the sky (as they do in the TV adaptation of the Ramayana), with none of the messy impure sexual dealings that the Hindu right associates with the polygamous Muslim family. What men of the Hindu right seem to want in their gods is strong muscle and warlike aggression. What they do not like to think about when they think about god is the round belly of Ganesha, his soft elephant's trunk; the mere suggestion that this trunk might symbolize a limp penis has led to death threats against a scholar.<sup>5</sup> What they want in their goddesses (or the mothers of their heroes) is a spotless purity that cannot even be touched by scandal; the mere mention of a rumor that Shivaji's mother might have had an illicit love affair has led to death threats against a scholar.<sup>6</sup> One might have thought that families usually have sexual relations, and often very complex such relations. One might have thought, too, that penises, even divine penises, are sometimes soft as well as sometime hard. One might have thought that women, even heroic women, sometimes have love affairs, and even more often are rumored to do so. Such things are part of human life, and, very obviously, part of the lives of the Hindu gods. But they are not to be mentioned, or else they are to be ascribed to that which one hates. The music of the military band drowns out Krishna's flute.

Shame is a powerful motive for aggression in human life. The sense that one fails to have some desired characteristic, often some kind of control or mastery, seems ubiquitous in human beings' relationship to their own bodies, and to the many areas of need and uncontrol that

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<sup>4</sup> See Mohan Rao, Malthusian Arithmetic: From Population Control to Reproductive Health (New Delhi: Sage, 2004), chapter 6, to be discussed below.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Courtright, Ganesa: Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), to be discussed in chapter 7.

characterize a human life. But when common human experiences of need and weakness are joined to a prolonged sense of helplessness and humiliation, as the result of real political events (to some extent also heightened and reconstructed by fantasy), self-hatred can all too easily turn outward, as symbolic acts of violence seek to remake a world, a long-for pure and spotless world, in which the once-helpless are in total control, no longer threatened by the vicissitudes of mere human limbs and desires.

Shame and revulsion at the signs of one's bodily humanity have often been invoked in analyzing group violence. One particularly apposite study is Klaus Theweleit's *Männerfantasien*, a study of the writings of German officers after World War I, particularly an elite corps known as the Freikorps. Through a study of these men's imagery for despised groups such as Communists and Jews, Theweleit shows that these defeated men, humiliated and grieving, display a ferocious aggression toward the female and its signs. They commonly depict the objects of their hate as having traditionally female characteristics, and, even more significantly, characteristics that are ubiquitously linked with people's disgust at the waste and decay of the human body.<sup>7</sup> What Theweleit's officers hate and repudiate are what psychologists call the "primary objects" of disgust – ooze, stickiness, having liquids flowing out of one, bad smell, and so on. Thus Communists are a "red tide," Jews are like disgusting bugs and slimy slugs. The hated are the female seen as the hyperbodily – as aspects, we might say, of the vulnerable body of every human from whose mortality and weakness every human in some ways recoils. Anti-Semitic thinker Otto Weininger, whose ideas exercised a strong hold over the German imagination at this time, makes the connection explicit: the woman just is the man's body, the mortal decaying oozy part of himself from which he needs to distance himself, on the way to security and mastery.

Such an analysis of group hatred is appropriate to Gujarat, and I shall develop it further. I shall argue, however, that we need to make the analysis culturally specific if we are to understand with precision the sexual violence that occurred. We must begin by thinking

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<sup>6</sup> James W. Laine, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), to be discussed in chapter 7.

<sup>7</sup> I am making this connection of femaleness to disgust, which is not explicitly stressed in Theweleit's analysis, although it is ubiquitous in it. See my *Hiding From Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

about Krishna – and, more generally, about a traditional Hindu attitude toward the erotic as one of life's most important sciences. To see how and why this tradition's picture of the male became so deeply unsatisfying to Hindu men, we must then see what becomes of the traditional construction under British rule – and under Muslim rule before that, as that experience is constructed during the colonial period.

## II. "Erotic Mood Incarnate"

The world's three major monotheistic religions do not ascribe to God an enjoyment of sexual pleasure. God is imagined as disembodied, pure spirit. Although there are interesting disputes about the extent to which the bodiless nature of God entails that God cannot have emotions such as anger, grief, and compassion, there is general agreement that sexual love and pleasure are absent. Moreover, even Jesus Christ, whose embodiment and genuine divinity are central points of Christian theology, typically lacks all connection with the sexual. Christ is not only without sexual love and longing himself, he is also at least one remove from the sexual through the Virgin birth, and perhaps at two removes, if one accepts, as well, the Immaculate Conception of Mary. This did not prevent great Renaissance painters from depicting Christ as both male and sexual, as Leo Steinberg memorably argued.<sup>8</sup> Even here, however, Christ's sexuality is seen as a link with human vulnerability rather than as a source of erotic pleasure. Whatever is historically problematic in Dan Brown's bestselling The Da Vinci Code, the book is correct right that the conception of Christ as married, and thus as enjoying an active sexual life, is heterodox and was forcefully marginalized by the Christian Church from an early date.

Moreover, the distance of God from sexual pleasure is accompanied, in the Christian tradition at least, by a problematicization of sexuality itself, seen as connected to original sin, and of women, seen as sources of temptation. (Here Michael Foucault plausibly located a major difference between Christian views and ancient Greco-Roman views.<sup>9</sup>) There are many different views about the origins of such Christian views, which may not have been those of the early

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<sup>8</sup> Leo Steinberg, The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, second edition 1996).

<sup>9</sup> Michael Foucault, The Use of Pleasure: History of Sexuality Volume 2 (English version New York: Pantheon, 1984).

Church.<sup>10</sup> But certainly the sexual appetite is singled out in most of the Christian tradition as a special source of moral difficulty. Whereas appetites for food and drink are problematic only to the extent that they become excessive or take over, sexuality is problematic in itself, and can be rendered acceptable only within the bonds of marriage. (“Better to marry than to burn,” as Paul said.) In the Jewish tradition marital sexuality is positively valued, but one could hardly say that there is strong religious encouragement of sensuousness, erotic play, or sexual experimentation.

Ancient Greco-Roman polytheism has a more positive attitude to the sex lives of the gods -- so much so that traditional views gave rise to a counter-tradition, represented in different ways by the philosophers Xenophanes and Plato and by later Epicureans and Stoics, all of whom assailed the idea that the gods have extramarital affairs, including affairs with mortals. The gods are depicted as enjoying many types of sexual connection, including male-male relationships; Kenneth Dover notes that the ascription of such pleasures to the gods shows us something important about how the longing of an older man for a younger man was regarded in ancient Greek culture.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, ancient texts do not typically go into great detail about the sex lives of the gods and heroes.

To some extent this may be an artifact of genre: epic and tragedy are typically reticent. Vase paintings and Attic comedy are much more frank, and we do find some such representations there. Certainly the cult of Dionysus was generally understood to involve a veneration of both human and divine sexual power and the madness accompanying it – although Dionysus is typically represented with a small penis (image of self-control), by contrast to the rampant sexuality of his entourage of satyrs and sileni. About the other major gods, however, there is little to be known. If we ask, for example, what Zeus typically enjoys when he makes love to a mortal, we get an answer that is in part a blank, in part rather alarming: numerous abductions and rapes are depicted, but any more sensuous or mutual activity that might have followed them is not. Indeed Zeus’s failure to be sensuous becomes a theme of later comic literature: the poet Lucian depicts Zeus asking advice about how to become attractive to women,

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<sup>10</sup> See Elaine Pagels, Adam, Eve, and the Serpent (New York: Vintage, paper edition 1989), who argues that Augustine is the origin of the view that problematizes sexuality; earlier Church fathers focused, instead, on human helplessness.

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Dover, Greek Homosexuality (second edition Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 19 ).

who are all (plausibly enough) afraid of him. He is told by the baby god Erôs that he ought to become more like Dionysus:

Eros: "If you want to be loved (eperastos einai), stop brandishing the aegis and carrying the thunderbolt and make yourself really pleasing and soft to look at; let your curls grow and tie them in a ribbon, wear a purple gown, strap on gold sandals, walk to the beat of a flute and tambourines, and you'll see, more of them will tail you than Dionysus' maenads.

Zeus: Get out of here! I don't want to be loved (eperastos einai) by becoming that sort.

Eros: Okay, Zeus, then stop falling in love (mède eran thele). It's easier that way.<sup>12</sup>

Zeus typically dominates without play or sensuousness; it is no surprise that women prefer a different approach.

Hindu religion is unique among the world's major religions for the way in which sex is accepted as a normal and inevitable part of human life and as a part that should be cultivated rather than marginalized. Kama, or sexual pleasure, is something that should be theorized and studied. The Kama Sutra (or Treatise on Sexual Pleasure) which many modern European and American readers think of as a pornographic text, to be read in a hush-hush way, with winks and giggles, is a sacred text, one hundred percent sober and serious. Indeed, it was understood that the science of kama (or kama-shastra) is one of the three great areas of scholarly study, along with law (dharma), whose foundational text is the Laws of Manu, and political economy (artha), whose foundational text is Kautilya's Arthashastra. Together, kama, dharma, and artha are known as the three aims of human life, or the trivarga, as the opening of the Kama Sutra stresses.<sup>13</sup> As one can see if one reads the entire treatise, the Kama Sutra is not simply a catalogue of sexual positions; it is an art of love, which includes all sorts of topics having to do with desire, emotion, marriage, life generally. The general picture of sexuality that emerges from the text is one in which the art of sex civilized the violent impulses in human beings and promotes some sort of erotic reciprocity.<sup>14</sup>

As for the gods, throughout Hindu myth and legend they gods are repeatedly depicted as highly sexual beings, curious, experimental. In one South Indian myth, Ganesa's father Siva explains to his child why he has an elephant head:

<sup>12</sup> Lucian, Dialogues of the Gods, trans. by David Konstan: see his discussion in "Enacting Eros," in The Sleep of Reason (above n. 15).

<sup>13</sup> The only reliable translation, and the best account of the purposes and content of the treatise is the version by Wendy Doniger, and Sudhir Kakar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

I, in the company of Parvati, retired once to the forest on the slopes of the Himalayas to enjoy each other's company. We saw there a female elephant making herself happy with a male elephant. This excited our passions and we desired to enjoy ourselves in the form of elephants. I became a male elephant, and Parvati became a female one, and pleased ourselves, as a result of which you were born with the face of an elephant.<sup>15</sup>

Other variants of the story have Ganesa born from the sweat of Siva and Parvati, as it mixed together on the ground; or from Parvati's sweat alone, as she examines the dirt that was scraped off her by her masseuse and shapes it into an elephant head; or from a drop of blood that happened to be shed while Siva and Parvati were having intercourse (thus accounting for the god's characteristic red color).<sup>16</sup> In all versions, Ganesa is a byproduct of a sexual enjoyment that is regarded as normal for the gods. The very fact that Hindu gods (unlike Greek gods) often have animal forms permits the depiction of the sexual to take a form that is often playful and exuberant, as what can only be fantasy in human copulation is made reality in the accounts of the gods. Notice, as well, that it is completely unremarkable to imagine a god made out of the dirt of the body.

There is an ascetic tradition in the depiction of the Hindu gods, but it is complicated by the ascription to the most ascetic of the gods, Siva, a very profound eroticism: his life can be seen as an alternation between two opposed identities.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, Siva's acceptance of eroticism is connected in one myth to his compassion for mortals, which apparently leads him to take on, and endorse, their form of life.<sup>18</sup> Throughout the stories of Siva's asceticism runs the idea that desire can be controlled not by denial, but only by appropriate satisfaction.<sup>19</sup>

Above all, however, we must speak of Krishna, a central figure in myth and sacred scripture, the speaker of the Bhagavad-Gita. Krishna is a demi-god, or rather metamorphoses from a heroic human, as he appears to be in the Mahabharata (from which the Gita is taken) to a full-fledged god. He is one of the most loved of the Hindu gods, and one who is most often depicted in works of literary and visual art, as well as music and dance. With his characteristic

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<sup>14</sup> See Doniger.

<sup>15</sup> In Paul Courtright: Ganesa: Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 31, drawing from a collection of legends by T. A. Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography, 4 vols. (Madras 1914). Whatever the controversy surrounding Courtright's interpretations, nobody disputes that these myths exist as he reports them.

<sup>16</sup> See Courtright, 44-45.

<sup>17</sup> See Doniger (O'Flaherty), Siva: The Erotic Ascetic (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). (In this early book, Doniger uses her then-married name Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty.)

<sup>18</sup> See Doniger (O'Flaherty), p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> Doniger (O'Flaherty), p. 257.



thin, blue body, he is shown in countless paintings, frolicking with the cowherds – and, at times, fighting effectively against his enemies. Krishna is not Dionysus: his entire life is not focused on sensuous indulgence. But that aspect of his life is regarded by literary and artistic traditions as particularly fascinating. Jayadeva's poem about Krishna and Radha is a long meditation on the different stages and moods of Krishna's eroticism; its sections are called "Joyful Krishna," "Careless Krishna," "Bewildered Krishna," "Tender Krishna," "Lotus-Eyed Krishna Longing for Love," "Indolent Krishna," "Cunning Krishna," "Abashed Krishna," "Four Quickening Arms," "Blissful Krishna," and "Ecstatic Krishna." Not only is the poem one of the great works of classical Sanskrit literature, it is also closely linked to traditions of music and dance, and is intended for public dance performance. Each section specifies the raga, or traditional musical form, to which it is to be sung, and the accompanying dance performances are still celebrated in many parts of the country.<sup>20</sup> Although its eroticism is sometimes interpreted allegorically (as with the Song of Songs in the Bible) such interpretations typically do not negate the surface meaning of the text, but see that literal meaning as one example of more general themes of longing and vulnerability. As Barbara Stoller Miller writes, "Intense earthly passion is the example Jayadeva uses to express the complexities of divine and human love."<sup>21</sup> (The poem, well translated into German in the eighteenth century, was much admired by Goethe, whose spirit, and whose critique of bourgeois German morality, is in many ways Jayadevan in spirit.)

Miller chooses as the epigraph to her translation of the Gitagovinda these lines from Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali (the poem for which, above all, he won the Nobel Prize for literature):

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation.  
I feel the embrace of freedom in a  
thousand bonds of delight.<sup>22</sup>

The pairing of Tagore with Jayadeva is insightful: in many ways Tagore's dance-dramas carried on the erotic tradition of the Gitagovinda. Tagore's own self-depiction as male, when he danced (as we learn from photographs in the Tagore museum, as well as from accounts by those who remember him), was, we might say, Krishna-like: sensuous, full of curves and beckoning arm-

<sup>20</sup> Barbara Stoller Miller, Love Song of the Dark Lord, Preface, pp. xiii-xvi.

<sup>21</sup> Miller, P. xiii.

<sup>22</sup> Tagore, Gitanjali, section 73. The translation is not attributed, but is presumably by Miller herself.

gestures. (If you think of the closely related dance idiom of Isadora Duncan, this will give you some idea of Tagore's choreographic vocabulary.)

Traditions are never simple. In the Hindu traditions of India, attachment to erotic play and reciprocity is typically combined with a good deal of misogyny and with norms of patriarchal control, so clearly laid out, for example, in the Laws of Manu.<sup>23</sup> Women's position in India, as in all other nations, has never been equal, and there is probably about the same amount of rape and domestic violence in India as in the United States.<sup>24</sup> Caste and class, moreover, complicate such norms of reciprocity as there are, making lower-caste women fair game for, and not fully human to, upper-caste men.

Moreover, at least the Brahmin traditions of Hinduism contain a strong valorization of asceticism. Indeed, a Brahmin is expected to play the part of the householder for a time, but then to leave his family and devote himself to ascetic contemplation as a sannyasi. It is to these traditions that Gandhi so successfully attached himself, much though his own rationale for asceticism was both personal and intercultural (Tolstoy), and much though his own caste origins would not have made asceticism the norm for him.

We also need to qualify our claims by emphasizing that texts from elite literature and art, and even classical religious texts, do not necessarily represent the traditions of real people as they enact their religion. Indeed, real people may not know these works of art and even these religious texts. Nonetheless, the texts have at least some general validity, given their central cultural role, and typically express widespread attitudes as well as shaping them. Moreover, when your colonial oppressor repeatedly attacks you for not being respectable in a certain way (focusing on what he gleans from a cursory study of texts and works of art), this is likely to make the element that is attacked more central in your own self-conception, even if it was not so central before.

Despite all these qualifications, then, we can still say that Sandip is right: there is something in the traditional Hindu conception of masculinity that is quite unlike the music of a

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<sup>23</sup> See the excellent account of these norms in Roop Rekha Verma, "Femininity, Equality, and Personhood," in Martha Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover, eds., Women, Culture and Development (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 433-43.

<sup>24</sup> See my "Women's Bodies: Violence, Security, Capabilities," Journal of Human Development 6 (2005), 167-83.

British military band; this capacity for sensuous play is part of the lives of gods as well as mortals. Young Americans who fell in love with India during the Vietnam war, in connection with the idea that eroticism would bring an end to the power of the “military-industrial complex” were naïve and ignorant in many ways, but they were also on to something real about Indian traditions, something that made them different from many of our own.

We can now add another ingredient: the preference of the Indian male for talk. Perhaps this preference is most pronounced in Bengal, with its veneration of intellectuals and their books. The Kolkata book fair is not only the largest book fair in the world, it is surely the only such fair that is thronged by a large proportion of people who can neither read nor write. And Kolkata and Dhaka (in Bangladesh) are surely the only cities in the world where a million people would turn out to join a parade honoring an economist who had won the Nobel prize. But the love of talk, while especially characteristic of Bengali men, is a characteristic of Indian manhood more generally, as Amartya Sen shows in his recent book The Argumentative Indian.<sup>25</sup>

In cultural discussions of manhood in European traditions, however, a preference for talk often codes as feminine. Think, for example, of Aristophanes' Lysistrata, in which warlike men like brandishing their weapons and have no time for talk, whereas the woman's world is a talk-filled world. When the women try to get the men to talk about the reasons for the war, they are scorned, or slapped around a little. And when the men try to attack the recalcitrant women with crowbars, Lysistrata says, “What we need is not crowbars, it is intelligence and good sense.”<sup>26</sup> This is comedy, not social description, but to be funny it has to strike a chord, as representing a common reality, however exaggerated. To talk, to argue, is (as men often see it) to make yourself vulnerable (as Plato emphasized by calling reason a “soft golden cord” by contrast to the iron strings of aggressive passion). It is to allow someone to touch you, to be receptive to that person's utterance. In many cultures, that kind of receptivity codes as unmanly. Such ideas form part of traditional European anti-Semitism, with its disdain for the Jew's soft bookish body.<sup>27</sup> They are also involved in Sandip's self-critique: instead of overwhelming Bimala, he

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<sup>25</sup> London: Allen Lane, 2005.

<sup>26</sup> I discuss these oppositions in “The Comic Soul: or, This Phallus that Is Not One,” in The Soul of Tragedy, ed. Stephen Oberhelman and Victoria Pedrick (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005 forthcoming).

<sup>27</sup> See Daniel Boyarin, Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).

(unfortunately, as he sees it) likes to talk her into things, and most of his action in the novel is in fact talk.

When a people who have such traditions repeatedly experience subjection and humiliation at the hands of powerful aggressively masculine enemies who repeatedly tell them that they are not real men, it is not surprising that shame should result. Nor is it surprising that such a people would seek a counter-culture of masculinity that emulates the perceived hardness of the aggressor. Another such example is the culture of masculinity in contemporary Israel, which is surely at least in part a counter-culture to traditional norms of masculinity for the Jewish male. That more traditional norm is not the same as the Hindu norm: it stresses the sedentary pursuit of scholarship rather than the sensuous pleasures of dance. But the two traditions have their love of talk in common, and the result is in some ways the same: a body that to Western eyes codes as soft and feminine, norms of play and non-aggression, a distinctly unmilitary type of music.<sup>28</sup> There can be little doubt that the aggressive hardness of current Israeli masculinity is a reaction, in many cases quite self-conscious, against the perceived softness and weakness of European Jewish manhood, which brought untold misery and humiliation upon the Jewish people.

### III. The Victorian Reaction: Direct and Indirect Shame

The presence of the British in India transformed the traditional Hindu culture of manliness in two ways. First, and most obviously, it gave rise to what might be called reactive shame, responding to the scandalized British critique of Hindu myth and religion. For the British, the Muslims were recognizable and even admirable monotheists; Hindus were wild and strange. The depiction of the two religions in E. M. Forster's highly sympathetic A Passage to India shows Aziz as rather like a Protestant, the Hindu Professor Godbole as a wild ecstatic irrationalist, given to all sorts of childish and incomprehensible rituals. If this is the reaction of a sympathetic observer, hostile English voices were far more blunt. To Churchill, Hindus were "a beastly people with a beastly religion." (He always sought to play up the Muslim contribution to the war effort and to deny that Hindus were reliable helpers at all.)

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<sup>28</sup> See Boyarin.

As historian George Mosse has shown in his important book Nationalism and Sexuality,<sup>29</sup> norms of sexual respectability were crucial elements of both British and German nationalism. People believed that their success as nation depended on upholding “virtuous” and “respectable” norms of sexual conduct. Integral to these norms was a very sharp distinction between male and female sex roles, in which the male was the active, aggressive party and the female was passive. Around these sharp distinctions a normative culture of manliness grew up. The true man was not sensuous or pleasure-loving; he was duty-driven and self-controlled. “Sexual intoxication of any kind was viewed as both unmanly and inherently antisocial.”<sup>30</sup> Anyone who seemed too “soft” or sensuous was branded as a “degenerate,” a label integral to the persecution of both Jews and homosexuals, who were believed to be subverters of the social fabric. Although Mosse does not study closely the colonial operations of these norms, he does observe that the concept of degeneracy was quickly transferred to “inferior races” who inspired anxiety. “These races, too, were said to display a lack of morality and a general absence of self-discipline.”<sup>31</sup>

The Hindu male was a natural object of this critique. Polytheism was already thought degenerate and primitive, the worship of gods in animal form even more so. When we combine these features with the overt sexuality of the Indian gods, particularly in its sensuous, playful form, the Hindu male looks like the antonym of the respectable, and Hinduism looks (from the British point of view) like a religion that could never be compatible with national unity and national success. The British conveyed in many unobvious ways the thought that it was because of this degeneracy and these “inferior” morals that the Hindu needed to be ruled for his own good. The use of Hinduism to symbolize the sexually degenerate spread to places where no or very few Hindus had ever lived: in U. S. Supreme Court opinions in the nineteenth century, Hinduism customs such as sati and child marriage are mentioned as examples of what a decent society may not tolerate, even when it protects religious freedom.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> George L. Mosse, Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

<sup>30</sup> Mosse, p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> Mosse, p. 36.

<sup>32</sup> See Reynolds v. United States, 98 U. S. 145 (1878), denying Mormons the right to polygamous marriages, where sati is coupled with pagan child sacrifice, and both with a disdain for non-Western cultures. (“Polygamy has always been odious among the northern and western nations of Europe, and, until the establishment of the Mormon Church, was almost exclusively a feature of the life of Asiatic and of African people.”)

Like Jews in Germany,<sup>33</sup> Hindu men in India internalized this critique. Reacting with self-hating shame to the Victorian English critique, they became determined to show that they were indeed respectable. A real man does not lounge around like Krishna, but behaves like a proper military man. The milder form taken by this shame was Puritanism and denial of the sensuous. The more militant form was (as in the early enthusiasm for Chatterjee's anthem) a militant culture of aggressive masculinity that emulated British militarism.

Combined with this reactive shame was a deeper and more pervasive shame. The first sort of shame reacts directly to the British critique, saying, "I must be the sort of man that will be found respectable." The second sort reacts more generally to the abject situation of the conquered, to the deep wound of not being in control of one's own life. The subject males says not only, "I ought to be respectable," but also, "I am not a true man because I have let this happen to me, and perhaps it happened to me because I was not a true man." In part this shame is the internalized self-hating version of the British repudiation; in part it is something deeper, a wounded sense of helplessness and subjection that goes beyond mere peer pressure and conformity. In the simpler shame, sensuousness and receptivity are repudiated by chance, as it were, because the British stigmatized them. In the more complex form, they are deeply felt as aspects of one's own helplessness, as a form of psychic powerlessness that is painful to experience. We see this more complex shame, too, in Tagore's Sandip, who hates his subjection and finds himself attracted to the sort of manliness that seems sufficient to avoid it. Sandip perceives English sexuality as military, bright, hard-edged, definite. It doesn't lounge around, it doesn't delay, it doesn't go through a Krishna-like alternation between joy and anxiety, hopelessness and tenderness, lotus-eyed longing and bliss. Sandip feels that he could conquer if only he were the right sort of male. When traditional Hindu maleness was in any case being mocked and assailed, held to be incompatible with national unity and national success, it is no wonder that its bearers should feel it as the source of their subjection. The thought gradually grows: we can only be a true nation, successful and unified, if we become the right (aggressive, non-sensuous) sort of male.

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<sup>33</sup> See Mosse, p. 36: "It was the reaction of outsiders trying to get inside and finding the door locked for no conceivable fault of their own; of people who wanted to be normal but who found themselves trapped into

Looking back in history, the Hindu right, from Savarkar onward, associated the British conqueror with the Muslim conqueror and constructed a continuous narrative of shame and wounding. It is of course very difficult to know whether a Hindu shame-reaction to Muslim maleness was common during the Moghul Empire, during what periods and within what classes it was common, and so forth. Contemporaneous artistic and architectural evidence shows deep cultural syncretism; the greatest Moghul poet, Kabir, is himself reverent toward both Allah and Ram, and his spirituality is intensely anti-aggressive. Most of the historical and literary evidence involves later construction and reconstruction. Even the life of the Hindu ruler Shivaji, who surely did display aggression successfully against the Muslims, comes down to us as a tissue of legends; it is impossible to reconstruct contemporary attitudes confidently from this material – although it is interesting that a seventeenth-century life of the hero depicts Shivaji as hyperaggressive even in the womb, causing his mother to have fantasies of armed conquest.<sup>34</sup> What we can say with confidence is that today people of the Hindu right remember the Moghul Empire as a time when powerful Muslim aggressors tyrannized over them and humiliated them, destroying their temples. They link the remembered wounds of that time closely to evils of British rule, portraying their history as that of an ideal time of unity and peace, followed by a succession of humiliating conquests. And although we have no evidence that Muslims were really stigmatizing Hindu men as not sexually respectable, a retrospective obsession with sexuality has developed in the representation of Muslims: they are sexually rapacious and aggressively triumphant, as if that very fact were already a critique of Hindu male purity. It is easy to believe that the winner is laughing at you.

Thus shame grew, like a wound in the Hindu male psyche. Who received the aggression to which shame gave birth? The British were clever rulers. They understood that humiliation and emasculation often give rise to aggression. They were therefore careful to arrange for the subject Indian male to have his own outlets for aggression, in a place that would not threaten British supremacy. As we have seen, the British codified commercial and criminal law for the nation as a whole, but they left family law in the hands of the different religious communities. In

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abnormality...”

<sup>34</sup> Laine, *Shivaji*, p. 33, translating from Paramananda.

Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation,<sup>35</sup> a study of the construction of gender and national identity in 19th- and early 20th-century Hindu India, Tanika Sarkar argues that this separation of domains served the purposes of empire well. While establishing secure domination in the most important matters, it also quieted dissent by allowing the males of the subject population a sphere of rule: the household, where a man who had few rights in the outer world could be a king. Control over women's bodies was thus substituted for control over other aspects of daily life. And self-respect that was injured in the daily encounter with the racial hierarchy of the outer world could be built up again by the experience of secure kingly rule in the sphere of the family.

As time went on, this control increasingly channeled an aggression that was inspired by the experience of humiliation in the outer world, but denied all expression there. The domination of women took an increasingly violent form, and the British indulged these expressions. In the face of a complaint involving the rape and death of a twelve-year-old child wife, for example, British judges resisted indigenous Indian demands for the reform of laws governing marital age and consent. They argued that local traditions required deference, and that judges were not entitled to go against them.<sup>36</sup> Such maneuvers had the effect of insulating domestic violence, even of this appalling and fatal sort, from criticism and change. At the same time, given that self-respect and manly status were increasingly defined around the control of women's bodies, reform met with increasing internal resistance: for who would want to give up the one area of manly pride and honor? Thus control over the female body came to represent control over the nation.

This widespread idea helps to explain why, during the waves of communal violence at the time of independence, possession of women was such an important issue to the contending sides, as Muslims established Pakistan, and as Hindus and Muslims killed one another in large numbers during the mass migrations surrounding the separation of the two nations. Women were raped in huge numbers; often they were abducted as well and forced to bear the children of the Muslim or Hindu who had abducted them.<sup>37</sup> The

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<sup>35</sup> Tanika Sarkar, Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001).

<sup>36</sup> Nehru argued that the British more generally supported the "obscurantist, reactionary" elements in Indian culture as the authentic ones, in order to prevent Indians from progressing: see Nehru, Autobiography, p. 449.

<sup>37</sup> On this history, see, among other important feminist works, Embodied Violence: Communalising Women's Sexuality in South Asia, ed. Kumari Jayawardena and Malathi de Alwis (London: Zed, 1993); Ritu Menon



rationale of these rapes and abductions is easy to connect with the earlier history: if the female body symbolizes the nation, then in the struggle of two emerging nations the possession and impregnation of women is a potent weapon in consolidating power. Even when women were not abducted but were raped and then brutally murdered, this too was an act symbolizing the power of one group to damage the domain of rule of the other group, dishonoring the group in the process.

Superficially, one might suppose that the symbolic association between woman and the body of the nation would lead to veneration of women and delicate treatment of their bodies. But the idea that control over territory is to be asserted by violence and destruction – the same idea that the conquered people remembered as having been enacted against them – led, here too, to the thought that one only securely dominates by violence, immobilizing the woman and erasing all possibility of resistance. Under colonialism, a nation is a ground on which men may gratify their desires for control and honor. By being exalted into a symbol of nationhood, a woman is at the same time reduced—from being a person who is an end, an autonomous subject, someone whose feelings count, into being a mere ground for the expression of male desire – in this case, of anxious and shame-ridden desire. Thus, although much of the time the male who sees a woman that way will still want her to live and eat and bear children, there is no principled barrier to his using her brutally if that is what suits his desires. Once the woman is no longer seen as a distinct individual, with her own desires, her own agency, it is very easy to think of her as merely a thing that should be controlled.<sup>38</sup>

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and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998); Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); *The Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India*, ed. Jasodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan Dasgupta (Kolkata: Stree, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> See my "Objectification," in *Sex and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 213-39. What of the women of the Hindu right? As Tagore presciently suggests in his complex characterization of Bimala, they fulfill two different and contradictory roles. On the one hand, and most commonly, they are the domestic and passive beings who can be controlled by their husbands, as the British strategy suggested. In my discussions with members of the Hindu right, the woman has typically functioned as a silent presence, supportive and submissive. Devendra Swarup's insistence on the importance of sharp gender divisions and of female purity was enacted, it seemed, in his own household. On the other hand, there are also women who join female *shakhas* or become VHP activists. These women are characterized doubly: they must fulfill the traditional female role, but they are also allies in the pursuit of domination. In the RSS, such women (for example the politician Uma Bharti) are portrayed as pure and austere. In the VHP, however, such women are depicted as fierce tigresses and other wild animals (see Basu *et al.*, 79-

#### IV. Population: the Double Logic of Shame

The idea of woman as a ground of male kingly rule takes us some way into the grim darkness of Gujarat, but questions remain. For example, if the Muslim woman symbolizes territory to be conquered and dominated, why were Muslim women in Gujarat brutally and sadistically tortured, and then burned alive, rather than being abducted and impregnated? To be sure, many people were murdered at Partition, and in the general violence many women were used simply as objects of the desire to maim and kill. On the other hand, the logic of colonial possession was also amply evident in that case, since men really did want to take these women to their country and force them to bear their children. And in large numbers, they did so. In Gujarat, we hear nothing of this sort. Women were simply tortured and killed. So we wonder why the reaction against subordination led to this particular type of obliterating violence. Surely the behavior of the torture-rapist is not a paradigm of respectability or a way of restoring manly honor. So why didn't shame lead to abduction, rape as impregnation, and other well-known devices through which men at war establish their domination over the subject nation? Such actions, while not exactly respectable, are at least recognizably the actions of a dominating nation, and they can lead to respectable family life.

As Sarkar says, however, there is something dark and unusual about the Gujarat tortures, something suggesting obsession with the female body and especially its genital organs. Torture and abuse, particularly the insertion of large metal objects into the vagina and other forms of genital torture, play a dramatic and unusual role in these events. The feminist analysis of objectification shows why there would be no large barrier to using women's bodies in these ways. But why would men inflict such tortures? Defense Minister George Fernandes treated the rapes dismissively, as if they were nothing new, saying on the floor of Parliament, "All these sob stories being told to us, as if this is the first time this country has heard such stories—where a mother is killed and the fetus taken out of her stomach, where a daughter is raped in front of her mother, of

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87). At Ayodhya, women chanted, "We are the women of India. We are not flowers, we are sparks." Such women are not encouraged to take a formal political role, nor does the movement support their full civil rights. But they are permitted to be allies in the pursuit of violence, honorific men. This change, a recent phenomenon, is possible because it is the Muslim woman, and Muslim sexuality, on whom stigmatization and anxiety focus. To this topic we must now turn.

someone being burnt. Is this the first time such things have happened?" Most witnesses, however, disagreed. As one commentator writes, "The violence in Gujarat was different from earlier incidents of communal violence, both for the scale of the assaults and for the sheer sadism and brutality with which women and girls were victimized."<sup>39</sup> This new something, I would argue, is connected to the operations of disgust and shame, operating in a sinister combination.<sup>40</sup> We must move, in effect, from a Mosse-type analysis, invoking notions of respectability, conformity, and social stigma, to a deeper psychological analysis that is compatible with it (as Theweleit's Männerfantasien is compatible with Mosse's social history), but not entailed by it, in which shame functions as a deep psychological wound prompting reactive violence.

To begin to understand the contours of the underlying fears and fantasies, we may turn to one of its oddest manifestations. One of the strangest expressions of the Hindu right's conceptions of masculinity and sexuality is an obsession with the fantasy of a growing Muslim population and a shrinking Hindu population. In reality, the proportions of the two groups have remained remarkably stable over the past forty years. The Hindu population has moved from 84.4 percent in 1961 to 83.5 in 1971 to 83.1 in 1981, 82.4 in 1991, and finally to 81.4 in 2001.<sup>41</sup> The Muslim population figures are 9.9 percent for 1961, 10.4 for 1971, 10.9 for 1981, 11.7 for 1991, and 12.4 for 2001. So there is a very slight decline in the Hindu population and a more significant but still quite small increase in the Muslim population. When we turn to the rate of growth, however, we find that, while the Hindu population growth rate has slightly declined, from 24.8 percent between 1961 and 1971 to 21.5 percent from 1991 to 2001, the Muslim rate of growth has also declined, from 31.2 percent between 1961 and 1971 to 29.3 percent between 1991 and 2001. So the idea that Muslims have been outstripping Hindus in their birth rate has no substance. Nonetheless, it is constantly harped upon by politicians of the Hindu right. Narendra Modi campaigned on the slogan, "Hum do, hamare do; Woh paanch, unke pachhees," "We are two and we have two, they are four and they have four" – meaning that Hindus have one wife and Muslims three wives, and that as a result Hindu families contain two children and Muslim families

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<sup>39</sup> For Fernandes' speech and this critical response, see Editor's Note to "'Nothing New?' women as Victims in Gujarat," in Gujarat, ed. Siddharth Varadarajan (Delhi: Penguin, 2002), 215; see also Agnes, p. 17.

<sup>40</sup> This analysis draws on my Hiding from Humanity and the psychological research (by Paul Rozin and others) that is discussed there.

four children. We can see that this is quite false: Hindu families display a very high rate of population growth, and Muslim families, while having a slightly higher growth rate, are extremely far from having double the number of children that Hindus have. In any case, only about 5 percent of Muslims are polygamous, and approximately the same percentage of Hindus are polygamous, although polygamy is legal for Muslims and illegal for Hindus. The Hindu Mahasabha has been harping on the theme since well before independence, using U. N. Mukherji's 1909 book, Hindus: A Dying Race to argue that Hindus are indeed in danger of extinction.<sup>42</sup>

Why this singular obsession, particularly when the data do not support it? As Mohan Rao argues in his study of population panics, Malthusian Economics, exclusionary cultural and racial views often portray the non-respectable "other" as hypersexual and therefore as hyper-fertile. Although George Mosse's study of German and British ideas of sexual respectability focuses on attitudes to sex roles and to homosexuality, not on population, Mosse's conceptual categories fit nicely with Rao's findings concerning British population anxieties. These typically portray the Irish and the Jews as hyperfertile, the British as committing "race suicide" by allowing these people to remain in society and reproduce. Such positions were not only right-wing positions: they were espoused by the socialist economist Sidney Webb in his 1907 work "The Decline in the Birth Rate." (Webb and his wife Beatrice spent time in India and wrote Indian Diary, published in 1987.<sup>43</sup>)

Why do Hindus believe the myth of the "dying race"? Why was it so explosive an issue in Narendra Modi's reelection campaign in Gujarat? And why does it stubbornly resist confrontation with fact? When I point out the census data to my interlocutors on the Hindu right, they refuse to back down, saying that the census has not counted huge numbers of illegal Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh. So there is a precommitment to a picture, and this picture is resistant to fact. As in Mosse and Theweleith, so here: the attribution of hyperfertility and hypersexuality to Muslims functions as an expression of anxiety and shame: Hindus feel emasculated, and they are expressing a kind of envy of the hypermasculine, hyperaggressive other. But we can begin

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<sup>41</sup> India, Census, online; I give the "adjusted" figures, which omit Jammu, Kashmir, and Assam.

<sup>42</sup> See Rao, chapter 6.

now to see that Muslims function in a more complex way in the symbolic life of the Hindu right. On the one hand, Muslims are indeed, like the British, the hypermasculine dominators, whom a self-hating shame instructs Hindu males to emulate. At the same time, however, Muslims also (unlike the British) symbolize sexuality run rampant, sexuality out of control, a flood or tide of sex and birth that threatens to drown the nation.<sup>44</sup> In other words, they also represent what one might call the feminine element, the element of bodily desire and vulnerability that a respectable man needs to distance from himself and discover in other subordinate groups only. They function like the British in one way, but in another way they are like the Jews in Germany or the Irish in England, or the lower castes in earlier Indian debates about fertility<sup>45</sup>: emblems of the dark, out-of-control part of oneself from which the wounded would-be dominator needs to escape, and on which he blames his subject status. Muslims can function symbolically in this double way because they are at one and the same time a subordinate group whose growth is feared (like the Jews in Germany and the Irish in England) and, at the same time, a remembered dominating presence, the ancestors of and handy surrogates for the British rulers who inflicted centuries of humiliation.

As British physician Lionel Penrose noted, concerning European eugenic movements:

It is a well-known psychological mechanism that hatred, which is repressed under normal circumstances, may become manifest in the presence of an object which is already discredited in some way. An excuse for viewing mentally defective individuals with abhorrence is the idea that those at large enjoy themselves sexually in ways which are forbidden or difficult to accomplish in the higher strata of society.<sup>46</sup>

Aggression against the sexuality of the subordinated group, Penrose argues, is really a form of shame-induced hatred of and revulsion at one's own sexuality. The presence of a socially discredited group can allow the release of this hatred. Muslims, like the mentally disabled in Penrose's example, are a socially stigmatized group on whom fantasies about sexual excess can conveniently be projected. Unlike the mentally disabled (and more like the Jews as imagined by European anti-Semitism), they are also a group whose power is feared, and whose fertility can therefore be the object of an added hatred deriving from that fear. In the context of the

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<sup>43</sup> Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Indian Diary*, ed. Niraja Jayal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>44</sup> Compare Theweleit's account of the fear of communists (the "red tide") and Jews.

<sup>45</sup> See S. Anandhi, "Reproductive Bodies and Regulated Sexuality: Birth Control Debates in Early Twentieth Century Tamilnadu," in Mary E. John and Janaki Nair, eds., *A Question of Silence? The Sexual Economies of Modern India* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998), discussed in Rao.

aspiration to national unity, the threatening “other” must be defeated; at the same time, the external symbol of one’s own sexuality, stigmatized and criticized by the colonial ruler, must be obliterated.

As both Mosse and Theweleit stress, shame, in the context of nationalism, typically involves a self-referential component: what is stigmatized in the other is what is feared and repudiated in the self. What is this fear ultimately about? The earliest experiences of a human infant contain a jolting alternation between blissful completeness, in which the whole world seems to revolve around its needs, an agonizing awareness of helplessness, when good things do not arrive at the desired moment and the infant can do nothing to ensure their arrival. The expectation of being attended to constantly – the “infantile omnipotence” so well captured in Freud’s phrase “His Majesty the baby” is joined to the anxiety, and the shame, of knowing that one is not in fact omnipotent, but utterly powerless. Out of this anxiety and shame emerges an urgent desire for completeness and fullness that never completely departs, however much the child learns that it is but one part of a world of finite needy beings. This sort of “primitive shame” is closely linked to one’s awareness of one’s bodily nature; it typically takes as its target those parts of oneself – bodily need, sexual longing – that are the markers of a finite needy bodily nature. If they are shameful when seen as in oneself, they can be better managed if one can imagine them projected outward, so that they appear to characterize some other group of people not oneself.

Closely linked to the operations of “primitive shame” is the allied emotion of disgust: for one’s own bodily fluids and processes are not merely objects of concealment, they are, very often, objects of loathing. The primary objects of disgust are the bodily waste products (feces, body odor, blood) and decay (corpses, rotting food); disgust easily extends itself to insects and animals who seem to have the primary disgust properties: bad smell, sliminess, stickiness. Disgust is an emotion heavily caught up in symbolic and magical thinking. Its objects are reminders of our animality and mortality, either because they are in fact corpses or waste products or because they come through a process of association to symbolize waste, excrement, and mortality. Disgust works by shielding human beings from too much daily contact with aspects

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<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Rao, chapter 6.

of their own humanity that are difficult to live with, the very ones of which people are deeply ashamed. Thus if we don't touch corpses or oozy decaying smelly things, we may be able to ignore our own mortality. If we neatly dispose of our bodily waste products, we more easily forget that we are made of stuffs that end up on the dungheap.

It is not enough for human beings to protect themselves from contamination by the primary objects of disgust, such as feces and corpses. Humans also typically need a group of humans to bound themselves against, who come to symbolize the disgusting and who, therefore, insulate the community even further from its own animality. Thus, every society ascribes disgust properties—bad smell, stickiness, sliminess, foulness, decay—to some group of persons, who are therefore found disgusting and shunned, and who in this way further insulate the dominant group from what they fear facing in themselves. This role was assigned to the Jews in many European societies: they were characterized as disgusting in those physical ways, and they were represented symbolically as vermin who had those same properties. Women in more or less all societies are assigned this role: they are the bodily (smelly, sticky) part of human life from which males distance themselves, except when they cannot help being drawn by the lure of the disgusting. Proto-fascist writer Otto Weininger famously argued that Jews were really women: both groups share the properties of hyper-physicality and hyper-sexuality from which the clean German male must distance himself. (Weininger recommended that women give up sex so that they might transcend this destiny.)<sup>47</sup>

Thus the stigmatization of minorities described by Mosse is not merely a handy device to cement national unity. It goes deeper than that, because it is a strategy through which human beings attempt to cope with the shame of being helpless, as all human beings in some way are. Thus it is likely to turn up ubiquitously in human life. It can be confined, given fortunate developmental and social circumstances. But when a group has reason to think that it has been humiliated for centuries on account of the feminine or needy parts of itself, shame is likely to take a particularly aggressive form – as with German shame after World War I in Theweleit's analysis. In the wake of World War I's colossal wound to German maleness we see a virtual obsession with the idea of male bodily purity against a contaminating tide of femaleness -- with impossible

fantasies of men made out of metal, uncontaminated by any fluids or blood or stickiness or stench.

Projecting disgust and shamefulness onto another group subordinates the group. As Mosse stressed, it says, "This group is not respectable like us." The group to whom disgust properties, and shamefulness, are ascribed exemplifies animality and thereby (in the eyes of the dominant group) lowness in contrast to the allegedly pure dominant ones. But because the subordination is inspired at root by anxiety and denial, it is not a peaceable subordination. Disgust minorities are not treated like nice household pets. Instead, the rage that people feel against their own helplessness and animality is often enacted toward them, whether by humiliation or, in addition, by physical violence. At its extreme point the anxiety issues in projects of ethnic cleansing: if only we could completely rid ourselves of this group, the thinking goes, we would be free of our own death.

In virtually all cultures, we said, women are among the groups to whom disgust properties are imputed and whose bodily nature is portrayed as shameful. But there is a subtle difference between disgust toward Jews, say, and disgust toward women, for women are, to dominant males, sexually alluring as well as disgusting, and one of the alluring things about them is the fact that they exemplify the forbidden terrain of the hyperphysical, which is the disgusting. Men are revolted by the idea of their semen inside a woman's vagina, and they think it quite shameful to be occupied in putting it there, and yet they can't keep from wanting to put it there.<sup>48</sup>

In a brilliant analysis of Tolstoy's The Kreutzer Sonata,<sup>49</sup> feminist thinker Andrea Dworkin argues that this fact about disgust toward women—that men can't keep from wanting them and then feeling sullied and disgusted by them—undergirds sexual violence. For the very understanding of dominant masculinity that makes all reminders of animality disgusting is deeply threatened by sexual desire for women. The man sees, in his desire, that he is not who he pretends to be: he is an animal wanting to exercise animal functions. This deep wound to his ego can only be salved by destroying the cause of his desire. Thus Tolstoy's narrator has murdered

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<sup>47</sup> Otto Weininger, Sex and Character (English Edition 1906).

<sup>48</sup> See also William Ian Miller, The Anatomy of Disgust (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); I contest most of Miller's normative conclusions but admire his analysis.

<sup>49</sup> In Intercourse (New York: The Free Press, 1983).



his wife. Only after she is dead, he tells us, can he see her as a human being—because then he no longer desires her. Similarly, according to Dworkin, Tolstoy himself records in his diary violent repulsion and antagonism toward the young wife who tempts him out of his purity. Dworkin suggests that male desire is often, if not always, mingled in this way with the desire to violate and destroy.

## **V. Purity and Violation**

Beneath our culturally specific scenario of direct and indirect shame, then, there lies a general human longing – to escape from a reality that is found to be too dirty, too mortal, too decaying. For a group powerful enough to subordinate another group, escape may possibly be found (in fantasy) through stigmatization of, and aggression against, the group that exemplifies the properties the dominant group finds shameful and revolting in itself. When this dynamic is enacted toward women, who are at the same time alluring, the combination of desire and revulsion/shame may cause a particularly unstable relationship to develop, with violence always waiting in the wings. In the cultural and historical circumstances of Gujarati Hindu males – to some extent real, to some extent fantasized – conditions are created to heighten anxiety and remove barriers to its expression. At the same time, conditions that would have militated against these tendencies – a public critical culture, a robust development of the sympathetic imagination – were particularly absent in Gujarati schools and civil society. This specific cultural scenario I have outlined explains why we might expect the members of the Hindu right, and the men to whom they make their political appeal, to exhibit an unusual degree of disgust anxiety, as manifested in a fearful, even paranoid insistence on representing the Hindu male as pure and free from lust (while being, at the same time, successfully aggressive). The child Ganesha throws off his childish pot-bellied delight in sweets and becomes a potent warrior, with rippling muscles and a sword in the air.

Against whom will all this shame and revulsion be enacted? Against an “other” who conveniently represents the ungovernable humanity from which both shame and revulsion drive the subject who has so long been humiliated. The body of the woman, always a convenient vehicle for such displacement, becomes all the more alluring as a target when it is the body of the

discredited and feared “other,” the hyperfertile and hyperbodily Muslim woman.

Sexuality and its vulnerabilities are difficult enough for any human being to deal with at any time. All cultures probably contain seeds of violence in connection with sexuality. But a person who has been taught to have a big stake in being above the sexual domain, whose political ideology insists on purity, and whose experience of cultural anxiety connects impurity with humiliation, cannot bear to be dragged into that domain. And yet, of course, the very denial and repression of the sexual create a mounting tension within. Tolstoy's diaries describe how the tension mounts inside him until he has to use his wife, and then he despises her, despises himself, and wants to use force against her to stop the cycle from continuing.

The hate literature circulated in Gujarat portrays Muslim women as hypersexual, enjoying the penises of many men. That is not unusual; Muslim women have often been portrayed in this denigrating way. But it also introduces a new element: the desire that is imputed to them to be penetrated by an uncircumcised penis. Thus the Hindu male creates a pornographic fantasy with himself as its specific subject. In one way, these images show anxiety about virility, assuaging it by imagining the successful conquest of Muslim women. But of course, like Tolstoy's narrator's fantasies, these fantasies are not exclusively about intercourse. The idea of this intercourse is inseparable from ideas of mutilation and violence. Fucking a Muslim woman just means killing her. The fantasy image of the untying of the penises that were “tied until now” is very reminiscent of the explosion of violence in Tolstoy, only the logic has been carried one small step further: instead of murder necessitated by and following sex, the murder just is the sex. Women are killed by having large metal objects inserted into their vaginas.

In this way, the image is constructed of a sexuality that is so effective, so closely allied with the desire for domination and purity, that its penis is a pure metal weapon, not a sticky thing of flesh and blood. The Hindu male does not even need to dirty his penis with the contaminating fluids of the Muslim woman. He can fuck her with the clean non-porous metal weapon that kills her, while he himself remains pure. Sexuality itself carries out the project of annihilating the sexual. Nothing is left to inspire fear.

A useful comparison to this terrifying logic is the depiction of warlike masculinity in a 1922 novel of Ernst Jünger, Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis (Battle as Inner Experience):

These are the figures of steel whose eagle eyes dart between whirling propellers to pierce the cloud; who dare the hellish crossing through fields of roaring craters, gripped in the chaos of tank engines . . . men relentlessly saturated with the spirit of battle, men whose urgent wanting discharges itself in a single concentrated and determined release of energy.

As I watch them noiselessly slicing alleyways into barbed wire, digging steps to storm outward, synchronizing luminous watches, finding the North by the stars, the recognition flashes: this is the new man. The pioneers of storm, the elect of central Europe. A whole new race, intelligent, strong, men of will...supple predators straining with energy. They will be architects building on the ruined foundations of the world.<sup>50</sup>

In this fascinating passage, Jünger combines images of machinery with images of animal life to express the thought that the new man must be in some sense both powerful beast and god, both predatory and invulnerable. The one thing he must never be is human. His masculinity is characterized not by need and receptivity, but by a "concentrated and determined release of energy." He knows no fear, no sadness. Why must the new man have these properties? Because the world's foundations have been ruined. Jünger suggests that the only choices for males living amid death and destruction are either to yield to an immense and ineluctable sadness or to throw off the humanity that inconveniently inflicts pain. Disgust for both Jews and women become for such men a way of asserting their own difference from mere mortal beings.

I believe that something like this paranoia, this refusal of compromised humanity, infects the rhetoric of the Hindu right, and, indeed, may help to explain its continuing fascination with Nazi ideas. Jünger's novel does not connect the "release of energy" directly to misogynistic torture and murder, but, as Theweleit shows, other documents of the period amply do so.<sup>51</sup> As in Jünger, so too in Gujarat: what seems to be denied is human vulnerability itself, the smell, the fluids, the stench of the body. The woman functions as a symbol of the site of weakness and vulnerability inside any male, who can be drawn into his own mortality through desire. The Muslim woman functions doubly as such a symbol. In this way, a fantasy is created that her annihilation will lead to safety and invulnerability -- perhaps to "India Shining," the Jünger-like campaign slogan that betrays a desire for a crystalline sort of domination. The paranoid anxiety that keeps telling every man that he is not safe and invulnerable feeds the desire to extinguish her.

Only this complex logic explains, I believe, why torture and mutilation are preferred as

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<sup>50</sup> See discussion in Theweleit (English edition), vol. 2, 160-62.

<sup>51</sup> Although we do not hear a great deal about Nazi rapes of Jewish women, there is a great deal of evidence

alternatives to abduction and impregnation—or even simple homicide. Only this logic explains why the fantasy of penetrating the sexual body with a large metal object played such a prominent role in the carnage. Only this explains, as well, the repetitious destruction of the woman's body by fire, as though the world cannot be clean until all vestiges of the female body are simply obliterated from its face.

Why this terrible and murderous vulnerability? In Germany it was easy to connect such fantasies to the devastation of World War I, the loss of a whole generation of males, and a humiliating military defeat. In the case of the Hindu right, no single catastrophe provides an easy explanation. We must turn, instead, to the long, cumulative catastrophe (in part real, in part constructed in fantasy) of being subjugated for many centuries, first by the Muslims, then by the British, now once again, perhaps, by the rich developed nations of the world, but always, still, by those rapacious Muslims and their dirty hyperfertile women. Murder brings peace, an India that is “shining” because all traces of weakness and dirt have been wiped from its body.

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of rape, forced prostitution, and the forced exchange of sex for survival. Many relevant documents are excavated in Catharine MacKinnon, an article forthcoming in a collection edited by Melissa Williams.

