

VIII CONGRESO DE ANTROPOLOGÍA

*Las identidades  
y las tensiones culturales  
de la modernidad  
Homenaje a la Xeración Nós*

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**GENEALOGY ORG:  
FAMILY TREES, THE WORLD WIDE WEB  
AND THE 'POLITICS OF CLEANLINESS'.  
A PLENARY PAPER PREPARED FOR THE VIII CONGRESS  
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Nunca he sido afecto a esa vanidad necrófila que lleva a tanta gente a inquirir el pasado y a quienes pasaron buscando las ramas y los injertos del árbol genealógico. Entiendo que cada uno de nosotros es, por encima de todo, hijo de sus obras, de lo que va haciendo durante el tiempo en que por aquí anda.

José Saramago, *Las Maletas del Viajero*

**Popular Genealogies and the Crisis of Connectivity:**

With a little anthropological, or better bio-anthropological, imagination we can easily conceive of a different possible world than the one we have evolved to live in, as the social animals we seem so decidedly to be. Suppose, like so many of the ungulates and ruminants, we were only ephemerally social --social annuals that is, socializing for annual reproductive purposes only, and otherwise and mainly living in lonely self isolation-- pursuing herbivorously and relatively pacifically our separated lives. What a solution that would be to the

abiding war between the sexes, and to the war over and with the next generation --although even more marked, perhaps, would be a gendered view of the world. But we are, for better or for worse, perennials with perennial social interests in others of our ilk.

In recognition of current cybernetic usages we might redescribe that enduring social interest in making connections with others as a preoccupation with *connectivity*. That interest is troubled --as we have been especially made aware in this century now ending-- by feelings of repugnance and repulsion.<sup>1</sup> These feelings are frequently in play in the relations between groups and cultures. And they energize "the politics of cleanliness" a phenomenon taking many forms: from such mildly callous humiliations such as "blazon populaire" and ethnic jokes,<sup>2</sup>

1 For a discussion of some of these issues of cleanliness and hierarchy as between rural and urban society in Iberia, see J. A. Fernandez de Rota, "Betanzos, Siglos XVI-XX: Suciedad Aldeana y Limpieza Urbana." in *Historia y Fuente Oral* No. 9. 1993. See also the response of the author of this essay commenting upon the public health notion of "fecal cycle": the relative rapidity with which human and animal effluent returns to be a part of and both a sustenance to and an infective factor in ongoing social life: as for example in the rapidity in rural life in which manure, human and animal, is returned to the earth as plant and eventually human nutrients. The pacing of that cycle has also been a point of hierarchy as between northern and southern European society. J.W. Fernandez, "El Ciclo Fecal: Comentario al Articulo de J. A. Fernandez de Rota", *Historia y Fuente Oral*, NO.9. 1993:87-89. Urban or urbane society has long held the rapidity of the rural cycle in repugnance. Perhaps it is all summed up best in the term "untouchable" in the Indian caste system which has in part to do with the fecal cycle! .

2 The WWW has become a trove, not to say "treasure trove", of ethnic jokes as can be confirmed by searching <ethnic jokes> in any search engine. In America the predominant ethnic objects of these jokes, immigrant ethnics identified by national origin in contrast to the national objects in Europe, are Polish, Italians, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Norwegians Swedes and Irish. Spaniards, that is people of direct Spanish descent, are hardly present in keeping with their scarce representation as a community in American life. It is arguable that the surge of ethnic jokes on the Internet may be a displacement to a kind of authorless cyber-underground caused by the new pluralism in

through such harsher separatisms as ghetto-ization and caste systems, to the cruel and ruthless efforts at ethnic cleansing and genocide we have witnessed in this century. Recently, as we are well aware, the powers that be in Europe and America have wished to end the century and begin the new millennium by taking a militant stand against "ethnic cleansing." The purpose of this paper is to make a practical but more pacific contribution to our understanding of that dehumanizing phenomenon. That is, we will try to exercise the anthropological imagination in a rather different way than by reviving evolutionary scenarios by examining what the widespread interest in the world in genealogy --a topic of some obvious interest to anthropologists after all-- may contribute to it. The fundamental question is: What do we imagine when we imagine that genealogy is important? And what do we imagine by 'family resemblances' when these --very much nourished by genealogy-- are made definitive of identity? Our aims must be modest, but we engage very big questions in human relations, well worthy of anthropological inquiry and effort.

This appropriate anthropological meditation or speculation on our social animality<sup>3</sup>, to begin with, and our favoring of "family resem-

America and the increasing criticism of inter-ethnic intolerance in any form made in such 'positive thinking' movements as "affirmative action" or "political correctness." See Thomas Horenkamp, "Contemporary Folklore in the United States: Ethnic Jokes on the Internet". Unpub. MA Thesis. University of Chicago.1997. That ethnic jokes relate to our subject matter here, the dynamics of genealogical linkage, can be seen in the advertising blurbs for Ethnic Heritage books and Heritage CDs that appear on the same web page with Ethnic Joke collections.

3 For who better than an anthropologist to speculate about other ways of being human, not only about the constructedness of culture which is our more frequent speculation on the ontology in our ontogeny but about possible alternate consequences of evolution and adaptation, the choices" made and the "choices not made in phylogeny such as we might better understand the fatefulness of the human career! And such speculation may be particularly important at this moment of millennial turnover!

blances”, to end with --which is a speculation on the ultimate social configuration of human worlds-- comes to mind when one contemplates this new world of our daily engagement with “others” (others who, by familistic criteria, may resemble us very little if at all) that has suddenly sprung full blown and with great *eclat* into our lives: the World Wide Web. A new and absorbing way to be connected with the works and lives of others. ‘Connectivity’ has become the name of the game ... though, of course, it always has been, in one sense, the name of the game for any social animal, a fact that is deeply embedded as figurations in our language games, as I mean to make clear. Anthropologists repeatedly recognize that what, in the end, our discipline is about and about which it is particularly informed is ‘the problems of social relationships’<sup>4</sup>. It seems that we cannot, alas, solve our problems in any permanent way through ‘loneliness,’ for that is a state of only passing or pathological interest to a social animal. We are destined to be animals in which connectivity, relationship, is nearly everything to us; and we will often enough --as the 20<sup>th</sup> century, if not the entire 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium has taught us-- ‘cleanse’ or kill in search of it --or in denial of it. One crucial struggle for humans as we enter the third millennium is surely that of redefining, in this respect, what is at present called our “rules of engagement”<sup>5</sup>. The object of this essay is,

4 A commitment to this view has been enduring in British social anthropology as an inheritance, perhaps, of its Durkheimianism. The work of Marilyn Strathern is an instance of that whether she is reflecting on the partiality and plenitude of connections (*Partial Connections*: 1991), assaying the role of evocation (genealogical or otherwise) in persuading us or not persuading us about our “significant relationships” (“Out of Context: the Persuasive Fictions of Anthropology”: 1990 (1986) or speculating, as I do here, on the nostalgic return to relational thinking in reaction to the new millennium technologies biological (in her case) and cybernetic in our case here. (“Nostalgia and the New Genetics,”:1995)

5 A phrase used by President Clinton and other NATO leaders and commanders, after the NATO bombing, of Serbia and Kosovo, for defining and establishing relationships of greater mutual tolerance between the various contesting ethnic

in view of some challenges to connectivity which repose in present definitions of the human situation, to think of what that redefinition might consist. These are definitions bound up in the idea of genealogical connection. To pursue this objective I will first engage in some popular ethnography!

With our expertise on working out the ‘dynamics of the categorical’ over time in the structure of relationships, whether those of kin, clan, and club --that is, our expertise with the ‘genealogical method’ broadly defined-- it is likely that we anthropologists will find a particular professional interest in a certain kind of emphasis on ‘connectivity’ that has recently sprung forth as WORLD WIDE WEB search sites: these are sites that promise WEB users to organize their interest in their ancestry (<Ancestry.com Inc>) or their genealogy (<MyFamily.com>). The potential of this emerging enthusiasm first surfaced in December of 1998 in a *Wall Street Journal* article touting this new use of the Web for genealogical research as offering also an opportunity for startup investing<sup>6</sup>. Subsequently an April issue of *PC Magazine*<sup>7</sup> reviewed four software programs, all WEB associated, which enable the users to research and structure their own family

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groups in the Balkans.

6 Jon G Auerbach, “Web Handicapper’s Latest Horse is Genealogy,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Page B1. 12/17/1998. As is usual any new WEB enthusiasm usually spins off into a crowded field: “Ancestry faces competition from a raft of other *genealogy* sites. One is a popular destination run by Learning Co. with a link to a popular software program called “Family Tree Maker.”

7 *PC Magazine*, Vol 18 (8) April 20, 1999. Pgs 261-268. In their section “After Hours, Genealogy Sites and Software to Find Your Roots.” The four software packages reviewed: Family Tree Creator Deluxe; Family Tree Maker Deluxe, version 6; Generations Grande Suite 5.2; Ultimate Family Tree Platinum. The magazine also lists the Web Sites with more or less free information derived from various genealogy centers, for example that of The Church of Latter Day Saints or Mormons.

genealogies through personal research in combination with the use of information available on the WEB. This particular review article went so far as to coach readers in the relevant terms and methods of genealogical research and to suggest 'pedigree criteria' for an exacting construction of family trees. Appropriate and clarifying collateral reading is also suggested, though not the classic essay by W.H.R. Rivers<sup>8</sup>. One supposes that the focus is on rather more reader-friendly work<sup>9</sup>.

Evidently there are a lot of people out there building family genealogies. An anthropologist would have to observe that there always have been. But the present phenomenon deserves some comment in a world said to be globalizing, the same kind of comment that has for some time now observed the many localizing reactions that have arisen in recent years to provide anchorage in the presence of the ambiguities and the queasy oceanic experience of that very globalization, which has produced the neologism 'glocalization.' The dissolving of fixed and stable categories in globalized thinking, in other words, has produced a counter interest in the persistent and long satisfying categories. Genealogy, like the renewed interest in place and locality, is one of these. It is incumbent on anthropologists --who invented the genealogical method and who have often structured their ethnographies upon the armature of genealogy-- to be attentive to it. This can mean engaging, as suggested here, in ethnography of the popular as purveyed in the media.

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8 W.H. R. Rivers, "The genealogical method of anthropological inquiry," *The Sociological Review*, Vol 3 (1), 1910, but reprinted in *Kinship and Social Organization*, *L.S.F. Monographs in Social Anthropology* NO. 34., London: The Athlone Press. 1968:97-109.

9 Cyndi Howell, *Netting your Ancestors: Genealogical Research on the Internet* Genealogy, Publishers. 1997; Matthew Helm and April Leigh Helm, *Genealogy Online for Dummies*, IDG Books: Dummies Technology Press. 1998.

In the American context, for example, a maximum imprimatur to the interest in the stability of family trees and genealogical research --the category known as 'fa-mily'-- is given by Martha Stewart, a contemporary media icon of upscale domesticity, in the April 1999 issue of her Coffee Table magazine, *Martha Stewart Living*<sup>10</sup>. In her "Letter from Martha" she declares her sadness and guilt that she has not been more attentive to her own family tree, She goes on to encourage the reader to accompany her on the adventure "of unraveling the family skeins of time". "No other sleuthing job will ever be so satisfying" she promises.

Stewart's uneasiness about her own inattentiveness to genealogy may be because Martha is of Polish descent which has not been as upscale and as flourishing a genealogical referent in the American ethnic hierarchy as has been the Scots or English referent of her married name. Martha has also been divorced from her husband which also acts to shake the stolidity of the family tree. In all fairness she is honest about this sotto voce turbulence in her family tree and open and encouraging about the ethnic surprises that inquiry into family trees may provide. Still, as regards the status claims so often bound up in popular genealogical inquiry, it seems doubtful that Martha Ruskowski Kostyra would have made such a name for herself as a paragon of American decorum and upscale domesticity<sup>11</sup>.

In keeping with Martha Stewart's thematic commitment to inculcating in the reader a homey decorum in every aspect of domestic life, this feature article expends much effort in showing a variety of

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10 *Martha Stewart Living*, April 1999. Pp. 22 and 220-231.

11 It should be obvious that this author finds these American notions of ethnic distinction regrettable, an embarrassing rash on the fair body of our democracy..

ways to use family trees in home decor. It thus avoids, as any decorous treatment of problematic matters and particularly social problems must do, some of the more knotty issues tied up with genealogy in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society. These, in respect to popular genealogy, arose recently in the New York Times, in an article on the problems raised when third and fourth grade children in New York grammar schools were, as a homework assignment, asked to consult their parents and construct family trees<sup>12</sup>. This assignment described as a "mainstay" in grade schools for most of this century was also increasingly causing embarrassment and anguish among the significant number of children who were adopted or members of single parent or alternative households, such as children of gay parents. Those children who were members of families who did not follow the nuclear family model of two biological parents of opposite sex traceable to biological grandparents and biological ancestors tended to be confused or consternated by the assignment. Unable to produce "respectable" biological parents, such children often enough concluded that there was something wrong and unacceptable with them. One single gay parent described the assignment as an "altogether terrible experience" for both him and his child. Parents of adopted children were especially critical of narrow biological definitions of family tree.

While some teachers continue to insist that there is "no substitute for traditional genealogical research" many others, in view of increasing diversity of family formation, are allowing family trees to be built out of relatives of any kind and degree, including best friends, arguing that the important constituent of a family tree is warmth and future fruitfulness of relationship, rather than biology in a strict and

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12 Lynette Holloway, "In Schools, Family Trees Bend With Times," *The New York Times on the Web*, February 7, 1999. (Section: The New York Region) <http://www.nytimes.com/library/natio...regio-nal/020799edu-family-trees.html>.

antecedent and rooted sense. Letters to the Editor on this article<sup>13</sup> were especially critical of the invidiousness implicit in conservative argument for the indispensability of genealogical knowledge in the biological sense. The exercise conceived as anchored in biology was not only an invasion of privacy but its hidden agenda was to privilege those families who had lived longest in the United States. As one letter put it,

In a world of donor eggs, surrogate wombs, gay parents, single parents and cross continental adoptions, educators need to extricate themselves from their obsession with children's ancestries and instead focus on the promise of their futures<sup>14</sup>.

The results of this brief media ethnography on popular genealogy --that is its demonstration that there is a "politics of identity in genealogy" and that impulses of self arrogation and invidiousness often enough accompany genealogical research --will hardly surprise anthropologists. The manipulation of genealogies for political or social class-serving- purposes is, among us, old and enduring knowledge, of course, and frequently recognized in anthropological inquiry. But in the present context of a crisis of connectivity brought about by the very facility of connectivity on the world wide web and the placelessness brought about by the very exaltation of the globe as the ultimate place of human residence, anthropological attention to evolving and reactive interests in genealogy is an important and appropriate disciplinary task. We might be tempted to call it a third millennium task.

### The Persuasions of Pedigrees:

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13 Letters to the Editor, *The New York Times on the Web* February 13, 1999. ([Http://www.-nytimes.com/99/02/13//letters/lklei.html](http://www.-nytimes.com/99/02/13//letters/lklei.html))

14 Letter of Ruth Levy, New York, Feb 8<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

The popular ethnography of the media we have conducted here is mainly New World in locus, although the worldwide influence of that New Electronic World is not to be underestimated. Of course, as is well realized, the Iberian Peninsula is not immune to the obsessions of genealogy nor of the associated politics of family identity and family/ethnic cleanliness. The "interest in purity of family blood" is widespread in the world and a frequent accompaniment of genealogical inquiry, although its institutionalization as a bureaucratic obsession during the Inquisition is an instance of that preoccupation of particularly "triste memoria." More recently, and in respect to anxieties about connectivity in an increasingly mobile and borderless world, such popular media productions in Iberia as "?Quien Sabe Donde?" is an instance of the phenomenon that interests us here. For this television show features the re-discovery of lost relatives, an account of the vicissitudes of their vagrancy and the highly emotional moments of unexpected reunion --of re-connection as it were.

There is no doubt much popular ethnography of this kind to be being done here in Spain and Portugal on the subject matter of popular genealogy. I would like to turn now, however, and with matters of genealogical distinction in mind, to related matters of pedigree, to what we might call "the beast in every body"<sup>15</sup>. I would like to turn to a most interesting and challenging study by the English Social Anthropologist, Mary Bouquet based on her teaching of the genealogical method, a method largely English in origin, to students in Portugal<sup>16</sup>. It is certainly relative to our meeting place here in Santiago, in one of the centers as some have called it of the Galaico-Lusitano culture area, where the engagement or lack of engagement of Portuguese students

15 Cf J. W. Fernandez, "Of The Beast in Every Body and the Metaphors of Everyman": *Daedalus*, Vol. 101, NO.1, Winter 1972, pp. 39-60.

16 Mary Bouquet, *Reclaiming English Kinship: Portuguese Refractions of British Kinship Theory*, Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1993.

with the "genealogical method" and genealogical thinking generally can be expected to resonate.

Bouquet's argument, fundamentally, is that the genealogical method --rather than being a universal of social science-- is in interesting ways culture bound. Its centrality in British Social Anthropology responds to some particular features of English popular culture, that is to say colloquial and common sense understanding about the nature of social life, not fully corroborated as common sense nor directly evocative to colloquial understandings in Portuguese students of the method. It is not that there has not been plentiful debate in British social anthropology about the armature of kinship produced by such inquiry, and Bouquet reviews the main arguments of Malinowski and Kroeber (that the method in its focus on nomenclature misses the ambiguities and 'imponderabilia' of family life), of Radcliffe Browne (that the method neglects the corporateness in kinship), of Fortes and Leach (that the method in pursuing pedigree misses the politics of descent and inheritance, which lie at the heart of family relations), Evans Pritchard (that the method is a rather meager model that in its modesty misses other models and analogies by which family life is understood). The burden of these critiques, in a word, is that the schematics of the method, if pursued obsessively, do not permit a full grasp of the complex of *relation-ships* characteristic of kin groups, do not admit of the complex of materials one obtains when one sits down to, as the French ethnographers call it, *parler famille*<sup>17</sup>.

Of course, any anthropologist who has practiced the genealogical method in an open en-ded fashion will recognize, when employed as a guideline and not as a rigid template, how much it does aid one to "*parler famille*" and obtain a much deeper sense of the meaning of

17 Bouquet mentions in this context, for example, the rich ethnographic work of F. Zonnabend, *The Enduring Memory: Time and History in a French Village*, Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1984 (1980)), and M. Segalen, *Quinze Generations de Bas-breton: Parente et societe dans le pays bigouden Sud 1720-1980*. Paris: P.U.F. 1985.

relationships. Our own fieldwork in Asturias, I may say, has been much enriched in understanding family history and family dynamics by following a modified form of the 'genealogical method.'

But the part of Bouquet's argument worth developing here, in the context of this essay's interest in popular ethnography, is rather to point up the wider and deeper set of assumptions in English culture which give resonance, which is to say the ring of truth, to the method in England but much less in Portugal. This concerns her discussions of English notions of pedigree in both animals and humans<sup>18</sup>. Although there is inevitably a class element in matters of pedigree the word has wider resonance and one might even refer to meanings very widespread in English folk culture. The most relevant and most obvious meaning of pedigree<sup>19</sup> is that of a distinguishing line of ancestral descent by which one can claim one or another kind of social distinction. We recognize that interests in pedigree are almost always interests in breeding that is to say "good breeding" applied to both animals and men, from which breeding a family genealogist can or cannot derive social satisfaction, depending on whether her genealogy has stood the test of time. It is of special interest that the term is used for both animals and humans although primarily, it is true, the referent may well be to animal descent and interests in the practice in animal husbandry in pureness of breed. The extension of notions of pedigree and "good breeding" to humans, therefore, would be originally metaphorical in nature, although it is now widely taken in the literal sense and has become dead metaphor.

The fact that pedigree is applied to both animals and humans is

18 See especially op cit. Chapter 5, pgs. 185-225.

19 Etymologically the meaning derives from the Romance, "crane's foot" (ped i gru), in reference to the now obsolete three claw lines by which descent was indicated

of interest because it suggests the linkage between two realms already explored extensively by anthropologists: our studies of totemism, and our studies of the social capitalization of the animal human link. These explorations have shown how good animals are to think with in creating social order, and often enough social hierarchy. Bouquet takes a rather different tack, however, and does not explicitly suggest that the genealogical method is a sort of Anglo-totemism good to think with about social differences, although she does emphasize that it is a kind of pedigree thinking. What she pursues, in seeking to find intellectual theory in folk thought (she is, in this, very much in the tradition of Vico, who was ever ready to find the origins of abstract ideas in the thinking of the common people), is the important role that animals as quasi humans play in English children's stories in, for example, the Peter Rabbit series of books by Beatrix Potter or Kenneth Graham's *The Wind in the Willows* or A. J. Milne's *Pooh* stories. What she suggests is that in these animals-as-humans stories --especially influential at the time of the heyday of the method-- there is implicitly a certain kind of Genealogical Method emphasizing differences in "kind-ness." This is so insofar as the method seeks to emphasize linearity in descent. For to feature the lineal and vertical over the horizontal and collateral is, thus, to emphasize differences in kind anchored in time. Such an emphasis is perfectly compatible with what these animal stories teach --dressed up as these animals are as humans yet embodying underneath their clothes essential differences in substance, as between one genus species (read genealogical line) and another.

What they teach is that though social life can be carried on cooperatively between various breeds of animals domestic and wild --in language and even dress-- these denizens of the children's story world remain, as distinct species, essentially, substantively distinct. These animal stories and the genealogical method lodged in them inculcate differences in kind, essential differences in classes of persons. Behind the common language and beneath similarities in clothing are essential differences. Thus do human and animal pedigrees feed into one

another as class and kind differentiators in the social order.

The Genealogical Method like these children's stories, Bouquet argues<sup>20</sup>, teach a difference between the self and the social person, between the family line and the common society. They teach also essential differences between selves and between families. Behind the social person is a self and family with a particular nature, a particular animal nature one might say, keeping in mind the animal-human conflation. Both the Genealogical Method and these animal human stories are vehicles therefore of essentialization, are vehicles supporting the mystical appeal of blood descent and consanguinity!<sup>21</sup> Needless to say a great deal of the complexity of human relationship bound up in collaterality, contemporaneity and co-evality are elided in this celebratory emphasis on substantial differences in lineal kind<sup>22</sup>. That difference is, of course, not irrelevant at all to the underlying problem of the 'politics of cleanliness' that we are addressing in this essay.

Quite obviously this emphasis on the substantial differences granted by distinguishing lineality of descent is not unknown in Portugal or elsewhere in the world although it may be in certain

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20 Op cit, pg 210.

21 Op cit. pg 211-212.

22 And, indeed, a great deal of anthropological work on kinship has sought to both diffuse the overemphasis on the precision of lineal tracings by pointing up the "fuzziness" or "messiness" of genealogical thinking on the ground, and to emphasize the importance of collaterality. See Robin Fox' discussion of "messy relationships" in his study of *The Tory Islanders: A People of the Celtic Fringe* (New York: Cambridge 1978). This is discussed in relation to attributions of the "uncleanness" of sickness running in families in Renate L. Fernandez, *A Simple Matter of Salt: An Ethnography of Nutritional Deficiency in Spain*. Berkeley: U. California Press. 1990. Chapter 4. "Kinship and Affliction."

societies given exceptional attention and supplemented and abetted by an extraordinarily rich children's literature, as in England. Bouquet points to the work of A. de Mattos *Manual da genealogia Portuguesa* (1943) as a widely consulted and popular Portuguese account committed to a lineal view of genealogy as a privileging mechanism associated with heraldry, nobility etc.; that is, as a mechanism by which significant differences in substance may be noted and privileged. Indeed the corporate state under Salazar itself --based on monopolies held by certain wealthy families-- was a state quite sympathetic to genealogical argument for its support of linear distinctions and beliefs in underlying differences in substance and natural privilege. In part, indeed, the difficulties the Portuguese University students had with the Genealogical Method was its association with the Salazar regime and its genealogically anchored Corporativism. In the same breath and as Bouquet's several years in Portugal, in the nineteen eighties, was in a period still resonant with the Socialist Revolution, the association of the Method with linearity, hierarchy and the time-tested privileges of substance, was also incompatible with the horizontal ideology and cooperativist working class and rural sentiments of that revolution. But Bouquet documents as well other reasons for the difficult fit of English kinship theory with Portuguese expectations: different ideas about the meaning of blood, different ideas about the importance of generational identity<sup>23</sup> and filiation, different naming practices vis a vis preserving the father's and the mother's name etc. In sum a Method, the genealogical one, presumed to be scientific and thus universal proved to be, in the teaching of it in another society, very much the product of a certain time and place!

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23 See particularly for Spain the "generational method" bound up in Ortega y Gasset's and Julian Marias' *Philosophy of History* and put into illuminating ethnographic practice by Carmelo Lison Tolosana in *Belmonte de los Caballeros: History and Anthropology in an Aragonese Town* Princeton. Princeton University Press. 1984 (1961).

### Windfalls in the Web:

The anomaly we have noted is the surge of interest in the World Wide Web in providing users with information on how to organize genealogical research and construct family trees. (Genealogy.org). Most of these sites provide this service for a fee (genealogy.com). We consider this an anomaly because trees and webs are two quite distinct and widespread tropes frequently employed for organizing the complexity of human experience<sup>24</sup>. These tropes, when meditating on genealogy, bear reflecting upon, just as much as the pedigree trope of breeding bears the reflection Bouquet bestowes upon it. The difference in these tropes lies in the vectoral interplay and its absence. It lies in the lineality of the one which is lacking in the other. Family trees are rooted in apical ancestry, an ancestry which hopefully will have flourished "spreading out like the proverbial Banyan tree" over the land. The family tree trope is vertical and pronouncedly lineal and self-sufficient. To be sure it branches into collaterality as it grows and flowers yet the emphasis lies upon the ascendent or descendant line and genealogical research with this model in mind is almost always concerned with establishing the singularity of the family line and rooting it in the earliest known ancestors and the way that their nurturant substance has been tended and brought to contemporary fruition (or failure in the negative case). Relationships between collaterals gain their value from association with this line. Family trees bear fruit, if they bear fruit, and are brought to perfection by virtue of the sap, the "pure sap" as the Spanish say (*pura cepa*), that rises from the impetus of the ancestors' perfection that energizes its descendants. One can see that such a trope lends itself easily to "essentialisms", the

24 See Paul F. Kress, "The Web and the Tree: Metaphors of Reason and Value", *Midwest Journal of Political Science* Vol 13, 1969: 395-414; and also J.W. Fernandez, "Trees of Knowledge of Self and Other in Culture: On Models of the Moral Imagination," in Laura Rival and Maurice Bloch (eds), *The Social Use of Trees*, Oxford: Berg. 1998: 81-110.

essentialism of the singularity of the tap root, of the pureness of the nurturing sap and of the bringing into the fruition of its kind. It might also easily lead to the 'politics of cleanliness.'

The web on the other hand is in the main a collateral model in which the singularity of apicality doesn't apply, in which each node is in positive or negative tension with all the others and every attachment has an importance to the whole as it is inevitably responsive to it and responsible to it. No doubt it is an apt trope for the multi vectored nature of electronic connection and apt for a globalization process as free of hegemonic centralities and self privileging essentialisms as possible<sup>25</sup>. We have to hold in abeyance here, of course, the nature of whoever or whatever it is that has constructed the web, always a possibly arachnoid presence, ominous and possibly poisonous in its intentions and transferable essences.

Irrespective of these deeper readings there are crucial differences between these two tropes and those who would think towards a third millennium free of ethnic cleansing would do well to reflect upon their influence in the thinking that influences this phenomenon. Of course it's not a matter of tropic cleansing either. Family trees have their important and beneficial purposes surely as pastimes and as time-binders in the face of the ephemerality and transience of the human career. There is no doubt a real need for them because of that very

25 Kress lends his strong support to the greater value of the web metaphor in political science theory: "The central points concerning the web metaphor are these: 1. The values states or ends are particular configurations of multiple values; 2. That these configurations presuppose a vast and complex network of traditional, moral, theological and habitual as well as "interest" values which impinge upon us at the biological, psychological, social and cultural levels; 3. That action takes place at the peripheral or ground point anchorage of this value constellation; 4. Finally that the value complex is itself altered by the shifting of knots at the margin. In short the web metaphor seems vastly superior to the tree as an image of both individual and social theories of value." Op cit. Pg 413-414.

ephemerality of to which "genealogy.com" is responding on the web.

I watched my own grandmother Houghton spend some happy final years of her life researching her family tree, but also conditioning the familism implicit in the enterprise by remarking ruefully that she had found a connection to one of the most disreputable of the American Presidents, Martin Van Buren. I think she had it right. In constructing family trees it would be well to compliment the *pura cepa* with some *mala uva* and above all to keep in mind how this particular trope tends to organize by essentializing our thought and possibly our action! On the other hand we cannot live hanging strung out on the web alone. We need some special relationships and a sense of their continuity in time but not, perhaps, at the expense of the promise of collaterality. As with the tropes, as Weber said about science as a vocation, the important thing is a 'sense of proportion,' the recognition that any or all of our intellectual instruments are likely to conceal as much as they reveal.

There is a big and possibly important claim in this argument that there is a connection between the tropes we choose to represent our relationships in this world and our organization of them, to begin with, and the 'politics of cleanliness' if not ethnic cleansing, to end with. It is to say a lot and to claim for "tropology" (or an-trope-ology as I like to call it) a major contribution to our anthropological task to work towards better times and to amelioration in human relationships.

To begin with in addressing this claim we recognize that the 'politics of cleanliness' involves complex feelings. Cleansing of any kind, even perhaps ethnic cleansing, involves repugnance at some more corporeal and factual level, one might argue, than what is touched by the imagination's artifacts, the tropes. We might argue, as it effectively has been by Mary Douglas, that dirt, matter to be cleaned

up or out, whether human matter or otherwise, is matter out of place<sup>26</sup>. But that may simply beg the question of the criteria or politics by which rightful and desirable and unrighteous and undesirable place is established. We might argue also, as it too has been very effectively argued by Alan Dundes, that a great deal of the animus towards ethnic cleansing is found in the lore of the folk, in ethnic jokes and "*blasons populaires*" which, jocular or with malign disparagement, ascribe repugnant habits and behaviors and cloacal associations to others<sup>27</sup>. Dundes has shown the presence of this malignity in German folklore and identified it as an important contributory factor to the acquiescence among Germans in the presence of ethnic cleansing conducted by the Nazis. But that also may be to beg the very ancient question of how the body so enters into the mind (and vice versa of course) as to influence the way the mind conceptualizes and subsequently acts upon the world, and more particularly upon others.

There is a whole tropological theory of mental representations and moral and immoral imagination anchored in the body's primordial experiences that becomes relevant here. This theory has been treated extensively elsewhere in tropological theory<sup>28</sup>. Suffice it to say here

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26 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Notions of Pollution and Taboo*, Hammondsworth: (Penguin Publishers. 1970.) This is the classic study but Douglas has made other important contributions to the study of the dynamic of defilement in human social relations.

27 Alan Dundes, *Life is Like a Chicken Coop Ladder: A Portrait of German Culture Through Folklore*, New York: Columbia University Press. 1984. Cloacal identifications of the other are, of course, widespread in cultures but Dundes argues that there are a particular concentration of them in German culture and that this, in part, explains the holocaust as a particularly horrendous example of cloacal attributions carried forth to compulsive ethnic cleansing.

28 See for example, J.W. Fernandez, "The Mission of Metaphor in Expressive Culture"--With Comments and Rejoinder. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 15, No. 2, June 1974, pp. 119-145; and Mark Johnson, *Moral Imagination:*

in this context that since one of the body's primordial experiences, one might argue, are feelings of cleanliness or uncleanliness in self and other, we are surely dealing with profound and pervasive experiences<sup>29</sup>. But they are not universal experiences in the sense that they are everywhere configured and projected upon the world in the same way.

And it is just here where lies the thematic interest of our argument. There are configurations and projections that produce more and others that produce less human unhappiness and humiliation. Let us not pretend to a world entirely free of projected feelings of "Human matter out of place" or of "malignity and humiliation expressed in corporeal terms." We can, perhaps, however, pretend to a third millennium free of the kinds of gross 'politics of cleanliness' that has produced truly appalling examples of ethnic cleansing. And in preparation for such millennial thinking a greater awareness of the tropes that condition our sense of corporeal relationships and family resemblance is surely in order. In any event what we seek to address here is an awareness of these tropes, some of the differences among them, and some of the possibilities of their ameliorative employment. We might say that we seek here --in a non-nihilistic gesture towards Nietzsche and in briefest phrase -- to recite a genealogy of the moral imagination. .

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*Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press. 1993.

29 See for example the work of Paul Rozin on the psychological laws (and their cultural shaping) of feelings of disgust and contamination and contagion, and particularly his reworking of into rests in the 'laws of sympathetic magic': P. Rozin and C. Nemeroff, "The Laws of Sympathetic Magic: A Psychological Analysis of Similarity and Contagion," in J. Stig anthropological ler and R. Shweder (eds) *Cultural Psychology*, New York: Cambridge 1990:205-232. Following this line of research one might see the cultivation of genealogy as the attempt to preserve contiguity and prevent contagion in sympathetic thought structures over time.

### Concluding Discussion: The 'Politics of Cleanliness' and the Crisis of Justice in the Third Millenium:

A constant undercurrent presence in our considerations here in this essay is this corporeal politics we have called the 'politics of cleanliness,' the ever presence in human groups of the so often self-arrogating, family-arrogating, group-arrogating notions of purity or purer-than-thou in social interaction. I first ran into this issue most forcefully in my African fieldwork in the nineteen fifties where I noted strong feelings among Fang of the careless uncleanness of neighboring autochthonous peoples, and the justification by Fang of their gradual migratory conquest of the equatorial forests on the basis of their imposing a kind of propriety there. Fang had in my experience with them pronounced preoccupations with "bad body" (*nyolabe*) or unclean body, and devoted a variety of rituals to avoiding or rectifying that state. They tended to assign that state, 'bad body' or failure of its avoidance to alien peoples<sup>30</sup>. It seems very possible to me that such institutionalized attitudes, these deep feelings of uncleanliness in the self, projected upon the other bordering on abhorrence, were present as a significant contributing factor in the Ruanda genocidal massacres of 1995-1996.

No doubt the same complex is some part of that complex of feelings and ideas that justified the Civilizing Mission of the West among the Rest, otherwise referred to, along with our own lower

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30 J.W. Fernandez, *Bwiti: An Ethnography of the Religious Imagination in Africa*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1982. Pp. 158-159, 304-305, 393-394 and passim.

classes, as the Great Unwashed. Of course, both class systems like caste systems are often justified on the basis of comparative purity, and a change of caste and of class or ethnic identity or of citizenship is often felt to require some kind of routine or ritual of purification, often enough baptism by symbolic or real immersion. Among religious Jews the ritual bath or *mikva* is an ancient rite of purification and real immersion is required of all who would convert to Judaism, without which no conversion is valid. To be sure, this rite of purification, the *kosher mikva* of entire immersion, is also required monthly of the observant wife in families who still follow the laws of family purity. Among observant Jews exceptional attention is paid to these laws in relation to foods consumed and other natural acts<sup>31</sup>.

Notions of ritual, family or ethnic purity can, as appropriated by political power, easily become a politics of inclusion and exclusion justified, if perhaps often in a subliminal way, on the basis of comparative cleanliness --in short, a 'politics of cleanliness.' We have glaringly before us the contemporary ethnic cleansing in Central Africa and the Balkans. But the phenomenon is much more widespread, as any student of Iberian history and of either the expulsion of the Jews or the inquisition into ethnic purity, that has occurred here, is well aware. But rather than focusing on this well known politics I will take as a little-appreciated instance of the 'politics of cleanliness' the creation by appropriation of the American National Parks. We may consider the highly respected Scots-American naturalist and father of conservationism in America, John Muir. Muir had every reason --as regards "the crisis of nature"he confronted-- to make common cause with the American Indians by reason of their religious respect of and

31 Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Be a Jew: A Guide to Jewish Observance in Contemporary Life*. New York: Basic Books. 1972. Chapter 6 the Dietary Laws, Chapter 7. Family Life: A Key to Happiness." The point should be made, and this is the author's emphasis, that the purpose of these rituals of purification is self-discipline, "the key to real happiness in life" and not discipline, by self arrogation, of the other which is so often central

conservative practices towards Creation Nevertheless, was so effectively put off by their "uncleanliness" that he denied them any rightful place in the {?}"landscape of wilderness"<sup>32</sup>. And this generalized attitude became a politics among many conservationists --justifying Indian removal from the American National Parks<sup>33</sup>.

It is obvious that the 'politics of cleanliness' in its dehumanizing aspect is one of the great challenging problems to humanity and to the comity among nations and ethnic groups that globalization, particularly, brings to the fore. It is certainly a politics worthy of concentrated anthropological attention because, one can argue, anthropologists have special knowledge and special tools, the Genealogical Method and the Tropological Method among them, to bring to bear on the question.. Here we have focused on this politics by examining its presence in the very human interest in genealogy, a kinship structure of sympathy and purity that frequently enough contains within itself the seeds of antipathy and contagion .

While we have wanted, by bringing into question The Genealogical Method, for example, to address the un-recognized assumptions that accompany the interest in family trees, we have also wanted to avoid too sanguine an expectation of the consequences of our attempts at ameliorative de-construction<sup>34</sup>. This is not necessarily

32 John Muir in *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1916) and *The Mountains of California* (1894) referenced in Mark D. Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* New York: Oxford Press. 1999. Pgs 23, 109.

33 Mark D. Spence. Op cit. . Passim.

34 It ought to be said that most of the great, that is universal, religions, while often enough celebrating the family, have also struggled against the narrow loyalties, emotional and material, which repose in family trees and have sought to extend sympathy and obligation , that is the bonds or web of "universal brotherhood,"

because --to return to the evolutionary narrative with which we began-- we as social animals are inevitably adapted to the construction and defense of social hierarchies, by ethnic cleansing or genocide if necessary. Such notions are surely liable to the work of culture, and culture can work effectively against them, as here we have sought to do. Rather, we have to recognize that we are not only social animals. We are also conceptual animals, and in our concept formation we inescapably employ what Wittgenstein has called "family resemblances." That is we employ differentiating notions of kinds, of types, of classes, and of things, and these notions obtain a certain power in our thinking, we might argue, because of their anchoring in our genealogical sense of family as a kind or class or type of thing which has perpetuated itself over time, as genealogical research into family trees can show.

So there is a mutual support system between our mental categories and our corporeally anchored sense of family as a self-perpetuating kind. In recent years the necessary and sufficient rigidities of Aristotelian categories and categorical thinking has been made more reflective of the actual fuzziness of thinking in the social animal by introducing this very notion of family resemblance logic. But in Wittgenstein's very choice of that notion of family resemblance we understand how deeply anchored in the experience of family our more abstract thinking as social animals is, and how much resistance there may be to any attempt, such as this one, to open up to a much more collateral world, to a world of non-family solidarities --despite the considerable support for that kind of possibility to be found in the World Wide Web!