Bodies, Desires, Violence:
Feminist Interventions in Un/Doing Empire

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Editorial Foreword

The York Centre for International and Security Studies (YCISS) held its 14th Annual Conference on 1-2 February 2007. Entitled *Bodies, Desires, Violence: Feminist Interventions in Un/Doing Empire*, the conference sought to provide a space for conversations about the specificity of feminist contributions to current debates on Empire/imperialism, including the ways in which feminist knowledge production challenges and colludes with the reproduction of Empire/imperialism.

While the current US-led “war on terror” has revived an interest within International Relations and International Political Economy in the study of imperialism, most of the ongoing discussions frame the problematic in terms of a “return to imperialism” vs. “deterritorialization,” and around a limited conceptualization of “Empire” as a militarized quest for national security and/or capital accumulation. Missing from the debate, specifically, is a systematic examination of the role of the social reproduction of racialized, heterosexed, and classed social relations of inequality that are necessary for the re-production of “Empire.” Interestingly, in the last two decades feminist research across the social sciences and humanities as well as in social movement/activist settings has produced challenging insights around issues of social re-production of inequality, militarization, and academia’s investment in the production of subjugating and subordinating discourses and practices. However, much of both orthodox and critical theorizing in International Relations has proven largely resistant to feminist interventions.

Conference participants were tasked to investigate this resistance to feminism(s) in the context of imperialism, and also engage with the contributions of feminist scholarship in un/doing the work of “Empire.” We were particularly interested in the ways in which empire-building plays on the production and deployment of not only militaries and capital, but also of raced, sexed, and classed bodies and how these are linked to historical legacies of imperialism and colonialism. How is the production of knowledge, especially feminist knowledge, complicit in the re-production of Empire? What are the roles of the academic industry in the social re-production of inequality, both inside and outside its walls? How can feminism(s) participate in (de)colonizing knowledge production, both its own and that of others? What have feminist analyses to say about the current “war on terror” in the context of imperialism? How can feminist scholarship contribute to our
understanding of militaries and militarization? What are the ways in which feminist analyses of militaries and militarized masculinity complicate our understanding of empire-building?

**Producing, Consuming, and Disciplining Imperial Bodies and Knowledge: Feminist Pedagogical Re-Presentations**

The proceedings begin with Maita Sayo’s paper addressing the problematic of historical memory about violence. Sayo interrogates this economy of memory about violence against the backdrop of ongoing occupations of ancestral and indigenous land, the incarceration of racialised people in prisons, refugee camps, precarious workplaces, and the displacement of populations within and across state borders. The paper focuses on the recent salience of Giorgio Agamben’s notions of the “homo sacer” and the “state of exception” across the social sciences and humanities. Drawing on Walter Benjamin’s messianic approach to history, Sayo seeks to interrupt Agamben’s announcement that “we are all virtually homines sacri.” Critical of Agamben’s “Greco-Roman socius” and his transhistorical understanding of the biopolitical, she argues that Agamben’s cartography of the exception maps violence onto specific spaces in particular periods without being attentive to the continuity of the hauntings of past violences and experiences.

Jessica Parish’s paper seeks to complicate the feminist politics underpinning UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 is commonly heralded as a great step forward for women’s “human security,” and the Canadian state and Canadian civil society organizations are generally praised for having been at the forefront in getting the resolution adopted. In her paper, Parish critically interrogates the “imaginary geographies” underpinning the work of the Gender and Peacebuilding Working Group (GPWG) of the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee (CPCC). She argues that the GPWG’s liberal framework obscures the relationality of the “West” and the “Rest” and the entanglement of corporeal, epistemic and economic forms of violence, thereby foreclosing the possibility of more substantive imaginings of “peace” and “security.”

**Disciplining the Citizen Body: The Racialized and Sexualized Exceptionalism of Nation Building**

The second section of the proceedings starts off with Naoko Ikeda’s critical feminist intervention in debates on the contemporary Japanese Emperor System. Drawing on her field research focusing on a group of women living in the town of Hikami-cho, located in the Hyogo prefecture
of mainland Japan, Ikeda shows that both conservative and anti-imperialist conceptualizations of the Emperor fail to address the ways in which imperial power relations rest on specifically gendered processes of the cultural production of domestic ideology and the patriarchal family. Ikeda’s gendered analysis of women’s negotiations with the dominant image of the Emperor offers a more complex view of Japanese imperialism and nationalism.

In his piece *The Adventures of Destiny and American Body Politic*, Chris Hendershot deploys satire to expose and denounce the gendered logics underpinning the recent US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Scripted as a tragic comedy, Hendershot’s analysis of “American imperially procreative adventures” foregrounds how hegemonic narratives of the US “War on Terror” rest on the regulation and disciplining of gendered, sexed, raced and classed bodies and subjectivities. By privileging literary devices over reasoned arguments, Hendershot seeks to contribute to the generation of “a subversively performative space where raced, feminized, queered and trans-bodies, subjectivities, identities and voices can assert a bodily and subjective legitimacy that is not subject to the hegemonic logics of American imperial procreative adventures.”

*War Abroad and War ‘At Home’: Producing and Regulating Abject Bodies in the War on Terror*

Both of the chapters in the third section demonstrate the centrality of the control of racialized sexual and bodily conduct in the current war on terror. Both papers show how women's bodies constitute contested sites for the inscription of national/ized and colonial fantasies in the quest/s to fix boundaries of culture, nation, and community.

Bringing into conversation questions of political economy and (colonial) subject-formation, Roshan A. Jahangeer examines the politics of the recent “French Headscarf Ban.” Based on a close reading of the official government report on the application of the principle of secularism (laïcité) in the current French Republic, Jahangeer shows how the hegemonic discourse on secularism is a central technology of governance in the French neoliberal order that (re)produces racialized and sexualized bodies in need of discipline through legislation. Drawing on postcolonial and transnational feminist theories as well as Foucaultian analytics of power, she argues that the discourse of secularism and the colonial gesture of unveiling the bodies of young Muslim women are part of a narrative of “modernity and progress” that seeks to discipline the “uncontrollable bodies of Muslim immigrant ‘Others.’”
Shortly after the “Abu Ghraib prison scandal,” media reports of another “sex scandal” involving US soldiers deployed in Iraq surfaced. At the heart of the “controversy” was an adult pornography website that offered free access to US soldiers in exchange of combat images of dead and wounded (presumably) Iraqi bodies. The subsequent official military inquiry focused not so much on the images of dead and mutilated corpses, but the sexualized images of nude female US soldiers shared on the website. In his analysis of the media scandal, Nelson Lai shows how the representations of female US soldiers are intimately connected to colonial representations of veiled Muslim women in a discourse of racialized sexuality.

Putting together such a successful conference and these proceedings would not have been possible without the financial and logistical assistance of many sources. We are first of all grateful for the generous and good-humoured organizational and technical support of Sarah Whitaker, David Nolan, and Joan Brossard. We would also like to thank David Mutimer and Robert Latham for their feedback and encouragement. Further we would like to acknowledge the generous financial support by the Office of the Vice-President Research & Innovation, Office of the Vice-President Academic, Faculty of Arts, Department of Political Science, Department of Women’s Studies, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Graduate Political Science Student Association, and the Trans Feminist Action Caucus of CUPE 3903.
The Archive in a Time of Violence

Maita Sayo

Was my hunger for the past so great that I was now encountering ghosts?
(Saidiya Hartman: 2007)

It is worse than memory, the open country of death
(Carolyn Forché: 1994)

Introduction

This essay is an attempt to make sense of the popularity of Giorgio Agamben’s notions of the “homo sacer” and the “state of exception” within disciplines as varied as political science, humanities, sociology, and geography. What seems to be a philosophical reflection upon the historiography of violence within the Greco-Roman tradition and its inscription into Latin law has suddenly become an overarching (and even programmatic) account of the historical present. Agamben’s account of the historical emergence of violence within a specific social context – the “Western” socius – has been received as a hegemonic reading of the present. Why is the language of the “exception” crucial in understanding the spectacular events in Abu Ghraib, in Guantanamo Bay, in the policing of border conflicts “at home” and “abroad”?

In the past few years there has been a proliferation of texts “applying” Agamben’s theorization to the present conditions of refugees, political detainees, and non-status peoples. It is not within the scope of this paper to work through this secondary literature or to draw up an inventory of the so-called popularity of Agamben’s work. Instead I will examine the nexus between Walter Benjamin and Agamben to unravel the way they provide for us a historiographical imagination of the 20th century. Is Agamben enacting a hermeneutical project in order to create a particular, even exclusive polity? By what fiat is this possible?

Before I can provide an account of violence in the historical present, I seek to return to the ways in which violence has been framed by Giorgio Agamben’s seminal work, Homo Sacer. I aim to
unsettle the unquestioned deployment of “violence” within this text, one that seems to be an isolated reading that remains within the realm of transcendental thought. This is due to the fundamental ambiguity of the notion of violence itself. In this light, this essay is an attempt to open up the problem of violence in the archive – the archiving of violence, which I understand to be works of memory. In this essay I take Walter Benjamin’s messianic approach to history as a means for interrupting, even lacerating Agamben’s announcement that “we are all virtually homines sacri” (1995: 115).

The problem of the “archive”

Our minds hover in a famous impasse
and cling together. Your hand
grips mine like a railing on an icy night
(Adrienne Rich 2002: 46)

Why an archive of violence? The “archive,” as arkhe, poses the problem of time in the question of violence. A brief definition for our purposes: the arkhe signifies the notion of the “first principle” in classical Greek thought. Jacques Derrida translates arkhe as both commencement and command –

This name apparently coordinates two principles in one: the principle according to nature or history, there where things commence—physical, historical, or ontological principle—but also the principle according to the law, there where men and gods command, there where authority, social order are exercised, in this place from which order is given—nomological principle (Derrida 1995: 1).

In this light an archive of violence is an ontology of violence, but simultaneously a nomology (nomos) of violence. When does violence commence, and who commands it? Here Derrida poses a wager –

The archive has always been a pledge, and like every pledge, a token of the future. To put it more trivially: what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way. Archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives (Derrida 1995: 18).
In this paper I will work with the idea of posing the problem of the archive with the problem of living, and with the corporeal as well as the material structure that archives. The body as an archive, and the body as one that archives.

Walter Benjamin reminds us that “the past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again” (TPH: 255). With him, I am posing the problem of our works of historical memory about violence, the (unquestioned) gains we make in this economy of memory about violence. How does the notion of violence circulate in certain spaces? How are we intervening in the present, in the face of ongoing violence? In an anthology on the poetics of witness, Carolyn Forche says,

What I discovered was that extremity does mark language. Language fragments at the core of trauma, no matter what the subject matter, if a poet comes out of prison after a long time and writes about snowflakes, I began to sense that you could see the prison in the snowflakes.

Paraphrasing Benjamin, “To articulate past violences historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’. It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.” Perhaps it means to seize hold of our works of memory on colonialism and imperialism as they flash up in the moment of their ongoing nature within the occupation of ancestral and indigenous land, the incarceration of racialised people in prisons, refugee camps, precarious workplaces, and the displacement of populations within and across state borders. As she was being haunted by her own ghosts in the archives of slavery, Saidiya Haartman says,

Impossible to fathom was that all these deaths had been incidental to the acquisition of profit and to the rise of capitalism. Today we might describe it as collateral damage. The unavoidable losses created in pursuit of the greater objective. Incidental death occurs when life has no normative value, when no humans are involved (2007: 31).

Here I invoke the notions of the archive and violence with the same urgency, as they flash up before me at a moment of danger. The danger that an ontology of violence is circulating, and left unquestioned. That the words “method” and “epistemology” are deployed to intellectualize suffering. That my body, here, must question what it means to assume an intimate relation with
the violences that I attempt to study.

Finally, in her poem “Power,” Adrienne Rich says,

Today I was reading about Marie Curie:
she must have known she suffered from radiation sickness
her body bombarded for years by the element
she had purified

She died a famous woman denying
her wounds denying
her wounds came from the same source as her power

With these lines – perhaps they are epitaphs -- I am trying to make sense of what it means to brush history against the grain. But alongside this, to ask what it means to mourn – to question the stakes in mourning what remains, especially in past and ongoing histories of loss. And yet I am beginning to wonder about the usefulness of writing history as an act of mourning with rigour.

**Reading the archive of violence in “messianic time”**

John Berger argues that “Walter Benjamin’s attitude was that of a thinker who needed a fixed object before him in historic time, in order to thereby measure time (which he was convinced was not homogenous) and to grasp the import of the specific passage of time which separated him and the work, to redeem that time from meaninglessness.” What happens when we treat violence as a fixed object? How can we begin to think about violence in historic time? And, this becomes even more difficult, what would it mean to redeem the concept of violence? This is why I pose the problem of the archive of violence. How are we writing about violence, and in doing so, grounding it in a particular fashion?

What meaning does the term critique take on when it becomes a critique of violence? Judith
Butler argues that a critique of violence is not just an inquiry into the conditions of its emergence, but it is also an interrogation of how violence is circumscribed in advance by the questions we pose of it (2006: 201). With Benjamin, “archiving” this critique enables us to question the narration of historical time and to question the repressed histories of the “pre-modern” and the “pre-colonial” as hauntings that serve as the constitutive outside of Western modernity.

How can we figure this outside? In speaking of an “outside” we can begin to recognize the aporetic place of the “postcolonial” in this archive. I argue that those that haunt the Western subject – the so-called “pre-colonial,” the “native” and the figure of the slave – are central to the constitution of the socius that Agamben privileges in his work. Only by displacing this ostensibly Greco-Roman socius can we even begin to reach a provisional definition of “the political”. I would argue that it is through displacing these dominant archives, by being attentive to the hauntings that foreground them, that we could even begin to resist a teleological deployment of the “political” in the historical present. As Benjamin argues:

Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the “time of the now” which is shot through with chips of Messianic time (1968).

Benjamin’s “messianic time” fundamentally questions the ways we await the “arrival” of the Messiah. Kafka said that the Messiah “will come not on the last day, but on the very last” – does this mean that he will ever come? This perhaps is an injunction to be attentive to the trace of the redemptive and the effacement of “theology” as an excess to the Western subject as a “secular”

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1 It is not within the scope of this paper to unravel the ways in which the “messianic” is a contested term within the Abrahamic traditions. The messiah is arguably a complicated figure within the Kaballah and the Talmudic traditions, and yet has been primarily understood as falling within the structure of monotheism. For more study on this subject, see: Richard Wolin’s Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption (New York, 1982).
subject. If we stay with Benjamin, this would mean resisting the rush to anthropomorphize the messianic, that is, to name resistance as being located in a subject, a human figure. Perhaps this means the need to pause before naming resistance as being located in a human figure; the need to pause before assuming the existence of a revolutionary subject, however plural, as a humanist figure that will deploy criticality in order to bring forth the possibility of justice. An aporia, then – how can we even anticipate the “arrival” of justice? How is this arrival figured and announced – who is present at the scene?

In this light Benjamin’s own figuration of violence is oblique and ambiguous. Through his fragmented and allegorical mode of writing he resists the rush to name and ossify the subject of history. Butler argues that this ambivalence around the messianic gestures towards an unleashed individualism – an individualism that finally destroys the example of the individual itself. This unleashed individualism within the messianic, however, is dependent on a destruction of chronology (Butler 2006) and thus necessitates a critique of linear time. Alongside this, a critique of the old conceptions of space and time – the assumption that the space of politics is within the state, that the possibility of justice is contained within the liberal subject, both of which are embedded in the old grammar of linear historical time. Is the task then to break from a relation with a past that demands for payments and cycles of retribution and revenge?

And yet, with Benjamin, does messianic time enable us to think of radical futurity, a critical rupture within the present? Benjamin’s messianic materialism forces us to question the “origins” and “ends” of violence. His radical ungrounding of historical time fundamentally displaces the telos of violence. What would it mean then to examine the relation of violence to the ongoing consolidation of the socius, of social life – to weave together the ongoing violences of colonization, genocide, occupation, accumulation?

A critical practice of reading history means staging a rupture in historical memory – both moving within a redemptive understanding of time. “History,” Benjamin says, “is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time but time filled by the presence of the now” (1968: 261). Perhaps Benjamin announces the messianic only obliquely in order to show how our

\[\text{Here I am gesturing towards the problematic conclusions of Derrida’s “Force of Law.”}\]
grammar, however critical, is insufficient. This poses the redemptive possibilities of counter-history. Michel Foucault says as much in his understanding of biopower as race struggle –

These counterhistories reveal that the light – the famous dazzling effect of power – is not something that petrifies, solidifies, and immobilizes the entire social body and thus keeps it in order; it is in fact a divisive light that illuminates one side of the social body but leaves the other side in shadow or casts it into darkness. And the history or the counterhistory that is born of the story of the race struggle will of course speak from the side of this darkness, from within the shadows (Foucault 2003).

The images that abound here – light and shadow – remind us that the articulation of history already contains within it the intimations of a counter-history. I am questioning the ways in which histories of violence are being narrated in the historical present – arguing against the easy announcement of a subject that enacts violence (the “US imperial state”) and the subject of violence (the “homo sacer”). Especially in the present context of ongoing violences - the incarceration of brown and black bodies in the US prison-industrial complex tied to ongoing enclosures of indigenous lands and the global war on terror, the continuous fragmentation of the revolutionary subject even within radical discourses - what would it mean to question the socius that underpins the conditions of possibility for speaking of resistance, and even of radical justice?

We are thus forced to account for how the production of knowledge itself is an archive and that knowledge has its own anthropology. However, I already am located in an impasse: in centralizing the texts of Agamben and his interlocutors, am I enacting a metaphysical compensation for the histories of violence and genocide? If, within Gayatri Spivak’s schema, I am indeed acting out the role of the native informant, bearing “data” to Western ontology, merely “importing” Western categories to “other spaces,” am I reinforcing a history from the perspective of the victor? Is the materialization of an archive that is attentive to the messianic to be understood merely as a manifestation of residual social structures and repressed psychic forces? Or could it perhaps announce a radical futurity – the possibility for Other forms of being? Is the alternative then to remain in the accumulated practice of politics within the traditions to which

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3 Here I am drawing from Gayatri Spivak’s seminal text *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999).
Agamben and Benjamin are wedded, complicit in retaining the self-identity of dominance and the “sovereign exception”? As Jacqui Alexander asks for us – How then can we make sense of the “archive of empire” but also be attentive to the oppositions to it, of the knowledges and ideologies it summons and of the ghosts that haunt it (2005: 2)? Lacerating this metaphysical archive by exposing its violent origins leads to the call to write with the hope for other modes of existence. Perhaps I am gesturing towards the possibility of an entirely different kind of archive – a messianic body of an archive. But in doing so I can only proclaim my own impotence. But as Benjamin reminds us, in the wake of these losses, we must find the means to continue. What emerges then is a critical practice of reading the archive – a task, Benjamin says, that entails brushing history against the grain (1968: 257).

What would it mean then to resist the anthropomorphization of the Messianic, one that is symptomatic of the residues of universalism and humanism in the naming of the “subject”? What would it mean to question precisely how we, as bearers of the “legacies” of the criticality and knowledge, might be figuring ourselves as Messiahs? What works of remembering are we enabling here, and for whom? But perhaps, and this is why I continue to work with Benjamin, it is only through tracing the counter-archive, the repressed and subterranean histories that modernity sought to efface as savage excess, that we can even begin to figure the problem of messianic time as a social question. More importantly we must expose the origins of this social, uncovering the cosmologies it proffers and the possibilities that are simultaneously enabled and foreclosed.

The body as archive

*Blurred genres are not empires in distress but imperial polities in active realignment and reformation*  
(Stoler: 2006)

What bodies and entities define and constitute modern politics in and through their exclusion? As present discourses on US homeland security illustrate, refugees, asylum-seekers, and “terrorists” are constructed as “outsiders” that endanger the boundaries of the “homeland” or the “frontier.”
Whoever is outside this border or ambiguously moves within its threshold is constituted as a body “that may be killed and yet not sacrificed.” For most of us, this is old news. But these tensions continue to haunt the ways in which the “political” is being constituted. Agamben argues:

The concept of the body is caught in a deployment of power… the body is always already a biopolitical body and a bare life. There is no return from the camps to classical politics. In the camps, city and house become indistinguishable, and the possibility of differentiating between our biological body and our political body – between what is incommunicable and mute and what is communicable and sayable – was taken from us forever (1995: 187-188).

We are, he says, citizens whose very politics is at issue in their natural body (1995: 188). But who is the “us” that Agamben announces? Why is it that a recourse to the biopolitical is affirmed as the space of politics in the present? And yet, we must remember, knowledge of the body has been central to decades of feminist struggle and theoretical praxis. Why did Agamben have to take all these detours into the genealogy of modernity and into classical Greek ideas of life in order to tell us that the body is political, that the body matters?

In States of Exception Agamben argues that in the detainee at Guantanamo, bare life reaches its maximum indeterminacy (2005: 4) – however, the scandal of hypervisibility around Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo led to their contradictory framing as both spaces of exception but at the same time unremarkable conditions. There is a radical inversion of US exceptionalism here: that tortures and the enactment of bare life happen outside the borders of the US. How then can we understand the borders of the political if the tortures aren’t a domestic issue?

In staging these questions I attempt to examine how acts of knowledge production in the academe serve to obfuscate the vertical differences between subjects. If we are “all” virtually homines sacri, how is it possible to differentiate modalities of violence across historical periods? What are the material consequences of the symbolic deployment of the term homo sacer across multiple spaces? The borders that Agamben constructs are limiting in the way that they describe the present historical moment. Moreover, the call for embodiment, that the body matters, is a risk. It unravels the relation of complicity involved in the naming of the homo sacer. In naming the
refugee, the asylum-seeker, the terrorist as homo sacer, we articulate their existence as outside (as un-domesticated), as not here, and not involving ourselves. Retaining the exclusion of the homo sacer sustains political practices that consolidate the borders that Agamben attempts to render indissoluble.

Analogous to the logic of the exception, the notion of the archive too has its own logic. As a genre, the archive of violence is situated in an economy of imperial expansion – the circulation of knowledge necessary for managing and expanding an empire. Perhaps we can understand the archive of violence as an imperial archive. This complicates an understanding of “knowledge” (and its historical constitution within “Western metaphysics” as the “canon”) as one that is already implicated in colonial and imperial logics. The history and archeology of knowledge is one of the “master’s tools” (Audre Lorde) par excellence. A wager then – we too are part of the imperial archive. More and more I find myself having to deal with the “shock” of reading myself and ourselves in the shadow of “modernity”. In my future work I seek to examine the writing of the nation enacted through the writing of the body. By visualizing this archive as a bio-graphy, we can begin to make sense of the circulation of bodies (corps) and the ongoing work (corpus) of memory.

However, the archive is not a weapon. It should not be used to prevent people from questioning. Perhaps the archive is what is brought into it – the archive becomes us, as we enter it. We must not lose sight of this fact. Too many times we become imprisoned by rigour, competing for the “better” reading which leads into a contest over facts and competition over obscure interpretation. In many ways the archive is a fantasy, a phantasmagoric collection of ideas. However, fantasy has material groundings. The need to insist upon this fact is symptomatic of the fear of the subliminal, which for me is a haunting presence. I refuse then to disguise my questions through the Western injunction to psychoanalysis and pathology. My inner life must not be determined by disciplines that nourish the forgetting of racialised bodies that sustained the domination of the imperial project.

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4 Here I am juxtaposing the notions of the “archive” and “archeology.” However tenuous this juxtaposition, both concepts expose the problem of origins in Western metaphysics.

5 Many argue that we are currently living in an age and state of permanent emergency. The
Fanon once made the controversial statement that the Holocaust was a mere family quarrel (1965: 155). This statement is tied to a Manichean framework that circumscribes Fanon’s study of race and blackness. Fanon’s understanding of the social is overdetermined by the antagonistic relationship between blackness and whiteness. However, the question is whether Fanon is making an ontological claim or a strategic one. Reading this as an ontology would lead us to certain paths. First, if social relationships are predetermined as being antagonistic, Fanon’s understanding of the subject is implicated in a logic of social death. This logic of social death is tied to the reproduction of white life. Dylan Rodriguez’s compelling work traces the lineage of a radical philosophy embedded in the structure of social death. He speaks of imprisoned radical intellectual George Jackson, when interviewed shortly before his assassination in the summer of 1971, amplifies the insurrectionist trajectory of social truth (2006: 253). Rodriguez argues that Jackson conceptualizes the historical telos of the oppressed’s ontology as it is entwined in a bifurcated historical possibility: massive death or total liquidation of the existing systemic arrangement (ibid). Rodriguez quotes Jackson as following Fanon:

> The principal contradiction between the oppressor and the oppressed can be reduced to the fact that the only way the oppressor can maintain his position is by fostering, nurturing, building, contempt for the oppressed. That thing gets out of hand after a while. It leads to excesses that we see and the excesses are growing within the totalitarian state here. The excesses breed resistance; resistance is growing. The thing grows in a spiral. It can only end one way. The excesses lead to resistance, resistance leads to brutality, the brutality leads to more resistance, and finally the whole question will be resolved with either the uneconomic destruction of the oppressed, or the end of oppression (Jackson as quoted by Rodriguez 2006: 253-254).

Within queer studies authors like Jasbir Puar argue that the post-911 scenario has led to new forms of racism that return to the old logics of colonialism and Orientalism. That is, the fear of the brown man and the violent conflation of terrorist as Muslim and fag (Puar 2002). Saba Mahmood (2005) speaks of the semiotics of the veil, marked by the return of old colonial desires for unveiling and therefore “saving” the abject, oppressed Muslim woman.
However, a problem arises with Agamben’s logic of permanence in the state of exception. Is this “permanence” tied to an ontology of the “political”? This insistence upon permanence is symptomatic of Agamben’s transhistorical understanding of the biopolitical. What then is the “time” of biopolitics?

Today’s democratico-capitalist project of eliminating the poor classes through development not only reproduces within itself the people that is excluded but also transforms the entire population of the Third World into bare life (Agamben 1995: 180).

Symptomatic of the problem of historicity, Agamben seems to be reproducing a clear demarcation between the “inside” and “outside” of violence. Throughout this essay I have been militating against his cartography of the exception that maps violence onto specific spaces in particular periods, without being attentive to the continuity of the hauntings of past violences, past experiences. My future work will pursue these questions further. However, the problem of time is intimately linked to the radical possibilities embedded in works of historical memory. A rigorous critique of time is a political act. Folded into this is the idea that in the face of mourning loss, the injunction to remember opens forth the possibility for new desires, new means for living, a politics, that even Agamben calls, is one of pure means (2000).

In the face of all these aporias, what is at stake in Benjamin’s injunction to continue, in the face of ongoing violence? If we read this alongside the Schmittian (1974) sovereign exception – that the socius is possible in and through the suspension of the law – how can we reconceive the terms and practice of justice? My ongoing work on the archive is located at this impasse. It means remembering that rewriting the colonial encounter is already a contaminated process, and there is no real way in which “material evidence” can be resuscitated in speaking of alternative origins or a counter-narrative to the so-called “given” history. We have already seen Benjamin reading and writing against the grain – critiquing Schmitt by figuring the sovereign in the Trauerspiel (Benjamin 1977) as impotent, but whose corpus is dripping in the blood and dirt of sacrifice6 – the work of memory is always and already re-inscription of history. The unravelling of the phantoms that haunt the historical archive already announces a radical futurity to come.

6 I am currently pursuing this problem.
Bibliography


Resolution 1325 in Canadian Foreign Policy: an Instance of Peacebuilding as Neocolonial Enterprise?

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Introduction
The post-Cold War era has seen the rise of what have been termed by some as the “new wars” (Kaldor 1999). Such conflicts are often described as civil, ethnic, or intrastate in nature. They are said to be characterized by unprecedented civilian impacts, resulting, in part, from the blurring of the boundaries between the “home front” and the “war front” as well as those between “peace” and “war” (Giles and Hyndman 2004). At the same time, multilateral organizations, and the UN in particular, project an image such that liberal internationalist “soft power” approaches to “war” and “peace” appear to have triumphed over Cold-war realpolitik (Whitworth 2004). Thus the rise of the so called “new wars” has been accompanied by major changes in “conflict management,” in so far as public policy dealing with issues of “war” and “peace” has become increasingly internationalized at the same time as it has become increasingly interventionist: peacebuilding has become, in the words of Roland Paris, “an international growth industry” (Paris 2004: 13).

While the apparent “newness” of these conflicts is said to be evidenced in and through an array of conflict dynamics, perhaps one of the most challenging, and deeply troubling features of these conflicts are the ways in which the raced/classes/sexed bodies of women, as well as the concepts or categories “women” and “gender”, have been incorporated into some security discourses and practices of both academic and policy communities. Throughout the 1990s the ways in which racialized, sexualized and militarized violence are played out on women’s bodies in the context of the “new wars” received significant attention from various sites, including the media, policy makers and academics. Reasons for this “attention” are complex and varied. For instance, it has been argued that post-Cold War conflict management strategies, especially peacekeeping, gave the UN and some national militaries (i.e. Canada) renewed justification for existence. At the same time, the peacebuilding industries allow for the projection of an ostensibly kinder softer form of

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7 The obvious exception to this is the continuity of American unilateralism, especially with regards to the so-called war on terror and the attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq.
militarism (Whitworth 2004; Debrix 1999). I would also suggest that this has to do with a politics of knowledge production in and through academic, activist and public policy making sites, such that, as feminist and post-colonial academics and activists produce critiques of social relations and structures which systematically create conditions of vulnerability for women and “the feminine”, it becomes necessary for both public policy and popular opinion to respond to such pressures in ways which tend to depoliticize issues of race and sexual difference (Agathangelou 2005; Whitworth 2004; Cohn 2004).

Thus, even as recognition for the ways in which women are particularly “vulnerable” to armed conflict was gained in the 1990’s, it became, at the same time, increasingly apparent that both women’s bodies and their interests were absent from the table when the terms of “peace” were negotiated and set. Sandra Whitworth (2004) has demonstrated with force that even where “gender” is incorporated into the UNs’ “way of doing business”, this mode of inclusion proves, ultimately, to be “an effective way of silencing critique” – even more so “than straightforward dismissal because it ensures that deeper critical questions… do not end up on the formal agendas for addressing gender” (17). Notwithstanding such difficulties and ambiguities, however, women’s activism around peace and security as gendered and raced politics has been formidable. One of the most remarkable outcomes of this was the unanimous adoption, on October 31, 2000, of UNSC Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (UNSC1325 2000). This was a result of intensive lobbying of the Security Council by activists, NGOs and supportive member states from within and outside of the UN.

In this paper I look at Canadian governmental involvement with Resolution 1325 through its support of a particular civil society organization: the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee (CPCC). I choose this organization as one example of how an “epistemic convergence” (Paris 2006) between certain academic and bureaucratic elements may shape the contours of a key stakeholder’s (i.e. the Canadian State’s) response to the challenges and opportunities posed by Resolution 1325. Specifically, I look at the CPCC’s involvement with

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9 Of course 1325 is already a form of consensus/convergence, as the product of contestation between various sites (academic, activist, governmental, non-governmental and so forth).
assessing Canadian implementation of 1325. I argue that the adoption of UNSCR 1325 marks a significant development in International Relations/International Security studies, for the women, peace and security project. Yet such developments must be problematized, insofar as articulated frameworks for the Canadian state implementation of UNSCR 1325 draw on colonial/neocolonial ontologies that seek to deny both the relationality of the “West” and the “South” and the entanglement of corporeal, epistemic and economic forms of violence. I argue that this obfuscation of relationality functions through the construction of imperial narratives and “imaginary geographies” (Said 1978; Orford 2003; Gregory 2004). Such imperial narratives and imaginary geographies construct the “West” as essentially modern, “civilized,” orderly and progressive, whereas the “South” is deemed essentially archaic, pre-modern, “uncivilized” and chaotic. Furthermore, such geographies depend on gendered colonial re-imaginings of the relationship between time and space, such that spatial distance is mapped onto an axis of time, and nations of the “South” are portrayed as historically infantile – what McClintock terms the production of “anachronistic space” – and are therefore gendered feminine (McClintock 1999). This is an epistemological strategy that works to obscure the ways in which complex and already existing relationships between the “West” and the “South”, as well as between the politics and economics of neocolonialism, help to create the very conditions of possibility for the gendered corporeal violence with which UNSCR 1325 is primarily concerned.

Following Orford (2003), I apply my understandings of neocolonial and capitalist patriarchal desires to “deny relationality” to a critique of peacebuilding as a form of intervention. Thus, I argue that to “deny relationality” is to discursively localize sources of violence and insecurity, thereby obfuscating the connections between said violence(s) and insecurities and broader processes of marginalization and dispossession, such as those associated with economic globalization.10 In somewhat different language, I argue that the Canadian state depends on, and therefore fosters, the legitimacy of particular imagined civic and political solutions to violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations as separate and distinct from economic considerations of material well-being, and the spaces in which this well-being does or does not exist. These imaginary geographies are crucial for the Canadian state to sustain, insofar as they

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10 I understand economic globalization in terms of the aggressive promotion of a neo-liberal economic agenda, on the part of the world’s most powerful states and the international institutions, which their interests tend to dominate (i.e. the World Bank, United Nations, International Monetary Fund).
are integral to the material viability of “Canada” as both an economic and a national(ist) entity.

In making these arguments I situate Canadian engagements with Resolution 1325 in the context of the emergence of what Oliver Richmond has termed the “peacebuilding consensus,” itself a constitutive element of the “liberal peace” (Richmond 2005: 85). As such this paper is also a discussion of the internationalization of Canadian foreign policy, and some of the ways in which such policy is legitimized. My intent is to call attention to the ways in which this process of legitimating may foreclose possibilities to problematize the linkages between SCR 1325 and “peacebuilding” as a form of intervention that rests simultaneously on perceptions/presumptions that link the “vulnerability”/“victimization” of particular (i.e. Congolese, Burundian) female bodies to the spaces of “chaos”, “disorder” or “uncivilization,” which they are said to occupy, as well as on understandings of “Canada” as a separate space of “peace” “order” and “good government”. Thus, “Canada” and “Canadian” national identities may be reproduced through the representation of Canada as an appropriate and benevolent agent of “peace” and “security” in ways that render Canadian complicity in structures and processes that help to create the conditions of possibility for unpeace and insecurity essentially invisible. Lastly, it is significant to re-emphasize that the concepts of “chaos” and “order” are themselves gendered. In the Western philosophical tradition, “chaos”, or more commonly “mess” is associated with the feminine, while “order” is rationalized as “masculine” (Spivak 1997; McClintock 1999; Orford 2003; Whitworth 2004; Agathangelou and Ling 2004). Hence, the questions I ask are “how and why does a specific, contemporary articulation of “peace” (liberal peace) reproduce gendered relations of colonial power? How are the Canadian state and Canadian nationalism(s) implicated in these global social relations?

**Space, Time and the Question of Colonization**

Before engaging the question of “peacebuilding” specifically, it is necessary to spend a moment on the question of language, and to elaborate on some of the terminology used above. Is the “liberal peace” an imperial project? Is it neocolonial? Or are we witnessing something fundamentally “new” or different here? Mark Duffield (2001) insists on distinguishing his “liberal peace”/“global liberal governance” approach from “new imperialism” theses. He argues that such theses are unable to account for shifts in the ways power is wielded in the contemporary period, because power is now exercised in ways that are “more nuanced, opaque and complex”
than the desire to possess and control land might suggest (34). Thus, for Duffield, the language of imperialism is not tenable. However I believe that Duffield’s understanding of imperialism as (only) about territorial acquisition is profoundly limiting. It is, moreover, linked to masculinist preoccupations that render questions of gender and sexuality almost totally invisible. If political and economic sites of power and control are increasingly deterritorialized, than it should be unsurprising that the agents of Empire may not be concerned with conventional modes of territorial control, per se. Further, it must be acknowledged that colonial territorial desires are linked materially and epistemically to desires for the female body (McClintock) and to whiteness as a modality of desire (Farley 1997; Agathangelou 2004).

While it may appear to be novel for mainstream policy makers to “contemplate the transformation of entire societies” in the ongoing quest to maintain and re-consolidate power and authority, this relationship to the colonial Other (i.e. the desire to possess/whiten vis-à-vis “civilization” or “transformation”) has always been integral to imperial projects.

Following Spivak (1999), I will use the term neocolonial to denote the “largely economic rather than the largely territorial enterprise of imperialism” (3). However I also concur that the “difference between colonialism and imperialism, crucial to historians, is not of the last importance here” (Ibid.). What is crucial is an analysis of the ways in which cultural, academic and policy productions represent time and space, and are always implicated in social relations of power. Thus, when critics “concentrate only on the representation of the colonized or the matter of the colonies” they may inadvertently contribute to the “production of current neocolonial knowledge by placing colonialism/imperialism squarely in the past and/or by suggesting a continuous line from that past to our present” (1). Here McClintock’s (1995) discussion of colonial and nationalist ontologies of time and space, and their gendered contortions, is particularly salient. Because colonial/neocolonial constructions of an Other to be conquered/saved/civilized depend on the reasonable supposition of a self, nationalism cannot be ignored.

For McClintock, nationalist temporal imaginaries are profoundly gendered. The paradox of “nation time” (358) is that its evocations are simultaneously primordial – the “national community” must be naturalized in such a way that “the nation” comes to have a taken for
granted existence since “time immemorial” – and modern insofar as national organization must be broadly understood as the vehicle for “progress”, or indeed, that which is responsible for the “forward” movement of time itself (Ibid.). Since, in this epistemology, women are the reproducers and boundary markers of all things national, the primordial is gendered feminine, and modernity masculine. The violence of this separation is the technology of political power usually referred to as “nationalism” (352). As such my understanding and use of the terms “liberal peace” and “global liberal governance” is that these strategies are essentially neocolonial in nature, and are, in the first instance, about attempts at consolidating and maintaining raced, gendered and classed structures of power, by drawing on colonial and nationalist productions of time and space. I will expand on these contentions with reference to Canadian nationalism and Canadian foreign policy below.

McClintock provides two further, highly useful concepts; “anachronistic space” and “panoptical time”, of which the former will be most significant to my discussion here. In the colonial imagination, McClintock argues, “the world is feminized and spatially spread for male exploration, then reassembled and deployed in the interests of massive imperial power” (23). Since, in the colonial ontology, the earth (i.e. territory to be conquered) is feminized, and women are constructed as boundary markers for race/ethnic/national imaginaries, female bodies and female sexualities (as, paradoxically, both passive/submissive and transgressive/threatening) become central to the colonial civilizing mission. “Black geographies” – the “uninhabitable”/“uninhabited” backward spaces of the “natural” trajectory of white European Imperial history – and “historical immaturities” are produced as simultaneous moments in the European spacetime imaginary (McClintock; McKittrick 2007). Further, the anachronistic space trope effectively erases “the agency of women, the colonized and the industrial working class” as well as “the labour of changing history” (McClintock 40). This is the tandem function of “panoptical time”: European history is universalized as world history through the presumed exclusivity of white male agency, while paradoxically “universal” time “just when it appears most historical – stops in its tracks” (Ibid.).

Owen Dywer and John Paul Jones (2000) articulate a concept of “white socio-spatial epistemology” which is similarly useful in illustrating this point. Dwyer and Jones note that spatial “distance” can be deployed as a metaphor for social/cultural/economic distance in ways,
which both manifest and sustain the privileges of whiteness. In this sense white socio-spatial epistemologies are related to imperial and neocolonial epistemologies, which make sense of the Other as simultaneously distant and disempowered. The epistemology of whiteness articulated by Dwyer and Jones relies on a “non-relational construction of space and identity [to make] its claims to be realized independent of an Other” (209). Here, what is significant about the “colonial encounter” is not only the impact it has on the “colonized” but also on the ways in which such encounters inform and sustain the self conception of the “colonizer.” Thus, while the “West” (and Western “white” identities) cannot exist, discursively, historically, geographically and economically, independent of the so-called “South” or “Third World”, white socio-spatial epistemologies seek to deny that this is so.

**In Search for “Peace”: Peacebuilding and Neocolonial Intervention**

The concept of “post-conflict peacebuilding” was first introduced by then UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali in his 1992 *An Agenda For Peace*. This text is presented as Boutros Ghali’s response to a request to provide “an analysis and recommendations on the ways of strengthening and making more efficient within the framework and provisions of the Charter the capacity of the United Nations for preventative diplomacy, for peacemaking and for peacekeeping” (Ghali 1992). Peacebuilding is introduced by Boutros Ghali at this time, as, in his language, an additional and “closely related concept” to peacekeeping (Ghali 1992: Article 5). We may reasonably wonder what exactly this means, however the ambiguity of the statement is significant.

If scholars such as Whitworth are essentially correct in their assessment of peacekeeping as the continuation of militarism by other means, then the presentation of peacebuilding as an essentially benign extension of the supposedly civil militarism of peacekeeping should be cause for concerned reflection. Notwithstanding Ghalis’s presentation of the concept, peacebuilding signals a rather dramatic shift in how peace itself is conceptualized. Pearson era peacekeeping valued the more limited intervention of a neutral force keeping warring parties apart on the ground. Contemporary peacebuilding, however, entails the willingness of liberal policy makers to

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11 For example in a recent report “In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All” the establishment of an intergovernmental Peacebuilding Commission is recommended so that “the UN system can better meet the challenge of helping countries successfully complete the transition from war to peace” (Executive Summary 3).
contemplate the transformation of entire societies (Duffield 2001: 22), through increasingly intrusive practices such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs and security sector reform (SSR) (Mutimer 2006: 6).

In Article 55 of the Agenda Boutros Ghali outlines his vision and justification for the concept:

Peacemaking and peacekeeping operations to be truly successful, must come to include comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people. Through agreements ending civil strife, these may include disarming the previously warring parties and the restoration of order, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel, monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation (Ghali 1992: Article 55).

This paragraph provides some good insight into the way “peacebuilding” at the UN is conceptualized as a specific process through which peace may be consolidated. Thus embedded within it is an implied definition of what peace is. In this articulation peace is structural as well as experiential (“a sense of confidence and well-being among people”), is located in the nexus of order, democracy and good governance, and will therefore require “comprehensive efforts” to transform (civilize) the societies(s) in question. Peace is also spatialized in terms of return to home, which is constructed as a private space of stability and therefore, safety, away from the public spaces of civil strife, weapons and violence. It is temporalized in terms of a return to a past (primordial) experience of harmony, and a future cleansing of public spaces from the threat of violence vis-à-vis the regular and predictable cycles of democracy. This vision of peace entails a colonial taming of those violent and unruly Others of the Black geographies of intervention narratives, as well as of time and space.

The language of “peacebuilding” articulates a decidedly liberal vision of “peace.” Mark Duffield (2001) describes “liberal peace” as an “ideological mix of neo-liberal concepts of democracy, market sovereignty, and conflict resolution that determine contemporary strategies of intervention” (21). Thus the western liberal version of “peace” is, somewhat narrowly and rather
ironically understood as synonymous with western market society and consumer citizenship.

The specificity of contemporary articulations of peace as “liberal” is very significant. Anna M. Agathangelou (2005) deploys the concept of a “moral vernacular” to describe the totalizing discourse of “peace” as it is articulated through different sites in Europe and North America, with respect to the ongoing “War on Terror” (131). She notes that “The moral vernacular that circulates in world politics today is that the majority of the world population, worldwide wants ‘peace’” (Ibid.). While Agathangelou specifically limits her discussion to the White House’s deployment of this “moral vernacular” in the “contemporary moment,” I find the concept to be useful here insofar as it allows her to make the following argument:

When a moral vernacular is utilized to explain why people should be against war… such frames of intelligibility focus on the end goal and do not ask questions of the process through which one comes to achieve that goal…. The seeking of ‘peace’ with the absolute goal of ‘ethical peace’ does not allow us to deliberate on the methods through which we work together towards collaborations and forging of communities within which violence and wars are not the major constitutive elements of social relations (Ibid., my emphasis).

This also means that the “absolute goal” of peace at all costs, does not allow us to problematize the violences of contemporary social relations (capitalism, racism, sexism) when these violences do not manifest as war or other forms of corporeal transgression, even when said violences are creating the very conditions of possibility for war and violence as they are understood within the conventions of liberal legalism (Agathangelou 2004: 9).

The rise in popularity of the discourse of “peacebuilding” over the past decade and a half since Boutros Boutros Ghali first introduced the concept to the General Assembly is quite remarkable. As noted, Richmond theorizes this development in international politics in terms of the liberal hegemony of a “peacebuilding consensus” (Richmond 2005: 85-123). The implications of the suggestion of “consensus”, convincingly argued by Richmond, give cause for serious reflection. This is particularly the case in light of Agathangelou’s critique, for as “peacebuilding” becomes institutionalized, its associated discourses and practices are mobilized in an expanding range of spaces and places. According to Jonathan Goodhand and David Hulme (1999), “peacebuilding”
has gained steadily in legitimacy and usage in the world of international multilateral policy making and is “now widely used and expounded by relief and development workers as well as conflict resolution specialists” (15). It is no longer the sole preserve of the UN, although the UN remains a central proponent of the practice(s). Thus “peacebuilding” is performed by a complex mix of actors and interactions between the UN, member states, civil society and NGOs. This is very significant, because as “peacebuilding” is mobilized more frequently and in more and different sites, its basic assumptions become normalized and naturalized through the moral vernacular, and it becomes increasingly difficult to “ask questions of the process through which one comes to achieve that goal” of peace.

Liberal peace also expounds an interventionist logic, which relies, paradoxically, on a simultaneous negation of past/existing relations of intervention. Here my understanding of “intervention” is not limited to the use of force in situations where impending humanitarian crisis is perceived by the political eye. Rather, I conceive of intervention broadly, as a set of discourses/practices that transgress or challenge orthodox notions of state sovereignty, from aid conditionality and development assistance and peacebuilding activities to direct military intervention, as it is more commonly defined. In doing this I draw upon the work of Anne Orford (2003), and her application of Said’s (1978) notion of imaginary geographies to the question of intervention in IR, specifically. While Orford herself focuses on the issue of “heroic narratives” of military intervention as they are found in international law, her use of the concept “imaginary geographies”, which draw upon the anachronistic space trope, to construct non-relational understandings of geo-political spaces and economic relations, is particularly useful here.

According to Orford (2003) the “imaginative geography of intervention” is one in which “the international community is absent from the scene of violence and suffering until it intervenes as heroic savior” (85). Yet, she goes on to note, in the specific cases of both Rwanda and Yugoslavia “The international community had already intervened on a large-scale basis before the security crises erupted, through the activities of international economic institutions and development agencies” (110, my emphasis).

Military interventions are often framed in terms of a series of racialized and gendered dichotomies: protector/protected; democratic/chaotic and so forth. For instance, The
Responsibility to Protect outlines the impetus for Western benevolence as follows: “First, the responsibility to protect implies an evaluation of the issues from the point of view of those seeking or needing support, rather than those who may be considering intervention. Our preferred terminology refocuses the international searchlight back where it should always be: on the duty to protect communities from mass killing, women from systematic rape and children from starvation” (R2P 2001: Sec. 2.29). These narratives/imaginings depend simultaneously on understandings of the “victimhood” of a feminized and brutalized Other which is to be saved by civilized western protectors (Benedicto 2005: 154). In a similar fashion, discussions of peacebuilding that identify violence as “over there” tend to reify national borders, the hierarchical organizations of spaces and peoples which they facilitate, and the distances they inscribe.

An important link between the economic and epistemic processes that give ground to these imagined geographies is highlighted in Duffield’s work. Duffield situates the rise of liberal “peacebuilding” in the emergence of what he calls a “new and complex development-security terrain” (9). This “terrain” is brought about by a transformation in the global political economy since the 1970s. Duffield argues that since the 1970s “global capitalism no longer operates on the basis of expansion and incorporation, but on a new logic of consolidation and exclusion” (Ibid.). The result has been the “shrinking” of formal “North-South” economic linkages, while, at the same time, “Northern” “networks of international public policy have thickened and multiplied their points of engagement and control” (Ibid.). This shift has taken place in conjunction with the redefinition of underdevelopment as dangerous, “a source of conflict, criminalized activity and international instability” (7).

According to Duffield this “redefinition” was made possible by the demise of “Third Worldism” or dependency theory in academic and policy debates. Western liberal views that understood the “causes” of conflict and underdevelopment as predominantly internal, and disconnected from any wider international or global political/economic context were ultimately triumphant, and the policy solutions imagined from this “diagnosis” demonstrate both the socio-spatial epistemology outlined above, as well as a “willingness in mainstream policy to contemplate the transformation of societies as a whole” (22). As the range of discourses and practices converge around particular understandings of “problem” and “solution,” critical space for deliberating on what peace is and how it might be attained are crowded out.
SCR 1325: Peacebuilding, Gender, and the “Woman” Category

On 31 October 2000, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1325, “Women, Peace and Security.” This eighteen point resolution calls for “the prosecution of crimes against women, increased protection of women and girls during war, the appointment of more women to UN peace keeping operations and field missions and an increase in women’s participation in decision making processes at the regional, national and international level” (Cohn, Kinsella and Gibbings 2004: 130). Additionally, the resolution “outlines actions to be taken by the Secretary General, the Security Council, UN departments and member states to ‘mainstream’ gender” (Ibid.).

The adoption of 1325 was a watershed event. It was the result of years of hard work and lobbying by NGO’s, activists and supportive member states (Whitworth 2004: 121). As with the earlier adoption of a “human security” agenda at the UN, the government of Canada was a key player in the promotion and development of resolution 1325 (Cohn, Kinsella and Gibbings 135). Indeed, Cohn, Kinsella and Gibbings have argued that without the inclusion of a “human security” discourse into the work of the Council, other “thematic” resolutions like 1325 would not have been possible (Ibid.).

The resolution marks the first time the Security Council formally recognized the diverse and differential impacts and implications armed conflict holds for women and men (Whitworth 121-2), and as such, it signals the official introduction of the category “woman” and the language of gender into the lexicon of peacebuilding. Here women’s knowledge and experiences come to be seen as integral to the peacebuilding project as a whole, and their presence in peace support operations and at negotiating tables comes to be seen as a legitimate demand.

However this entry is not unconditional. On the one hand the arrival of the ostensibly archaic woman in the “orderly”, “progressive” world of peacebuilding is a landmark event. Yet the knowledge frame within which peacebuilding operates has not been substantially altered. This frame is not one which is necessarily able to accommodate the substantive demands of women for ending violence against women in conflict settings, because it does not acknowledge the ways in which its own liberal ontology is implicated in the production and maintenance of the conditions of possibility for such violence in the first place. As such, the “women, peace and security”
project must necessarily be disciplined to conform to the imperatives of peace as the export of order. As noted earlier, through various and complex processes, the potentially radical concept of “gender” as an analytical lens has often been de-radicalized when it is adopted by liberal institutions and government agencies (Whitworth 133). Speaking to the specific example of gender and SCR 1325 at the UN, Whitworth argues that because gender analysis is often seen as a mere problem solving tool, it can very easily be mapped on to existing “peace” and “security” discourse and practice without ever forcing a reconsideration of the ways in which these concepts and activities often function to reproduce and maintain existing gendered power relations (Ibid.). So, rather than introducing “gender” as a mode of deconstructing neocolonial and capitalist social relations, which systematically marginalize women, people of colour and working classes (McClintock 1995; Agathangelou 2004; Agathangelou and Ling 2004), gender is appropriated as a means of silencing critique (Whitworth 2004). Relatedly, Whitworth notes that in the context of “women, peace and security”, “UN treatments of gender have… been quite limited and have tended to focus on women as victims of sexual violence and the unique contributions that women can make to peace and peacemaking” (132). This approach arises from, on the one hand, a socio-spatial epistemology which denies intervention and relationality, and on the other, the logic of an intervention induced transition from chaos to order.

The Liberal Peace, 1325 and Canadian Foreign Policy
The Canadian state is a key stakeholder in the international peacebuilding consensus. For example, Canada is a founding member of “Friends of 1325,” an international group of concerned parties devoted to promoting the implementation of 1325. The Government of Canada also regularly “Engages Canadians” in consultations “organized in cooperation with the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee (CPCC), the Canadian Consortium on Human Security (CCHS) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) [which] bring practitioners together to discuss current and emerging issues in the field of peacebuilding and human security” (DFAIT a, October 29, 2006). According to the Department of Foreign Affairs, these dialogues are important knowledge-sharing exercises, which facilitate the enhancement of Canada’s contribution to international peace and security (Ibid.). As such, the work of the CPCC should be understood as an important source of policy relevant knowledge and input for FAC as well as a means by which related internationalized elements of foreign policy are legitimized through engagements with civil society and academics.
To better demonstrate how consensus may be produced, an examination of the relation between policy events at the UN and in Canadian foreign policy, as well as the mediating role of a civil society organization such as the CPCC is useful. I make a modest attempt at such an exploration in this and the following sections of the paper.

Richmond explains that contemporary “third generation” peacebuilding approaches “effectively lead to the construction of the liberal peace through a complex epistemic process in which specialist knowledge, expertise, capacities, norms, actors, regimes, and institutions converge in particular forms of regulative governance, each strand legitimated independently by its adherence to different aspects of a peacebuilding consensus on how the liberal peace can be built” (86). Canadian approaches to both peacebuilding and “women, peace and security” can be understood in these terms. At the same time, Canadian foreign policy is becoming increasingly internationalized. Here then, one of the important roles played by civil society organizations and networks in this “complex epistemic process” is to legitimize policy which appears to by-pass more orthodox avenues of democratic accountability and legitimacy.

Gecelvosky and Keating argue that, viewed through a Canadian foreign policy lens, “Geopolitical boundaries are expected to yield to the principles of free markets as enshrined in rules-based institutions” (356) such as the UN, the World Trade Organization and so forth. The effect of this has been a redefinition of spatial boundaries of economic and human security related issues. This has also gone hand in hand with the multilateralization and internationalization of public policy, “where civil society actors are engaged both domestically and transnationally” (Ibid.). Moreover, “As the policy making process has shifted to these multilateral institutions, so to have Canadian officials encouraged transnational forums involving civil society organizations. While this can be viewed from many different vantage points, one of the effects is to reinforce and legitimate transnational policymaking processes and structures” (Ibid.).

The central objectives of Canadian foreign policy as articulated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) are to “help Canadian companies expand and succeed internationally…. [to] ensure the security of Canadians within a global framework, and promote Canadian values and culture on the international stage” (DFAITc January 2, 2007). These “pillars
of policy” were not all created equally, however. On the contrary, several scholars have noted the structural imbalance of this policy framework. According to Gecelovsky and Keating (2003), Canadian foreign policy is marked by a fundamental contradiction between its two “substantive pillars” of “human security” and “economic liberalization.” The Government of Canada’s definition of human security as “freedom from fear” explicitly excludes economic dimensions of insecurity and associated forms of structural violence. Ann Denholm Crosby (2003) makes a similar argument, asserting that DFAIT’s human security agenda functions essentially to cure “with one [human security] hand the ills caused with the [neo-liberal] other” (96). Crosby argues, moreover, that other pillars are merely “flying buttresses” to the economic pillar: DFAIT’s primary function is to promote the economic interests of Canada and Canadian corporations in global markets (94).

Alison Howell (2005) provides a critical discussion of the discourse of “Canadian values” in recent policy documents and public communications, to show how ideologies or myths of Canada as an altruistic international player, function to enforce and legitimate these economic pursuits. According to Howell, one of the effects of the discourse of “Canadian values” as a framing mechanism for Canadian Foreign Policy, and the concomitant image of Canada as the altruistic “do-gooder” on the international stage, is the reproduction of colonialist dichotomies which position Canada and the “Third World” nations it imagines (not) intervening in, in a series of discursive binaries: civilized and uncivilized; developed and undeveloped; democratic and undemocratic; successful and failed states, and so on (52). In so doing the government of Canada constructs a questionable image of “Canadian values” as being somehow separate or unrelated from the material and economic realities that underlay and inform their pursuit. The masking of the material conditions necessary for the continued realization “values” – both at home and abroad – such as women’s and minority rights, the protection of the environment and so on, simultaneously enforces the image of Canada as a “helpful fixer”, while reinforcing a dichotomy between the “order” of home and the “disorder” of elsewhere (Howell 2005: 51). At the same time, Howell’s argument is important as it indicates the extent to which the “projection of Canadian values” has its own legitimacy and power to seduce, independent from visions of economic gain.

In sum, the Government of Canada’s ongoing support for implementation of 1325 can be seen as
both consistent with and integral to, the broad foreign policy objectives outlined above, and to DFAIT’s human security agenda more specifically. Moreover, the Government of Canada’s involvement and leadership in a number of projects designed to strengthen legitimacy and support for resolution 1325 is illustrative of the transnational policy making processes referred to above.

The Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee and 1325 In Canadian Foreign Policy

According to the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), while it is the responsibility of member states to implement Resolution 1325, various civil society sites are engaged in important ways both in researching issues related to implementation, as well as finding creative ways to make the resolution “work” for the populations it is intended to serve (WILPF January 2, 2007). Canadian government support for the CPCC is but one such example. I am interested in looking more closely at a specific intervention made by this organization recently, as it has in some ways been implicated in reproducing the peacebuilding frame and its supporting narratives which seek to deny intervention, or indeed relationality between Canada and Canadians on the one hand and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi and Congolese, Burundians on the other. In the context of international “humanitarian policies” this is an interesting kind of double move, whereby civil society is drawn into the service of redefining crucial concepts such as “peace and security” in statist terms, while simultaneously providing legitimacy to practices which undermine the sovereignty of particular peoples, communities, nations and states.

In what follows I examine a point of convergence between the three sites of knowledge and policy production I have identified as the subject of this paper; the UN, DFAIT and CPCC, specifically the work of the Gender and Peacebuilding Working Group (GPWG). In doing so I identify a particular moment in the ongoing exchange between the Government of Canada, the United Nations, and the Canadian GPWG.12 My intent is to argue that GPWG represents an

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12 In April 2004 the Secretary General requested information relating to Canada’s implementation of UNSCR 1325. DFAIT responded in July with its “Government of Canada Response to the request for information by UN Secretary-General concerning full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security” (DFAIT b October 8, 2006). Pursuant to this the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee, Gender and Peacebuilding Working Group issued its assessment of GoC’s involvement with the publication of “Canada’s Support for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in the African Great
important site of knowledge production in that it domestically legitimizes the position of 1325 as a human security pursuit in DFAIT’s broader foreign policy agenda.\textsuperscript{13} I wish to problematize the GPWG’s objective of “strengthening” Canada’s women, peace and security agenda – it is not apparent that the enhanced incorporation of women into the “liberal peace” project is the best or most appropriate means of working towards “peace and security” in general, and for “women” in particular. I argue that the dialogue is contained within a rather narrow liberal framework, which effectively forecloses the possibility of critical questioning and alternative imaginings of “peace” and “security”. In making this argument, I take the GWPG’s recently published report, entitled, “Canada’s Support for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in the African Great Lakes Region: Challenges and Perspectives for Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo” (hereafter GPWG – Great Lakes Report), as an entry point into this conversation.

In July, 2004 the Government of Canada issued its report “concerning full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security” in response to a request issued by the Secretary General. The report begins in the following way:

A number of Canada’s Federal government departments are involved in the implementation of SCR 1325, each with a specific area of responsibility... key departments are members of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Gender and Peacebuilding, which is chaired by FAC and reviews Canadian initiatives currently underway on gender and peacebuilding… (DFAIT\textsuperscript{a}).\textsuperscript{14}

The report goes on to note that, under its commitments to the Beijing Platform for Action, Beijing+5 and SCR 1325, “Canada... has worked actively to integrate a gender-sensitive approach to peacebuilding and human security activities, and to ensure that women and men equally participate in, and benefit from, efforts to build peace within a range of international and regional organizations” (Ibid.).

\textsuperscript{13} Crosby has documented the way in which the Canadian Government engages civil society, thereby legitimating its policy pursuits, from both ‘above’ or internationally and ‘below’ or domestically (Crosby 2003: 100-01).

\textsuperscript{14} Key departments include; Foreign Affairs Canada, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Department of National Defense, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the International Development research Center.
The GWPG – Great Lakes Report is fairly extensive and focuses on two countries in particular, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Why these two countries have been selected is not clear from the report itself. However the report states: “Canada has taken part in peace processes in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi through numerous multilateral and bilateral cooperation programs” (2). The report is too long to do justice here, but essentially it rearticulates discourses of “Canadian values” and “responsibility” to the Other in its attempts to critique the Canadian government on its own terms. So, for example the logic of strengthening 1325 through international efforts to “stabilize failed and fragile states” is acknowledged but not critiqued. Rather, the critique is that these efforts are too highly concentrated in the “fight against terrorism”. Thus, the report states:

For Canada the challenge is one of appropriate weighting. This is not to say that Canada should withdraw from countries such as Haiti or Afghanistan where reconstruction and stability depend on a firm commitment on the part of the UN. Rather it encourages Canada to undertake similar efforts in other regions facing the same, if not worse, humanitarian catastrophes. Such efforts would demonstrate Canada’s role in the world as one that balances humanitarian values including the protection of civilians, while delivering commitments to peace and security (9, my emphasis).

This is an interesting statement, the nature of which poses a dilemma: on the one hand, this can be read in terms of a strategic decision to articulate certain kinds of demands in a language that is both intelligible and acceptable to Foreign Affairs. On the other, it is possible to argue that the report reproduces rather than interrogates some of the neo-colonial assumptions upon which Canadian foreign policy engagements with 1325 rest, and which are certainly linked to broader global process which generate violence and insecurity along racialized and gendered geopolitical lines.

For instance, that the Canadian state should be actively engaged in the “transformation of entire societies” in accordance with the economic imperatives of “progress” and the forward march of history, are not interrogated. Rather, the argument is one that demands that neocolonial interventions are more equitably shared among supposedly anachronistic national spaces such as
Afghanistan, Burundi and the DRC.

Paradoxically, such engagements are pursued under the guise of a globalized peace as antidote to ostensibly localized sources and sites of violence. In other words, because Canadian foreign policy ignores or denies the relationality between the “West” and the “South” and between economic and corporeal forms of violence, it is always trying to fix with one policy arm, the crises contributed to with the other. Thus while it may be possible through existing policy frames to respond to violence after or even as it escalates, this paradigm is simply not able to articulate a vision of a more just world, one that seeks to erase the conditions of possibility for the kinds of violence that Canada and Canadians rightly deplore.

The GWPG – Great Lakes Report further identifies six key areas in which policy involvements have “enabled Canada to support the advancement of women.” They are as follows:

- women’s participation in peace negotiations;
- women’s participation in the electoral process;
- protection of the rights of girls and women, including from gender based violence;
- participation of women in reintegration processes;
- integration of women’s rights in the restoration of the rule of law;
- support for reconstruction and economic recovery (2).

While these points leave much to interpretation, they appear to conform to the imperatives of liberal peacebuilding – at least it is clear from these objectives that they present no serious challenge to the major assumptions which underpin such approaches. Overwhelmingly, the emphasis is on the need to incorporate women into liberal political institution building and market “reconstruction”. The notable exception to this, of course, is the third point, which stresses the need to “protect women and girls form gender based violence” (Ibid.).

Here women and girls remain gender specific victims of localized violence, perpetrated in the chaotic and uncivilized spaces of Burundi or the Democratic Republic of Congo. This complicates the racialized protector/protected West/Other dichotomy by-passing the erstwhile Congolese or Burundian male protector, while simultaneously locating the threat to Congolese or Burundian women in the “barbaric” masculinities of the “their” men. Here the policy nexus
converges around a point which creates discursive, moral and policy spaces within which to
protect ostensibly helpless Congolese/Burundian Women, trapped in the implied/imagined space
between excessively weak and excessively violent Black African masculinities. Thus the
“threats” to the physical safety of women are constructed as “cultural” (i.e. apolitical) and
disconnected from wider social and political contexts and phenomena. Additional “threats”, for
example those to social, political economic and cultural self-determination, are conspicuously
absent.

It is also curious to note the way in which this form of “private” violence, which is played out on
the bodies of women and girls is juxtaposed with (indeed situated on the page in the very middle
of) calls for “public” and globalized political and economic institutional reform. While it is not
explicitly stated, the implication is nonetheless that the establishment of a Western liberal
democratic “order” will play an important role in freeing women from gender based violence.
This logic is of course questionable, however it is significant in that it contradicts itself by
pointing to the ways in which ostensibly localized sites of violence are indeed connected to larger
political economies of violence, such as a neo-liberal world economic order.

Feminists, peace activists and academics have been arguing for some time that any notion of
“peace” must acknowledge and confront the structural and global nature of economic or material
forms of violence and deprivation as well as their relationship to “war” and related forms of
political violence. These literatures have made significant contributions, which are of continuing
importance to any dialogue that concerns itself with a discourse of peace. Richmond locates these
writings in the ‘second generation’ peacebuilding work. In terms of producing ‘consensus’ what
Richmond is gesturing towards is essentially the problem of co-option, where-by feminist
arguments are simultaneously de-politicized as they are ‘mainstreamed’ into public policy
discourse.

Currently there also exists a growing body of feminist literature, which seeks to disrupt the ways

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15 Women’s and peace movements have been theorizing/performing/practicing complex
conceptualizations of ‘peace’ and ‘security’ for decades. See, for example, Ann Denholm-Crosby (2003)
on Canada’s Voice of Women or Gwyn Kirk (1989) on the action around the decision to site 96 US
cruise missiles at Greenham Common, UK.
in which discussions of war and peace are demarcated in time and space. A recent edited volume, *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones* is exemplary in this regard (Giles and Hyndman 2004). Privileging the body, and specifically the female body, as site of violence/analysis, authors in this volume explore the various ways conventional distinctions between the spaces of “home front” and the “war front” as well as the moments of “conflict” and “post-conflict” obfuscate various social, political and economic relations that make conflict possible (5).

**GWPG and Further Research**

In this final portion of the paper I will take up one recommendation of the GPWG – Great Lakes Report in an attempt to illustrate how the critiques I have thus far articulated may be put to use in “practice.” I assume that it is possible to engage with DFAIT on these issues in such a way that is capable of challenging neo-colonial epistemologies and imagined geographies which understand violence against women in the Great Lakes Region as separate, both physically and analytically, from broader processes of economic globalization. This would at the same time open up the possibility of alternative ways of thinking about “peace” and “security”.

The GWPG report makes five recommendations to the Government of Canada in total. The fourth recommendation is as follows:

> To respond efficiently to the issue of women, peace and security it is important to rely on empirical studies. The Canadian response would be more effective if it was based on research undertaken to this end. It is recommended that the research community, such as IDRC, create a research fund devoted to the Great Lakes Region, particularly to women’s participation in peace, reconciliation and reconstruction processes (3).

It is my concern that, given the overall framing of the GPWG report, this call to research will simply reproduce the existent peacebuilding frame. At the same time however, such research may lead to new ways of confronting the issues at hand. I firmly believe that the way in which a research project is framed and the nature of the questions asked is a decisive factor determining the nature of the research “results”.

Bobby Benedicto (2005) makes the apt observation that “the close relationship of humanitarian
intervention with the broader discourse on universal human rights, combined with the challenge which it appears to pose against traditional notions of sovereignty and state interests, makes it difficult to be critical of narratives which provide political capital and support of intervention” (161). To this I would add, the relative paucity of research and writing which investigates local, community based strategies for responding to and coping with crisis, and which takes such activities and strategies seriously as effective and legitimate practices. A notable exception to this in the context of academic writing examining the “deep rooted and multiform crises” (Trefon 2005: 2) in the Great Lakes Region is a recent edited volume entitled *Reinventing Order in the Congo: How People Respond to State Failure in Kinshasa*. I will frame this portion of my argument in relation to this volume not because I am attempting to generalize the specificities of the Kinshasa experience across the region in general – on the contrary, I contend that the value of this book for my discussion here is not what it may tell us about Kinkois and Kinshasa per say, rather it is the approach to knowledge production which I wish to call attention to. In other words, the book is of particular value when read for its own specificity. For, as Benedicto argues, “work which foregrounds stories “from below” are still oftentimes dismissed as theoretically useless” (161). This practice, moreover, signifies the continued dominance of views which “subordinate specificity and particularism to the convenience of metanarratives” (Ibid.). As Trefon notes:

Kinshasa is often portrayed as a forsaken black hole, characterized by calamity, chaos, confusion and a bizarre form of social cannibalism where society is its own prey. The ostensible sense of anarchy is based on daily hardship and sacrifice…. The toll of marginalization, stratification and social exclusion has been heavy. Outbreaks of violence have reached frightening proportions (1).

Violence, chaos, social cannibalism and anarchy; these are familiar tropes in much of the discourse dealing with the “new wars” in general and with the conflicts in the Great Lakes in particular. Yet, Trefon argues, “this “heart of darkness” mode of representation needs some serious critical scrutiny. Despite outrageous problems Kinshasa… is also a fascinating and fantastic social space…. It is a city of paradox, contrast and contradiction where new and remarkable patterns of stability, organization and quest for well being have emerged” (Ibid.). This observation is made possible by asking a fundamentally different set of questions, based on different kinds of assumptions than the bourgeoning development/security orthodoxy allows.
The major point to take from this is that in looking in this way, alternative spaces are opened up – Trefon seeks to challenge the notion that the western liberal state is the gatekeeper of order and civilization. To be sure material and conditions in Kinshasa and in the Great Lakes Region more generally are tremendously strained. However to conclude that this necessarily results from a lack of formally free markets and Western democracy is presumptuous indeed. It also works to obscure neocolonial interventions, both past and present.

Concluding Remarks

In Against Empire: Feminisms Racism and the West, Zillah Eisenstein (2005) argues that the West’s self-made image as the birthplace of democracy and feminism is a fiction. In fact the West itself “is as mush a fiction as it is real” (2). What are claimed as Western democracy and Western feminisms, she argues, are in fact, the result of world wide, historical contestations and resistance to slavery, colonialism and the Enlightenment understandings of the democratic subject as white, European, propertied male which they facilitated: “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 and Western feminism was never simply Western” (Ibid.). Moreover democracy, if it exists today, “exists as a promissory at the sites of resistance” (74).

Thus to deny relationality between the “West” and the “South” is not only to discursively localize sources of violence and insecurity, thereby obfuscating the connections between violence, insecurity and broader processes of economic globalization. It is also to ignore also how the “West” is itself perpetually constituted and reconstituted with respect to the Other. The Government of Canada nurtures the legitimacy of particular imagined civic and political solutions which understand violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations as separate and distinct from economic considerations of material wellbeing, and the spaces in which this wellbeing does or does not exist. This process is marked by irresolvable internal contradiction, insofar as both the narratives of “women, peace and security” and the imagined geographies which make them possible in Canadian foreign policy, are constructed around an interventionist relationality with the other, at the same time as they seek to deny that this is so.
Bibliography


Beyond the “Empty Centre”: On the Contemporary Japanese Emperor System and the Cultural Politics of Gender

Naoko Ikeda

The Japanese Emperor System and the Post-War debate

My paper examines the contemporary mode of power of the Japanese Emperor system (天皇制Ten’no Seido) by using a feminist analysis of gender. I engage the debate over the meanings of the Emperor in post-war Japanese democratization processes, focusing on how the notion of power of the Emperor has been interpreted and situated in different theoretical approaches in that controversy. My goal is to offer a much more complex view of Japanese imperialism and nationalism by foregrounding a feminist critique of power and culture. My central argument is that the conceptualization of the Emperor in the Controversy commonly fails to address the ways in which the Emperor has been engaging with specifically gendered processes of the cultural production of domestic ideology and the patriarchal family. In order to develop this analysis, my paper attempts to see some women’s negotiations with the dominant image of the Emperor, with a focus on a group of Japanese women living in the town of Hikami-cho, located in the Hyogo prefecture of mainland Japan. Through this observation, the paper examines how these women make sense of their relationships to nation and patriarchy, thereby complicating the traditional understanding of the Emperor system.

The Emperor System: ‘Ten’no’ in Post-War Japan

Since the end of the Second World War, the public definition of the Emperor (天皇Ten’no) has been a highly controversial subject. The Emperor, or the Heavenly Emperor of Japan’s nation, has long been represented as the symbol of the nation’s coherent origin and ethnic superiority over non-Japanese people (Jansen 2000; Oguma 2002). During the Second World War, Emperor Hirohito was commander-in-chief of the Imperial Japanese Military (日本帝国軍) and led the nation-wide mobilization for the war. The Emperor stood as the spiritual and military leader of the nation, and under his ruling, the nation was consolidated into one family and the population's dedication to the war was encouraged as a form of loyalty to the Father/Emperor (Hayakawa 1998: Kano 2005; Muta 2006).

The defeat of the country in 1945 and the subsequent occupation by the General Headquarter of the US military in Japan (GHQ) effected significant challenges to the wartime definition of the Emperor. For the idea that the nation was ruled by the naturally superior and authoritative leader radically contradicted the principles of “democracy” and “pacifism,” which were outlined by both the GHQ and the post-war Japanese government.

17 I will refer to this debate as “the Controversy.”
In the eyes of the GHQ it was crucial to re-define the meaning of the Emperor away from Japanese nationalism. In 1946, the GHQ made an official announcement that the Emperor was not responsible for the crimes committed by the nation during the wartime, though individual military executives were held accountable. The reason for this was the alleged lack of proof indicating the relationship between the Emperor and the political decision-making processes of the Japanese state during the war. Within the same year, the Emperor Showa publicly declared that he was not divine but an ordinary human being. Subsequently, the GHQ established the new role of the postwar Emperor as a ‘Symbolic Emperor (象徴天皇 Shocho Ten’no)’ (Nakamura 1992).

This new “The Symbolic Emperor System,” articulated in the new Japanese Constitution (新日本国憲法), is based on the idea that the Emperor no longer plays any role in the decision-making process of the new liberal state. The Emperor’s new role was limited to conducting cultural events and ritual practices contingent on the approval by the democratically elected Cabinet (Yokota 1990). In short, the Emperor became “merely symbolic,” though he was constitutionally regarded as “Head of State” (ibid.).

This shift in the role and meaning of the Empire led to the “Post-War Emperor Controversy” (戦後天皇論争), a large public dispute over the “correct” interpretation of the “postwar” Emperor system (Titus 1980; Otsuka 1988; Akasaka & Inomata 1989; Koschmann 1996). The Post-War Emperor Controversy has been constituted by a wide range of intellectual approaches (Karatani 1991: 206-9) and was not limited to scholarly debates, but has been openly discussed in parliament as well as the national and international media (VAWW-NET Japan). Critics have tended to refer to the Emperor’s loss of political power as a basis of the decline of the nation, which is now “haunted by the loss of the national identity” (Ivy 1995). Drawing on the argument of Roland Barthes, the idea that the Emperor is now practically an “empty center” (Inose 1986: 11) became the dominant perspective in academic interpretations of the postwar Emperor.

**Postwar Emperor Controversy: Absolute Emperor and Humanist Emperor**

Generally, two main camps can be identified in the Controversy: the Absolute Emperor thought and the Anti-

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18 Okuda and Hirai provide a very inclusive and concrete historical record of the post-war events regarding the status of the Japanese Emperor, American GHQ, and the negotiations between Japan and the US, particularly focusing on their implications for women’s sexualities. Their study (2007) describes most critically the significance of the transition of Japanese imperialism under the GHQ from a feminist perspective (See Okuda, Hayakawa, and Hirai et al 2007).
19 Note that increasing media attention to the Japanese Emperor system has been largely due to the attempts by a coalition of women’s non-governmental organizations and social movements to hold the Japanese state accountable for the war crimes committed against women in the name of “military sexual slavery”. See the Violence Against Women Network Japan.
20 Inose and many other post-war Japanese critics of the Emperor system have adopted Roland Barthes’s concept of “empty center” in their reading of Japanese symbolic space and mentality as the “final and a priori interpretive principle for understanding the emperor system” (Fujitani: 1992, 826).
Emperor thought. The Absolute Emperor theory supports the perspective whereas the Emperor should be given his “traditional” authority and power. This view is mainly initiated by conservative scholars, including historians and philosophers who established the Association of the New History Textbook (新しい歴史教科書を作る会). The Association, which is committed to publishing and normalizing their extremely patriotic and ethnocentric textbook for mandatory high school education, demands the revival of the Emperor’s transcendental status as a key to recover the nation. They argue that Japan’s defeat in the war and American cultural invasion, widely understood as part of the postwar democratization, are at the root of the destruction of the traditional Japanese Emperor system (Nishio 2000: 7). In their view, the loss of the Emperor has caused the post-war rise in social ills, such as juvenile crime (Fukuyama 1995: 26-7). The Association claims that it is fundamental to the nation’s moral and political progress to preserve the Emperor as sacred, transcendental and essential (Nishio 2000: 7).

Fiercely opposed to the conservative restoration plan is the anti-nationalist standpoint. Unlike the conservative view that demands the renewal of the Emperor’s spiritual authority, many anti-nationalist and anti-war critics fear that the reinstitution of the Emperor might return the nation to the wartime militarism and nationalism (See Amano 2001).

Importantly, unlike the conservatives who tend to emphasize the “spiritual” nature of the Emperor’s power, many of the anti-nationalists critics argue that the Emperor’s power is not spiritual but highly political and concrete. They emphasize that during the previous wars the Emperor has been a distinctively political individual with clear visions and ambitions for the diplomatic and international relations of the country, and thus was responsible for those decisions that affected the country’s history (See Oe 1959; Amano 2001). In this view, which seeks to render visible the Emperor’s human agency, the Emperor must thus not be given any further power because he would abuse of these rights.

In sum, while the conservative interpretation of the Emperor as a “sacred symbol” perpetuates a view that the post-war Emperor is divine and that the state should recognize his authority over spiritual matters, anti-nationalist forces conceptualize the Emperor as a human subject that should be prohibited from entering the nation’s policy-making processes. This dispute, referred to as the Postwar Emperor Controversy, has been a dynamic part of Japanese intellectual and political struggles over the meaning of the “postwar” nation and democracy.

Re-conceptualizing Power and Culture

There is a critical intervention into this dispute, particularly questioning the dominant ontological assumptions about the Emperor taken for granted by both of the two main camps in this Controversy. In his edited collection Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan, Takashi Fujitani critiques that the conventional
approaches to the Emperor in the postwar disputes tend not to clarify that the Emperor’s system is indeed a *cultural* process productive of power and ruling discourses. Fujitani focuses on “the symbolic politics” (記号の政治) of the Emperor through which various rites, signs, customs, and practices are invented, and dominant cultural meanings of power, especially modernity, are constructed and circulated (Fujitani, cited by Snodgrass 1997: 155). Through his interdisciplinary approach to questions of history and geography, Fujitani suggests that the Emperor system has had an “ethnographic history,” which has been populated by the actual individuals who participated in the cultural constructions of landscapes, rituals, creations of festivals, symbolic heroes, and refurbishing shrines. In his view, those imperial events and symbols are actually interpreted and represented as “politically significant national rituals” (Fujitani 1996:159), and were critical to post-war nation-building in Japan (ibid.).

Importantly, Fujitani’s study highlights a significant conceptual blind spot: While conservatives and anti-nationalist critics disagree over the future rule and power of the Emperor, underpinning both arguments is a notion of power as an external object *in isolation from* cultural space and its transitional historicity. Therefore, by assuming that the Emperor’s power has been completely punctuated at the end of the war, both camps render the post-war Emperor system into an apolitical and timeless *concept*.

Moreover, as Fujitani shows, both approaches in the Controversy demonstrate a problematic separation between politics of imperialism and nation-making on the one hand, and the politics of culture, on the other hand. For example, while ultra-conservative scholars calling for the revival of the sacred Emperor believe that without the Emperor the nation has lost its sovereignty and chauvinism, scholars critical of such imperialist narratives share the common viewpoint that the Emperor is the sole actor of aggressive nationalist politics. In other words, while their political platforms are drastically different from one another, their political narratives are still operating under the similar premise that the Emperor is the most central actor in imperialist postwar nation-building and the politicization of people according to a chauvinistic and militaristic agenda. Such a view tends to marginalize other analytical possibilities of looking at the politics of Japanese nationalism and imperial politics of social control, continuously re-centering the Emperor as political subject and leaving unexamined how social categories, such as class and national identity have been intervening into, as much as intervened by, the cultural construction of the imperial imaginary of the Japanese nation.

**Gender Analysis: Where are the “Women”?**

While Fujitani’s critique has more successfully historicized the Emperor as a dynamic “process,” rather than an static authority, his approach nevertheless disregards some significant aspects of *gendered* differences surrounding the Emperor system. Although he attempts to focus on “individuals” (個人) who participated in the maintenance of the culture of the Emperor, Fujitani’s major subjects are exclusively the ruling elite (支配階級).
male politicians, and “the imperial household” (宮内庁), including the Royal family (皇室) (Fujitani 1996). His and most historians’ works hardly include any serious analysis of subjects who are gendered as women (except for women within the Royal family lineage) as part of the cultural process of Imperialism. It seems, in short, that in Fujitani’s and other mainstream works, “women” have not been considered to constitute an important subject of inquiry.

Feminist scholars have contested the absence of women in his/tory as being by no means natural or self-evident. Rather, the disciplinary invisibility of women is a structural problem that is based on, and sustains, the power relations which contribute to and justify the unequal dynamics of gendered social relations and masculinist paradigms of knowledge (Smith 1990; Harding 1991; Enloe 2000). From a feminist view on the social constructedness of gender, thus, it is an extremely political question to ask what specific ideas about gender and gender relations are constructed, and/or, marginalized in a certain context, in order to examine how dominant modes of power have been created and changed (See Scott 1989; Connell 1987).

In the case of the Emperor system in Japan, too, there has been an increase in feminist critiques of conventional historiography as being based solely on masculine perspectives. Much of these feminist works attempt to rewrite the ways in which women have been so central to the Emperor system, and the ways in which the Emperor system has always regulated, pressured, and gendered them.

One of the prominent contributions made by feminist historical work is the critique that the Emperor system has been productive of the systematic sexual exploitation of Asian women, Okinawan women, and some Japanese women as “comfort women” (慰安婦Ianfu). Soh argues that the Emperor system is fundamentally based on the gendered ideology that constructs Japanese men as children of the Emperor who must die for Him, and which demands of “good” Japanese women to support them as mothers and or wives (Soh 2000: 61). This construction of normative Japanese gender relations was intertwined with the dichotomy between Japanese women’s respectable femininity and non-Japanese women as Other. This racial discourse of femininities justified the large-scale institutionalization of sexual/ized slavery, deploying the bodies of non-Japanese women, including Okinawan women, as “imperial gifts” for Japanese soldiers (ibid.). Ogoshi argues that this particular role of the Emperor has survived until the contemporary period, and even intensified under the globalized trafficking of Asian women’s bodies into Japanese sex industries, including base prostitution in Okinawa (Ogoshi 2005: 46).21

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21 Since they deem the Emperor responsible for past war crimes, many women survivors of Japan’s military sexual slavery have protested against the succession of the Emperor system (Ogoshi, 2005: 46-47).
These feminist interventions have certainly opened up many new questions regarding the centrality of women in processes of imperialism and nationalism. Their analytical category of gender certainly allows us to think of various ways in which women have participated in and interpreted the imperial projects of the Emperor.

**A Case study: Women as Historical Subjects**

While dominant understandings of the Emperor system in the post-war Controversy have often been inattentive to gender, disregarding women as socially important agents, feminist inquiries of the Emperor system have developed research methods to investigate how women’s gender specific experiences and interpretations have developed some unique understandings of the power relations underpinning the Emperor system. The works conducted by Mikiyo Kano (1887; 1994), Yuko Suzuki (2002), and Okinawan historian Shigeko Urasaki (1992) incorporate diverse methodological frameworks into their inquiry of the Emperor system, including ethnographic, participant observatory, narrative analysis, and anti-oppressive feminist research ethics. Contrary to conventional historians of Japanese Emperor system, their works also interrogate the relationships between a researcher’s positionalities (as Japanese women) and the research subject (nationalism). In the following I will address a specific case study which I have conducted by incorporating aspects of the methodological framework shared by those feminist historians, and I will discuss how such a feminist ‘method’ of research on the Emperor raises new understandings of power and culture.

**The Emperor through the lenses of working mothers**

The study I conducted from June 2005- August 2006 examines how the Emperor system produces specific domestic ideologies in women’s lives. I interviewed forty Japanese women living in the town of Hikami-cho (氷上町), Tamba-City (丹波市), in Hyogo prefecture (兵庫県) on the East side of mainland Japan.

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22 These feminist historians and researchers commonly address the intricate links between women’s gendered roles as mothers/daughters and Japanese imperialism. While they highly value the stories and testimonies of women in their analysis of imperial war politics, they do so not only empowering women’s voices, but also historicize Japanese feminists’ and women’s complicity with Japanese war and nationalist policies.

23 Although the official interview period was punctuated between June 2005 and August 2006, I note that my relationship with the women I have interviewed precede the actual interviews and continue today. Because my research explores the Emperor system in everyday contexts, I had to spend a lot of time observing how the concept of the Emperor was used by these women. For instance we sometimes watched TV shows featuring the Royal family together, as many women use this occasion to openly discuss and criticize the Emperor. Again, as I explain in more depth below, through my interviews I came to realize that it was rare for many women to openly express an opinion on the Emperor system. This is why my interviews were not clear-cut in terms of time and place.

24 I chose this town for my research for a number of practical and political concerns. First, as a feminist researcher I needed to have already familiarized myself with the location and specific culture of the site and people I am engaging with. The town where I conducted my interviews has been my hometown, and I could spend a lot of time with the women I interviewed. Another reason why I chose this town is that Hikami-cho has been undergoing extensive social and economic changes due to urbanization and populations changes, but these transformations have remained largely unexplored, in particular the question how “ordinary” people negotiate and/or challenge them. I wish to demonstrate that the dichotomized view between the national center (such as Tokyo) and the margins is fundamentally inadequate to understand how the class, gender, and sexual formations of families and public spaces are constituted through the imperial order. It is my intent, thus,
cho consists of approximately 19,000 inhabitants. It once belonged to Hikami-gun; however in 2004 it was abolished as the six towns including Hikami-cho were consolidated into Tamba-city. Although Hikami-cho has traditionally been dependent on the Primary Sector (第一産業: Daiichi Sangyo), such as farming, forestry, and fishing, processes of urbanization that started in the early 2000s, have resulted in a fundamental transformation of the economic base of the town which now depends primarily on the Tertiary Sector (第三産業), such as services and transportation (Tamba City 2008). Today, Hikami-cho is one of the regions in the Hyogo prefecture that is most fatally affected by the exodus of workers to more urban areas and the lack of non-precarious full-time employment for those that decide to stay.

Women’s Stories: The Emperor in the Everyday Realities

The women I approached for my research are all residents of Hikami-cho. The majority work in the town’s biggest construction company K. Others work as part-time cashiers in either the big franchised super market or smaller retail stores. Two women work as care workers for the elderly. I met the women through my mother who works as a secretary in the company K. Upon her introduction, I was able to meet with her female colleagues and friends, who then referred me to their friends and relatives. Most of the women were in their 50s, but some were in their 30s and 40s. Many of these women were self-referentially “Kengyo-Shufu” 兼業主婦: Wives with dual

to conduct a serious study on cities such as Hikami-cho, especially women’s lives within the city, to develop a substantive analysis of the political economic history of Japanese nation-building.
labors) (Ikeda, 2005-2006). All of them were married, and many of their husbands work outside the village, and accordingly those women seem to have a very female-oriented community life.  

The interview sessions were conducted in a very casual setting, as my primary concern was to know how the Emperor system was talked about in those women’s daily lives. I wanted to know how the Emperor system was perceived by the women, and what meanings they ascribed to it. Most of the interviews were held in the dining room of my own home, the company’s lunchroom during lunchtime, or in the town’s community centre. Sometimes I shared time with some of the interviewed women while we were in the local hot spring, where the women gathered and chatted with me. Although the conversations in these extremely informal settings were not part of my data analysis, I acknowledge that my choice of having more informal relationships with the participants was based on my desire to generate a less hierarchal setting between us. I also chose to be open about my anti-nationalist view and my concomitant negative view of the Emperor system in the attempt to structure the research not as a simple participant observation, but a dialogical process between researcher and participants.

My most important finding is that many women openly showed their clear discomfort with my negative attitude towards the Emperor system. When my words sounded “too critical” of the Emperor system, many women defended the Emperor system. They did so, not because the Emperor was a sacred authority for them, but because they felt that the “the Emperor is just like us” (Ikeda, June 2005). As one of the women put it: “I pity the Emperor because people try to see him like a god (Kamisama), but he is actually an ordinary Ojii-chan (grandpa)” (Ikeda June 2005)

Through my long-term relationship with the interviewees, I also found that it was the Princess Masako that many of those interviewed women seemed to be interested in commenting on. From the conversations with the participants, I came to learn that the three most popular women’s magazines, Josei Jishin (女性自身: Women’s Selves), Josei Seven (女性セブン: Women Seven), and Josei Gendai (女性現代: Women Today), were featuring stories about the Princess, especially focusing on her fashion, her maternal life, and her personal dilemma in

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25 In fact, many of the women I interviewed told me that during daytime the town became a “women’s world” (Ikeda July 2006). They explained that most men commute to Osaka, Kobe, and Kyoto (major cities) for work and therefore the town is emptied with “only” women and children left behind. My assumption is that this feminized time of the town made it very easy for me to conduct my interviews with these women, and have them actively participate in the conversations, without feeling that their talk might be interrupted by men.

26 A key implication of feminist methodologies is to take seriously women’s way of talking and thinking. Feminist historians have challenged the low value attached to oral history. For example, Anderson et al. argue: “Oral history is a basic tool in our efforts to incorporate the previously overlooked lives, activities, and feelings of women into our understanding of the past and of the present…interviews with women can explore private realms such as reproduction, child-rearing, or sexuality to tell us what women actually did instead of what experts thought they did or should have done” (104).
their monthly issues. Mrs. Onishi told me that those magazines are better than the official TV program sponsored by NHK (Japan’s National Broadcasting), because the magazines “show more details about the Princess only, rather than the Royal Family as a whole” (Ikeda, July 2005).

Drawing on the extensive media coverage of the imperial family, many of the women I interviewed agreed that they felt very sympathetic for the Princess Masako (皇太子妃雅子). They perceived her “just like us,” the “ordinary” Japanese housewives, who had to be both good mothers and good wives (Ikeda 2005). One woman told me that she identified with the Princess due to the latter’s “ordinary class” background - a feeling of identification she did not share towards the former Princess Michiko (美智子妃殿下), who came to the Royal family from Kazoku (華族), an aristocratic family (Ikeda 2005).

What is most interesting is that those women expressed their sympathy for Masako precisely because Masako gives them a sense of “upward mobility” in a rigid class society. Indeed, the media has stressed over and over that the marriage between the Prince (皇太子) and Masako was an unforgettable event, because Masako was not from the same aristocratic class background, but belonged to “our class.” Here, it is clear that the media representation of the Princess Masako as “just like us” succeeds in creating the very particular image of a “class-less Japan”: that is, the contemporary Japanese society is devoid of an economic hierarchy, though in reality the existence of the Royal family itself represents this hierarchy.

This point is interesting as it shows how some women’s affinity with Masako works as a mediator in the contemporary social context in the current Japanese society, where an expanded military budget and neoliberal economic restructuring has deepened the “hierarchy society” (格差社会) while the media and the government continuously bombard us with the significance of the family unity as a survival technique under the “economic crisis” (経済危機). In this particular context of intensified societal anxiety about the widening gap between middle class and working class, the women’s identification with Princess Masako and their view of Masako as representing an egalitarian family relationship seems to help them negotiate the pressured family ideology. Adopting the more appealing narrative that Masako’s success story demonstrates that it is possible to overcome these challenges and to live one’s family life as quasi-egalitarian brides/wives/mothers.

27 Suzuki Yuko argues that representations of the Princess Masako were part of a concerted corporate media campaign to manufacture public support for the Royal family. In 1959 when Princess Michiko married Masako’s father-in-law, the media represented her as the “true womanhood” in the “Symbolic Emperor system” (Suzuki 2002: 31-2). However, in 1993, when princess Masako got married, the media represented her as the “princess of the people,” emphasizing that Masako “belonged to the ordinary class” (Suzuki 2002: 32). Suzuki argues that this representation of Masako as a commoner corresponded to the period of transformation of the Emperor system from the “Symbolic Emperor (象徴天皇)” to “People’s Emperor (大衆天皇)”. Thus, as Suzuki argues, it was the national strategy to construct the “ordinary-ness” of Masako for creating and legitimating a new discourse of the Emperor system (ibid.).
28 See the discussions by Oyama (1995).
Another interesting thing is that many interviewed women showed ambivalent feelings toward Masako: that is, their “intimacy” with, on the one hand, and “denial” of patriarchal domestic duties, on the other. Reflecting the recent media coverage on the Princess’ alleged difficulties in coping with the Royal family’s life style, Mrs. Neki told me that the relationship between the Prince and the Princess could not be understood unless one was married. Mrs. Neki emphasized that the Princess’s hardship was exactly what “we are going through,” and, in reference to my unmarried status, “You don’t even know how it is” (Ikeda July 2005). I was then told “that is why I don’t like you to talk about them [the Royal family] like that” (ibid.). When I asked, “But don’t you think the Princess is getting too much pressure to have a baby from the Family and society?” many of the interviewed women agreed with me (ibid.). Indeed the women in Mrs. Meki’s friends’ circle told me that they felt hurt to see people (the media) all “gossiping” about the Princess’s fertility (Ikeda 2005). In one woman’s words, “Why do strangers have to know about a woman’s personal thing?” (ibid.). Nevertheless, they emphasized that the Princess was still a “blessed woman” (Ikeda 2005), because unlike the past, Princess Masako is now supported by her understanding husband, and has very open-minded family members.

Interestingly there is an obvious contradiction, or an attempt to mediate the contradictions. On the one hand, the women I interviewed acknowledge that they feel sorry for the Princess who is oppressed by a patriarchal family structure. As women, they sympathize with the Princess who endures the pressure to reproduce and follow the gendered role imposed by that patriarchal family structure. In their comments, the Princess is interpreted as symbolizing “ordinary” Japanese women’s gender identity and their own struggle to be a “proper mother.” Thus these women are communicating the societal pressure and dilemma, which they confront in their daily lives, via the represented image of the Princess. The Royal family is, in other words, a public as well as sub-cultural medium, which allows women to articulate the continuity of patriarchal constructions of femininity, which otherwise they might not express because this subject is traditionally considered “domestic” and “trivial.”

However, on the other hand the interviewed women also emphasized that the Princess must truly enjoy her life as a wife and mother, because she has the support of an understanding, “generous” husband (Prince), and she has her “real family” (Ikeda, August 2005). Many women admitted that the Royal family was an extremely demanding place for women (referring to the Princess but many women stressed their own identifications with her), yet in their view the Princess and the Prince are developing a very stable, equal, and ordinary kind of “home.” In other words, through the Royal family, those women are accommodating hetero-normative patriarchal family relations as a positive template for identifying themselves with domestic femininities.

These two contradictory images tell us yet again an old narrative about domesticated femininity: A Princess confronts the hardship regarding the traditional gender role imposed by the patriarchal family system just as
bravely as “ordinary housewives” do. As a consequence, these women will be rewarded like the Princess – as long as both are dedicated wives/mothers. In other words, the contemporary Emperor system helps re-create normative ideas about the “Japanese family” and women’s role and identity in it. In short, the Emperor system reinforces a re-organization of respectable, middle-class (or even class-less) family life. Of course, this is nothing new.

During the previous wars, the Emperor system was at the heart of the state’s mobilization of women inside the domestic/ated sphere. As Mari Yamamoto notes, during World War II, representing the Emperor as the nation’s sacred Father/God and the people as His subjects, constituted a prime war strategy (Yamamoto 2006: 182). According to this discourse, women’s duty was to reproduce and nurture His subjects, to become “Ethical Mothers” who “don’t complain, accept the entire domestic labors, strongly commit to the care of men” and support the home, nation, and its future (Yamamoto 2006: 182).

While the militarized domestication of women’s love and work has been part of the previous Emperor system, it is also important to note that today the Emperor system is highly “humanized” through an ordinary and familiar face of “woman,” which is very different from the time of WWII when the Emperor was highly masculinized and overtly politicized. As many participants emphasized, the Emperor is no longer a God, but a figure which resembles an “ordinary” grandpa that is generous and humane enough to welcome even Masako, who is “just like us” (Ikeda, July 2005). Significantly, the image of the Emperor as a less authoritative parent seems to allow many women to both de-politicize the Emperor and speak less negatively about their own marriage and domestic lives. In short, the current Emperor system is operating through, and producing very distinctive discourses of gender and gendered relations.

Interestingly this new view of the Emperor system also encourages us to explore the contextuality of imperial projects of nationalism; that is, how the Emperor system has historically depended on the mobilization of women’s everyday abilities and work to negotiate with specific local realities in which individual women are situated. In my case study of Hikami-cho, many women I interviewed mentioned the gendered effects of the recent transformation of the town towards a service economy and the concomitant decline in population. They negotiate the burden of the “double-day” of domestic duties and paid labour, and their own visions of a better life, self-determination, and happiness. In this particular social context, the humanized image of the Emperor provides a language for many women to validate some complex parts of their own gendered identities.

These observations suggest that there is no clear separation between the Emperor (the Divine Subject) and ordinary people (His Subjects). As noted above, this separation is taken for granted by both conservatives and anti-nationalists in the Post-war Controversy - both tend to individualize the Emperor as a political actor. In the
narratives of the interviewed women, the Emperor is often represented in familial terms, and there are much more spaces for their localizations, interpretations, and negotiations over what the Emperor is supposed to mean. Through this participatory domestic imperialism\(^{29}\), women are encouraged to learn what the most updated forms of femininities are, and to valorize their own domestic labor and marital status, so that they can better articulate their ambivalent feelings about a highly patriarchal social order in their city under transition. In short, those women’s stories suggest that women’s everyday practices of gendered work and emotional negotiations with patriarchy are fundamental to the production and preservation of imperial femininity.

**Research Findings and Further Questions**

My research is still leaving many question unexplored and untouched. Undeniably my research methodology is not outside of, but is deeply influenced by my own assumptions and value judgements which are implicated in the very imperial ideology of Japanese womanhood. Yet there is certainly an important finding. My study strongly contradicts the idea that the Emperor system is either just an “empty center” or an individualized actor, as many critics have put it in popular representations of the Emperor in the postwar Controversy. On the contrary, the “Emperor” is sustained by and sustains specifically gendered and nationalist discourses on Japanese identity and its moral boundaries. Moving far beyond Fujitani’s contemplation that the Emperor system is maintained by cultural practices, such as ritual ceremonies or religious events, based on the interviews I conducted it is clear that the Emperor system actually cannot be examined without also analyzing women’s concrete representational and localized activities in their everyday confrontations with patriarchal social orders.

**Conclusion: From a Mythology to the Cultural Process of Imperialism**

My paper has discussed the ways in which the Emperor system of contemporary Japan relies on and produces specific gendered ideologies and imperial family relations. As my aim is to engage with, and challenge the hegemonic postwar debate on the Emperor system, I have used a feminist analysis of gender as well as feminist research methods to more dynamically explain how current Japanese society is continuing to justify and maintain a highly imperial social order and ethno-nationalist ideas by gendering women’s lives.

My research on women in Hikami-cho suggests that the Emperor system is neither clearly a “post-war” nor an “empty centre”, unlike being defined in the conventional postwar debates. Rather, I argue that the Emperor system is a *cultural* process of changing and shaping women’s identities and social experiences in local contexts. Thus, when we dismantle a static view of the “high politics” of the Japanese Emperor system and instead put

\(^{29}\) The idea of domestic imperialism is greatly explored in the work of feminist historians such as Ann Stoler (2002) and Ann McClintock (1995). In *Imperial Leather*, for example, McClintock investigates colonial constructions of intimacy between colonizers and colonized, and complicates the process of colonization through extending her analysis into what are typically considered strictly private, domestic, and personal (intimate) spheres.
women at the centre of social analysis\textsuperscript{30}, we can see how the political legitimacy of the Japanese Emperor itself is not self-evident, but has \textit{required} continuous work, modifications, and re-constructions of specific viewpoints and actions which rely on women’s active participation. In other words, only through locally mobilizing women’s gender identities, economic activities, and family commitments, the contemporary Japanese Emperor system is promoting and further naturalizing the process of an imperial formation of the nation.

With such feminist curiosities about women’s experiences as political realities, imperialism becomes a much more concrete, contextualized, and intimate process for us, rather than an abstract figure of god or symbolism. Therefore, our on-going struggles against imperialism, and our collective search for alternative views of post-war Japanese society and peace must go beyond the static Emperor Controversy, and continue with very serious interrogations of imperialism as our own practices of gender in our most intimate spaces of everyday lives.\textsuperscript{31}

\textbf{Note}

All the words in the interview are translated by the researcher. The names of the interviewees are pseudonyms.

\textsuperscript{30} Cynthia Cockburn suggests that a feminist analysis of power not only offers a constructivist understanding of gender as a socio-political category, but it also seeks to examine the complex ways in which the categories are experienced, lived, and interpreted as “identity” or “the self” (Cockburn 2007: 7). In this framework of gender, to focus on women is not to essentialize one’s experience as some kind of universal standpoint, but to explore the complex processes in which these social categories are lived and sometimes resisted by women through diverse social and political border-crossings.

\textsuperscript{31} Note that in the last two decades, there has been a substantive increase in feminist gendered analyses of the Emperor system. In particular the Emperor’s involvement in the postwar military occupation of Okinawa by the US state has been well-researched by feminist historians whose work challenged the conventional approach to the subject (See Okuda et al 2007). As Chieko Oyama notes, these feminist works on the Emperor qualitatively differ from mainstream approaches, as many women “attempted to understand the Emperor system” through their “understanding of the oppression of the Emperor system in their everyday living space” (Oyama 1990: 157). It is my desire to further participate in the developments of these feminist analyses of imperialism and nationalism, which are growing in trans-disciplinary fields of studies today.
Bibliography


Straight Messages in Ambiguous Encounters

Chris Hendershot

While America’s most recent imperial ‘adventures’ are most readily perceived as reclamations of that, which was supposedly lost or taken on 11 September 2001, I maintain that the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan cannot only be read as demonstrations of America’s (continued) virility and potency as such imperial ‘adventures’ involve somewhat ‘ambiguous’ confrontations. By this I mean to say that because War on Terror narratives regularly (re)produce ‘terrorist bodies’ as depraved, deformed and despicable, an intertext of ‘queerness’ is thoroughly installed in the project of naming, sighting and confronting ‘terrorist bodies’ and ‘terrorism’ (Puar 2005). In this way, continued popular media and Bush Administration portrayals of ‘terrorist bodies as ‘queer bodies’ and the American Body Politic as male and masculine setup the potential for an ambiguous confrontation of (fantastical) bodies. Consequently, if an image of the American Body Politic as male, masculine and ‘straight’ is to be maintained a re-imagining of this confrontation is required.

A particular pertinent demonstration of virility and potency is through the traditionally heternormative, yet increasing homonormative (see Duggan 2002; Puar 2007), desire for progeny. It is this packaging of the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as imperially procreative adventures – ‘spreading the seed of democracy’ – that most concerns me. By foregrounding ‘procreative intentions’ I am able to better demonstrate how (and why) the American Body Politic circumvents the problematics of a queer confrontation with ‘terrorist bodies’ by producing a heterosexed engagement with a feminized Afghan Body Politic. Moreover, I believe this packaging of American imperial adventures opens an intellectual space in which creative and playful, yet serious, subversions can be pondered.

To this extent and in the spirit of Butler’s (1990) notion of subversive performativity, I now offer the script to a tragic comedy entitled The Adventures of Destiny and American Body Politic. Beyond providing a satirically critical interrogation of America’s imperially procreative intentions this piece also forces recognition of how War on Terror narratives read like a scripted tragic comedy. Protagonist suffers tragic event. Protagonist struggles to reclaim that which was lost. Protagonist experiences/finds ‘happy-ending.’ By offering a satirically critical intervention it is my intention to foreground the recognition that those feminized, queered and trans-bodies that are present in this story only appear as mirroring or reflecting-subjects that the American Body Politic requires to (re)produce itself as male, masculine, straight and thus hegemonic (Weber 1999). Rather than simply reconstitute feminized, queered and trans bodies as reflecting-subjects, The Adventures of Destiny and American Body Politic seeks to foreground the ridiculous spectacle that the narratives of the War on Terror require to continue to discipline and control gendered, sexed, raced and classed as ‘other’ bodies and subjectivities.
Having said this I do recognize that my (re)deploying of the spectacle of American imperially procreative adventures is ridden with critically significant problematics. The least of which is the potential to effectively disrupt the reconstitution of the feminized, queered and trans bodies that appear in *The Adventures of Destiny and American Body Politic* as reflecting-subjects and thus reproduce the spectacular, the stage and/or the mirror as the only legitimate space in which feminized, queered and trans bodies appear in discussions of war, imperialism and ‘terror.’ To this, I say *The Adventures of American Body Politic* is a ridiculous play of and about sex, sexuality, gender, race and violence which undertakes a critical interrogation of American imperial procreative intentions by and through irony, insinuation and entendre rather than overt and articulated contention. For as Weber writes, “Laughter defamiliarizes discourses and events for readers, giving readers license to disobey common expectations about what meanings a given text ought to generate,” (1999: 8-9). By privileging literary devices over reasoned arguments I can only hope to contribute to the generation of a subversively performative space where raced, feminized, queered and trans-bodies, subjectivities, identities and voices can assert a bodily and subjective legitimacy that is not subject to the hegemonic logics of American imperial procreative adventures.

**The Adventures of Destiny and American Body Politic**

Narrator

Our story begins with a somber looking American Body Politic, America for short, rousing Destiny from an afternoon nap.

America

(shouting)

Destiny, Destiny wake-up!

Destiny

(still dreary)

Huh, huh. Oh, hi America. Is there something wrong?

America

I’ve been outed! I’ve been shown to, you know, be lacking.

Destiny

By who?
America
(Shouting even louder)
That DAMN TERRORIST.

Destiny
(looking confused)
The terrorist, how?

Narrator
Destiny couldn’t imagine what the terrorist could have done to have troubled America this much. Especially, because America hadn’t taken Destiny off in quite sometime.

America
(nostrils flaring)
That’s neither here nor there. What matters now is that I, American Body Politic, demonstrate that I am not lacking. I need to demonstrate that I am as virile and potent as ever. I need to demonstrate that American Body Politic ...

Narrator
(interrupting)
America was prone to referring to itself in the third person.

America
...is strong, brave ... powerful!

Destiny
(stepping back and speaking timidly)
uhhh, ok, but what are you going to do?

America
What are ‘we’ going to do my friend. We are going to go after the terrorist. Hunt it down. Smoke it out of its cave. Make it pay for what it did to me!

Destiny
You do realize, America, that your encounter with the terrorist could be construed as somewhat ambiguous...

America
(looking concerned)
Ambiguous? You don’t mean to say....

Destiny
I certainly do mean to say ...

America
(shaking head, muttering)
While that’s not good, at all ... not all. What are we going to do?

Destiny
Ok. So the terrorist has reminded you that you are lacking. As such, the terrorist didn’t castrate you per se, but demonstrated to you that you have been faking it. Of course deep down you have always known that you have been faking it. Indeed faking that you have ‘it’ is not the problem. The problem is that you could not admit to yourself that you didn’t have it. However, the terrorist has forced you to confront your ‘lacking’. And that is why you have me. You now, as many times before, need me to demonstrate ... to yourself ... that you do indeed ‘have it’ or actually never lost it thereby reasserting yourself as masculine, straight, hegemonic (Weber 1999). Follow so far America?

America
(looking bewildered)
Ya, I think so...

Destiny
Nevertheless, just having ‘it’ isn’t enough, you need another body to be ‘it’ as well. To quote Butler (1990): “…to be [it] means, then to reflect the power of [it], to signify that power, to “embody” [it], to supply the site to which it penetrates, and to signify [it] through “being” its Other, its absence, its lack, the dialectical confirmation of its identity(59).” However, America the terrorist cannot be what you want the terrorist to be. The terrorist cannot be passive, receptive and reflective in the manner you need the terrorist to be. And because of this, America, any encounters with the terrorist will
carry an ambiguity regarding your status as masculine, straight, hegemonic.

America
Really? Wow!

Destiny
Is there another body that could better reflect the appearance you desire?

America
Well, the terrorist is holed-up in Afghanistan, so what about Afghan Body Politic.

Destiny
Perfect...but let’s call her Afghani!

Narrator
America listened intently as Destiny laid out the plan.

Destiny
So, America, you want to be very clear that you intend to save the women of Afghanistan by liberating Afghani women from the tyranny of the terrorist.

Narrator
Destiny explained that by using the plight of Afghani women to gain access to the terrorist, America could (re)affirm an image of the Afghan Body Politic as a ‘Woman in need of help’.

Destiny
This feminizing of Afghani will produce the necessary mirror, being, or ‘being for’ that you need to appear masculine, straight, hegemonic ... to yourself.

America
(accusatorially)
Why do you keep saying that under your breath?

Destiny
(sheepishly)
Saying what?

America
You keep finishing your sentences with “to yourself”!

Destiny
Oh you’re just being neurotic America. Not everything is about you ... Where, where were we, ah yes ...

Narrator
Destiny continued to explain that, although a feminization of Afghan Body Politic would overcome the ambiguity of America’s encounters with the terrorist, questions would soon emerge regarding America’s commitment to Afghani.

Destiny
Hmmm, how can you demonstrate that you are committed to your relationship with Afghani?

Narrator
And then it struck Destiny.

Destiny
You want to procreate with Afghani!

America
(looking confused)
Why would I want to do that?

Destiny
Because what better signals that you are ready for a ‘commitment’ than wanting to procreate, to reproduce? I say nothing America, nothing is a better signal! Even better, just don’t express a desire to ‘spread your seed’, express that you want to have a democracy with Afghani. Your intention with Afghani is to ‘spread the seed of democracy’!

America
Ok, so I want to spread my seed. There is just one problem, Destiny, I’ll be using you and you are a
strap-on, an accessory. You are made of silicone so you can’t ‘spread the seed of democracy’ if you
know what I mean?

Destiny
(standing erect, speaking confidently)
What that I can’t ejaculate. That is exactly why you want me. You want to gain access to Afghani, to
the terrorist, but you don’t want any of the responsibilities of actually nurturing (a) democracy, do
you? Of course not! I offer you that power. I offer you the power of penetration without conception;
the power to fuck around consequence free! I offer you the power that comes with knowing that you
will always be able to perform.

America
Yes, yes, I know Destiny, but after a while won’t it become obvious that I have no real intention of
‗finishing’ with Afghani.

Destiny
Likely, but than we just get an-other body to be it. Besides, if you continue to wrap yourself in the
flag, as you are so fond of doing, no one will know for certain whether I’m real or not

America
(in a raised, determined voice)
Damn it you’re right Destiny. You know I just bought a new flag. The clerk at the store promised
me that these colours won’t run!

Destiny
Really?!? Wonderful!

Narrator
And with that America draped itself in the new flag. Now, you may think it socially awkward for
America to walk around draped in a flag with a 10 inch protrusion, but America could care less.
America felt ‘whole’ again, thanks to Destiny, and was about to embark an exciting adventure to far
off lands in search of the terrorist, err, I mean democracy!

Bibliography


Disciplining the Female Muslim Body: The Headscarf Ban in the French Secular Republic

Roshan A. Jahangeer

On March 15, 2004, French President Jacques Chirac passed a law on seularity to ban the display of all conspicuous religious symbols in public schools across France. The law was officially named, Loi n° 2004–228 du 15 mars 2004 (Legifrance 2004), and came into effect in September of the same year, despite vociferous protests from Muslim and other religious groups in France and around the world. Although the law applied to religious symbols from all religious groups, critics and media widely labelled it “the French Headscarf Ban,” because of the disproportionate impact it would have on Muslim schoolgirls wearing headscarves. The law itself came about as result of one of twenty-five recommendations made by the Stasi Commission, a commission charged by President Chirac to examine the application of the principle of secularism (laïcité) in the French Republic. In his report, Bernard Stasi outlines the reasoning behind the proposal for a new law to ban religious symbols in schools, and why such a law is necessary to preserve the integrity and character of the secular French republic.

A closer reading of the original text, however, yields several problematic assumptions: first, the assumption that unnamed “extremist groups” are threatening the foundations of the secular state by influencing young people to reject French values; second, the explicit assumption that young (Muslim) women are the particular targets of such groups, and are therefore in need of “rescuing” by the state and its well-meaning civil servants; and third, the conflation of secularism with “sexual equality,” a relatively recent development that has nonetheless become a “founding value” of the French Republic along with liberté, égalité and fraternité. These set of assumptions are problematic partially because they remain unchallenged and form the framework of the law in question, and because they reflect pervasive discourses that permeate French society in the current historical moment.

Using both Foucaultian and postcolonial/transnational feminist approaches to further draw out and historicize the assumptions within the text, I argue that the main object of the law against the display of

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32 I will use the term headscarf (foulard) to denote the cloth worn by some Muslim girls/women to cover their head, hair, and neck, leaving the face visible. Other terms for this item of clothing include hijab, Islamic headscarf, or veil (voile), all of which have different connotations depending on context.
religious symbols in French public schools is to discipline the uncontrollable bodies of Muslim immigrant ‘Others’ through the colonial gesture of unveiling the bodies of young Muslim women. This forced unveiling attempts to intervene into the subject formation of young Muslim women by inscribing the values and codes of French secularism onto their bodies, in order to turn them into the desirable and disciplined subjects of the French secular Republic.

I will undertake an historical contextual analysis of the Stasi Commission’s report using multiple theoretical approaches in order to demonstrate the complexity and interwovenness of the assumptions in this debate. My methodology will consist of a contextual analysis of the Stasi Commission’s main recommendation, which is to ban students from wearing all religious symbols in public schools in order to preserve the French Republic’s principle of secularism (Stasi 2003). I justify my focus on only one of the Commission’s twenty-five recommendations in light of the fact that it was the only recommendation that was passed into law by the French National Assembly on March 15, 2004 (Legifrance). I will analyse the sections of the report that speak directly to the rationale behind the banning of religious symbols, and the contemporary meaning of secularism in the French Republic. My approach will consist of a broadening of the historical context of the report, as well as situating the debate regarding young women’s bodies and the need to intervene into their subject-formation within the context of current feminist critiques. As such I will be providing many converging treatments of the issues, including a preliminary investigation into the Foucaultian concept of “docile bodies” and the technologies of discipline and regulation, and how these may be applied to the legislation that circumscribes veiled bodies. I also engage with various postcolonial and transnational feminist theorists, such as Radhika Mohanram, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Meyda Yeğenoğlu, who problematize France’s relationship with colonial Algeria, its collusion with Western (liberal) feminism, and its integration in the neoliberal global economy. As such my argument will not be limited to one specific claim; rather, I want to problematize the number of contextual complexities that make the issue of the headscarf into more than just a banal debate between Islam and secularism, as it is normally presented ahistorically in the mainstream media.

**Docility, Sexuality and the Neoliberal Subject**

Michel Foucault’s theories on the technologies used in (re)producing the docile body are useful as a framework for organizing the discursive assumptions of the Stasi report. In *A History of Sexuality* (1978), Foucault describes the utility of discipline in the process of governing that developed over the course of the eighteenth century in France that considered both the population and the human body itself as the main sites
of government intervention. Government intervention required the development of specific techniques for managing and administering populations, such that there was an explosion of diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and control of populations, which marked the appearance of what Foucault has termed, “bio-power” (1978: 140). Both the disciplining of the body and the regulation of populations were two poles around which this regime of bio-power developed, whereby the human became an object to be manipulated and controlled—an object to be inserted into the machinery of capitalism. As Foucault argues,

This bio-power was, without question, an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population into the economic processes. But this was not all it required; it also needed the growth of both these factors, their reinforcement as well as their availability and docility…(1978: 140-41)

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault elaborates on the forms of disciplines that produce this docility: “A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved” (1977/1995: 136). A body becomes docile when subjected to “disciplines,” which consists of a whole set of instruments, techniques, and procedures deployed to increase each individual’s mastery over his (or her) own body. It was necessary for individuals to be subjected to such forms of disciplines, which were constituted through a whole set of regulations that were carried out by the army, the school, and the hospital, as obedience was necessary for the proper functioning of the state, the economy, and its security (Foucault 1978: 102). In this respect, the maintenance and discipline of the body, and the production of docility, become central to the state and its interests, because it produces individuals who are both disciplined and supervised. Such docile bodies are desirable because they are useful and productive, and as such essential for the state’s economic growth. As such, the state has great investment in making sure that its citizens are disciplined in such a way as to further its social, political, and economic interests.

At the same time, the development of bio-power and the disciplining of the body also produced a process of self-regulation through the normalization of subject-formation. This regulation was achieved through obeying laws, laws that were concerned not with administering death but with taking control of life and distributing it around different measures of value and utility (1978: 144). For instance, such regulation had the power to “qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendour; it does not have to draw the line that separates the enemies of the sovereign from his obedient subjects; it effects distributions around the norm” (Foucault 1978: 144). This normalization, the production of a normative subject, is an important part of regulation and indeed the disciplining of the body in a regime of bio-power. The state’s interest in its population
is ultimately related to wealth and economics, as “…a large workforce and workers in work is necessary on condition that they are docile and really apply the regulations posed on them. Numbers, workers and docility, or rather large numbers of docile workers, will ensure the, as it were, effective number one needs for a good [polis, meaning state]” (Foucault 2007/1978: 344).

At the same time, sexuality has also been historically linked to this project of regulation and disciplining of the body, as human sexuality has been seen as a central technology of power. Foucault argues that sex, a crucial target of biopower, is what stands at the juncture between the body and populations, such that the mechanisms of this power are targeted to, “the body, to life, to what causes it to proliferate, to what reinforces the species, its stamina, its ability to dominate, or its capacity for being used” (1978: 147). As a result, sexuality became an object or target that was incorporated into discussions around health, progeny, race, the proliferation of the species, the vitality of the social body, and its perpetuation (1978: 147). In short, the deployment of state power, through laws, regulations, and injunctions, can be directly connected to the body and to the maintenance of populations. Therefore, the state’s interest in maintaining populations, regulating sexuality, and disciplining individual bodies into ‘docile subjects’ can ultimately be related to its economic projects.

If we apply Foucault’s analysis of the production of the docile subject to the contemporary neoliberal moment, we can begin to locate some of the interests at stake in the formation of normative citizen-subjects. France, for instance, is heavily embedded in a neoliberal global economy; as such, it presumably has interests in cultivating the types of subjects that will be useful workers in this type of economy.

Wendy Brown (2005) describes neoliberalism as a constructivist project. She writes that neoliberalism does not assume that either states or people will behave in a way that is conducive to their economic development, but rather assumes that such behaviours require political intervention and orchestration (2005: 41). Her critique foregrounds the distinct disciplinary project of neoliberalism in the context of its normative claims that affect not only institution building, policies, and discursive claims, but also subject-formation. She writes that “neoliberalism normatively constructs and interpellates individuals as entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life… [and] attempts to construct prudent subjects through policies that organize such prudence” (Brown 2005: 43).

Taking Brown’s analysis into account, one notes a similarity between her description of the prudent neoliberal subject and the Foucaultian notion of ‘docile bodies.’ I locate my analyses within the interstices of this framework, which incorporates a post-structuralist reading of the discourses found in the Stasi Commission, with the neoliberal project of the French state at the current historical juncture. In addition to this I also situate my reading within both postcolonial and transnational feminist debates, which historicize and dismantle the
discursive construction of “the veiled muslim woman” by linking such tropes with the political economy of the veil in the post-911 historical moment. By using a combined critical lens of Foucaultian post-structuralist and postcolonial/transnational feminist theories to “read against the grain” of the Stasi Commission’s Report, I hope to interrogate its assumptions and problematize the colonial logic behind its recommendation to ban the display of “conspicuous” religious symbols in public schools.

**Headscarves, Secularism and Neoliberal Investments**

The headscarf debate first gained national prominence during the 1989 *l’affaire du foulard*, when three girls “of North African origin” were suspended from their public schools for refusing to remove their headscarves. The resulting fracas reached hysteric proportions, with everyone from the media, intellectuals and politicians weighing in and teachers threatening to go on strike. The case went to court, and later that year the *Conseil d’État*, France’s highest court, ruled that wearing the headscarf (and religious symbols in general) was permissible as long as it did not lead to acts of “pressure, provocation, proselytism, or propaganda” in regards to other students, or interfere with safety or teaching activities (Thomas 2006: 243). It also ruled that the court could not produce judgements on such matters, and that as result, it would be left to the school heads to decide on a case-by-case basis. This case-by-case approach led to the expulsions of four students in 1994, but the decisions were later overruled by the *Conseil d’État*, France’s highest juridical court (Thomas 2006: 239). The context for the current law arose when in 2003, Nicolas Sarkozy, then Minister of the Interior under President Chirac, insisted that Muslim women should pose bare-headed for official identity photographs; this brought up the issue of headscarves in schools once again and a member of the Socialist party put forward a bill to the National Assembly calling for a ban on all religious signs in schools, in the name of *laïcité* (Scott 2005: 108).

Ezekiel (2006) argues that both the 1989 and 2003 incidents could be attributed to domestic factors, such as the rise of the influence of the far-right National Front (FN) party, the perceived lack and need of integration of France’s five million strong Muslim population, and the constant back and forth between groups claiming to represent the voice of French Muslims at the state level. However, several international and transnational factors may also have converged to create the particular context for the 2003 debacle, including favourable *European Court of Human Rights* rulings in regards upholding the headscarf ban in Turkey, the escalation of the Israeli-Palestine *intifada*, anxiety about France’s national identity in the face of European unification, and specifically, the American “War on Terror” (Thomas 2006: 255; Ezekiel 2006: 265; Scott 2005: 112). Ezekiel notes that when President Chirac refused to support the United States in its decision to go to war in Iraq, he opened himself to criticism from the far-right parties of being “soft on Islam”. To counter this image, and to circumvent the opposition’s criticism, Chirac opted to “fast-track” the only recommendation of the Stasi report that seemed to impact the Muslim community directly: a ban on headscarves (Ezekiel 2006: 265).
In order to properly historicize this moment of legislated unveiling, the Stasi report must be read in the context of France’s complicated history. Indeed, Secularism (laïcité) has long established roots in French history; it was first enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic in 1905, and at that time was seen to be an accommodation between the French Republic and the Catholic Church. In fact the most accurate translation for laïcité is the separation between Church and State. Although secularism is portrayed as being “universal” and “non-negotiable” in the Stasi Report and indeed in the political establishment and most media, in practice, it has been contested in numerous ways and has ended up accommodating religion, most specifically Catholicism, in a number of different districts. For instance, in Alsace-Moselle, which was a constituency of Germany before its annexation in 1918 by the French state, religion is taught in all state-funded public schools. The French state even pays the salaries of Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist and Jewish clerics, all in the name of secularism (Terray 2004: 125). This is justified on the basis of Alsace-Moselle’s “special character,” which was written off as being self-evident and unproblematic in the Stasi report (Terray 2004: 125). Other accommodations have been more foundational to the structure of the public school system itself, which continues to be dismissed on Wednesdays (to allow children to attend Catechism class) as well as retaining all of the major Christian holidays such as Christmas, Easter, etc. (Auslander 2000: 287).

Such accommodations opened the doors to critics, calling the French system “catho-laïque”, because of its accommodation of Catholicism to the exclusion of all other groups. Secularism’s religious accommodation notwithstanding, the French public school system is still considered to be a “republican sanctuary,” where republican values are taught and citizen-subjects are made. Discipline is a requirement for attending public school, because it is there that the subject-formation of future citizens takes place (Balibar 2004: 362). Essentially, the role of the public school is to carry out a neutralization process in which individuals must be detached from their primary identities, in order to be reattached to the sovereign state as abstract citizens. As Balibar notes, school “is essentially a place of transition between the space of the ‘private’ existence and the existence of ‘public’ space,” whereby it functions to transform “the private individual into the political citizen” (Balibar 2004: 359, 362). The citizen-subject, after having gone through the normalization process of the school, cannot have any kind of particularistic mark on ‘its’ body, as this decreases ‘its’ mobility and competitiveness in a global political economy of neoliberalism (Gökariksel and Mitchell 2005: 147).

Gökariksel and Mitchell (2005) argue that the discourse of secularism is used as a technology of discipline and governance in the French neoliberal order. They examine how discourses of secularism have been inextricably linked to state formation and economic development in both France and Turkey. They draw on Foucault’s contention that techniques of discipline and governance in the nineteenth century increasingly involved controlling both sexual and bodily conduct. In the contemporary moment, they argue, secularism as an ideology is increasingly used by politicians as part of a narrative of “modernity and progress,” in order to
“discipline the wayward bodies of those defined as existing outside the cultural boundaries of the nation, particularly women and migrants” (2005: 150). In this context, controlling veiling becomes linked to “the disciplinary administration of bodies” and to the “regulation of populations” in the neoliberal order (Gökariksel and Mitchell 2005: 149). This is because from the secularist point of view, religious symbols (such as the veil/headscarf), “mark religious, ethnic or cultural differences onto bodies that are supposed to be neutral, rational, equal and competent in neoliberal terms” (Gökariksel and Mitchell 2005: 150). From the neoliberal perspective, anything that deviates from the individualistic, autonomous, rational and (masculine) subjectivity required to compete effectively in the global marketplace is a liability. Thus, the subject-formation desired for bodies in a neoliberal order is one that effaces all ‘particularistic’ ties, in order to renders one’s body completely ‘neutral’; similarly, this is precisely the purpose reinforcing the prominence of secularism in French schools—to create non-particularistic citizens who interact freely and “equally” in the public (and potentially global) sphere.

However, it is only the ideal citizen-subject that is constructed in terms of the liberal virtues of autonomy and individualism —essentially ‘unmarked’ by gender, class, race, ethnicity, religion, etc. In contrast, France’s racialized “immigrant” population, many of whom live since at least two generations in the surrounding outskirts (banlieus or cités) of Paris, are marked and stigmatized by all of the above categories. While the Stasi report briefly addresses the conditions of those living in these districts, it proposes no concrete solutions to deal with any of the inequalities faced by these populations, save for the vaguely hopeful recommendation to “put in place an authority to fight against discrimination” (Stasi 2003: 67). There is no elaboration on how the discourses on secularism interact within a neoliberal framework to (re)produce racialized and sexualized bodies, who then need to be disciplined and made docile through legislation.

As Brown notes, neoliberalism constructs individuals as “rational, calculating creatures whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for ‘self-care’—the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions” (2005: 42). Anyone who does not fit into this mould is comparatively ‘marked’, such that they can be blamed for taking on “pre-modern (or anti-modern) subject position[s]” that “retard state formation, economic development and individual autonomy for women” (Gökariksel and Mitchell 2005: 150). The production of certain bodies as “marked” is itself a reflection of the neoliberal imperative to take advantage of such “markedness” in order to provide sources of cheap labour for the state. Such a characterization allows the state to deflect the debate away from the social and economic issues that retard state development, while allowing them to continue to blame the racialized and sexualized bodies of “immigrants” for not being able to “integrate” properly into society.
French Colonial Fantasies and the Algerian Woman

The Stasi Commission’s use of the word *voile* (veil) instead of *foulard* (headscarf) is one that must be examined in the context of French Colonial history, especially in the context of its war against Algeria (1954-62). For instance, the ‘semantic confusion’ that resulted in the media over the ‘correct’ usage of these terms during the 1989 ‘foulard affair’ resulted in huge debates about the connotations of using different terms. For instance, the Socialist party was torn between using the term *foulard* and *voile*, and finally settled on *voile* in defence of orthodox *laïcité* (MacMaster and Lewis 1998: 131). The more conservative and right-wing media outlets, such as *Le Figaro* and *Le Quotidien*, went even further by using words such as *tchador*, *hidjeb* and *khiemar*, to capitalize on the public’s ignorance of the specific sociological reference of each term in order to achieve semantic distance and evoke an air of foreignness (Macmaster and Lewis 1998: 131-2).

The Stasi Commission’s use of the word *voile* to denote the Islamic headscarf is not without precedent, as Asad reminds us that, “what is evoked is not a headscarf (*un foulard*) but ‘the Islamic veil’ (*le voile islamique*). More than an image, the veil is an imaginary—a shrouded difference waiting to be unveiled, to be brought into the light of reason, and made indifferent” (2006: 100). In other words, the French have seen this spectre before; like president Chirac’s political gesture towards unveiling, what the Stasi Commission seems to echo with its reference to *le voile* harkens back to the residual memory of the French experience in Algeria, an history that continues to dominate France’s contemporary imaginary.

In this reading of the veil as a (political) imaginary, we come up against numerous Orientalist representations that have their roots in a palimpsestic history of French colonialism. Scott refers to the polysemy of the “veil,” which acts as an unstable signifier that allows for “a great play in fantasies of invisibility and visibility, darkness and light, blindness and full sightedness” (Scott 2005: 118). The veil is used to denote the hidden quality of a woman, as the unseen, the suspect. Scott refers to widespread representations of the veil as a “curtain” used to silence and suppress the light of reason; to signify ignorance and the violation of the body; or as a mask for those wanting to hide ulterior motives (Scott 2005: 118). The anxiety evoked by the use of the word veil lies in its multiplicity of meanings, in its polysemic character that prevents one from knowing the specific intention of its wearer. What is veiled cannot be seen, and must therefore, be interpreted as a threat—a fear that emerged during the Algerian War (MacMaster and Lewis 1998: 125). And indeed, the use of the “veil” has been documented extensively in the anti-colonial struggle of the Algerians against the French occupation. As Frantz Fanon, a participant in the Algerian anti-colonial endeavour, observed at that time:
Removed and reassumed again and again, the veil has been manipulated, transformed into a technique of camouflage, into a means of struggle… Here again, a new technique had to be learned: how to carry a rather heavy object dangerous to handle under the veil and still give the impression of having one’s hands free, that there was nothing under this haik, except a poor woman or an insignificant young girl. (Fanon 1967: 61)

As a result of her participation in the Algerian War, the covered girl or young woman comes to evoke anxiety in the French imaginary, and her veil becomes sinister and overtly political since it conceals her activities and makes her a terrorist suspect (Macmaster and Lewis 1998: 127). As MacMaster and Lewis note, even in the contemporary moment, “the veil is the signifier, just as it was in the colonial period, of an entire social, political and cultural order [of] barbarism, oppression, ‘medieval’ values, [and] fanaticism” (1998: 128). Therefore the woman who chooses to veil, who exercises her subjectivity and insists on her right to ‘hide herself’ becomes even more suspect. As Asad so succinctly put it:

[T]he idea of ‘voluntary servitude’…that young French women should themselves choose to wear the headscarf is precisely what makes them even more dangerous. This act is no longer to be seen as the consequence of family pressure but as the sign of a personal—and therefore fanatical—commitment. (Quoted in Asad 2003: 21)

This accounts for the contradictory view of the Stasi commission, which on the one hand sees Muslim women as “silent victims” who need to be “rescued” by the benevolent state, but at the same time a sign of a dangerous fundamentalist enemy who is ever encroaching on French soil.

The epistemological framework underpinning the Stasi Report links visibility and knowledge with truth and power. As Foucault has shown, one of the most important aspects of discipline is visibility, whereby acquiring knowledge and thus power over someone is achieved by rendering them completely visible at all times (Foucault 1977: 211). This is the logic behind the Panopticon, whereby a reconfiguration of the prison complex allows the prison ward to see each and every inmate, without the prisoners being able to see when they are being watched – they cannot look back at the surveilling eye. This results in a permanent state of surveillance, whereby the subject comes to internalize this power/knowledge and begins to police him/herself. Meyda Yeğenoğlu argues that the inability of European men to see the women behind their veils during colonial times in Algeria was a source of anxiety and frustration, because it was essentially an inversion of the panoptic gaze; instead of seeing and knowing the woman behind the veil, “her body was [completely] invisible to the European observer except for her eyes, the veiled woman can see without being

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33 Bentham’s Panopticon is treated in more detail in Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1977/1995).
seen” (Yeğenoğlu 1998: 43). To the European observer, this implied a loss of control and inversion of power that was difficult to reconcile; thus, as Fanon writes in *Algeria Unveiled*, “unveiling this woman is revealing her beauty; it is baring her secret, breaking her resistance, making her available for adventure. Thus the rape of the Algerian woman in the dream of a European is always preceded by a rending of the veil,” a phenomenon he refers to as “a double deflowering” (Fanon 1967: 43-45). This ‘double deflowering’ not only reflected the sexual fantasies of European men, but also their colonial desire to make the body of the Muslim woman both visible and malleable, for power can only be inscribed onto “legible and docile” bodies (Foucault 1977: 199).

**Interventions into Subject-Formation: Representing the Young Muslim Woman**

Just as the French colonizers’ desire behind the unveiling of Algerian women was to know and thus to be able to control the Algerian woman (and through her the Algerian man), unveiling young Muslim girls and women from the French suburbs is a way to both attempt to know the enemy Other and to control her subject formation—and through her that of the young and hostile immigrant youths of the cités. Asad observes that the Stasi commission’s report went beyond the purely visible voile to determine the intention of the wearer, which required locating both the “desire” and “will” of the wearer. While wearing the headscarf translated into the “will” to display Muslim identity, “desire” is differentiated between those who have the “real” desire (and hence “will”) to wear the headscarf and those who do not desire it and wear it out of pressure from parents/brothers or fundamentalist groups (Asad 2006: 97). Asad notes,

> It is worth remarking that solicitude for the “real” desires of the pupils applied only to girls who wore the headscarf. No thought appears to have been given to determining the “real” desires of girls who did not wear the headscarf…no headscarf worn means no desire to wear it. In this way, “desire” is not discovered but semiotically constructed (2006: 98).

The commission’s attempt to infer and locate the desires of young Muslim women has a striking similarity with the European wanting to know and penetrate the interiority of the Algerian woman. The commission attempts to “know” the will and desire of young Muslim women and then represents them by assuming a privileged access to their inner subjectivity. By representing the Other’s desire, however, one effaces one’s own desire to know and represent the Other. Thus by representing the veil, “the desire that represents the veil can not be represented” (Yeğenoğlu 1998: 47). The subject cannot gaze at its own desire, and thus believes it has privileged access to the others’ subjectivity. Yeğenoğlu further argues that “by rendering the veiled body perfectly visible, the colonial, observing subject assures his/her own invisible, unmarked and thereby universal position…” (Yegenoglu 1998: 111). Thus, what is achieved by the Stasi Commission’s
representation of the young Muslim women’s so-called desires, is a re-constitution of its own authority to name and represent the other, thereby reconstituting itself and its members as the ideal autonomous, individual, and unmarked secular liberal citizen-subjects.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in her famous essay “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” has argued this very point in relation to the discursive construction of the “Third World woman” as a singular, monolithic trope in much of Western feminist scholarship on the Third World. She draws attention to the textual strategies used by some feminist authors to re-present others as non-western, while self-presenting themselves as implicitly western subjects. She points out that such representations are arbitrary and discursively produced, but nonetheless reflect how power is exercised through the construction of binary oppositions. She argues, that the distinction between some Western feminist re-presentations of women in the Third world and Western feminist self-presentation is a distinction that is based on the privileging of a particular group (in this case, Western feminists) as the norm or referent in a discursively constructed analytic (1988/1997: 259).

The Stasi Report’s representation of the simple binary between those who wish to wear the headscarf and those who are coerced, demonstrates its intent to fix one particular meaning on the headscarf. As Stasi writes, “For those who wear it, the veil can have many different meanings. It can be a personal choice or on the contrary an imposition, particularly for the younger girls” (2003: 57). The Stasi report’s discursive construction of veiling as an ‘imposition,’ creates a teleological argument whose logical endpoint leads to a recommendation for a ban. As Asad argues, by fixing one meaning onto the polysemous veil, the Stasi Commission performs both a symbolic repression and a discursive displacement, such that the effect of the law is to impose the assumption that the veil is a sign — a displaceable one at that — that can be put on and removed without any consequences (Asad 2006: 100).

However, unlike the Stasi Report’s discursive representation, Yeğenoğlu argues that the veil is not necessarily a removable sign.

…[T]he veil is not outside the woman’s body…her body is not simply the inside of the veil: it is of it; “she” is constituted in (and by) the fabric-ation of the veil. Being an undecidable text-ile, the veil interweaves the woman’s skin with its threads; as the sign of fusion it stitches together the epidermis of the woman with cultural codings (Yeğenoğlu 1998: 119).

According to Yeğenoğlu, the woman’s veil is what shapes her identity and thus her embodiment. There is violence in both the imagery of “sewing on” of the veil into the woman’s skin, and in the peeling off; both
practices constitute a disciplinary violence to the body that is marked upon, inscribed, sewn on or torn off by different cultural codings. Marking the body with either culture is a violent process, but it is a violence that is deemed necessary for the disciplining of the body according to historically and culturally specific norms. The discursive violence underpinning hegemonic Western representations of “the veil” needs to be acknowledged in this context. Reina Lewis notes that disciplinary markers, such as bras, stiletto hells, corsets, and cosmetics, have similarly ‘marked’ the body of Western women in different and yet similar ways to the veil (quoted in Yeğenoğlu 1998: 116). However, by assigning to the veil the status of a removable religious sign, the Stasi commission constructs a discursive representation of the veil that obscures the inherent violence of the disciplinary act of unveiling, which is instead meant to produce the bodies of young women as ‘unmarked’ according to secular French cultural codings.

The Stasi report denies that there is any agency on the part of young Muslim women in exercising their choice in making decisions about their own bodies. Stasi writes in his introduction that “extremist groups are at work in our country to test the Republic’s resistance and to push some of the youth to reject France and its values” (Stasi 2003: 7). The report uses ominous references to “‘politico-religious activists,’ ‘extremist politico-religious tendencies’, an ‘activist minority’, ‘organized groups testing the resistance of the Republic’, ‘communalist politico-religious groups’, etc.” (Terray 2004: 122) to describe unnamed groups that are supposedly threatening the very integrity of the French Republic. These groups are never explicitly identified, but presumably refer to a group of shadowy figures working in underground ‘cells’ in the immigrant-populated cités; their victims are the girls and women of the suburbs who are either forced to veil or who take it up willingly as a sign of their own fundamentalist leanings. Stasi continues,

> *Politico-religious communitarian groups are exploiting this real social malaise to mobilize militants... These groups operate in this way in marginalized neighbourhoods by submitting the most fragile populations to constant pressure. This is the case for instance of the pressures exercised on young girls or young women in order for them to wear a specific type of clothing and follow religious precepts as interpreted by these groups, under threat of having to withdraw from social and associative life* (Stasi 2003: 46).

The Stasi Report constructs young women either mobilized as militants or as victims of coercion; there is no third option. As Radhika Mohanram notes, the woman’s body acts as the metonymic location for both race, and as a map/boundary of groups (Mohanram 1999: 60). Such cartographic referencing reflects the patriarchal gesture whereby the woman’s body is meant to act as a ground for articulating the values of the (imagined) nation. Thus, the Muslim woman’s veiled body comes to act as a map whereby fundamentalist groups can encode their violent inscriptions, while her unveiled body acts as a contesting field upon which the French nation can display the success of its secularizing and integration mission. In this context, Muslim women’s stubborn
insistence on continuing to wear the headscarf as their indisputable “right” has been seen in the media to reflect “the increasing danger of Islamic fundamentalism on French soil” (Ardinozzi 2004: 641).

This link is made ever more apparent when the female body is “conspicuously” Muslim and de-colonized. In this way, Muslim women’s agency is completely subsumed under the competing agendas of either fundamentalists or the state: there is no third space whereby young Muslim women can be seen as equal French citizens who attempt to delineate an independent hybridized Muslim identity outside of these competing conceptions of nationhood. This view denies young women their agency for making choices about their own bodies, which, as Ardizzoni notes, denies them the possibility to articulate a hybrid identity, as well as “the ability of these young women to re-invent tradition, to invest new meanings into their tradition in an attempt to come to terms with the contradictions it poses to their diasporic experiences” (2004: 643). Such a hybrid identity includes the possibility of being both French and Muslim, secular and religious, public and private, as the veiling in the Western context is increasingly articulated as an “invented tradition” (Ahmed 2005: 155).

The State as Benevolent Patriarch: The War on Terror, Docile Patriots and Feminist Collusions in Disciplining the Muslim Body

The assumption that girls’ bodies are open to intervention pervades the Stasi Report: “Pressures are put on underage young girls to force them to wear a religious sign. The familial and social environments force them to follow choices that are not theirs” (Stasi 2003: 58). Returning to Foucault’s theory that a useful body is a disciplined, docile body — one that can be re-inscribed and re-made again and again if necessary — Duits and Van Zoonen argue that it is usually young women that are often the targets of discourses having to do with the disciplining their bodies. In their study of the headscarf and “Porno-Chic” debates in France and Holland respectively, Duits and Van Zoonen found that (normative) “boys’” clothing choices (no matter how controversial or potentially ‘conspicuous,’ such as gang insignia) were almost always classified as belonging to the “political” expressions of “freedom of speech,” and therefore not subject to state intervention; on the other hand, girls’ clothing choices—regardless of whether they wore headscarves or G-Strings—were always classified as either “cultural” or “fashion” and therefore subject to state/school/parental intervention (Duits and Van Zoonen 2005: 105).

The underlying tension between these two positions reveals an assumption that male bodies are independent and enclosed, while female bodies are dependent and open to intervention (Duits and Van Zoonen 2005: 114). Thus, even though the headscarf is frequently worn by young women for explicitly “political” reasons (such as their support for the Palestinian cause, for instance) (Ahmed 2005: 153), their behaviour is nonetheless construed as being linked to tradition or male coercion and therefore amenable to assimilation, “integration,” or “emancipation.” As Duits and Van Zoonen argue, such discourses “construe girls as ‘docile bodies’ on which
power—of Islam, capitalism or ‘men’—is inscribed, and from which [thus] no independent rational contribution to the debate can be expected” (2005: 114).

Paradoxically, it is through the fixed representation of the veil/headscarf that the Stasi Report construct the state as “rescuer” that should intervene and save the oppressed young women from (Muslim) patriarchy:

*The situation experienced by girls in the cités (suburbs) is dramatic... Girls find themselves victims of a renewed movement of sexism, which translates into various pressures and verbal, psychological or physical violence. Young men force them to wear coverings and asexualized clothing, to lower their eyes in front of a man. If they do not, they are stigmatized as ‘whores’* (Stasi 2003: 46).

Stasi further claims that these young girls are subjected to various forms of violence such as sexual mutilation, polygamy, or forced marriage, especially those of Turkish, Middle Eastern, African and Pakistani origin (2004: 47). According to Stasi’s analysis, this type of behaviour is equivalent to a particular kind of religious “sexism,” and falls under a different category of laws than those dealing with violence against women. Therefore, these young women, who are the “silent majority” of the suburbs (cités), are the victims of pressure exerted in the family or community context, and as such, “[i]f these young women need to be protected, and to do so, the public authority must send strong messages to the extremist groups” (Stasi 2003: 58). But as Terray asks, how does banning the religious scarf inside schools protect girls from community and family pressure outside schools, if indeed such pressure is forthcoming? How does such a move send “strong messages” to extremist groups, which are supposedly the cause of the rampant sexual inequality that has overtaken France and threatened the very core principles of secularism? Would it not instead give them more ground to argue against the principle of secularism, and thereby recruit more young people to their cause? (Terray 2004: 127).

In the context of the current “War on Terror”, the Stasi report’s constant referral to the “‘politico-religious activists,’ ‘extremist politico-religious tendencies,’ ‘communalist politico-religious groups,’ and the equating of these communities with sexual inequality helps to reproduce these figures as ‘monsters’ or sexual deviants. Puar and Rai note that the deployment of sexuality is central to the construction of the terrorist threat, especially in the production of the heteronormative docile patriot, the ideal obedient nationalist subject in the “War on Terror”. In order to construct the terrorist, one has to rely on certain notions of sexual perversity (such as failed heterosexuality) to explain why the terrorist is the way he is. As Foucault reminds us in the context of European history, monsters and abnormals have always also been sexual deviants (1999/2003: 60-61). The Stasi Report deploys both the figures of unnamed shadow monsters and sexual deviants to signify the impotent patriarchy of the father/brother/traditional community that imposes their deviant failed heterosexuality onto their daughters/sisters by making them wear the veil. The young women,
in return, must deny their own sexuality in order to survive the “dramatic” conditions of their lives in the
ghettos. Similarly, Lewis notes that in the 19th century European imaginary, both Oriental patriarchy and the
phallic order that controlled the harem were constituted as being either “impotent,” “emasculated and de-
legitimated or at best barbarically potent” (Lewis 1996: 181). That way, Western sexuality could appear to be
the moral opposite: virile, sexually competent and unquestionably superior. By constructing representations
of the unnamed but sexually deviant “extremist forces,” the Stasi report thereby furthers the image of the
Western secular state as champion for sexual equality.

At the same time the discourse of the patriarchal and sexually inept “Arab”/”Muslim” monster reproduces the
docile subject as the woman who needs rescuing from (his) impotent and deviant sexuality. This monstrous
figure, contemporarily located in the figure of the terrorist, is again called upon to justify processes of
normalization and disciplining for the rest of the Muslim population (namely the docile women). Thus, young
women are called upon to display their allegiance to the state by subscribing to codes of patriotic republican
laïcité and removing their headscarves. As Puar and Rai argue, “nationalism is heterosexism” (2002: 127). They
draw on the example of the production of Sikh-Americans groups as good, docile citizens following 9/11 attacks
on the World Trade Centre. When several Sikhs temples were burned down or vandalized in the racist violence
following 9/11, instead of speaking out against the overt acts of racism and standing in solidarity with other
racialized Americans being attacked, Sikh groups came out with a campaign to ‘educate’ well-meaning
Americans that “we are not them” (i.e. meaning, they were not Muslim), and that the Sikh turban is not the same
as the Osama-bin-Laden turban, etc. (ibid) In this example, Sikhs groups were able to reproduce themselves as
good docile citizens by mapping their difference onto similar yet differently racialized others (Muslims). By
marking someone else as Other, they were able to reproduce themselves as the Same – a gesture Fanon refers to
as a “bleaching” (Fanon 1967: 45).

In a similar way, young Muslim women are called upon to map their difference onto others (the nameless
‘extremist’ forces) in effect to prove to the state that “we are not them” and to conform to the principles of laïcité
to become good disciplined French subjects (i.e. to become the Same). As Yeğenoğlu reminds us, “the unveiled
body is no less marked or inscribed; rather a whole battery of disciplinary techniques and practices have
produced Western women’s bodies and therefore not-to-veil needs to be seen as one among many practices of
corporeal inscriptions” (1998: 115). Therein lies the paradox of state rescue: ‘[I]n order for us to rescue you from
your oppressive conditions, you must first have to become us.’ The young Muslim girl is expected to abstract
herself from her community, traditions and identity, in order to become the unmarked Western secular subject
that is desired in the French republic. Only then will she be free (presumably) from her oppression, because only
then will she be able to practice the French values of liberté, égalité, and fraternité.
In positing the state as the “rescuer” of young (Muslim) women in need of “protection,” the Stasi report allows the state to play the role of moral feminist, while at the same time taking away young women’s right to choose what to wear. As Puar and Rai point out, in the post-9/11 War against Afghanistan, the United States took on the mantle of “global feminist” in its zeal to condemn the Taliban government for their treatment of Afghan women, aligning themselves with Western liberal feminists, while nonetheless pursuing their project of Empire (Puar and Rai 2002: 127). This phenomenon reminds strongly of the racist British colonial discourse on “white men saving brown women from brown men”, as Spivak so aptly put it (1988).

This trope of state rescue is also found in the Stasi report, where the commission and French feminists echo one another in calling for the state to intervene into the lives of young women: “[T]he Republic cannot remain deaf to these young girls’s cry of distress. School space must remain for them a place of freedom and emancipation” (Stasi 2003: 58). The Stasi commission express their desire to “emancipate” girls from the patriarchal domination of their brothers and fathers by paradoxically subjecting them to the presumably benevolent patriarchy of the state. As Scott rhetorically questions, “[Is] this women’s emancipation, or the exchange of one “father‖ for another?” (2005: 120). However, this discourse of state protection does serve a purpose, as it is only through this appeal that the state can be portrayed as being modern, progressive, and morally superior in comparison with the traditional and anti-modern subjectivities of the (Muslim) family and/or Islam in general. As Mohanty argues in the context of the discursive construction of the “Third World Woman” trope,

Universal images of the Third World woman (the veiled woman, chaste virgin, etc.), images constructed from adding the “Third World difference” to “sexual difference,” are predicated upon (and hence obviously bring into sharper focus) assumptions about Western women as secular, liberated, and having control over their own lives….Without the “Third World woman,” the particular self-presentation of Western women mentioned above would be problematical….the one enables and sustains the other (1988/1997: 273-74).

The collusion of the state with Western (liberal) feminists’ rhetoric co-implicates both the state and French feminists. Likewise, the discourse that equates secularism with “sexual equality” also implies state co-option of feminist discourses. In addition to describing laïcité as being based on the three indivisible values of “freedom of conscience, equality in the right of spiritual and religious choices, neutrality of the political authority,” (Stasi 2003: 9) the Stasi report adds that, “[n]owadays, secularism cannot be conceived of without a direct linkage to the principle of equality among sexes” (2004: 52). One immediately wonders what the concept of the separation between church and state have to do with sexual (in)equality? Indeed, Stasi takes it for granted that the connection between church/state and men/women is an obvious one. However, as Yeğenoğlu argues,
If the target of territorial imperialism is to de-territorialize and then re-territorialize the land of the native, the target of the imperial feminist project, directed towards unveiling, is to alter the embodiment of the other woman by inscribing it according to different cultural, social, symbolic codes (Yeğenoğlu 1998: 112).

Thus, by advocating for the “sexual equality” that state secularism presumably provides, state feminists are actually calling for an inscription of liberal “Western” notions of sexuality onto Muslim women’s bodies. As Scott argues, what is inferred in pronouncements against the veil is actually the protection of the French Republic’s notions of sexuality, which is embodied by the concept of *mixité*—which means co-education but also implies equal visual access to the bodies of both men and women (Scott 2005: 122). In an interview, a prominent French feminist was asked if she thought that beards should also be banned. She replied that the problem was not so much beards as the fact that the headscarf covers a part of the woman’s body that could perhaps be alluring to men, and that “it was precisely the covering over of women’s sexuality that so troubled her about the veil — the veil was a denial, she said, of women as ‘objects of desire’” (Quoted in Scott 2005: 123).

In advocating for women as objects of men’s desire, French feminist are in collusion with the neoliberal project of the French republic, which aims at reproducing the heterosexual couple in order to (re)produce a larger and more ‘intergrated’ workforce for the nation. As long as young Muslim women wear the veil, they will not be as sexually appealing to French men (only to Muslim men) and furthermore will not be able to enter into sexual relationships with them. It is only by removing the veil, and achieving a kind of optical equality with the bodies of men, that Muslim women will be free to experience a “superior” French way of conducting sexual relationships. As Foucault reminds us in his analysis of bio-power, sexuality has historically been a central technology of power (1978: 157). Thus, the French state’s model for disciplining young Muslim girls’ bodies attempts to mask an implied solution for integrating the Muslim immigrant population into the French Republic: unveiled Muslim women will presumably be free to practice the “superior” French way of conducting sexual relationships. If we take Foucault’s contention that sex is where a politics of bodies and populations meet, then the exercise of power at such a juncture involves intervening into the sexual-formation of Muslim women in particular. The strategy of unveiling maybe gesturing towards a more insidious form of racism, which relates to the anxiety and fear of the “demographic threat” whereby Muslims are blamed for have too many children as compared with the relatively lower birth-rate of women in the developed world. As Foucault reminds us,

…a whole politics of settlement (*peuplement*), family, marriage, education, social hierarchization, and property, accompanied by a long series of permanent interventions at the level of the body, conduct, health and everyday life, received their color and their justification from the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race (1978: 149).
If we make the link between interventions into the body and regulation of populations explicit, as Foucault does by foregrounding the importance of sexuality in the deployment of power, then the politics of the veil in France takes on a historical timbre that cannot be unlinked with the legacies of colonialism, secularism and neoliberalism.

**Concluding Remarks**

The law to unveil young Muslim women is, at best, a naïve attempt to forcibly “integrate” resistant Muslim bodies in order to (re)produce them as good (non-Muslim) French citizens. The discourses encountered in the Stasi report suggest a convergence of factors: that state, secularism, neoliberalism, and “sexual equality” merge with the notion of young (Muslim) women as being docile bodies in order to effect a disciplining whereby (Western) cultural codings can be inscribed onto their bodies. In this way, historical notions of veiling from the Algerian context come to embody the contemporary moment of young women wearing headscarves in schools—an act that is interpreted as inherently threatening in the context of French colonialism. As such, the main object of the law against the display of religious symbols in French public schools is to discipline the uncontrollable bodies of Muslim immigrant ‘others’ through the colonial gesture of unveiling the bodies of young Muslim women. This is accomplished by intervening in the subject-formation of young women, in order to turn them into the desirable and disciplined subjects of the French republic. The Stasi report reflects and co-constitutes contemporary debates plaguing the French republic, that of sexual identity, immigration integration, and the relationship between the West and Islam. As such, it reproduces its position as the autonomous, neutral subject *vis-à-vis* the body of the female Muslim immigrant other.

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Bare (Life and Sexual) Anxieties and Mythical Bodies: The Politics of Representations and the Image Economy in the “War on Terror.”

Nelson Lai

(Post-)Colonial Postcards

In the aftermath of the Abu Ghraib prison “scandal”, the U.S. Army conducted a military inquiry into an internet website after officials from the U.S. Department of Defense learned that several nude photographs of women posted on the site had been identified as U.S. soldiers stationed in Iraq. Reportedly, some of the pictures show the women posing nude with standard U.S. Army issued weapons and equipments, and at least one photograph showed a female soldier having sex with an unidentified man (Niles Latham 2005). The website had previously been the focus of media coverage (but not a military investigation) for hosting a section containing photographs and videos uploaded by U.S. soldiers stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan, who were granted free access to the website’s (sexual) contents in exchange for uploading their “original content.” A journalist describes the section hosting images and videos uploaded by U.S. soldiers as “a stomach-churning showcase for the pornography of war” (George Zornick 2005), containing carefully framed shots of wounded and dead bodies of (presumably) Iraqi “insurgents” and civilians, burnt and mangled body parts, and internal organs (to which the site users were invited to identify). The pictures were accompanied by captions and commentaries, such as “what every Iraqi should look like”, “name this body part”, and “die Haji die!” (Neva Chronin 2005).

The website began in 2004 as a paid site specializing in the trading of sexually explicit images of (ex)wives and (ex)girlfriends. When some of the users of the site—U.S. soldiers deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan—could not pay for monthly access because their credit card companies declined charges from “high-risk” countries, the site owner decided that free access would be granted on the condition that they could provide proof that they were U.S. soldiers stationed overseas. The “proof” came in the form of combat and “after-action” images and video footages taken by personal digital and video cameras that, in the words of one soldier, articulate “what life is like in Iraq”34, a “reality” that is in excess of the representations that the mainstream Western media and embedded journalists make accessible to the general American public.35 It is (I believe) important to note that while the

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34 The statement was made by a U.S. soldier stationed in Iraq in an email interview. For a more extended version, see George Zornick, 2005.
35 When the U.S. Army Inquiry concluded, the case was handed over to the Polk County Sheriff’s Department in Florida, who shut down the site, arrested the site owner, and charged him with one felony count and three hundred misdemeanor counts of indecency (Chris Thompson 2005). After receiving national publicity and legal assistance from the American Civil Liberties Union, a plea bargain with prosecutors was made in which Wilson agreed to plead guilty to five misdemeanor charges, permanently close the website “nowthatsfuckedup.com” (NTFU), and refrain from working on any “adult websites” for five years. Wilson has since launched a blog which documents his legal battle with Florida’s obscenity laws. See “The Liberal Blogger.” <http://www.theliberalblogger.com/florida-vs-wilson/> (22 September, 2007).
photographs of dead bodies solicited media coverage—it was not until rumors that images of nude female soldiers had been circulating on the website (and other internet sites and blogs) that an U.S. Army military inquiry was initiated to investigate whether any of the soldiers – in particular the female soldiers who appeared nude on the website – violated U.S. Army regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

My essay investigates some of the ways in which power is represented, constituted, articulated, and contested through the politics of the body and corporeal embodiment, and loosely follows two different but interconnected trajectories. First, I am interested in how images and/of bodies — as sites of inscription for sexual, national, and colonial fantasies — function to perform the perimeters of the dominant discourse. I argue that the dead bodies, mutilated bodies, and organs without bodies that are trafficked through the contemporary war image economy are at once instrumental to the production of certain “political, claim-making subjects” (Dauphinee 2007) in the discourse of the “War on Terror”, but whose labour are rendered invisible and erased to conceal the epistemological anxieties of these subjects. Second, following Meyda Yeğenoglu (1998), I argue that to engage with the complex significations that constitute Orientalism, we need to examine closely how discursive constitution of “otherness” is achieved simultaneously through sexual as well as racial modes of differentiation between women. I propose to read the iconography of the female U.S. soldier as an articulation deeply implicated with media images of the veiled Muslim woman, whose “liberation” served to mobilize support for the Iraq War. To the extent that women’s bodies are (over)burdened with the weight of representation and operate as sites of colonial discourse, the aesthetics of their corporeal embodiment are deeply political and constitutes a field of contestation that is structured by – and helps to structure – imperial practices.

**War Porn**

Scholarly investigations into the study of “war and media technology” continue to be preoccupied with analyzing how the proliferation of electronic media increasingly frame and organize experiences of war and violence into thoroughly mediated processes of image production (Mirzoeff 2005; Kellner 2004; Campbell 2003; Der Derian 2001; Gray 1997; Baudrillard 1995). James Der Derian notes that during the first Gulf War, the success of the Pentagon’s media suppression of the civilian “body counts” and its sanitization into the abstract military vernacular of “collateral damage” was a part of the broader capacity of the “military-industrial-media-entertainment network” (MIME-NET). The capacity of the MIME-NET to mobilize a largely technical register, in which opponents were reduced to objects in a purely visual field – coordinates on a grid, shapes on a radar, silhouettes on a nightscope – that effected a dehumanizing abstraction of “the other”, encompassed not only the technology to achieve censorship of the “human costs” of war, but to “seamlessly merge the production, representation, and execution of war” (Der Derian 2001: xx). Because it disembodies, instead of embodies, electronic representations presumably strips war of its traditional trappings and liberates the spectator/participant from any “deep structure of feeling”, generating a free-floating and impersonal presence that is “dominated by a

Some media theorists (Kellner 2004; Sontag 2003) have attempted to document the transition to what Jean Baudrillard has coined the “hyperreality” of modern war, but primarily to highlight the obfuscation of the “human costs” of war — which is often presumed to be the ultimate deterrent to war (Gray 1997) — and to respond to the dangers of what they perceived as the uncritical acceptance of a transition to fashionable and politically irresponsible “postmodern position” that believes “reality just is whatever we make of it according to this or that predominant language game, discourse, or mode of signifying practice” (Norris 1991: 24). The critical task, for such critics, entails the necessary demystification of the dominant narratives of modern war with alternative accounts in which its deaths and carnage are not obscured, in order to undermine the seemingly unlimited power of the U.S. military to produce death while escaping political and moral accountability. It is presumed, from the lessons of the U.S.-Vietnam War, that the (hyper-) visibility of pain and suffering will premise the mobilization of a moral consensus against the waging of war itself (Scarry 1993: 69).

But even prior to the “leaking” of photographs from the Abu Ghraib prison, before the exchange of combat images for free access to an adult pornography website became a media “scandal”, the internet was already saturated with images representing the “uncensored realities” of the Iraq War. The proliferation of “embedded” technologies such as personal digital video cameras and satellite phones had induced and helped to generate an increasing availability of “point-of-view” combat footages, “partisan videos”, and war trophy photography hosted by both mainstream and alternative internet media sources that materialized into an obscene underside, where lived experiences (of death, pain, and suffering) reduced to commodity forms are trafficked in a global war image economy.

The demand for “uncensored” images of war reveal a visceral visual fetishism that has long been associated with (and cultivated by) North American cinema, popular culture, video games, and the more “softcore” news coverage of wars and military actions on television. Matteo Pasquinelli remarks, “watching Abu Ghraib pictures of pornographic tortures does not scandalize us, on the contrary, it rather excites us, in exactly the same way as the obsessive voyeurism that draws us to videos of 9/11” (Pasquinelli 2004). It is precisely because of their coveted exchange value in the image economy that they are produced in the first place. Although both television and internet media outlets (and their corporate advertisers) profit from the sensational value of violence and death emerging from the Iraq War, the labour performed by the dead and wounded Iraqi bodies that enabled the production of these images are not acknowledged as such.

36 Here, I refer to not only to the thirteen (mostly video-sharing and blogging) websites that the Pentagon recently blacklisted, and are now blocked from those who use (and rely on) internet access provided by the U.S. Department of Defense — for more information, see “U.S. blocks soldiers from websites.” 14 May, 2007 — but “news wire services” (such as Reuters, Associated Press, and Agence France-Presse), “feature news picture agencies” (such as Sigma, Magnum, Network and Black Star), and stock picture libraries that commission, produce, archive, and circulate “war photographs” used by the “mainstream” news media.
Even though images of the “uncensored realities” of war expose a kind of (human) body so markedly absent, yet ever present, from the war’s total discursive field, they are no more (and no less) “real” than the sanitized war made accessible by the military censored media — they are technologically screened, selectively framed by U.S. soldiers and freelance journalists, and they physically and sensorially distance the spectators from the “actual” events being revealed. Theorists like Douglas Kellner continue to express concerns that the absence of actual combat footage generates a situation where the only available information about the battlefront is information manufactured on the homefront (Kellner 2004). They remain critical of what they see as an increasing “separation of the sign from what it signifies, culture from nature, truth from reality,” where all we are left with is “a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential” (Woolley 1992: 198-99). But it is banal to speak of a technologically induced shift from some prior historical moment that permitted access to the “real” to the present moment of “unreality” characterized by nothing but an endless multiplicity of free-floating signifiers. To make such an argument presupposes that in a different time and place it was possible to directly experience an unmediated reality where a perfect fidelity between “the represented” and “representation” existed.

I wish to signify a (partial) break with the normative trajectory of a line of debate about the politics of representation in the literature on “war and media technology.” As Gayatry Spivak (1988) reminds us in her reading of Derrida, a representation can never entirely capture the represented subject, and is always already a violation, an imposition of static subjectivity upon complex, contested, and continuously changing phenomena. The so-called “uncensored images of war” are important less for what they purport to produce about the “reality” of war — they are themselves the preconditions for generating the excess of what they seek to contain but can never fully articulate – and more for what they reveal about the military planners and institutional elites, who scramble and maneuver to conceal the presence of the images and suppress their circulation. It is in those moments when sovereign power visibly acts to police the leakages in the imperial narrative that its desires, fractures, anxieties, and insecurities are made amply apparent – the real “military vulnerabilities.” This, I argue, is the burden of these images in the context of the “War on Terror” – the articulation of the forms, sites, and strategies of power (and thus, of contestation, “resistance”, and subversion) that underpins a (always already failed) project in which national image management has become central in mobilizing national and international support for its continuation – not the ethical burden of veracity that is conventionally presumed to incubate the promise of a liberal utilitarian calculus of “death” which, in any event, continues to participate in their rendering as “spectacle” (Debord [1967] 2002) and fails to disrupt a disembodied notion of ethical accountability.

**Bare Anxieties**
There is nothing novel about the anxieties manifested by the Pentagon over the sexualized representation of female soldiers. For example, there have been several cases in which female soldiers were disciplined or
discharged from military service for appearing in adult magazines. More recently, the U.S. army completed an investigation into allegations that a local newspaper in Louisville received a compact disc containing images of nude female soldiers from a Kentucky National Guard (KNG) unit on the day in which the unit was deployed to Iraq. Cynthia Enloe (1993) notes that during the first Gulf War, the image of the female U.S. soldier was internationalized (and mythologized) by American-produced satellite television companies (84). An important insight offered by media theorists is the ways in which technically enabled tactics and strategies of the productive, distributive, and consumptive process have achieved phenomenal velocity and capacity in domesticating and commodifying radical subjectivities. While wars in the past have always been (and continue to be) massively marketed, modern war’s marketability is predicated on its capacity to be rapidly sold to an increasingly diverse audience with continually shifting attitudes towards war. Linda Boose (1993) contends that during the (first) Gulf War, the reporting disposition of the mainstream U.S. press not only referenced it as an opportunity to vindicate Vietnam veterans of their (and the nation’s) emasculation, but also emphasized that great strides towards gender equality had finally been achieved as nearly 30,000 American women were active participants on the battlefront.

In the present context of the “War on Terror”, representations of female U.S. soldiers are intimately enmeshed with colonial representations of veiled Muslim women in a discourse of racialized sexuality, and can no longer be articulated outside of the broader context of the contemporary project of empire building. While the veiled Muslim woman’s body figures as a signifier of feminine inequalities and sexuality in the Western colonial imaginary, the uniformed female body has been juxtaposed and ascribed with “professionalism”, empowerment, and equality (see Figure 1). The uniformed female soldier no doubt has a particular form of disciplinary power impressed upon her, as Foucault notes in Discipline and Punish (1979: 151-156), through her embodied participation in military norms, rituals and practices. But discipline here is more than simply a bodily practice; if the media frenzy over the Abu Ghraib prison photographs reveals anything, it is that “discipline” is a commodity circulating in a war image economy in which disciplinary spectacles can be rapidly converted into media spectacles. Images of female U.S. soldiers have become the most notable representations compiling the narrative that “the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women,” (Laura Bush 2001) in which

For example, Michelle Manhart (“Staff Sgt. in Trouble for Playboy Pics.” 11 January, 2007), Sherry Lynne White and Frederica Spilman (“Sergeant in trouble for Playboy photos: Air Force blasts her steamy pictorial as ‘not representative’ of service.” 12 January, 2007).

The photographs reportedly showed female members of the KNG posing nude or semi-nude with standard issue U.S. army weapons and equipments. Initially threatened with court martial in the beginning of the military inquiry, the investigation closed with the recommendation that female soldiers identified in the photographs should instead face “non-judicial, administrative measures” that range from docked pay to confinement in barracks during off-duty hours. For more details, see “Sanctions for Soldiers Who Posed Nude.” November, 2006.

Paul Virilio (2000), for instance, has analyzed the various ways in which technology permitted images of war to saturate the global system with disorienting reach and speed, such that contemporary visual media technologies, rather than represent and describe warfare, have become constitutive of war itself.
militarized conceptions of “peace”, “liberation”, and “security” can be marketed. Through these representations, the mythical female U.S. soldier is constituted as a feminist forerunner who can teach Muslim women the proper understandings of gender equality and civic duty. But the mythical female U.S. soldier masks the reality of a gendered division of labour in the U.S. military, in which the prohibition barring women from serving in direct combat units effectively relegate them to maintenance companies, clerical and administrative support, supply and logistics, transport, medical care, and other “feminized” labour within the military.

![Image](http://www.army.mil/images/2007/03/26/3568/)

Figure 1: The photograph was posted to the U.S. Army website to accompany a story that commemorated Women’s History Month. Part of the caption reads: “American women working as Soldiers serve as a strong example for young Afghan girls trying to attain an education and hoping to walk the same path of equality.”

The integration of white women into the institutions of imperialism has always been crucial to the reproduction of colonial relations. Ann Stoler (2002) notes that during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, middle-class European women attempted to secure their own economic and social status by making a place for themselves as compassionate helpmates to European men in the colonies. The moral value of Victorian womanhood depended on the discourse of racial superiority and a moral agency that involved either reproducing the white race, or saving the natives in the colonies. As wives of European men in colonies, they were expected to embody the ideals of middle-class European domesticity and assume the attendant household labour and responsibilities required to provide a happy home life, thus displacing the need for their husbands to have (sexual) contact with indigenous women. But women’s bodies, I argue, are not simply resources drawn upon to metabolize nationalist and imperialist projects. They are depended upon as sites where sovereign fictions must be continually reproduced in order to enable and maintain their conditions of possibility.

“Making Empire Respectable”

Post-colonial scholars (Loomba 1998; Yuval-Davis 1997; McClintock 1995) have given careful considerations to the ways in which women’s bodies constitute contested sites for fixing competing discourses, relationships, and arrangements, and are socially policed for leakages and crossings between “outside” and “inside” spaces in order to secure the boundaries of culture, nation, and community. In times of conflict, bodies of subaltern women are frequently produced as “revolutionary” bodies for the oppressed and as “dangerous” bodies in the discourse of the occupier. In “Algeria Unveiled”, Frantz Fanon (1967) discusses Islamic veiling practices during the French colonized Algeria as emblematic of the textual and administrative operations of colonialism which can be primarily observed in the demand to know the Orient by making particular bodies increasingly visible, vulnerable, and open to scrutiny (37). When French colonial authorities attempted to unveil Muslim Algerian
women, Muslim and secular women were encouraged to wear the veil as a sign of revolutionary solidarity. Under (anti-)colonialism, the veil was simultaneously rendered as a symbol of cultural resistance, a mode of concealment, and a signifier of the status of the oppressed and the silenced “other.” Feminist scholars such as Leila Ahmed (1992) and Fatima Mernissi (1991) have long suggested that the veil historically carried far more complex connotations than conventionally understood by Western observers: the veil, worn when women moved out of secluded domestic spaces, marked them as belonging to a higher social class and made it possible for them to travel outside the household without harassment from men in their own communities (Hessini 1995: 47) – thus allowing them to negotiate their appearance and presence in (masculinized) domains that sought to exclude them (Mernissi 1991: 142-43).

As with the complex discourse of veiling, the body of the female U.S. soldier reveals itself as a contested social formation. While feminist scholars such as Cynthia Enloe (1994, 2000) have analyzed the ways in which women have always been implicated in the process of militarization without donning uniforms, the uniform affords a particular set of privileges that has allowed women to be recognized as active participants in nationalist struggles and compelled the nation to acknowledge their contributions, thus providing them access to benefits and privileges traditionally reserved for those who could demonstrate the most masculinist form of civic virtue. The uniform denotes “professionalism” and allows American women to negotiate their appearance in the (hyper)masculinized domain of the “battlefield.” Professionalism provides a protective shield, an accolade that carries with it “a new form of guaranteed respectability” (Enloe 1993: 220), because a professionalized woman soldier is “neither morally loose nor suspiciously manly” (Ibid.). Feminist research in military prostitution has long documented the gender double-standard in the policies and practices of Western militaries regarding sexual relations between soldiers deployed overseas and the local population (Whitworth 2004; Moon 1997; Sturdevant 1993). The discourse of interracial rape that preoccupied the American media throughout the capture and rescue of Jessica lynch (see Melisa Brittain 2006), which relied on the colonial stereotype of Arab hyper-masculinity (Norton 1991), additionally serves to foreground the portrayal of Iraq as a space of sexual danger not only for women in general, but for white women in particular. Familiarly, in this colonial encounter, the female body is especially vulnerable to being scripted by the discourse of the nation as bearing the potential for treachery through sexual activities. Biopower emerges here as a double articulation, honing its power on the mythical body of the female U.S. soldier through the control of her sexuality and using this singular body to discipline the entire social body of the colonial apparatus, thus “making empire respectable” (Stoler 1995). Stoler’s insights are useful here not so much to highlight how representations of white femininity can “articulate different forms of racism” (Ware 1996: 65), but how the (re)constituation of white femininity – and some Western feminist

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40 During the Algerian revolution, Algerians were required to carry identity cards that would render them “visible” and “legible” to French colonial authorities. Soldiers rounded up entire communities of Algerians, and forcibly unveiled Algerian women to take their ID card portraits.
subjectivities – occurs through and is contingent upon colonial encounters.41

But even while the uniform inscribes the symbolic bodies of women into the nation – and the symbolic nation into women — the militarized female body is a volatile body (Grosz 1994), transgressing the boundaries of gender norms defined by the normalizing force of militarized masculinity. The ambiguity brought about by women acting in men’s space generates deep ontological anxieties for the military. Her (sexual) excess compels (media) discourse, and this discourse reconstitutes her body. Her body is at once a site of construction and a site of meaning, because the dominant discourse of the Iraq War as a war of liberation is built on her and deployed through her. The anxieties of U.S. military planners regarding the sexualized images of women in combat not only suggest that the mythical body of the female U.S. soldier at once labour to support, reproduce, and metabolize the dominant narratives of the war, but also spill, transgress, and threaten to undo such narratives. Her body possesses the capacity to embody, enact and expose paradoxes that eschew disembodied, free-floating epistemologies and provides a fruitful area of investigation into the ways colonial power operates as a complex mix of discipline, aesthetics, representation, and visuality that can be traced to the intimacies of human bodies.

The Aesthetics of Attention/Distraction
In the Birth of the Clinic, Foucault argues that the techniques of seeing formed in medical autopsies are the source of not only clinical knowledge, but of the entire disciplinary matrix and taxonomies upon which modern power rests: “medicine becomes modern with the corpse…” he writes, “It will no doubt remain a decisive fact about our culture that its first scientific discourse concerning the individual had to pass through this stage of death” (Foucault [1963] 2003: 197). The body is itself an effect of the knowledge practices that render it intelligible – as a “dead body”, a “wounded body”, or an “insurgent’s body.” The U.S. soldiers who framed, produced, and circulated the war photographs and video footages do more than simply articulate “what life is like in Iraq.” Through these representations, they profess to express “true knowledge” about the “reality” of war. To invite an audience to survey photographs of internal organs and to “name this body part” literally turns the opaque depths of the human interior into an extensive surface of legibility to be deciphered by the clinical gaze. Intimate knowledge of the “enemy” body becomes a kind of social currency that helps to define and constitute the “real soldier” who has graduated the ritual of bloodletting, as well as the war spectator/commentator/researcher who performs “value-productive labour” in what Johnathan Beller (2006) terms the “de-territorialized factories” that characterize the multimedia delivery channels through which the visuality of modern wars is dispersed. It is through the very power to produce and assign moral commentaries to these bodies (and organs without bodies) — as “insurgents”, “terrorists”, “Haji” — to penetrate, survey, and appropriate even the interior of the body, that they transform their “self” into a knowing subject in the “War on Terror.” The power of “knowing” the body lies with the ability for expert reading of it and, as Foucault reminds

41 For a more elaborate analysis of this argument in the context of academic feminism, see Sunera Thobani 2007.
us, is always achieved at the expense of those who are subject to the power of the gaze.

The visualization practices exemplified by the mainstream news media reporting of the “War on Terror” are already, I argue, embedded with the logic of the gaze to generate a system of surveillance that works to “disappear” women. The iconic bodies of the female U.S. soldier and the veiled Muslim woman as the subjects of media and public scrutiny, inspection, and regulation, attain a permanent visibility that works to displace and marginalize entire histories of violence inflicted on lived bodies. While a select number of cases of sexual assault and harassment of female U.S. soldiers are noted by the news media (for examples, Sara Corbette 2007, and Helen Benedict 2007), gender violence in the U.S. military continues to figure as a mere distraction to the uninterrupted reporting of the Coalition “progress” in the “War on Terror” (Brittain 2006; Enloe 2004). The fluctuating (re)appearance of the white female body also masks the disappearance of “other” bodies. Just as Jessica Lynch displaced Shoshana Johnson as a commodity for circulating the emotional value of the female heroic victim, the media preoccupation with Lynndie England (and her upbringing, her marriage/divorce, her pregnancy) as the ubiquitous villain of the Abu Ghraib prison overshadowed calls for sustained inquiries into reports of the abuse and rape of female detainees (Luke Harding 2004). The narrowing scope of the media attention camouflages the scale of violence inflicted by the U.S. military, the complex and contradictory politics of gender and militarization, and calls into question the Iraq War as a war of liberation for women.

In her reading of Giorgio Agamben, Christina Masters points out that while bare life poses a contingency into which any political arrangement might dissolve and is a biological minimum to which we are all reducible, “[t]his trope of visibility…is two-pronged. While it appears first and foremost about rendering visible particular subjects, it is also necessarily about rendering subjects invisible – a politics of active derepresentation” (Masters 2007: 51, emphasis in the original). The impetus for an ethics of refusal in the “War on Terror” must necessarily address, and perhaps contest, the double-erasure of not only certain bodies (through the narrowing focus on, and ubiquitous presence of, other mythical bodies), but the labour these bodies perform, even after death. But here, the mere counting of bodies – the numeric tabulation of the Iraqi and Afghani civilian deaths that fails to interrupt the abstraction of bodies upon which certain political subjects are constituted – cannot suffice. Instead, as I have tried to propose throughout the course of this paper, the possibility for an alternative politics must turn to matters of accounting.
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