Cont Islam
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As the title of this book suggests psychoanalysts have overlooked Islam as a part of the inherited tradition of the West when trying to decipher the questions about the foundations of human society and the chronic crisis of civilization. Benslama rightly notes that fundamental questions of origin, the role of the father and the genesis of the law 'have remained undecipherable when viewed from the perspectives of Judaism and Christianity alone' (p. vii). This book is conceived as a remedy to fill this gap through the examination of the underlying structures of Islam that shape the emergence of a modern subject that has broken away from the subject of traditional Islam.

Benslama begins his analysis in the first chapter with 'the Torment of Origin.' The parallel he draws between modernist Islamists' rhetoric of return to the origins of Islam and his own personal return to the site of his Muslim Tunisian origins from where he made his move to Europe makes this a readable chapter. He writes about being conscious of himself as a modern European subject who never got over his origins. He views this origin as twofold, a geographical/cultural one to which he constantly returns, and as a mythic origin, which had returned to 'torment' him in the form of an Islam that takes interest in him, and therefore compels him to take interest in it. Benslama argues that the Islamist discourse is similarly haunted by questions of origin, even 'tormented' in the Hegelian sense of being aware of a self that can be constituted only by separation from the source. The difference is that, for the Islamists there is no expectation of the future, only a regression to some distant past

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(p. 28). This mythic past floats back to the surface of lived time and submerges the present into ritual practice combined by pseudo-scientific assertions, nationalists sentiments (pp. 37, 38), and 'a terrifying wish for vengeance' (p. 10).

In Chapter Two, 'The Repudiation of Origin,' Benslama discusses Islam's exclusion of the symbolic economy of exchange between God and man in the form of the divine paternal and God-the-father. Whereas Christianity and Judaism choose Abraham as the symbolic father of the official symbolic lineage, Islam opts for the lineage of Abraham as the real father. This theme is picked up again in the last chapter through the discussion of sacrifice (Chapter Four: 'Within Himself'), which concentrates on the problematic of masculine narcissism and violence in monotheistic cultures. Here Benslama argues that Abraham's sacrifice of his son in the Qur'an was never God's intention, rather it is the son who suggests that the killing is ordered by God. This is significant because, like Judaism and contrary to Christianity, Islam refuses to fulfill the son's sacrificial desire.

Even though from its origin Islam excludes God from the logic of paternity and the Qur'an clearly states that Muhammad, raised fatherless as an orphan, is not the father of anyone, 'the paternal complex' nevertheless did become reactualized in Islam, for example in the annual ritual of Hajj where Abraham's near sacrifice of his son is commemorated. Also genealogy became important for the Arabs who soon began to trace their ancestry to Abraham through his slave girl Hagar and her son Ishmael. The significance of Benslama's arguments, if not its originality, lies in his insight that the 'torment' of origin manifests itself in Islam in the suppression of the feminine, which combined with the absence of the divine paternal, accounts for Islam's extreme masculine monotheism and political extremism. One example of the exclusion of the feminine is Hagar, who, in spite of her foundational mothering role is never mentioned in the Qur'an and in effect is 'evicted' from the foundational discourse so that Abraham the father could be 'found and reconciled' with the son to rebuild the Ka'bah, Islam's holiest site (p. 104).

Chapter Three ('Destinies of the Other Woman') adds several other examples to the constitution of Islam's symbolic order through the repudiation of its dependence on the maternal body and the disavowal of the feminine at its origin. According to a recorded tradition, Ruqayya, a woman of pre-Islamic Mecca, recognized the 'glow' that the Prophet's father Abdullah carried on his forehead, indicating the treasure he unknowingly bore within him that was to become Muhammad, and proposed sexual intercourse with him. Khadija, Muhammad's first wife and the first person to believe in him when he himself was in doubt, confirmed the truth of Muhammad's message and assured him that he was not insane. Through a simple test she confirmed the angelic nature of the spiritual being that visited him. When she uncovered her hair Muhammad no longer saw the angel present, confirming that this was not a demonic manifestation. She provided Muhammad with a certainty that he was unable to recognize by himself.

Even though the first test of truth for Islam took place on a woman's lap, and a woman was the witness of the truth of the vision, and mediator between man and the angel, even though a woman possessed a knowledge that predated the prophetic knowledge of the founder, women came to be perceived as wily helpers of demons, lacking reason and religion, troubling creatures of disrepute whose submission must be stringently organized. Once the turmoil and confusion of the origin was over,

with recourse to a series of proscriptions Islam reduced, dismantled, and denied the role of feminine, 'so as to gradually establish the sovereignty of a phallic, juridical, and ethical order congruent with the formation of the state' (149). Benslama notes some concepts from Sufi authorities like Ibn Arabi and Rumi, and hints that Sufism may present a hyperbolic solution to this problem (28). The reader is left wishing he would elaborate on this hypothesis, especially since the general phallocentric orientation of Sufism has been pointed out in recent studies.

In Benslama's psychoanalytical model the psychosexual development of the subject is predicated upon the repression of the radical dependency of the child on the mother and the maternal body, which must be repudiated for the subject to develop. The site of this dependency, however, is returned to and traces of it will always return as the torment of the origin to haunts the subject. In Islam, argues Benslama, the suppression of the feminine is the symptom of the torment of the origin, which explains why the manifestations of the feminine are registered as a 'traumatic presence.'

The general reader familiar with Islam but not with psychoanalytical language might find some concepts and arguments in this book cumbersome (but not overwhelming), especially since a glossary of technical terms and a bibliography are not provided (most references are to works in French; the authority of one source, Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch's *Rumi et le soufisme*, is highly questionable). The English spelling of some Arabic words instead of their French spelling would have improved the text (for example, *kashf* instead of *kachf*, p. 130). Many of Benslama's insights are simply refreshing, for example: 'the shift *toward* an origin … is also a shift *of* origin' (9). For the scholars of religious phenomena, especially those utilizing psychoanalytical perspectives, this book is very important and will prove to be influential.