

The Contexts of Religion & Violence

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Writing Terror

The Representations and Interpretations of Terrorism in Eduardo Galeano, Cormac McCarthy, and William Vollmann

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Introduction

[1] *The New York Times* marked the fourth anniversary of the terror attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. by including two very interesting review essays in its Sunday Book Review. Tom Reiss noted in his essay “The True Classic of Terrorism” that Joseph Conrad’s 1907 novel *The Secret Agent* has achieved a kind of cult status for the post-9/11 age. Conrad’s master villain, the Professor, an altogether common figure although not always evil in the literature of the late nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth, who never goes out without a vial of high explosives and a detonator, is as Reiss writes, “a prescient portrait of the terrorists who menace our own world.” Conrad wrote during the first great terrorist wave of the modern world in which hundreds were killed between 1881 and 1901 and among them two American presidents (Garfield and McKinley), one French president (Carnot), a Spanish prime minister (Canovas), an Austrian empress (Elizabeth), and an Italian king (Umberto I), and Parisian anarchists hurled their bombs on the floor of Bourse and into crowded theaters and cafes. Of course, terrorist violence was even more extensive in Russia during the same period. Reiss points to some striking parallels between that time and our own – the Russian terrorists came out of the 1860s, and much like the radicals of

the second wave of terrorism in our time who came out of the 1960s, let their hair grow, followed gurus of one kind or another who promised a “new man,” and lived in communes.

[2] Conrad could not overlook terrorism. When he was five, his father, a poet and playwright, had been arrested for joining a group associated with Bakunin. The young Conrad was deported along with his parents to northern Russia where his mother died of tuberculosis and his father died four years later. Terror and violence were part of his own biography, and Reiss notes that Conrad’s earlier novel, *Under Western Eyes*, along with *The Secret Agent*, provide accounts of why young people throw away promising careers and family ties to become terrorists, a situation which is not altogether different from the terror of the present. But Reiss is most interested in drawing out other parallels – in Conrad’s time and novels terror comes from the Russian “East” in much the same way that our terror comes from the Middle “East.” The “West,” as Conrad elegantly fashions in *Under Western Eyes*, could not understand the terror of the East. He concludes that Conrad allows us to see “our terrorist problem through the mirror of a distinctively ‘multicultural’ man, an author who felt the hypocrisy and injustice of ‘the West’ even while he felt the burden of protecting it – all the more passionately because he had chosen it.” But as the sister of the assassin Haldin tells the narrator of *Under Western Eyes*, “Don’t expect to understand him quite . . . He is not at all – at all – Western at bottom.”

[3] Benjamin Kunkel’s contribution “Dangerous Characters” is more provocative. He draws a parallel between the art of the writer and the terrorist’s violence in that both want to change the world, and change it quickly, despite the measured time required to write a novel. He too makes reference to the importance of Conrad’s *Secret Agent* and notes that the terror novels of the present are really products of the pre-9/11 world due to the time lags between writing and publishing. He writes, “In the fantasy-nightmare of the terrorist novel, the terrorist was the public symbol maker the novelist wished and failed to be. He and often she did the highly novelistic work of bringing to light hidden and marginal subject matter, forcing us to contemplate tangled questions of motivation and causing the private and the public to collide. Terrorists might be a novelist’s rivals, as Don DeLillo’s novelist character maintains in ‘Mao II’ (1991), but they were also his proxies. No matter how realistic, the terrorist novel was also a kind of metafiction, or fiction” about terror before 9/11. And so, there is not much use “in combing recent fiction for clues to the psychology of the young men behind the attacks on New York, Madrid, and London.” Yukio Mishima’s 1973 novel *Runaway Horses* may have more to say by implication about al-Qaeda than any novel yet written by an American. In *Runaway Horses* the reader encounters young assassins “fanatically concerned with religious purity and choked with hatred for the Western modernity grafted onto their old Japanese culture . . .” (Kunkel). The reader, as Kunkel underscores, can only comparatively tally this world with what we know in the post-9/11 world of terror. Still today in America, the terrorist novel “has dealt mostly with imaginary political sects or with the gun-happy dregs of the domestic New Left, who for all their snarling communiqués killed only a handful of people, and that 20 or 30 years ago.” There is a parasitic relation of fictional terrorism, especially when it articulates historical careers. “The terrorist novel feeds off the glow of the violence it condemns – and in effect turns actual terrorists into advance publicists for your book.”

[4] Yet, despite their very different interpretations on terror writing, Reiss and Kunkel agree that the role of the artist, the writer, is an important factor in understanding terror. In this paper, I will explore how the contemporary novelist casts some important light upon the phenomenon of terror. I am not entirely convinced that the attacks of 9/11 mark such a dramatic break in artistic representation as offered by Kunkel. One index of difference, in Kunkel's reflection, is the magnitude of lethality – the victims of 9/11 and attacks afterward are in the thousands, while earlier terrorism counted its victims by tens or at most hundreds. I want to argue here that there is something of tremendous importance in the artist's ability to envision the world of terror, perhaps beyond specific time frames or moments where things have changed dramatically as in the case of 9/11. Take for example Gillo Pontecorvo's film "The Battle of Algiers" (1966), where the director and his fellow writer, Franco Solinas, captured the struggle for Algerian independence through the lives of Ali La Pointe and Saadi Yacef. But the director and writer also understood far better than others looking back at the events from 1954 through 1957 the power of terror. Not only did they capture the shootings of police, random drive-by shootings, and the torture used by the *paras*, but also the near suicide attacks that are portrayed as the three women plant their bombs in the bars and airline office. There is something deeply prophetic in Pontecorvo's representation of Zohra Drif-Bitat's carrying the bomb in her child's baby carriage. Certainly, Pontecorvo and Solinas had the support and cooperation of Saadi Yacef, who was head the Front de Libération Nationale in the casbah during the battle of Algiers. He was arrested in 1957 and imprisoned in France where he was sentenced to death three times. He escaped execution and was granted amnesty at the end of the war. He presented the original idea for the film to Pontecorvo and played himself under the name El-hadi Jaffar. But perhaps even more importantly, Pontecorvo and Solinas understood the immense power of Islam to mobilize against the colonial French. Of course, that power of Islam only emerged with the Iranian revolution in 1978 and 1979. The standard histories of the war, like Alistair Horne's *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*, have minimized the role of Islam in the conflict.

[5] The artist, and in our case here, the writer, has a role to play in making understandable that which seems irrational. The question repeated endlessly after 9/11 is how could religious people carry out these acts of terror. The answer to that question is neither in President Bush's understanding that the terrorists have "hijacked" religion or from the members of religious traditions that argue that religion is only about "peace." Conrad understood far better than we the immensity of the writer's imagination. In his introductory note to *The Secret Agent*, Conrad states that he had based his story on the attempt to blow up the Greenwich Observatory, which appeared to be "a blood-stained inanity of so fatuous a kind that it was impossible to fathom its origins by any reasonable or even unreasonable process of thought. For perverse unreason has its own logical processes. But that outrage could not be laid hold of mentally in any sort of way, so that one remained faced by the fact of a man blown to bits for nothing even most remotely an idea, anarchistic or other" (1924: x). Conrad's point here is that what appears an act without any reason to it has its own logic and that logic, as witnessed by his own effort to make sense of the act in a compelling narrative, can only be unpacked and made intelligible by the act of imagination.

[6] Here, in this paper I would like to explore three texts from Eduardo Galeano, Cormac McCarthy, and William T. Vollmann. All three writers have produced significant bodies of

work, vastly different, but all having a common theme – the imagined inscription of violence and terror in history.

First Text: Eduardo Galeano

1682 Remedios – He trembles, twists, howls, dribbles. He makes the stone of the church vibrate. All around streams the red earth of Cuba.

“Satan, dog! Drunken Dog! Talk or I’ll piss on you!” threatens the inquisitor José González de la Cruz, parish priest of Remedios, as he knocks down and kicks the black woman Leonarda before the main altar. Bartolomé del Castillo, notary public, waits without breathing. He clutches a thick bundle of papers in one hand, and with the other he waves a bird’s quill in the air.

The Devil romps contentedly in the charming body of black Leonarda.

The inquisitor swings the slave around with a blow and she falls on her face, eats the dust, band bounces. She raises herself up, and turns, blazing and bleeding, handsome, on the checkerboard tiles.

“Satan! Lucifer! Nigger! Start talking, stinking shit!”

From Leonarda’s mouth come flames and froth. Also noises that no one understands except Father José, who translates and dictates to the notary:

“She says she is Lucifer! She says there are eight hundred thousand devils in Remedios!”

More noises come from the black woman.

“What else? What else, dog?” demands the priest and lifts Leonarda by the hair.

“Talk, you shit!” He does not insult her mother because the Devil has none.

Before the slave faints, the priest shouts and the notary writes:

“She says Remedios will collapse! She is confessing everything! I have him by the neck! She says the earth will swallow us up!”

And he howls: “A mouth of hell! She says Remedios is a mouth of hell!”

Everyone cries out. All the residents of Remedios jump about, screaming and shouting. More than one falls in a faint.

The priest, bathed in sweat, his skin transparent, and his lips trembling, loosens his grip on Leonarda’s neck. The black woman collapses.

No one fans her (Galeano: 262-63).

[7] This text is taken from the first volume of Eduardo Galeano’s trilogy *Memoria del fuego*. Galeano is an Uruguayan journalist and newspaper editor who spent more than a decade in exile during the 1970s and 80s because of his protests of the military regime in Uruguay. The trilogy spans the history of the Americas from the primordial traditions of tribal peoples to 1984. The scope of this novel immediately reminds the reader of Pablo Neruda’s *Canto*

General. The novel moves chronologically from the pre-Columbian tribal and urban traditions to the twentieth century, and Galeano has re-written historical sources, ethnographic reports, and newspaper reports, transforming them into yearly accounts that form an interlocking narrative of the civilizations and cultures of the Americas. Many of these accounts are about violent confrontations and encounters, and here he has re-written this narrative from an exorcism and forced confession of a black slave woman that is found in Fernando Ortiz's *Historia de una pelea cubana contra los demonios* [*A History of a Cuban Fight against the Demons*].

[8] Galeano has imagined how the inquisitor and priest, José González de la Cruz, tortures the Black slave woman to extract her confession. His brutal treatment of her enables him to read her sufferings as an indication that the Satan is using her body, or better that she has become the Satan. He refuses to use her name and screams at her, "Talk, you shit!" He reads and interprets her suffering and pain as a curse against the people of Remedios who will be attacked by an army of demons and that the city is the very mouth of Hell. In the next two passages he describes the collective panic that sets in among the city's population. There are 800,000 demons in the city; 1,305 per inhabitant. He describes the devils: "The devils are lame, ever since the Fall that all the world knows about. They have goats' beards and horns, bats' wings, rats' tails, and black skin. Circulating in Leonarda's body is more enjoyable to them because they are black." And Father José tells her, "If God wants to cleanse you . . . He will whiten your skin" (263). But nothing can stop the panic, which becomes violent, and Father José finally must exit the city along with Remedios' people, slaves, horses, and all they can carry or put into wagons to drag along with them.

Second Text: Cormac McCarthy

What is true of one man, said the judge, is true of many. The people who once lived here are called the Anasazi. The old ones. They quit these parts, routed by drought or disease or by wandering bands of marauders, quit these parts ages since and of them there is no memory. They are rumors and ghosts in this land and they are much revered. The tools, the art, the building – these things stand in judgment on the latter races. Yet there is nothing for them to grapple with. The old ones are gone like phantoms and the savages wander these canyons to the sound of ancient laughter. In their crude huts they crouch in darkness and listen to the fear seeping out of the rock. All progressions from a higher to a lower order are marked by ruins and mystery and a residue of nameless rage. So. Here are the dead fathers. Their spirit is entombed in the stone. It lies upon the land with the same weight and the same ubiquity. For whoever makes a shelter of reeds and hides has joined his spirit to the common destiny of creatures and he will subside back into the primal mud with scarcely a cry. But who builds in stone seeks to alter the structure of the universe and so it was with these masons however primitive their works may seem to us.

None spoke. The judge sat half naked and sweating for all the night was cool. At length the ex-priest Tobin looked up.

It strikes me, he said, that either son is equal in the way of disadvantage. So what is the way of raising a child?

At a young age, said the judge, they should be put in a pit with wild dogs. They should be set to puzzle out from their proper clues the one of three doors that does not harbor wild lions. They should be made to run naked in the desert until . . .

Hold now, said Tobin. The question was put in all earnestness.

And the answer, said the judge. If God meant to interfere in the degeneracy of mankind would he not have done so by now? Wolves cull themselves, man. What other creature could? And is the race of man not more predacious yet? The way of the world is to bloom and to flower and die but in the affairs of men there is no waning and the noon of his expression signals the onset of night. His spirit is exhausted at the peak of its games? Let him play for stakes. This you see here, these ruins wondered at by *tribes* of savages, do you not think this will be again? Aye. And again. With other people, with other sons.

The judge looked about him. He was sat before the fire naked save for his breeches and his hands rested palm down upon his knees. His eyes were empty slots. None among the company harbored any notion as to what this attitude implied, yet so like an icon was he in his sitting that they grew cautious and spoke with circumspection among themselves as if they would not waken something that had better been left sleeping (McCarthy: 142-43).

[9] Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* has generated considerable discussion with commentators describing it as a post-modern novel, an example of American naturalism in the tradition of writers like Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, Frank Norris, Upton Sinclair, John Steinbeck, Saul Bellow, and Norman Mailer, a metaphysical western, a southwestern novel, a Gnostic tragedy, and an American epic comparable in its scope to Melville's *Moby Dick*. The novel details the exploits of a small army of scalp hunters as they murder, pillage, rape, and desecrate throughout the borderlands of the Southwest in the 1840s. Edwin T. Arnold and Dianne C. Luce describe the novel in this fashion: "Blood Meridian makes it clear that all along [i.e., in reference to the theme of violence in McCarthy's earlier novels that had been viewed as exercises in style or studies of evil] Mr. McCarthy has asked us to witness evil not in order to understand it but to affirm its inexplicable reality; his elaborate language invents a world hinged between the real and surreal, jolting us out of complacency" (7-8). Their idea of the witness is important; McCarthy has made violence elegant with his writing, making us, the readers, even more uncomfortable and challenged by it. Consider this description of a bloody massacre carried out by Comanches of an entire Mexican town's population as they huddled in a church:

The murdered lay in a great pool of their communal blood. It had set up into a sort of pudding crossed everywhere with the tracks of wolves or dogs and along the edges it had dried and cracked into a burgundy ceramic. Blood lay in dark tongues on the floor and blood grouted the flagstones and ran in the

vestibule where the stones were cupped from the feet of the faithful and their fathers before them and it had threaded its way down the steps and dripped from the stones among the dark red tracks of the scavengers (60).

Of course, the novel challenges the discursive construction of the “West” and “the Frontier” in American thought, literature, and film. Sam Peckinpah’s violence cannot hold a candle to the excruciating violence that unfolds in this narrative, which might be thought of as an extended example of Richard Slotkin’s “regeneration through violence” on the frontier.

[10] *Blood Meridian* subverts and de-stabilizes the western, especially when we remember that it was published the same year as Larry McMurtry’s romantic and nostalgic *Lonesome Dove*. Certainly also, there are deep affinities between “the kid,” the young runaway who falls in with the gang and through whose eyes we see much of the violence, and Marlow who narrates Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Both are studies of violence, terror, and evil. Just as Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* has been repeatedly and rightfully understood as an important critique of the brutality of colonialism at the end of the nineteenth century, *Blood Meridian* should be understood as a critique of violence and terror at the end of the twentieth century. Much like Conrad, McCarthy’s novel is set in an international or even global world – even though the novel is set in the nineteenth century, it is about a global world. McCarthy reverses the spatial movement of the traditional western genre. The gang of American killers goes south, across the border into Mexico. This is uncharted territory in the American psyche and in the Western, and there in the borderland there is terror and violence. This global subversion of space is fully realized in McCarthy’s Borderland trilogy (*All the Pretty Horses*, *The Crossing*, and *Cities of the Plain*) where his characters repeatedly cross into Mexico, cross the border, and live in and on the border where they find only terror.

[11] There is another point at which Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian* would seem to touch. Conrad’s Kurtz and McCarthy’s Captain John Glanton and his alter-ego, Judge Holden, are almost identical characterizations of evil. Kurtz is the murderous slaver and head-collector. Glanton is the murderous scalper, and both are intellectuals. Kurtz becomes the perfect representative of what Conrad calls the white man’s “noble cause” of bringing civilization to the Congo while at the same time carrying out their destruction of the continent. Conrad describes Kurtz as “an emissary of . . . science and progress.” He is a painter, a poet and journalist, and the author of a seventeen-page report for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, a report “vibrating with eloquence . . . a beautiful piece of writing.” Of course, at the end of this report, filled with European sentimentality justifying the destruction, Kurtz scrawls in a shaky hand: “Exterminate all the brutes!” And both Glanton and the Judge are intellectuals, collectors of the flora and fauna of the borderlands. Here, the Judge tells the members of the gang a story, a theological story that begins pages earlier with a traveler who is murdered by an old man. The traveler had a son and later the old man confesses to the young man that he had killed his father. Here, I think that McCarthy is conflating the biblical narratives of Ishmael and Esau, and in McCarthy there is the homecoming of both to no father and no patrimony. The Judge seems to be that son, years later, who now, fatherless and in the borderland uses the material remains of the Anasazi. I am tempted to draw a parallel between how the Judge uses these material remains to justify the predacious capacities of men and how the Qur’an uses the material remains that the Prophet Muhammad observed in his mercantile travels to

justify that the Qur'an is the last revelation that God will give to humans. The remains of previous cultures and civilizations becomes a material proof that failure to follow the will of God will end with complete destruction. Here, the Judge uses them to justify the violence that is hard-wired into the human.

[12] Space matters to McCarthy and it matters to the violence he orchestrates in his novel. Earlier, as the Kid is recruited to the gang, Captain White tells him about his view of Mexico and that they are essentially mercenaries coming to the aid of the Mexicans. "What we are dealing with, he said, is a race of degenerates. A mongrel race, little better than niggers. And maybe no better. There is no government in Mexico. Hell, there's no God in Mexico. Never will be. We are dealing with a people manifestly incapable of governing themselves. And do you know what happens with people who cannot govern themselves? That's right. Others come in to govern for them" (34). American intervention is required and called for by "Enlightened Mexicans." The mercenaries must act. "Unless Americans act, people like you and me who take their country seriously while those mollicoddles in Washington sit on their hindsides, unless we act, Mexico – and I mean the whole of the country – will one day fly a European flag. Monroe Doctrine or no." While Captain White gives the gang a clear political *raison d'être*, McCarthy begins to build the symbolism of the borderlands as empty of real people, and more importantly empty of the divine. The borderland is a place where anything can happen and does happen. There is more than, I think, a studied mediation on the chaos of the wilderness here in our text and in the novel.

Third Text: William Vollmann

"I was a student." (He would have been about thirteen.) "But I began to be worried about the situation here. Three years ago I decided to be involved in politics." (This would have been during the height of the massacres.) "I'm very worried about people. It's my responsibility to provide the peace."

"So how did Convivir come to be formed?"

"There was a conference every in Urabá. The paras permitted us to have our own organization. It was very easy."

"That was nice of them," I said, more convinced than ever that he must be a para. It stood to reason that if my hotelkeeper didn't dare even introduce me to the paras for fear of decapitation, then how could Convivir operate freely and confidently with the blessings of Papa [Senor Carlos Castano, the commander-in-chief of the Columbian military forces], unless they too were Papa's children? How confident and powerful they were I didn't know until the next day, when Juan conducted us to their headquarters on the other side of Apartadó, past more banana plantations. Now we had arrived at a massive *hervito* [a regular soldier] base with watchtowers, tents and a training green. We turned left onto a dirt road which hugged the base's outermost wall, and after a *hervito* in a booth raised the bamboo barrier for us, we continued on to a concrete complex upon a rise where the members of Convivir were gathered, everybody clean-cut and strict. That day they all refused to be photographed – for fear of the guerrillas, they said. But on that first day

when Juan smiled and liked me, I was able to take some portraits of his colleagues sauntering together down the street, some with radios, the rest with somewhat hard-bitten expressions. I asked the spectators whether they wanted to be in the pictures, too, and they all shook their heads, because you never know who is who, or maybe they knew all too well.

“We had one chance to participate for our own protection, according to the constitution,” Juan was saying. “Convivir joined itself to the military forces, the police and the government according to the law. At the beginning, everyone thought that Convivir was paras. But no – we were just trying to carry out peace in the zone.”

“And what happened next?”

“Then the constitution changed, and so Convivir was abolished and the new services started.”

“I see. So what are they called now?”

“*Servicios Especiales y Comunitarios de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada*. We’re just vigilant citizens. We have a thousand members in Urabá, men and women together. This organization is the biggest of its kind in the world.”

“So you are like private police?”

“No. Our mission is *information*. For example, in each neighborhood there are some radios. The informers say some criminals or subversives try to come here. Then they call the police.”

“When the police come, they help to catch the bad people?”

“*Claro*. Of course.”

“So you do nothing but advise the police?”

“If it is necessary to use physical force, we do it. But we treat them as normal criminals.”

Listen to all of this, I was bored and sickened.

“How many hours a day do you patrol the streets?”

“The enemy never sleeps” (Vollman 2003: 6.414-15).

[13] William T. Vollmann is in the process of completing a multi-part novel titled *Seven Dreams: A Book of North American Landscapes*. If Galeano begins in the south and interlocks it to the North, Vollmann begins in Scandinavia and follows violent encounters across the North Atlantic to Iceland, Greenland, New Foundland, Labrador, and across the expanse of Canada. He describes his intention in writing this “history” in volume six, *The Rifles*, in this way: “It may be of interest to the reader to know what use I have made of my sources. My aim in *Seven Dreams* has been to create a ‘Symbolic History’ – that is to say, an account of origins and metamorphoses which is often untrue based on the literal facts as we know them, but whose untruths further a deeper sense of truth . . . In this Dream, as with the

others, I have mixed my colors not only from the palate of times, but also from the palate of places” (1994: 377). Vollmann echoes Tim O’Brien’s famous statement about the experience of war and stories about war: “A thing may happen and be a total lie; another thing may not happen and be truer than truth” (89).

[14] This text comes from his *Rising Up and Rising Down*, a seven-volume study of the multiple forms of violence in history and in the contemporary world that moves toward a final volume in which he provides what he calls “a moral calculus.” He writes in the first volume:

No credo will eliminate murder. But if we think about a sufficient number of cases we may be able to plant seeds of a tentative ethics which others could consider, pick and choose from and hopefully even benefit from even if they cannot improve. That is my hope for this book. I know that other people’s advice has rarely made me better than I was. When it has, it was less often the advice itself than the spirit in which it was given which helped me, requiring me out of sheer respectful reciprocity to listen, search and consider, like Saint Ignatius being guided by an old woman to seek his own God as if he were a hunter employing all craft in a dark and wild forest. As it is, I wish that I were a more worthy person to embark upon this project called *Rising Up and Rising Down*. I am not a theoretician. Nor have I seen enough, suffered enough or thought enough about violence. I have never been tortured; I haven’t lived in the mouth of violence; I’ve only paid a few visits. In a hopeful rather than confident spirit I close my research, and offer this book to you. My own life is also of value to me (this is an explanation, not an excuse), and I do not really want to see or suffer or think about violence any more than I have to – not that I can get away from it, either. In other words, the suffering of others shames me and awes me, but does not invite my emulation. This essay will therefore be more broad than deep (2003: 1.38-39).

[15] While there is much humility in Vollmann’s introductory statement about this work, its content suggests that he has gone places few would dare to visit and he has spoken to people who are so violent that few outsiders have found them. Indeed, this short text comes from interviews he conducted in Columbia in 2000. Here, he interviews a member of a paramilitary group called Convivar. There is much here that only the novelist could appreciate and understand. The “paras” are the children of Columbia’s military leader and their relationship to him as “his sons” is suggestive that terror and politics are symbolized by the structure of the normal family. “Convivir” or “Living Together” and *Servicios Especiales* are powerful euphemisms for the terror and violence Juan suggests; their gathering of information, they gather for the police. Here, Vollmann captures how the paras always knew where their victims would be. They became the *desparicados* as a result of the information collected by Juan and his colleagues. Finally, their enemies never rest, they never sleep.

Terror, the Novel, and Religion

[16] We have many collections of the documents of terrorists that provide access to their worldviews. Some like Walter Laquer’s collection have been undergoing a continual process of revision and expansion since the 1980s. Others, like Barry Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin’s

collection and the work of Richard Bonney have provided extensive documents from contemporary groups. Despite the growing body of literature of terrorists, there are several prejudices that seem to mitigate integrating these materials into our understandings of violence. Indeed, the problem of understanding these individuals and groups has become an even more pressing need, as is clear to all of us in the wake of 9/11. There is a materialist prejudice that suggests that economic development will staunch the terrorism. Of course, this prejudice has to argue that ultimately the worlds of terrorism will disappear when people do better economically. There is a strategic prejudice that argues that the only response to terrorism is a military response. The documents and the worldviews of terrorists are unimportant to planning to destroy them before they can carry out their attacks. But neither of these prejudices will work in the end. The worldviews of terrorists are ultimate worlds and it is shortsighted to believe that those committed to these ultimate worlds will be or can be co-opted by material gain. The military response is insufficient, and I believe, a major factor in producing new generations of terror. The worldviews of terrorists are important, better vital, in developing strategies that neutralize them.

[17] And here is where the novelist, a Conrad, a Galeano, a McCarthy, or a Vollmann, is essential. Consider Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*, which appears to be a novel about a murderer. But it is vastly more important. This is a narrative that lays out the psychological processes that transform alienated youth into the ranks of the violent men of the Protestant Ulster Volunteer Force or the IRA in Northern Ireland. Francie, "the Butcher Boy," is McCabe's imagined character and McCabe fictively creates a world that is very real. One of the most powerful men in the Protestant neighborhoods that run along Shankill Road in Belfast is Johnny "Mad Dog" Adair, powerful even from his jail cell where he is serving three consecutive life sentences for murdering three Catholics. He bragged at his trial that he had killed many more Catholics. He began his career much like "the Butcher Boy" and graduated from random killings to be one of the UVF's legendary assassins. Killing and terror gave him charisma and he successfully converted that into the political control of neighborhoods. Nothing happens in Johnny's neighborhoods without his consent. Also, in "the Butcher Boy" and Johnny Adair we see the problem of why Protestant terror has been and is even more volatile than the violence of the IRA. It is supremely local and the charisma of terror cannot be converted easily into trans-local politics and leadership.

[18] But the novelist's fictive act is mirrored in terror and counter-terror. Michael Taussig in a series of books and essays has argued that there is a fictive quality of state-terrorism and counter-terrorism. The polity and its enemies are linked in a mimetic relationship. He concludes his *The Magic of the State* by writing "For the task of much of cultural anthropology, no less than of certain branches of historiography, has been, and will increasingly continue to be, the storing in modernity of what are taken to be pre-modern practices such as spirit possession and magic, thereby contributing for good or for bad, to the reservoir of authoritative, estranging, literalities on which so much of our contemporary language is based in its conjuring of the back-then and the over-there for contemporary purpose if not profane illumination" (194-95). This storing in modernity breaks the mimetic relationship that exists in lived experience, in situ, and which explains that exchange is the critical mystery of the state. Others have made the very same point and it is important to understand, and certainly Taussig does this throughout his work, that the mimetic is not just a literary or

discursive phenomenon. It has its ritual expressions in terror. Consider, for example, David Kertzer's interpretation of the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro, the leader of the Christian Democratic party in Italy, in 1978 by the Red Brigades. Kertzer writes that the kidnapping evolved into a complex ritual, complete with standardization, repetition, mass participation, and complex symbolism, including revolutionary icons, the very same ritual pattern deployed by the state. And in so doing, mimetically mirroring the State, the Red Brigades "transformed the kidnapping from a random, bloody, and pointless exercise into a meaningful political statement, thus establishing the organization as a regular actor on the Italian political scene" (136). If the State is the result of a theophany, terror draws its power from what Bruce Lincoln has called the "profanophany." He demonstrates this through the revolutionary exhumations of the bodies of priests and nuns in Barcelona during the early months of the Spanish Civil War. The revolutionary anarchists broke into churches, opened the crypts, and exposed the decomposed bodies of the priests and nuns, many of whom were venerated a little below saintly figures. The Church promised eternal life, but the anarchists demonstrate the fate of the clergy and holy orders were exactly the same as any woman or man. The anarchists put on the ecclesiastical robes of Cardinals, Bishops, and priests and enacted masses, showing that the bread and wine remained just what they were, nothing more than bread and wine. Franco's fascists painted the anarchists as inhuman beasts, which made them the deadliest of enemies among the Republicans. The sacred and the profane were linked in a mimetic exchange (103-27).

[19] One last observation may be appropriate. The fictive draws state terrorism and counter-terrorism into the web of meaning-making. Terror in the form of the State or its opponents is about symbols. One very important perspective that we in the study of religion have inherited from the Protestant theologian Paul Tillich, and it is as important today as it was in the 1950s or 1960s, is that religion is about "ultimate concern." The ultimate is articulated and registered through symbolic communication, symbolic behavior, through symbolic places, objects, and persons. In this context, religion is much more than historical religious traditions. Paul Tillich recognized that religion was thus about meaning and this connects it organically to terror. Perhaps this begins to explain why religious people turn to terror so easily. It is not just that religion provides justification for acts of ultimacy, acts of violence, but is essential to it. Religion is thus not hijacked by bad people to justify evil acts. Religion is the carrier of meaning, often meanings that are contradictory, but always about meaning.

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