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## Departures from Violence: Love Is Not Enough

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**In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:**

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There is something uplifting about reading John Borneman's piece on what conditions might make reconciliation after violent conflict attainable ("Reconciliation after Ethnic Cleansing: Listening, Retribution, Affiliation," *Public Culture* 14 [spring 2002]: 281-304). Perhaps it is hope in the face of despair at the multiplicity of ethnic cleansings past and present. Perhaps Borneman has afforded us the possibility to think about the subject without the elaboration of a specific case, while at the same time providing a model through which to ponder a particular instance if we so choose.

My work as an anthropologist and a writer has focused on Mexico, south Lebanon, and Native Americans in the United States. All three have witnessed violent conflict and ethnic cleansings. Yet, as I read Borneman's proposals, the word *coexistence* kept coming to mind. In the Middle East, and particularly in Israel/Palestine, the idea of coexistence fades during periods of violence. Yet, notwithstanding media focus on current forms of violence, the Middle East is replete with examples, both historical and contemporary, of coexistence among Muslims, Jews, and Christians. Some anthropologists have ascribed coexistence to an ethnic division of labor or, as Carleton Coon has called it, a "mosaic," a situation where everybody needs others for the requirements of daily living.<sup>1</sup> Coon [End Page 195] has noted the mutual tolerance of the Peoples of the Book, indicating that Jews, Christians, and Muslims, unlike pagans, have in common their own religious books to guide them. Coon also speaks to a division of labor that respects difference rather than insists on requirements for sameness.

Coexistence reminds me of the so-called Golden Age in the Spanish region of Andalusia (lasting roughly from the tenth through twelfth centuries), a period of peace and mutual respect between Christians, Muslims, and Jews that witnessed an unprecedented flowering of art and literature. The basic ideals of the Golden Age are echoed in a sign I saw in 1972 at the entrance to old Cairo: "We are Muslims, Jews and Christians who live in old Cairo in peace."<sup>2</sup> More recently, I traveled with Berkeley colleagues to visit the marketplace in Damascus, where there are three sections corresponding to the three religious populations of the city: Muslim, Christian, and Jewish. If one section closes during respective religious days, the other two remain open. So coexistence has deep roots in this part of the world, as Janet Abu-Lughod has investigated in her book on pre-European hegemones,<sup>3</sup> in which she describes pluralistic models of trade covering the area from China to Gibraltar, trade clearly not dominated by one hegemonic force.

But with colonialism another model of ethnic relations emerged, a model that can equally be applied to Israel since, as Anthony Nutting has proposed, it constitutes a kind of Western beachhead in the Middle East.<sup>4</sup> In this new pattern of relations, an ethnic division of labor, in which the mutual respect of the Andalusian days formed the exemplar, could no longer function. Nevertheless, one might build a possibility of coexistence from this earlier model, using it as an idea that might provide a "sense of ending" and a "sense of beginning," as Borneman puts it. This idea would have to work alongside Borneman's other points about "rebuilding the integrity of the social," breaking hegemonic silences, and legal judgments that foster a sense of ending. What he wants us to do is to imagine departures from violence. I agree completely.

My disagreement with Borneman, however, concerns not what he says, but what he does not discuss. Borneman focuses on the visible while allowing key [End Page 196] players invisibility. We can look to no better example than that of Africa if we wish to examine the consequences of arms dealing and mercenary armies. These are interests that feed on violence, and, as Elizabeth Colson has recently argued, peace does not mean disarmament.<sup>5</sup> Rather, it releases arms for sale elsewhere, thereby involving organized networks of manufacturers, salesmen, traffickers, and buyers. And...

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1. Carleton Coon, *Caravan: The Story of the Middle East* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1958), 1–9. Two other scholars speak about these issues. See Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (New York: St. Martin's, 1964), and Albert Habib Hourani's excellent book *Minorities in the Arab World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947).



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