



PROJECT MUSE®

Crossing the Line: Blasphemy, Time, and Anonymity

Colin Jager

Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences, Volume 22, Number 2, Spring/Summer 2014, pp. 1-30 (Article)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: [10.1353/qui.2014.0010](https://doi.org/10.1353/qui.2014.0010)



➔ For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/qui/summary/v022/22.2.jager.html>

Crossing the Line

Blasphemy, Time, and Anonymity

COLIN JAGER

According to anthropologists and sociologists, the sacred depends upon boundaries. “Things set apart and forbidden” is how Émile Durkheim defined the sacred in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915), emphasizing that sacred things were set apart in such a way that they became the center of the social whole.¹ For Durkheim, religion began when social groups performed rituals as a way of binding together a community; these actions *produced* a sense of the sacred, rather than the other way around. The true content of religion was to be found, then, in the manner in which it enabled humans to represent to themselves the social unit of which they were a part. In his desire to sort the sacred from the profane, Durkheim almost certainly overemphasized the coherence of the social whole.² But the point remains that cultures, even loosely organized ones, depend upon separation, the demarcation of boundaries, and the leveling of injunctions against their violation.

Examples of such a dynamic abound. Early in Terrence Malick’s 2011 film *The Tree of Life*, for instance, a father tells his very young son Jack to stay out of the neighbor’s yard. He draws a faint line in the grass with a stick: “You see this line? Let’s not cross it. You understand?” We know, of course, that this is futile: no physical barrier exists here, just an imaginary line that no tod-

dler will be able to comprehend, much less respect. Not surprisingly, the next scene shows Jack playing happily on the far side, and the father calling him back. There is a deep sense in which the father's gesture is a futile one: to draw a line, or create a forbidden zone, is also to invite its violation. Indeed, transgression seems built into the idea of a boundary itself: we may know cognitively where the lines are drawn, but we don't really experience their power until we cross them.

Later in *The Tree of Life*, Malick returns to the scene of transgression: driven by a need he cannot quite fathom, the teenaged Jack sneaks into the same neighbor's bedroom and examines a woman's undergarments, even laying a negligee carefully on the bed and stroking it reverently. Then, wracked with guilt, he tries to bury the offending item, and when that fails he throws it into a river and watches it float away downstream. The scene is easily read as Jack's confused attempt to distinguish his feelings for his mother from his burgeoning sexual awakening, but the point to emphasize, again, is that the entire episode has been in effect pre-scripted by the father's initial command not to cross the line.

Religious discourse provides some of the oldest expressions of this movement of separation, injunction, and transgression: in Genesis, God tells Adam, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."³ Here, too, the end of the story is built into its beginning. For the temptation of Eden is knowledge, and in succumbing to such temptation Adam and Eve acknowledge that Eden is not the whole world, not the fully complete place that it seemed. They knew, somehow, that there was more to know.⁴ According to the writer of the story, when they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Genesis 3:7). Then Adam and Eve hide themselves, and when God asks them why they are hiding, Adam replies that they are naked. God's response is one of the strangest in all of Scripture: "Who told you that you were naked?" (Genesis 3:11). Since the only possible answer is "no one told us," the question is sometimes interpreted as an allegory of the birth of self-awareness. It may be that knowl-

edge is like nakedness: to learn it of oneself is to learn that it has been there all along. Yet becoming conscious of it changes things: to realize that we are naked is also to realize that there is an *outside* to our experience of the world as it is. Indeed, Adam and Eve's nakedness could be seen as the first step in that story: our early warning that we will go our own way.

In Genesis, the ability to see oneself as if from the outside is called "nakedness." We tend to call it by other names. Hegel may have been the first to theorize it fully, as *self-consciousness*; Charles Taylor calls it "radical reflexivity" and identifies it as the central characteristic of the modern self. Taylor writes that in the stance of radical reflexivity we adopt a first-person view of the world, becoming "aware of our own awareness." There is "something that it is like to be an experiencing agent," and consequently our own experience becomes the object of our attention.⁵ This is a mental attitude available at least since Augustine, Taylor tells us, though it is not widely distributed until the early modern period. Such reflexivity is often central to stories of secularization, for it gives to modern spiritual life a distinct feel: disembedded, perhaps rather tentative.⁶ Henceforth, we live our faith self-consciously—in the knowledge that, however firmly we hold to it, there are others out there who hold equally firmly to something else.

In a well-known essay titled "Secular Criticism," Edward Said tells his own version of this story, though he draws a different and less somber conclusion. Said describes modernity as the loss of "filiation" with a natal home or place. In consequence, people search for a way to reconstitute that experience through the creation of a new community.⁷ Whether progressive (e.g., socialism) or reactionary (e.g., nationalism), such affiliations risk dogmatic formulation. Thus the role of the secular critic is to interrupt that affiliative process and question its legitimacy. Contrasting the "the quasi-religious authority of being comfortably at home" with the consciousness of exile and homelessness that is for him the mark of a critic, Said informs his readers that the perspective of exile "introduces circumstance and distinction where there had only been conformity and belonging." Thus, he writes, "there is distance, or what we might also call criticism" ("SC," 16, 15). Said's concep-

tion of criticism renders it an extrinsic discourse no less essential to social relations; the sign of the outsider, it is also the rift that grounds political contestation.

And yet if what I have said about boundary drawing is correct, then it is too simple to merely oppose filiation, homecoming, and belonging to reflexivity, distance, or “what we might also call criticism.” Eden is no closed system. It wouldn’t be Eden without the interdict, which means that the beginning of Eden is also its end: nakedness was always there. The flaming sword that God places at the gate after he expels Adam and Eve simply makes explicit what was implicit even before the banishment: there is no way Adam and Eve can return, even if they wanted to, since to be in Eden is already to be exiled from it.

In this essay I consider three examples of blasphemy, a “profane speaking,” as the *OED* has it, with the emphasis on speech as a dramatically enacted violation of the sacred, a crossing of the line. The first instance, Pussy Riot’s brief concert in a Moscow cathedral, consists of shouted slogans and symbolic actions. The second, Archbishop Moses Tay’s attempt to exorcise the totem poles in Vancouver’s Stanley Park, confronts sacred objects with a symbolic violence that ironically signals respect. And the third, drawn from a sonnet by Percy Shelley about the Pharaoh Ramesses II, takes us to the origins of monotheism itself, rendered as the iconoclastic shattering of a secular god in favor of a god without a face.

Blasphemy is not simply a violation of space. Crossing into unhallowed space also releases a new relationship to time, provoking a process of revelation that would otherwise remain bottled up. We can see this already in my opening examples: in Malick’s film, the forbidden space reveals the new kind of time (of adulthood, of sexuality, of mortality) upon whose verge the adolescent Jack stands; in Genesis, eating from the forbidden tree brings death into the world, and God consequently decides to drive Adam and Eve out of the garden because they “might reach out . . . and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Genesis 3:22). God’s anxiety is strange and under-motivated, since he could presumably think up other ways to prevent Adam and Eve from eating from the tree of life. And why should God be worried if humans

live forever? This is a moment when divine time and human time slide over each other without engaging.

As I proceed, then, blasphemy will come to seem as much an experience of *time* as a violation of space. This conceptual shift can serve to remind us that reflexivity is built into religion as much as it is built into secularism. This means more than simply pointing out that secularism does not have exclusive rights to the metaphors of exile and distance—though that is certainly true. It also suggests that blasphemy is less a mode of heroic defiance than a posture inclined toward homelessness and anonymity. The politics of that gesture, as I hope to show, are anything but predictable.

Pussy Riot's Punk Prayer

On February 21, 2012, five members of a Russian punk collective called Pussy Riot entered the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow.⁸ Singing “Mother of God, Chase Putin Out!” and clad in brightly colored dresses, leggings, and balaclavas, the women danced, kneeled, and crossed themselves in front of the doors that led to the cathedral’s high altar. Within less than a minute they were apprehended by security guards and removed from the sanctuary. On March 3, the day before the controversial reelection of Vladimir Putin, three members of the band were arrested and charged with “hooliganism motivated by religious hatred.” In August they were convicted and sentenced to two years in prison.

Aided by social networking sites, blogs, and popular YouTube videos, Pussy Riot’s plight had become, by the summer of 2012, something of an international media sensation.⁹ *Foreign Policy* and *Time* ran articles, Amnesty International and Madonna took up the cause, and British prime minister David Cameron questioned Putin about it in a face-to-face meeting. By the spring of 2013, two of the women were still in custody, and one of them had gone on a hunger strike.¹⁰ The dominant media narrative—freedom of expression versus authoritarian censorship—left little room for an analysis of the complex role that religion played within this media event. As expected, many Orthodox clergy were quick to label the performance blasphemous, claiming it insulted believers and

violated a sacred space. The official indictment drew on the same language, describing the performance as a sacrilegious humiliation of the age-old principles aimed at inflicting even deeper wounds to Orthodox Christians: “[the women’s] chaotically waving arms and legs, dancing and hopping . . . cause[ed] a negative, even more insulting resonance in the feelings and souls of the believers . . . desecrate[d] the cathedral, and offend[ed] the feelings of believers.”¹¹ Perhaps more surprisingly, many liberals and free-speech activists in Russia also felt that Pussy Riot had crossed the line when they chose the cathedral as the site of their performance; such activities in an art gallery were one thing, in a cathedral they were quite another.¹²

The Russian Orthodox Church’s historical relationship to the secular power of the state has been a peculiar one. Historically aligned with the czars, it was driven largely underground during the Soviet era, thus becoming one site of opposition to party politics as usual. In recent years, however, the church has emerged as a potent political force in Russia, affiliated with a surging nationalism and Putin’s hold on power.

In her closing statement at the trial, Yekaterina Samutsevich positioned Pussy Riot’s performance as an interruption in this arrangement. The cozy relationship between church and state in contemporary Russia, she claimed,

has required considerable quantities of professional lighting and video equipment, air time on national television for hours-long live broadcasts, and numerous background shoots for morally and ethically edifying news stories, where the Patriarch’s well-constructed speeches would . . . help the faithful make the correct political choice during a difficult time for Putin preceding the election. . . . Our sudden musical appearance in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior with the song “Mother of God, Drive Putin Out” violated the integrity of the media image that the authorities had spent such a long time generating and maintaining, and revealed its falsity.¹³

So far, the performance feels like a classic punk gesture, with an assist perhaps from Guy Debord: a mixture of aesthetic, politi-

cal, and religious dissidence inserted deliberately into spaces of order and control, aimed at demolishing the society of the spectacle. Perhaps the most relevant precursor to Pussy Riot's "Punk Rock Prayer" is the intervention staged by several young Lettrist poets at Notre Dame Cathedral on Easter Sunday in 1950. In the middle of the service, Michel Mourre, dressed as a Dominican monk, climbed into a pulpit and began to read a sermon/poem that condemned the Catholic Church for "infecting the world with its funereal morality," and announced that God was dead "so that Man may live at last."¹⁴ The response was dramatic: the cathedral's guards attacked with their swords, and the crowd chased Mourre and his companions out of the cathedral and down to the Seine, where they were apprehended by the police.

Similar as these two events were, their consequences differed markedly. Though the Notre Dame incident was more shocking and disruptive, it drew a light response from the authorities: of the four conspirators, only Mourre was actually arrested; he was held for eleven days and then released, and the event itself quickly faded away. By contrast, the more modest disturbance caused by Pussy Riot elicited the more dramatic afterlife: the draconian sentences, the international attention, and the clear belief on the part of the authorities that, accusations of blasphemy notwithstanding, the real stakes were political. As one of the prosecution lawyers put it: "Lurching behind [Pussy Riot] are the real enemies of our state and of the Orthodox Christianity; those who instigated this multipurpose provocation are hiding behind Tolokonnikova's group, and [there are also others] hiding behind those who are hiding behind them" ("PW").

While there are doubtless many reasons for such official paranoia, the comparison to the French case highlights one striking difference. Mourre's group had conceived its gesture as boldly and simple-mindedly anti-religious, in the spirit of French anticlericalism stretching back to the eighteenth century; Pussy Riot, by contrast, rejected the government's claim that they were motivated by hatred of religion. Christianity, of course, has its own traditions of punk transgression: Jesus overturning the tables of the money changers in the temple; Martin Luther with his ninety-

five theses nailed to the door; Jenny Geddes, the Edinburgh woman who allegedly hurled her stool at the minister of St. Giles Cathedral and sparked the English Civil War. But more interesting is the history of theological interpretation to which Pussy Riot appeals. In fact, all three women used their closing statements to engage in a debate over the meaning of the gospels themselves.

Maria Alyokhina, for example, notes a change in the historical disposition of the church regarding the Gospel that effectively forgets the role blasphemy played in the life and work of Jesus:

The Gospels are no longer understood as revelation, which they have been from the very beginning, but rather as a monolithic chunk that can be disassembled into quotations to be shoved in wherever necessary. . . . I think that religious truth should not be static, that it is essential to understand the instances and paths of spiritual development, the trials of a human being, his duplicity, his splintering. That for one's self to form it is essential to experience these things.

Alyokhina then explicitly links the blasphemous gesture to contemporary art when she remarks that “all of these processes—they acquire meaning in art and in philosophy. Including contemporary art. An artistic situation can and, in my opinion, must contain its own internal conflict” (“cs”). Here Alyokhina mounts a defense of dissidence, intervention, rupture, and conflict—the aesthetics of punk, to be sure, and similar also to the language of “contradiction” favored by critics like Theodor Adorno. Yet she aligns these oppositional gestures to what she calls “religious truth,” which consists of the splintering of the self and its consequent spiritual development that only become manifest when the Gospel is treated as a process of revelation rather than as a “monolithic chunk.”

Historians have noted that questions of doctrine and belief achieved a new importance during what is sometimes called the “confessional period,” when the chaotic politics of Western Europe in the aftermath of the Renaissance and Reformation led to an emphasis on religious uniformity. Five hundred years ago, “belief” meant something quite different from what it does now. As Wilfred Cantwell Smith demonstrates in his classic book *Faith and*

Belief (1979), the word's original sense implies passionate longing and relationship; its etymological ties to the German *belieben* (beloved), the Latin *libido* (pleasure), and the Old English *leof* (dear) suggest as much. To "believe" in someone was to put your trust in that person, hence presupposing a relationship and a certain posture or orientation—commitment, cherishing—toward that relationship, something partly captured in the Latin *credo*, also often translated as "believe." To lose one's belief is consequently a moral and emotional failing more than it is an epistemological one.¹⁵ Today we still sometimes try to capture this wider sense of belief with the word *faith*, understood to encompass a range of experiences, faculties, and dispositions, as well as cognitive "beliefs."

But in the early modern period, in line with the development of modern science, *belief* took on an increasingly epistemological charge. Religion became a set of propositions in which one professed belief; salvation depended upon believing in the correct package of propositions—about the substance of the Eucharist, the possibility of miracles, the precise mechanisms of salvation, and the nature of free will; and the relevant question became whether a particular mental state was *true*.¹⁶ This placed a different kind of burden upon individuals, who now had to grasp precisely what it was they were professing to believe. "The traditional view," writes Peter Harrison, "had been that in the process of revelation God reveals himself. Now God reveals saving knowledge." This is a new understanding of what it might mean to "believe" in God: instead of focusing on a revealed relationship, belief now focused on revealed *content* (*RE*, 24–25).¹⁷

One might suppose that Russian Orthodoxy had escaped at least some of these dramatic changes. But Alyokhina's distinction between the gospels as "revelation" and the gospels as a "monolithic chunk" suggests that, from her perspective, at any rate, this is not entirely the case. She claims that the Orthodox Church is focusing on the content of people's beliefs rather than the experience of an unfolding revelation. And she implies what critics like Charles Taylor, Talal Asad, and Saba Mahmood have charged explicitly, namely, that the focus on the uniformity of belief is a *secular* process, insofar as its real goal is the consolidation of state power

and governmental control over its subjects.¹⁸ Once religious belief becomes a matter of concern for state power, blasphemy becomes inseparable from a threat to the state, and thus, counterintuitively, Pussy Riot's critique of official culture becomes a theological, rather than atheist, gesture.

The potency of that gesture becomes most clear in Yekaterina Samutsevich's closing statement: "In our performance," she writes, "we dared, without the Patriarch's blessing, to unite the visual imagery of Orthodox culture with that of protest culture, thus suggesting that Orthodox culture belongs not only to the Russian Orthodox Church, the Patriarch, and Putin, but that it could also ally itself with civic rebellion and the spirit of protest in Russia" ("CS"). Most striking here, perhaps, is the language of "uniting" Orthodox and protest culture, rather than setting them against each other. This is done, Samutsevich suggests, in the name of a democratic ideal: both cultures are (or ought to be) properties of the people rather than of one group or another. The performance, on this analysis, becomes a visual and aural demonstration of what Alyokhina had called "internal conflict," something posed by all three women as the space in which religious revelation happens. Art, religion, and politics are not conceptually separated but deliberately mixed up, in the name of a religious truth that extends into public life—an act made necessary by the process of secularization.

Round About the World

In the early 1990s, Moses Tay, the Anglican archbishop of Singapore and the primate of the Anglican Province of South-East Asia, visited Vancouver to attend a conference on church growth. In Stanley Park, Tay observed the city's famous totem poles and promptly organized prayer meetings in order to exorcize their evil spirits. Local Anglican leaders, working hard to build a relationship with native communities, were appalled. But Tay refused to apologize.

In his book *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, the historian Philip Jenkins uses this anecdote as an example of the tensions between liberal Northern Christianity and

its more conservative Southern versions.¹⁹ And at first blush the commotion caused by Tay's actions does seem structured by a familiar fault line: modern liberal tolerance versus a religious intensity that had not yet been appropriately transformed and privatized, as if Tay and his premodern rituals lagged behind Vancouver's liberal Anglicans by several hundred years. A little reflection, however, suggests that the iconoclastic aspect of Tay's exorcism rests on a deep if unarticulated pluralism. This indeed is one of the paradoxes of iconoclasm: in the very act of destroying the object, the iconoclast grants it power. For if icons and idols were really just dead matter, then why did early modern reformers lavish such attention on their destruction, and on recording with such detail exactly what they had done? Here, for example, is William Dowsing describing his activities in Gorleston Church near Great Yarmouth, East Anglia, in 1644:

In the chancel, as it is called, we . . . broke twelve apostles, carved in wood, and cherubims, and a lamb with a cross . . . broke in pieces the rails, and broke down twenty-two popish pictures of angels and saints. . . . Ordered eighteen angels off the roof, and cherubims to be taken down, and nineteen pictures on the windows. . . . We brake [*sic*] down a cross on the steeple, and three stone crosses in the chancel, and a stone cross in the porch.²⁰

Idol-breaking may well be designed to show that the object could not protect itself, that it was merely matter—but it also tacitly admits that the object possesses a strange power. Ironically, by according its enemies the status of enemies, the iconoclastic temperament takes them and their objects seriously. Iconoclasm is in this sense the material realization of a spiritual exorcism—an acknowledgment, against its own demystifying impulses, that there is more to things than meets the eye.

Tay's actions go beyond even this already paradoxical situation. Most anthropologists think that the totem poles of the Pacific Northwest were never objects of worship. Christian missionaries, however, tended to view them through the lens of idolatry, and that seems to be Tay's perspective as well. In his "misreading" of the poles as potent objects of veneration, then, Tay brings into be-



Fig. 1. Totem poles in Stanley Park, Vancouver. Photo by Prayitno Hadinata. Reproduced from Flickr in accordance with the Creative Commons attribution license.

ing their potency as such. What many regard as a cultural expression to be photographed, admired, and studied, Tay apparently regarded as something much more formidable. The fact that the Stanley Park totem poles rest on land formerly owned by First Nations peoples adds a further layer of irony to this event. Situated as representatives of a “culture” and an obsolescent way of life, the poles-as-tourist-attraction could be seen as an example of secularization, mapped onto a familiar transition from tradition to modernity. By treating them as things of power, Tay resists this seductive narrative. He is, among other things, working with a different time scale.

Tay’s exorcism is thus blasphemous in several directions at once. His actions violate the sacred space of the object itself, presumably offending native leaders. But they do so by *creating* that sacred space, in the same manner as God’s founding interdict in Eden: division and transgression appear once again as internal to religion.

Finally, Tay's actions, with their different temporality, also profane the liberal, progressive space of Stanley Park as a repository of culture to be respected.

There is more to be said about this last observation. Liberal alternatives to iconoclasm—tolerance, respect for difference—can be iconoclastic in their own way, since they elevate reason or critical acumen to a place above the fray of historical and political struggle. Marx makes this point in “On the Jewish Question” when he chastises the Young Hegelians for assuming that the criticism of religion is enough to banish it. Indictments of reason's iconoclastic ambitions run with varying degrees of intensity through some of the foundational texts of modern critical theory: not only within Marx's text, but within Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, and Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.²¹ In a related fashion, Charles Taylor, Talal Asad, and Stanley Fish have called attention to the way that critical iconoclasm legitimates itself by claiming to be neutral or value-free.²² And the idea that modern liberal tolerance neuters the very religious formations that its tolerance seeks to preserve is a theme variously explored by Kirstie McClure, Wendy Brown, and William Connolly.²³ Liberals, to return to our example, may see exorcism as outdated, but Archbishop Tay recognized the Vancouver totems as sites of power. And indeed, by all accounts Vancouver's Anglican establishment reacted more strongly to Tay than did local native leaders. In fact, when Tay next sought to visit the city, in 1999, it was the local bishop who barred his entry; progressives, in this case, were the ones drawing the lines.

Tay's iconoclasm also highlights a third element, however, and it is the one I wish to focus on here: the politics of time. The most striking thing about his action is not that it exposes the pretensions of liberal reason but that it juxtaposes two different ways of measuring time: a modern time scale of tourism, appreciation, and respect for difference on the one hand and a non-modern scale of confrontation, spiritual power, and dramatic change on the other. Tay, it must be emphasized, is not a backwards-looking authoritarian; he is a globe-trotting manager and postmodern transnational

actor who is, by the very same token, a conduit for a non-modern temporality. To perform an exorcism in Stanley Park is not so much to try to turn back the clock as it is to insist on the simultaneity of multiple clocks ticking at different rates.

Iconoclasm is the kind of thing that nowadays goes under the name of “creative destruction.” And like that bit of management-speak, it comes packaged with a strange and non-linear kind of temporality. Rather than letting the disenchanting path of history take its course by allowing idolatry to give way to superstition and superstition to the light of reason, iconoclasm has a more antagonistic and creative relationship to history. Rather than “telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary,” in the words of Walter Benjamin, the iconoclast “establishes a conception of the present as the ‘time of the now’ which is shot through with chips of Messianic time.”²⁴ As Benjamin implies and as the history of iconoclasm bears out, the ideology of progress will not be displaced without some violence, real or metaphorical. “The iconoclasts,” writes Margaret Aston in her definitive account of early modern English idol-breakers, saw “the possibilities of controlling minds through imagery or the destruction of imagery, loading or unloading mental processes with visual effects.”²⁵ If there is something new on the horizon, it will emerge only as the result of a disruption in the normal course of things.

During the political and intellectual upheavals of the early modern period, the mental states of believers became a matter of interest to those in authority. True religion became “a body of certain knowledge”—something that one could have rather than an orientation that defined who one was. Newly equipped with qualities understood to belong properly to it, religion became an “outsider’s term,” part and parcel of a developing science of comparative religion designed to accord with the new natural sciences. Consequently, a new science of religion became possible, as suggested in the various taxonomies that began by the early seventeenth century to divide the world’s “religions” into four categories: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Idolatry.²⁶

The first important English book to use the word *religions* in the plural appeared in 1613. Penned by an energetic Anglican minis-

ter named Samuel Purchas, it was called *Purchas His Pilgrimage: Or Relations of the World and the Religions Observed in All Ages and Places Discovered, from the Creation Unto This Present*. If that title isn't daunting enough, a glance at the table of contents immediately confirms the ambition of the enterprise: even the first and shortest edition of 1613 runs to 752 pages; by the time of the fourth edition of 1626, the *Pilgrimage* topped 1,000 pages.

Purchas believed himself to be doing something new, "an enterprise never yet (to my knowledge) by any, in any language, attempted."²⁷ This was a survey of the world's religions grouped by region—together, as his subtitle promised, "*With briefe descriptions of the countries, nations, states, discoveries, private and publike customes, and the most remarkable rarities of nature, or humane industrie, in the same.*" Thus the *Pilgrimage* implicitly proposed that the world's religions be treated not as heresies but as the central element of what Purchas called "customes" and we would call "culture." Indeed, he was the most influential early writer to make the crucial distinction between "religion" in the singular, by which he meant Christianity, and "religions" in the plural.

When it came to those religions, Purchas was struck by all the activity that they encouraged: sacrifices and rituals presided over by astrologers, shamans, and magicians, practices whose purpose was obscure but clearly central to the many social formations that filled his book almost to bursting. At home, however, the news was not so good. Here Purchas saw divine judgment against the sorry state of western Christianity wherever he turned. He stressed the schisms that afflicted it, "torne and rent by . . . Sects and Heresies" (PP, 202). Further, he was less than impressed with village ministers who "onely read the service . . . and never studie for more." "Even the Heathen shall rise up in judgment against them," he wrote, for his literary pilgrimage showed that most of the world's religions involved the doing of many things. Perhaps, Purchas supposed, reading of all this activity taking place elsewhere would inspire the sleeping guardians of the true religion at home, since "otherwise, for outward and bodily ceremonies, the Turkes and Jewes in their manifold devotions in their Oratories every day, and other Heathen would convince us of Idlenesse" (PP, 7). His title pages, in

their virtually endless taxonomy and their range from Asia to Africa to the Americas, implicitly recognized this new historical reality and demonstrated the kind of energy that would be needed to meet its challenge. In the new global marketplace of religion, England's slumbering Christians needed a prod from the global cultures to which they suddenly found themselves connected.

For Purchas, the somnolence of the country clergy required the wake-up call of a religiously plural world. Turks, Jews, even "Heathens," will "rise up in judgment" against this complacency. And if Purchas is in this sense the first face of global Anglicanism, who better than Archbishop Tay to represent its latest? For Tay, too, the story of the West is one of spiritual decline, a drugged sleep verging on death. As he wrote in his 2009 autobiography, "The pathetic spiritual state of the Church in the West did not happen overnight. In my travels to minister in churches in the West, I had already noted how far the churches had departed from scriptural norms, even when huge allowances were made for cultural differences."²⁸ From this angle, Tay's actions in Stanley Park were not addressed to the totem poles but to the "pathetic" Anglicans who fail to see that these expressions of a different culture also pose a fundamental challenge to their somnolent way of life. Like Purchas's "Heathens," the totem poles stand in judgment. But one can only see this if one also sees the totems as more than objects in which the past merely congeals. As critics of the "Church in the West," the totem poles are active historical presences. In the formulations of Purchas and Tay both, history is layered and complex rather than progressive and linear.

In his own meditations on history, Benjamin speculates that something about the present situation might "concentrate" an earlier moment, "such that everything past . . . can acquire a higher grade of actuality than it had in the moment of its existing."²⁹ Rather than mere events filling the "homogenous, empty time" of modernity, Benjamin claims the past as the potential site of an intervention in the present (*t*, 261). This struggle against the age, simultaneously a struggle against the phenomenology of secular time and its idols, demands a certain kind of political activism on the

part of a writer, who must “blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history” (*I*, 263). It likewise demands the intellectual posture that Benjamin refers to as an “awakening” (*AP*, 458). As if progress, as mere history of cause and effect giving meaning to the empty time of modernity, has also put us to sleep. And as if the point of criticism is to wake us up from this secular slumber, from what Purchas called “Lethargie,” and become alive once again to the multiple possibilities that adhere to each moment.

And so it came to pass that in January 2000, over the objection of the archbishop of Canterbury, Moses Tay, together with Emmanuel Kolini, the archbishop of Rwanda, consecrated two North American bishops. This led in short order to the creation of the AMIA (Anglican Mission in the Americas) and the remarkable phenomenon of Anglican clergy and congregations in Virginia, South Carolina, Texas, Toronto, Vancouver, and elsewhere under the jurisdiction of various conservative bishops in the global South, including those from Rwanda, the Congo, and Singapore. The group’s website claims that it has added a new North American congregation every three weeks for eight straight years.³⁰ One can perhaps imagine Tay updating Purchas, addressing liberal North American Anglicans like this: “Look! the heathens have indeed risen up in judgment against you; they are right here, in Stanley Park and elsewhere, but you are too sleepy to notice. We global Anglicans, we who have seen the world, who are *from* the world, know better. *We* are awake.”

Pussy Riot and Moses Tay struggle in their different ways with the legacies of the early modern European nation-state, with its focus on belief, and its now deeply familiar blend of religious privatization and state sponsorship.³¹ In that formation, spaces—the space of the nation and the public but also the cathedral and the park—are conceptualized as secular, in the specific sense that they are places where we encounter the official division between private belief and public action. I have argued that in response to this colonization of space, both Pussy Riot and Tay try to activate a politics of time: of revelation, of creative destruction, and of a past “blasted” (to use Benjamin’s violent verb) out of its congealed and homo-

geneous course and into a dynamic relationship with the present. Although the contents and contexts of these actions are historically distinct, both gestures share a formal structure. By crossing real or imaginary lines, the form of blasphemy also crosses time zones and temporal boundaries.

The Lone and Level Sands

Scholars of religion have long been fascinated with the so-called Axial Age, approximately 700–200 BCE, when most of the world’s major religious and ethical systems emerged independently: foundational texts of Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Platonism, Confucianism, and Buddhism all date to this period.³² In many accounts this emergence is understood as a “development” of religion away from primitive, community-based polytheism and toward a more sophisticated spiritual vision. Advances in agriculture during this period meant the advent of surplus wealth and increased leisure time. Leisure time lead in turn to a more complex interior life, and thus a more richly developed spirituality.

Before monotheism, however, was the State. Durkheim proposed that primitive polytheist religions ensured social cohesion by referring social conflict to forces outside of human history and understanding. In *The Disenchantment of the World*, Marcel Gauchet takes the argument a step further: once political domination enters human history in the form of the state, he argues, social conflicts are not neutralized but rather exacerbated. There is suddenly an objective division between those who are on the side of power and those who are not. The order of the world moves from being received to being imposed, and this invites a debate—unimaginable heretofore—about the meaning of the social whole.³³ Gauchet argues that without this prior transformation effected by the state, primitive religion could not have taken the decisive turn toward monotheism, with its characteristic opposition between worldly and otherworldly power.

But if the state sets the conditions for the emergence of monotheism, what happens when the state fades away? Such is the question Percy Shelley asks in his 1818 sonnet, “Ozymandias”:

I met a traveller from an antique land,
 Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
 Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,
 Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
 And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
 The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
 And on the pedestal, these words appear:
 My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings,
 Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
 Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
 Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
 The lone and level sands stretch far away."³⁴

Shelley's sonnet moves with dizzying rapidity through a series of narrative frames: it begins with a speaking "I," addressing the audience, shifts to the "traveller" addressing the speaker, and then by way of the epitaph arrives finally at Ozymandias addressing his people. These frames work to distance the reader from the immediacy of experience, echoing and enacting at the level of construction the very temporal consciousness that the poem thematizes.

The Ozymandias of Shelley's poem is the Pharaoh Ramesses II (or Ramesses the Great), who ruled from 1279 to 1213 BCE. He was the most enthusiastic builder of monuments since the age of the pyramids, fifteen hundred years earlier; indeed, as the poem tells us, his "works" are the means by which he stamps his power throughout his domain. Like other long-ruling pharaohs, Ramesses was deified while still alive, thereby combining in himself both temporal and divine authority. But such an elevation also, of course, brings the gods to earth and entangles them in human history. This is only exacerbated when the pharaoh/god marks out some of his people for discriminatory treatment. What does it mean when certain people under the god's domain are not on his side? This question matters for the history of religion, for according to tradition Ramesses II is the pharaoh of the Exodus narrative. In the third chapter of that book, Yahweh tells Moses that he has

been watching as the Egyptians mistreat the Israelites; he has been suffering along with them, and now has a plan to rescue them and bring them to a new land. In other words, there are now two gods: the god of the state (Ramesses/Ozymandias), and this new god (Yahweh, who claims to be an old god) who will call his chosen people out of the state and into a new relationship with the divine.

But how does this new god talk to his people while remaining at the same time wholly Other? In the story of the burning bush, we see, as it were, monotheism theorized for the first time:

There the angel of YHWH appeared to [Moses] in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. . . . When YHWH saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then he said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” . . . And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3:2, 4–6)

One cannot imagine this moment outside of the state that gives it meaning, for it is the pharaoh’s mistreatment of the Israelites that creates the need for *another kind* of god. The contrast between this new god and the state power from which it takes its departure could not be more stark. States seek to extend their sovereignty and expand their sphere of influence; they go to war not so much to eliminate others as to assimilate them. Indeed, Ramesses II devoted most of his rule to expanding the boundaries of his empire by fighting wars in Syria and Nubia. With similar imperial aims, he signed what is believed to be the first peace treaty in history, with the Hittites. Such political domination aims to universalize. That is the function of monuments, of the “works” that Ozymandias instructs his hearers to look upon. He cares not that his subjects “believe” in him, but rather that they acknowledge his power.

By contrast, Yahweh particularizes. He chooses a specific people, calls them away from their entanglement with the state, allows no treaties with outsiders, and builds monuments not with stone but with his faithfulness through time:

But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” (Exodus 3:13–14)

The clear contrast here between the scattered remains of Ozymandias and the constant self-identity of Yahweh is built upon two distinct acts of naming: “My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings” and “I AM WHO I AM.” The first, an inscription on a monument, presents itself as an epitaph, and immediately refers the reader beyond itself: “Look on my works.” In Shelley’s poem the epitaph is vertiginous precisely because there are no works left to look upon. The second act of naming, of course, is radically different, for it points not beyond itself but, tautologically, back to itself. There is nothing external that secures Yahweh’s identity. He simply *is* by virtue of his speech act, and is therefore protected from the kinds of historical contingencies that have doomed Ozymandias.

It is no accident that Coleridge tried to build an entire theory of poetic imagination upon the foundation of “I AM.” The lyric voice seems to demand such assertions of identity. This may lead to a deepening of the experience, but it also defines its limits. By establishing holy ground, where identity is secure, Yahweh also makes it possible to imagine a profane space, where things are a little less clear. Moses immediately grasps the significance of this: “and when they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” he asks. In the spatialized world over which Ozymandias/Pharaoh has dominion, such a question is inconceivable: questions of identity are simply referred to the evidence of sovereign power: “look on my works.” Only with the new order announced from the burning bush does that question become pressing, for Yahweh has no works to display.

Yahweh’s answer, for its part, definitively inserts Moses into the temporal dynamics of divinity rather than the spatial dynamics of the state: Moses, says Yahweh, should tell the Israelites that “‘YHWH, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations” (Exodus 3:15).

The sign of this god is carried in language, memory, and tradition rather than through the organization of space.

The moral of Shelley's sonnet seems rather obvious: time will destroy all the works of human hands. But its more surprising implication—which runs against the grain of modern theories of religion and the state—is that political domination creates monotheism as a form of resistance to the state, a blasphemy against temporal power that turns it into a “lifeless thing.” The state may pass away, but the spiritual vision to which it gave rise, and which builds its monuments in the heart rather than on the sand, seems impervious to such dismembering. It defines a vast field for itself outside the purview of temporal power. Of course, it is difficult to hold onto this new vision, which is why throughout the exodus Moses has to keep calling the people back from their old gods, who took material form, and to the new god, whom they cannot see.

There is one more turn to the Exodus narrative. We know who Yahweh is, because he tells us; but what do we know of the human actors in this drama? Shelley's poem constructs its sense of layered historical vistas as if the reader were tuning in on a conversation that had begun long before. The opening address—“I met a traveller”—comes without context: where are we? who is speaking? When the traveler takes over, he too begins abruptly: “Two vast and trunkless legs of stone stand in the desert.” Whatever question might have elicited this abrupt piece of information has disappeared, and as a result, one feels in this poem not the massive sweep of chronological history but rather dislocation and disjunction, much like the dismembered body of Ozymandias himself. To be sure, this sense of dislocation ironizes the king's assertion of self-identity as the “King of Kings.” As the traveler notes, perhaps a bit too cleverly, there is nothing here aside from remains—that is, bits and pieces, fragments. More telling, though, is the contrast between those fragments and the poem's own lyric voice, fashioned as simultaneously assured and anonymous: “I met a traveller.” If time scatters pieces of Ozymandias across the desert like so many abandoned toys, then all that remains are the kinds of fleeting, disconcerting encounters contained in phrases like “I met.” Although we can deduce that it is Yahweh, the god without a face, who is re-

sponsible for shattering Ozymandias's visage, he leaves behind no tautological assertion of identity upon which to build. No "I am," then; only an "I met." The poem is not, finally, about Ramesses; it is about the traveler, or more accurately about the meeting between an unnamed traveler and an unnamed speaker. Who is this traveler from an antique land, and why is he telling this particular story in this particular way? What routes has this story traveled in order to get here? Who have been its caretakers? Part of the poem's power hinges on the fact that we can't answer these questions.

Meeting Blasphemy's Anonymous Face

In his important meditation on blasphemy and secular criticism, Talal Asad writes that in the modern West, accusations of blasphemy tend to be interpreted against a background of negative liberty. If, as the early modern reformers seem to have thought, we do indeed possess our beliefs the way that we possess property, then banning certain speech acts because they are blasphemous seems like a denial of free expression. But it is an open question whether we really do own our beliefs or desires in this way—or whether, as appears more likely, they arrive trailing their own kinds of coercion, originating perhaps from cultural norms, from *habitus*, from love, or from comportment as well as religious traditions and faith commitments.³⁵

Asad uses this observation to highlight secularism's blindness to its own coercions. I would like to draw out a different implication. Skepticism about a notion of religious belief that is cognitive, voluntary, and self-enclosed should also entail skepticism about definitions of blasphemy that emphasize the individuals who are offended and the spaces where the offense takes place. It is finally anonymity, indeed depersonalization, that Shelley's sonnet accomplishes so strikingly. The Pussy Riot event gives a clear example of the intellectual and political stakes of this move. Russian authorities accused the group of "desecrating the cathedral, and offending the feelings of believers." This charge emphasizes that the performance violated two kinds of space: the sacred area of the cathedral and the interior domain of the individual conscience. In response,

Pussy Riot stressed the temporal dimensions of its performance, politically in terms of the electoral situation and the history of opposition in Russia and theologically in terms of revelation as an unfolding that happens in time. This line of defense may very well have been a strategic decision on the part of the women, but the sincerity of their response is not really the issue; indeed, to focus on whether Pussy Riot really *believed* what they were saying naturalizes cognitive mental states to the virtual exclusion of everything else.

This is a lesson partially lost on the human rights community, who have for obvious reasons tended to personalize “Nadya, Masha, and Katya”; advocates refer to their youth and their young children; media outlets lavish particular attention on the telegenic Nadezhda Tolokonnikova. To wit, a recent HBO documentary, *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer* (2013), focuses on the personalities and life stories of the three imprisoned women, revealing “the real people behind the balaclava-clad protesters.”³⁶ In the midst of this public-relations campaign, the writer for *Foreign Policy*, checking in with a couple of Pussy Riot members a year after the initial performance, found himself rather flummoxed: “It’s an odd sort of publicity tour. For security reasons, ‘Fara’ and ‘Shaiba,’ who appeared to be in their 20s, did not provide their real names, did not allow themselves to be photographed without their trademark balaclavas, and refused to discuss details about their backgrounds or travel itineraries.”³⁷

From the perspective I have been outlining here, this refusal to become a person is by far the most interesting thing about Pussy Riot.³⁸ Indeed, one might say that the balaclavas are the whole point. They are of course a feminist response to a patriarchal culture that values women primarily as sexual objects. But the bright colors are inviting and playful rather than aggressive, and that surely accounts for their ready adoption beyond the ranks of the collective itself. Protestors around the globe have donned balaclavas as a sign of solidarity with Pussy Riot and of dissent from official culture; as the anonymous collective expands, it transcends the boundaries of nation, language, and religion. Potentially, we could all join Pussy Riot. This is an “odd sort of publicity tour” if you think that the point of publicity is self-disclosure. But if the poten-



Fig. 2. Pussy Riot protestors in balaclavas. Photo by Grüne Bundestagsfraktion. Reproduced from Flickr in accordance with the Creative Commons attribution license.

tial power of anonymity is the point, then the refusal to remove the balaclava is exactly right.

I should emphasize that I am interpreting the balaclavas not (or not merely) as an ironic comment on the society of the spectacle but as something more earnest: a vehicle of revelation paradoxically dependent upon its impersonality. Revelation is a process, and what it reveals is not a person (“I am”) but a relation (“I met”). Like all relations, revelation unfolds over time. This is not the homogeneous empty time that Benjamin associated with modernity, to be “filled up” by human activity the way we might fill a pitcher of water. Rather, it is the time of anonymity, of layers, of loops and surprises; at certain key moments it is laden with significance. And although it does not map neatly onto our usual categories, there is a politics to this kind of time. The reactionary tradition of global Anglicanism that stretches from Samuel Purchas to Moses Tay shares with Pussy Riot’s oppositional stance a faith (if faith is the right word) in the event of revelation. This takes the form of a dramatic interruption of secular time by a completely different

temporal order. Played out simultaneously in sites where modernity meets tradition, and in a global media sphere that exists (almost) everywhere but nowhere in particular, these events call upon older histories and refuse linear progress in favor of temporalities that promiscuously mix the old and new. Revelation does not just happen; it must be brought into being through an act simultaneously critical and creative.

Shelley's sonnet, which I have read here as an oblique interpretation of the origin of monotheism, also asserts the power of time. And though it may seem that the leveling sands will have the final word in that poem, the time that shatters the old god also creates the possibility of a new one. A faceless god, this time, for Ozymandias's scattered countenance prefigures a god who speaks from burning bushes and directly into the heart and, strangely enough, seems to be seeking a relation with human beings rather than a kingdom where he can rule. Perhaps we could say that this god doesn't draw a line in the sand, that there is no line to be crossed, and that this god's best—indeed, only—messengers are anonymous travelers far from home.

Notes

1. Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 44.
2. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 21–22.
3. Genesis 2:16b–17. I use the New Revised Standard Version throughout.
4. Here I am following an argument made by Stanley Cavell in *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 49.
5. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 130.
6. This is not a story of secularization, if by that we mean simply the lifting away of religion to reveal a modern, secular self that was always there, waiting to be liberated. Taylor is interested, rather, in the phenomenology of religious experience in modernity: one cannot

- pass through the various battles over miracles, or the incarnation, or comparative religion, without something changing. Even if orthodoxy and ecclesiastical authority are reestablished, they have to be reestablished through effort: one comes away from such discussions with the sense that there are other options out there. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 30. Hereafter cited as SA.
7. Edward W. Said, "Secular Criticism," in *The World, The Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 16. Hereafter cited as "sc."
 8. This section draws on my short essay "Pussy Riot's Punk Prayer," *The Immanent Frame*, September 18, 2012, <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2012/09/18/pussy-riots-punk-prayer>.
 9. Indeed, as some commentators noted, the whole event seemed designed for Western consumption. See Nitsuh Adebe, "Why Pussy Riot Is Big in America but Not Russia," *Vulture*, August 18, 2012, <http://www.vulture.com/2012/08/why-pussy-riot-is-big-in-america-but-not-russia.html>.
 10. As this article was going to press, Putin released the last two members of the group still in custody, along with Mikhail Khodorkovsky and other prominent political dissidents. The move was widely understood to be part of a public relations campaign during the run-up to the Winter Olympics in Sochi.
 11. Quoted in Masha Lipman, "Putin's Religious War against the Female Punk-Rock Band Pussy Riot," *New Yorker*, July 24, 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2012/07/putins-religious-war-against-pussy-riot.html>. Hereafter cited as "pw."
 12. At the time of the Pussy Riot trial, Russia did not have blasphemy laws; authorities therefore turned to the language of "inciting religious hatred" and the charge of hooliganism. In July 2013 Putin signed a blasphemy law into effect. See Anya Bernstein, "An Inadvertent Sacrifice: Body Politics and Sovereign Power in the Pussy Riot Affair," *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 1 (Autumn 2013): 223. Hereafter cited as "1s." Bernstein's thoughtful essay focuses less on blasphemy than on the way the bodies of the women became the focus of media campaigns and governmental authority.
 13. "Pussy Riot Closing Statements," *N+1*, August 13, 2012, <http://nplu.sonemag.com/pussy-riot-closing-statements>. Hereafter cited as "cs."
 14. See Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twenti-*

- eth Century* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 259–60.
15. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). Hereafter cited as *FB*.
 16. Peter Harrison, “Religion” and the Religions in the English Enlightenment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2–3. Hereafter cited as *RE*.
 17. See also *FB*; Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 33–43.
 18. *SA*; Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) (hereafter cited as *FS*); Saba Mahmood, “Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation,” *Public Culture* 18, no. 2 (2006): 323–47.
 19. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 130.
 20. “Journal of William Dowsing,” *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archeology and Natural History* 6 (1888): 244, qtd. in Margaret Aston, *England’s Iconoclasts*, vol. 1, *Laws against Images* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 79.
 21. Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1972), 24–51; Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Scribner, 1958); Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961); Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1997).
 22. *FS*, 36; See also *SA*, 221–69; and Stanley Fish, *The Trouble with Principle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).
 23. Kirstie M. McClure, “Difference, Diversity, and the Limits of Toleration,” *Political Theory* 18, no. 3 (1990): 361–91; William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); for an earlier example of this critique, see Herbert Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 81–117.
 24. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 263. Hereafter cited as *I*.

25. Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, vol. 1, *Laws against Images* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 5.
26. *RE*, 26; see also *FB*, esp. 118. Also Donald S. Lopez Jr., "Belief," *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 21–35; C. John Sommerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England: From Religious Culture to Religious Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), esp. chapter 1, and Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), esp. 33. For "outsider's term," see Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269–84. The fourfold division began to break down by the late eighteenth century. Enlightenment historians like David Hume had already begun tracing the origin of modern monotheism in primitive polytheism, and the explosion of religious texts from around the globe (thanks to empire, better printing, translation, and increased knowledge of languages) raised questions about the adequacy of the four categories. Buddhism, Hinduism, and a dizzying array of "nature religions" were added to the fold by the nineteenth century. See Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
27. Samuel Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimage: Or Relations of the World and the Religions Observed in All Ages and Places Discovered, from the Creation Unto This Present* (London: Printed by William Stansby for Henrie Fetherstone, 1613), "Dedicatory Epistle," 2. Hereafter cited as *PP*.
28. Moses Tay, *Born for Blessings: An Autobiography of Moses Tay* (Singapore: Armour, 2009), 165.
29. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 857. Hereafter cited as *AP*.
30. "Established in 2000 as a missionary outreach of the Anglican Church of Rwanda, the Anglican Mission has focused on planting churches throughout North America, adding on average one new congregation every three weeks for the first eight years." <http://www.theamia.org/leadership>.
31. On the day I visited the Stanley Park totem poles, in the summer of 2010, a group of young Korean evangelicals was singing praise songs and handing out pamphlets there. When I asked them why they had

- chosen the totem poles as their base of operations, they told me that it was hard to get permits for evangelism elsewhere in Vancouver.
32. See, most recently, Robert Bellah and Hans Joas, eds., *The Axial Age and Its Consequences* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).
 33. Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 35.
 34. Donald H. Reiman, Neil Fraistat, and Nora Crook, eds., *The Complete Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, vol. 3 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 109–10.
 35. Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, Saba Mahmood, *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (Berkeley: Townsend Center for the Humanities/University of California Press, 2009).
 36. *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer* (Amnesty International, n.d.), www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/campaigns.
 37. Joshua Keating, “Breakfast with Pussy Riot,” *Foreign Policy*, June 7, 2013, http://ideas.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/06/07/breakfast_with_pussy_riot.
 38. There has been some recent theoretical attention to the ethics of anonymity, or what Jacques Khalip describes as “an ethics of engaged withdrawal or strategic reticence.” My own interest is in the politics rather than the ethics of this gesture. See Khalip, *Anonymous Life: Romanticism and Dispossession* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 3; and Anne-Lise François, *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).