

## CHAPTER 9

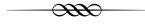
# SELF-EXPLODERS, SELF-SACRIFICE, AND THE RHIZOMIC ORGANIZATION OF TERRORISM

### Author's Note

In January 1996 the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation and Bruce Kapferer brought together a small group of anthropologists of whom I was one to critique his manuscript of *The Feast of the Sorcerer* so that Bruce could make final alterations if he so wished before the final manuscript was sent to press. To my knowledge, through this magnificent book Bruce was the first anthropologist to introduce Deleuzian thinking to an anthropological readership. This, too, was my introduction to Deleuze, especially to his and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, a primer, perhaps *the* primer, for counterintuitive thinking. For me, Deleuze and Guattari were a blessing of the imagination. I am not a Deleuzian, for wedding myself to a particular conceptual perspective has always felt wrongheaded, while imagining potentialities certainly was the fun in what I did. When I was younger the science fiction of Cordwainer Smith, Theodore Sturgeon, Ursula LeGuin, Frank Herbert, Philip K. Dick, Joanna Russ, Samuel Delaney, and others, gave me that opportunity. Meeting the writings of Deleuze (and, of course, Guattari) so much later restored to me something of the enthusiasm for wakeful dreaming, hence they were a blessing to my imagination, indeed blessing mine own imagination.

I wrote "Self-Exploders . . ." for a lecture series at Stockholm University in 2005 organized by Galina Lindquist. The literature on terrorism was replete with discussions of terrorist networks, yet I didn't find a single mention of the Deleuze and Guattari idea of the rhizome. In explaining the tremendous adaptive potential of

today's terrorism, using the rhizome was so much more powerful than that of the network, and showed me the value of practicing Deleuzian thinking.



The human bombs of today's terrorism are self-exploders. I do not refer to *self-exploder* lightly. Exploding the self is the self-destruction of one's intimate interior being, one's own journeys of becoming, the existential being-ness through which each of us (in manifoldly different cultural ways) experiences and knows worlds, inside one's self, outside one's self. Since self comes into existence and is formed and forming through relating to otherness, the self is a social being. To self-explode self is then a social act, a social practice, one intended to act on the world through one's own self-destruction. As social practice, self-explosion radiates outwards, into sociality, into its fragmentation, disruption, dismemberment. As social practice, self-exploding leads directly to the potentiality of self-sacrifice in today's world. Self-sacrifice indexes the voluntary giving of one's life for otherness—protecting this, saving this, bringing this into existence through self-destruction. The giving of one's self to otherness no less indexes altruism (Gambetta 2005b: 259), the gift of devotion—to a cause, to a belief, to others, and on. Therefore, and I emphasize this connectivity, the social giving of one's self to otherness as self-sacrifice often has *cosmic* implications when selfness and otherness in relation to one another are comprehended as integral to world-making. The creation of worlds through the destruction of worlds. This is the linkage I want to explore through the practice of self-exploding in and from the Middle East by considering, toward the end of this chapter, the self-exploder as a double sacrifice—of the enemy other and of the (purified and consecrated) self, and the implications of this for cosmic destruction and creation.

Self-exploding and the organization of today's terrorism both have qualities of a nomadic, rhizomic dynamic, in the terms created by Deleuze and Guattari. The rhizomic dynamic of movement has qualities of asymmetry, speed, intensity, laterality, and penetration (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 1986, 1988). As far as I can tell, self-exploder terrorism adopted these qualities for practical reasons, for putting together (again in Deleuzian terms) assemblages that worked, especially within globalizing, transnational, and urban ecologies. To a high degree, these dynamic, rhizomic qualities potentiate and enable the organization of terrorism to culminate eventfully in self-explosion. Though the rhizomic organization of terrorism and self-explosion have not been brought to conjoin one another in any deliberate, conscious way, they evolved together through practice, coming powerfully to complement one another. The rhizomic organization of terrorism foregrounds self-explosion as sacrifice, and the rhizomic is discussed here prior to addressing the latter.

Following this brief introduction, the chapter continues with the section "Terrorism in Modernity," considering thinking on terrorism that situates human bombs as a more "civilian" (though not noncombatant) response to perceived, felt, grievance. I then take up "The Rhizome and the Self-Organization of Terrorism," afterwards

turning to that which I am calling self-exploding, its sacrificial qualities, and its implications for cosmic order. I close by thinking on the attacks of 9/11 as ritual sacrifice and cosmic (re)origination. The logic of my argument moves from the phenomenon of terrorism more generally, to the organization of terrorism, to the terrorist act (that itself has rhizomic qualities). I do not discuss any psychology of self-exploders—so far this has been discussed primarily and often only in universal terms of suiciding and suicide. This I regard as of little or no aid in comprehending much of the significance of self-exploders in today's world.<sup>1</sup>

Self-exploders appeared in the Near East in 1983, during the civil war in Lebanon, when attacks by the Shi'a movement Hezbollah against American and French military peacekeeping forces and against Israeli military targets caused major casualties. The departure of the peacekeepers from Lebanon was linked to these attacks. Major training grounds at the time were in the Sudan, and in Afghanistan during the occupation by and battles against the Soviet armies there. That war in Afghanistan attracted and exported Muslim fighters from and to a broad swath of North Africa, the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Near East, Pakistan, and Southeast Asia. The success of Hezbollah with self-exploders in Lebanon may have influenced their use by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) beginning in the late 1980s (see Roberts n.d., 2005a, 2005b) and likely had an effect on al-Qaida (Gunaratna 2002: 147).

Human bombs appeared in Israel/Palestine during the 1990s, when Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (and later, during the Second Intifada, Fatah) adopted the Hezbollah initiative. The first Hamas self-exploders blew themselves up following the massacre in the Cave of the Patriarchs/Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, where according to Jewish and Muslim traditions Abraham/Ibrahim is buried (Beinin 2003: 15). On Purim, 25 February 1994, an annual holiday unusual in Judaism in that it is given over to inversion, license, and the blurring of boundaries between good and bad, a physician and settler, Baruch Goldstein entered the mosque in his army reserve fatigues and shot well over a hundred and fifty Muslim worshipers, of whom twenty-nine died. He was torn to pieces by the survivors. Goldstein the terrorist undoubtedly perceived himself as a self-sacrifice for the greater Jewish good in the biblical Land of Israel. His remains were buried in Rabbi Meir Kahane Park, and his tomb has become a pilgrimage site for West Bank settlers and their sympathizers. The inscription on his tomb reads: "Here lies the *saint*, Dr. Baruch Kappel Goldstein, blessed be the memory of the *righteous* and *holy* man, may the Lord avenge his blood, who devoted his soul to the Jews, Jewish religion and Jewish land. His hands are innocent and his heart is pure. He was killed as a *martyr of G-d*." (my emphases)

Attackers have detonated themselves or their bombs in numerous locations in the Middle East and Asia and, more recently in European capitals (Madrid, London). Their greatest success has been, of course, 9/11, the 2001 attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, in which the brilliance of a rhizomic attack and the catastrophe of its aftermath were magnified for all to see, as were the severity of the American bureaucratic responses through law, classification, and regulation.<sup>2</sup> Self-

exploding terrorism appears as an apparently new means of mass violence (but see, too, Dale 1988; Andriolo 2002), joining in the savagery of the twentieth and now the twenty-first centuries, on the edge of the uncomfortably incomprehensible in the religiousness of its self-destructiveness, in its indiscriminate massacring, and in its seemingly tenuous and diffuse social organization.

Responses to terrorism by intellectuals and university academics are commonly moralistic, outraged at the butchering of innocent noncombatants; at the destruction of peaceful, law-abiding civilian sectors; and at the transnational influx into Western states of archaics or primitives in a globalizing world. Scholarly and political thinking join in perceiving terrorism in grandiose terms—a war of civilizations, a war among the so-called universal Abrahamic religions of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, a theophany of Gog and Magog. With few exceptions, there is consensus that suicide bombers are terrorists, though there is no agreement as to what entails terror nor how to define this. Obviously, terror can be defined categorically, legalistically, normatively—but whether this can be a substantive rendition of the phenomenal in its social, existential, and eschatological dimensions is quite another matter, one hardly addressed. This affects how liberal scholarship is relating to terrorist phenomena.

The following premises infuse much scholarly thinking about these human precision bombs (as Michael Roberts calls them), about the contexts that shape them, and about the ways in which they organize. First, the perpetrators are suiciders, often mentally unstable or impressionable, trapped in the unstable flux of modernity, unable to find their footings, alienated and frustrated human detritus (e.g., Moghaddam 2005). In Durkheimian terms, their lives are underintegrated, insufficiently moored in a societal matrix, and they drift into what he called egoistical suicide, killing themselves for their own sake. Or, their lives are overintegrated within an authoritarian religious matrix, and so they are driven to give their lives to the cause in acts that Durkheim called altruistic suicide (Durkheim 1952: 152–240).<sup>3</sup> I return to this theme, briefly, further on.

Second, commonsensical and scholarly thinking concur that there is a clear-cut ethical and functional distinction between the civilian and the combatant—combatants are borderers, protecting civilians who live within borders and who are not complicit in the oppressions that are perpetrated by their states, officials, and armies. Therefore attacks on civilians violate this categorical distinction: these attacks treat noncombatants as fully complicit in the oppression and devastation carried through by states of which they are members. Whatever else it is, terrorism is understood as deviant violence against innocent civilians.<sup>4</sup> Today's terrorism, with its colonial and neocolonial legacies, puts this to the question.

## Terrorism in Modernity

During the twentieth century, warfare between states turned from battles primarily between armies to violence aimed deliberately at civilian populations. No less,

states attacked their own subject populations (the Armenian genocide, the Herero genocide [e.g., Hull 2005: 7–90], the Holocaust of European Jewry). The bulk of casualties during World War I were those of combatants. Poison gas was used by military against military. In World War II this completely turned about: Auschwitz, *Einsatzgruppen*, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Dresden and London, and on and on.<sup>5</sup> States deliberately attacking one another's civilian populations and their own, making them prime targets for mass slaughter. Western states terrorizing Western noncombatants, thereby making them no longer quite that, no longer innocent noncombatants but integral to strategizing the weakening of enemy capacities and capabilities, if not the very extermination of that enemy. If in the more distant past, "The law of nations held that war was a contest between states, waged by official, uniformed, armed forces," in more recent times, "as entire economies and societies have been conscripted to the war effort and military and nonmilitary work have converged, [there has been] a gradual loosening of what constitutes a legitimate military target" (Smith 2002: 361). Civilian targets that also contribute to war use increasingly are treated as unambiguous military targets. "The vogue today is the 'Strategic Ring Theory' of striking critical nodes of infrastructure in order to induce 'strategic paralysis' in one's enemy" (Smith 2002: 362).

The massacring, killing, and brutalizing of subject populations that had flourished during centuries of colonial rule surfaced within the motherlands and fatherlands, internally and in relation to one another. Despite numerous international treaties against the manufacture and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, against war crimes, and so forth, during the twentieth century it became more and more acceptable to attack civilians and civilian targets. In Edith Wyschogrod's (1985) momentous phrasing, the *logic* of manmade mass death became fully formed during the twentieth century.

Sociologist of law Donald Black argues that "terrorism in its purest form is *self-help* by organized civilians who covertly inflict mass violence on other civilians" (2004: 16, my emphasis).<sup>6</sup> Terrorism, he argues, is highly moralistic, often utopian, and intended to exert social control by responding to grievance with aggression, especially when there is no other redress, or when redress does not work.<sup>7</sup> Religious international terrorists may well resemble millenarian mystical Christian movements of medieval Europe (Black 2004: 18) whose utopian orientation, wrote Karl Mannheim (1936: 220), "tends at every moment to turn into hostility towards the world, its culture, and all its works and earthly achievements" (see also Cohn [1970]).

Black (2004: 15) contends, "Violence occurs when a conflict structure is violent . . . Every form of violence," he writes, "has its own structure. . . Structures kill and maim, not individuals or collectivities." The conflict structure of "pure terrorism" (Black uses this as a Weberian ideal type), like some of its organization and strategies, resembles that of the Deleuzian rhizome in relation to the state. Pure terrorism whose aim is the mass killing and maiming of civilians by civilians takes shape on behalf of one collectivity against another that is perceived as culturally and socially foreign,

and as superior in military, political, and economic power. Hence the Madrid rush-hour commuter train bombings in 2004, and the London Underground bombings in 2005. Two decades ago, Rapoport (1984: 675) could (perhaps) argue that terrorists tend “to choose methods that minimize the terrorist’s risks; the targets, accordingly, are increasingly defenseless victims who have less and less value as symbols and less responsibility for any condition that the terrorists say they want to alter.” If this was ever the case, it ceased to be so in the age of the self-exploder, when boundaries between the military and the civilian, between combatant and noncombatant, are blurred and even effaced, and when terrorism extends self-exploding and other opportunities to civilians, both male and female (Gambetta 2005b: 283).

In 2003 there were ninety-eight self-exploder attacks around the world (Atran 2004a). Not only are most of the targets of these attacks civilian, but civilians are perceived to be complicit in the oppressive enterprises of the offending states because they do not oppose these states. Of no less significance, implicit in the complicit is the intentional. Complicity is a declaration of intentionality—civilians thereby are intentional accomplices of the oppressive states they are members in and shelter within. The deeper implication is that the distinction between the officially designated armed forces of the state and its civilian citizens no longer holds. Civilians are held responsible for their government and its practices. Civilians, then, should take responsibility for their governments just as Islamist terrorists take responsibility for the well-being of Islam. There are no longer any innocents, only perpetrators and the complicit. This has more than a little prominence in America, for example, in the bombing of the federal office building in Oklahoma City, yet no less in the Columbine high school massacre and in similar mass murders.<sup>8</sup> I will discuss intentionality further, in relation to sacrifice.

However, the brutal converse of all this is that in the name of national security, indeed security even more broadly conceived as Total (and Totalizing) Security, there are no longer civilian innocents in the eyes of the State either (see Bajc 2007).<sup>9</sup> All are at least under suspicion unless cleared for the moment. Thus every stop at a security portal where ID is demanded, every passage through a metal detector, is a form of *interrogation* into whether passage will be permitted, an interrogation into that which is not evident on the surface of being, an interrogation that can be highly condensed in time and act, even left entirely to machines, or stretched out to include questioning, body search, and even incarceration. CCTV systems in civic spaces, and the monitoring of private phone conversations and email no less attest to the fact that all are under suspicion until shown not to be. So too does the current official enthusiasm for simplistic behavior profiling in public spaces: “The authorities at about a dozen US airports now monitor passengers’ involuntary actions in hopes of nabbing potential terrorists, and Miami officials are so impressed with such behavior recognition techniques that they plan to have janitors, coffee-shop workers and skycaps trained to detect dangerous fliers.”<sup>10</sup> A hostile environment for the unwary traveler who is unaware of his own subtle behavioral habits.

The practice of terrorism is a phenomenon of late modernity, of the last century and this one, as technology has enabled transnational strike trajectories across lengthy distances, separating, for example, a colonial power from those whom it oppresses or oppressed (Atran 2004b). Violent civilians fighting back, attacking the oppressive state through its civilians who are perceived as complicit, rejecting the distinct classification of civilian and military (e.g., Asad 2007: 17, 22).<sup>11</sup> Violent civilians or quasi-civilians (those with limited martial training) in small groups are systematic wild cards, mutating, developing, emerging in their own ways with less of or quite without the external strictures imposed by bureaucratic states, as was the case with terrorism during the Cold War (Ackerman 2006). But the ways in which this is coming to be done, if al-Qaida is any example, are through rhizomic transformations of state organization.

### The Rhizome and the Self-Organization of Terrorism

Much of (pure) terrorism is organized through forms of organization that are antithetical to the modern state. The infrastructure of the modern Western state is highly bureaucratic, its institutions organized around clearly defined offices and tasks, a clear-cut division of labor, hierarchies of officials, and chains of command. This holds no less for the armed forces, the intelligence agencies, and the secret police. The modern state is deeply rooted in clearly bounded territories whose borders are inviolate and within which its sovereignty is supreme. State systems work best when pitted against other states with the same logic of organization or under conditions of colonization when conquering or grabbing territory and economic resources, or controlling these, are often primary goals. So, too, during the Cold War the Soviet Union and the United States sponsored and used terrorist activities as arms of state to further national goals, but also kept the scope and intensity of these activities tempered (Raufer 2003: 392).

The organization of transnational terrorism that has blossomed during the past two decades is different. Consider the following scenario recently posed by a researcher:

Now, imagine a company, or agency, with global markets, or an international mission, say IBM or the CIA. If their offices have been raided worldwide, or bombarded, tens of millions of dollars confiscated from them, all their known bank accounts blocked, their computers seized, their electronic communication systems destroyed, thousands of their employees and part of their leadership arrested—even killed sometimes—could these organizations still function? No, of course not. (Ibid.: 395)

He is referring to al-Qaida, though whether there is a unified organization (like a corporation, say IBM, or a bureaucracy, say the CIA) that can be called “al-Qaida” is unlikely. If not this, then what manner of entity is working here? No one seems to know the overall state of affairs—al-Qaida, and probably other terrorist entities, like

the anarchists of the late nineteenth century, constitute an “inscrutable case” (Gambetta 2005a), one about which there is no stable truth to find out. This is so not only because terrorist formation may be quite loosely held together, but also because it is in ongoing change. So the forming of terrorist entities varies within a field of potentialities, enabling (indeed, potentiating) the simultaneous emergence of more hierarchical formations, more network-like formations, and more rhizome-like formations, perhaps shifting through these different modalities. I will turn to the rhizome shortly.

In the case of al-Qaida, the best documented of these organizations, these forms mutate, radically changing their formations. In its early years in Afghanistan, al-Qaida was a highly structured, more guerilla-like hierarchical formation run from the top by Osama bin Laden and dedicated to fighting the Soviet occupation there. Bin Laden was reputed to own or control eighty companies around the world (Hoffman 2003: 434). In the Sudan alone he owned construction, manufacturing, currency trading, import-export, and agricultural businesses (Bergen 2001: 47–49), and he had established a set of valuable Islamic charities in Saudi Arabia with international sections. Following the defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan, bin Laden turned al-Qaida toward more transnational terror operations (while continuing more of a conventional war against the Northern Alliance). Bin Laden in part reoriented the organization toward more network-like formations that enabled making decisions and carrying out operations to be done locally, without referring to an apex or center. This was the case with the first World Trade Center bombing in 1992; with Ramzi Ahmed Yousef’s plan, developed in the Philippines in 1994–95, to simultaneously bomb twelve American commercial airliners in midflight over the Pacific (Hoffman 2003: 436); and with the plan to assassinate the Pope in Manila in 1995, using an assassin dressed as a priest who was to explode himself while kissing the papal ring (Hassan 2001; Gunaratna 2002: 175).

More network-like formations strongly contributed to the planning and putting together of the cells for the 9/11 attacks. The terrorists trained in al-Qaida facilities in Afghanistan, and later received logistical support from sleeper cells in Europe and Southeast Asia in order to enter the United States (Mishal and Rosenthal 2005: 279). The attackers themselves were divided into a number of cells that were unknown to one another, except through operators or cut-outs (in Cold War espionage language)—the pilots met the other attackers only on the morning of 9/11. Moreover, it is likely that not all members of the same cell knew one another. Meetings were held to synchronize distant segments or cells of the network and to discuss progress, but then these ties went dormant.<sup>12</sup> The 9/11 attacks are estimated to have cost under 500,000 USD (Basile 2004: 172).<sup>13</sup>

An important attribute of this shift in organization is that terrorism becomes more of a bottom-up phenomenon, with local initiatives and local cells whose destruction have limited effects on the viability of larger transnational terrorist networks. Bottom-up formation is highly emergent, spawning a multitude of directions, but also re-



cursiveness and numerous loci of leadership.<sup>14</sup> These are indeed qualities of rhizomic formation. Following the American invasion of Afghanistan and the destruction of al-Qaida infrastructure—its bases of operation and training camps—al-Qaida ceased holding to two tenets of conventional organizations: first, attachment to territory—apart from the religious-political imaginary of the first Islamic State shaped by Muhammad after he was driven from Mecca to Medina—and, second, permanent institutional presence (Mishal and Rosenthal 2005: 279).<sup>15</sup>

Thus the networks and cells of al-Qaida decentralized further, becoming weakly coupled in their connections to one another, though tightly coupled within themselves. Weak coupling allows greater agency, enabling cells to adapt less abstractly and more directly and immediately to their environments, while setting their own agendas. Maksim Tsvetovat and Kathleen Farley (2003) who modeled covert (terrorist) networks found that attacking them as one would a hierarchical organization, for example by targeted assassinations of network or cell leaders (a major Israeli weapon)—thereby “beheading” and fragmenting such entities—was not effective. Cells are highly adaptive and heal themselves, either by finding ways to reconnect to the network, by operating on their own, or by becoming dormant and waiting. Al-Qaida’s cells have been likened to clusters of grapes, such that a grape plucked does not affect the viability of others of the bunch (Gunaratna 2002: 97). Since cells tend toward the autopoietic in interaction with local ecologies, they also tend not to replicate one another in their organization (Knorr Cetina 2005: 230).

Tight coupling within cells gives them *esprit de corps* and a sense of fictive kinship.<sup>16</sup> Entities that come into existence in bottom-up ways generate more complex behavior and action than is produced by top-down, deliberate planning according to a hierarchical chain of command (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2003: 70). Bottom-up forming encourages experimentation and learning from experience. Marion and Uhl-Bien (2003: 71) contend that “al-Qaida leadership provided models of creativity, dropped seeds of innovation, encouraged innovative initiatives, stimulated the growth of supporting resources and largely stayed out of the way of spontaneous growth and innovation.” So, al-Qaida can create or help to create ad hoc cells to carry out local missions of their own choice, specifications, and modes of operation. The March 2004 attack on commuter trains in Madrid is an example. The attack was coordinated by a Tunisian who created an ad hoc cell by connecting to a local group of immigrants called the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group, without direct links to al-Qaida (Mishal and Rosenthal 2005: 288). The elimination of the Madrid attackers did little or no damage to the nets of al-Qaida, which probably proceeded to set up other local ad hoc cells elsewhere. The cell that carried out the 2005 London Underground bombings was autopoietic, obtaining most if not all of its bomb-making information from the Internet. Many of these cells “are not durable units but changing implementations of short-term projects sequentially replaced by new projects—they are units that their creators plan from the outset to abolish, abandon and recreate as non-identical units at a different location” (Knorr Cetina 2005: 229).

A further adaptive or mutating form, emerging from nets of loosely coupled terrorist cells, is what is called *swarming*—terrorists from different groups come together from scattered locations to hone in on multiple targets and then disperse, perhaps to form other swarms (Atran 2004a).<sup>17</sup>

The economics of al-Qaida are especially instructive in relation to the emergent bottom-up forming of cells and nets. Though American bureaucracies have shut down many channels of al-Qaida monies in the United States, its devolving character makes it extremely difficult to track money sources globally. Al-Qaida seems not to benefit from state funding. Monies raised by Islamic charities, in Saudi Arabia, for example, may be moved through Islamic banks (governed by Shari'a law) that are subjected to little bureaucratic regulation and oversight, and through *hawala* ("transfer," "exchange," "change") networks, long institutionalized in South Asia and the Middle East. In *hawala*, there are no transfers between money traders; instead, one *hawaldar* will fax or phone another, telling him to give a sum of cash to a particular recipient. Particular transactions are not recorded; instead *hawaldara* keep track of the balance of their accounts with one another, the outstanding balance eventually to be settled in various ways (cf. Berkowitz, Woodward, and Woodward 2005). Al-Qaida separates monies for its operational cells from its sources of funding. Until now, every successful operation sponsored by al-Qaida has used different money sources, the funds for any given operation arriving through multiple routes. According to al-Qaida's training manual, the commander of a cell is to divide finances into monies to be invested and monies to be saved for operations (Basile 2004: 171–76). Cells are intended to be as financially self-sufficient as possible, in keeping with their loose coupling and agency in choosing targets and organizing attacks.

Transnational terrorism has emerged from the mass killing of civilians characterizing much bloodletting among and within states especially from World War II on, becoming matter-of-course. These terrorist networks and groupings often are more civilian-terrorists, or at most quasi-military, than they are military. They are, in the main, civilians taking up or turning themselves into weapons against civilians, directly reaching civilian populations whom they hold complicit in the perduring existence of regimes that have or that are oppressing them. Attacks by civilians upon civilians are not only strategic decisions to damage easier "soft" targets—these attacks in their own ways are uprisings that go directly to those held most responsible; those sheltering behind the violent bureaucracies that are the military.

Discussing the history of warfare, Lind et al. (1989) suggest that a fourth generation of forms of war is emerging, and that terrorism is integral to this: terrorism "attempts to bypass the enemy's military entirely and strike directly at his homeland at civilian targets. Ideally, the enemy's military is simply irrelevant to the terrorist." Military culture remains a culture of order even as the battlefields are ones of disorder. Military culture, they point out, "has become contradictory to the battlefield" (but see endnote 18). Both the forming of cells and the trajectories of attack are becoming more rhizomic. The International Institute for Strategic Studies states that the

Iraq War is generating “an already decentralized and evasive transnational terrorist network to become more ‘virtual’ and protean and, therefore, harder to identify and neutralize” (2003). Knorr Cetina (2005: 214) maintains that today’s terrorism is not only global but constitutes “the emergence of global microstructures; of forms of connectivity and coordination that combine global reach with microstructural mechanisms that instantiate self-organizing principles and patterns.”

Little by little, terrorist attackers, their cells and nets, are becoming more deterritorialized, more mobile, more *nomadic* in a transnational, globalizing world—they are becoming rhizomic in their forming. In a topological sense, terrorist attackers *are* their movement, and the dynamic of this movement is rhizomic. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) distinguish the rhizomic from the state form, that form of organizing that captures, incorporates, and stabilizes whatever it takes in within its boundaries. Yet as Deleuze and Guattari intend, the state form and the rhizome are metamorphs of one another. Every subversion, uprising, insurrection within the state is a node of the rhizomic, of an unpredictable dynamic that undermines the verticality of the deeply rooted, the beginnings of a line of flight, a trajectory that will destroy distinctions between interior and exterior, erasing borders. No less, every swelling within a rhizome, every shift toward hierarchical self-organization is a node of a potential state form in the making, of the emergence of boundaries, of distinctions between interior and exterior, of verticality, of the deeply rooted. Many transnational terrorists are migrants moving from one state to another, settling in new places yet becoming nomadic, fluid cysts within the weightiness of statist territorial positioning.

What is rhizomic forming, according to Deleuze and Guattari’s sense of this vegetal dynamic? The rhizome is not a root, but rather a tuber or bulb that ramifies growth in all directions, on, over, and under the ground, a multiplicity of diversities without clear boundaries, or perhaps whose boundaries are densities of connectiveness, with shallow tendrils without any natural points of closure, with multiple entrances and ongoing, spreading movement. Within this dynamic maze of movement any point can be connected to any other, and this making of connection never ceases. Rhizomic organization has no fixed points in its lines of flight (as Deleuze and Guattari call its movements), and therefore has only potentialities to emerge vertically, to grow hierarchy and stratification with differences in status, authority, gatekeepers, and specialized guardians of order sign-posted by the uniform—in other words, to becoming top-down organization, the bureaucratic state in miniature. “A rhizome,” they write, “can be cracked and broken at any point; it starts off again following one or another of its lines, or even other lines” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 17–18). A crucial dynamic of the rhizomic is *speed*. The bureaucratic state form exists through the stability of its territorialism, the portentousness of its deep-rootedness, the weightiness of its regulations, the density of its institutions. The rhizome turns a point—the potential node of swelling into verticality—into an intense line of flight through the speed with which it moves. Speed vanishes the boundary, its blockage and stoppage disappearing with it.<sup>18</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari (1983: 49) write: “In opposition to centered systems (even multi-centered), with hierarchical communication and pre-established connections, the rhizome is an a-centered system, non-hierarchical and nonsignifying, without a General, without an organizing memory or central autonomy.” The rhizome cannot answer to a structural or generative model, for there is no grammar through which to generate a rhizome. Therefore the rhizome makes and morphs itself as it moves.<sup>19</sup> Here, in a strange yet powerful way, rhizome and self-exploder join in the same line of flight. In the emergence of its manifold evolution, al-Qaida has developed qualities of the rhizomic—loosely organized, decentralized, flexible in practice (Gunaratna 2002: 11, 57–58, 95), penetrating fluidly from multiple directions, while encouraging if only by example, the sprouting of autonomous rhizomes, terror cells with potentially these sorts of capacities.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, speed and intensity are the dynamic of the self-exploder, as they are of the rhizome. A founder of Palestinian Islamic Jihad wrote in 1988 on the importance of penetrating the territory of the enemy, in making the case for what he called “exceptional martyrdom,” aimed at countering objections by Islamic religious figures to suicide bombing. “We cannot achieve the goal of these operations if our *mujahid* [holy warrior] is not able to create an explosion within seconds and is unable to prevent the enemy from blocking the operation. All these results can be achieved through the explosion” (Hassan 2001). A leader of Hamas commented to Nasra Hassan (2001): “The main thing is to guarantee that a large number of the enemy will be affected. With an explosive belt or bag, the bomber has control over vision, location, and timing.” And al-Zawahiri of al-Qaida, in his post-9/11 book, wrote on “the need to concentrate on the method of martyrdom operations as the most successful way of inflicting damage against the opponent and the least costly to the *mujahidin* in terms of casualties” (Gunaratna 2002: 224).

It is crucial to recognize here that the individual self-exploder is himself/herself a tiny rhizome in its asymmetric movement and speed, intensity and depth of penetration, a tiny rhizome that is a small piece or segment of a larger rhizome, a cell in self-organization and line of flight, itself perhaps part of a larger rhizomic agglomerate. A recent case in point of the above was the self-exploder Abdullah al-Asiri, who flew from Yemen to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia with half a kilo of explosive secreted in “a bodily orifice” (perhaps in his rectum, since he refrained from eating or drinking for forty hours), and who then succeeded in getting into close proximity to the Saudi interior minister, whereupon the explosives were detonated by a call from his controllers to a cell phone.<sup>21</sup>

Just as some terrorist cells are rhizomic in their dynamics, putting down no permanent roots, deterritorializing their networks, weapons, and finances, combining local conditions and religious-mythic abstraction into practice, so, too, they accomplish the complete synthesis of idea and action, of *perfect praxis*, through the act of self-explosion. Moving in emerging lines of horizontal flight, shifting direction, communicating through cyberspace, cells connect to other cells or to members of these.

And so the emerging phenomenon of swarming for a particular operation, gathering together a multiplicity and diversity of persons and resources into what Deleuze and Guattari (1988) call an “assemblage,” here a transient proliferation of the dimensions of the phenomenon that also changes its nature. So, too, just as the ruptured rhizome starts up again, cells show adaptability in self-healing after parts of cells or networks are destroyed. And, the cell or cells act at speed, refusing to accentuate any point of potential stability, sometimes choosing the objective at the last moment, often angularly penetrating to the target, controlling the line of flight, of access, to a high degree. It is the rhizomic qualities of the terrorist cell and network, the rhizomic qualities of the individual self-exploder, that make them so effective against weighty structures, solidified ponderously in place in the bureaucratic state, making it so difficult for the state to trace the activities of the rhizomic. The terrorist rhizome may become a perduring threat to the promise of the state that total security is the right of civilians and the belief of the latter (who are no less True Believers) in this promise.<sup>22</sup> I return to the response of the state in the conclusion.<sup>23</sup>

Rhizomic terrorism is also complemented powerfully by the character of Islam that is emerging through the jihad declared by al-Qaida and other Islamist agglomerates. The usual analyses done on the Islamic roots of jihad and their influence on al-Qaida and others is to classify and pigeonhole according to traditional social movements—Salafi, Wahabi, and so forth (e.g., Sageman 2004)—such that these movements are made to exist historically and currently as the neatly compartmentalized progenitors of today’s jihad and as the ideological motivators of Islamic self-exploders. In a much more penetrating analysis, Faisal Devji (2005: 50) argues that, for al-Qaida and associates, “Islamic history and authority has been completely disaggregated and is no longer clustered within more or less distinct lineages of doctrine or ideology that can be identified with particular groups.” Devji (2005: 51) contends: “In effect all traditional forms of intellectual and political grouping or identification have been fragmented, their elements scattered like debris for the picking, to be recycled in ever more temporary constructions.” One result of this is what he calls the “democratization of authority in the Muslim world” (ibid.: 51), and so the “radical individuation of Islam” through which many Muslims become related much more tenuously to traditional modes of collective solidarity “based on some common history of needs, interests or ideas” (Devji 2005: 31; see also Brown 2001: 110). This perspective of global dynamics enables understanding of how today’s Muslim self-exploders and other terrorists constitute such heterogeneous agglomerations, and, so, too, the flexibility, mobility, and tensile strength of their rhizomic self-organization (putting to the question, for example, studies that evaluate the enabling of extremism in jihad in terms of the selective inaccuracy with which bin Laden and other terrorist leaders and ideologues use the Qur’an and Hadith (e.g., Gwynne 2006). The individuation of the self-exploder, and the self-exploder as a rhizomic segment or piece of a rhizome, are directly relevant to self-exploding sacrifice.

## Self-Exploding Sacrifice

The rhizome is a metamorph, transforming itself through its own dynamics of ongoing movement, through its assemblages and lines of flight. In this respect the rhizomic form of terrorism and self-exploder is complemented by the very act of self-explosion and the preparation leading to this, once we understand that the act is one of self-sacrifice, and that sacrifice is a practice of transformation. To get at this, the interior logic of sacrifice needs discussion.

In the most influential work on suicide written in the modern era, Emile Durkheim (1951: 152–240) distinguished between *egoistic suicide*, the intention to kill oneself for oneself, and *altruistic suicide*, the preparedness to kill oneself for others, as in warfare. In either instance, Durkheim abhorred the taking of one's own life. This is the canonical attitude of all three monotheistic universal religions—God gives life and only God has the right to take life. The modern state claims a monopoly on doing violence, primarily through its violent bureaucracies (within which I include military, judiciary, and police). Suicide transgresses both the monotheisms and the states that developed from them.

Though no general theory of sacrifice will satisfy all the phenomena that anthropologists and historians of religion call sacrifice, a few general points are relevant here. Whatever else it is, sacrifice is an act of violence—a violence done to natural form, natural in the sense of form existing in the integrity of its created shape in the cosmos. Kapferer (1997: 189) argues that sacrifice is “a primordial act . . . a total act [. . . in which] the force of sacrifice [is] constitutive both of the being of the person at the center of sacrifice and of the person as himself or herself [as] a being who constitutes. . . . The violence of sacrifice underlines sacrifice as the total act: an act that can have immanent within its process the entire potential and process of human being.” He (1997: 190) continues:

Violence is quintessentially the form of totalizing action, the explosion of possibility and of possibility exploded. . . . The act of killing in sacrifice is a conjunction of the force of life with death, and of the separation of life from death. This conjunctive/disjunctive energy is the vital force of sacrifice. The motion towards killing is the conjunction . . . of death with life. The moment of killing, the peak of the death-life conjunction, is also the radical separation, the disjunction of life from death.

In sacrifice, natural form is taken apart—cut, rent, torn, split, burnt—so that something else can come into existence.<sup>24</sup> The violence of sacrifice is originary (Kapferer 1997: 190). Put differently, the violence done to form through sacrifice is violence that is done to the boundary, perhaps to the origination of boundary and being that no less is that of cosmos. The violence done to the sacrifice alters, opens, momentarily destroys the boundary between levels, domains, or realms of cosmos. Thus sacrifice, as Kapferer argues, is an act of primordial transformation, of radical change.

Through this something unseen will take shape or have consequential effects in the world.

Sacrifice is a foundational practice in the three monotheisms (in Judaism, the *aqedab*—Abraham's preparedness to sacrifice Isaac, and God's acceptance of an animal substitution; in Islam, Ishmael's *willingness* to be sacrificed by Ibrahim for Allah, the willingness that nears, that perhaps is, self-sacrifice; in Christianity, the self-sacrifice of Christ). In Islam, self-sacrifice must be death in the service of God's plan but is first and foremost *active* struggle with correct *intention* in the service of God's plan (Lewinsein 2001: 78–81). Self-sacrifice may differ from sacrifice in the degree of its closure and in the totalization of its intensity and dynamic of movement. Its explosion is no less its implosion. The sacrificer is no less the sacrificed—as one dies for an exterior goal or cause, one's self or soul is transformed interiorly, perhaps the purification or release of an authentic self (Verkaaik 2005: 141), perhaps the instantaneous transference of the soul to paradise (Hassan 2001). A Hamas self-exploder whose bomb failed to explode described to Nasra Hassan (2001) how he felt when chosen for martyrdom: "It's as if a very high impenetrable wall separated you from Paradise or Hell. . . . Allah has promised one or the other to his creatures. So, by pressing the detonator, you can immediately open the door to Paradise—it is the shortest path to Heaven." Another described the immediacy of paradise as: "It is very, very near—right in front of our eyes. It lies beneath the thumb. On the other side of the detonator."

If the victim is made holy or sacred in the act of sacrifice (Hubert and Mauss 1964: 9)—a *sacrificium*—this is because the violence of its destruction momentarily destroys the boundary between cosmic levels, this destruction becoming an originary locus of the reconstitution of cosmos. In Israel/Palestine in the name of jihad, the Islamist self-exploder simultaneously kills himself as a self-sacrifice that transports him to paradise and kills enemies, others, thereby offering them as a sacrifice to Allah to open the way to the creation of the Palestinian nation-state, as part of the *ummah*, the universal Islamic religious polity (Strenski 2003: 4; Hage 2003: 69) that in its making is perforce fragmentary and transnational.<sup>25</sup> I return in a moment to this theme. In the warfare of the modern state, the ethos of heroic death in battle acquires the status of self-sacrifice (Greenhouse 1989; Marvin and Ingle 1999; Handelman 2004; Zerubavel 1995).

Sacrifice is originary; suicide is abhorred. Suicide is a sin, self-sacrifice is not. Sacrifice is transformative; suicide is merely self-destructive. Under what conditions in monotheistic traditions and in modern states does self-destruction become transformative, and so is turned into sacrifice?<sup>26</sup> The question lies at the heart of the emerging conundra of self-exploders. The matter of *intentionality* is crucial here.<sup>27</sup> Intentionality establishes a conscious relationship of consequence between sacrificer and sacrificed, between destroyer and offering (see Kapferer 1997: 192–98). In the case of the self-exploder, much of this relationship is within the self, thereby fusing and totalizing commitment and outcome. Closed into itself—into selfness—the locus

of sacrifice becomes absolute. Commitment predicated on the direction of dying, of transformation, exploding exteriorly, transforming interiorly. The idea of “exceptional martyrdom,” mentioned above, depends on this embodiment of intentionality. So, too, a Muslim cleric making the case for martyrdom argues, “while both suicide and acts of martyrdom require the express act of will of the perpetrator, what matters is not the act, but the intention [*niyya*] of the martyr” (Israeli 2002: 35).<sup>28</sup>

## Shaping the Ritual Sacrifice

Sacrifice is the perfect praxis—the perfect synthesis—of idea, intention, action. The inner logic of self-exploders—in Israel/Palestine and those of 9/11—configures how this praxis of self-sacrifice is accomplished through the ritual shaping of self. Central to this is an agency different from that of individualism made free for itself, the individual for himself. Devji’s argument on the spreading of individuation in today’s Islam, mentioned earlier, is especially relevant here. Devji (2005: 34) contends that today’s jihad largely rejects “the classical doctrine of holy war as a collective or political obligation [*farzkifaya*].” Instead, holy war becomes “an individual and ethical obligation [*farz ayn*] like prayer. . . . [Holy war] becomes spiritualized and finally puts the jihad beyond the pragmatism of political life. . . . So, whereas liberals as well as fundamentalist Muslims tried to instrumentalize Islam by attributing social, political or economic functions to its beliefs or practices, the jihad does just the opposite—its task is to de-instrumentalize Islam and make it part of everyday ethics” (2005: 34; see also Gwynne 2006: 14, 16; Brown 2001: 110–11). Today’s jihad, like previous movements, develops in the peripheries of the Muslim world, with practices that braid together the charismatic, the heretical, the experiential, the mystical—the Muslim content of which “draws upon the flotsam and jetsam of received wisdoms and remembered histories [. . . denying] the existence of distinct orders or genealogies of Islamic authority” (Devji 2005: 41–42). Instead, personal faith, repentance, and the quest for salvation rise to the fore together with the democratization of authority in which prophecy, dream, and messianism are prominent, rather than the traditional, even canonical knowledge of texts (ibid.: 42, 48). If this jihad emerged out of oppression of Muslim populations, it has become a metaphysical war, “an effort to define the terms of global social relations outside the language of state and citizenship” (ibid.: 76)—and it is through this that self-explosion and self-sacrifice become sacred practice intended to transform cosmos through individual intentionality and action.<sup>29</sup>

Relevant thinking on individual agency, self-discipline, and ethics in present-day Islam comes, appositely, from a study of putting on the veil by Muslim women. Saba Mahmood discusses how women in Egypt take on veiling through *docility*, though this is not the docility of the passive abandoning of agency—rather, it refers literally to the *malleability* needed to be taught particular skills, and this demands “struggle, effort, exertion, and achievement” (Mahmood 2001: 210). This is an internal strug-



gle within and against one's self, one not distant from the struggle demanded by jihad (see Euben 2002: 12). Putting on the veil is the preparedness to respond positively to shaping oneself, in relation to self and others, as one is being shaped. Thus, "while wearing the veil at first serves as a means to tutor oneself in the attributes of shyness, it is also simultaneously integral to the practice of shyness. . . . One veils," argue these women, "not to *express* [my emphasis] an identity but as a necessary, if insufficient condition for attaining the goal internal to that practice—namely, the creation of a shy and modest self. The veil in this sense is the means of both *being* and *becoming* a certain kind of person" (Mahmood 2001: 214–15, emphasis in original). Putting on the veil is a bi-directional self-declaring practice of ascetic intent—interior and exterior.

Taking on the veil is an exterior practice that develops interior qualities that, in turn, "comes to regulate and govern one's behavior without conscious deliberation" (Mahmood 2001: 216). The practice of shyness, modesty, and patience become inseparable from one's interior intentionality and desire, as both are inseparable from the significance of the theology and eschatology that inspire these. The veil becomes integral to the face, not as covering but as an embodiment of synthesizing interiority and exteriority, of showing one's authentic interior selfness on one's exterior. One's holism, within and without. The distance from face to veil is, at it were, the absence of distance between re-formed self and the practice of self-transcendence, between an ethics of self-accountability and an ethics of self-responsibility, embodied by the veil-face. So, too, when the bomber puts the bomb on himself and becomes a self-exploder, the distance between self and self-transcendence diminishes and then disappears if he self-explodes successfully. Both in the instances of women veiling and in jihad there is the dynamic of making Islam universal. Devji (2005: 94) puts it this way for the forming of the self-exploder: "the forging of a generic Muslim, one who loses all cultural and historical particularity by his or her destruction in an act of martyrdom."

There are three hand-written copies of a four-page document in Arabic that the 9/11 self-exploders left behind. The document can be called a spiritual manual (Kippenberg 2005).<sup>30</sup> If we accept it as a guide to the preparation of the self-exploders (we have no way of knowing whether they followed this), then it gives an inkling of how the self-exploders ritualized and shaped themselves in spirit and body (Mneimneh and Makiya 2002) before attacking and transforming themselves through the total and totalizing act of martyring self-sacrifice.

In Arabic, to be martyred, to have one's martyrdom seen and witnessed, to witness one's own martyrdom, are all highly complementary through the term *shahadat*—"Witnessing means martyrdom. . . . There is a close link between seeing and dying in the etymology of martyrdom" (Devji 2005: 94).<sup>31</sup> But the significance of *shahadat* is much greater than that of the individual martyr's self-experiencing—the term resonates powerfully with medieval and modern understandings of enduring habitus (Nederman 1989; Bourdieu 1977) and too with the Deleuze and Guattari

(1988) understanding of dynamic assemblage constituted to momentarily reshape and act on realities. Devji (2005: 94–95) comments that:

*Shahadat* involves not only the person whose life is voluntarily sacrificed for the cause of God, but *everyone* [my emphasis] annihilated in this cause whether willingly or not. Not only people, but animals, buildings and other inanimate objects as well may participate in the rite, including even those who witness the martyrdom of others without themselves being killed. . . . *Shahadat* is a fundamentally social and therefore inclusive act, the pity and compassion it excites among witnesses forming part of its classical as much as contemporary definition . . . perpetrators, victims, bystanders, other animate and inanimate witnesses, near or far, all of whom constitute by their very seeing the landscape of the jihad as a site of sociability.

The total act of self-exploding brings into one another habitus in its more enduring reality and assemblage in its more immediate configuration, through where and when the self explodes. Self-sacrifice in these terms is always an act of *cosmogensis* that ultimately is social, while the scale and grandeur of the self-sacrifice expands its sociability.

The transitory assemblage that enables the explosion totalizes habitus through the sacrifice, a total act that is intended to be one of cosmic (re)creation. The sacrifice and martyrdom are shaped as their own proof, utterly self-contained (Devji 2005: 102, 104), supremely interior even as they effect the exteriority of habitus. Implicitly or explicitly, this shaping of the 9/11 sacrifice likely speaks to its ritual forming through preparation, even though this aspect of the totality of the act has been quite ignored by scholars and other interpreters.<sup>32</sup>

In the spiritual manual, the attack is called a raid (*ghazwa*) for the sake of God, one whose intention is voluntary and whose preparation is ascetic—in classical Arabic literature, like all wars against infidels, “a kind of worship” (Kippenberg 2005: 36). The term “*raid*” also referred to each of the groups or cells that came together on the morning of 9/11 to do the attack. The manual orientates the conditions of being of the attackers, toward one another and individually. It opens with “a mutual pledge (*bai'a*) to die and the renewal of intent (*niyya*)” (Kippenberg 2005: 37).<sup>33</sup> Intention and action must braid together, both in worship and in battle and in battle as worship. Intention must be such that the attacker is purified of all personal emotion, such as a desire for personal vengeance, so that the sacrifice is selfless. Selfless, yet self-responsible and the outcome of free choice, the (self-)sacrificial total and totalizing act is turned into the practice of ethics, argues Devji (2005: 102, 120). Only when the action is for the sake of God alone, can violence be turned into sacred act (Kippenberg 2005: 39). In my terms, the sacrificer prepares himself as a vehicle of self-transformation through violence, the pure gift (Kapferer 1997), the self-sacrifice of the selfless self, the sacrifice of other. Through their pledge of mutuality,

the self-sacrificers form or re-form themselves as a community. As a microcosm, the entire (male) religious polity goes to a battle of self-sacrifice for the sake of God.<sup>34</sup>

The manual divides the raid into a three-part sequence: the first part, the night before, during which the attacker struggles with his own soul; the second part, the following morning at the airport, when the attacker struggles with the satanic forces all about him, all of the unbelievers and their institutions; and the third part, the battle against the unbelievers inside the airplane. The sequencing of these three parts is significant. First, the purification of deepest interiority within the person, as he takes into himself and embodies the ascetic state of being of the sacrificer for God (Euben 2002: 19). Second, the exteriorization of this condition of being, as the intentionality of the sacrificer's line of flight moves into the world, meeting the first ranks of the enemy face-to-face, yet needing to elude these in order to penetrate the target and close with his victims. Third, the violence of sacrifice.

The manual prescribes fifteen exercises for the night before the attack. These include recitals, prayers, meditations, and purifications.<sup>35</sup> Cook (2002: 25) contends that “during the period of time covered by ‘The Last Night’ the attackers would consider themselves to be dead.” Kippenberg (2005: 39) comments that the Arabic word for “recital” (*dhikr*) means “remembering” in a broad sense; and that the manual chooses Suras 8 and 9 from the Qur'an, both originating when Muhammad the persecuted prophet had turned into the warrior and had begun establishing the Islamic State in Medina, breaking off all contact with non-Muslims except that of attack, kill, or convert. Following the recital of the Suras, the manual prescribes Sufi practices of self-forming. The carnal self wants to live, not die. Yet the ascetic, denying the world, must persuade, tame, awaken, and drive the self to action through self-purification. Not unlike the woman who puts on the veil, the self-sacrificer must become patient and modest, with honed will and dedication. Thus Mohamed Atta, thought to be the leader of the four cells, left instructions long before the 9/11 attack that whosoever washed his corpse should wear gloves so that his genitals would not be touched; and asked that pregnant women and unclean persons not be allowed to see his body, attend his funeral, or go to his grave (Gole 2002). There follow instructions on sharpening the sacrificial knife and the wearing of proper clothing for the attack. In the morning, prayers, a ritual washing, the shaving of excess hair from the body and the application of perfume (Mneimneh and Makiya 2002). Cook argues that the attention to preparation of their bodies by the attackers is related to the preparation of a corpse for burial. Thus, “One should note that in Islam, although normally corpses are prepared after death [*sic*], the body of a *shahid* is deemed to have been purified by the act of martyrdom, and the body is buried in the state in which the person died” (Cook 2002: 25). With all of these purifying acts—spiritual, physical—the first part of the manual ends.

Mneimneh and Makiya (2002) argue that the attackers enter a great sacred drama and the heroic deeds of the Companions of the Prophet of the Seventh Century. Probably so, yet the attackers are preparing themselves both as sacrifices and as sacri-

ficed. For this they ritualize themselves as warriors, re-forming self and body through inner discipline and purification, so that these will awaken with agency, as one. So, too, they prepare themselves as the perfect sacrifice to God, selfless, honed, aimed, totally committed, their intentionality utterly willed and joined to their task. They re-create themselves as the very capacity to deliver both *other* (the infidel) and *self* (the true believer) as the totalizing of sacrificial violence, the entirety of cosmos in the process of transformation.<sup>36</sup>

In the second part of this ritual, the warrior ventures forth from within himself on the way to the airport, advancing his being into a world ruled by satanic powers, yet protected from them, undetected by them. So long as he is in a condition of worship, of living truth, reminding himself repeatedly of God, he can deceive those who live in a world of lies as to his identity (Kippenberg 2005: 42–43). At each point in the journey he silently invokes God’s blessing. He wears his purified intentional interiority on his exterior, and this mask or shield cannot be pierced by his enemies, by “Western Civilization,” as the manual says, with all its technological might.

In the third part of the ritual, quietly reciting Qur’an and prayers, the attacker enters the plane, and self-sacrifice, martyrdom, dominates, yet as always, this can only be granted by God, by His divinely authorized plan, to which martyrdom is submission (Euben 2002: 26). The manual tells the attackers to “Clench your teeth as did [your] predecessors . . . before engaging in battle. Hit as would heroes who desire not to return to the World” (Mneimneh and Makiya 2002; Kippenberg 2005: 45). If there is resistance to the hijacking, those persons should be killed as a “ritual slaughter” (*dhabaha*, rather than *qatala*, to kill), as an act of grace conferred by God and an offering made to God, through filial devotion on behalf of the attacker’s parents. According to Mneimneh and Makiya, dictionaries of classical Arabic give the meaning of *dhabaha* as “to cleave, slit, or rip something open. This is the word used for slitting the two external jugular veins in the throat of an animal. It is quick, direct, and always *physically intimate*: one does not slaughter with a gun, or a bomb, from afar. . . . *Dhabaha* is also that which Abraham was prepared to do to his son on God’s instructions.” And, as the sacrificer enters his own death, the manual says, “When the moment of truth comes near, and zero hour is upon you, open your chest welcoming death on the path of God” (Kippenberg 2005: 46). “Opening his chest,” his interior, the sacrificer is himself the perfect sacrifice, selflessly welcoming self-death, self-sacrifice. Devji (2005: 120) argues that this moment of martyrdom is “the purest and therefore the most ethical of acts, because in destroying himself its soldier becomes fully human by assuming complete responsibility for his fate beyond the reach of any need, interest or idea.”<sup>37</sup>

I have suggested that the logic of this moment is one of transformation, the totalizing of a microcosmos constituted of self and other in which self dedicates the sacrifice of other and, simultaneously, dedicates his own death by sacrifice, all by the grace of God, in the name of martyrdom and the generation of the transcendent Islamic polity. The entire sequence—which I understand as a ritual sequence

(Handelman 2005)—shapes a line of flight through which the self of the sacrificer is first made malleable within itself and shaped through purification and dedication of intent. This self is a self among fellow selves, filiated selves, a band of warrior brothers who selflessly are no longer other to one another among themselves. Self-dedicated, they know one another intimately, indeed a condition of *communitas*. This interior self (and selves) then emerges from within itself, thrusting rhizomically with speed and intensity deep within the world of the alien enemy other, until it penetrates the interior of the selfness of this other (within the aircraft, outside the aircraft). The interior self of the sacrificer kills that of the other, thereby destroying its existence in this microcosmos. The sacrificer, self-witnessing, self-sacrifices, and this microcosmos with its presence of the alien enemy other utterly ceases to exist. In its own way, this is a primordial act of transformation at the very heart of creation; perhaps, as Agamben (1998: 105) puts it, this is the “survival of the state of nature at the very heart of the state.”

Sacrifice, as we understand this in traditional moral orders, is an *economy of violence*, of violence calibrated to accomplish transformations necessary for dynamics of survival of person, group, social order, in a self-creating cosmos.<sup>38</sup> The “state of nature” at the very heart of moral order was calibrated to destroy in ongoing relationship to that which would be created within social orders. The manmade mass death of the twentieth century has exploded through the massive deaths of trench warfare, through the military killings of civilians in World War II, and now through mutations of civilians massacring civilians augmented by rhizomic terrorism. The economy of sacrificial violence inflated in modernity and blew up, as sacrifice already joined to military death and the military slaughter of civilians became joined to civilians slaughtering civilians, and to terrorism. *Sacrifice itself becomes rhizomic*, braided into speed, penetration, and small-scale acts amplified into massive uncertainty by state and global responses. Terrorism and self-sacrificial terrorism target the very complexities upon which modern infrastructures depend, demonstrating the fragility of their jointing, of their coordination and synchronization. Potential targets move toward the infinite in number (Simon and Benjamin 2001–02: 14), certainly a lesson of today’s Iraq, and the state mobilizes “to wage infinite war on an indefinite enemy” (Dillon 2002: 77).

The outcome of these amplifications may be what Beck (2002: 41) calls the world risk society, “a world of uncontrollable risk” in which rhizomic terrorism and self-exploders join together with vectors of ecological deterioration, disease, starvation, population movement, mass slaughter, financial crises, all of which overflow the borders of particular states, fill interstices in fuzzy areas among and amidst fuzzy states (Mbembe 2000), and are transnational in differing configurations of presence and effect, amplifying threat, fear, and its administration (e.g., Virilio 2007: 17–18).

State response to rhizomic terrorism is to reify borders; to exact the marking and identification of persons; to slow down, stop, and freeze movement (e.g., Bajc 2007); to increase surveillance in public spaces and private lives—to shape an increasingly

gated, exclusionary state. In general to adopt what Virilio (2007: 43) calls the myth of “a precautionary principle,” which seems to promise absolute security to everyone selected for inclusion within state bastions manned by fear against exterior threat, demanding what Beck (2002: 41) calls the feigning of control over the uncontrollable. Without a doubt, the terrorism I am discussing and state initiatives are intimately complicit and powerfully self-fulfilling (Zulaika 2003). To a serious degree, states contribute to the shaping of terror for their own purposes (American support for al-Qaida in Afghanistan against the Soviets; Israeli support for the early Hamas as a counterweight to Fatah).

Yet this relationship between terrorism and state cannot be reduced to the methodological rationalism of economic calculations of the political. Metaphysics stirs just beneath the surface in its world-breaking and world-making capacities. Through rhizomic violence, Muslim self-exploders seek an end to violence in the creation of the goodness of a transcendent polity, even as the destruction they do engenders further violence that denies the realization of this or any other utopia. Americans dote on the badness of rhizomic violence within their borders and elsewhere, even as they erect more and higher walls of the good to imprison this—always failing, always convinced of the utopic righteousness of their cause (see Duclos 1998). Responding to the rhizomic through its trans-form, the state form, in order to destroy the former, just augments and accelerates the rhizome-state form dynamic. Yet in the present day the forming and destroying dynamic of rhizome and state form, each within the other, each growing the other, are increasingly amplified by technological means of control and destruction, threatening life more than any “war of civilizations.”

## Notes

First published in 2011 as “Self-Exploders, Self-Sacrifice, and the Rhizomic Organization of Terrorism,” in *Religion, Politics and Globalization: Anthropological Approaches*, ed. Galina Lindquist and Don Handelman, 231–62. New York: Berghahn Books. Reprinted with permission. Though not deliberately, this work emerged contrapuntally to my *Nationalism and the Israeli State: Bureaucratic Logic in Public Events* (2004). That book focuses on the forming power of the bureaucratic logic of the state. This chapter was given in seminars at the University of Bergen, the University of Capetown, and Stockholm University. My thanks to the participants for their responses. For their comments I am indebted especially to Smadar Lavie, the late Galina Lindquist, Limor Samimian Darash, and Liora Sion.

1. The term *suicide bomber* is an oxymoron. The intention of this bomber is, first and foremost, purposefully to kill other people. (The point is made by Israeli [2002] and others, though I reached this position independently). The formative dynamic of the act is that the bomber dies in killing others; and this conjoining of self and other may index the logic of sacrifice permeating many of these acts. Nasra Hassan (2001) reports that Hamas self-exploders are called “sacred exploders.”
2. One should not forget that a terrorist cell on 9/11 also intended the hijacking of a flight from Heathrow to Manchester in order to crash the aircraft into the British Houses of Parliament. By the time the cell members reached Heathrow, the attacks in America already had occurred and the airport was closed to flight traffic (Gunaratna 2002: 119).

3. Durkheim himself was offended by suicide. This may have reflected the deeply rooted monotheism of the modern Western state, and the value given to the individual as an autonomous social unit in France and elsewhere. If the individual is understood as an autonomous microunit, then it is a holistic entirety, even if in a limited sense. Then self-killing makes the microunit extinct, the death of no value to social order. However, for the individual to die for group bonds and values is to create death as sacrifice, death that is of value to social order.
4. Thus most scholars and theologians of Islam whom we hear of distinguish between canonical religion that eschews suicide, whatever the cause and intention, and sects that deviate from the canon.
5. See W. G. Sebald's (2004) discussions of the allied bombing of Hamburg, and John Hersey's ([1946] 1989) all but forgotten classic description of Hiroshima nuclearized, as told by survivors.
6. Contrast this with the definition of terrorism given by the US State Department in 1983: "Terrorism is premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience" (Kippenberg 2005: 55).
7. Philosophers differ, in their own terms, as to whether terror is a moral act. Compare with Primoratz's (1997) contention that terrorism is morally impermissible, and Held's (1991) claim that terrorism is justified in terms of human rights and distributive justice. See also Devji's (2005: 120) argument that martyrdom entails an ethical act.
8. Pure terrorism seems to be quite absent from conflicts within relatively homogeneous social orders; there, riots, assassinations, and guerrilla warfare will be more prominent (Black 2004: 20).
9. Neocleous (2006: 374–76) charts how, in the United States, the idea of "national security" developed from that of "social security." Social security policies, designed in the main to protect the citizenry against rapacious capitalism, also spawned the idea of national security after World War II. Neocleous (2006: 378–80) argues that the "national security state" was intended first and foremost not for military purposes as such, but to further economic security, in other words to make the world safe for capital expansion and accumulation.
10. *International Herald Tribune*, 9–10 September 2006. See also, "Judging Evil Intent: It's All in the Body Language—A New Squad at Dulles Airport Is Scrutinizing Travelers for Behavioral Signs of Bad Intentions," *International Herald Tribune*, 18 August 2006.
11. This schematic portrait is much more complex than I have space for here. As Mbembe (2003: 31–33) notes, military operations and the right to killing practices are no longer the monopoly of states—thus mercenaries, child soldiers, citizen soldiers, and privateers abound in different combinations in Africa, in spaces that are "a patchwork of overlapping and incomplete rights to rule . . . inextricably superimposed and tangled, in which different de facto juridical instances are geographically interwoven and plural allegiances, asymmetrical suzerainties, and enclaves abound" (Mbembe 2003: 31).
12. Krebs, [http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue7\\_/krebs/](http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue7_/krebs/).
13. Before 9/11, al-Qaida operatives returned over 20,000 USD in unused funds to leaders in the Middle East (Basile 2004: 172). Hassan (2001) reports that the cost of organizing an armed self-exploder to enter Israel was about 150 USD. The ingredients are of the order of nails, gunpowder, a light switch and cable, mercury, acetone. The most expensive item is transportation. For that matter, the bombs exploded in London in 2005 cost only a few hundred pounds sterling (*Observer*, 9 April 2006).
14. Researchers of organizations sometimes speak of "autocatalysis"—"a tendency of recursive systems to self-generate catalysts that speed up or enable the emergence and evolution of forms" (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2003: 61).
15. These qualities are why some analysts compare al-Qaida to a modern corporation whose existence is primarily through the flow of capital, investment, and production, rather than through any permanent physical presence in particular places.

16. According to Scott Atran (2003), al-Qaida, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah use small cells of three to eight members who are brought to feel the cell as a family of fictive kin “for whom they are as willing to die as a mother for her child or a soldier for his buddies.” <http://www.interdisciplines.org/terrorism/papers/1>. See also Sageman (2004). A rich source of information on self-exploders in Gaza, especially during the First Intifada, is Oliver and Steinberg (2005).
17. Thus Iraq’s Ansar al-Islam and Pakistan’s Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Jaish-e-Muhammed may be coordinating operations, following al-Qaida’s example and swarming through their own impetus (Atran 2004b). Swarming in warfare is said to have powerful historical antecedents (Edwards 2005: 13–52), and the language and ideas of swarming are used by strategic planners to describe future warfare built through highly mobile and flexible units that join together for particular operations and then disperse, no longer using fixed weapons platforms as bases from which to launch operations, adapting to continuously changing battlespaces that are related to as ecosystems (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2000; Dillon 2002: 72). Such imaginaries seem to be rejected by American military brass. See also Dillon (2002: 74). Nonetheless, there is evidence that the initial (and successful) American attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq used swarming tactics. Some Israeli military strategists in low-intensity urban warfare on the West Bank explicitly adapt the rhizome of Deleuze and Guattari to develop strategies of “infestation” in attack (Weizman 2006a) and “necrotactics” (Weizman 2006b). From a military perspective, necrotactics reverse traditional goals of warfare by temporarily entering strategic ground *solely* in order to kill enemies (Weizman 2006b: 81). The last Israeli army offensive into Gaza, called *Operation Cast Lead*, used necrotactics. Asaf Hazani (personal communication) tells me that Israeli Army “infestation strategies” were taken from those used by the French paras in the battle for the Casbah of Algiers. Especially interesting are the rhizomic parallels in movement between self-exploders and some military units. Likely they learn from one another. In response to the Israeli Army’s practice of low-density urban warfare, its ethicist, a professor of analytic philosophy, is defining neat moral distinctions (similar to those formulated to cover “ticking bombs”) between “preventive killing” and assassination. In other words, as to when murder is moral (see Kasher and Yadlin 2005a, 2005b).
18. Implicit within, though especially germane to the Deleuze and Guattari argument is that the deeply rooted state-form is especially vulnerable where its lines of movement slow down, becoming densely constricted with limited lines of flight. For the self-exploder, such concentrations, approaching stasis in the restricted movement within them, are excellent targets. Perhaps for al-Qaida the Twin Towers were a lure hard to resist, a gigantic trap of limited, clumsy, machinic, vertical movement, existing (like all skyscrapers) ethereally, seemingly unconnected to their own grounding in the world of human beings, with no ethical responsibility to the earthy struggling “ants” way below. Exploded, the Twin Towers were revealed as ponderous trees deeply rooted in earth masquerading as sky.
19. Consider the implications of the rhizomic dynamic when it is propelled by a universal religion.
20. In differing degrees, Hezbollah (in Lebanon) and now Hamas (in Gaza) are evolving in counterpoint to al-Qaida, from more rhizomic to more centralized, deeply rooted organizations. The point is that these are various potentialities actualizing; and so far, these organizations have shown high capacities for altering their self-organization in relation to changing circumstance and ecology.
21. *Ha’aretz* (English edition), 13 September 2009.
22. Despite the relevance of rhizomic dynamics to understanding terrorist cells and networks in relation to state structures, I found no such connections in the literature I read, apart from one essay by a historian (Griffin 2003). He, however, uses *rhizome* as an ideal type, while Deleuze and Guattari understand the dynamic as entirely relational.
23. *Rhizome* should be differentiated from *network*. The rhizome is its own dynamic, obviating distinctions of the order of “structure” and “process” or “structure” and “content.” The rhizomic point is itself dynamic, swelling into verticality, receding into the snaking lateral movement of



- another rhizome in the making. The conception of network, as this usually is understood, including its application to terrorism (Knorr Cetina 2005; Sageman 2004), depends on relatively fixed points (the individuals in the net) whose relatedness to one another is analyzed through how the structural properties of these points connect these individuals to one another. Network, then, is first and foremost a structure to which the content of relatedness between points is imputed. This relatedness (through structural properties of points, and through the content of relatedness that connects these points) is confounded with dynamics. On the other hand, network could also be understood as an emergent property of the rhizomic dynamic, one driving toward structuration and verticality.
24. Violence can be done equally well to vegetal form as to animal or human. The ancient Greeks called the “dismemberment” of form *sparagmos*, and the term was used extensively by Victor Turner to denote social order taken apart ritually.
  25. From its outset Islam was a political religion, aimed at the creation of an Islamic State, the intention of the Prophet during the last decade of his life, after he left Mecca for Medina. Muhammad can also be cast, in the present era, “as the chief example of both self-sacrificial death and self-sacrifice (*tad’hiya*) that is linked essentially with jihad” (Strenski 2003: 14). Such positions are criticized by Ahmad (2009: 148) who argues that, “it is [only] during the early twentieth century that a fully developed political theory of the Islamic state emerged in the discourse of Islamism.”
  26. Israeli (2002: 25–26) traces the Hezbollah innovation of what he calls “islamikaze” to the Shi’a reversal of the tragic mourning of the suffering and martyrdom of Imam Hussein at Karbala into the celebratory attacking martyrdom of the bombers, in which Hussein becomes not someone to be mourned but a heroic model of the battling warrior. Israeli’s neologism is based on the similarities he perceives between Islamic human bombers and the Japanese kamikaze of World War II. On kamikaze see Ohnuki-Tierney (2002).
  27. As Friedman (2002: 108) comments, intellectuals tend to take intentionality away from the bombers, turning them into representations or embodiments of social problems. Intellectuals thereby miss the workings of praxis that they so often extol.
  28. The ultimate decision as to the intentionality of the self-exploder is that of heaven, of Allah.
  29. If the appellation of *suicide bomber* is accepted without critique, as Asad (2007) does, this obviates the transformative dynamic of self-sacrifice. Indeed, this is a signal weakness in Asad’s analysis. Thus, “Suicide [in the Abrahamic religions] is a sin because it is a unique act of freedom, a right that neither the religious authorities nor the nation-state allows” (Asad 2007: 67). Yet, the self-sacrificer in Islam cannot know beforehand how God will judge his intentionality and whether God will accept his self-sacrifice.
  30. Kippenberg (2005: 56–57) notes that *The 9/11 Commission Report* (2004) reconstructs the sequence of events leading to the attack yet utterly ignores the manual. The American “concept of a war against evil portrays the attackers as devoid of religious faith.” The faithless cannot have morality in a state that, after all, is one of Christian believers.
  31. Lewinstein (2001: 79) comments on early Islam that *shahid* likely acquired its sense as “martyr” as “a reflex of late antique Christian usage.”
  32. Neria et al. (2005: 7–8) argue that this document presents an “as if” reality, in effect, ritual-as-pretense of ritual that enabled the attackers to dissociate themselves from the real, violent consequences of their action. In my view this demonstrates a complete lack of comprehension of the relationship between sacrifice, violence, and transformation. To date, psychologists have contributed little to comprehending self-exploders (for example, Guss, Tuason, and Teixeira 2007).
  33. For Hasan al-Bana, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, “death is the very goal of *jihad*, and willingness to die is the key to its success” (Brown 2001: 113).
  34. I am not concerned with whether or not such formations accord with “canonical” Islamic traditions. My premise is that in all moral and social orders, religious life, like all other domains of living, goes through innovation and emergence, most of which is disregarded and discarded,

though each has its own history, were we able to trace this. This has been a prominent theme of my thinking for the past four decades. As I have discussed this here, the entire phenomenon of terrorism as we are experiencing this is innovative, as is, to a degree, the rhizomic forming this takes, in movement, changing shapes. Must religious forming accord always with Durkheimian genealogical foundationalism? My position here accords in more general substantial terms with that of Faisal Devji (2005).

35. When the practices of the manual are referred to, too often this offers “rational” explanation of the order of: “prayer is ritual designed to block thought, to prevent the spontaneous upsurge of disobedient impulses and inclinations. Prayer is anesthesia” (Holmes 2005: 151–52). For a psychologicist rationalization of the manual, see Neria et al. (2005).
36. Hassan (2001) quotes Palestinian bombers (whose explosives failed to detonate) as saying, “We were in a constant state of worship. . . . Those were the happiest days of my life,” and “We were floating, swimming, in the feeling that we were about to enter eternity.”
37. This argument gives us an idea of just why it is so important on the part of Western media, scholars, publicists, and politicians to demean and denigrate the terrorist self-sacrificer by labeling him or her mentally ill, mentally retarded, lost in despair and hopelessness, brainwashed, and, not least, without true religious belief. Devji (2005: 120) writes that “the Islam of the suicide bomber is an absolutely personal quality, as distant from the group identity of the traditional cleric as it is from the state ideology of the fundamentalist.”
38. This is lost sight of too often by scholars of the logic of “sacrificial violence” in modernity, in which violence and sacrifice are nearly equated. As Martel (2006: 819) puts it, “if everything is sacrifice, then nothing is sacrifice.”

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