

FEMINISM AND WAR **confronting US imperialism**

Robin L. Riley, Chandra Talpade Mohanty
and Minnie Bruce Pratt | editors



Zed Books
LONDON | NEW YORK

Feminism and war: confronting US imperialism was first published in 2008 by Zed Books Ltd, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF, UK and Room 400, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA

www.zedbooks.co.uk

Editorial copyright © Robin L. Riley, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Minnie Bruce Pratt, 2008

Copyright in this collection © Zed Books, 2008

The rights of Robin L. Riley, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Minnie Bruce Pratt to be identified as the editors of this work have been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

Cover designed by Rogue Four Design

Set in OurType Arnhem and Futura Bold by Ewan Smith, London

Index: ed.emery@thefreeuniversity.net

Printed and bound in the UK by the Charlesworth Group.

Distributed in the USA exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of St Martin's Press, LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library. Library of Congress cataloging in publication data are available.

ISBN 978 1 84813 018 0 hb

ISBN 978 1 84813 019 7 pb

Contents

Acknowledgments | vii

Introduction: feminism and US wars – mapping the ground | CHANDRA TALPADE MOHANTY, MINNIE BRUCE PRATT, ROBIN L. RILEY 1

ONE | Feminist geopolitics of war

- 1 A vocabulary for feminist praxis: on war and radical critique | ANGELA Y. DAVIS 19
- 2 Resexing militarism for the globe | ZILLAH EISENSTEIN 27
- 3 Feminists and queers in the service of empire | JASBIR PUAR 47
- 4 Interrogating Americana: an African feminist critique | PATRICIA MCFADDEN 56
- In praise of Afrika's children | MÏCERE GÏTHAE MÛGO 68
- 5 What's left? After 'imperial feminist' hijackings | HUIBIN AMELIA CHEW 75

TWO | Feminists mobilizing critiques of war

- 6 Women-of-color veterans on war, militarism, and feminism | SETSU SHIGEMATSU WITH ANURADHA KRISTINA BHAGWATI AND ELI PAINTEDCROW 93
- 7 Decolonizing the racial grammar of international law | ELIZABETH PHILIPOSE 103
- 8 The other v-word: the politics of victimhood fueling George W. Bush's war machine | ALYSON M. COLE 117
- 9 Deconstructing the myth of liberation @ riverbendblog.com | NADINE SINNO 131
- 10 'Rallying public opinion' and other misuses of feminism | JENNIFER L. FLURI 143

THREE | Women's struggles and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

11 Afghan women: the limits of colonial rescue | SHAHNAZ KHAN 161

12 Gendered, racialized, and sexualized torture at Abu Ghraib | ISIS NUSAIR. 179

13 Whose bodies count? Feminist geopolitics and lessons from Iraq | JENNIFER HYNDMAN 194

14 'Freedom for women': stories of Baghdad and New York | BERENICE MALKA FISHER. 207

The war on Iraq | MÍCERE GÍTHAE MŪGO 216

FOUR | Feminists organizing against imperialism and war

15 Violence against women: the US war on women | LEILANI DOWELL 219

16 'We say code pink': feminist direct action and the 'war on terror' | JUDY ROHRER 224

17 Women, gentrification, and Harlem | NELLIE HESTER BAILEY 232

18 US economic wars and Latin America | BERTA JOUBERT-CECI 238

19 Feminist organizing in Israel | MELANIE KAYE/KANTROWITZ 243

20 Reflections on feminism, war, and the politics of dissent | LESLIE CAGAN 250

21 Feminism and war: stopping militarizers, critiquing power | CYNTHIA ENLOE 258

Prosaic poem | MÍCERE GÍTHAE MŪGO 264

Action: end US wars now! 266

Afterword | LINDA CARTY 267

About the contributors | 271

Index | 274

Acknowledgments

This anthology grew out of the 'Feminism and War' conference held 19–21 October 2006, in Syracuse, New York, USA, sponsored by the Women's Studies Program with generous support from the Ray Smith Symposium for the Humanities, and the College of Arts and Sciences of Syracuse University. We gratefully acknowledge the indefatigable work of the members of the Planning and Program Committee who organized the conference: Linda Martín Alcoff, Linda Carty, Elora Chowdhury, Kelly Christian, Susann DeMocker-Shedd, Janet Dodd, Glenda Gross, Nisha Gupta, Chen-I Kuan, Jenna Lloyd, Alice Loomis, Vivian May, Jackie Micielli, Sarah Miraglia, Gwendolyn Pough, Judy Rohrer, Diane Swords.

Special appreciation for assistance with the conference also goes to: Liat Ben-Moshe, Maureen Curtain, Micenis Garrido, the Humanities Council of Syracuse University, Alka Kurian, Leslie Owens-Pelton, Tehmekah MacPherson, Chacine McCoy, Grizelda Rodriguez, Jennifer Wingard, Tom Wolfe, Yuan Zhang, Corri Zoli, and the many student volunteers.

Thanks to Zed Books for their enthusiastic response to this book. And the manuscript would not have been completed for publication without Robin Goettel and her fine editorial work – thank you, Robin!

Chandra Talpade Mohanty is grateful for the sustained and invaluable comradeship of her sister-friends Jacqui Alexander, Zillah Eisenstein, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall. Many thanks to Satya Mohanty, for love, challenge, and three decades of amazing partnership. Chandra also acknowledges her daughter Uma, and Shakti and Zeke (aka the dogs), who always bring joy and wonder into her life.

Minnie Bruce Pratt especially thanks Leslie Feinberg for their political and literary conversations during the continuing adventure of their life together. She is also grateful for her sisters-in-the-struggle in the National Women's Fightback Network.

Robin Riley thanks Margaret Himley for her love, humor, and patience. She is indebted to Linda Carty and Hannah Britton for enduring and buoying friendship that sustains her. She is also grateful to Cynthia Riley for affection beyond biology.

Finally, the editors want to thank each other for the respect and delight that they found in doing this work together, both in organizing the original conference and in the process of editing this book.

- Stiglitz, Joseph (2002) *Globalization and Its Discontents*, New York: Norton.
- Sunday Herald* (2005) 'Afghan women still in chains under Karzai', 23 January, www.rawa.org/jail-women.html.
- Symonds, Peter (2004) 'Afghanistan's presidential election: a mockery of democracy', www.WSWS.org, accessed 2 October 2007.
- UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) (2005) 'A Country on the Move', December 2005, www.undp.org.af/Publications/KeyDocuments/afg_on_the_move.pdf.
- UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) (2006) 'Retraining Afghan media', portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=21011&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html, accessed 25 January 2008.
- UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) (2006) 'UNICEF warns of continued threat facing women and children', www.rawa.org/unicef.html, accessed 21 March 2008.
- UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) and the World Bank (2006) 'Afghanistan's drug industry: structure, functioning, dynamics, and implications for counter-narcotics policy', 28 November.
- (2007) 'Afghan opium cultivation soars 59 percent in 2006', www.unodc.org/unodc/press_release_2006_09_01.html, accessed 21 March 2008.
- Walsh, Declan (2006) 'Gap between rich and poor widens in Afghanistan', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1 January.
- Weinert, Myron and Ali Banuazizi (1994) 'Introduction', in M. Winder and A. Banuazizi (eds), *The Politics of Social Transformation in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Whitting, Alex (2005) Crisis profile: 'Afghanistan still the "sick man" of Asia', AlertNet, 20 June, www.rawa.org/sickman/html.
- Yousafzai, Rahimullah (2007) 'Much ado about nothing', *Newsline*, September.
- Zoya (2006) 'Five years later, Afghanistan still in flames', Znet, www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=11169.
- Zunes, Stephen (2006) 'Afghanistan five years later', *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 13 October, www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/3597.

12 | Gendered, racialized, and sexualized torture at Abu Ghraib

ISIS NUSAIR

I examine here the meaning of difference and the construction of the other within the contours of what Mohanty terms the United States' advanced post-colonial capitalist state project at play in Iraq. I use Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Meyda Yegenoglu's *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* as frameworks for analyzing how the essentializing and dichotomizing discourse of orientalism has justified, facilitated and shaped the torture at Abu Ghraib, the US prison established in Baghdad after the US invasion in 2003. Orientalism in this analysis is a discursive regime and an effect of a specific formation of power. In order to examine these sites of power, I trace and analyze how military and political institutions, practices and discourses contributed in a complex and systematic way to the creation of an essential oriental other and to the production of gendered, racialized and sexualized domination at Abu Ghraib.

The war on terrorism and the representation of the other

The premises of superiority, exclusion and ethnocentricism that are at the core of orientalism permeate neo-orientalist discourses as well (Sadiki 2004). The binary opposition between the Orient and the Occident is not only a means to set boundaries between the self and the other, but a representation that is interlocked with the will to power over those others (Said 1979). This was illustrated in the public discourse on terrorism offered by President Bush in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the USA – discourse which divided the world into 'good versus evil' and 'us against them,' and reinforced an absolute view of the world without offering a way of understanding the specifically global aspect of the attacks and the economic and political tensions that contributed to them (Hatem 2004). On 16 September 2001, US president George W. Bush made the association between the war on terrorism and the war against Islam, and described it as a 'crusade' that pitted 'us' against 'them,' giving the conflict a clear religious dimension.

The September 11 attacks generated a hypermasculine identity that draws on a religious code of ethics and orientalist constitutive differences

between the self and the other (Nayak 2006). The Bush doctrine, as it came to be called, argued that if you 'harbor them, feed them, house them, you are just as guilty and you will be held accountable.' This discourse dispensed with legal niceties and embraced the lawless motif of the US Old West of 'get them dead or alive' and 'smoke them in their caves/holes' (Hatem 2004). In a press conference on 17 September 2001, Bush explained that the USA was facing a new type of enemy, one that has no borders and with an extensive network. Yet his representation of this enemy did not go beyond describing it as a barbarian whose objectives were incomprehensible.

This construction of the enemy facilitated the conceptual gendered division between the nation and the enemy, and represented the successful reproduction of US intervention as a superior moral mission (Shepherd 2006). In his State of the Union address on 29 January 2002, Bush offered another articulation of this globalized orientalist discourse, its religious grounding, and its use of superior Western values in order to explain the war and some of its outcomes as good versus evil, light versus darkness, civilization versus barbarism, freedom versus oppression, just cause versus outlaw regimes, security versus danger, and peace versus terror. In this same speech, Bush was very specific in his description of the changing US definition of security in a global world where the USA could no longer feel protected by geographic barriers, and where its security had to be assured by action abroad and increased vigilance at home. Variations on this globalized orientalist discourse have since dominated Bush's speeches and the public discussion of the war on terrorism, reflecting strategic concerns as well as realpolitik in the mobilization for the war on terror (Hatem 2004).

Constructing the other at Abu Ghraib

Within the orientalist discourse, differences are hard to overcome, and Islam, Muslims, and Islamic cultures are represented as an inferior 'other' whose irrationality, backwardness and violence reinforce the superiority of the West, which stands for rationality, enlightenment, progress and civilization (Yegenoglu 1998). Within orientalism, the taming and civilizing mission of the barbaric Orient requires the dissemination of rational procedures of Western institutions of law and order and reorganization of oriental cultures along the principles of the modern, progressive and civilized West (Asad, as quoted in *ibid.*). Orientalism, therefore, offers an analysis of the structure of those varied Western discourses which represent the Orient and Islam as an object for investigation and control (Tetreault 2006; Abu-Lughod 2002). In order to be able to construct the

West and the Orient in different and distant temporalities, the machinery of colonial discourse does not need terms that are manifestly temporal. It can very well achieve its distancing and temporalizing function by using terms such as 'primitive,' 'backward,' and 'traditional.' This in turn distances or pushes the cultural other back in time, implying and inscribing an 'articulation and ordering of cultural difference' (Yegenoglu 1998: 96).

Cultural difference: the Arab mind

The essentializing discourse of orientalism not only constructs the Orient as the place of sensuality, irrationality, corrupt despotism, mystical religiosity, and sexually unstable Arabs, but also makes the orientalist inquiry into the nature of the 'Islamic mind' and 'Arab character' perfectly legitimate (*ibid.*). In his introduction to Raphael Patai's 2002 revised edition of *The Arab Mind*, retired US army colonel Norvell B. De Atkine states:

To begin a process of understanding the seemingly irrational hatred that motivated the World Trade Center attackers, one must understand the social and cultural environment in which they lived and the modal personality traits that made them susceptible to engaging in terrorist actions. This book does a great deal to further that understanding. In fact, it is essential reading. At the institution where I teach military officers, *The Arab Mind* forms the basis of my cultural instruction, complemented by my own experiences of some 25 years living in, studying or teaching about the Middle East. (De Atkine 2002: x)

Colonel De Atkine adds that 'much of the American political science writing on the Middle East today is jargon- and agenda-laden, bordering on the indecipherable. A fixation on race, class and gender has had a destructive effect on Middle East scholarship' (xii). According to him, 'some of the best and most useful writing on the Arab world has been by outsiders, mostly Europeans, especially the French and British. Many of the best and illuminating works were written decades ago' (xii).

In a *New Yorker* article on 14 May 2004 entitled 'How a secret Pentagon program came to Abu Ghraib,' Seymour Hersh describes how *The Arab Mind* became the neoconservatives' bible on Arab behavior. He states:

The notion that Arabs are particularly vulnerable to sexual humiliation became a talking point among pro-war Washington conservatives in the months before the March, 2003, invasion of Iraq. One book that was frequently cited was 'The Arab Mind,' a study of Arab culture and

psychology, first published in 1973, by Raphael Patai ... The book includes a twenty-five-page chapter on Arabs and sex, depicting sex as a taboo vested with shame and repression. 'The segregation of the sexes, the veiling of the women ... and all the other minute rules that govern and restrict contact between men and women, have the effect of making sex a prime mental preoccupation in the Arab world,' Patai wrote. Homosexual activity, 'or any indication of homosexual leanings, as with all other expressions of sexuality, is never given any publicity. These are private affairs and remain in private.' The Patai book, an academic told me, was 'the bible of the neo-cons on Arab behavior.' In their discussions, he said, two themes emerged – 'one, that Arabs only understand force and, two that the biggest weakness of Arabs is shame and humiliation.' (Hersh 2004a)

These representations and essentializing notions of Arabs and Muslims reinforced gendered, racialized and sexualized orientalist references and characteristics and sustained a climate of orientalist domination at Abu Ghraib. The Bush administration insisted on presenting the torture at Abu Ghraib as an isolated incident committed by a few bad apples while disregarding the larger continuum of torture and mistreatment of detainees in Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay, and Iraq (Williams 2006; Dratel and Greenberg 2005; Harbury 2005; Harf and Lombardi 2005; Daner 2004). On 4 May 2004, US secretary of defense Donald H. Rumsfeld described torture at Abu Ghraib as 'an exceptional, isolated' case. In a nationally televised address on 24 May 2004, President George W. Bush spoke of 'disgraceful conduct by a few American troops who dishonored our country and disregarded our values.' US brigadier general Mark Kimmitt, deputy director of coalition operations in Iraq, told CBS television news program *60 Minutes*: 'Frankly, I think all of us are disappointed by the actions of the few.' This focus on the action of the few stands in stark opposition to a Human Rights Watch 2004 analysis that the US administration policies created the climate for Abu Ghraib.

Racial and sexual difference: the Arab body

Militarized and masculine presumptions about the oriental other were at the heart of the acts of sexual domination at Abu Ghraib. These were not singular or pathologized events, but systematic oppressive acts integral to power relations and complex productions and significations of gender, race and sexuality. In *Orientalism*, Said touched upon the issue of Western male fantasies in which the feminine and weak Orient had to undergo the conquest of the powerful and sexually dominant

West. He demonstrated how the Orient was a counter-mirror image of the other, the superior West, and that the depiction of a single cohesive Orient leads to the essentializing and stereotyping of images, whereby the Orient is classified as backward, unchanging, irrational, menacing, and to be dominated sexually.

Discourse is a system of meaning production related to practices of power. Within this context, manifest orientalism refers to various stated views about oriental society, languages, literatures, and history, while latent orientalism refers to an almost unconscious and untouchable act. It is through this latent structure that orientalism achieves its doctrinal character, its everydayness and naturalness, its taken-for-granted authority (Said 1979). Latent orientalism is transmitted from one generation to another partly because of an 'internal consistency about its constitutive will-to-power over the Orient' (Yegenoglu 1998: 23). In addition, it encourages a peculiarly male and sexist conception of the world. A case in point is the US military psychology assessment report on detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib. This report makes clear the connection between latent and manifest orientalist conceptions of the other and the impact it had on soldiers' behavior at Abu Ghraib. The report indicates that 'soldiers were immersed in Islamic culture, a culture with [a] different worship and belief system that they were encountering for the first time.' The report goes on to explain how the 'association by soldiers of Muslims with terrorism could exaggerate difference and lead to fear and to a devaluation of people.' Difference between US soldiers and Iraqi prisoners reached a level where, according to a military dog handler, even dogs 'came not to like Iraqi detainees. They [the dogs] did not like the Iraqi culture, smell, sound, skin-tone, hair-color or anything about them' (AR15 2005).

This binary division and construction of difference is laden with negative cultural, racial and social connotations. It is associated with constructions of power and hierarchy where the oriental is represented as feminine and the feminine as oriental (Yegenoglu 1998). Within this context, the Orient, seen as the embodiment of sensuality, is always understood in feminine terms and accordingly 'its place in Western imagery has been constructed through the simultaneous gesture of racialization and feminization' (ibid.: 73). This is evident in Sherene Razack's (2004) analysis that what took place at Abu Ghraib is part of a larger 'national project of dominating racially inferior peoples,' and that the violence in these photos is colonial violence, a result of a colonial encounter that is an 'encounter that the soldiers understand to be one between conquerors and racially, morally and culturally inferior

peoples.' She adds that the three features of the violence enacted by white militaries in peacekeeping operations are also evident at Abu Ghraib – the violence is openly practiced with dozens witnessing it, it is recorded on film and in diaries, and it is sexualized, with both real and simulated rape and sodomy.

Liz Philipose (2007) describes a colonial landscape at Abu Ghraib that is both racialized and gendered. Assata Zerai and Zakia Salime (2006) analyze the intersection between patriarchal authority, racism, militarism, and elitism, and Richter-Montpetit (2007) describes what took place at Abu Ghraib as a constructed heterosexual, racialized and gendered script that is firmly grounded in the colonial desires and practices of the larger social order. It protects heterosexist normativity and the larger system of racialized masculinity that is put in higher gear at moments of unilateral militarization (Eisenstein 2004). Militarization in this context is a transformative process where individuals or a society come to imagine military needs and militaristic presumptions to be not only valuable but also normal (Enloe 2000). Militarization, in turn, reinforces hierarchical modes of orientalist representations, privileges masculinity, and 'others' anyone who is not in the business of empire-building – with the result that there are few if any civilians left at this moment (Eisenstein 2004).

The question of sexuality governs and structures the subject's every relation with the other (Yegenoglu 1998). This orientalist project institutionalizes gendered and racialized violence through the infantilization, demonization, dehumanization and sexual dominance of the other (Nayak 2006). Linda Burnham (2004) calls attention to the sexualization of national conquest at Abu Ghraib and sees sexual domination as part of a militarist hypersexuality. Hypermasculinity, within this context, is the sensationalistic endorsement of elements of masculinity, such as rigid gender roles, vengeful and militarized reactions and obsession with order, power and control (ibid.).

Photos of torture and abuse at Abu Ghraib are evidence of the violent act of unveiling, stripping and penetration, the ultimate act of cultural and sexual domination over an emasculate Iraqi other. Male Iraqi prisoners were represented in the Abu Ghraib photos as the opposite of what a US militarist and hypersexual soldier or policeman, either male or female, is or should be. The prisoners were represented as helpless, obedient, and docile (read feminine) others. They were sexually dominated, degraded, and forced to simulate homosexual acts. Within this homophobic, militarized, racist, and sexist representation, the perpetrators were defining their position as well as the nature of their domination over Iraqi others.

Taking over eighteen hundred pictures of torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib marks not only the difference between 'us' and 'them' in terms of sexuality, religion, belief system and culture, but makes these pictures available for the whole world to see. The act of taking a picture automatically implies distancing the self from its objectified other, and the process of reproducing these orchestrated images marked and recorded these representations of absolute and essential *difference from and domination over* those others.

Orientalizing the veil

Before analyzing the relation between orientalizing the veil and torture at Abu Ghraib, I find it necessary to provide two examples of the position on the veil held by British colonial powers in Egypt (1882–1922), and French colonial powers in Algeria (1830–1962). This comparative analysis, examined in the case of Egypt by Leila Ahmed and in the case of Algeria by Marnia Lazreg, is important for understanding the connection between the veil and orientalist discourses of colonial and post-colonial domination.

Leila Ahmed, in *Women and Gender in Islam* (1992), argues that even though Islam's 'oppression' of women formed some element of the European narrative of Islam from early on, the issue of women emerged as the centerpiece of the Western narrative of Islam only in the nineteenth century, and in particular in the later nineteenth century as Europeans established themselves as colonial powers in Muslim countries. She adds:

The reorganized narrative, with its focus on women, appears to have been a compound created out of a coalescence between the old narrative of Islam and which Edward Said's *Orientalism* details and the broad, all-purpose narrative of colonial domination regarding the inferiority, in relation to the European culture, of all other cultures and societies. (ibid.: 150)

Fusion between women and culture and the idea that other men – men in colonized societies or societies beyond the borders of the civilized West – oppressed 'their' women was to be used, in the rhetoric of colonialism, 'to render morally justifiable its project of undermining or eradicating the cultures of colonized people' (ibid.: 151). According to this thesis, Islam was 'innately and immutably oppressive to women ... the veil and segregation epitomized that oppression, and ... these customs were the fundamental reasons for the general and comprehensive backwardness of Islamic societies' (ibid.: 152). Only 'if these practices "intrinsic" to

Islam (and therefore Islam itself) were cast off, could Muslim societies begin to move forward on the path of civilization' (ibid.).

Veiling, to Western eyes the most visible marker of the difference and inferiority of Islamic societies, became the symbol of both the oppression of women and the backwardness of Islam, and an open target of colonial attack. This is illustrated in a demonstration that was organized on 16 May 1958 by rebellious French generals in Algiers in order to show their determination to keep Algeria French. The generals wanted to give the government of France evidence that Algerians were in agreement with them, and they had a few thousand native men bussed in from nearby villages, along with a few women who were solemnly unveiled by French women. After this momentous act, 'all together sang the *Marseillaise* and the military *Chant des Africains*' (Lazreg 1994: 135). Lazreg argues that 'rounding up Algerians and bringing them to demonstrations of loyalty to France was not in itself an unusual act during the colonial era. But to unveil women at a well-choreographed ceremony added to the event a symbolic dimension' (ibid.). Lazreg suggests that this event did lasting harm to Algerian women and brought to light the politicization of women's bodies and their symbolic appropriation by colonial authorities. Their sexed bodies were suddenly laid bare before a 'crowd of vociferous colonists who, in an orgy of chants and cries for "Long Live French Algeria," claimed victory over all Algerian women,' and particularly over the veiled Algerian woman who represented 'Orientalist mystery and hidden beauty, but also an object of possession and aggression due to the frustration stemming from being seen by her but not seeing her' (ibid.: 135-6).

Unveiling and penetrating bodies and minds at Abu Ghraib

In orientalism, femininity is represented as enigmatic, mysterious, and concealing a secret behind its veil which is projected onto the iconography of the Orient (Yegenoglu 1998). The horror and threat of what is assumed to be 'hidden behind the Oriental/feminine veil is revealed in and by these representations and the more the Orientalist subject has tried to know and conquer the zone of darkness and mystery, the more he has realized his distance from the "authentic," "real" knowledge of the Orient and its women' (ibid.: 73). Within this framework, the Orientals are people who are characterized by dissimulation and dissemblance, which is why it is so hard to understand them and penetrate their minds. The Orientals are 'hidden not only behind their words but also behind their silence, for even their lips are a veil; true life is missing, its absence is dissimulated by appearances and masks' (ibid.).

If dissemblance, dissimulation and concealment are what characterize Orientals, if their lips are a veil and this is why it is so hard to understand them, to penetrate their 'Arab minds,' then there is a need to analyze the role that knowledge/language as a nexus of power about the other has played in the 2003 US invasion and occupation of Iraq. Lack of Arabic speakers among US soldiers and administrators has been quoted by many US officials as an obstacle that needs to be overcome. A 2007 report by the Iraq Study Group noted that of the thousand people who worked at the United States embassy in Iraq, only thirty-three spoke Arabic, and only six of them spoke it fluently. This in addition to the wall erected for security reasons around the Green Zone in Baghdad, which is becoming a literal and figurative wall that separates the US embassy and military administration from its Iraqi others.

If the veiled woman/culture remains always different or infinitely dissimulating in orientalist logic, this is *not* because of the complexity of her/their being-in-the-world, but because they are always absolutely different (Yegenoglu 1998). In addition, they '*should* remain different, because I should remain the *same*' (ibid.: 57). This deep hostility, according to Yegenoglu, is not a question of liking or disliking the Orientals, their women, and their culture, but a force of negation. Even in death, the subjectivity of Iraqis is denied and invoked as different. 'We don't do body counts,' is what General Tommy Franks said in reference to the 2002 US bombing in Afghanistan (Broder 2003). This policy, introduced by the US military in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, re-enacts the force of negation of the other's subjectivity. Iraqis in this formula of negation are the ultimately present and non-existent others. The Iraq Body Count website questions the sole attention to US/UK and Western deaths in Iraq as well as the evasion, obstruction, and racist double standards that the American and British authorities employ to contain and deflect concerns about casualties in Iraq. The website analyzes the meaning and practice of the 'We don't do bad things' approach of these officials, their denial of responsibility, and the ways in which investigations are announced, forgotten and discarded. A case in point is the response of US secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld to the massive looting that took place in Baghdad immediately after the 2003 US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. According to Rumsfeld, 'You cannot do everything instantaneously. It's untidy. And freedom's untidy. And free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes.' I wonder whether such a clumsy explanation would have been offered had those involved been US or European citizens. Is Rumsfeld telling the 'child-like' Iraqis that with time they will get used to the meaning and practice of 'freedom'

and 'democracy'? Who could be held accountable within this discourse of negation of subjectivity? Is this why Iraqi agency has been absent from the planning for the aftermath of the 2003 US invasion and occupation of Iraq? Was the assumption among US policy-makers that the 'docile and child-like' Iraqis who could not yet take full control over their lives were waiting with rice and flowers to welcome the US military? Is this why it took more than twenty months for the US military and political administration to publicly recognize that there was serious resistance to their presence in Iraq? (Jansen 2005; Zakaria 2004).

The colonial doctrine of unveiling, 'the fantasy of penetration, the metaphysics of the veil can all be seen as the avoidance of such *responsibility vis-à-vis* the other, denied by the very structure of sovereign subjectivity' (Yegenoglu 1998: 58). The grand narrative of the colonial gaze is a 'deaf topology of the veil, made up of tales of unveiling, fantasies of penetrating her truth, fantasies of domesticating and reforming and thus controlling her' (ibid.). This is indeed a fundamental characteristic of colonial power. A case in point is the articulation by a French general in his study of the lessons of the Dahar insurrection in North Africa in the nineteenth century:

In effect the essential thing is to gather into groups this people, which is everywhere and nowhere; the essential thing is to make them something we can seize hold of. When we have them in our hands, we will then be able to do many things which are quite impossible for us today and which will perhaps allow us to capture their minds after we have captured their bodies. (ibid.: 117)

In this discourse, the people appear to be veiled indeed; they are visible and invisible, everywhere and nowhere. The fundamental question is to 'seize hold of them,' and the capture that the general articulates aims not at repression in a simple sense, but at the '*production of "minds" and of course "bodies"*' (ibid.). Within this context, the colonized should be produced as a new body and mind with certain skills, characteristics, and form: she/he needs to be remade. But to understand this remapping and reterritorialization, we need to position the body of the other within a frame of power and domination.

By posing and presupposing that the veil is hiding something, concealing an essence, the subject turns the veil into a mask that needs to be penetrated, a mask behind which the other is suspected of hiding some dangerous secret threatening his unity and stability (ibid.). This was illustrated in the US government-generated Taguba Report on the treatment of Abu Ghraib prisoners in Iraq.¹ The report states that the

intentional abuse of detainees by military police personnel at Abu Ghraib included the following acts: punching, slapping, and kicking detainees; jumping on their naked feet; videotaping and photographing naked male and female detainees; forcibly arranging detainees in various sexually explicit positions for photographing; forcing detainees to remove their clothing and keeping them naked for several days at a time; forcing naked male detainees to wear women's underwear; forcing groups of male detainees to masturbate themselves while being photographed and videotaped; arranging male detainees in a pile and then jumping on them; positioning a naked detainee on an MRE (military 'Meals Ready to Eat') box, with a sandbag on his head, and attaching wires to his fingers, toes, and penis to simulate electric torture; writing 'I am a Rapist' (sic) on the leg of a detainee alleged to have forcibly raped a fifteen-year-old fellow detainee, and then photographing him naked; placing a dog chain or strap around a naked detainee's neck and having a female soldier pose for a picture; a male MP (military police) guard having sex with a female detainee; and using military working dogs (without muzzles) to intimidate and frighten detainees, in at least one case biting and severely injuring a detainee.

Torture at Abu Ghraib was first exposed not by a digital photograph but by a letter from the prison. A woman prisoner inside the jail managed to smuggle out a note in December 2003. The contents of the letter were so shocking that Amal Kadham Swadi and other Iraqi women lawyers, who had been trying to gain access to the US jail, found them hard to believe. The note claimed that US guards had been raping women detainees and that several of the women were now pregnant. It added that women had been forced to strip naked in front of men, and it urged the Iraqi resistance to bomb the jail to spare the women further shame.

Swadi, one of seven female lawyers now representing women detainees in Abu Ghraib, began to piece together a picture of systemic abuse and torture perpetrated by US guards against Iraqi women held without charge in various detention centers in Iraq:

This was not only true of Abu Ghraib, she discovered, but was, as she put it, 'happening all across Iraq.' In November last year, Swadi visited a woman detainee at a US military base at al-Kharkh, a former police compound in Baghdad. 'She was the only woman who would talk about her case. She was crying. She told us she had been raped,' Swadi says. 'Several American soldiers had raped her. She had tried to fight them off and they had hurt her arm. She showed us the stitches.' She told us, 'we have daughters and husbands. For God's sake don't tell anyone about this ...'

During her visit to Abu Ghraib in March 2004, one of the prisoners told Swadi that she had been forced to undress in front of US soldiers. 'The Iraqi translator turned his head in embarrassment,' she said ...

Another lawyer, Amal Alrawi, says '... relatives who gathered outside Abu Ghraib last Friday said it was common knowledge that women had been abused inside the jail.' Hamid Abdul Hussein, 40, who was there hoping to see his brother Jabar freed, said former detainees who had returned to their home town of Mahmudiya reported that several women had been raped. 'We've known this for months,' he said. 'We also heard that some women committed suicide.' (Harding 2004)

The statement from the Taguba Report concerning 'a male MP guard having sex with a female detainee' seems to be as far as US officials are willing to go in admitting that actual rape of Iraqi women took place at Abu Ghraib. Within the logic of orientalist domination, male Iraqi prisoners are still men, although weak and emasculate others. Acknowledging the actual rape of Iraqi women will shatter the civilizing and rescuing nature of the US military mission in Iraq. Although the moral superiority and saving mission of this project have been damaged by the release of the photos of torture and abuse at Abu Ghraib, these pictures could be blamed on a few bad apples and not on the structure and value system of the US military. Within the sexist and hierarchical logic of militarized hypermasculinity, penetration of and dominance over Iraqi male prisoners at Abu Ghraib could still be justified as something to be resolved between men. For after all, and despite women comprising about 15 percent of the US army, waging war is still constructed within the domain of the masculine. Acknowledging the rape of Iraqi female prisoners exposes the undifferentiated power of penetration and control over not only the bodies of Iraqis (both male and female) but over the land and its resources. This exposure, in turn, strips naked and tears apart the moral foundation of the liberation mission as well as the fundamentals of the US masculinized and militarized enterprise currently at play in Iraq.

The violent act of unveiling and ensuring total control over the body and the land of the other can guarantee the presence of a system of surveillance and the creation of docile and obedient subjects. This, in turn, forms the precondition for the intervening and corrective practices of colonial governing mentality. In this act, knowledge as well as vision is part of an interlocking desire for colonial disciplinary modes of control, and of the sadistic desire to physically master the object of the gaze by ripping it apart (Yegenoglu 1998). Within this context, the aggressive,

hostile and violent act of unveiling, stripping, penetrating and tearing apart Iraqi bodies at Abu Ghraib, where the body is left nude, exposed and laid bare, is a guarantee for the colonial power that the body and consequently the mind become knowable, observable, visible and thereby able to be manipulated. This gendered, racialized and sexualized violence maintains discipline and secures the boundaries between the private and the public, and between community, nation and state (Nayak 2006). Within this context, they are all bodies to be disciplined.

Abu Ghraib is but one site of territorial control, a target in the mission to deterritorialize and reterritorialize the land of the native according to colonial values and geopolitical interests. Seizing hold of bodies and minds at Abu Ghraib is part of a larger continuum of control that seeks to seize hold of Iraq itself. This act of unveiling signifies the violent transformation of the Orient itself, which is subject now to neoconservative modes of colonial and post-colonial domination. My aim here is not to perpetuate the essentialist binary logic of 'us' and 'them' or East and West, nor to negate the presence of Iraqi subjectivity and agency. On the contrary, I aim to show that resistance to colonial power or the restoration of the colonized as the subject of history cannot be theorized apart from the orientalist discourse. The history of Iraq is redolent of resistance to orientalist colonial modes of domination, and the case is not any different this time around.

Note

1 The Taguba report is one of twelve military investigations and reviews of detainee abuse. Since October 2001 260 soldiers have faced punishment for detainee-related

incidents. Nine individuals in the military, all except one below the level of captain, have been sentenced to time behind bars (McKelvey 2007; Hersh 2004b; Strasser 2004).

References

- Abu-Lughod, Lila (2002) 'Do Muslim women really need saving?', *American Anthropologist*, 104(3): 783-90.
- Ahmed, Leila (1992) *Women and Gender in Islam*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- AR15 (2005) *Investigation - Allegation of Detainee Abuse at Abu Ghraib: Psychological Assessment*, www.aclu.org/torturefoia/released/t1.pdf, accessed 10 January 2005.
- Broder, John (2003) 'Iraqi army toll a mystery because no count is kept', *New York Times*, 2 April, www.ih.com/articles/91667.html, accessed 10 January 2005.
- Burnham, Linda (2004) 'Sexual domination in uniform: an American value', www.war-times.org/issues/WT_gender&abughraib.html, accessed 10 January 2005.
- CBS News (2004) 'Abuse of Iraqi POWs by GIs probed', *60 Minutes*, 28 April, www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/04/27/60II/

- main614063.shtml, accessed 10 January 2005.
- Danner, Mark (2004) *Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib and the War on Terror*, New York: New York Review Books.
- De Atkine, Norvell (2002) 'Foreword', in Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind*, New York: Hatherleigh Press.
- Dratel, Joshua and Karen Greenberg (2005) *The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib*, Boston, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Eisenstein, Zilla (2004) 'Sexual humiliation, gender confusion and the horrors of Abu Ghraib', www.zmag.org/content/show_article.cfm?SectionID=12&ItemID=5754, accessed 10 January 2005.
- Enloe, Cynthia (2000) *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Harbury, Jennifer (2005) *Truth, Torture, and the American Way*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Harding, Luke (2004) 'The other prisoners', *Guardian*, 20 May.
- Harf, James and Mark Owen Lombardi (eds) (2005) *The Unfolding Legacy of 9/11*, University Press of America, Inc.
- Hatem, Mervat (2003/04) 'Discourses on the "War on Terrorism" in the US and its view of the Arab, Muslim, and gendered "Other"', *Arab Studies Journal*, XI(2), XII(1).
- Hersh, Seymour (2004a) 'How a secret Pentagon program came to Abu Ghraib', *New Yorker*, 14 May.
- (2004b) *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib*, New York: HarperCollins.
- Human Rights Watch (2004) *The Road to Abu Ghraib*, www.hrw.org/reports/2004/usa0604/, accessed 10 January 2005.
- Jansen, Michael (2005) 'The prodding of international media and the clamor of world opinion', *Jordan Times*, 6 January.
- Lazreg, Marnia (1994) *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question*, London: Routledge.
- McKelvey, Tara (2007) *Monsterring: Inside America's Policy of Secret Interrogations and Torture in the Terror War*, New York: Carroll & Graf.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade (2004) 'Imperialism, militarism, globalization: mapping feminist struggles', Lecture at the Feminism Contesting Globalization Conference, Dublin, 8 July.
- Nayak, Meghana (2006) 'Orientalism and "saving" US state identity after 9/11', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 8(1).
- Philipose, Liz (2007) 'The politics of pain and the end of empire', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 9(1), March.
- Razack, Sherene (2004) 'When is prisoner abuse racial violence?', www.selvesandothers.org/article1527.html, accessed 10 January 2005.
- Richter-Montpetit, Melanie (2007) 'Empire, desire and violence: a queer transnational feminist reading of the prisoner "abuse" in Abu Ghraib and the question of "gender equality"', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 9(1), March.
- Roth, Kenneth and Minky Worden (eds) (2005) *Torture*, New York: New Press and Human Rights Watch.
- Sadiki, Larbi (2004) *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Said, Edward (1979) *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage.

- Shepherd, Laura (2006) 'Veiled references: constructions of gender in the Bush administration discourse on the attacks on Afghanistan post-9/11', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 8(1).
- Strasser, Steven (ed.) (2004) *The Abu Ghraib Investigations*, Public Affairs.
- Tetreault, Mary Ann (2006) 'The sexual politics of Abu Ghraib: hegemony, spectacle, and the global war on terror', *National Women's Studies Association Journal*, 19(3): 33-49.
- Williams, Kristian (2006) *American Methods: Torture and the Logic of Domination*, Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Yegenoglu, Meyda (1998) *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zakaria, Fareed (2004) *This Week*, ABC, 14 November.
- Zerai, Assata and Zakia Salime (2006) 'A black feminist analysis of responses to war, racism, and repression', *Critical Sociology*, 32(2/3).