Modernizing Purity:
Creating the Nation-State via Expelling the Other

Week 5 – Lecture 1
8 October 2004

But first: details about next assignment:
- Mary Douglas
- Sander Gilman
- Susan Sontag

REALITY: each one of us is a complex intersection of different, conflicting – and perhaps even incompatible – planes of “identity” that might one day come unraveled

RHETORIC: we create ourselves as “unified” entities/identities that are perfectly coherent and consistent with themselves

KEY QUESTION:
How do we create images of a “self” that is unified, pure and “safe” (i.e., not in “danger” of unraveling or becoming something “other”)?

NB: Yes, The notion is complex . . .

but you have already been studying this for five weeks!!!

(No don’t psyche yourself out!)
“Social Contract”: the foundation of society is not given “in nature” --- rather, we create society by mutual agreement.

c) “General Will”

1. In the act of making the social contract, “Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will.”
2. An individual’s “particular will” may be “contrary or dissimilar to the general will which he has as a citizen.”
3. So that “the social compact may not be an empty formula,” “whomever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body.”

Abbé Sièyes: What is the Third Estate?

1. Mathematical view of society as equidistant from center.
   --- “I imagine the law as being at the center of a large globe; we the citizens, without exception, occupy equal places.”
2. What should we do with “privileged orders” [nobility and clergy] who do not want to be stripped of privileges and become citizens like everyone else?
   --- “This is the equivalent of asking what place one wishes to assign to a malignant tumor that torments and undermines the strength of the body of a sick person; it must be neutralized.”
   --- NB analogy: ENCOMMUNICATION of dissenters.
3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation.

4. Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights.

5. Law can only prohibit such actions as are hurtful to society.

“Geography of disease”: self and other / alien / “foreign”

Fact: plague “invaded” from China – outside

Fantasy: Jews poisoned wells of Europe – from within… from the “marginal”…

“The Plague, SARS, and Gay Rights”
http://www.familyresearchinst.org/FRR_03_05.html

Delusional fantasy not a thing of the past…

Read Sontag first:

CANCER:

--- modern metaphor of dissolution of self
--- “invasion” from “outside” attacking within very center of “self”
--- fact: these are my own cells “out of [my] control”

(Older: tuberculosis; syphilis; leprosy)
Read Gilman second:
More theoretical (borrows heavily from Douglas)

“Self” is constructed by “distancing” the “Other”
---as long as they are far away from me -- sick / polluted / incoherent / foreign / alien – then “I” am “safe”
--- i.e., “I” am not in danger of “becoming” them [becoming something I am not]

Note attention to “madness”: it is the dissolution of myself that I most fear; unraveling of the unity; loss of control hence: madness as frightening “gargoyle”

cf. Alzheimer’s

Read Douglas last:
Cultural anthropologist

“Anthropological boundary markers” --- they mark identity between myself [“safe center”] and the dangerous “Other”

NB: Biblical Hebrew: “perversion” = “mixture”

Text:
Center and Margins

NB: Anthropological boundary markers:
same-sex / “wrong position” / inter-species

Text:
Center and Margins

NB: Anthropological boundary markers:
food / cannibalism [same-species eating] “barbarians” do not heat / cook food
“dirt” = “matter out of place” (e.g., broom on kitchen table)

NB: relative to a culture, i.e., an ordered system of “ideas and values”

“Culture” (from Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*)
A system or positive pattern in which ideas and values are tidily ordered.

Cf. Ancients: true / good / beautiful

“I” = safe
“Other” = safe
“Margins” / “borders” = dangerous

If the “Other” is truly “Other,” then I can’t become it. I’m safe.

HOWEVER: if the boundaries are ambiguous…
I might “catch” it [contagion]. I might become it. I am in danger.

Medieval: werewolves
Caroline Bynum: “become” a wolf (inter-species) or just “wear its pelt”? (Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde)

Modern: “passing” – for white; for straight; for Gentile; for rich (*Great Gatsby*)

Anthropological boundary markers: maintain social order/s

Douglas: “The boundaries of the body politic are inscribed on individual bodies.”
RECAP:

REALITY: each one of us is a complex intersection of different, conflicting – and perhaps even incompatible – planes of “identity” that might one day come unraveled

RHETORIC: we create ourselves as “unified” entities/identities that are perfectly coherent and consistent with themselves

KEY QUESTION: How do we create images of a “self” that is unified, pure and “safe” (i.e., not in “danger” of unraveling or becoming something “other”)?

Why Venice???

St. Mark’s Cathedral, Venice


AMBIGUOUS LOCATION / IDENTITIES / BORDERS
Imperial Mosque, Lahore, Pakistan.

Mosque of Süleyman I the Magnificent, Istanbul (former Constantinople/Byzantium)  
Built 1550-57

Santa Maria della Salute, Venice

Imperial [Moslem] Mosque, Pakistan / St. Mark's [Christian] Cathedral, Venice

Venice

Istanbul

West? East?
Ambiguous identities
“Italian Renaissance
Humanism”

<Muslim> East?
<Christian> West?

Is “Europe” “Christian”?
Are Istanbul and Athens “Eastern”?

NB: they are boundary regions: ambiguous identities

If even “the School of Athens”
-- Plato and Aristotle!! –
isn’t “Western,” then what is “the West” …? 

II. “Spain”:
Western? Christian?

al-Andalusia (“Spain”): ca. 720 - 1492
Islamic (“Moors”) kingdom + co-existing Christians and Jews

Beginnings of Islam….
Early 600s:
Muhammad the Prophet: proclaims a radical monotheism in the Arabian desert:

There is no god but God.

NB Menocal’s usage: not “Allah” — i.e., implying another “God” [polytheism]
We don’t say “YHWH” or “Deus” or “Dieu”

Quran = “recitation” of this revelation

Dies in 632 in Mecca

caliph = “successor” = problem of legitimacy

How close are you in blood marriage?
[contrast Xty: bishops --- how close to the apostles?]

711: Syrian Arabs invited in as mercenaries to help Visigothic king: they don’t leave!
720: Conquest complete.
Establish a Muslim kingdom loyal to Damascus [Syria]

Who are the Syrians / Arabs / Muslims?

KEY EVENT: 661
Caliph #4 = cousin Ali — assassinated

Umayyads come to power: ARABS

Move center of Islam out of isolated Arabian desert [Mecca/Medina] up into Damascus [Syria]

Build: Great Mosque of Damascus; Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem -- Isaac spared — whitewash / co-optation

Ideological point: Islam replaces Judaism as inheritor of Abraham’s monotheism

Late 600s: conquered Berbers embrace Islam (NB: Berbers are non-Arab Muslims)
711: Berbers led by Syrian Arabs cross Strait of Gibraltar: Becomes al-Andalus

al-Andalusia

• 720: Muslim conquest of Spain complete
• Cross Pyrenees into Gaul [France]

• 732: Charles Martel [grandfather of Charlemagne] turns them back at Poitier
• Muslims retreat back to Iberian Peninsula
750 --- Abassids massacre whole Umayyad family in Damascus [Syria]

Transfer of capital to Baghdad

750: One survivor! Abd al-Rahman; Arab father/Berber mother
755: He appears in the Maghrib, i.e., “Far West”
756: Defeats the Abbasid governor of Cordoba
929: Declaration that Abd al-Rahman III is true Defender of the Faith
    Cordoba in Spain --not Baghdad-- is true center of Islam

CORDOBA vs. BAGHDAD
Rival visions / versions of Islam:
1) “People of the Book” = dhimmis
   --- Quran says: all who share Abraham’s monotheism get special protection.
   --- Arab-Israeli conflict?
2) Multi-lingual/ religious/ culture
3) Assimilationists --- like Romans, borrow everything they can [cf. Zeus ---> Jupiter]

Toledo: Translation center
- Ancient texts [Plato/ Aristotle] introduced back into “West” via Islamic libraries
- Arabic--> Spanish-->Latin
- e.g., Pope Sylvester II: “Spanish,” fluent in Hebrew, Arabic, Greek and Latin
- This is where Aquinas [1200s] gets his Plato and Aristotle! Wise Muslim
  [Averroes/ Avicenna] and Jewish [Maimonides] commentators
Fundamentalists — e.g., Tunis — “fanatical Almoharids” — Berber tribesmen - - set up puritanical regime in Marrakesh [Morocco]
Factions destroy al-Andalus. Allows “Catholics” to “re-conquer” [reconquista]
Modeled on Garden of Eden “Flowing waters…”

Tigris and Euphrates

Alhambra [“Spain”] — Venice [“Italy”]
[Note Arabian / Islamic arches]

1492: Expulsion of the Jews
[Modern nation-states: one language, one religion]

- 1469: Marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon (eastern Spain) and Isabella of Castile (western Spain)
- 1478: Spanish Inquisition set up to deal with Jews and conversos
  - No appeal to Rome!
- 1492: Conquest of Granada
  - Christopher Columbus sails west
- 1492: Expulsion of the Sephardim (i.e., Iberian Jews)
- 1502/1526: “Moors” given choice between baptism and expulsion
- 1609/1614: Final expulsion of Moors
  - Shakespeare: “Othello” 1598-1604
1492: From “Iberian Peninsula” to “España”
Creation of “Spain” as modern nation-state

- Defeat of the Moors at Granada
- New Kingdom created by Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella
- Expulsion of the Jews [Sephardim]
- Columbus sent to “New World” by new monarchs
- Shift from Mediterranean to “Atlantic Triangle”

What does the invention of “Spain” have to say about “modernity”?

- Old story about “modern nation-state”:
  - progress; rationalization; centralization
  - tolerance

- New questions for “modernity”:
  - The suppression / oblivion of the “East”?
  - The eradication of co-existing cultures?
  - The imposition of centralized universal norms?

SUM: Without Islamic al-Andalusia ➔ no “Western culture”

And even as it is: is Western culture — coming from Greece and transmitted through Islam — “Western”? Can we speak of a “West”?

Ballad: "Tres moricas m’enamoran”
Diego Fernandez, 1400s

- Tres moricas m’enamoran en Jaén: Axa i Fátima y Marién.
- Three Moorish girls have made me fall in love in Jaén: Axa, Fátima, and Marién.

- Díxeles, --¿Quién sois, señorasy, De me vida robadoras?
  I said to them, “Who are you, ladies, that have robbed me of my life?”
- --Cristianas qu’éramos moras de Jaén,
  Axa i Fátima y Marién.
  “We are Christians who were Moors in Jaén. Axa, Fátima, and Marién.”

- --Yo vos juro all Alcorán,
  en quién, señorasy, creéis,
  “I swear by the Koran in which, ladies, you [still?] believe..."
que la una i todas tres m'avéis puesto en grande afán'
that one and all three of you have caused me great anxiety;
do mis ojos peneràn, pues tal verèn
Axa y Fàtima y Marién?
where can my sorrowful eyes see at last Axa, Fátima, and Marién?

Cuando el rey Nimrod al composalia,
Mirava en el cielo y en la estreyeria.
When King Nimrod went out to the country
He looked at the sky and the constellations.

Vido una luz santa en la giuderia,
Que havia de nacer avraham avinu.
He saw a holy light above the Jewish quarters [ghetto];
That Abraham, our father, will be born.

Saludemos agora al senor parido,
Que le sea besiman-tov este nacido.
Let us greet now the newborn father,
May he be blessed, this newborn one.
Eliahu hanavi mos sea aparecido,
Y daremos loares al verdadero.
The prophet Elijah has appeared to us,
And we shall give praises to the true one

Refrain:
Avram avinu, padre querido,
Padre bendicho, luz de Israel.
Our father, Abraham, beloved father,
Blessed Father, light of Israel.

Refrain:
Avram avinu, padre querido,
Padre bendicho, luz de Israel.
Our father, Abraham, beloved father,
Blessed Father, light of Israel.
• *Saludemos al compadre y tambien al moel*
  Que por su zekhut mos venga
  el goel
  Let's greet the godfather and also the *moel*
  For because of his virtue comes to us
  the Messiah

  • *Moel: Jewish official who performs circumcision.

• *Yr’ihma a todo Israel.*
  Cierto loaremos al verdadero.
  And to redeem all Israel.
  Surely we give praise to the true
  one.
  • Refrain:
  • *Avram avina, padre querido,
    Padre bendicho, luz de Israel.*
  Our father, Abraham, beloved father,
  Blessed Father, light of Israel.

Video: “Christians, Jews and Moslems in Medieval Spain”