

“BETTER OCCASIONAL MURDERS THAN FREQUENT ADULTERIES”. BANDITRY, VIOLENCE AND SACRIFICE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN*

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Banditry and its Ambiguities

Fernand Braudel’s observation that “banditry” was “an ill-defined word if ever there was one” (1972, I: 102), has been confirmed by subsequent debate. This article explores banditry from a different set of perspectives than the parameters set by the Hobsbawm-Blok debate. As is well known, Hobsbawm (1969) and others (Joseph 1990) viewed banditry in populist-romantic terms (banditry expresses pre-political sentiments and a desire for a just world). Alternatively, it has been seen by hard-nosed empiricist revisionists (Blok 1972; Vanderwood 1981; Dreissen 1983; Hart 1987; Koliopoulos 1987; Slatta 1987) as collectively politically repressive and individually interested. In this paper I suggest that Hobsbawm essentialised the concept in too narrowly Marxist terms, and thus forced the discussion into certain directions that prevent us from addressing some important issues about criminality, representation,

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violence, the psychology and sociology of terror, and how bandit myths may be created and used within nation-states or societies aspiring to nationhood.

Conversely, I argue that Blok and his followers do not take representations of banditry into account. Banditry is not just a specific form of lawlessness in the countryside which can be harnessed by political forces. "Banditry" is a statist definition of certain types of violent behaviour, which the grassroots may not necessarily view in the same way. It operates between the state imposed system of law, the courts, social order etc, and the local system of vengeance and grassroots conceptions of justice. It is a specific form of arbitrary personal prepotence and agency having its own "aesthetic" and accompanying discourses that thrives on, and constitutes itself through, the production of overdetermined signs and symbols. This personal power and symbolisation may well have cumulative political (class) implications but not necessarily in the way one would automatically assume. As a form of extreme personal power "banditry" can survive after its formal conditions have disappeared. As an expression of agency, involving violence to persons and things, banditry is illegal in state defined terms, but it may well extract consent or complicity at the grassroots. How authorities have responded to this form of prepotence (either through extreme savagery or co-option of strong arm men) has itself influenced grassroots responses to agency there. The state is therefore complicit in the construction and interpretation of banditry.

Even more fundamental, in its project of homogenizing and nationalising time and space, the modern state has used banditry as a means to produce discourses on order, time, legality, the justice and legitimacy (of the state), and local cultures. In its shaping by functionaries, intellectuals, writers, politicians and investigators of all sorts, banditry has had a disemic identity. Since the nineteenth century there have been two discourses on banditry, intimately tied with the nation state and the geography of its imagination. First, *bandites d'honneur*, heroes of the vendetta, personal honour, "saints", or saint like, on the periphery of society, are always

presented on the horizon of the past, as traces of a nostalgic world that has been lost forever. The closer one gets to it, the more it appears to recede. Conversely, there are "contemporary bandits" involved in protection rackets, common robberies, murder, etc. An extreme form is contemporary political brigandage which merges with political terrorism, blending political programmes, covert violence, and protection rackets. "Genuine" banditry always seems to have existed in the past, never in the present. "Banditry" can therefore be seen a metaphor of, and from, time. Through these two poles the state constructs discourses about order, legitimacy, etc, whilst also stereotyping regions as inhabiting a "different time" than that of the modern state, and thus legitimating savage repression. But because banditry is often a myth of nation-statehood which legitimates itself by reference to popular culture, notions of freedom can be used by those resisting the state or carving out their own power domains.

As a category, banditry is thus a state historiographic discourse about order, ordering, justice, and freedom. In contrast to Hobsbawm I do not claim that the symbolism of banditry is "true" but concealed (even from its practitioners). Neither do I claim with Blok that it is "false", and distorting (even from its victims). Rather, I suggest that banditry has a symbolising or inherently ambiguous signifying role for the construction of power within the nation state.

Banditry can be approached as a legal category, a social category, a social representation, and as a series of stories and myths. Its meaning has changed across time. As a *legal category* it may be "part of the meta-language of crime rather than crime itself" (Moss 1979: 478). Adopting a statist definition, one could consider banditry to be the consistent, relatively long-term flouting of the laws of the state by groups of individuals. They are so supported and protected by a local population or potentates, either spontaneously or through a complex combination of covert and overt threats and incentives, that their betrayal to the state's agents conflicts with dominant grassroots moral sentiments. Officially a bandit may be "a man who responds to a summons by taking to the

maquis" (1), although he may become something more than that. From the perspective of the "bandit" himself the situation may be viewed quite differently: as a man who "killed an enemy and took to the maquis abandoning wife and family to avoid public justice and private revenge" (Wilson 1988: 339)

As a *social category* "banditry" employs a specific form of personalized violence within a state framework, formally de-legitimised by the state, but which may evoke notions of justice against the rule of law. Thus, as a *social representation* banditry may be polyvalent or even disemic and may encompass diametrically opposed sets of values: violence and generosity, secrecy and openness, and incorporation in and exclusion from the moral community (Herzfeld 1989). Banditry can be seen as an idealised "redistribution" of material and/or symbolic value through the employment of violence as a series of performative signs linking the parties to the "exchange". Finally, as a *series of stories* that should not be told but are told just the same, it socialises a depoliticised individualised interpretation of its consequences. Banditry thus often blinds its witnesses to its political consequences.

The Political Economy of Violence

In this paper I am interested in exploring the social and economic conditions of banditry with reference to Mediterranean and Latin American societies. I contextualise banditry in discourses by the state and intellectuals, and try to show how the significance of banditry changed across time. By analysing the use of extreme violence that accompanied banditry at the grassroots and the violence of its suppression, I suggest that the bandit figure in the ancien regime was not so much a noble figure but a tragic one, a sacrificial victim of the interaction of the state and the local community. I then show how banditry assumed a different nuances from the Enlightenment onwards and was enmeshed in the process of constructing a folk culture as well as problematising regional and local identities.

Most accounts of banditry fail to tackle two interrelated factors: the extreme signification of violence that often accompanies "banditry", and the complex sociology of terror. For the first I suggest that the signs of extreme violence that accompany banditry, both in its practice and *in its repression* (especially, but not exclusively in the "Ancien Regime") may provide clues as to why bandits appeared to have become popular symbols to the populace then. It is not because they practiced extreme violence and revenge; it is rather because, when caught and juridically processed, their bodies became the subject of publicly demonstrated state power. By his public execution and suffering the bandit is conjured up as a victim of a terrible state power, and thus as sacrifice. Rather than seeing the violent actions of bandits as a yearning for a pre-political just world (a product of romantic imaginings of the nation state which peopled its landscape with figures from the past, such as the noble bandit), it is in their violent executions that "bandits" witness both the transcendent notions of retribution-justice, and that pre-political just world that can only be realised, like the sufferings of saints, as an imagined utopia outside time.

Secondly, as an exchange between individuals banditry often employs a specific set of finely graded messages involving violence to the body and property of the victim. Violence employed in banditry (as against other forms of social engagement) is resolutely personalized. It is targeted specifically against persons, and things as properties of persons, and displayed through stories. "Reason" dictates that such excess "personalized" violence could not but of necessity have had a personal genesis of which it is an expression. Banditry displays itself socially in the form: "retribution as justice", where the ferocity of signification of an imploding vortex of "reciprocity" between two parties, renders it a private affair not to be witnessed to the state.

The above suggests we must reconfigure the functionality of fear. Fear is a necessary but not a sufficient cause for the persistence of banditry, and the decline of banditry cannot be attributed merely to the state's increasing monopoly of

violence, as Blok (1972) suggests. Banditry can often survive and indeed resurface, even in contexts in which the state is strong; and terror and its conscious unpredictability can be seen as constituting a special type of authority. Such authority is often accepted implicitly by the grassroots and hence legitimated as in opposition to the state. Furthermore, wider factors must be adduced to explain the persistence of banditry and its re-emergence. These include both economic and political factors. The nature of capital accumulation, transformation through re-investment, or disaccumulation all contribute in different ways to the particular evolution of banditry in specific contexts. Finally, myths of banditry are significant in that in certain contexts they have been incorporated in nationalist or regionalist rhetoric and can be used to legitimate subsequent examples of lawlessness in the countryside.

A significant feature of banditry in the Mediterranean and Latin America is its political dimension. This includes the way it has been subsequently presented at the local and national levels. Throughout the Mediterranean and Latin America, banditry has often been incorporated in nationalist and regional rhetoric in various complex ways, at least as far back as the eighteenth century. *Brigantaggio Politico* had already emerged as a central feature of Corsican independence strategies against Genoa under Paoli and Gaffori in the mid eighteenth century (Carrington 1971). Political banditry often required outside support to be successful. This was the case in Corsica and in southern Italy (Calabria), and Sicily, in the early 19th century where "our chivalrous brigand-allies" were supported by the British against the French (Douglas 1994: 322). In post-independence Greece, Kleptich heroes figured prominently in nationalist rhetoric. Although the fact that they often terrorized and robbed peasants and blackmailed the state as well, renders analysis problematic, but this does not deter contemporary Cretan shepherds from drawing upon such symbols to legitimate their sheep-rustling activities (Herzfeld 1985). In Sicily, Salvatore Giuliano's ambiguous notoriety, created partly through extensive press

coverage, derives from his expression of regional aspirations, despite the fact that he also massacred peasants.

In Latin America banditry had a strong political dimension, especially since the latter 19th century. Originally embedded in cattle raising and smuggling in a frontier economy, banditry and violence "linked peon and gaucho, bandit and ranchhand, smuggler and policeman" (Duncan Baretta and Markoff 1987: 616), and was to subsequently imprint a dominant model of the progress of "civilization" over "barbarism". By the late 19th century banditry was not pre-political according to Slatta who finds little evidence of "social" banditry: "unlike social bandits, political bandits show clear partisan (rather than class) leanings. Unlike the pre-political social bandit [whom he dismisses-PSC], political bands were conscious of and loyal to a larger political movement. In Mexico and Cuba, political bandits did not switch sides for financial gain but worked towards a political, partisan and regional agenda" (1987: 148). He suggests "groups resorted to banditry if they could not organize or protest through the judicial system" (*ibid.*: 149). Here it is clear that Slatta (1987) and his contributors are talking about banditry in terms of mass violent sustained resistance and political mobilization often in the countryside, as a "weaker strategy" available amongst others, including Scott's "weapons of the weak" (1985). (2) Nevertheless, it is clear that political banditry of this sort conceals (paraphrasing Edmund Burke) "the mean and interested struggle" for wealth and resources. "Political banditry" in the Columbian *Violencia* from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, was closely linked with political party struggles, but for various complex reasons became detached from the evolving political struggle. Bandits de-legitimated themselves by their preying on peasants, were abandoned by the parties they had previously supported, and were criminalised by the state. (Sanchez and Meertens 1987). Unsurprisingly, in contrast to the powerful myths of the Brazilian Lampiao and others (Chandler 1988), in Columbia "the bandit personifies a cruel and inhuman monster... the 'son of the *Violencia*', frustrated, disoriented,

and manipulated by local leaders" (Sanchez and Meertens 1987: 168). One may be tempted to quip that banditry is condemned to be "social" (politically correct but misdirected) in the past, and "political" (i.e., anti-social and politically repressive) in the present.

Ambiguity and the packaging of the myth of banditry in literate state contexts are significant features which cannot be disregarded as mere frills. That bandits often terrorized peasants who appear to have voluntarily supported them is often indubitable yet does not exhaust or even address the significance of why and how banditry emerged, how it was sustained, and the potency of these myths at both the local and national levels. Bandits are often romanticized afterwards through nationalist rhetoric and texts which circulate and have a life of their own, giving them a permanence and potency which transcends their localized domain and transitory nature. How bandits are portrayed in the modern nation-state and the way in which such symbols are utilized to legitimate contemporary struggles is as significant as what they actually did and represented.

Banditry in Comparative Perspective

In Sicily and Greece, where banditry persisted partly because the state was weak. However, it would be simplistic to attribute the decline of banditry to the state's increasing monopoly of violence, although this is certainly important. Rather, the persistence or decline of banditry depends upon a complex interplay of variables, including the social structure and political ecology of a particular region; the nature and distribution of property and capital accumulation (whether landed or moveable and precarious, such as livestock), and the means available to legitimate it; the presence or absence of trust and its relationship to the development of civil society; underdeveloped electoral processes which may encourage strong-arm tactics; and permanent insecurity rather than permanent misery at the grassroots, the former being more conducive to

banditry. The political ideology of local elites and their relationship to the state is also important because bandits may either be co-opted by local elites as in Sicily as a means to resist the state or reluctantly by the state, as in Greece, where they were used nationally, as well as locally, for irredentist adventures to threaten the supporters of rival politicians. The state's policies towards landlordism, peasant cultivators, and pastoralists may also be a significant variable because it may favour one over the other with radical implications for the practice of illegality – in certain situations the peasants may prefer the traditional depredations of pastoral bandits to the more extensive, sustained ones of the state, such as taxes. In other situations the depredations of the potentates' henchmen may be protected by powerful national interests.

A final important variable is the process of mythification at the local and national levels and its role in the process of nation-state formation. The two levels may be separate and different, but in the Mediterranean literacy and the circulation of popular accounts are particularly significant. In certain cases these accounts interact in complex ways with the creation of the nation-state's history. Bandits may be portrayed in texts as outsiders and hence dangerous, as residues from the past and hence ambiguous, or as insiders and hence admirable. They may move from the outside to the inside and vice-versa. This may affect how bandits are perceived, legitimated, and even legitimate themselves. In nineteenth-century Greece, ex-klephts, such as Kolokotronis, "used their memoirs to glorify their own actions and to denigrate those of their political rivals" (Gallant 1988: 272). Later, parliamentary Deputies published books which turned bandits and freebooters of all sorts into national liberators in order to pursue national irredentist claims. Soon, bandit chiefs themselves published pamphlets in their own defence: like good Greeks, they fought the Turks; the Muslim outsiders were the brigands attempting to discredit Greece, and "the vital national interest" often prevented politicians from suppressing banditry (Kolipoulos 1987; Jenkins 1961). Such definitions and redefinitions have created a vocabulary of justification,

traces of which remain in contemporary life. In contemporary Crete, extensive livestock theft is legitimated orally by reference to written, highly selective, nationalist accounts of the "freedom-loving" Klephts of old taught in school book (Herzfeld 1985); and in Andalusia local communists have turned nineteenth-century bandits into proto-regional rebels, as symbols in their devolutionist struggles with Madrid (Mario Guarino personal communication; Zugasti 1934). For Corsica Wilson notes that by the late 19th century "bandits of a mercenary type liked to be thought of as 'Robin Hood' figures" (1888: 348). In short, when dealing with banditry, we must be aware that stories have an essentially constitutive role and are often reinterpreted in determinate ways.

When analysing banditry in a comparative perspective, we must be cautious in treating bandits either exclusively as primitive social rebels (as Hobsbawm [1987] does), or as individual opportunists, or as merely the co-opted henchmen of rural potentates (as Blok [1972] does). Often all these features may coexist in particular examples of banditry, although one may be more dominant in certain contexts than in others. The particular form and significance of banditry, which is a *sui generis* phenomenon only to a certain extent, depends largely upon a complex series of factors. Banditry may also hold different and changing significances for different segments or groups across time. We thus have to peel away the different layers in the hope of discovering the original explanation of an incident or series of incidents, although clearly the mythification reinforced through texts is particularly potent and is anthropologically significant.

Banditry traditionally appeared in areas where large-scale landholding coexisted with a relatively permanent intermediate strata of leaseholders or freeholders based upon family-sized plots, such as Sicily, parts of Greece, Cyprus, Peru, and Mexico. In 1950s Columbia it was found in areas where different sized properties coexisted, as well as a cash crop like coffee (Sanchez and Meertens 1987: 161). As in Sicily of roughly the same period, bandit entrepreneurship exploited the gap between the tenant farmer (*agredado*) and the

absentee (i.e., fled or murdered) landowner. Bandits were linked to merchants, and like mafiosi were protected by powerful urban political party patrons. It appears somewhat puzzling however that bandits could neither legitimate themselves, nor transform their wealth into land holdings, given the large profit inducements offered by coffee. (3) Sustained banditry requires concealable, transportable, wealth (cash, cash crops, animals, alcohol, narcotics, stock exchange dealings by rogue traders) which leave few traces. In the 19th century Mediterranean banditry was particularly strong where pastoralists occupied an intermediate position between small-scale cultivators and large-scale proprietors, as in northern Greece, or where overseers, and share-croppers performed that function as in rural Sicily, or even where pastoralism was prominent in its own right as in Sardinia and Corsica. Yet there are apparently basic differences between banditry in predominantly agricultural areas and that in pastoral areas, which are often mountainous. In the latter, banditry appears to have been more resilient, especially where a combination of external factors militated against making pastoralists into peasants. This did not occur in northern Greece but did in Cyprus in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Banditry in more agricultural contexts is usually more controllable and can be tamed more easily, especially when violent men from humble origins acquire secure property and legitimate themselves.

Banditry tended to appear less in areas with large masses of rural proletarians, such as Puglia in Southern Italy (Snowden 1977). Few legal or illegal opportunities were available there for social mobility, and the social relations of production encouraged the emergence of collective solidarity and of anarcho syndicalism:

the absence of substantial intermediate strata of peasant proprietors, leaseholders and share-croppers also closed the political safety valve of upward social mobility. There were few examples of men who by toil, initiative and good fortune were able to gain land of their own. Between the mass of the landless there was an unbridgeable void (Snowden 1977: 73).

Much the same appears to have happened in the Andalusian town of Santaella, where absentee landlords were separated from a mass of largely landless labourers and where rural discontent increasingly took class forms (Driessen 1983). By contrast, where large-scale estates owned by resident landlords coexisted with small family plots, banditry flourished. Vanderwood quotes a Peruvian judge who found

little banditry in districts where property was well distributed among the peasants. Unproductive haciendas, however, spawned bandits among their landless peons. on the other hand, commercial farming districts experienced limited brigandage because the capitalistic entrepreneurs had the will, means and police to control it (1981: 12).

The social structure of a region is, however, only one, though an admittedly important, precondition for the emergence of banditry. Other conditions include a weak state and undeveloped electoral processes in which politicians are encouraged to utilize strongarm tactics to widen and patrol their power bases by coopting ex-bandits as retainers, sometimes for ostensibly national causes, such as in late-nineteenth-century Greece (Jenkins 1961). Other conditions include the dominance of moveable and precarious wealth, such as livestock, and the important absence of trust and permanent insecurity, rather than permanent misery at the local level (as in nineteenth-century Mexico), which opens a field of anarchic, individualistic opportunism, such as in nineteenth-century Greece and Mexico. Vanderwood observed that

the business of Mexican bandits was business. They were not the justice seeking pre-capitalist peasant brigands whom E. Hobsbawm describes. The only thing the Mexican brigands seemed to protest was their exclusion from rewarding sectors of the social system. They wanted profit, position and power, not to overturn society, and many later made good as bandits-turned-rurales (1981: 14).

Much the same appears to have occurred in Greece in the turbulent mid-nineteenth century. (4)

The romanticization of banditry, and hence its legitimisation, is also a significant feature of the phenomenon. Bandits

were often viewed at the grassroots level with some degree of ambiguous and grudging admiration in certain societies. This issue addresses the crux of the debate between Hobsbawm and Blok. Whereas the former takes myth as an amplification of grassroots yearnings for a type of pre-political just, but hierarchical, world, the latter has over-emphasized the causative role of terror in suppressing peasant unrest through the co-option of bandits as henchmen by landlords and mafiosi. Both Hobsbawm and Blok over-emphasize the psychology of terror without analysing its complex sociology. Furthermore, they do not sufficiently distinguish between violence and terror, and in particular the demiurgic role of violence. In the next section I begin by examining the role of violence as a system of signs, and as a means for the engendering of sacrifice.

Violence, Mutilation, and Sacrifice

Traditional banditry has often been accompanied by extreme violence in both its expression and its repression. Hobsbawm suggests both that “moderation in killing and violence belongs to the image of the social bandits”, and also that “they are heroes not in spite of the fear and horror their actions inspire, but in some ways because of them” (1985: 58). There is ambiguity in Hobsbawm’s treatment of violence. On the one hand he asserts that “excessive violence and cruelty are thus phenomena which only overlap banditry at certain points” (1985: 63). On the other, he advances various reasons suggesting violence has more centrality: bandits have a functional need for violence – they need to alternate love and fear; cruelty is inseparable from vengeance (1985: 63); violence is “associated with particularly humiliated and inferior groups” (1985: 64). And finally “things just get out of hand” (1985: 65); when men “cannot be ‘heroes’, they then stop acting like heroes” (1985: 66) – but then he says that they need to inspire fear and horror in order to be considered heroes (above). His argumentation is somewhat circular.

These arguments are unsatisfactory. They are too psychological in a predictable sense; they are circular; and they paradoxically present bandits using anti-social means when Hobsbawm is keen to present them as *social* bandits, even if "primitive" rebels. In our state-dominated, routinized, political worlds it is difficult to conceive of violence except as disruptive. That is the double-Hegelian "cunning of reason" (*list der vernunft*), which de-rationalises and de-legitimises violence except as the manifestation of the state's right to "protect order/rationality". Rather than a "lack of control", the intensity of violence in banditry suggests a control manifest through the application and signification of violence, however distasteful to our modern sensibilities. In banditry, as in feuding from which it often derives, personalized violence is critical and finely graded. Violence is targeted specifically against persons, and things as properties of persons, and displayed through stories.

Hobsbawm fails to distinguish between violence and terror. Terror can be a product of violence, but not necessarily. It is clearly much more complex because it is a series of representations. Following Girard (1988), I suggest violence is more than the producer of terror, and that it is demiurgical. When individuals employ violence in "banditry" type contexts, and when they are its recipients, they do so not just as individuals, but are also perceived (and perceive themselves) in almost dramaturgical roles: as the "wronged party", the "avenger", the "fugitive from justice", the "victim", etc. Although the process whereby "banditry" is generated is well known (a personal disagreement – a killing – flight – becoming an outsider – justice/revenge – retribution- eventual capture and execution), "cultural" elaboration still occurs. Through the signification of violence, notions of sacrifice, justice, retribution, etc, are evoked. Violence has a structural, almost sacrificial engendering role. The state in its ancien regime form is not peripheral but critical to this process. Through his public execution as dangerous outlaw-outsider, the state transforms the bandit into a sacrificial victim of justice, who whilst being polluted through bloodshed is nevertheless transfigured through

his suffering into a popular apotheosis as a victim of state law. I suggest that Hobsbawm simplifies the figure of the bandit as a modern yet transcendently valid hero. The bandit is a tragic and deeply ambivalent "hero", a figure of tragedy, which subsequent enlightenment thought simplified and manicheanised. We begin with the employment of violence by the bandit. Here violence can be seen to generate terror.

Terror and violence had a functional role for bandits. Many bandits embarked on their careers through personal vendettas, such as in Corsica, or in Cyprus (Sant Cassia 1993). Betrayal to agents of the state was always a grave danger, unless the individual were protected by powerful interests. In Corsica, many bandits were obliged to rely on the support of family and kin and thus soon found themselves further enmeshed in family feuds. They used their prepotence and violence to protect their kinsmen interests, and thus ensure the latter's support against betrayal to the state. Kinsmen and bandits thus depended on each other: the former as protection against enemy depredations, the latter against betrayal. To become a bandit was a "disgrace" and a "misfortune", a point I return to later. Violence had a functional purpose as a warning and deterrence. It had to be "overdetermined" to ensure no ambiguity, and that massive retaliation would result. The more protected an individual was, especially by powerful patrons as in Sicily, the less need to use violence to signify itself, and the more opportunities to employ ambiguity and courtesy, a point noted by Franchetti and Sonnino (1977). The more marginalised a bandit, the more dependent he was on protection, the greater the risk of betrayal, and thus the greater the tendency for violence to appear "gratuitous" i.e., to signify itself.

If the genesis of banditry often had a personal element (vendetta, revenge, etc), its prosecution was also personal. In its ideal form most stories about "bandits" can be reduced to the following pattern: slight to personal/family honour by equal/superior – response – violence – breaking of state law and threat of revenge – escape to maquis (flight of young man) – retribution – death of offender – further marginalisation

and involvement of outlaw/ bandit in illegal but morally just actions – betrayal (killing) or capture (execution by state). Violence is polluting. It is significant that the outbreaks of violence was usually, in both ancient and other more modern societies, followed by banishment as an alternative to state prosecution (Wilson 1988: 338). Girard has suggested “the cause of ritual impurity is violence... This impurity is contagious, (thus)... the only sure way to avoid contagion is to flee the scene of violence” (1988: 28). As a nineteenth century observer for Corsica noted: “the vendetta is a kind of religion... The Corsican takes revenge... because the affront which he has suffered *separates* him from his peers, and renders him *impure*, like a social *excommunicate*”. (5) In any case the culprit usually banishes himself both out of fear of retribution by the state, and of the kin if blood has been split, or to pursue the retribution if he has been wronged and could not obtain justice. The main means to express violence, damage one’s opponent’s interests, and express itself as a series of autonomous signs, was through the mutilation both of individuals and of animals. Banditry employed a specific set of finely graded messages involving violence to the body and property of the victim. Violence was targeted specifically against persons, and things as properties of persons, and displayed through stories. As his metaphorical representation, the property of the victim is subjected to an excess of violence eg livestock that is disembowelled (*sventrate* in Sicily, see also Blok 1983), but not killed. The owner would be forced to complete the bitter destruction of his own herd. In other cases (such as in Corsica), mules’ ears were cut off as a ritual death threat (Wilson 1988: 78). Such actions served as a warning, or an unambiguous omen of further action. Whereas lower animals (e.g., dogs) were destroyed, medium range ones (e.g., sheep) were grievously wounded, and higher animals (bulls, mules, etc) had marks left on them. The victim was therefore defined taxonomically.

Through the destruction of animals or other property of the offender, or the even killing of some other person, a surrogate victim is created: “By killing, not the murderer

himself, but someone close to him, an act of perfect reciprocity is avoided and the necessity for revenge by-passed" (Girard 1988: 26). The act resembles both a legal punishment and a sacrifice, yet "it cannot be assimilated to either" (1988: 26). It resembles sacrifice in that the victim of the second murder is not responsible for the first. But it resembles a legal punishment "because it constitutes an act of reparation, a violent retribution" (1988: 26).

However as Girard points out "the difference between sacrificial and non-sacrificial violence is anything but exact; it is even arbitrary" (1988: 40). Girard has called this the "sacrificial crises": "the inability to distinguish between blood split for ritual and for criminal purposes". He suggests "Men find it distasteful to admit that the 'reasons' on both sides of a dispute are equally valid – which is to say that *violence operates without reason*" (1988: 46 original emphasis). The sacrificial crises "coincides with the disappearance of the difference between impure violence and purifying violence. When this difference has been effaced, purification is no longer possible and impure, contagious, reciprocal violence spreads throughout the community" (1988: 49), in short vendetta-type reciprocal violence.

Two main processes operate in killings. First, there is the selection of the victim, and secondly there is (often) the mutilation of the body. Sometimes victims were selected precisely as substitutes. Wilson notes: "there are indications that the killing of children characterized feuds of peculiar bitterness or 'bad feuds' aimed at the total extinction of rival families. *'On adults and children, it does not matter./Even on the women. / Rip out all their guts!*, an aunt enjoined her nephew in a lament" (1988: 209). "All sacrificial rites are based on two substitutions. The first is provided by generative violence, which substitutes a single victim for all the members of the community" (Girard 1988: 269). This is the choice of the surrogate victim, a member of the community, often chosen precisely because s/he is a treasured member of the community (such as women and children), which further compounds the sacrilege, the anathema.

Second, the body has to be "prepared" retroactively as it were, disassembled rather than dressed, in parts rather than whole, blemished rather than pure, to be offered back to the group who "made" it, and to whom it belongs. This is the antithesis of fertility (Bloch and Parry 1982).

"Desecration" / mutilation of the corpse performs this function. Significant parts of the body are isolated as targets of extreme violence, often physically detached/removed from the whole body, and reassembled with the corpse as metonyms of disassembled potency and messages of denaturalised personhood. In Corsica in 1846, "Giovan-Natale Fanceschi's head was cut off and his viscera ripped out, while the body of his 14-year-old son and another relative similarly treated" (Wilson 1988: 405). Often this follows metonymic associations- the offence itself determined the treatment of the corpse. In other cases sexual organs had been cut off, especially where the victim had been accused of a sexual offence. In Cyprus and Sicily the cut-off penis was stuck in the mouth of the victim. In Corsica ears were cut off, especially for those of low status, thus metaphorically treating them as animals/mules of more powerful protectors (Wilson 1988: 407). Sometimes bodies were stripped.

The desecration of the body, its disassembly to be reassembled in a grotesque mimetic parody of the original body, is what Girard has called sacrificial preparation: "Once the victims have been obtained, ritualistic thought strives in various ways to make them conform to its original image of the original victim and simultaneously to increase their quotient of cathartic potential" (1988: 272). The defilement of the corpse and the denial of burial in Homeric Greece went "beyond accepted conventions" and was a sentence of exile for the spirit (Campbell 1992), but conventions were often broken, and the initial uncertainty surrounding Patroclus' and Hectors' bodies indicates that anger and violence often tempted men to take this course. Corsicans sometimes "wanted to kill their enemies precisely when they were in a state of mortal sin, so that they would suffer eternally after death", including not being buried on consecrated ground

(Wilson 1988: 405). (6) Yet in practising such highly signifying violence, the bandit embarked on his final transformation. He sets himself up outside the community and thus as the ultimate sacrificial victim. He does not just turn his victims into surrogate sacrifices, but defines himself as the ultimate sacrifice. This is the second component of sacrifice- the true sacrifice: "the only strictly ritualistic substitution, is that of a victim for the surrogate victim. It is essential for the victim to be *drawn from outside the community*. The surrogate victim, by contrast, is a member of the community. Ritual sacrifice is defined as an inexact imitation of the generative act" (Girard 1988: 269 my emphasis). By setting himself outside societal norms through his use of the excessive signification of violence, the bandit prepares the way for his ultimate sacrifice as the *defeat* of violence: "if the sacrificial victim belonged to the community (as does the surrogate victim), then his death would promote further violence instead of dispelling it" (Girard 1988: 269)

To recapitulate: "the victim should belong both to the inside and the outside of the community... As there is no category that perfectly meets this requirement... the goal is to make the victim wholly sacrificeable. In its broadest sense, then, sacrificial preparation employs two very different approaches. The first seeks to *make more foreign a victim* who is too much part of the community (e.g., through mutilation-PSC, my emphasis). The second approach seeks to re-integrate into the community *a victim who is too foreign to it*" (i.e., the "bandit"-PSC, my emphasis) (Girard 1988: 272). As Marcaggi noted: "The bandit is a being who has placed himself on the *margin* of society, who is constrained by *no responsibilities*, who has *sacrificed his like in advance*, who will perish sooner or later by *violent means*, and whose only guide is his own whim" (7) We can now more fully appreciate the songs about the hardships of bandit life in Corsica (Wilson 1988: 344), Greece (Politis 1973, Campbell 1992) and elsewhere, and understand why becoming a bandit was far from glorious. Most bandits in Corsica saw themselves as victims; they spoke about their "disgrace", "destiny" and "fate" (*poveru*

disgraziato) (Wilson 1988: 340); in Greece the notions of *atichos*, (luckless) and *moira* (fate) were equally prevalent.

The Bandit as State Sacrificial Symbol

Most academic accounts of banditry concentrate on the lives of bandits. In so doing they miss an equally important aspect: their death. That this was the subject of popular accounts should alert us to something distinctive. I suggest that it is not so much through their lives that bandits generated the (sometimes powerful) myth of "nobility", etc, but rather in their death. Indeed, many did not live or die "nobly". It was rather by being either betrayed/killed, or (publicly) executed, they achieved sacrificial status. For the first, they became symbols of betrayal by more powerful vested interests. Second, their public execution as sacrifice became "an instrument of prevention in the struggle against violence" (Girard 1988: 170). The violence of their executions, and the disassembly of their bodies as public spectacle, demonstrated the irrepressible power of the state over the individual. When caught and juridically processed, their bodies became the subject of publicly demonstrated spectacle of state power. Through their public executions the state generated and imposed order through the slow, measured (rather than through a personal impetuous anger), disassembly of the bodies of its subjects (rather than their mutilation practiced by individuals), whose violence as justice-retribution-emotion threatened the justice-legality-reason of the leviathan. Finally, their lives through their deaths, became fated like tragedy, and as in tragedy individuals become aware how they themselves assisted in the birth of their own destinies only when they have finally happened. For tragedy is the "balancing of the scale, not of justice but of violence" (Girard 1988: 45).

As "one of us who always risks becoming one of them", the bandit set himself up outside (not against, but neither for) society. He distinguished himself as a potentially sacrificial being from non-sacrificial beings by one essential characteristic:

"between these (potentially sacrificial) victims and the community a crucial social link is missing, so that they can be exposed to violence without fear of reprisal. Their death does not automatically entail an act of vengeance" (Girard 1988: 13). It follows that the bandit as polluted, as a being set apart from society, must be captured by those outside the community (the agents of the state), even if this still required the concealed complicity and betrayal of members of the community. (8) Offered up by the community to the state, he is returned to the community through and by his death. His suffering is apotheosed as an imaginary, suffering, collective peasant body. In their public torture and executions bandits, as examples of criminality (state law both uses justice and travesties it), became spectacles through which the crushing resolute power of the state was manifest and elevated as a theological principle. If, as Foucault has suggested, "the condemned man represents the symmetrical, inverted figure of the king" (1987: 29), then the body and suffering of the "bandit" becomes an icon of the peasant body – mute, inexpressive, almost beast-like, terrible not so much in the revenge he exacts through the bodies of others, but in the silence with which he is made to consecrate his suffering.

The bandit is thus not so much an expression of peasant reaction to its oppression, nor a simple wish-fulfillment, but may well be a *transfiguration* of peasant suffering, transformed from (individual) execution to the collective personification of sacrifice. The parallels between bandits and saints, and the linkage in the literature between bandits and monks, is not fortuitous, not just in terms of the social conditions that gave rise to banditry, but also in terms of the iconography and models of suffering. (9) Many bandits whilst in prison become "like saints". (10) By his public execution and suffering the bandit is conjured up as a victim of a terrible state power, and thus as sacrifice. Popular models of suffering were available in the lives and tortures of saints. Foucault notes that the ancien regime spectacle of punishment (and most glorifications of banditry by the peasantry date from the immediate period surrounding the establishment of the

nation state) ran the risk of being "rejected by the very people to whom it was addressed... the people never felt closer to those who paid the penalty than in those rituals intended to show the horror of the crime and the invincibility of power; never did the people feel more threatened, like them, by a legal violence exercised without moderation and restraint" (1987: 63)

Accounts of crimes were published, but the effect like the use of this literature, was equivocal:

"The condemned man found himself transformed into a hero by the sheer extent of his widely advertised crimes, and sometimes the affirmation of his belated repentance. Against the law, against the rich, the powerful... he appeared to have waged a struggle with which one all too easily identified... If the condemned man was shown to be repentant, accepting the verdict, asking both God and man for forgiveness for his crimes, it was as if he had *come through some process of purification*: he died in his own way, *like a saint*. But indomitability was an alternative claim to greatness: by not giving in under torture, he gave proof of a strength that no power had succeeded in bending. *A convicted criminal could become after his death a sort of saint, his memory honoured and his grave respected*" (1987: 67 my emphasis)

The following account of a Calabrian bandit's execution around 1810 by the French forces brings together a number of the above themes:

"Betrayed and bound by his followers as he slept in the forest of Cassano, Benincasa was brought to Cosenza, and General Manhes ordered that both his hands be lopped off and that he be led, thus mutilated, to his home in San Giovanni, and there hanged; a cruel sentence, which the wretch received with a bitter smile. His right hand was cut off and the stump bound, not out of compassion or regard for his life, but in order that all his blood might not flow out of the opened veins, seeing that he was reserved for a more miserable death. Not a cry escaped him, and when he saw that the first operation was over, he voluntarily laid his left hand upon the block and coldly watched the second mutilation, and saw his two amputated hands lying on the ground, which were then tied together by the thumbs and hung round his neck; and awful and piteous spectacle, This happened at Cozenza. On the same day he began his march to San Giovanni in Fiore... one of the escort offered him food,

which he accepted; he ate and drank what was placed in his mouth, and not so much in order to sustain life, as with real pleasure. On the next day, as the hour of his execution approached, he refused the comforts of religion, ascended the gallows neither swiftly nor slowly, and died admired for his brutal intrepidity." (11)

Rather than seeing the violent actions of bandits as a yearning for a pre-political just world, it is in their violent executions that "bandits" witness both the transcendent notions of retribution-justice, and that pre-political just world that can only be realised, like the sufferings of saints, as an imagined utopia outside time. Indeed, it was precisely the spectacle of execution that the enlightened modern state authorities wished to avoid. As Dickie (1992) points out, in southern Italy the task of fighting bandits between 1860–70 was seen as an inglorious and even dishonourable one for the army. Officers and men were obliged to employ the same barbarism they were engaged to suppress. A whole range of distancing rituals and signs were deployed to separate the officers and men from the declared enemies of society, and thus legitimating and facilitating the extreme measures employed (summary executions, pitiless razing of towns, etc). These included: the removal of officers' epaulettes when in action, the widespread convention to shoot bandits in the back, and the display of brigand heads on posts or leaving their bodies unburied. As Dickie points out "to be shot in the back one has to be below the symbolic threshold of citizenship" (1992: 17). Such signs of pitiless retribution created problems: "The army saw itself caught up in a war of signification conducted in terms alien to those which normally expressed its nationalism" (1992: 17); it was "haunted that the division between the human and inhuman might disintegrate or that in dealing with the barbaric one might be contaminated by it" (1992: 13). Paraphrasing Girard, one can now understand not so much why violence operates "without reason", but rather that reason is subject to the "logic" of the signification of violence. As Dickie points out "brigandage seems to stretch the law beyond itself, to place it on the boundaries of legality, and even make it parade itself as brute power" (1992: 13).

It brings the civilizing power of the state face to face with its own contradictions.

Banditry, Literature, and the Imaginings of the Nation State

"Better occasional murders than frequent adulteries"

Boswell, on the "advantages" of the Corsican justice system (quoted in Carrington 1971: 83).

When Hobsbawm singled out bandits as pre-political rebels against oppression, he was following in the steps of the Enlightenment. Intellectuals of the modern nation state were heavily implicated in the literary and political romanticization of banditry. (12) There were at least two examples in Europe where guerilla-irregular popular uprisings (i.e., "banditry" as an expression for freedom) against outside despotism caught public imagination: Corsica in the mid eighteenth century, and Greece in the early nineteenth. The uprising of the Corsicans against the Genovese attracted the interest of Rousseau and Boswell (who visited the island). In his *Contrat Social* (publ. 1762) Rousseau singled them out in Europe as the one people fit to produce just laws: "There is still in Europe one country capable of legislation, and that is the island of Corsica". (13) In Rousseau's imagining of the Corsican way of life are contained many of the germinal contradictory notions about bandits that developed in Romanticism, and which have popular currency today. "It will be known" he bragged to Saint Germain "that I was the first to see a free people, capable of discipline, where all Europe still saw only a horde of bandits". (14) Carrington observes "for him their factions and feuds were the direct consequence of their "servitude" to the Genoese. They had only to revert to their primal condition, barely out of sight, to recover "concord, peace and liberty" (1971: 265). Similar views were entertained by Byron for Greek klephts. The Rousseauesque utopia inverted traditional wisdoms, (certainly the Hobbesian

justification of the state, power and sovereignty), and manufactured the bandit as the first modern primitive on the borders of Europe. The bandit was the distorting looking glass through which European political thought could engage in the process of anticipating the future. Where there was no (state) law, Rousseau apprehended justice; where the people were oppressed, Rousseau anticipated freedom; where the Ancien Regime recognized anarchic bloodthirsty bandits, he discerned exemplary citizens capable of discipline. Bandits were natural men, outside time, but nevertheless potential law makers. To anticipate themselves and the future they had to further recover their bucolic pleasures: the "simplicity, the equality of the rustic life". Previously, bandits were seen as barbarians with whom one could coexist, inhabiting the same time, and whose criminality was predictable, but religiously condemnable. Now, they were seen as living ancestors who inhabited a different time and who had to be tamed in the modern republic. Rousseau had plotted the trajectory of the social bandit even down to scripting a role for the intellectual: "The valour and constancy which this brave people has known how to recover and defend its liberty well merits that some wise man teaches them to preserve it" he proclaimed with some modesty.

Literary romanticization of bandits was pronounced during the formation of the nation-state and was often coupled with a desire of the urban literati to discover sources of opposition (often to foreign rule) in the countryside. (15) In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, klephts also figured prominently in Greek historiography, representing an often entirely fictional traditional opposition to Ottoman rule. The earliest collection of songs extolling the virtues of the klephts was obtained from a Kerkyran nobleman (Gallant 1988: 272). The myth of banditry may well, therefore, have a double function. In the hands of urban intellectuals it points to the bad old days before the establishment of the nation-state, when life and property were not secure. On the other hand banditry suggests that ordinary peasants or pastoralists, the source of national folklore and the social stratum from whom bandits

were traditionally recruited, possessed the right ethnic sentiments in rejecting foreign authority, exploitation, and so forth. That such men were often misguided and ultimately shifted their loyalties only serves to demonstrate that peasants are incapable by nature of taking legitimate mass political action unless they are under the leadership of the more enlightened urban elites, as Rousseau intimated. Since national culture of the nation-states is built upon folklore, or even created it where there was none (Gellner 1983), there is no reason to exclude banditry from this type of elaboration, such that "it is difficult... to distinguish between myth and fact, especially in a world in which one turns so readily into the other" (Hobsbawm 1981). Such an example emerged in Greece in the nineteenth century (Koliopoulos 1979, 1987).

By the mid-nineteenth century with the growth of industrialization and mass migration to the cities, most of Europe's periphery was temporalised in a different time zone. The countryside of Europe's periphery became a theatrical topos where the vicarious fantasies, and terrors, of an emergent national reading bourgeoisie could be collectivised and enacted in literature. In Spain, Sicily, Greece, and Corsica, bandits became important literary, operatic, and iconic subjects. Novelists travelled to remote places to ground their texts in direct experience and observation. Edmond About published *Le Roi des Montagnes* in 1856 with illustrations by Gustave Dore: an ironical story about a Greek bandit leader who kidnaps some Europeans on a tour of classical sites. The themes are resolutely modern: tourism, terrorism, kidnapping, obscure politics, intermeshing hidden political agendas that conceal financial gain, even absurdity are all there. And literature could easily turn into life, even if the ending was not acceptable. In 1865 a kidnapping took place near Marathon that echoed About's novel, but it went terribly wrong – the tourists were butchered and the brigands cut down. Some Greek politicians tried to exculpate governmental blundering in dealing with the crises by claiming that banditry was an Ottoman heritage and not Greek (Jenkins 1961). In Corsica the mutual interpenetration: life-literature, became

anticipateable. Prosper Merimee, then Inspector of Historical Monuments, (16) wrote his novel *Colomba* (publ. 1840) inspired by a contemporary vendetta. (17) But “fearing the incredulity of his readers, Merimee could not resist adding a footnote to the effect that anyone who doubted the possibility of such a performance could go to the Sartene and learn for himself how ‘one of the most distinguished and agreeable citizens’ had saved himself in similar circumstances” (Carrington 1971: 107–8). Bandits, however, were no longer the hoary exemplars from the past and could read. Merimee’s naivete in fabulating and anticipating a Pirandello world where reality and fiction blended into each other from their respective territories before their time had come in this century, had disastrous consequences. In the eyes of local society, the hero of the novel after being forgiven by his enemies, had “committed the monstrous injury of boasting of his crime” and was killed (Carrington 1971: 108). (18) Wilson observes “Corsican attitudes towards what was in the main a hostile stereotype were mixed, reflecting an ambivalence towards socially sanctioned violence at least among the elite” (1988: 14).

Banditry did not just become romanticised in the 19th century. In Sicily it became regionally folklorised, and eventually nationally problematised; whilst in Greece it became regionally problematised and nationally folklorised (Herzfeld 1982; Politis 1973). In Corsica it appears to have been somewhere in between the two. The noted Sicilian folklorist G. Pitre had presented personal prepotence in existential terms, quoting one of his informants: “Mafia is self respect/awareness (*coscienza del proprio essere*). The mafioso wants to be respected, and to be respected in almost all situations. He knows how to vindicate himself personally”. Mafia was then almost a manifestation of local colour. (19) In literature the closer one got to the actual *topoi* of banditry, the greater the tendency to either conceal it (as in Sicily), or to treat it either romantically or negatively, as in Greek *ithographia*. (20) The reports by the northern Italians Franchetti and Sonnino problematised banditry as a national question of regional public order, a resistance to the state and its undoubted benefits that derived

not just from structure, but from culture. Cultural misperceptions and obduracy by all strata prevented the new Italian citizens from realising their own long term interests. From the perspective of the state the two politicians were right. Mafia and brigandage thrived in the early modern Italian state. Mafia and *brigantaggio* became part of the wider *questione meridionale*, (the Southern Question/Problem), a “question” that suggested cultural (southern) reasons for its construction and northern (rational) means for its resolution. Brigandage moved from being a question of individual barbarism which the Ancien Regime had to extirpate by an over-determining signification (massive repression, or decoration of bandits when they assisted the regime against invasion as in Bonaparte-resisting Bourbon Calabria), but one of collective measurement, documentation, education, and economic development.

Unsurprisingly, this aroused the ire of local intellectuals and politicians. As the contemporary novelist Leonardo Sciascia points out there was “a certain latent racism of the north towards the south” (1983: 140): “as soon as the state conditioned by northern opinion posed the problem of the mafia (or, in its language, in terms of public security in Sicily) as a problem that is completely Sicilian, typical of Sicily’s psychology and history; distancing itself thus from it – then the educated classes in Sicily react by minimalising the criminal happenings...” (1983: 140–1). Indeed the nineteenth century Sicilian novelist Luigi Capuana in his *La sicilia e il brigantaggio* accused Franchetti and Sonnino’s report of being vitiated with an “original sin”: “they went there, like doctors to a sick man’s bed, with the preconceived idea that the illness of that poor devil must be something quite out of the ordinary”. (21) He denied the Sicilianity of the mafia. Mafia may exist in Sicily but is no different than criminality found elsewhere. (22) Sciascia objected that this should not have excused local authors, such as Pirandello, Capuana and Verga, from recognizing the insidiousness of the mafia and brigantaggio. (23) By the early 20th century brigandage was a regional stain unless it could be safely nationalised. This is why it was folklorised in Greece but less so in Sicily and Corsica, unless

it could be presented as a precursor to modern resistance to the state. (24) "Bandits and brigands are the two subjects on which a Corsican is never expansive," wrote Archer in 1924. "The prefer the foreigner to believe that such things no longer exist," or she might have added, that they never had (Wilson 1988: 14). Equally, of course, foreigners were keen to have it remembered.

Banditry has thus been surrounded by a mythology and rhetoric which are far from insignificant. Caution must be exercised in treating such myths either as generic expressions of hidden grassroots aspirations (as Hobsbawm does) or as largely irrelevant to banditry's political functions in the class war (as Blok suggests). The two are not necessarily opposed and indeed may coexist at different levels of analysis. Nor is it possible, or even desirable, to aim for essentialist definitions; and Blok rightly questions the usefulness of the category social bandits. Yet because what passes as banditry cannot be analytically separated from wide areas of social life, its presentation in discourse is particularly significant. This includes not just the various ways in which strong-arm men are co-opted by the powerful (for it would be surprising if they were not) but also how such men are portrayed by various strata of society, including conflicting interpretations. Banditry is often linked to nationalist rhetoric and to writing in complex ways. Hence, one critical issue is why and how certain bandits from determinate periods are mythicized in certain contexts and others are not.

Peasant idealization of bandits is also variable and a function of their subsequent political evolution. In contrast to Hobsbawm, I argue that bandits do not necessarily "belong to the peasantry" (1986: 130), they often belong to those groups who sponsor or control the production of these symbols often in literary form. In certain cases bandits may belong to the peasantry only because those who peddled these images were themselves of recent humble origins eager to legitimate themselves. This occurred in Greece with ex-klepts, such as Kolokotronis and Makriyiannis. In Brazil and elsewhere, through the *literatura de cordel*, bandits belong

to the peasantry because they are incorporated in widely-circulated chap books (*folhetos*) which popularized and contemporized bandits, such as Lampiao (Fentress and Wickham 1992). Bandits often belong solely to the peasantry because no other social group has a need for them and because they are often forgotten. In Cyprus and in Greece, and doubtlessly in other parts of the Mediterranean, bandits do not “belong to remembered history, as distinct from the official history of books,” as Hobsbawm claims (1985: 133); rather, they belong to remembered history because they were often incorporated in written history, or through other devices such as written ballads, puppet theatre, etc. (25)

Conclusion: Violence, Terror and Reason

This essay argues that banditry is not a unique phenomenon and can take different forms according to specific and particular conditions. Banditry is intrinsically neither a pre-political form of protest nor a means of suppressing peasant unrest, although it may have these functions among others. Rather, banditry is an aggressive form of illegality and of adventurist capital accumulation found in certain social contexts. In this sense it is a product of political economy. As a category of social behaviour banditry employs specific forms of the display of violence for personal ends, and generates terror in specific ways. Banditry is as much a social role, as a specific type of rationality and behaviour. Terror is the employment of signs according to a certain rationality to affect reason itself. As a legalistic and political-social category, banditry is formed by the impact and interaction of the state on local communities, and its meanings have changed across time to reflect these changing relationships. The myth of banditry, furthermore, is often not a reflection of reality but, rather, may be employed by urban middle classes or peasants as a means of legitimating political strategies.

Some concluding thoughts on the nature of violence, rationality, and terror may be useful here. To see the issue

in terms of the legitimation of violence is to reproduce the authority of the state in a double Hegelian sense: the state is not just the highest expression of reason/violence, but the state is the ultimate *producer of reason/violence*. And this "reason" takes two forms. First, it links up the power of the state with violence in almost instrumental, "reasonable" terms (the state as the ultimate guarantor of the rule of law, as having a "monopoly of violence" which can ultimately be deployed if it is threatened by illegitimate means), to therefore ensure the "rule of reason". Second, it is interiorised such that "reason" supports this construction. If we accept, following Evans Pritchard, that there is reason in magic and that there is order outside the state, then we should also be attuned to the possibility that the structuration of violence in the modern state is an aspect of a specific form of reason. Taussig has suggested: "there is something frightening, I think, merely in saying this conjunction of reason and violence exists, not only because it makes violence scary, imbued with the greatest legitimating force there can be, reason itself, and not only because it makes reason scary by indicating how it's snuggled deep into the armpit of terror, but also because we so desperately need to cling to reason – as instituted – against the terrifying anomie and chaos pressing in on all sides" (1992: 115). Violence, he suggests, is not a *substance* of power (as Weber seemed to think), but a power that produces the "intrinsically mysterious, mystifying, convoluting": "violence is very much an end in itself – a sign, as Benjamin put it, of the existence of the gods" (1992: 116).

I share this view, but with some qualifications. In contrast to what Taussig is suggesting, violence does not need to have corporality. It does not even need to be applied, it can be extracted from the social world to signify itself. It can derive from, and engender, corporality. Violence is not so much an end in itself, but both a series of signs, and a power of signification, that conjure up and make real from within the social imaginations of men, that which is externally mysterious and internally mystifying.

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Notes

1. Military report of 1826 quoted in Wilson (1988: 339).
2. One problem with Scotts view is that it is historically too general.
3. Sanchez and Meertens suggest puzzlingly that bandits were both class conscious and class active, whilst also being politically partisan and class blind. For the former they note that "bandits began to attack or weaken the economic interests of property owners of *their own party*" (*ibid.*: 164 my emphasis), whilst for the latter they observe "acts of violent terrorism were justified as righteous vengeance against representatives of the opposing party, *even through these might be peasants of the same region*" (*ibid.*: 165 my emphasis). They call this "a fragmented class consciousness" (*ibid.*: 165) It is hard to fully comprehend such obtuseness if that is the case.
4. Koliopoulos states that "the Kapetanioi were those who often created serious problems for the central power but eventually they became organs of the State" (1979: 19, my translation). Political exigencies certainly encouraged this tendency. In 1843 "one of the first actions of the revolution was to free an unknown number of jailed men, including many bandits among them" (1979: 39–40). Uncertain frontiers, especially in the Northern mountainous areas of Epiros, enabled bandits to shift loyalties easily from Greek to Ottoman paymasters depending upon financial incentives (1979: 71).
5. Quoted in Wilson 1988: 405, my emphasis. "To do violence to a violent person is to be contaminated by his violence. It is best, therefore, to arrange matters so that nobody, except perhaps the culprit himself, is directly responsible for his death" (Girard 1988: 27).
6. Others were more charitable, and indicate the importance of the concept of grace as an equal component to the study of honour.
7. Marcaggi, 1898(b) 21–22. Quoted in Wilson, 1988: 355.
8. Such individuals thus become tainted with the stain of state power and the blood of the victim.
9. In Calabria banditry was linked to monasteries, and the monk is the spiritual double of the bandit.
10. Cypriots still use these metaphors nowadays.

11. Colletta, quoted in Douglas 1994: 324. Douglas notes that this incident was denied by General Manhes, but this would hardly be surprising, nor necessarily contradict the points made above.
12. Clearly banditry appears in literature much earlier but bandit literature becomes a genre from the 18th century, such as in the *Rauberromane*. Hobsbawm recognizes this but it is surprising that he does not further explore the relationship between banditry stories and the nation state.
13. Quoted in Carrington 1971: 263. Rousseau was engaged to write a constitution for the Corsicans, a project dashed by the French invasion.
14. Quoted in Carrington 1971: 264.
15. Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, which features El Guapo, was written soon after the Reconquista.
16. The irony is that a government official in charge of the statist view of time through monuments should have occupied himself with a sympathetic elaboration of local customs and moeurs wrote his novel *Colomba* (publ. 1840) inspired by a contemporary vendetta.
17. The central dilemma in *Colomba* is whether or not to pursue a feud. There is a gender symbolism with the heroine representing the nation remaining faithful to the traditional obligations whilst the brother, who had been educated abroad, is reluctant to do so. The brother represents modernity. A similar opposition is found in the novel *O Archeologos* by Karkavitsas, cf. J. Politi, 1988.
18. Of course one can never be certain about the veracity of such claims, but what is of interest here is the imagining and envisionability that such possibilities can occur.
19. In *Usi e costumi, credenze e pregiudizi del popolo siciliano* (1889), quoted in Sciascia 1983: 141.
20. Popular literature produced in the latter 19th century.
21. Quoted in Sciascia 1983: 139. I thank Setrag Manoukian for bringing this text to my attention.
22. Farrell is too harsh in calling it "provincial bragadaccio", and "bad faith" (1995: 14). From an anthropological perspective Capuana is absolutely right.
23. He referred to "the paradoxical situation where a literature committed not to betray realism... when faced with the mafia, has observed a type of *omerta*" (1983: 143).
24. The myth of banditry continues to be used strategically in contemporary Crete (Herzfeld 1985).
25. The models of the noble bandit in Brazil were in turn based on noble heroes of medieval Europe. (Fentress and Wickham 1992), but even these two authors' excellent work has difficulty in explaining whether this was transmitted, and if so how, or whether these models offer the satisfaction for a "structural need" – for justice, etc.

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