

Chapter 1

UNILATERAL EMPIRE; THE UNITED NATIONS OF AMERICA¹

The U.S. at present—is NOT what a democracy looks like. Neither is feminism one and the same with the Bush administration's appropriation of women's rights talk on behalf of Afghan women, or, women in the U.S. military. Controversy over the meanings of democracy and feminism is hardly new. But my attempt at seeing and thinking through these issues today, has a compelling newness, especially for many of us living in the United States.

Much of what makes this moment new is the unilateral stance of the U.S. Our leaders are so giddy with their power they arrogantly and inadvertently reveal their imperial plot for most of the world to see. U.S. empire building Americanizes the globe in its particularly racialized and masculinist form. The Bush administration continues to plaster its version of neo-liberalism to the rest of the globe. People I speak with 'elsewhere' think they should be able to vote in U.S. elections given that they are expected to live according to U.S. design.

I use the term 'elsewhere/s' to pluralize my viewings and my sitings for thinking about other-than-western democracies.² I use these places outside the U.S. as sites to radically pluralize my viewing of humanity's complex understanding of democracies and feminisms. Radical pluralism requires a displacement of the U.S. as the privileged site of modernity, democracy, feminism, and so on, and demands an accounting from places 'elsewhere'.

This project is risky as I span the globe historically, and comparatively. I try to avoid the East/West, traditional/modern, secular/religious divides and know that I am only sometimes successful in doing so. I look for multiple and incomplete starts and fissures, rather than originary locations, to see the most innovative democratic and anti-racist feminist dialogues possible. This requires a public and intellectual space large enough for all of us. Sadly, this public space is shrinking and narrowing.

The present is always shifting, yet at any given moment it is also the surrounding in which we live, so it is both history and the present, simultaneously. Thinking and seeing BEFORE the moment—its history—and AFTER—its future possibilities—demands complex knowing.

GLOBAL CAPITAL AND EMPIRE

My inquiry starts here: that western democratic theory has appropriated all experience it chooses, as its own, locating 'the' West as the originary home of democracy. It is not simply the well known critique that western democracies were exclusive at their core of indigenous peoples, non-propertied men, all women, and African-slaves but rather that the ideas of individuality and human freedom also come from these excluded people, from their acts of resistance. 'The' West has in part learned what democracy means FROM the Haitian revolution, and FROM women's anti-colonial struggles in Egypt, Algeria, Argentina, Chiapas, and Chile. As such, western democracy, as well as western feminism was never simply western and grew out of global struggles of resistance, at multiple sites, like the slave-trade. Equality and freedom are early on envisioned by those punished by and excluded from western notions of freedom.

The flows between 'East' and 'West' go each way; from West to East; and East to West. And, these very constructs are exactly that—constructs that are as much symbolic as real. As such, I use the terms at the same time I hope to open and complexify them. Because these labels reify the very hierarchies I wish to displace much of the historical record I seek does not exist. Silences and exclusions form the erasure. Yet, there is more than one conception of democracy and freedom, and the western brand is not simply of 'the' West, nor the best.

In the 21st Century, 'the' West means the U.S. more than Europe as well as the globalized forms of cultural capitalism which no longer have any one geographical location. The flows travel from global capital to sites everywhere; yet there still are flows traveling in reverse against these developments from Seattle, Washington, and Johannesburg, South Africa. Given the relations of power, flows both ways are absorbed by power-filled discourses which appropriate and silence subversive variety.

Global capitalism parades as globalization. Globalization holds out the probability of world poverty

¹I am indebted to Tariq Ali for the phrase. See his: "Recolonizing Iraq", New Left Review, 21, (may-June, 2003), p.7.

²See: Carol Quillen, "Feminist Theory, Justice and the Lure of the Human", Signs, vol. 27, no. 1 (Autumn, 2001), pp. 87-122, for the phrasing, "other-than" in pluralizing feminisms beyond liberalism.

worsening along with repressive measures against those who suffer most. It also holds out the possibility of resistance against these forces. Growing criticism of global capital and its culture of domination has taken hold in places like Seattle, Paris, and Barcelona. At the same time Coke and McDonald's are known throughout the world and people line up for miles to enter a new McDonald's in Kuwait. In China the owners of Noodle King say that they have learned everything from McD's, but that they offer a "traditional menu in an untraditional setting". Yet, they wonder if they must give up the "human touch", in the end, for what is considered, modernity.³ Being modern, means down-sizing labor because labor is too costly. Coke, McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken represent 'the' West, while the U.S. is more and more dependent on other countries to do our work. Dell computers are built in Tijuana; 90 percent of the world's scanners and most computer motherboards are manufactured in Taiwan.⁴

Bourgeois culture is seductive and captivating AND it is oppressive and isolating. Monitoring is needed and most of all, the U.S. needs to surveil more and more of the globe in order to protect its own needs which extend well beyond its own territorial borders. So the U.S. builds empire for itself and the globe be damned. The U.S. votes against the Kyoto treaty, women's rights initiatives, the banning of land mines, etc. Well known capitalists like George Soros recognize that the U.S. is the major obstacle to building international initiatives which endorse a sense of global community, responsibility, and cooperation.⁵

In the U.S. many progressives feel helpless and powerless. The Bush administration presses on with its 'homeland security' agenda while destroying civil liberties at home, and protecting tyrannies abroad. In media and politics, language emptied of meaning has become triumphant. Terms championing the human struggles of people around the world have been re-contextualized for a global economy which is diverse and plural, but not equal nor equally free. The meanings of color are shifting slowly and contradictorily given the new slaveries of the globe.

Color, and its cultural and political naming in terms of race, has no one meaning. The slave-trade designated a new context for seeing Black skin; today the exclusion of most African countries from the cyber-tech world renews this context in historical form. Yet, colors, continue to mix and Yellows and Browns have more visibility in the global cyber economy. Columbus 'invented' the Indian; the Indian was something else before he 'discovered' them. Afterwards, they were hung, and burned with unspeakable rage and cruelty but the Spanish slaughters and violence destroyed much of these traces.⁶

Yet meaning is always sluggish and complex. Aime Cesaire writes that Hitler was seen as a monster, not because of the crimes themselves that he was responsible for, but because he used these crimes to humiliate the white man. He used the European colonialist practices against Europeans, that had formerly been "reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the 'coolies' of India, and the 'niggers' of Africa".⁷ This reflects in part the fact that Hitler did not see Jews as white, nor did many Europeans.

Language is all we have to name what we see, and it also gets emptied of meaning. Each word is filtered through the concentrated power of our times, which selfishly captures meaning for itself. The world becomes indecipherable and as Jean Baudrillard says, "undecidable". When little is expected of language it no longer has effective meaning. Instead, image becomes the operating mode; reality is disconnected from itself and we are left with "radical uncertainty". Digitality only re-encodes these modes of exchange: artificiality replaces the real.⁸

However, people retain their human capacity to know pain or to feel jubilation. The '91 Gulf War happened, even if the U.S. pretends it did not; our president does not know much and is probably one of the least educated rich men of the world even though we pretend he leads. The children of Iraq continue to suffer and die whether this is named or not.

The recognition and seeing of Islamic and Muslim culture is uncovered by political and economic forces. Once again the ascendancy of Islam returns, even if this time it is from a marginalized positioning. As such,

³Jianying Zha, "Learning from Mc Donald's", *Transition*, issue 91, vol. 12, no. 1 (May, 2002), pp. 18-39.

⁴Barry Lynn, "Unmade in America", *Harpers*, vol. 304, no. 1825 (June, 2002), pp. 33-42.

⁵George Soros. *On Globalization* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), pp. 66, 159.

⁶Scott Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood. The American Misadventure of Race* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2000), pp. 68, 91, 98.

⁷Aime Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), p. 36.

⁸Jean Baudrillard, *Impossible Exchange* (New York: Verso Press, 2001), pp. 14, 15.

feminisms and women's resistance in Islam, which are not new, but being newly uncovered once again, let us see more of the history and presence of women's struggle for liberation as central to the globe. So much is said to be new, when most of everything is almost always also old.

I, a woman born in the United States of communist and atheist parents, wonder anew about my identity. Raised as an atheist, I have never known God as an explanation for what people do, or for what happens to them. I was brought up to believe in people; that people make the world through their struggle and pain. Others enter the world 'believing'. We each share the point of entry which initiates us to a way of seeing and thinking. Jew, Muslim, atheist, Christian, Hindu—each starts with a before...with some shared explanations of beginnings. There are too many kinds of religious belief and ways of believing, and too many kinds of non-believing for the simple divide between secular and religious. Bush speaks of good and evil in biblical terms, is said to see no moral ambiguity when he decides to drop bombs on Iraq, and yet is said to lead a secular state. Meanwhile, others in Islam, are defined as religious fanatics.

The wars in Israel and Palestine and Rwanda and between Hindu and Muslim in Gujarat, and white and Black in South Africa speak intractability. But the struggles of secular Muslims in Iran against the Khomeini regime also bespeak human struggles that move beyond neat divides. Yet, our politicians have no interest in opening our language or our thinking or our seeing. Progressives standing against all forms of fundamentalist extremism—capitalist, Muslim, Christian—must make a new clarity possible for seeing a shared humanity.

Israel, initially founded on the idea of freedom for Jews is also an apartheid state practicing racism against Palestinians. It is why Israel has become the new south Africa for much of the world outside the U.S. This reminds me of how bigoted and reactionary so many of the middle-class Jewish communities—in Atlanta, Georgia, and Columbus, Ohio—were to my family as my parents actively took part in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's. They wanted nothing to do with us; making it impossible for us to move into their neighborhoods; and we were not interested in their synagogues.

How do oppressive moments get appropriated as supposedly democratic? Who gets to claim the meaning of democracy and for whom is it claimed? White-propertied men used colonialism and imperialism to appropriate democracy for themselves. The enlightenment articulated the language of democracy in spite of its dependence on the slave-trade. Haitian revolutionaries are silenced by the revolutionaries of the American colonies. India is said to be a democracy yet Gandhi does not stand alongside Jefferson in the history books because Gandhi was an anti-western/anti-materialist democrat. Democracy that looks different from western individualism is dismissed as something else, from 'elsewheres'. This power of naming affects all viewing and seeing. It even gives feminism to 'the' West, when struggles for women's freedom have existed always, and everywhere. And while it does this, many progressive feminisms which have existed within 'the' West are also denied.

My 'always' and 'everywhere' assume I know more than I do. But right now I must think subversively which means seeing comparatively. The larger the sweep, the better the understanding of 'similarity' as partial and incomplete. Similarity is not the same as sameness; and yet a simple notion of difference will not do because any one site has its multiple meanings which are not fully knowable. The big sweep is no more incomplete than the small local site. It just feels safer.

I was brought up by my communist parents to believe that I should never endorse a way of being or living that I would not be willing to embrace myself. I have used this as my democratic guide—to always imagine myself in the situation before giving my support for it. But I now wonder if this is too limiting, that it assumes that we must be willing to exchange each others lives, when all I need to do is to understand another person's choice. Do not misunderstand this stance as liberal pluralism, or cultural relativism.

My radically plural standpoint requires that humanity be respected and allowed self-determination, but in cacophonous voices. This polyversal humanism locates the feminist promissories of this book. My radical pluralism does not allow for suicide bombers, no matter their gender, because this involves indiscriminate killing. Nor does it allow any form of racialized or gendered exclusion of any person from the right to freely choose their path in life. I move beyond the liberal/western notion of diversity which accepts out of necessity, rather than choice, that people will differ. This means seeking out cultural differences in order to deepen understanding by sharing and decentering the self with a newly fulfilling complexity.

Being direct and open with each other allows us to try and subvert the cultural constructions which continually confront us and keep us from knowing what someone else is thinking. I must ask questions in order to know. But subtle webs of silence—be it about lovers, or dreams, or family sadnesses—are defined as private. Privacy, as a veil for secrecy and fantasy can often disable and disengage. Many cultures, including those of 'the' West, think silence is better than openness. Yet, westerners are said to be too open, too brash, too noisy about private tales. Just look at our t.v. shows. But it is as though the more that is revealed publicly—from Bill Clinton's affairs to the sexual abuses of the Catholic priests—the more silences operate privately. I find the silences, rather

than more talk, deafening.

Thinking is done best by borrowing, dialoguing, mirroring, exchanging, arguing. This means that modernity, secularism, terrorism, 'the' West, Islam, globalization, feminisms—all need clarification. The difficulty of speaking in power-filled discourses is that we reproduce them at the same time they we challenge them. The term slavery itself is a homogenized abstraction that silences the incredible individualized lives of the slaves themselves. Yet, slavery must be named for its crushing inhumanity. I interrogate and challenge the very idea of 'the' West, and yet find myself using and replicating it too much of the time.

The present scourge of terrorism disallows, from above, a careful hearing of whose terror the U.S. is concerned with. The so-called "war on terrorism" is used across the globe to silence human rights activists. Whereas the U.S. has often in the past authorized human rights rhetoric, today it authorizes anti-terror legislation allowing governments here and elsewhere to equate human rights dissidents with terrorists.

U. S. security guidelines now require Arabs and Muslims from Iran, Iraq, and Syria to be fingerprinted and photographed, although Saudis are exempt. Arrests and threats of deportation plague most Arabs and Muslims throughout the U.S. Since 9/11, more than forty-to-fifty percent of Pakistanis in Brooklyn have been detained. Families are leaving the U.S. for Canada and places elsewhere to avoid the constant surveillance and fear.⁹ Houman Mortazavi, who emigrated from Iran says of the U.S.: "I've been seriously thinking of moving somewhere civilized, where I will not be prosecuted for who I am".¹⁰ Another Iranian says: the U.S. is plagued by a new cesspool of racial conservatism.¹¹

There seems to be little consistency and rationale for many of the violations of civil rights. Saudis are often exempt, yet several Saudis were on the planes that destroyed the peace and quiet of so many on 9/11. Similarly, none of the initial 598 detainees suspected of Al Qaeda connections held at Guantanamo Bay came from Iraq. Yet the war of/on 'terror' was directed against Iraq. Bush repeatedly used Saddam's "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD) as justification for war. Bush declared Saddam an "imminent threat"; that he would pass on WMD to Al Qaeda if left in power. Yet, no weapons have been located; and more and more information has surfaced to show that this threat was more made up than real. This kind of misinformation, deception, and lying makes it almost impossible to think.

THE WARS OF/ ON 'TERROR'

Right-wing "war on terrorism" rhetoric in the U.S. distorts and deceives. Noam Chomsky along with many progressives points out that the bombings of Afghanistan and Iraq were massacres rather than 'wars'. As well, terrorism has become a catch-all phrase for the enemy who challenges U.S. imperialism. Viewed by the likes of George Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz, terrorism is the activity of terrorists; and terrorists are not us, nor are they like us, but terrorists are those who hate 'our' freedom/democracy, modernity/secularism, and hard-won success. "Terrorism" has now fully replaced communism as the globe's scourge. 'Our' enemies, the enemies of democracy and freedom, exist everywhere and anywhere. Yet, much of the rest of the world thinks that president Bush is more of a threat to the world than Saddam Hussein. More on all this later.

The political aftermaths of Sept. 11, 2001 were in motion before that day. A neoliberal/imperial agenda, already firmly in place, took advantage of the deep emotionalism tied to this day. The Bush administration has nurtured this fear and used it to further dismantle democracy. Bush and Cheney feed the U.S. public a constant litany of retribution and defense; while people in South Africa and Rwanda struggle, even if not always successfully, to find reconciliation.

Anti-terrorism rhetoric fits well with global capitalism. Today 'terrorism'—whether it is Al Qaeda's or the imperial state's—is deployed and scattered globally, much like capital itself. There is no single country which houses terrorism; or capitalism. Both are networked transnationally. The needs of capital to thrive globally conflict with U.S. desires for unilateral control. Terrorism becomes a convenient justificatory cover for U.S. interventionism. Anti-'terrorism' rhetoric then protects U.S. empire building while creating the very conditions that spawn true terror and terrorists.

⁹Andrea Elliott, "In Brooklyn, 9/11 Damage", New York Times, June 7, 2003, p. A9. Also see: Rachel Swarns, "More Than 13,000 May Face Deportation", New York Times, June 7, 2003, p. A9.

¹⁰Azadeh Ensha, "Undoing the Dream", Color Lines, vol. 6, no. 2 (Summer, 2003), p. 15.

¹¹Quoting Guiti Lami, who left Iran in 1978 for the United States. See: "Undoing the Dream", *ibid.*, p. 15.

Do not misunderstand me. I very much wish to stop terror-filled moments across the globe. However, the Bush administration is not addressing this terror and cannot with its present imperial policies. The U.S. wishes to articulate a unilateral dominance in global times which expresses a contradictory stance between U.S. nationalism and global capitalism. Hence, the need for a strong militarist presence. Noam Chomsky writes that '9-11' was not a statement against globalization, but a statement against U.S. foreign policies in Israel, Guatemala, and so on.¹² Yes, but our foreign policies are about maintaining an imperial kind of globalization. The U.S. wants it both ways here: unilateral nationalism and transnational capitalism.

John Ashcroft, Condoleeza Rice, and Dick Cheney oversee this process of nationalizing U.S. global strategies from the top. Bush tries to keep up with what is going on. Military tribunals are legitimized as fair treatment for the enemy. Detainees held in Guantanamo are not classified as prisoners-of-war and therefore do not have the rights that the enemy has in conventional warfare. Which combatants count as human, with legal rights, is no longer clear.¹³ Reports from Guantanamo say that the conditions of prisoners are unconscionable—that they are treated like animals, crouching naked on the ground. As a result, many of the detainees have attempted suicide.

COINTELPRO is reactivated for the monitoring and detention of suspected terrorists. Every Muslim is a possible target. A recent initiative prohibits non-citizens from working as airport screeners even though nearly 30,000 immigrant were working as airport screeners at the time. Forty percent of these screeners at L.A. International airport and 80 percent at the San Francisco Bay Area airport were immigrants who have permanent legal residence.

The U.S. defense budget increases exponentially; billions of dollars are promised to securing security for the homeland; and the U.S. gripped in fear authorizes the privatizing and conservatizing of U.S. politics. The purpose of the state becomes reduced to policing and surveillance. This reductionism is reminiscent of the Hobbesian state of war: the best any government can do is provide self-preservation. The U.S. P.A.T.R.I.O.T Act—the acronym for Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism—sets out the new agenda of a police state for monitoring its internal borders. Documents like the Defense Planning Guidance report originally written in 1992 and brought out again in 2002 with little change by Wolfowitz, Cheney and Colin Powell, focus on the global need for pre-emptive strikes for monitoring across external borders.¹⁴ Pre-emptive strikes bespeak the priority given to the absolute and complete domination over all potential enemies.

The Bush administration took September 11th and manipulated it to its own purposes for empire building. Its goal is singular domination of the globe. In their arrogance, they have become the bullies on the block who lie, and cheat, and kill, as documented in their own internal reports. We—the imperial 'we'—are a 'terror' state overseeing the new warfare with laptops and modems.¹⁵ This network centric warfare (NCW) uses unmanned aerial vehicles and writes off collateral damage. It is a war which denies the established, institutional and international law regulating war. It demands "total war" which cannot be constrained and restrained by human rights rhetoric.¹⁶ The consequences are devastating as war is thought of like an arcade game and 'tactical' nuclear weapons are discussed. All human rights succumb to this disembodied militarist directive. The Bush administration thinks nothing of targeting and killing suspected Al Qaeda members without judicial process. Bush boldly and brashly told the whole world that the U.S. government was a willing assassin in the hunt for Saddam.¹⁷

The 'security' state re-writes the rights of the dissident. At the start of the bombing of Iraq, anti-war marchers were readily denied a permit to march through the streets of New York City. Anti-war activists were/are charged with anti-patriotism. The 'security' state is itself also being re-structured. The Pentagon down-sized and streamlined the State Department while placing the final version of the Iraqi emergency supplemental appropriations bill under its own central control. Continued conflicts between the C.I.A., the Pentagon, and the State Department

¹²Noam Chomsky, *9-11* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001).

¹³Judith Butler, "Guantanamo Limbo", *The Nation*, vol. 274, no. 12 (April, 2002), pp. 20-24.

¹⁴David Armstrong, "Dick Cheney's Song of America", *Harper's*, vol. 305, no. 1829 (October, 2002), pp. 76-83.

¹⁵Bruce Berkowitz, *The New Face of War* (New York: The Free Press, 2003).

¹⁶Rosalind Morris, "Theses on the Questions of War: History, Media, Terror", *Social Text*, 72, vol. 20, no. 3 (Fall, 2002), p. 152.

¹⁷Seymour Hersh, "Manhunt", *The New Yorker*, December 23/30, 2002), pp. 66-74.

have also created much confusion and greatly damaged reconstruction efforts in Iraq. The power grab within the Bush administration exists both inside and outside this restructuring process.

Although it would be wonderful to end the actions of fanatical extremists in Israel, Bali, Nigeria, and India; or stop those who damaged the S. S. Cole and embassies in Africa, the U.S. will never be able to do so with its own acts of violence and violation.¹⁸ The U.S. will first have to stop its disrespectful cultural imposition on places elsewhere.¹⁹ And the U.S. will have to start abiding by the same international standards respecting human rights that is expected of other countries. It might help if we were to finally sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. It is telling that the U.S. is so often unwilling to sign covenants that simply recognize liberal democratic rights and be held accountable to them. Yet, well known columnist Thomas Friedman assumes that the U.S. sets the standard of democracy; that although the U.S. makes mistakes, nothing much good happens without us. He writes that more than at any other time “the world has come to accept the Western values of peace, democracy, and free markets.”²⁰

Friedman’s rhetoric is much of the problem. The U.S. appropriates democracy for its own global agenda; and displaces ‘terrorism’ to others elsewhere. I agree that terrorism is immoral, but as Jean Baudrillard says, globalization is immoral as well; and terrorism is defiant of imperial globalization. He points out that if Islam were dominating the world, terrorism would rise up against Islam too because “the globe is resistant to globalization”.²¹ Global capitalism persists through extreme exploitation. There are all kinds of ‘terror’—homelessness, starvation, disease, bombs. U.S. prisons are filled, public schools are crumbling, millions of people have lost jobs, over forty-two million people do not have health insurance. All this is also terrifying. It is why people around the world need to globalize resistance. Security for the wealthy few is not the answer. Truly global democratic discourses and vibrant societies are needed. Instead of spending upwards of \$3 trillion on U.S. wars of/on ‘terror’ poverty and repression must be fought against wherever they exist.

THE GULF WARS, ‘91, ‘98, ‘03

The newest U.S. face of power has become more excessive, to match the excesses of wealth and greed. The U.S. does what it wants despite world opinion. When more than eight million strong in London, Prague, New York, San Francisco, Melbourne, Paris, Jakarta, Karachi, and elsewhere said no to a war on Iraq the U.S. went ahead anyhow. They could make this war alone, without any other authorization, not even the United Nations. U.S. unilateralism—with a bit of British assist—was key to this moment.

The U.S. war on/against Iraq preceded the post-September 11th “war on terrorism”. It has been a more-than-decade long war with three noted episodes: Desert Storm, in 1991, orchestrated by Bush Sr.; the renewed bombing of 1998 designed by Bill Clinton and Madeleine Albright; and the “war on terrorism”/Operation Iraqi freedom of 2003 led by Bush Jr. and Donald Rumsfeld. Economic sanctions were in place this entire time, devastating the country as a whole, while Saddam amassed incredible wealth for himself. Through the sanctions, the U.S. blocked shipments of milk, yogurt, printing equipment for schools, dialysis and dental supplies, chlorine for purifying water, and textbooks for medical schools. Children suffered the most with hundreds of thousands dying of malnutrition and radiation poisoning.

The ‘91 episode ended with the U.S. declaring victory but pulling out before an incursion into Baghdad. Saddam Hussein remained in power but the war was said to be over anyway. In ‘98 U.S. bombing was renewed to pressure Saddam to allow U.N. weapons inspections again. Then the U.S. declared war on Saddam, again, in 2003. One more time, the U.S. declared victory but Saddam is still on the loose. No one knows where he is and Bush tries to let everyone forget that we were ‘hunting’ in the first place.

In order to rally support for the ‘03 war the Bush administration lied to the American people. They said

¹⁸Judith Butler, “Explanation and Exoneration, or What We Can Hear?”, Social Text, 72, vol. 20, no. 3 (Fall, 2002), pp. 177-88.

¹⁹A. G. Noorani, Islam and Jihad (New York: Zed Press, 2002), p. 11.

²⁰Thomas Friedman, “Going Our Way”, New York Times, September 15, 2002, p. wk 15.

²¹Jean Baudrillard, “L’Esprit Du Terrorisme”, Le Monde, November 2, 2001, p. 18. Also see his: The Spirit of Terrorism (New York: Verso Press, 2002).

that in order to fight 'terrorism' Saddam had to be deposed; otherwise he would supply weapons of mass destruction to Al Qaeda. Even our own C.I.A. said there was no known connection between the two. This triple lie: that the terrorism of September 11 was connected to Iraq, that Saddam and Osama bin Laden were cohorts, and that Saddam had available WMD was used to deceive and mobilize the U.S. for war. This mobilization was then further justified by speaking about the necessity of regime change, towards democracy.

The U.S. wars on Iraq and says it is a "war on terrorism".²² But terrorism is transnational and the Iraq war was nation based. Maybe this is what it means to say that the good generals always fight the last war; that they are always one war behind. They did not know how to fight a transnational war of/on 'terror' so they made a "war on terrorism" with a knowable territorial site. The war on Iraq has put U.S. power in gross view. This differs from the more usual clandestine power that defined earlier U.S. interventions in Chile, in Nicaragua, in the Congo. War appears to be the foreign policy of choice for post-'89, post-Soviet times.

The Iraq war plan was titled, "Shock and Awe". It is telling that this initiative was written in 1996, six years before the sadness of September 11, 2001. This policy underwrites the importance of using "overwhelming and decisive force" and makes quite clear that "deception, confusion, misinformation and disinformation, perhaps in massive amounts, must be employed". And it concludes that it "seeks to impose (in extreme cases) the non-nuclear equivalent of the impact that the atomic weapons dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had on the Japanese".²³

As the U.S. public awaited president Bush's decision to go to war Bush kept demanding that the U.N. assure him that all WMD be unveiled. It was all too clear that the U.S. was going to war and that the only question to resolve was when. The truth is less clear: that the U.S. has been at war with Iraq since 1991 and that this last episode would simply be what Perry Anderson calls the "asphyxiation" stage.²⁴

Just short of three weeks into the war a military victory was declared. We were told that Baghdad was controlled by 'coalition forces'-- meaning the U.S. with British assist--even though intermittent fighting continued in several cities, unrest and disquiet filled the streets, and fear of suicide bombers was still high. Very shortly after victory was declared reports of mass looting filled the news media. Rumsfeld said this was all being overblown. The country was gripped by violent rioting. There was no law or order. There was no electricity or clean water. "The streets of Baghdad are a swamp of crime and uncollected garbage".²⁵ Rumsfeld says that freedom is messy. No one mentions Saddam. The Bush administration tells us that we have succeeded in forcing a regime change. Rumsfeld is asked if Saddam will never return; and Rumsfeld says that never is too long to know about.

Rumsfeld conveniently never mentions to the U.S. public that he repeatedly met with and supported Saddam during the Iran-Iraq war, and was fully aware of Saddam's use of chemical weapons during this time.²⁶ When asked by journalists why no WMD have been found, he responded that this does not matter, that the true reason for war was to bring freedom to Iraq. He says this despite the war-torn and miserable situation most Iraqis face.

Rhetoric is key to this war. Victory was declared in Iraq but U. S. troops still are in battle, anxious and weary, facing new missions.²⁷ U.S. troops look more and more like occupiers than liberators to the people of Iraq and to themselves as well. Journalists describe these conditions and feelings and refer to a 'post-war' Iraq while doing so. This level of deception--by the administration and its discourse is commonplace. There are more U.S. ground troops (150,000) in Iraq after victory was declared, than at the start (70,000). And, even though the deception and lies are revealed by some journalists it seems as though this simply naturalizes and normalizes the lying as part of politics itself. The more some of the lies are exposed, the more they reign as truth.

Bush's deception and hypocrisy seems to know no bounds. Just at the moment that troops were being

²²Paul Virilio, Ground Zero (New York: Verso Press, 2002).

²³Harlan Ullman and James Wade, Shock and Awe (Washington, D.C.: NDU Press, 1996), p. 4.

²⁴Perry Anderson, "Force and Consent", Harper's, vol. 306, no. 1832 (January, 2003), p. 21.

²⁵Naomi Klein, "Downsizing in Disguise", The Nation, vol. 276, no. 24 (June 23, 2003), p. 10.

²⁶See detailed verification of Rumsfeld's negotiations with Saddam Hussein during the 1980's in The National Security Archive. www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82

²⁷Steven Lee Myers, "Anxious and Weary of War, G.I.'s Face a New Iraq Mission", New York Times, June 15, 2003, p. A1.

deployed overseas to Iraq, he cut federal school aid for the children of men and women in the military. Bush did this by substantially reducing the funding for “Government Impact Aid” which financially assists school districts with a short fall in taxes because of the large number of military families in their district. Payments to the Virginia Beach schools, which are home to many military children, were targeted to be cut in half. This was done just at the time that the needs of children with deployed parents—for counseling and tutoring—increased exponentially.²⁸

People in the U.S. do not really know much about the costs of this war. An awful lot of schools and hospitals could be built with this war money in both the U.S. and Iraq. Some estimates cite the cost of the Iraq war at \$2 billion a month. Other estimates assume that it will cost close to \$2 trillion at its end. But there was/is little outcry within the U.S. because so many seem to think that this is necessary if the “war on terrorism” is to be won. And Bush continually reiterates this deceit. Speaking from the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln on its way back home to the U.S. Bush stated: that the victory in Iraq is a victory “against terrorism and Al Qaeda that began on September 11, 2001, and still goes on”. He continued to call Saddam “an ally of Al Qaeda” and recommitted the U.S. to avenge the deaths of loved ones: “with those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States. And war is what they got”.²⁹

Before the war had even ‘officially’ ended the spoils of war were being promised to U.S. corporations. Both Bechtel corporation—which former Secretary of State George Shultz had ties to—and Halliburton and its subsidiaries—which Cheney, a former C.E.O. had ties with—were already in line for contracts to rebuild Iraq. Bechtel landed contracts upwards of \$680 million for reconstruction work. James Woolsey, former C.I.A. director and also a part of Paladin Capital Group, a venture capital firm that specializes in domestic security, has played an early role in the ‘post-war’ occupation. According to Bob Herbert of the New York Times, power brokers like these immediately honed in on \$100 billion worth of postwar reconstruction contracts.³⁰

This corporate power grab is expected and accepted as the simple spoils of war, much like the privatization and marketing of Iraq as a whole. Supposedly, the only hope for Iraq is successful corporate investment.³¹ However, the real problem remains that there is no game plan for reconstruction other than this power grab. The people of Iraq and U.S. ground troops are both caught in this horrid and failed peace.

It is unconscionable that the rich will make out like bandits while the war is not being fought by rich kids. Instead the U.S. military is disproportionately made up of our multi-racial working class. And much of this working class, since the ending of the draft, is now women, who make up 15 percent of the military. Many of these women are single parents who joined the army as a way of paying for their education and creating new job opportunities. It is also the case that significant numbers of U.S. fighting forces are not even U.S. citizens, but newly arrived immigrants who enlist in order to waive the waiting period for citizenship. This is borne out in the number of American casualties in Iraq who were not born in the United States.³²

“Operation Iraqi Freedom” is a pseudonym for U.S. empire building. Empires build grief and disorder, not democracies. Soon enough Iraq will become like Afghanistan. Desperate times will continue in both places but the U.S. gaze will be on new sites, ‘elsewhere’. As a cab driver in Kabul says of the war-lords in ‘post-war’ Afghanistan: “These men were here before the Taliban. Then they became Taliban. Now they support Karzai. But they will always be thieves”. Only the bravest of women walk without their sky blue burqas. The country is getting worse and worse. It is still in critical need of roads, and schools, and jobs. Foreign aid workers are held up at gunpoint and are unable to do their job. Yet, Bush no longer speaks about the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Although the Afghan war is said to be over, U.S. troops remain there on high alert.³³

Osama bin Laden is still missing, like Saddam. U. S. troops will continue to hunt the Taliban; and attempt peace-keeping in Iraq. Meanwhile an interim regime in Iraq initially headed by retired Lt. General Jay Garner,

²⁸Bob Herbert, “A Strange Budget Cut”, New York Times, February 20, 2003, p. A31.

²⁹David Sanger, “Victory in a War on Terror”, New York Times, May 2, 2003, p. A1.

³⁰Bob Herbert, “Spoils of War”, New York Times, April 10, 2003, p. A27.

³¹Tim Shorrock, “Selling (Off) Iraq”, The Nation, vol. 276, no. 4 (June 23, 2003), pp. 11-16.

³²David Halbfinger and Steven Holmes, “Military Mirrors a Working-Class America”, New York Times, March 30, 2003, p. A1.

³³Scott Baldauf, “Letter from Afghanistan”, The Nation, vol. 276, no. 16 (April 28, 2003), pp. 24-28.

oversees the flow of oil which does not bode well for democracy. Saddam may be gone, but U.S. corporate interests and designs have just fully arrived.

HUMANIZING MILITARISM

U.S. imperialism attempts to humanize this extremist militarist phase of global yet territorial corporate building.³⁴ Enter women. Although women have become a significant presence in the military, their presence has not re-gendered the military democratically.³⁵ Yet, women have been used to symbolically humanize and democratize war-making: we are told that mothers now fight alongside fathers; women alongside men.³⁶ The gendered role of a masculinized warrior is now filled by either males or females. But there is little equality to be seen here between men and women either inside or outside this hierarchy.

Why else would so much attention be paid to the “rescue” and recovery of Private Jessica Lynch? Because, she is a woman, and NOT a man. She was a P.O.W.–blond and young and feminine, “a symbol representing the nation’s virtuous identity to itself.” Initially she was said to be the tough soldier–“I kept shooting until I was out of bullets”–but also vulnerable and feminized by her injuries.³⁷ However, despite everything, she still needed to be rescued. Images of her rescue were shown over and over to the world. The facts surrounding the “rescue” were more difficult to get: first we were told that she had gun-shot and stab wounds, then we were told she didn’t; then we were told she was mis-treated by Iraqi doctors, then we were told they befriended her and donated their own blood for her transfusions; then we were told that her “rescue” was not quite that, that she was in a hospital with no guards. Next we were told that the entire incident when she was captured was a mistake: a wrong turn, wrong information, etc. She was injured in a humvee accident, rather than a fire-fight. For now, we are just expected to forget the confusions and not ask further questions.

It is not insignificant that so much of the presentation, at home, of the initial war was with a woman’s face. Humanize the war by showing us a lot of single moms and young women who were fighting it. But do not democratize the war too much; remind us at every chance that women are more fragile, more open to sexual abuse by the enemy, not quite able to fight the war by themselves. Women personalized the war and made it feel more intimate while it remained completely distanced. We were also told that Jessica wanted to be a grade school teacher to remind us that nothing too drastic about gender has really changed.

Gender supposedly operates to humanize the U.S. abroad as well. Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times writes that one of the best modern weapons of the western arsenal is “Claire”–and she carries a machine gun. Apparently Kristof thinks that Iraqi soldiers are squeamish about shooting female soldiers so we should let their “chauvinism work for us”. He continues that the U.S. should use coed military units because they look less menacing, not like rapists who will do harm to civilians. So women are good for fighting wars in Islamic countries because of “foreign chauvinism”. It is more than a little bit ironic that this is Kristof’s argument for re-examining the ban on women in the front-lines, as well as “equality for all”.³⁸

Other returning P.O.W.s were also a part of this rescue scenario needed to cover over the mixed and ambiguous rescue that was delivered to the people of Iraq. These six men, somewhat demasculinized by virtue of their capture; and one Black woman, Shoshana Johnson, a single mother of a two year old, were miraculously found, and able to return home. I too celebrated their wonderful luck and the kindness of their captors. I had been quietly watching for word about Specialist Johnson once I heard of her disappearance. She was an unlucky cook whose group made a wrong turn in a sand storm and was captured. My heart strings, too, were pulled wondering if her

³⁴For important discussion of gender and militarism see Cynthia Enloe, Does Khaki Become You? (Boston: South End Press, 1983); and her Bananas, Beaches and Bases. Making Feminist Sense of International Politics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

³⁵Jodi Wilgoren., “The New War Brings New Role for Women”, New York Times, March 28, 2003, B.1

³⁶Jim Lacey, Cath Booth Thomas, et al, “An American Family Goes to War”, Newsweek, vol. 161, no.12 (March 24, 2003), pp. 26-34.

³⁷Melani McAlister, “Saving Private Lynch”, New York Times, April 6, 2003, p. wk13.

³⁸Nicholas D. Kristof, “A Woman’s Place”, New York Times, April 25, 2003, p. A 31.

young daughter would ever get to see her again. For many days no one was sure if she or the others were alive. But the focus on their stories, and the jubilation that dominated several days of t.v. reporting upon their return was misplaced. Too many other Americans would not return. Too many Iraqis had already died. So much of the war that we saw was not about the real suffering and pain. The war was about Lynch and other P.O.W.s because this made people in the U.S. feel better about war, and gender too.

Women fly F18's, launch Tomahawk missiles, and are on the front lines of intelligence units. There are 200,000 active duty women.³⁹ Most of these women join the military to better themselves in a world with few options for them. Pfc Lori Piestewa, a Hopi Indian killed in the same ambush as Lynch, represents the multi-racial identities of women in this war. These women, in particular, symbolize the equality of women in 'the' West, to the rest of the world. The symbolic is in part true, and in part not. Women in the U.S. are thought to be treated equal; modern and free. Yet, most middle-class and wealthy women are not found in the military. Private Lynch is West Virginia working-class poor. She is the age of Bush's twin daughters, both attending college, far away from this war. Johnson and Piestewa, both single moms, were in the military in order to go to school. Necessity, more than equality seems to be the guide here. More often than not, inequity and sexual harassment, rather than sexual equality is the mark of the U.S. military.

While the U.S. makes war, the U.S. Air Force, February 2003, is charged with multiple counts of rape. Upwards of fifty women finally came forward to speak out publicly against a decade's worth of unfair treatment at the Air Force Academy. Several documented their rapes, their failed attempts to have their complaints acted upon, and the stone walls they encountered in trying to do so. One woman, Debra Dickerson tells her story of being raped, Christmas day, 1981. She pressed charges, her rapist confessed, and then the military blamed her. She says she was born poor and Black, and escaped poverty in large measure by enlisting in the Air Force. She became their golden girl, but in the end she writes that: "It was infinitely more difficult to be female in uniform than to be black".⁴⁰

Yet women in khaki⁴¹ are juxtaposed against women 'elsewhere', even though these women elsewhere—as in Iraq-- are also trying to scrape together a life for themselves and their loved ones. It is a tricky scenario to clarify. Women in military garb bespeak new gains for women who are trying to build a life of economic independence; but this is a track which is raced and classed by inequities already existing in their lives. Arab women from across Egypt said no to war in Iraq and were in the front lines calling for peace and the protection of the environment and natural resources of the area. They condemned the cost of a multi-billion dollar war when billions of people across the globe have no access to potable water or proper sanitation. Given this context, women's and people of color's incursion into a military hell bent on empire building is one of the saddest contradictions of these times.

This irony may effect the women in Iraq the most cruelly. Although no friend to women, during most of Saddam Hussein's regime they worked and studied with few restrictions compared to women in many other Muslim countries. Middle class women were part of the professional class. They could vote and maintain custody of children after divorce. These rights began to be challenged in the last years of Saddam's rule as he sought support from Islamic extremists against the U.S. Women were newly required to travel with a male relative. Now in post-Saddam Iraq women are fearful that if Islamic Shiite extremism takes hold, that they will lose more freedoms.⁴² But it is already clear that no one in the Bush administration is watching, or cares, what happens to women in Iraq.

BUSH'S CRUSADES

Capitalism, described as modern and democratic, is a misappropriated version of history set in place by those in charge. As well, the modern bourgeois state is often identified with its secularism. Secular is equated with western, and 'the' West with modernity, and then religion is positioned as non-modern. Yet, Bush pushes his faith-based initiatives and deploys his religiosity to advance his right-wing agendas. Public religiosity was already very much in vogue in the '92 Presidential Election with Joseph Lieberman declaring his religious faith as central to his

³⁹Jodi Wilgoren, "A New War Brings New Role for Women", New York Times, April 2, 2003, p. B1.

⁴⁰Debra Dickerson, "Rallying Around the Rapist", New York Times, March 18, 2003, p. A33.

⁴¹I am indebted to Cynthia Enloe for this phrasing.

⁴²Nazila Fathi, "Iraqi Career Women Ponder A Future Under Shiite Rule", New York Times, May 25, 2003, p. A 19.

moralism.⁴³ Tax monies go to religious schools more and more frequently. U.S. money reads: “in God we trust”. Yet, Muslim politics is often reduced to its Islamic religious meaning, while bourgeois culture is distinguished from Christianity.

The cover story of Newsweek, February 2002, read: “The Bible and the Qur’an”,⁴⁴ and with it the appropriation of religion for politics was authorized. There is much discussion asking for a recognition of theological liberalism and non-liberal secularisms, while recognizing the need for nuance and modesty.⁴⁵ A distinction however is drawn between allowing religious values in public life, and not following divine direction in policy making.⁴⁶

Bush’s presidency is often characterized by his visions of good and evil, which he defines in expected unambiguous ways. Supposedly he is doing God’s will and work. In his 2003 State of the Union address he said that: “the liberty we prize is not America’s gift to the world, it is God’s gift to humanity”.⁴⁷ His use of religion for the secular state problematizes both and should alert us to his right-wing manipulation of each as a result.

Bush interprets evangelical Christianity for his own purposes. Although he has a multi-racial cabinet and has many women in his administration his presidency bespeaks other commitments. His end election scenario hinged on intimidation and disenfranchisement of Black voters in Florida. He backs challenges to affirmative action law and his administration filed briefs on behalf of the white plaintiffs seeking redress from the University of Michigan. He insists that affirmative action imposes quotas, and he says that quotas racially discriminate against whites. He continues to appoint federal judges who have racist histories.

Bush can easily be described as a zealot and extremist when it comes to issues related to women’s freedom of choice. He imposes a Christian theocracy on issues tied to women’s bodies. He says that embryos are a “sacred gift from our creator”, and rejects stem cell research as a result. When asked to think about his positions related to abortion he often will say “I’ll pray on this”. He is proud to not see ambiguity because of his “all-knowing God”.⁴⁸

Bush appointed David Hager to head the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) “Reproductive Health Drugs Advisory Commission”, that makes decisions on matters relating to drugs used in obstetrics, gynecology, pregnancy termination, and contraception. Hager is a practicing ob/gyn who describes himself as pro-life in his book As Jesus Cared For Women. He refuses to prescribe contraceptives to unmarried women. He says that given his religious beliefs he will try to revoke the approval for mifepristone (RU-486) used for early abortion. This is dangerous zealotry for a secular state; while most in Bush’s inner circle now speak of the U.S. as a Judeo-Christian country.

Anti-abortion politics, whether couched in religious rhetoric or not also dominates Bush’s agenda for increased AIDS funding for Africa. He has disallowed any AIDS funding for programs where sex education or abortion are allowed. He continues to use his anti-sex awareness policy and anti-abortion beliefs in formulating policies that are not directly connected to these issues. He does this when millions of people’s lives and deaths are at stake.

To conclude, in order to begin: it is sadly true that innocent people died on Sept. 11th, 2001. There were innocent people in the Towers and the Pentagon, but also in Hiroshima, and Afghanistan, and Iraq. So we must start seeing, really seeing.

When we hear of jihad we must be careful not to ‘other’ all Muslims as fanatics. Suicide bombers are not all that different from any other warrior. They kill innocents and themselves. More normalized war kills innocents, but not necessarily the perpetrators. Roxanne Euben asks us not to treat jihad as pathological or fanatical, but rather as the struggle with oneself in the world to find meaning and wholeness. Present popularized jihad connotes “an idealized Western public sphere in which reasoned arguments and nonviolent practices largely prevail” and becomes

⁴³Ellen Willis, “Freedom from Religion”, The Nation, vol. 272, no. 7 (February 19, 2001), p. 16.

⁴⁴Kenneth Woodward, “The Bible and the Qur’an”, Newsweek, February 11, 2002, pp. 51-57.

⁴⁵William Connolly, Why I Am Not a Secularist (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 10, 19.

⁴⁶Isaac Kramnick and Lawrence Moore, The Godless Constitution (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), pp. 12, 14.

⁴⁷Howard Fineman, “Bush and God”, Newsweek, March 10, 2003, pp. 22-31.

⁴⁸ Richard Brookhiser, “Close-Up: The Mind of George Bush”, The Atlantic Monthly, vol. 291, no. 3 (April, 2003), pp. 55-69.

a repository for “contemporary anxieties about death, the irrational religious” and othering. We need to recognize that there are many jihads, and many democracies. Jihad, at its best, and its meaning for most Muslims the world over, is the struggle to find justice, equality, and freedom for the internal and external self. “Human beings must change themselves so that they may change the world.” A virtuous Muslim must realize human freedom for all.⁴⁹

Palestinian suicide bombers—men and women alike—are juxtaposed against the Israeli army as part of the U.S. campaign against terrorism, and for Israel. And Israel stands as the U.S. arm of democracy in the Middle East. But democracy in Israel is illusory today. Gruesome devastation has been normalized for all the world to see. If not clarified soon, the Palestinian struggle will also turn into something other than liberatory.

I write against empire building in its exploitative, racialized, masculinist, militarist forms. I can see more inclusively when I look to find these complex webs. I ask you to look for them, and to destroy them. Anti-racist feminisms are needed in all parts of the world to build an insurgent people’s movement of struggle; to humanize the globe and guide political resistance against masculinist terror-filled wars.

I now link backwards to find the silences that have been constructed by ‘the’ West, for ‘the’ West, so that the imperial “we” is exposed for its terrorizing deceptions.

⁴⁹Roxanne Euben, “Killing for Politics” Political Theory, vol. 30, no. 1 (February, 2002), pp. 5, 8, 19, 22.