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The purpose of this research was to explore the historical, cultural, and political background behind the visual representation of Muslim women in the West in the post-September 11th era and to create pedagogy based on contemporary art that can engage and unsettle stereotypes and assumptions. The history of European colonialism in traditionally Muslim countries has led to a complex and problematic centering of the covering or uncovering of Muslim women's bodies.

The current influences of globalization provide a means to theorize two types of identity creation: inclusive identity that is based on a global sense of community, and exclusive identity that is predicated on the creation of concrete borders that separate "us" from "them". The exclusive identity has been central to the discourse of an impending clash between Islam/West, evil/good, and the visual representation of difference is vital to maintaining these false binaries. Historically, the West has created a visual fantasy of the Muslim woman that involved the uncovering and exposing of the forbidden, veiled woman.

Contemporary artists who cross cultural geographic borders between traditionally Muslim countries and the West offer ways of constructing inclusive identities that do not break down into easy binaries. Shirin Neshat, Marjane Satrapi, Mona Hatoum, and Emily Jacir create artwork that is diverse in its medium and meaning, but all address personal experiences of movement

between cultures and the shifting cultural codes that have been negotiated. Their work uses many of the visual codes of Orientalism in order to question and subvert assumed meanings.

I propose a postcolonial pragmatic pedagogy based in the work of these artists. The Visual Orientalist discourse that has created the image of the oppressed, veiled Muslim woman in American public imagination must be analyzed through a critical visual pedagogy. Once assumptions are acknowledged, the work of contemporary artists can be examined and evaluated in order to pragmatically dislodge Eurocentric notions of Muslim women. The unequal relationships of power that produce Orientalism must be at the foundation of a postcolonial pedagogy that re-imagines how difference is engaged and multicultural education is created.

(RE)ENVISIONING SELF AND OTHER:
SUBVERTING VISUAL ORIENTALISM
THROUGH THE CREATION OF
POSTCOLONIAL PEDAGOGY

by

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CHAPTER I

(RE)LOCATE

The age of terror that seems to have settled upon us like a chemical cloud disfigures our pictorial vision and encloses us in a harrowing chamber. (Bhabha, 2006, p. 30)

The Muslim woman's body is central to Orientalist imagery as a voyeuristic site of Otherness and difference. (Sedira, 2003, p. 70)

Prologue: A Personal Note

I am visiting my sister in Boston and I get on a bus to go meet her at work for lunch. When the bus reaches its next stop a woman in full burqa, covered from head to toe with a fabric mesh panel covering her eyes, gets on the bus and stands near me. Before I have time to reason with myself, a sickly feeling of fear comes up in my stomach. The fear is irrational; it causes thoughts of bombs, fanaticism, and Islamist extremism to fly through my body. My heart beats faster as my arms and legs prepare for flight, or impact, or something. When I can again think clearly, I have time to analyze my fear reaction to this woman going about her daily life in Boston. Her presence was no threat to me; my fear was based on the culturally-specific clothing she was wearing and the layers of meaning that have been embedded. Where did this sense of fear, this loss of control come from? After the encounter on the bus, I reconcile my reaction. I remind myself

that I am extremely tolerant and worldly. But, if this is so, how could I not escape this visceral reaction to what has been constructed through media images as something so foreign, so different from me? The news footage of suicide bombers, of women hiding bombs beneath their veils, has been powerfully ingrained in my body through repetition. If this is happening for me, I feel confident that most Americans post-9/11 would feel this visceral fear and many would not feel so disturbed by its presence.

In thinking of myself as tolerant, what did I truly mean? To tolerate means, literally, to “accept or endure” something that is distasteful. If one endures, the implication is an act of denial, a suppression of true feeling in order to go on with daily living. My reaction of visceral fear was then repressed through my appeal to tolerance. Was there a critical appraisal of the situation, did I try to analyze my own reaction to the woman whom I judged and feared? By playing the tolerance card, I did not need to use tools of critical analysis to investigate the historical and contemporary constructions that played out in my mind on the bus. In conceiving of my project, I have to address this difference between intolerance, tolerance, and critical analysis of reaction to difference. These are not three distinct phases that one enters and leaves in any concrete manner, and consist of a complex mixture of emotion, background knowledge, mental images, and personal connection to the subject of difference. The theoretical model is a continuum, with intolerance on one end, moving to tolerance, and then finally the critical analysis. Intolerance is based in ignorance and fear; a reaction to

difference that openly expressed hostility and disgust. For my understanding, tolerance is not the absence of ignorance-based fear, but rather the suppression and denial of any overt reaction. My hope is to create a pedagogical space that can address the reaction to difference and produce movement along the continuum past mere tolerance and endurance, numbing to the Other, towards a critical understanding of how difference is constructed and can be confronted and understood.

What is the connection between fear and ignorance; why are we always more frightened in the dark? There is something about the lack of knowledge and understanding of difference that leads to a feeling of helpless fear. My reaction to the woman on the bus was based on the fact that I did not know her; I have only had media miseducation about women who choose to be veiled in public. In my state of willed ignorance, I retain the sense of identity built upon a history of American egoism and power. I am far removed from the world of oppression, hunger, pain, and fear in which most people live. My lack of empathy, my feelings of entitlement to security and centrality keep me shielded from the rest of the world, including those on the margins of my own daily life. The images and stories that I have heard about Muslim women are either sound bites, sensationalized for easy digestion, or stories that have been filtered through a Western lens. I have heard Laura Bush and Cherie Blair speak for the horribly abused and covered women of Afghanistan before the United States' offensive in the country. I have read books by Western women authors detailing the gender

oppression of Islam. In all of the writing and talking about Muslim women, their stories and voices are still mostly silent. And so my reaction on the bus was based in an ignorance-based fear, for all the “information” that I had seen and heard understanding of this difference I was still in the dark. The repetition of sinister, darkened faces, of suicide bombers, and of the Muslim terrorist were at the base of my visceral reaction. The books I have read and the knowledge gained through study did not counteract this bodily urge to flee.

How have we come to this place of intolerant fear, where this Muslim woman creates in me such an automatic revulsion? And what forces can counteract this fear, with an influence that dislodges my irrational fear of this woman? I have been involved in the creation of art for most of my life, from scribbling on walls with crayons to my most recent work that involves working through issues of loss, memory, and family. I believe in the possibility of art to allow us to see things in new ways, from different perspectives. Though art comes in as many forms as there are individual artists, there is a thread of connection with all works. The artist creates the work from her/his own vantage point, creating personal expressions of her/his perspectives and theorizing of experience even in the most abstract of work. Will the artwork of individual women have the power and force needed to stop my visceral fear-based reaction that I felt so clearly on that Boston bus?

Can artwork be used as the central piece of a pedagogy of difference that can address the continuum and move us into a space of critical, open dialogue

with self and others? I imagine using artwork as the core curriculum of a responsible education that addresses difference. A responsible education of difference needs to begin to address the reality of unequal relationships of power and oppression. Self-identity needs to be affirmed while creating questions of the certainty of definitions that construct the self in opposition to a nebulous, exoticized Other. What makes the current approach to difference irresponsible and how will the art-based pedagogy be responsible? I see three current themes in formal and informal approaches to difference in education in the United States: difference is celebrated as an exotic diversion to the everyday, it is used to maintain the power of the dominant culture over those who are different, or it is treated as a possible threat to the safety and security of our “American way of life”. We celebrate our eclectic tastes when we eat at “ethnic” restaurants or display global knick-knacks in our homes. But, real difference that confronts us with issues of oppression, anger, and distrust forces us into complex reexamination of our concept of self. Can this basic frame of pedagogy address the fear that I felt in the Boston bus? I do not know, but it is the starting place that makes the most sense to me.

I would like my research to begin the process of imagining a form of globally responsible education that could address the dehumanizing, stereotypical representations of those who we see as the “Other”. The current formal schooling process in the United States either ignores difference of religion and ethnicity, or preaches a numbing tolerance that does not attempt to

understand or hear the expression of others. Like individual attempts to tolerate, when tolerance is the goal of learning about others, differences that are based on unequal relationships of power and oppression are suppressed for a false sense of surface diversity. Informal education from the media and our government presents difference in a sensational way that emphasizes the threat and exoticism of difference, particularly in regard to the representation of Islam. Bold headlines connect the images of terrorists and suicide bombers to the greater concepts of Islam and to veiled women. The result of formal and informal education in the United States is a willed ignorance of other cultures and the historical foundation of foreign policy that has led to the current global dynamics.

I believe the use of contemporary art that exists in multiple cultural spaces at once, that crosses boundaries and borders offers the possibility to confront our biased views of those who are foreign to us. Increased globalization, travel, and communication lead to a feeling of shrinking distance. As real difference and distance contract, we feel increased vulnerability and construct imaginary differences between “us” and “them,” built upon unequal power legacies of colonialism, patriarchy, and modernity. The visual images of this difference are embedded in the way we think, recalling the mental pictures that are associated with loaded words. “Muslim,” “veil,” “Arab,” “Orient,” are all words weighed down with layers of visual and verbal history that we carry with us in Europe and the United States. They are signifiers that at one time related to a real place and time, but have been overloaded with biased media and cultural meanings. My

interest is in using my positionality as a Western scholar to attempt to understand the layers of misrepresentation of the Other, specifically the discursive production of Muslim woman as object and subject, and to propose a way to re-invent our Western way of seeing others through a pedagogy of dissent that involves the viewing and analysis of contemporary art.

Legacies of nationalism and imperialism have created unequal power relationships involved in representations of self/other. Those who wield power in global, gendered relationships represent the rest of the world in the form of their choosing. Colonial power and exploitation by the West, traditionally Europe and more recently the United States, has taken control of creating the Other academically and artistically. These misrepresentations have been based on assumptions of Western superiority and cultural biases that lead to a privileged position of “objective knowledge” about other cultures. Scholars who created the field of Orientalism believed in a superiority of European technology and knowledge. I am specifically interested in how Western views of the Muslim world, the Orient, have informed Western public perception about the nature and agency of those in the East. Almost daily there is a new story of ways in which the issue of the Muslim woman’s body is constructed as a site for political struggle. The veiling or unveiling of women is currently being legislated in many countries, choice of dress and religious expression are denied to Muslim women in many cases without their consultation. How is the Orientalist history of biased

representation affecting these current debates and how is the image of Islam in the United States feeding into the fear of difference?

American global power has been built since World War II on this foundation of European scholarship and colonialism. Our sense of self as Americans is intimately connected to our military strength and ethnocentric views of the foreign. Benedict Anderson (1983) writes that “imagined communities” must be formed through invented connections; group identities are constructed through the lure of being part of an exclusive community. The creation of our national identity defines who is part of the community of the nation and who is on the outside. It is this creation of imaginary difference that separates one group from another. Nationalism takes physically nonexistent borders and transforms them into sacred lines of difference. When unequal levels of power are combined with the often-violent xenophobia of nationalism, individual humanity and empathy are lost in the frenzy to decide who belongs inside and outside the borders. The visual, pictorial representations of those left outside are created to enforce difference and deny the individual experience. Thus we in the West have come to know the other visually as primitive, tribal, unclean, ornamented, and frozen in a nebulous past. In terms of the Muslim woman, we visually have been presented with the helpless victim, veiled and hidden. This is a visual affront to our very Western idea of freedom, and allows us to distance ourselves from the women while pitying them for their cloth prison. This same Western idea of freedom is not questioned for its role in the pressure

on women to be overly aware of the space that our bodies take up while on public display and open to public comment.

The public American relationship with the rest of the world has shifted since the events of 9/11/2001. Many who felt comfortable about issues of American identity, safety, dominance, and believed in a worldwide admiration of all things American suddenly lost this sense of certainty. The world shrank overnight, and the lack of security that most of the world feels on a daily basis hit Americans all at once. This loss of confidence brought about an ugly wave of xenophobia, a crisis of identity that led to a sealing off from everything perceived as different and foreign. Fed by media fear mongering, public opinion reflected this new fear of the foreign, and especially of all things Muslim. Bills that limited civil liberties at the expense of illusive security, like the Patriot Act, were easily passed. American fears of global terrorism and of economic collapse have increased hostility towards difference of all kinds. Those on the outside are vilified and stereotyped, thoughts like “the Mexicans are going to come and steal our jobs,” and “the Muslims are going to terrorize us and threaten our very way of life,” run just under the surface of many conversations in public forums.

This escalating cycle of fear and violence since September 11th has played out in international politics and relations that have centered on the notion of the “Clash of Civilizations” set forth by an influential book by Samuel Huntington, (1998). The basic idea is that the current acts of Islamic extremists and the violent retaliation from the United States are the inevitable result of our

divergent civilizations. The United Nations has responded by creating a working group, called the Alliance of Civilizations, to address the mounting global tensions and the increasingly polarizing rhetoric of the so-called clash. The group released its findings on November 13, 2006 in a report entitled, “Final Report of the High-Level Group”. The document details research into the political, historical, and social root causes of global tension, and suggests policy and educational initiatives to dampen the fiery rhetoric and ease tensions.

For my project, the group’s work into the causes of tension between the West and Islamic extremists is useful to develop a backdrop for my examination of the Western representation of Muslim women. Of special interest, though, is the section of the report on educational recommendations to reduce ignorance-based fear and increase international understanding. I detail these findings in my final chapter that addresses the creation of pedagogical spaces and connects my idea of an education for difference and the findings of the United Nations group. Their emphasis on the use of alternative means, like art, to promote understanding and their focus on media literacy as a strategy for change are important links to my goals and research.

Choice of Artwork

I plan to use the artwork of contemporary women who cross boundaries in their lives and in their work to pose a new way of viewing the Other. These women, who have ties to traditional Muslim and Western societies, reclaim their experience and their representation through their artwork. They work in many

mediums and deal with the intersection of gender and culture in very different ways. These women have in common a re-envisioning of tradition and accepted ways of being, but they vary in their forms of expression and the intention of their production. The differences force us to address each artwork and artist individually- denying any form of generalization or of lumping all under one easy heading, such as “Islamic art”.

These individual expressions can create pragmatic pedagogical space to address the fear of the foreign, and to combat the ethnocentric American views of Arab and Muslim. The forces of American nationalism seek to homogenize those on the outside into vague, exotic threats. Imagined walls and barriers hide the humanity of others leading to a fear and uncertainty that can facilitate dehumanization and aggression. Artwork, when used for a global form of education, can dislodge our flattened, stereotypical ideas of the Other. This would require a form pragmatic postcolonial pedagogy that could disturb assumptions and beliefs that have gained power through repetition. Images and text that contradict the habitual, could force reexamination and cause the viewer to doubt the stereotyped images that have been built through bias in the media. The art of Marjane Satrapi, Shirin Neshat, Emily Jacir, and Mona Hatoum form the base of a visual pedagogy that could re-form the stereotypical vision of the victimized, passive woman whose repression is a threat to freedom.

The choice of particular artists was based on a desire to represent a wide variety of media, subject matter, and political intentionality of the work. It is

important to my project to not construct new generalizations as I seek to deconstruct the current monolithic image of the Muslim Woman. Therefore, I do not refer to the artists as “Muslim Artists” or “Arab Artists” because that would be inaccurate. Each artist chosen has a distinct and complex relationship to traditionally Muslim countries and to the West and I hope to highlight the complexity of connection to culture and geography in discussing each artist and her work.

I wanted to choose a couple of artists, such as Neshat and Hatoum, who are well known within the contemporary art world and have had long, evolving careers. I plan to look at artwork from different stages in their bodies of work to trace the changes in media and intention. Like many transnational, postmodern artists, these women have deep connections to the political and cultural contexts of their experience, and use their artwork to theoretically understand and communicate to a larger audience. As their careers and awareness of audience reception evolved, both women have expanded their artwork from the personal and didactic to more lyrical, and abstracted. Neshat and Hatoum use time and space within recent work, through video and installation. I purposely choose to highlight Hatoum’s early career and contrast it with the evolution of her work that resulted in highly abstract installation work. Early work focused on overt political messages relating to her homeland in Lebanon. Recent installation work leaves the viewer with a less clear idea of the artist’s intention, requiring reading of explanatory text to construct meaning.

I chose Emily Jacir as a more recent entrant onto the global stage of contemporary art. In many ways the freshness of her career can be seen in the experimental media of her work. She has used personal ads in newspapers and the act of changing currency as unorthodox forms of performance art. She is the only artist of the four who was born in the United States and chooses to travel and maintain ties to the Muslim world in Palestine. Her artwork is underpinned with the choice and freedom of movement that she has as an American citizen, and that leads to interesting questions about her position within the community of Palestinian exiles in the United States and in her travels to the Middle East.

Marjane Satrapi is in many ways outside of the traditional art world. Her graphic novels are mass-produced and distributed to reach a larger audience than the other works. I am interested in her outsider status within the art world and how the format of her art within graphic novels alters the possible readings and effects of her drawings. The format of the graphic novel provides for a narrative structure and more direct relation between image and text than the other artists in the project. I am interested in how this connection can work to both expand and limit meaning production by the viewer. By using a traditionally “low” art form that reaches people who do not enter galleries or museums, how does Satrapi find and engage her audience? And how does this difference provide possible expansion of our ideas of what the relationship between art and pedagogy can be?

Methodologies

My methodologies for this work are multiple and layered. The research evolves from a theoretical analysis of the current political and social currents of globalization that have prepared the ground for the production of visual images of difference. I position myself within and between several methodological frameworks: critical theory, postcolonial and feminist methodologies, and critical visual analysis based in semiology and discourse analysis. By working with these multiple, overlapping methodologies I hope to lay out and deconstruct Western discourses of truth about cultural superiority and difference, and then reconstruct and suggest possibilities for transformation through the analysis of artwork and the creation of pedagogic spaces. The common thread of these paradigms is the postmodern critique of the modernist concepts of objective truth and the detached researcher and the possibility of using research to actively transform knowledge.

Critical Theory

Critical theory, as articulated in Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (1998), has as its purpose, “the *critique and transformation* of the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender structures that constrain and exploit humankind,” (p. 211). The inquiry within this critical theory paradigm is “historically situated,” and “provides stimulus to action,” (p. 213). In the theoretical reading and critique of current strands of globalization, I situate my greater project within the historical, political, and cultural circumstances that are

geographically specific and contextual. I am interested in using a specific postmodern critical approach, detailed by Joe Kincheloe and Peter McLaren (1998), that stresses the connection of research to the “deconstructing of Western metanarratives of truth and the ethnocentrism implicit in the European view of history as the unilinear progress of universal reason” (p. 271). In chapters 2, 3, and 4 I deconstruct texts and discourse that pose Western objective truth about specific forms of difference in the constructed “Orient”. My goal is to lay the foundational critique of historical and contemporary discourse of the Other in order to frame the transformation that I believe is possible in using the expression of art for pedagogy in chapters 5 and 6.

Postcolonial and Feminist Methodologies

The addition of postcolonial and feminist theory to the critical methodology adds a focus on the center/margin binary and situates certain geographies and identities as marginalized within Western scholarship. “A critical theory reconceptualized by poststructuralism and feminism promotes a politics of difference that refuses to pathologize or exoticize the Other” (Kincheloe & McLaren, p. 275). In dealing with constructions of difference within discourse, I use feminist critique of the normalized distinction of self/other. In speaking of the representation of Muslim women in the West, I do not intend to speak “for” the women as a generalized group. My goal is not to be the Western scholar coming to the aid of voiceless, marginalized peoples. Michelle Fine’s essay “Working the Hyphens: Reinventing Self and Other in Qualitative Research”

(1998), lays out the traditional relationship of researcher as “self” to the object of research, “other”. “The social sciences have been, and still are, long on texts that inscribe some Others, preserve other Others from scrutiny, and seek to hide the researcher/writer under a veil of neutrality or objectivity” (p. 137). The ultimate subject of my scrutiny is the Western construction of the Muslim woman, and my own complicity as Western privileged woman in this construction. I hope to make explicit the historical, cultural, and political processes that create the Other in hopes of breaking down the self/other and center/margin binaries. Postcolonial theory gives me a vocabulary to utilize this methodology, to discuss the liminal, hybrid space that been ignored in modernist Western discourse about difference.

Work of globalization theorists, psychologists, and feminist postcolonial theorists who examine the transcultural roots of conflict provides a conceptual foundation for the later use of visual methodology to interpret Western images that reinforce hegemonic cultural differences, and the artwork of women who work to subvert this hegemony.

Critical Visual Methodology

To choose and interpret the visual images that construct the dominant visual discourse and those that subvert it, I am relying heavily on the critical visual methodologies that are presented in Gillian Rose’s Visual Methodologies, written in 2001. She writes of three criteria for a critical approach to choosing, viewing, and analyzing images: taking “images seriously,” “thinking about the social conditions and effects of visual objects,” and “considering your own way of

looking at images” (p. 15-6). These criteria foreground the cultural contexts of image and audience, while not ignoring the content of images within greater social critique. I examine historical and current Western images of Muslim women through two of Rose’s methodological lenses: visual semiology that examines the cultural meaning embedded in visual signs, and visual discourse analysis that looks at the combined cultural meanings and discourse produced through the repetition and institutional force of the images.

Visual semiology and myth. The field of semiology that was first introduced to the field of linguistics by Ferdinand de Saussure (1972) is a useful methodological tool when applied to the visual. In a visual representation of Muslim women in Western media, very specific meanings are embedded in location of the image, the angle of the figure, the level of covering or uncovering of the body, and the woman’s eyes in relation to the photographer. These loaded signs construct a cultural code, “a set of conventionalized ways of making meaning that are specific to particular groups of people” (Rose, 2001, p. 88). The visual signifier of a covered face creates very different signified meanings based on geographical and cultural context. Roland Barthes’ concept of cultural myth is made up of visual signs that are embedded with this cultural meaning and presented in a way that combines individual signs to change or reinforce meaning. “Semiology has taught us that myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal” (Barthes, 1972, p. 142). Myth functions to turn socially and historically created classifications and difference into

biological, natural fact. The myth of the victimized, oppressed Muslim woman colors any interpretation of an image of a veiled woman. Automatic assumptions about the woman are made, agency is denied and ideas about the openness and freedom of the West are reinforced.

Visual discourse analysis. The force of cultural myth and the regime of representation are related to an imbalance of power in discourse as theorized by Michel Foucault (1972). “Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true,” (p. 73). How was the objectivity/subjectivity of the Muslim woman created through political and cultural visual discourse? Methodological tools of visual discourse analysis, which were theorized by Stuart Hall (1997) in Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices, Nicholas Mirzoeff (1999) in An Introduction to Visual Culture and by Rose (2001) in Visual Methodologies, inform my analysis of the current regimes of representation of Muslim women in the West:

Discourse analysis can also be used to explore how images construct specific views of the world, in which case...visuality is viewed as the topic of research, and the discourse analyst is interested in how images construct accounts of the social world. (Rose, p. 140)

How is the discursive subject of this woman produced in the culturally produced images? I analyze multiple images from Western historical sources produced in the colonial era of the eroticized, unavailable woman. Malek Alloula’s (1986) Colonial Harem provides an example of one form of Western historical

representation of Muslim women in Algeria. Alloula theorizes the meaning of the covered women's bodies in relation to the gaze of the French photographer. The Algerian women were veiled, unavailable to the penetrating gaze of the colonizer, refusing to submit. "The photographer will respond to this quiet and almost natural challenge by means of a double violation: he will unveil the veiled and give figural representation to the forbidden" (p. 14).

What visual signs were coded in the earliest representations of these women; and how have the meanings of visual signs been altered by their relationship to other signs and forms of representation? The visual codes of different levels of covering or uncovering of women's bodies, and the visual location of the image as public or private space are important to my analysis. The veil is the most often represented sign of difference that I trace through historical and contemporary images. I study multiple visual and textual sources that represent the veil to create a genealogy of the Western discursive production of the Muslim woman. The images range from colonial era paintings and later photographs of Muslim women imagined by the colonizer, to the current images that circulate through Associated Press reports and other news photos of veiled, covered women.

Stuart Hall's (1997) essay entitled "The Spectacle of the Other" provides a method for analyzing the repetition of media representations of difference and stereotype. Hall extends the semiotics of cultural texts to a system of representation, where meanings build and interact with other images and in turn

are affected by the caption or text. The written and visual work together and can reinforce or alter the meaning of the overall representation:

But at the broader cultural level of how ‘difference’ and ‘otherness’ is being represented in a particular culture at any moment, we can see similar representational practices and figures being repeated, with variations, from one text or site of representation to another. (p. 232)

The play of meaning, inter-textuality, constructs what Hall names as a regime of representation. The play of meaning in multiple texts, inter-textuality, constructs what Hall names as a regime of representation. While meaning of visual signs may slip and change, the repetition of loaded markers of difference create a layering and sedimentation of meaning. A “racialized regime of representation” (p. 249) is created through repetitive representation of ethnic or racial difference that serves to naturalize difference and freeze groups of people in a place of inferiority.

The imbalanced power relations of colonialism exported the Western coded images of Muslim women around the world. Visual elements, such as the veil, were entrenched and embedded with meaning by the patriarchal systems of control within colonialism. To capture what he sees as the difference in reception of the moving nature of the image Mirzoeff (1999) expands on the semiotic sign with the concept of the “visual event”. “By visual event, I mean an interaction of the visual sign, the technology that enables and sustains that sign, and the viewer” (p. 15). The numerous visual events that occur every day relate and build on other events to create complex webs of visual experience and meaning. With

the Internet and increasing choice of television and video options, the speed and layering of visual events are reaching new levels. I investigate how the visual discourse has changed in the media representations of Muslim women since 9/11. How is the repetition of cultural codes and signs of the earliest Western representations functioning in more current media images of women?

Analyzing the Artwork

To analyze the artwork of Neshat, Satrapi, Hatoum, and Jacir I use visual content analysis to describe the visual elements and media of the art. The implied meanings and connotations of the elements present in the art are discussed using visual discourse analysis and semiotics. How do the codes and signs in the artwork relate and slip against the meaning of similar visual codes in the stereotypical media representations? I compare the ways these artists use the cultural codes of the veil, the woman's body, the gaze, and the location of the image to create different meanings than the media images. For instance, I trace the representation of the veiled woman in the work of Shirin Neshat in her earlier photographic work and how this visual code has evolved in her more recent video work. The meaning of the veil in Neshat's work is constructed in strategic ways to address historical representations. How have the discourses of Western Imperialism, liberty, and freedom affected the work of these women artists? I am interested in looking at how the work might subvert hegemonic images of Muslim women, but also of interest is the ways in which the same piece might function to re-inscribe the discourse of the oppressed, veiled woman. No cultural text can be

created or read in a political and social vacuum, and there are complex and often opaque connections to multiple conflicting discourses. How could this artwork be used as a justification for wars of “liberation” by the United States? Could the same image be used to dismantle fear and intolerance in the citizens of the United States?

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2: (re)move

In this postcolonial, postmodern era how have nationalism and globalization shaped the idea of others and led to levels of distancing and aggression? How are imagined borders and communities contributing to the current level of national and religious misunderstanding and conflict? The notion of identity, of “who I am,” has changed and slipped as global communications become faster, as the Internet introduces instantaneous connections, and as the ideas of objective truth and stable identities are revealed to be inventions of modernism. This chapter explores the tensions, anxieties, and challenges that we face as a result of increased globalization. I use the recently publicized document from the United Nations group the Alliance of Civilizations, which addresses the current tensions between the West and traditionally Muslim nations, to provide a structure to my examination of globalization.

Chapter 3: (re)view

This chapter delineates historical perspectives and discourse of the colonial and postcolonial era that inform the unequal power relationships of

West/East and Male/Female. The postcolonial scholarship that deals with the construction of the “Orient” and the exoticized Eastern woman provides historical foundation for the contemporary visibility of the veiled woman. The theorists whose writing addresses the historical subject and the construction of the veil identify a genealogy of the discourse that informs our current debates and fears.

Chapter 4: (re)inscribe

Chapter four works from the historical visual and postcolonial analysis of chapter three and extends the analysis to the current cultural debates and declarations that surround the wearing of the veil. I use the theories of representation and postcolonialism that address the historical context to deconstruct our current discursive image of the Muslim woman. The current political debate in Britain, France, Tunisia, Turkey, and the United States is over the wearing of the veil in public places. Recent statements and acts in these countries have intensified the centrality of the Muslim woman’s body as the site of struggle over cultural diversity. I use recent media articles and images to explore the current political moves against the wearing of the veil in the West, and how the recent discourse of the veil is connected to the growing global tensions detailed in the media and in the report by the Alliance.

Chapter 5: (re)present

In this chapter I analyze of the artwork and identity of the artists Shirin Neshat, Emily Jacir, Mona Hattoum, and Marjane Satrapi. Three of these women

artists were born into traditionally Muslim cultures and emigrated to either Europe or the United States at different points in their lives. Jacir was born in New York to parents of Palestinian origin and has traveled and negotiated the two cultures throughout her life and artistic career. Hatoum was born in Palestine and was exiled to Lebanon with her family at the creation of the Israeli state and she moved to London to attend art school. Neshat and Satrapi were both born in Iran; Satrapi left after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 to attend boarding school in Vienna, and Neshat left to study before the Revolution and was unable to return for many years. Neshat and Satrapi use the experience of Muslim women and their relationship with the veil quite literally in their work. How has their exposure to the discourses of Western representation affected the expression of identity in their artwork? Is the use of the veil in Neshat's work an exoticized image that plays into Orientalist fantasy? Can Satrapi's description of her obsession with Western popular music be read as a romanticized view of Western liberty at the expense of the humanity of the Iranian people?

Chapter 6: (re)new

I use this chapter to create pedagogical possibilities for using the artwork from chapter five to create a more globally responsible view of the Other. The tensions of increased globalization have created greater contact with the rest of the world, without greater information and understanding of those who live in this world. There is a lack of formal and informal methods of education that contribute to the understanding of those from nations and cultures outside our

borders. I outline a tentative globally responsible pedagogy of difference that can address the imbalanced power and privilege at work in representations of the Other. Pragmatic philosophy that values uncertainty, fallibility, and contingency is my starting point for using art to break us out of our historical ways of thinking and representing other cultures.

I get easily depressed when reading about the daily acts of nationalist, fundamentalist hatred and military aggression in the news; there seems to be an endless variety of ways to create and act on hostility towards those who are different. Many people and organizations in the world, including of course the government and armed forces of the United States, act within a consciousness of violence that produces more violent acts in response; creating a cycle that feeds more of the same, as all other alternatives seem impossible. Where peaceful solutions once seemed a real outcome, reciprocal acts of war escalate to the point of seemingly no return. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and now the American wars without end in Afghanistan and Iraq fill headlines with missile attacks and bombings, every side too far down the path of violence to see another alternative. These violent global events and increased migration and communication seem to be driving many Americans toward a greater willed ignorance and fear of difference and a strengthening of ethnocentric and uber-patriotic rhetoric.

The renewed focus on the Muslim woman's body as the site for greater political and cultural struggles is a disturbing trend. Politicians speak in megarhetoric about the need to forcibly veil or unveil the woman's body; the body

is the object of both exotic fascination and fear of difference. There is an urgent need for a transcultural dialogue that includes the expression and voices of women who have experience and connection to Islam. The need for political dialogue cannot be held separately from the profusion of cultural production by women who hold a stake in the current battle over the veil. Artificial walls that keep the expression of politically informed artists outside the public sites of political dialogue need to be breached if the Muslim woman as object in for Western fear and fascination is to be restored as a subject with agency and the will to act. I have to believe that change is possible; education can create a more responsible and humane reaction to and interaction with difference. Opening up education to the postcolonial imagination and to the polycentric pedagogy creates spaces for thinking more creatively and working through the ignorance-based fear that distorts and obscured real relationships with difference.

A Note on Terminology

I use several terms in this dissertation that are problematic and in many ways simplistic and inaccurate. I write of the “West” and the “Muslim World” as broad terms to describe large, diverse, and divergent groups of people who have been designated in this way by the media discourse. I fully realize that there is not one way of being “Western” or “Muslim”. Also, the term “American” is a problematic way of naming the citizens of the United States, because a majority of those who live in the Americas do not live in the U.S. and rightfully resent the appellation. However, to be able to speak of the citizens of the United States in a

less cumbersome manner, I will refer to them (problematically) as Americans. I also have issue with making any sweeping claims to a unitary way of thinking, believing, or behaving. Intersecting allegiances and lenses inform how we are affected by the changes in the flow of information and money in the global era. Our experiences of the world and of economic and cultural forces in globalization (i.e., the loss of job due to outsourcing, the uncertainty of migration and immigration, or the increasing linguistic and ethnic diversity of towns across the United States) are inextricably tied to our education, race, gender, class, sexuality, family, neighborhood, and regional geography, along with national citizenship. I object to using polls of public opinion or government policy as a measurement of general sentiment. However, to engage in productive dialogue about global forces I must make broad statements that may reflect trends but have no claim to any individual truth. When I write “American,” “Western,” or “Muslim” I am not supposing that I speak for any particular person or group of people and absolutely realize that there exist more differences than similarities of opinion among all named communities.

CHAPTER II

(RE)MOVE

And we must note immediately that it is always the West, and not Christianity, that seems pitted against Islam. Why? Because the assumption is that whereas ‘the West’ is greater than and has surpassed the stage of Christianity, its principal religion, the world of Islam- its varied societies, histories, and languages notwithstanding- is still mired in religion, primitivity, and backwardness. (Said, 1981, p. 9)

It would be disastrous if the current globalization were to be a one-way process, with ‘universal transmitters’ on one side and ‘receivers’ on the other, with the ‘norm’ set against the ‘exceptions’; with on the one hand those who think they have nothing to learn from the rest of the world, and on the other those who believe that the rest of the world will never listen to them. (Maalouf, 1996, p. 122)

Contemporary rhetoric heard in the media from around the world seems to confirm the idea that we are in the midst of a “Clash of Civilizations” (Huntington, 1998), an escalation in tension and violence between the West and Islam. Though Samuel Huntington’s discourse of clash is historically grounded, the theory gained new life after the events of September 11th. Since then, every action of an Islamist extremist group and every act of American or Western aggression seem to reinforce this notion that we are headed toward an ultimate struggle that pits these two diametrically opposed sides against each other in a

fight for the hearts and minds of global citizens. How have we come to this place of violent clash, of identity defined (by the media, extremists, and politicians) so exclusively by the region of the world or the religion practiced, by traditionally static and xenophobic ideas of community? What does this mean for those of us who share a belief in the possibility of transcultural identities that are defined by the mingling of difference and by movement? In this chapter, I lay out different aspects of globalization that have affected the formation of identity and attachment. This groundwork provides a way to view the visual representation of Muslim women from a contemporary globalized lens.

While in many ways the globe seems to be shrinking, the gap in level of power and wealth between what is called the First World and the Second, Third, and Fourth Worlds is widening. The increased material disparity is readily apparent, with American wealth and excess beamed worldwide through television and Internet programming. So, while in many ways we are at a time of the greatest global codependence, we are also at a time of growing animosity and uncertainty. “Never have men had so many things in common- knowledge, points of reference, images, words, instruments and tools of all kinds. But this only increases their desire to assert their difference” (Maalouf, 1996, p. 93). There is a crisis of identity, where ties of the centralized nation-state and traditional forms of attachment are weakened and other associations rush in to fill the void. Recent years have seen the rise in many different fundamentalisms: free market fundamentalism, the reactionary Christian right, and Muslim fundamentalism to

name a few. As stable connections to place, community, nation, or tribe are loosened, the anxiety and fear of what is to come increases. This nebulous threat causes many to call for a return to traditional ways of living, a longing for an idealized past that has never been.

Historical global events and the effects of globalization contribute to the contemporary American vision of the outside world in the 21st century. Many people in the United States feel an embedded sense of fear at the very thought of “Islam,” the media images of terrorists, and extremist protesters shouting, “Death to America”. Muslims are often viewed with an amorphous sense of paranoia and suspicion. I recently had a disturbing conversation with a friend, whom I consider to be politically and culturally aware. When the topic of Islam came up in our discussion of current events I saw a deep sense of fear in her eyes. She said, “Well, you have to admit that Muslims are inherently violent. And that there are more extremists in Islam than in other religions.” I argued that it was biased media images of Islam that created these views, that individual extremists are present in all faiths and cultures. White, American citizens like Timothy McVeigh have committed acts of terror without associating his entire ethnic group with fear and violence. My verbal argument made no dent in this emotional fear response. It is the root of my friend’s reaction that I wish to investigate in this chapter. How have the changes associated with globalization fed into terrorist use of the United States as representative of absolute evil, and how have we,

mythically invincible Americans, come to this place of insecurity, where terror is equated with the foreign, the Muslim?

The psychological work of Vamik Volkan on the creation of national identity and the roots of ethnic conflict inform the current climate of fear and aggression in the United States. The terrorist attacks of September 11th fit Volkan's (1997) description of a "chosen trauma". It is defined as, "a shared mental representation of the event, which includes realistic information, fantasized expectations, intense feelings, and defenses against unacceptable thoughts" (p. 48). The nation has been rallied around the shared mental image of the airplane crashing into the Twin Towers. When a justification for violence, racial profiling, or curtailing of civil liberties is needed, the image of September 11th is called forth. The shared feeling of helplessness that is invoked provides a reason to rally around the imagined patriotic identity of "American". It is a psychological feeling that we are all in this together and that those on the outside are trying to destroy what we stand for and what we have. The psychological theories behind the imagined borders of national identity and the creation of vulnerability help to explain how this climate of fear is created and manipulated.

The struggle over personal and group identity is a central factor in the increased movement, communication, and fear are results of globalization. The discussion of any current forms of globalization and global events must be couched in an exploration of identity formation and attachment to various communities and groups. Identity is at the heart of how we see ourselves in

relation to others and how we then interact within and outside of our communities. For my project, the purpose of examining current theories of globalization and contemporary world events is to critically analyze the multiple ways that human identity is constructed, manipulated, and negotiated on the global stage. There exists a tension between those who are comfortable with uncertainty, feel able to adjust to change, new environments, and communities and those who feel tense and fearful of change and therefore cling to a singular sense of identity. I think of these conflicting trends as either an inclusive or exclusive sense of identity. Several descriptors have been used to discuss the group of people who have an inclusive, more fluid construction of identity: cosmopolitans, diaspora discourse, and transcitizens to name a few. I look at the hybridity and fluidity in these identity constructions in relation to the other trend in contemporary response to global forces: the tightening, closing in, of exclusionary identity claims such as nationalist, religious fundamentalist, and extremist groups that build their sense of self around who they exclude from the group. How has the experience of uncertainty been utilized by leaders of nations, extremist groups, and reactionary political parties to create an imagined sense of group unity that is built on the denial and removal of difference? What are the common threads in the different theoretical descriptors of those who have a more inclusive, global consciousness and how can the more flexible notion of citizenship and group identity be used to allay fears of difference and change? I am especially interested in how globalization and identity formation have

influence and been influenced by the increasingly polarizing rhetoric of clash between the West and the Muslim world. In what ways has each side (which is unified in imaginary terms alone) defined itself in relation to the other?

I begin by analyzing the structures and organization of cultural globalization, using vertebrate and cellular models to discuss the structure and function of groups and actors. The communication of groups and individuals can be understood within a framework of megarhetoric and micronarrative, two often-opposing forms of creation and relation in global interactions. The megarhetoric is of specific interest in laying a foundation for the global flow of fear and over-simplification that inform official global relationships. I go into some detail regarding the historical and political factors that have led to the West/Muslim world tension, basing the analysis on the Alliance of Civilizations report from the United Nations. The chapter concludes with a look at the inclusive form of identity creation that is based on forming relationships and community with those who are different. Transcitizens and rooted cosmopolitans form different and more inclusive connections to various geographies and communities at once; identifying both with a specific cultural geography and the liminal space between cultures.

Globalization: Tentative Definitions

Globalization is a complex and shifting term that has been used to define the flow of global capital, the movement of people through travel, migration, exile, and diaspora, and the increasingly global networks of information and media.

There are at least five forms of defined globalization: industrial, referring to the rise of transnational corporations, financial, the movement and investment of financial resources, political, the increased global awareness and action of political actors, informational, the flow of communication through telephone, television, Internet, etc., and cultural globalization, the creation of hybrid cross-cultural practices (“Globalization”, 2007). Many have decried the death of the nation-state as borders seem to be blurring under the pressure of all aforementioned forms of the global flow. The effects of globalization are as complex as the varying definitions of the term. Transnational corporations (mostly based in the United States) seem to be obvious beneficiaries, growing in size and wealth as international treaties remove barriers and regulations that slow international trade. The over-worked and under-paid global workers who ensure the functioning of transnational corporations are an often-invisible effect of this financial form of globalization. As financial resources flow more easily due to trade agreements and deregulation, the global rich (often referred to as the First World) are getting richer at the expense of the global poor (Third, and Fourth Worlds).

With intensifying globalization of political alliances and organizations, the certainty of national sovereignty and rigidity of borders is increasingly under interrogation as movement and flow of capital and information blur traditional boundaries. For many nation-states, the fall of Soviet communism and the end of the Cold War has led to a more dynamic, less stable world order. The United

States has defined itself for the past sixty or so years primarily against the negative identity of our enemy. For many years in the twentieth century, we had the Soviet Union and communism as the darkness to compare to the shining light of our capitalist democracy. In popular culture, the “bad guy” was easy to predict and understand; he had a thick Russian accent and was intent on disrupting or destroying the “American Way”. There was an unspoken comfort in having an enemy that was so clearly defined, a communist “them” to rally our nationalist sentiment around. With the unraveling of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, the Iron door that we had been pushing and leaning against collapsed. We were left hanging in mid-air, no longer able to define our national identity by pointing to a stable, geographically contained enemy.

After several years in the 1990’s of lacking an outside force against which to define an enemy, the attempted bombing of the World Trade Center and the bombings of United States Embassies in Africa created a new foe. In the years since September 11th, global terrorist networks have replaced the Soviet Union as the force we need to defend our freedom against. Globalization is not only associated with the movement of capital and people, it is now tinged with the nebulous fear of terrorism in the United States. The fear has been directly linked to organizations like Al Qaeda and Hezbollah, which in turn have represented Islamic extremists, a term equated in many minds simply with Islam. Media outlets have exacerbated this connected of terror and Islam through the labeling

of those in Islamist groups as “terrorist” and those acting in state sponsored terror as “soldiers” even when the acts committed are similar. A Palestinian suicide bomber is clearly identified as a terrorist, while an Israeli air raid that levels a village is not an act of terror. Both acts kill civilians with brutal force, but the difference in state and non-state actors signals the difference in terminology. The United States foreign policy increases the connection between terror and Islam in its strategy toward diplomacy and war. We engaged in unilateral war with Iraq for “regime change” at even the slightest hint of nuclear weapons (evidence of which has been proven to be fabricated) and we adopt a hard line hawkish stance toward the nuclear aspirations of Iran. However, when North Korea develops and tests nuclear warheads, we urge sanctions and multi-lateral talks. While the situations may have more to do with strategic oil reserves than religion, many view our foreign policy as anti-Islamic.

Structures of Globalization

What are the historical and theoretical backdrops for our current forms of globalization? I choose to situate the large category of globalization within Arjun Appadurai’s (1994) two theoretical frameworks: on the level of discourse he writes of megarhetoric and micronarrative, and on the level of organizations the split is between vertebrate and cellular structures. Not all people, events, and interactions that make up globalization fit into these binaries that divide structures and events into generalized categories, and space needs to be created for the messy in-between spaces as well. The larger economic and political shifts

of globalization can be understood by the organized, centrally controlled vertebrate structure of state and corporation and its use of megarhetoric to control discourse and influence public opinion. Smaller-scale, grassroots globalization use the micronarrative of 'unofficial' discourse, spreading messages through music, art, and the Internet. Cellular in structure, the grassroots or no-roots structure is not tied to one specific nation-state. Cellular forms grow and reproduce quickly, are mobile and multiple. The shifting of global discourse, on the level of 'megarhetoric' and of 'micronarrative', has left a great number of Americans feeling that they are on the losing end, losing jobs, wealth, and power to those in the rest of the world. Globalization before 9/11 could be easily broken up into Appadurai's categories of mega and micro level actions and players. The events of 9/11/01 suddenly made the micro-level player, the person who acts without cover of flag and country, central to the nationalist discourse of fear.

In The Fear of Small Numbers, Appadurai (2006) coins the term 'cellular globalization' as a new way to imagine the non-state and cross-state actors in contemporary terms. Terrorists who have broken roots to place and time, who are not wearing uniforms or identifying themselves in advance, are now powerful actors on the global stage. Nation-states, with the need for megarhetoric and bureaucratic machines, move slowly compared to the uprooted and transnational terrorist. The certainty of who is the enemy has eroded, and the fight against the unknown cellular elements has created a tense climate with an alarming fear of difference. All levels of difference have taken on the potential for terror. Those

who speak other languages, whose skin is a darker shade, who wear foreign clothing are suspect as potential threats to our “American way of life”. Fear of the unknown has exploded into color-coded warning systems, and thoughts that the man of nebulous foreign descent in front of you on the airplane could be a hijacker. Being different has morphed into being suspect. The definition of what it means to be and to look “American” is narrowing, leaving more people on the periphery.

Megarhetoric v. Micronarrative

While the movement of capital beyond national borders led the charge to modern globalization, movement of people and information are the developments that more directly affect cultural representations. The shift from acquisition of land and goods to the freedom of movement of money and goods is the shift from the national to the transnational, what Zygmunt Bauman (2000) named as the shift from “heavy capitalism” to “light capitalism”. The heavy, colonial period focused on the accumulation of power and land. “Territory was the most acute of modern obsessions, its acquisition among the most compulsive of modern urges” (p. 114). In the final stages of “heavy” modernity, capital led the charge to mobility and the weakening of national sovereignty. Transnational capital defies borders and national laws, breaking down the divisions laid down in the heavy, accumulation of land and colonies. Bauman contends that the shift in contemporary power “consists in one’s own capacity to escape, to disengage, to ‘be elsewhere’” (p. 120).

Contemporary forms of globalization are led by the information exchange on the Internet, global media conglomerates, and more liquid movement of capital. The global space available for expression and organization of the Internet is reaching and being used by more people daily, though access to technology is still very much affected by social and geographical location. Arjun Appadurai (1998) stresses the two factors of mass mediation (the increasingly global movement of information) and mass migration (the global movement of people) as features of contemporary globalization. Even mass media and official government rhetoric are not consumed intact by passive groups; people receive, interpret, and reform information and communication in multiple and unpredictable ways. For Appadurai, the global media is not creating a homogenized, Americanized hoard but is fostering opportunity for imagination, resistance, and agency:

This theory of a break- or rupture- with its strong emphasis on electronic mediation and mass migration, is necessarily a theory of the recent past (or the extended present) because it is only in the past two decades or so that media and migration have become so massively globalized, that is to say, active across large and irregular transnational terrain. (p. 178)

This strain of globalization theory emphasizes the micronarrative, small-scale change, and the in-between spaces where cultures collide and transculture is produced. There are many people who do not fit into either the vertebrate or cellular structures of globalization; most of us operate in the messy area outside

of official organizations. We consume media from many locations, think and create responses to interchanges that cannot be easily categorized:

The megarhetoric of developmental modernization (economic growth, high technology, agribusiness, schooling, militarization) in many countries is still with us. But it is often punctuated, interrogated, and domesticated by the micronarratives of film, television, music, and other expressive forms, which allow modernity to be rewritten more as vernacular globalization and less as a concession to large-scale national and international policies. (p. 179)

This ‘megarhetoric’ is the official face of globalization on all sides, the transnational corporation that has factories in the third world and capital wealth in the first, and the Presidential press conferences that set the official tone for national identity, and the released videos of terrorist leaders. Leaders of vertebrate nation-states and corporations officially release megarhetoric, but cellular forms of globalization, such as Al Qaeda, also release these grand public pronouncements. Micronarrative forms of global communication are more intimate and creative forms of mingling that create hybrid identities and grassroots organizations that escape the borders of nation-state.

Official Nationalism, Extremism, and Megarhetoric

The concept of “official nationalism”, defined by Benedict Anderson (1983), is “an anticipatory strategy adopted by the dominant groups which are threatened with marginalization,” (p. 101). It is a defensive strategy of the powerful who feel that their tight grasp on dominance is threatened. The extreme forms of patriotism that surface at times of war or after terrorist attack are

natural extensions of this fear-based nationalism. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, President George W. Bush has led a return to a form of nationalist protectionism that has polarized the United States and the globe. He has set up a “you’re either with us or against us” binary, separating the world into clear sides. Those who follow and support the administration without question on one side, and those who question or push for alternate solutions are on the side of the terrorists. Most outside the U.S. recognize the megahistorical strategies of Bush as creating a special uniqueness to American identity at the expense of the rest of humanity. In examining Presidential speeches from the month of October 2001, I have extracted the following quotes:

Oct. 10, 2001

“Now is the time to draw the line in the sand against the evil ones. And this government is committed to doing just that. Our war is not against a religion. Our war is against evil.”

Oct. 17, 2001

“The evildoers have struck our nation, but out of evil comes good. We are a good, kind-hearted, decent people, and we're showing the world just that in our compassion and our resolve.”

Oct. 24, 2001

“Anybody who tries to affect the lives of our good citizens is evil.”

October 25, 2001

“We're fighting evil people. It's important for the boys and girls of Thurgood Marshall to know that we're fighting evil with good.”

October 26, 2001

“This legislation is essential not only to pursuing and punishing terrorists, but also preventing more atrocities in the

hands of the evil ones. This government will enforce this law with all the urgency of a nation at war. The elected branches of our government, and both political parties, are united in our resolve to fight and stop and punish those who would do harm to the American people.”

October 29, 2001

“We believe that the country must stay on alert, that there is -- that our enemies still hate us. Our enemies have no values that regard life as precious.”

(Bush, 2001)

The rhetoric is not just of special uniqueness of Americans, but of an ultimate struggle between forces of good and evil. Though in many speeches Bush states that we are not fighting a war against Islam, the overall impression is that “us” (the American, the Christian, the rational Westerner) are irredeemably good and that “them” (the Other, the Muslim, the irrational Easterner) are irredeemably evil and focused on the destruction of everything good and pure. The borders of nation are reinforced as those within and without are more clearly defined through official state speeches and laws. In the days and months following the terrorist attacks, the most powerful military country on earth turned itself into ultimate innocent victim. The question most posed by the media and people I overheard post-September 11th was, “Why do they hate us?” This remark shows that the official rhetoric of American uniqueness and goodness was aided by a complete ignorance of the history of U.S. foreign policy. The contrast between American as good and Muslim as evil was bolstered by the rhetoric of politicians. “Note that all of the dominant right-wing and Bush administration discourses are fundamentally Manichean, positing a binary opposition between good and evil,

us and them, civilization and barbarism” (Kellner, 2004, p. 28). The racist backlash after 9/11 meant that anyone who “looked Muslim,” was subjected to racial profiling, taunting, harassment, and possible violent attack.

Bauman (2000) writes of the nebulous fear that results in this kind of rigid binary of us/them. As fear and uncertainty rise, the need to cling to a shared national or ethnic identity increases, as this is the most automatic form of identification:

The inability to face up to the vexing plurality of human beings and the ambivalence of all classifying/filing decisions are, on the contrary self-perpetuating and self-reinforcing: the more effective the drive to homogeneity and the efforts to eliminate the difference, the more difficult it is to feel at home in the face of strangers, the more threatening the difference appear and the deeper and more intense is the anxiety it breeds. (p. 106)

The more we are pushed to rally around the flag and our own “special-ness,” and “goodness,” the greater the anxiety that something will invade, disturb, or infect us with their difference. This obsession with “pollution and purification,” (p. 108) goes hand in hand with the rhetoric of “good” that Bush uses freely. It is exemplified in the quote from October 17th: “We are a good, kind-hearted, decent people, and we're showing the world just that in our compassion and our resolve.” By saying that we are good and decent, it is implied that everyone else in the world is less so, and less deserving of freedom, prosperity, and blessing.

Islamist organizations have used megarethoric of binary a clash between good and evil as well. Leaders of extremist groups distort the meaning and cause

of Islam to suit their vision of violent retribution. Osama Bin Laden issued a fatwa in 1998 that states,

...the killing of Americans and their civilian and military allies is a religious duty for each and every Muslim to be carried out in whichever country they are until Al Aqsa mosque has been liberated from their grasp and until their armies have left Muslim lands...We also call on Muslim...to launch the raid on Satan's US troops and the devil's supporters allying with them, and to displace those who are behind them.
(cited in "UK's Bin Laden Dossier", 2001)

The call of Bin Laden is based on an extreme view of us/them, good/evil that calls on a "Muslim Holy War" against Americans. The rhetoric parallels Ayatollah Khomeini's reference to the United States as "The Great Satan," during the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran. The grand Manichean pronouncements of Western evil play on the real fears and insecurity that many feel to be caused by globalization, aggressive U.S. foreign policy, and the economic hegemony of U.S.-based transnational corporations.

Alliance of Civilizations

Samuel Huntington (1998) has described the increasingly violent and polarizing rhetoric as a "clash of civilizations", an inevitable result of the incommensurable differences between the West and the Muslim world. This theory of clashing requires a belief in the idea of distinct, isolated cultures that are homogenous and unified. Huntington also relies on the idea of cultural stasis, where the backbone of any of the world's cultures is essentially stable and defined. To counteract this idea of inevitable clash, the United Nations formed a

high-level study group to explore the historical, cultural, and political foundations of the rising tension and rhetoric of the imaginary divide between the West and Islam. The group, named “The Alliance of Civilizations” in a direct response to Huntington, released their findings in a report on November 13th, 2006. The report confirms many of my own thoughts about the root causes in the rise of tension. Breaking down the foundations of conflict by region, the group distributes cause and effect without letting any global power, specifically the United States, off the hook. On page nine, the report discusses the rising “Islamophobia” in the West, which has been fueled by political rhetoric of “Jihadists,” and “Islamic Fascism”.

One of the major historical causes of current global tension outlined in the report is European colonialism and the continued unequal power relationship of Western capitalism and military intervention in the rest of the world (particularly in the Muslim world). The British colonial control of Egypt and the French regime in Algeria are two examples of the long lasting influence of colonialism and postcolonial struggles to redefine national positions. In his essay, “Algeria Unveiled,” from 1959 (cited in Bailey & Tawadros 2003), Franz Fanon wrote about the tactic of the French colonial administration in Algeria to break the indigenous culture. He argued that the strategy was to break Algerian culture by convincing, through coercion or threat, the women to unveil and thus be “liberated” and agents of European freedom within their homes and communities. “The dominant administration solemnly undertook to defend this

woman, pictured as humiliated, sequestered, cloistered. It described the immense possibilities of women, unfortunately transformed by the Algerian man into inert, demonetized, indeed dehumanized, object” (p. 75). The tactic was similar to the tone of the British occupational authority in Egypt: you are barbaric and backwards because you refuse your women the freedom of dress and movement that European women have. The goal was to induce feelings of guilt and shame in native culture, a realization that European culture has much more to offer and the superiority should be peacefully accepted. “It was the colonialist’s frenzy to unveil the Algerian woman, it was his gamble on winning the battle of the veil at whatever cost, that were to provoke the native’s bristling resistance” (p. 77).

Fanon writes of a “counter-acculturation” (p. 76) that feeds resistance to the attempted outside modification of cultural customs and mores. The way of dressing, communicating, moving within a national culture is tied to the identity and value of that culture. When the French tried to do away with the custom of women veiling in public, they tapped into and invigorated a national spirit and sense of imagined community against the change. The discourse of the veil is discussed in more detail in chapters three and four, but it is an example of a native custom that was under threat from European colonial powers. The threat of loss led in many cases to the entrenchment of traditional values, and in the case of the veil, to a new sense of urgency and importance of holding tight to national and cultural customs. But, it is important to note that the meanings of such cultural practices were and are not static and uncontested from within.

During the Algerian resistance to the French, women used their veils as cover to carry illegal weapons to nationalist fighters. The donning of the veil in public was a form of resistance on its own for many women, a reclaiming of cultural authenticity in the face of European domination. Leila Ahmed (1992) writes of the centrality of the veil in the struggle between colonialist and nationalist discourse in Egypt:

To a considerable extent, overtly or covertly, inadvertently or otherwise, discussions of women in Islam in academies and outside of them, and in Muslim countries and outside of them, continue either to reinscribe the Western narrative of Islam as oppressor and the West as liberator and native classist versions of that narrative or, conversely, to reinscribe the contentions of Arabic narrative of resistance as to the essentialness of preserving Muslim customs, particularly with regard to women, as a sign of resistance to imperialism, whether colonial or postcolonial. (p. 54)

The veil was centralized by colonial European powers who believed that by promoting Western “liberation” for women, they could degrade the native culture and undermine the morale in the colony. It was one of the more subtle forms of degradation of national culture that that was meant to maintain control and win converts to the colonial government. This issue of Western paternalistic views of what is “best” for Muslim women is a continuing source of cultural and political conflict.

The report of the Alliance of Civilizations group also stresses the importance of the historical creation of the Israeli state by the United Nations in 1948 for current West/Muslim tension. Resulting in the displacement of Palestinians and Israeli occupation of land outside the 1948 decree, this conflict

resonates throughout the region as a source of antagonism and tension. “This occupation has been perceived in the Muslim world as a form of colonialism and has led many to believe, rightly or wrongly, that Israel is in collusion with ‘the West’” (Alliance report, 2006, p. 9). It is seen by some as a continuation of the humiliation and powerlessness of colonial influence in the Middle East; European and United States support for Israel at the expense of Palestinian land and people continually re-opens the wounds of colonial occupation and the perceived assault on Muslim identity.

Another historical event that is influential in the current global tension is the overthrow of the democratically elected leader of Iran with great help by the CIA in 1953. This event and the installation of a brutal, oppressive, but Western-friendly Shah is an event that most Americans do not remember at all, but is one that has formed part of the current Iranian consciousness of national identity and of Western influence. This historical event highlights to Iranians (and to many outside the United States) that the foreign policy of the United States in the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries has little to do with grand rhetoric of “liberty,” and “democracy”. National interest based in geo-political and economic dominance is the determined goal of U.S. relations with the rest of the globe, and those on the ground in Iran have a memory of this relation in action.

With the memory of U.S. support for tyrants and the lack of support for democracy that is not in their interest, many in the world see the officially stated goals of the invasion of Iraq as thinly veiled lies. The official name, “Operation

Iraqi Freedom” and the oft-stated goal of “spreading democracy throughout the Middle East” ring hollow outside of the cable news organizations and White House press conferences:

In the context of relations between Muslim and Western societies, the perception of double standards in the application of international law and the protection of human rights is particularly acute. Reports of collective punishment, targeted killings, torture, arbitrary detention, renditions, and the support of autocratic regimes contribute to an increased sense of vulnerability around the globe, particularly in Muslim countries, and to a perception of Western double standards. (p. 9)

The report also details trends in the Muslim world that are feeding into the increasingly tense rhetoric of clashing civilizations. The apparent rise of fundamentalist groups and regimes that spurn Western influence and urge return to a purely Muslim past are based in the nationalist struggles for independence. Postcolonial political leaders who came to power in the mid-twentieth century generally pushed modernization and secular government. These governments failed to provide the prosperity and stability that was promised:

More recent decades have witnessed the growth of a diverse array of religio-political movements- loosely termed ‘Islamist’- that have gained credibility and popular support in part by providing sorely needed social services, especially health and primary education, to deprived sectors of society. (p. 10)

An example of this type of religio-political organization is Hezbollah, who provided medical care and rebuilding efforts to war-torn areas of southern Lebanon after the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict of summer 2006. In impoverished

areas, with little in the way of governmental support or service, the groups that can provide for basic needs gain the trust and confidence of local populations.

The report also addresses the role of media in both the Western and Muslim discourse of difference and global relations. Media frame the debate in many Muslim countries over the role of women in Islam and in society. While the report insists that these debates must be solved internally within Muslim societies, the West can avoid detrimental effects by fueling anti-modern sentiments. “Propagation by Western media and official authorities of oversimplified explanations that either blame Islam as a religion or that falsely pit secularists against religious activists has a detrimental effect” (p. 11). The overly sensationalist tone of news programs and the patronizing and hypocritical tone of the United States government involving women’s issues abroad only serve to polarize the issue. For instance, the U.S. turns a blind eye to the treatment of women in “friendly” nations of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, but briefly focus on the treatment of women in Afghanistan when needed to support military offensives.

Maalouf on Identity

The postcolonial era has seen a rise in the assertion of a singular notion of citizenship and a backlash against those who attempt to legitimate alternative, multiple identities. With the dissolution of physical colonial rule, Eurocentric ways of knowing, through cultural and intellectual hegemony, were cemented in relation to the rest of the world. Amin Maalouf (1996) writes of this dominance:

The emergence in the West in the course of the last few centuries of a civilization that was to set physical and intellectual standards for the whole world, marginalizing all other civilizations and reducing their status to that of peripheral cultures threatened with extinction. (p. 69)

Positioning themselves at the center of the universe, the height of civilization, rationality, and intelligence, the colonial powers created a hierarchy of cultures that has been tenacious. Those who control the vast majority of global wealth and resources are afraid of losing their control and seem increasingly less willing to share. A fear of loss of scarce resources is stoked on news programs about the lack of oil and the threat of third-world development (for example, the idea that the Chinese are going to surpass the West in demand for resources in the near future). As immigrants from former colonies and third-world nations seek to enter the first-world, backlashes about purity of national identity (often centered around an official national language) are an attempt to “defend” first-world nations from change and difference. In addition to the rise in arguments for national purity, recent years have seen the rise in many different exclusive forms of attachment that rely on simplified definitions of identity (through religion, ethnic group, etc.). The commonality in these flattened notions of self and group is a refusal of the multiple and hybrid in favor of a singular attachment that clearly defines who is allowed inside the group and who is left out.

The central concept of identity, of chosen associations, is critical to understanding many related global events of the past few years. When Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published cartoons depicting the Prophet

Mohammed, the ferocity of backlash from the Muslim world was surprising to the Danish newspaper and many in Europe and the United States. There were calls for freedom of the press and the right to criticize:

But the right to criticize someone else has to be won, deserved. If, in general, you treat another with hostility and contempt, your slightest adverse remark, whether justified or not, will be seen as a sign of aggression, much more likely to make him obstinate and unapproachable than to persuade him to change for the better. (Maalouf, 1996, p. 42)

The re-publication of the cartoons in newspapers across the world shows the lack of sensitivity to the group identity and pride of the majority in the Muslim communities who believe it a grave sin to depict the Prophet in any visual form. Already feeling under threat from the West through economic and military power and influence, the attack of Muslim identity has been flamed since 9/11, the London Tube bombings, and the U.S. military offensives. The publication of the cartoons cannot be divorced from the context of perceived Western fear and aggression toward Islam:

But these cartoons depicting Muhammad as a terrorist are utterly inaccurate, feeding into an Islamophobia that has been a noxious element in Western culture since the time of the Crusades. It can only inflame matters at this very crucial juncture of our mutual history. (Armstrong, 2006)

Just as in George W. Bush's unfortunate call for a "crusade" against those who perpetrated the attacks of September 11th, the publication of the cartoons opened old wounds for those who feel that Islam is misunderstood and vilified in the

West. This insensitive re-production of the cartoons was met with widespread protest within Muslim communities in the West and in traditionally Muslim countries. While the vast majority of protesters were peaceful, extremists used the cartoons as an excuse to encourage violent retaliation against perceived Western targets.

Group Identity and Belonging

In the current global situation of increased communication and travel, the seemingly increased desire to identify with a group of people like oneself that leads to nationalism and acts of violence must be explored through psychological frameworks. This intense need to belong to a group of people that share common geography, language, religion, or ethnicity is explored in Vamik Volkan's (1997) Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism. Volkan describes identity in theoretical terms that help frame the relationship between individual identity and connection to one's group. The metaphor of the "ethnic tent" (p. 27) is useful in theorizing the rise of terrorism and violent nationalism. The tent represents the second layer of identity, larger and encompassing more members than personal identity (represented in the metaphor by clothing). "While the tent pole (the leader) holds the tent erect, the canvas itself, in its own right, is a protector of the group" (p. 28). When the group is threatened by imagined or real conflict with an outside force, group identity (in the form of the tent) becomes more vital than individual identity. Threats, described as tears in the ethnic tent, can be caused by actual physical aggression by those outside the tent or can be revived

remnants of a shared traumatic event from the group's past. Fear of violence or humiliation to the group cause members to rally around the leader, who in turn often uses the group's fear to consolidate power and influence.

This past event that is real and current in the group's imagination is named the "chosen trauma" (p. 36) that results from a historical tragedy that is not been properly mourned. The event comes to stand in for all the current wrongs and failings of the group, a repository of humiliation that feeds feelings of group inadequacy. "If historical circumstances do not allow a new generation to reverse feelings of past powerlessness, the mental representation of the shared calamity still bonds members of the group together" (p. 47). Members of our government invoke the terrorist acts of September 11th as a point of group solidarity around trauma, reminding and reviving feelings of group powerlessness and humiliation. The feeling of vulnerability is reinforced every time the "terrorist threat level" represented by a color-coded diagram is raised from yellow to orange, or from orange to red (the very vagueness of the color coded warnings increases the level of fear specifically of those who "look Muslim"). If the mourning process from the attacks were completed, the trauma would no longer be able to be used as rationale for continued violence and retribution.

These concepts of the ethnic tent and chosen trauma can also be applied to imagined communities of Muslims who feel powerless and marginalized by the West, first by the physical oppression of colonialism, then by the increased

Western global hegemony. For those countries that are on the receiving end of this hegemony change often is presented in Western terms and through a Western lens. Cultural traditions and customs are threatened, or perceived to be under threat, from many of the economic and social trends of globalization. For those not part of the dominant culture in the West, “modernization has constantly meant the abandoning of part of themselves...it has never been adopted without a certain bitterness, without a feeling of humiliation and defection” (Maalouf, 1996, p. 72). Transnational networks of terrorists rely on the humiliation of chosen trauma to recruit and retain members. Western symbols of wealth and indulgence, like fast food outlets and Hollywood movies, are daily reminders to many that globalization and modernization are being sponsored and defined by Western economic power. The continued United States offensives in Afghanistan and Iraq serve to reinforce the historical traumas and the argument that the violence is intended as an attack on Islam.

Anderson’s Imagined Communities

In Imagined Communities (1983), Benedict Anderson writes of the imagined national community that involves the creation of far reaching commonalities between diverse groups of people. I extend the term ‘imagined community’ to any felt common bond that is not based on the face-to-face meeting of people. Religious affiliations, ethnic ties, global humanity, along with nationalism, are all examples of imagined communities. Most human affinities beyond family relations are based on constructed similarities. These community

ties overlap and overlay, though there usually exists a hierarchy of attachment. I consider myself to be part of many communities at once, but I would privilege immediate family and global human identity over national, religious, and regional communities. The privileging of certain ties depends on the real or perceived threat to that imagined community. When the United States offensives were launched successively in Afghanistan and Iraq, many felt that it was Islam that was the real target of the violence. Thus, the imagined Muslim community gained strength and global support. Though this community is not united by specific geographical or language commonalities, the differences of country, region, language, and particular sect can be set aside for allegiance to the greater religious community.

One of the legacies of European colonialism is a definition of nation and nationalism as exclusive to certain people who belong to common racial, ethnic, or language groups. The Indians educated by the British, administered by the British, could never *be* British. A system of native education put in place in the British colony of India was meant to educate the culturally specific identity out of the Indians without conveying British citizenship. “But the important thing is that we see a long-range policy, consciously formulated and pursued, to turn ‘idolaters,’ not so much in Christians, as into people culturally English, despite their irremediable colour and blood” (Anderson, 1983, p. 91). For example, to be “French,” ultimately means to be white and native to France for generations. Immigrants, especially those from previous colonial holdings of France, are

always physically marked with their difference and geographically marked by their location at the actual margins of Paris.

Recent events, like the rioting of teenagers in France who are children of immigrants of Northern Africa, reveal the result of this idea of national identity. Growing tension and poverty in the mostly-immigrant communities of certain Parisian suburbs erupted in riots after two teenage boys were killed after running from French police. There are stories of French citizens with foreign sounding names being discriminated in the application for jobs and the rampant poverty and unemployment in the suburbs of Paris add to racial tension. While visiting a poverty-ridden area, interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy said, "that crime-ridden neighbourhoods should be 'cleaned with a power hose' and describes violent elements as 'gangrene' and 'rabble'" ("Timeline: French riots", 2005). The issue of urban crime is often paired in Sarkozy's speeches with tough talk about curbing immigration, conflating the issues of poverty, unemployment, crime, and difference. Official policies of police conduct in the suburbs have led to a feeling of impersonal patrols, watching for trouble instead of ensuring the public good. Teenage residents of the mostly North African population of the Clichy-sous-Bois neighborhood, where the rioting began, have this to say about the police presence: "We don't want a police station here. Some cops are racist," "Riots are caused by police. They think we are all delinquents," "The cops don't respect us. They come in and smash doors. They systematically suspect blacks and Arabs," "Some cops are aggressive and use racial slurs when they check you," (Astier,

2006, para. 3). Though these youth are French citizens by birth, they are marked with difference in name and appearance; the prospect for success in education and career are bleak.

Nationalist right-wing politicians in France have used the rioting as an excuse to tighten immigration laws and to curtail civil liberties in the poor suburbs:

Governments impotent to strike at the roots of the existential insecurity and anxiety of their subjects are only too eager and happy to oblige. A united front against the 'immigrants', that fullest and most tangible embodiment of 'otherness', promises to come as near as conceivable to patching the diffuse assortment of fearful and disoriented individuals together into something vaguely reminiscent of a 'national community'. (Bauman, 2000, p. 109)

Like the backlash against immigration to the United States from Mexico, the fears and uncertainty of difference lead to increased legal regulation that promises to improve the lives of those in France by increasing policing and removal of those considered to be outsiders. Fear of changing social and economic circumstances are used to locate scapegoats in immigrant and urban areas, national identity is used as a weapon to separate and conflate the 'pollution' of those who are different from the pure national identity and the societal ills that call for difficult change and self-examination.

Franz Fanon's work that focuses on the psychological effects of colonialism are useful in theorizing more contemporary effects of continued postcolonial Western hegemony. He used his own experience as a citizen of the French colony

of Martinique and his training as a psychiatrist to write about the dislocations and oppressions (both external and internal) of colonialism. In many ways, his work on the psychological effects of colonialism is applicable to the current crises of identity in France and other former colonial powers. His seminal text, Black Skin, White Masks (1967), introduces the “self-division” created by colonialism, where the oppressed have two faces: one for the white rulers and another for fellow subjects:

That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question...No one would dream of doubting that its major artery is fed from the heart of those various theories that have tried to prove that the Negro is a stage in the slow evolution of monkey into man. (p. 17)

This speaks to both a double consciousness and a form of internalized oppression, where the force of an oppressor affects the self-concept of the oppressed. For Fanon, there is historical weight to the color of his skin, connoting no matter how educated he becomes in the best French schools, will never be “French”. The French youth who participated in the riots understand that they will never be “French” enough to procure a decent job or to move out of the crime-ridden suburbs. In many ways, their violence reinforces the public’s views of them, as “thugs” and “hopeless”. They are bound by a desire to be a part of a nation that defines itself against them. This marginalization has been foundational to the work of many postcolonial theorists; how this sense of isolation and oppression could be used to form oppositional communities and identities. I am interested in Fanon’s sense of homelessness and destabilized

sense of self that can result from oppression and migration. How can this oppression and exclusion from a nationalist definition of pure identity be reformed into a more fluid sense of self and group? Is there something particularly powerful about living on the margins of a culture that can create inclusive identities that are open to change and acceptance of difference?

Identity Formation in the Context of Globalization

The official imagined communities of the nation-state and of religious groups seem to be moving further towards binary definitions of good/evil, us/them, and those who are inside/outside of the community. Those who function between and within official communities but who retain ties to multiple, other, smaller communities seem to display an alternate path to identity formation. Appiah (1998) writes of the relationship of identity formation to community:

It is social life that endows us with the full richness of resources available for self-creation, for even when we are constructing new and counternormative identities, it is the old and the normative that provide the language and the background. (p. 98)

It is within existing social structures that we define how we think of ourselves and whether we are constituted in relation or opposition to the social order. Those who are forced to live on the margins of society have to create strategies for connection and survival that are defined *against* the dominant culture of exclusion. Others who choose to live at the margins, or are able to move between margin and center, are able to form counternormative identities that are

oppositional to the dominant, unitary definition of self in relation to the group. Three theoretical frameworks for this form of inclusive identity are: diaspora discourse, the transcitizen, and the rooted cosmopolitan.

Diaspora Discourse

This connection to imagined community could be framed by the discourse of diaspora, a way to theorize the global connection of people who share emotional and psychological ties to a region, homeland, or religion. The movement of people has been described in many ways, leading to discourses on travel, tourism, exile, immigration, and diaspora. While traditionally used to describe the global communities of Jews with attachments to a Jewish homeland in Israel, the discourse of diaspora has been expanded to describe any community of people who live in one place and have plans to return to a “home” elsewhere. “Diaspora cultures thus mediate, in a lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place” (Clifford, 1997, p. 255). Those living as a minority in a dominant culture that does not validate their identity or experience use connection to their other “home” as a source of identity affirmation. This home, according to Clifford, can be a physical location or a shared sense of religion or group identity. “Islam, like Judaism in a predominantly Christian culture, can offer a sense of attachment elsewhere, to a different temporality and vision, a discrepant modernity” (p. 257). This sense of diaspora can be made more real in the current age of technological communication that can directly connect villages in Lebanon to communities in

New York City or London. As an example of this conception of transnational community, the work of artist Emily Jacir can be examined within the diaspora discourse; though not born in Palestine, her ties to the Palestinian community in exile is stronger in her work than her sense of herself as an American. Though, her upbringing in New York clearly re-defines her relationship to the Palestinians living elsewhere.

The Transcitizen

Another way to conceptualize the combined movement and attachment of people and communities is to speak of a form of “transcitizenship” (Miron, et al. 2005). Without decrying the death of the nation-state (as some have been eager to do), cultural theorists feel that there needs to be a new way to define the citizen that encompasses the multitude of geographies and cultures that many are negotiating in the twenty-first century. The transcitizen is a way to define those who exist in more than one cultural location at once. With the instantaneous communication made possible by the Internet, immigrants, migrants, and travelers can form ties to their new geographic and cultural locations while retaining continuous relations to their home, or homes. “Rather than displace the meaning of place, the processes of globalization and transnationalism propel local actors through their vast social networks to fully engage in the politics of place making” (Miron, et al., p. 289). Thus, Mexican immigrants to the United States can live and work in California, consider their village in Mexico “home”, speak Spanish at home, English at school, and be re-defining their relationship to

each space with their living within the other. These transcitizens are creating third spaces that exist outside of nation-state citizenship, forms of grassroots cultural citizenship that blur notions of fixed identity and a bland American monoculture of assimilation.

Cosmopolitan Identities

I have been arguing that we all have allegiance to layered, multi-faceted identities that begin with the first layer of self-identity and then are expanded to include physical community of family and friends, then to imagined community of nation, religion, etc. If this is so, is it possible to have an even more widely defined imagined community of humanity? Can there be transnational and transreligious feeling of connection? This is the question asked by those who write of cosmopolitanism; the sense that there is a growing number of people for whom identity is both rooted in a “home” country and community, but also movable and applicable in many different geographies. Cosmopolitanism is different in scope and sentiment than internationalism, which would include ideas of international institutions (the United Nations) and international law. The inter-national by definition pertains to the relations and actions of nation-states, re-inscribing the importance of the nation while encouraging a higher-level dialogue. The concept of cosmopolitan is much more flexible, applicable to individuals who have a sense of global ties and movement, and to larger communities that have transnational communication and connection. Appiah (1998) writes of the “rooted cosmopolitanism” of his father, who “thought there

was no point in roots if you couldn't take them with you" (p. 91). Part of the appeal of cosmopolitanism is that it offers a way to conceptualize identity that values and reaffirms individual sense of self and community while expanding the notion of community to those very different from oneself. It is:

The possibility of a world in which *everyone* is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of his or her own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different, places that are home to other, different, people. (p. 91)

Originally put forth by Kant (2001) the term "cosmopolitan" denoted a universal application of European morality and values with the goal of global peace. "The term *cosmopolitan*, separated from its (European) universalist moorings, quickly becomes a traveling signifier, a term always in danger of breaking up into partial equivalences: exile, immigration, migrancy, diaspora, border crossing, pilgrimage, tourism" (Clifford, 1998, p. 363). This then is a term that has the possible flexibility to apply to many different versions of transnational movement and attachment to multiple geographical locations. In many ways, this cosmopolitan sentiment is directly related to Bhabha's liminal space and hybridity, the mixing and multiplying of cultural and community identifications.

In The Location of Culture, Bhabha (1994) defines his conception of the colonial/postcolonial theoretical split and the use of language that has defined the contemporary field of postcolonialism. The theoretical split in discourse that he articulates is the shift from focus on "fixity" to "hybridity". "Fixity, as the sign

of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition” (p. 94). The white colonial power created the myth of unchanging racial essence and hierarchy, a form of social Darwinism that presented the European as the evolutionary pinnacle of civilization and order. The continuation of this colonial myth is present in the current goal of “liberating” and “democratization” that the United States has set for the Middle East. The implication is that we (in the West) have a monopoly on rational, democratic liberty that we can share or enforce on the rest of the world. The native other was and is essentialized and fixed as savage, chaotic, and lesser. The postcolonial discourse represents a deconstruction of the myth of fixity. Uncertain spaces open up between traditional centers; in these spaces, postcolonial identity formation begins to occur based not on fixity but on movement, migration, and negotiation.

Reasons to fear difference and to act aggressively play out every evening on television sets and through politicians. There seems to be an endless variety of ways to create and act on hostility towards those who are different. The official national and terrorist rhetoric of forces of good versus forces of evil create an atmosphere of extreme emotions and opinions. Inclusive identities that connect communities of difference seem difficult to maintain in the climate of heightened tension and uncertainty. Global events and increased migration and communication seem to be driving many Americans toward a greater fear of

difference and a strengthening of ethnocentric and uber-patriotic rhetoric. In light of these escalating tensions and rhetoric of political and religious leaders about the need for exclusive definitions of group and individual identity, the potential role of the diaspora community, the transcitizen, and the rooted cosmopolitan needs further examination. These inclusive definitions of self and group are communicated through micronarrative: the Internet blog, the novel, the rap lyrics, or the piece of visual art. The spaces that are opened between official centers from these forms of expression offer a chance for a redefinition of what it means to a citizen of multiple communities at once.

This conceptual understanding of exclusive and inclusive identity formations and the political realities of globalization provide a backdrop for the following chapters. More specifically, I evaluate the historical relationship between Muslim women and the discourse of the veil; the identity of the former has been inextricably linked in Western representation to the wearing or refusal of the veil.

CHAPTER III

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And when the west- always so inordinately interested in what Arab (or 'eastern') women wear talks about the 'veil', doesn't it mysteriously elide the 'seductive' veil as worn by, say, Colette in her *Egyptian Tableaux*, and the 'forbidding' veil as 'forced' on contemporary eastern women? To the west, 'the veil' like Islam itself, is both sensual and puritanical, is contradictory, is to be feared. (Soueif, 2003, p. 110)

If, as I suggest in chapter two, the relationship of identity and difference is shifting and evolving as a result of globalization, movement, and the flow of information, how do these shifts affect the Western imagination of the veiled woman? Though there have been a proliferation of images of this simplified archetype of difference since September 11th, the role of the veil in Islam and in colonial and postcolonial discourse has a long, complex history. How did it come to pass that Western representations of Muslim women cannot be discussed without recourse to the veil as ultimate cultural signifier? What is signified by the image of a veiled woman depends on your cultural position and the historical moment. While it is impossible to encapsulate all divergent historical meanings and uses of the veil, I would like to attempt an abridged account of how the veil has been used within Islam and by the West with various motives and intentions. This history leads me to the current events that have reaffirmed the veil as central to the discourse of cultural difference. In the past few years there has been a

surge in the attempt to legally control the covering or uncovering of women's bodies. Western European countries have been criticizing and banning the wearing of veils; officials are legislating cultural symbols in an attempt to control intercultural relations. At the same time, the governments of some traditionally Muslim countries have been moving toward more conservative positions on the veil; strains of fundamentalist Islam are pressing for mandatory covering of the face in an attempt to "purify" the women in the religion from the corruption of Western influence.

The centering of the woman's body as focal point in discourses on modernization, oppression, and cultural authenticity rely on established patriarchal structures. Patriarchy is not a European invention, nor a phenomenon that is unique to any culture. Though they have been expressed differently in varying geographical and religious contexts, systems of gender-based laws and codes can be found in most societies. During colonial times, the male elite of Muslim countries worked with the European men in charge of the administration of the colony to determine the role that women would play in the modernizing and "civilizing" of the country. Postcolonial nationalist movements have been led, for the most part, by small groups of men who use the woman's body as a stage to re-enact cultural authenticity that was stolen during the colonial period. Women have not been silent witnesses to patriarchy, and have taken part in various forms of private and public resistance to the male imposition of ideology onto the female body. I discuss a few of these forms of

resistance alongside the colonial and native forms of patriarchy that have centered the veil in discourse.

Banning of the veil has occurred many times throughout history. Secularization and Westernization in Turkey led Ataturk to regard veiling as an extremist symbol of Islam. As part of Westernization efforts by Shah Pahlavi in Iran, backed by the United States and Britain, women were officially discouraged from veiling. The current battles began to heat up when the French outlawed the wearing of the veil to school as part of a ban on “conspicuous” religious symbols in September of 2004. The veil has been the focus of attempts to legislate cultural unity through banning the wearing of the potent religious symbol. Once again, the covering and uncovering of Muslim women’s bodies is at the center of media attention about cultural diversity and difference. The instilling of the body and a piece of cloth with such intense meaning is a remnant of the colonial discourse of the veil.

Since the invigorated focus on Islam in the West that was the result of the events of September 11th, Islam and its practices (assumed to be unitary) regarding the treatment of women have been under increased scrutiny. In her essay, “Visibility, Violence and Voice?” Alison Donnell (2003) writes of the stereotyped representation of Muslim women in West:

Post-11 September, it would appear that attitudes to and representations of the veil have overwhelmingly demonstrated the intransigence of the veiled woman as an icon of oppression- an embodiment of the rationale for the continuation of George W. Bush’s war without end, a strategic

figure constantly evoked as a visual reminder of the incommensurability between Western and Islamic societies. (p. 134)

We have been assailed by images of veiled women in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere and the media has taught us that we should feel pity, and shame that these voiceless, oppressed women have been abandoned by the West.

Donnell questions the obsession with the veil as ultimate signifier of difference and oppression in the West:

Although the physical restrictions and social limitations that being forced to wear the burqa imposes on women should not be underestimated, it does appear that the visual privileging of veiling has narrowed the focus on women's rights. Indeed, the veil is so easily translated into a visual vocabulary of oppression that it is difficult to divert attention on to the more pressing issues for women in many Muslim countries. (p. 124)

I do not want to deny the reality of gender oppression that occurs in concrete ways in most societies, but the reflexive equating of veil to oppression is a problem that is a remnant from colonial discourse and used as an imperialist weapon for the constructed West. The pressing issue is how Western media and politicians are using the Muslim woman's body to control the discourse over cultural symbols and freedom of expression. The same governments that denounce the Iranian regime for enforcing the wearing of the veil are making gains in enforcing the removal of the veil. Both situations involve the enforced robing or disrobing of women whose voices are not included in debate.

The history of Western imagination of the veil is long and complex, inextricably linked to the idea of Western rationalism and liberalism in

opposition to the (inferior) religiosity and tradition of the rest of the world. It is part of the paternalistic way of dealing with the rest of the world that was perfected during colonialism; we (Western, rational, modern) know what is best for you (non-Western, irrational, primitive). Notions of what freedom means in the West, notably the freedom to see and be seen, are not universally applicable. Muslim women who are not available to be seen in public are a direct challenge to our Western idea of freedom. When it is asserted by many Muslim women that the veil might be chosen, critically considered, and understood to offer freedom of a different sort, accusations of internalized oppression are leveled. The veil has become an easy visual equivalence for cultural backwardness, a form of shorthand to represent Europe's "enlightened" cultural standing. At the height of colonial power, even those Europeans who fought against women's voting and educational rights in their home countries, championed the unveiling of women as a great leap forward, toward greater Westernization.

Variations on the Veil

Like most forms of dress, the style, color, shape, and coverage of the veil varies by geographic and cultural location. Though it is now almost exclusively associated with Islam, veils have been worn historically by those of all religions living in what is now referred to as the Middle East. In much of the recent Western attention to the veil, there has not been discussion of the complexity and variation of meaning and coverage in different forms of veiling. There is large distinction between a headscarf covering only one's hair and the full burqa that is

a thick cloth covering of the entire body, with only a mesh panel for the eyes. Many of the distinctions in veiling are based on cultural norms of various societies; women choose levels of covering based on many factors to make fashion, political, or religious statements. In “The Language of the Veil,” Ahdaf Soueif (2003) writes of the various meanings of different styles of veils in historical and contemporary Egypt. In 1906, the author details three different styles of veil that were class dependent: the “yashmak, which was drawn across the face under the eyes and connoted the aristocracy,” the “*bisha*, which could be casually thrown over the whole face and was class neutral,” and the “*burqu*, a rectangle of the same fabric as fishnet stockings” favored by the working or lower middle classes (p. 113). The amount of coverage was tied at this time to class; in contemporary Egypt, the Soueif writes that women’s amount of veiling or lack of veiling is tied both to class and the political and religious location of the women. Those who wear the *hijab*, “a long loose garment topped with a large plain scarf securely fastened so no hair, ears, or neck show through” (p. 116) are in the majority and are considered the average Egyptian woman. Some wear Western styles and are judged as wealthy and Westernized. Others choose to wear the *niqab*, “a black *hijab* outfit with a thick, black cloth over the face and a narrow slit to see through” (p. 119) and they are presumed to be political Islamists who oppose secular governments and desire an Islamist state. There are many variations on this culturally meaningful wearing of veils, and the complexity

believes the diversity of opinion and situation of women in traditionally Muslim cultures.

History, Islam, and the Veil

Much has been stated and written about the origins of the wearing of the veil in Islam and the statements of the Prophet about a required covering. Governments and religious leaders offer broad edicts about how Muslim women should dress, many purportedly based on strict readings of the Quran. All that has been written is the result of the multiple interpretations of statements and actions from hundreds of years ago. Two relatively recent texts that attempt to examine the history of the veil from a feminist perspective are useful in understanding the complex relationship between Muslim women and the veil: The Veil and the Male Elite by Fatima Mernissi (1992), and Women and Gender in Islam by Leila Ahmed (1992). Both of these texts attempt to reclaim women's rights to education and equality by examining the history of the Prophet Muhammed. Mernissi (1992) believes that a case for an Islamic feminism can be built by looking back to the origins of Islam and by rereading the Quran through a feminist lens. She also tries to refute fundamentalist claims that all efforts towards women's rights are forms of Westernization that dilute traditional Islam:

We Muslim women can walk into the modern world with pride, knowing that the quest for dignity, democracy, and human rights, for full participation in political and social affairs of our country, stems from no imported Western values, but is a true part of the Muslim tradition. (p. viii)

What events led to compulsory veiling of women, what was the relationship of the Prophet Mohammed to the role of women and their seclusion?

From available historical documentation of (what is now referred to as) the Middle East before Islam, it seems as if the veiling of women in public was a cultural expectation for most cultures of the region. Christians and non-Christians who lived in the Middle East, whether in the Mediterranean Byzantine or in Mesopotamia, were subject to the prevailing patriarchy and the misogynistic views on women's behavior and place. Ahmed (1992) writes of the women in Byzantine:

Women were not supposed to be seen in public and were kept as 'cloistered prisoners'...Barring some general disaster, women were always supposed to be veiled, the veil or its absence marking the distinction between the 'honest' woman and the prostitute. (p. 26)

These statements about the Christian Middle East echo some of the practices that today are associated with Islam exclusively. As in many, if not most, historical locations, women were viewed as primarily reproductive vessels, property of their male relatives and husbands. According to Ahmed's historical research and interpretation, the misogyny of the pre-Islamic Middle East and Mediterranean was at a surprising level and ferocity. According to Christian teachings of the day, sexuality was shameful and dirty and women represented the ultimate symbol of sex and temptation. "Merely seeing a woman represented danger- and therefore the veil, concealing clothing, and strict segregation became increasingly emphasized" (p. 35). In this view of women's powerful sexuality that required

veiling, or covering up, the men were in need of protection. The weakness of desire was believed to be with men, but it was enacted on the bodies of women who were covered from view so that their sexuality would not tempt and taunt the men around them. It is important for the discourse of the veil that the Prophet was born into a world that so devalued women and preached their seclusion and that this fact is rarely mentioned in regard to the current veiling practices associated with Islam.

The life of Muhammed has been documented in many forms and lives on in his sayings, *Hadith*, that form the backbone of the Quran. Volumes can and have been written about his life and founding of Islam, so I would like to focus on one prominent relationship that helped to shape the verses and teachings on women: the relationship of the Prophet and his third (and many say favorite) wife, 'Aisha. In a marriage arranged by her father, 'Aisha was around nine years old when she was betrothed. Several incidents involving this favorite wife coming into contact with men other than the Prophet were the possible motives for the seclusion of Muhammed's wives. Early in the marriage, 'Aisha was trusted to aid soldiers on the battlefield and to move about in public with her head uncovered. Ahmed writes of "the famous necklace incident":

'Aisha was left behind at a campsite because she had wandered off looking for the beads of her necklace. Returning the following morning, her camel escorted by a young man, she was suspected by the community, and finally by Muhammed, of infidelity. (p. 51)

Scholars believe that the jealousy resulting from this incident led directly to the seclusion of 'Aisha and the other wives. During the Prophet's lifetime, it was only his wives who were secluded and veiled. In his compound they had their own space that was separated from the multitude of visitors to the Prophet. Many of Muhammed's sayings stressed the equality under god of women and men, and in many ways his views on gender were revolutionary when examined within his cultural setting. Some speculate that the ordered seclusion was a result of jealousy and was only ever meant to apply to the Prophet's own wives. Ahmed and Mernissi believe that it was the men surrounding the Prophet who led to the expansion of seclusion and veiling to all women in Islam and to the role of women as inferior to men. Like the teachings of Jesus, those of Muhammed were interpreted within particular geographic and cultural settings and were therefore influenced by patriarchal views on gender that were entrenched and not easily disposed of. "The egalitarian conception of gender inhering in the ethical vision of Islam existed in tension with the hierarchical relation between the sexes encoded in the marriage structure instituted by Islam" (Ahmed, 1992, p. 64). The vision of greater equality between men and women was stressed in Muhammed's teachings that focus on the similarities of the sexes spiritually. Another goal of the Prophet was to counteract what he viewed as superstition regarding women and sex that were prevalent in pre-Islamic society. Records of women living in Zoroastrian-practicing areas of Iran show that they were removed and kept apart from the community during menstruation and after giving birth because these

processes were believed to be impure (Choksky, 2003, p. 57). Women might have felt relief in converting to a faith that does not consider them to be inherently dirty or impure. “Islam stresses the fact that sex and menstruation are really extraordinary (in the literal meaning of the word) events, but they do not make the woman a negative pole that ‘annihilates’ in some way the presence of the divine and upsets its order” (Mernissi, 1992, p. 74). For Muhammed, the biological realities of menstruation and sex were not viewed as impure or unnatural. While the original sayings and texts of Islam stressed the equality of women and men in areas of faith, the teachings and laws about marriage and seclusion have direct correlation to the practices of the men who gained the power of interpreting the faith after the Prophet’s death.

Though the more progressive views on gender in the Quran have not been adequately addressed in public discourse on Islam, it is true that Muhammed did require the seclusion of his wives. Though this requirement may not have been meant for all women, the application of it as a requirement for women of faith does have its basis in the Hadith. The Quran states, “And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms...” and “Tell thy wives and daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them (when they go abroad). That will be better, so they may be recognized and not annoyed” (cited in Bailey & Tawadros, 2003, p. 162). These translated passages from the Quran seem to recommend covering and modesty, but are

vague about the amount of covering required and the necessity to cover ones head and face. The openness of the passages on veiling in the Quran have led to differing levels of veiling and unveiling in different geographic locations and times. There are Hadith (claimed to be directly quoted from the Prophet) that are clearer in their attitude toward women. Many believe that the Hadith that demote and degrade the role of women to be misquotes, taken out of context and used to further certain agendas. One Hadith, cited in Mernissi, states: “Those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity” (p. 49). Another Hadith that made Mernissi uncomfortable in her religious upbringing attributed this statement to the Prophet: “the dog, the ass, and woman interrupt prayer if they pass in front of the believer, interposing themselves between him and the *qibla*” (p. 64). In this supposed quote, the woman is equated with animals, and on unequal spiritual footing of men. Though this is directly challenged by other, more equitable Hadith, the quote has been reprinted and valued as true.

After Muhammed’s death, ‘Aisha took a prominent role in the shaping and growth of the religion. She was consulted about the sayings and prayers of her husband: “‘Aisha’s transmitted hadith to several of the foremost early Muslim traditionists. Some 2,210 hadith are attributed to her” (p. 73). The close and intellectually stimulating relationship was obviously valued by the Islamic scholars who sought out ‘Aisha’s help. Widowed, ‘Aisha did not fade into the backdrop, but defended her interpretation of the Prophet’s life and faith through political speeches and her most (in)famous act of leading troops onto the

battlefield in the Battle of the Camel. ‘Aisha was, “responsible for the blood spilt at the Battle of the Camel, which set in motion the split of the Muslim world into two factions (Sunnis and Shi’ites), a battle where she herself was in command,” (p. 6). Extremely important in the history of the faith, this woman’s actions in warfare and politics cannot be ignored. After her death, the men who took over control of the two major divergent factions in Islam utilized more conservative and patriarchal interpretations of the Quran.

Divergent Paths and the Physical Seclusion of Women

As Islam spread to multiple geographies and classes, the way in which the call for veiling and seclusion were realized necessarily shifted and evolved. Within the working and poorer classes, men did not have the luxury of building separate rooms and chambers to keep women hidden from view within the home; at most the women’s area was separated by a piece of cloth, or curtain (Ahmed, 1992). Many of the poorer women in the Mediterranean Middle East (the area with the most recorded information) and beyond had to work within and without the home to provide for their families. For them, the call to seclusion was secondary to the need for survival and for the care of their families. However, as in most areas of study, the recorded history of poorer women is virtually non-existent and the views of these women and reflections on their relationship to the veil can be only guessed. There is much more information about the lives of upper-class women from the 18th-early 19th centuries. It was in the elite upper classes that the spatial seclusion became the norm. “*Hareem*, from the word

haram, 'sacred and forbidden,' refers to those apartments that were most particularly forbidden to other men- those in which his women resided" (Ahmed, 1992, p. 117). Women were allowed spend time in the company of other Muslim women, and often seem to have gathered in women's chambers for socializing. The harem was an important space for discussing daily events and cultivating friendships between women. In addition, women of a certain class went to public (single-sex) baths, *hammams*, though more conservative religious men had reservations of the women's baths based on the level of nudity and the presence of non-Muslim women.

European Travel and the Views of Women

The traditional physical seclusion of women within the home meant that male European travelers to Egypt, for example, did not have access to women within the privacy of the women's chambers, or harem. Denial of sight and experience led to an imagined harem space, which was pictorially realized in Orientalist paintings (see chapter four for more on this visualizing). The very separateness created sensual fantasy, much like the veil in public led to a desire to unveil. Both practices of harem and hammam have been imagined in European writings and images as places of female sexuality on display, lounging semi-nude women in darkened chambers. There is an undercurrent in these imaginings of sexual promiscuity, of nude women lying together, and bathing in front of one another. In the fantastic images produced by artists such as Frenchman Gerome, the male artist is privy to a secret and forbidden world of female sexuality when

he creates his harem or bathing scene. Reina Lewis (1996) writes of this in Gendering Orientalism, the “erotic charge of the harem has two main trajectories: the fulfillment of seeing the forbidden faces and bodies of Muslim women; and the fantasy of one man’s sexual ownership of many women” (p. 111-2). Women, veiled and unavailable for Western male viewing in public spaces are imagined to shed all inhibitions and covering when in private spaces. The veil and the harem, then, play supporting roles in the fantasy of uncovering and conquering visually the elusive Muslim woman. While in reality the harem was a social space for women to gather, drink tea, and discuss issues of the day, the Western fantasy of this space was different. Actual harems were focused on the building and sustaining of relationships between women, while the fantastic imaginary harem was so powerful because of its focus on the relationship between multiple women and the absent, but imagined, man. In some ways the construction of the harem as a space where women waited, sexually charged but powerless, for the man who had complete control over them is the fantasy of absolute control. As some European women were calling for greater freedoms and gaining power in the public realm, the harem provided a control fantasy where women could be imagined as totally passive and willing to submit to male gaze and power:

Paintings, photographs, and literature usually stressed passivity and stillness- not the stillness of inner content, but the stillness of women waiting for the man who was the sole reason for their existence. The only form of power available to them was the power of sexual attraction. (Graham-Brown, 1998, p. 74)

European colonialists and travelers were fascinated with the differences in these cultures, especially the practice of women's veiling in public. Much of the recorded sentiments of travelers are about the culture and women of Egypt around the nineteenth century. Many of these accounts stress the fascination with dress, and often allude to the provocative nature of the veiled woman. Claude-Etienne Savary was a French traveler who spent several years in Cairo before the Napoleonic expedition of 1799. He recorded, rather matter-of-factly, his impressions of Egyptian women as compared with the place of women in France. "How different in Egypt, where they are bowed down by the fetters of slavery, condemned to servitude, and have no influence on public affairs. Their empire is confined within the walls of the harem" (Savary, 1799, p. 155). He makes clear that he believes women to have no influence over events that occur outside of their secluded chambers, which he compares to a form of slavery.

The women of low rank, whose clothing consists of an ample blue shift, and long drawers, cover their faces with a bit of cloth, having holes opposite the eyes; the rich wear a large white veil, with a black silk mantle, enveloping the body like a domino, so that one would think them in a masquerade. (p. 54)

Savary offers one of the more unembellished views of the visual presence of Egyptian women, with his description of the types and colors of veils detailed in a rather straightforward manner. French novelist and traveler in Egypt, Pierre Loti writes of the allure of the veiled woman in order to keep the Egyptian women from adopting European dress, "Why cannot someone tell these poor little

women, who have it in their power to be so adorable, that the beautiful folds of their black veils give to them an exquisite and characteristic distinction..." (cited in Bailey & Tawadros, 2003, p. 166). Loti is more overt in his fascination with the sensuality of Egyptian women, hidden from his view except for flashes of skin when their covering moves or falls. Frenchman Barthelemy Saint-Hilaire viewed the veil as an advantage for "ugly" Egyptian women looking for a husband:

Here you never know the face of the woman you are going to marry, and the surprise of the husband when he sees for the first time the face of his wife after the wedding feast, if it is occasionally a pleasant one can often be very painful...But thanks to the veil, the woman has been married; at least she is sure that her ugliness will not force her to remain an old maid. (cited in Bailey & Tawadros, 2003, p. 164)

In this more pragmatic, if not less disturbing, view of the practice of veiling, Saint-Hilaire writes of the covering of faces as an alluring alternative for physically unattractive women looking for a husband.

The imperialist Western gaze is complicated when the gender of the traveler is changed; simple equating of the male gaze with imagined sexual pleasure is not sufficient to describe the experience of European women. Unlike male travelers, the women who ventured into Muslim countries could quite easily gain access to the secluded areas of the harem and experience firsthand what life was like for Muslim women. While the experience is still filtered through European lenses, complete with preconceptions and biases, these versions of harem life and of the wearing of the veil offer more realistic accounts. In contrast to male descriptions of harem, women who actually visited these spaces found

them to be not dissimilar to the drawing rooms of Europe. They were locations of socialization, gossip, and the development of personal relationships. Unlike the flattened account of Savary, where women's seclusion equated with a form of slavery, those who spent time inside harems gave more nuanced pictures of power relationships. "Neither do the accounts of these 'insiders' give the impression that women were entirely passive or helpless. Rather they suggest that the limits of women's power and influence depended mainly on their age and status in the household" (Graham-Brown, p. 80). Female British traveler Grace Ellison, writes in 1915 of the male fascination with the veil from a more critical perspective: "It makes the woman at once the 'forbidden fruit,' and surrounds her with an atmosphere of mystery which, although fascinating, is neither desirable nor healthy. The thicker the veil, the harder the male stares." (cited in Bailey & Tawadros, 2003, p. 176). Ellison experienced firsthand the male reaction to the veiled woman in public; she walked in public in full cover with Turkish women and felt the stares and attention. Other European women travelers gave nuanced accounts of the condition of women in Muslim societies. Lucy Garnett, a British writer and traveler, wrote of the variation and diversity present in the lives of Middle Eastern women depending upon their social position. Graham-Brown (1988) writes of her work:

She argued that neither in the West nor in the East was the subjugation of women absolute; but that in the West the constraints imposed on women were mainly legal ones, while in the Middle East, they related mainly to custom and socio-economic conditions. (p. 21)

Unlike many of the European male travelers of the time, Garnett wrote of similarities in women's roles and positions in the West and East. She experienced the varying levels of independence and seclusion of women based on their economic and social locations.

It does not seem surprising that the European traveler's most often mentioned feature of Muslim women is the veil. It is, for most, the only view that they had of women since they were denied access to private women's spaces; most were driven to fantasy by the inability to penetrate the inner sanctum of the harem. Ellison, as a woman, was allowed greater access to the lives of women in Turkey and was able to write of the veil from a more complex perspective. But, the general tone of most European travel writing in the nineteenth century was of fascination with the mystery of Muslim women and their hidden world and faces behind the veil.

Lord Cromer and the Battle for Egyptian Hearts and Minds

I would like to scrutinize in some depth the attitudes of Lord Cromer, the British administrator to the Egyptian colony, toward the native population. The British in Egypt, under the heavy-handed administration of Lord Cromer, used Orientalist "knowledge" of native peoples in many situations to stress the inferiority of Egyptian culture. In his book, Modern Egypt, originally published 1908, he has a chapter entitled "Dwellers of Egypt," in which he lists in forty-three pages of text the innumerable ways that Egyptians are different and inferior to the British. The statements, which are based on hearsay or personal

observation, are presented as rational facts that could be scientifically proven. Cromer's views are worthy of review as an example of the racist, paternalistic rhetoric of European colonialism in the Muslim world. Much of his rhetorical abuse of the Egyptian people is recognizable today, in more nuanced terms, in discussions of Islam. This chapter is the only place in the tome where Cromer discusses his views on Muslim women, and here it is only one in many forms of proof of the general inferiority of Islam and Egyptians. Cromer also takes the time to state how the "noble" British cause of colonialism is intended to civilize the people of Egypt. The chapter begins with a reminder that when the first Englishman "had planted his foot on the banks of the Nile, and sat in the seats of the faithful...he came not as a conqueror, but in the familiar garb of a savior of society" (p. 123, Vol. II).

The remaining pages show the reader how much the Egyptian society needed the British savior, all the while denying the fact that this colonial enterprise had anything to do with self-interest or resources. "It is for the civilized Englishman to extend to them [Egyptians] the hand of fellowship and encouragement, and to raise them, morally and materially, from the abject state in which he finds them" (p. 130, Vol. II). Cromer writes that the civilizing work of the colonial project will be much harder here than in India, as Egyptians are "the rawest of raw materials" (p. 131, Vol. II). "Want of accuracy, which easily degenerates in untruthfulness, is in fact the main characteristic of the Oriental mind" (p.146, Vol. II). Opposing Egyptian's mental capabilities to the reason and

rationality of the European, Cromer spends many pages enumerating the ways in which the “Oriental” is wanting in rational thought:

The mind of the true Eastern is at once lethargic and suspicious; he does not want to be reformed, and he is convinced that, if the European wishes to reform him, the desire springs from sentiments which bode him no good. (Cromer, 1908, p. 161, Vol. II)

Lord Cromer seems genuinely perplexed as to why the Egyptians are skeptical of British desires to do away with their cultural beliefs and customs and replace them with small-scale replicas of British society.

Treatment of women is one area of Cromer’s critique that, when viewed in conjunction with his other statements of native inferiority, adds to his overall mission of saving the Egyptians from themselves. He lists two issues of “degradation” of women that he feels are of utmost importance for the overall civilizing mission: veiling and seclusion, and polygamy. On the veil he writes, “the face of the Moslem woman is veiled when she appears in public. She lives a life of seclusion.” As a result, “by confining the sphere of women’s interest to a very limited horizon, cramps the intellect and withers the mental development of one-half of the population in Moslem countries” (p. 155, Vol. II). Though disguised in language of equality for women, his statements about Egyptian women have been interpreted as aimed at further eroding native cultural traditions. For, at the same time that Cromer bemoans women’s veiling as a hindrance to their mental development, he enacts laws that restrict women’s access to education. Ahmed (1992) writes of Cromer’s advocacy for Egyptian women:

The Victorian colonial paternalistic establishment appropriated the language of feminism in the service of its assault on the religions and cultures of Other men, and in particular on Islam, in order to give an aura of moral justification to that assault at the very same time that it combated feminism within its own society. (p. 152)

Gathering from his activities in Britain in opposition to women's suffrage, Cromer was neither a feminist nor a promoter of women's rights. By placing his critique of the veiling of Muslim women at the end of a laundry list of subjective and racist statements about the inferiority of Egyptian men, one can deduce that the administrator chose the unveiling of women as a cause that would showcase European rational superiority.

Colonial and Native Patriarchy

Though the Muslim world, since its inception, had contact in one form or another with Europe, the expansion of Europe's empires that went hand-in-hand with the increased desire for inexpensive raw materials led to increased contact and mixing of European culture and mores. There were negative effects for women from the increased importation of European goods, which decreased the value of rural women's labor:

Nonetheless, in crucial ways the outcome of the process of change the encroachments set in motion was broadly positive, because the social institutions and mechanisms for the control and seclusion of women and for their exclusion from the major domains of activity in their society were gradually dismantled. (Ahmed, 1992, p. 127)

Two of the most visible and focused upon areas of change and debate on women's issues were the availability and access of education for women and the wearing of the veil.

How did the veil change from an object of sensual fascination for European travelers into the ultimate symbol of backwardness and oppression? In her much reproduced and influential essay, "Discourse of the Veil", Ahmed (1992) lays out a rationale for why the veil became the one symbol for women's oppression by the European colonial powers in the Muslim world:

The idea (which still often informs discussions about women in Arab and Muslim cultures and other non-Western cultures) that improving the status of women entails abandoning native customs was the product of a particular historical moment and was constructed by an androcentric colonial establishment committed to male dominance in the service of particular political ends. (p. 165)

Before the entrenchment of colonial power in places like Egypt, the wearing of the veil was a cultural code that was more based on tradition and class distinction than on any idea of oppression. From the records, it appears that women of the Muslim world were more concerned with other, more substantial, issues of gender inequality. In the nineteenth century a main concern for women was the lack of state-sponsored education. Gains in this area are generally attributed to the travels in Europe and the influence of European ideas of education for girls and included the establishment of a medical school for women in 1832 and then state-sponsored primary and secondary schools for girls in the 1870's (Ahmed, 1992).

Before the intrusion of British colonial power in Egypt, women were interested in increased access to education, to issues of voting, and of access to publications for and by women (inspired by European feminists but altered by Egyptian women to fit their own cultural context). With the British administration in Cairo, the central issues of women's equality were to be boiled down to a single issue: the wearing of the veil. It was not the women of Egypt who centralized the veil and the uncovering of their heads as the most important reason for their oppression: it was the British authority with the support of a number of Egyptian elite. By narrowing the focus of the rights of women to one native tradition, the British effectively took attention away from their cutting back of women's education and made an effective assault on Egyptian cultural traditions.

British focus on the veil was reinforced by important essays written by prominent Egyptians who affirmed the importance of unveiling women to the notion of "progress". Qasim Amin was a controversial figure involved in women's issues during the colonial era in Egypt. A wealthy man of social standing and with ties to the British, Amin wrote an essay entitled, "Women and the Veil" in 1899, which has been both hailed as an early work in Muslim feminism and critiqued as an attempt to curry favor with those in power. Many of the arguments that the text makes for unveiling do not appear to be made for a genuine interest in seeing gender equality. To begin with, Amin writes that he considers veiling to be "one of the permanent cornerstones of morality," and that the level of uncovering

makes it “difficult for a Western woman to guard herself from sensuous desires and unacceptable shameful feelings” (p. 168). When Amin does get into his reasons for objecting to the practice of veiling, many of the arguments are directed towards male interests. Two sections of the text deal with the veil hiding the identity of a woman so that she may assume a fraudulent identity. In the first, he mentions how difficult it is for men to complete business transactions with women who they cannot see. “It is a very peculiar and difficult thing to prove the identity of a woman who is present but totally covered from head to foot or concealed behind a curtain or door” (p. 169). Secondly, he writes of how in a court of law, women who are allowed to testify wearing a veil over their face are not identifiable and therefore more able to commit fraud. Later in the same essay Amin reiterates the erotic fascination with the veil that so captured Western male travelers. In reference to a “thin, white, gauze face cover” and the veil, he writes: “These two coverings are in reality part of the ornaments worn by women that incite an onlooker’s desires. They prompt him to discover more of what is concealed after he has been tempted by the large area exposed” (p. 172). While arguing for the unveiling of Egyptian women, the author is indicting women who veil as fraudulent, sexually provocative dupes. In an essay entitled “A Woman’s Obligation to Herself,” Amin (1900) more overtly attacks Egyptians in general and Egyptian women specifically for their uncivilized manners including veiling. “Those for whom Amin reserved his most virulent contempt- ironically in a work

ostensibly championing their cause- were Egyptian women” (Ahmed, 1992, p. 157).

At this point in history the veil was already the central issue of Western powers in deciding whether women were being oppressed in Muslim cultures. The elite Egyptians who were benefiting from British rule were the first to match the call for unveiling, and those women who were of the upper classes were the first to shed the veil. Famously, Huda Sha’wari, founder of the Egyptian Feminist Union, attended the International Women’s Alliance in Rome (Ahmed, 1992) and as she stepped of the train in Cairo ceremoniously removed her veil. While this was Sha’wari’s least radical challenge to entrenched patriarchy, it was the most publicized. With close ties to European feminists, many Egyptians associated feminism with Westernization and colonial power, and therefore it was seen by some as a hindrance to independence from Britain and the nationalist enterprise. When nationalists needed to prove their independence from Europe and their commitment to Egyptian culture, the veil was invoked as a symbol of “authentic” Muslim femininity. As a result of the colonial period and ensuing nationalist struggles, the centralized discourse was of the veil either as ultimate symbol of oppression or as ultimate symbol of authentic native culture.

The Battle for Algiers, the Veil as Weapon

The period in Algerian history of French colonialism and nationalist struggle for independence is another cultural example of the relationship of colonial administration to the veiling of women. In some ways analogous to the

British administration's focus on the veil, the French were less paternalistic in their rhetoric for unveiling. While the British framed the argument as a call for increased freedom and movement for Egyptian women, the French were more open in their desire to damage native culture. In his essay "Algeria Unveiled," Franz Fanon (2003) wrote in support of the Algerian cause:

The officials in the French administration in Algeria, committed to bring about the disintegration, at whatever cost, of forms of existence likely to evoke a national reality directly or indirectly, were to concentrate their efforts on the wearing of the veil, which was looked upon at this juncture as a symbol of the status of the Algerian woman. (p. 75)

As in Egypt, the veil was centralized in the colonialist discourse of control; it was the most visible symbol of native cultural difference. As the earlier European traveler's reaction to the veil reveal, the Western male associations with the veiled women involve complex mixtures of fascination, sexual arousal, pity, and fear of the unknown. "Unveiling this woman is revealing her beauty; it is baring her secret, breaking her resistance, making her available for adventure" (Fanon, 2004, p. 77). In order to consolidate power, the French were bent on controlling visual accessibility of the colonial subjects. The difference between the colonial situations in Egypt and Algeria is the fact of armed resistance and ground battle between the French military and organized armed groups fighting for national liberation. While in both cases the desire of the colonial administration to erode cultural traditions led to nationalist sentiment, the more militant French occupation met with armed resistance.

Algerian women played important roles in the armed resistance to the French, reclaiming the covering and uncovering of their own bodies as powerful tools of subversion. During the French crackdown on the city of Algiers all native citizens were the subject of suspicion and bodily search. Some women, working for the revolutionary cause, adopted European style dress in a visual signal that they were a supporter of Westernization and the French cause. With their bodies conforming to the French standards of femininity, women were allowed to pass through checkpoints without harassment:

Carrying revolvers, grenades, hundreds of false identity cards or bombs, the unveiled Algerian woman moves like a fish in the Western waters. The soldiers, the French patrols, smile to her as she passes, compliments on her looks are heard here and there, but no one suspects that her suitcases contain the automatic pistol which will presently mow down four or five members of one of the patrols. (p. 80)

These women who cross freely through checkpoints turn around the colonial obsession with the veil and the woman's body as an uncomplicated source of cultural meaning. Previously held ideas that women who veil in public are necessarily traditional and in opposition to the French regime and that those who wear French dress, revealing face, hair, and parts of bodies are siding with the occupiers were proven to be dangerously wrong. Eventually, this subversion was detected, partially through admissions of militant women who were forced to speak under torture (Fanon, 2003). Again, Algerian women's relationship to the veil had to shift to accommodate the practical necessities of the insurgency. No longer protected at checkpoints by appropriating the dress of the colonial power,

women began to use the full body cover as a hiding place. Hidden from view, the women's bodies were accompanied by weapons, taped close to the body so that the hands could remain free. "For the hands must be free, exhibited bare, humbly and abjectly presented to the soldiers so that they will look no further" (p. 85).

The battle for Algerian independence is an interesting counterpoint to the conventional Western attitude that equates the veil with oppression and silence. Women strategically used the displaying of their own bodies in forms of violent resistance. This case does not invert the connection of seclusion and the veil into an automatic connection of resistance and the veil; it opens up another layer of complex history that cannot be ignored in the contemporary movements to ban the veil or to save the oppressed Muslim woman.

Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism and the Veil

I briefly mentioned the role of the Western backed Shah Pahlavi in Iran in the mid-twentieth century and his imposed ban on the wearing of the veil. It is an important historical continuation of the discourse of the veil that began in the colonial period. In attempting to retain close ties with Europe and the United States, the Shah wanted to do away with the most visible symbol of native culture, and the one that was already invested with deeply coded meaning:

The *chador*, forbidden by Reza Shah as part of his enforced program for emancipating women, and associated with the backward and downtrodden during the Pahlavi era, was later used as an emblem of revolutionary protest by women of all castes and classes who marched against the Pahlavi regime. (Sullivan, 2000, p. 245)

Declaring the veil illegal in 1936, the government faced challenge and resistance by a great percentage of women, especially those who lived outside of major urban areas (Ettehadieh, 2004). The policy was made to seem successful through media censorship and staged gatherings of supporters. “Whenever governors were unsuccessful, they contemptuously blamed local peoples as ‘backward, wild, unintelligent, barbarous, and dirty’ and said that they were unappreciative of what was being done for them and understood only force” (Ettehadieh, 2004, p. 99). Like the British administrators in Egypt, the Western-backed regime in Iran felt that it knew what was best for women and used force and police power to unveil women “for their own good”. By denying the expression of religious identity, the regime actually encouraged revolutionary feeling in those who deeply resented the forced Westernization and the perceived degradation of Iranian native culture.

Women opposing the regime joined forces to create the Women’s Organization of Iran (WOI) in the two decades leading up to the revolution. WOI evolved throughout its existence, but generally used a feminism based on the teachings of Islam to argue for greater equality for the women of Iran. For the women who formed this organization Islam was a vehicle for the expression of women’s agency. The religion could be reinterpreted to offer equality and a powerful voice for women. The group set up family welfare centers in rural areas to connect with women on a grassroots level. Secretary-general of WOI, Mahnaz Afkhami writes that the “centers built legitimacy for the organization at the

grassroots level and within communities where problems of illiteracy and strict control of women's movement outside of the home made other ways of reaching out to the masses of women impractical" (p. 133). A lesson of the work of this organization and its effectiveness is that the process and work of grassroots women's movements must be committed to working with all classes of women to improve living conditions. Top-down pronouncements, especially those that have to be enforced through police action, do not take into consideration what most women (especially poor, rural, or uneducated women) need or want for their lives. When the Shah was overthrown during the Islamic Revolution of 1979, women who had organized around a concept of Islamic equality for women demonstrated in the streets wearing veils as symbols of revolutionary resistance. They were reclaiming the potent symbol of anti-Westernization that had gained more symbolic power during the banning. The story of the Shah and the Islamic Revolution is an example of how the veiling of women has been centralized in the Western discourse of women in Islam, but that more substantive issues of women's rights to education, employment, voting, and equitable marriage and family laws have been generally more central to Muslim women's organizing and calls for change.

After the revolution, the Islamic regime betrayed its promises for more equitable legal and cultural treatment of the women who were active in support of the cause. Many of the gains that WOI had worked so hard to achieve (such as

the Family Protection Law, which gave women greater rights within marriage, to divorce, and for child custody) were suspended by Khomeini.

Banning the Veil

One lesson of the revolutionary action fomented by the banning of the veil in Iran is that the removal of religious symbol does not necessarily lead to a lessening of religious sentiment, or to a loss of desire to use the symbol. The work of the WOI in Iran during the banning of the veil shows that the removal of a piece of clothing is not necessarily an indicator of women's legal and economic freedom or equality. Conversely, the forced removal of veils led to an increased desire to wear them as an expression of cultural pride and religious freedom. In the past three years, the attention to and fascination with the veil has taken on new importance. Wearing the veil has become the most visible marker of cultural difference in Europe and the United States, a walking symbol of Islam. Since the renewed centrality of Islam in the West after the September 11th attacks, Muslim women have become targets of racist slurs and aggression and of government statements and policies aimed at addressing cultural difference. In the name of secularism and religious freedom, policies that ban the wearing of the veil (or certain types of veil) have proliferated.

Turkey, a majority Muslim state, led the governmental policy charge when in 1997 officials passed bans on the wearing of the hijab in schools (by teachers and students), public institutions, and the military. Since the rise to power of Ataturk in 1923, Turkey's official stance has been a strict separation of church

and state, and a policy of Westernization that includes the ban on headscarves. Fears of rising political parties with Islamist ties have brought the government in Turkey to a point of national tension over the hijab. In 2003, the government held national celebrations to mark the 80th anniversary of the Turkish republic formed under Ataturk. President Ahmet Necdet Sezer refused entry to the celebration to any woman wearing hijab, including the wife of Prime Minister Erdogan. Turkey seems to be in the throes of an identity crisis at the national level and while the terms of that crisis are being decided and argued over by the dominant patriarchy in political power, it is the bodies of Turkish women onto which the crisis is enacted. In political attempts to join the European Union, Turkey has been ignoring the call of many Turkish Muslims for a more open environment in which to express their religious beliefs. As Amin Maalouf (1996) wrote, “For...Turks, modernization has constantly meant the abandoning of part of themselves. Even though it has sometimes been embraced with enthusiasm, it has never been adopted without a certain bitterness, without a feeling of humiliation and defection” (p. 72).

While the ban has been the source of tension in Turkey, most of the debate around banning the veil has taken place in countries of Western Europe, where the Muslim population is in the minority. In 2000, France passed an official ban on “obvious religious symbols” in schools, including the headscarf. President Jacques Chirac claimed that the ban was an attempt to preserve the secular nature of France, which he felt was at risk from religious political parties and

Islamist minorities. “UMP deputy Jerome Riviere (of Chirac’s party) says France's secular nature was being challenged by a small minority of hardline Islamists, and he insists the law is not about suppressing religious freedom” (Wyatt, 2004, para. 9). It is interesting that the fear of growing Islamist political organizing is countered by a government ban on the wearing of the veil in schools. Official rationale behind the ban is that it will lead to a more unified, secular France where school children will unite in community without the barriers of religious difference. The implication is that if one does not wear overt signs of difference on one’s body the underlying difference will disappear. As if the clothing worn is the only sign of difference, or that one’s identity is so tied to clothing that removing one will result in the shedding of the other. Government statements also implied that the (white, male) leadership in France was doing this for the Muslim girl’s own good, basically stating that they know what is best for these students even if they do not yet realize it for themselves. Many in the government worry that the ban will further separate the growing Muslim communities in France from the rest of the country, and segregate Muslim girls in private religious schools. Protests within France and in other Muslim communities across the globe have demonstrated the controversial nature of such a ban. Those who doubt that integration and assimilation to French secularism can and should be forced through legal action question the logic of the French government’s rationale for the ban.

Weeks before the French ban was to take effect, two French journalists, Georges Malbrunot and Christian Chesnot, were taken hostage in Iraq. The group that held the men claimed that they would only be released when French President Chirac repealed the ban on wearing headscarves in schools. The removal of the ban became associated with the hostage taker's plea and with extremism in general. Proponents of the law gained support as a result, and moderate Muslims were forced to come out in support of the French government in the condemnation of the terrorist act of kidnapping.

Recent events in England have brought the debate over veiling into the headlines of British papers. Again, much like the bans in Turkey and France, male politicians are making public statements and policies that directly affect Muslim women without including the voices of those most directly affected in debate. This past fall, British ex-foreign minister Jack Straw made comments about the "visible statement of separation and of difference" (Straw, 2006) implying that he felt the veil represents the lack of community unity in Britain. Straw conducted several interviews in October 2006 stating his concern over women's ability to conduct meaningful conversations while veiling their face. He seemed to be frustrated that he could not read the body language of a woman who came to meet with him. He extended his discomfort in this conversation to what he believes is a barrier to the creation of community. "Would she, however, think hard about what I said - in particular about my concern that wearing the full veil was bound to make better, positive relations between the two

communities more difficult” (Straw, 2006). Straw laid the blame for poor community relations squarely at the feet of women who cover their faces in public. He stated, rather explicitly, that these women are selfishly choosing their personal religious beliefs over the good of the community at large. Just as the issue of the veil has stolen focus away from more pressing issues of women’s safety and education in Muslim cultures, the veil has made it more difficult to hold nuanced conversations about the role of religious freedom and symbols in secular Western cultures. Jack Straw was quoted in all major Western news outlets, but very few solicited responses to his remarks by Muslim women who choose to veil.

These incidents of banning the wearing of the veil have at their root a question of national identity. Immigration and increased religious diversity in France, Britain, and other countries in the West have forced governments to think about how to negotiate the increased diversity and a growing nationalism that resents this diversity. Western fears of terror acts, perpetrated in the name of Islam, have been fueled by the attacks of September 11th in New York, the London tube bombings, and the Madrid train bombings. Western European banning of the veil is playing out in response to a sense of rising Islamic fundamentalism in the West and in traditionally Muslim countries. Government pronouncements about the veil, clouded with rhetoric of diversity and intercultural understanding, cannot help but remind me of the paternalistic writings of Lord Cromer whose efforts to unveil the women of Egypt were part of a greater civilizing mission.

Again, the persistently patriarchal power structures in Europe are using the veiling of women as general critique of Muslim “difference”. Response to this recent call is reminiscent of the anti-colonial nationalist movements that saw unveiling as a form of elite Westernization and an assault on cultural practices. “Now, in the name of ‘purifying’ the Muslim nation from internal corruption, and in the name of countering the oppression of Western imperialism, religious fundamentalists posit women as key players in their whole project” (Skalli, 2004, p. 54). Many theorize that the rise of fundamentalism has its roots in the collusion of Western imperialism and the westernized elites in many Muslim countries. The unveiling of women is, as it has been established, felt by many to be a form of corruption and an assault on Islam. Every law or statement that is made in Europe or the United States that critiques the wearing of the veil is fuel for fundamentalist arguments about the attack on Muslim women.

Contemporary Muslim Women and the Veil

By centering Western fascination with the veiled Muslim woman in my writing, I am in some ways reinforcing this fascination and focus. But I hope to use this history of centrality of the veil in patriarchal discourse as a backdrop in which to discuss the much more complex gendered reality of women in Islam, and the resistance and agency that has been marginalized in Western popular discussion of the religion. In her autobiographical work, *A Border Passage*, Leila Ahmed (1999) writes of her experience of coming to the United States for the first time in 1979 and being a panelist on the subject of women and Islam. While she

was prepared to talk about the complexity of the history and negotiation of gender relations, the mostly white audiences wanted only to discuss how horrible Islam is and how oppressive and restrictive the practices of the faith were for women:

The implication was that, in trying to examine and rethink our traditions rather than dismissing them out of hand, we were implicitly defending whatever our audience considered to be indefensible. And the further implication and presumption was that, whereas they- white women, Christian women, Jewish women- could rethink their heritage and religions and traditions, we had to abandon ours because they were intrinsically, essentially, and irredeemably misogynist and patriarchal in a way that theirs (apparently) were not. (p. 292)

Ahmed's feelings of white feminists' antagonism toward Islam mirrors the attitudes of early European feminists who believed that Muslim women had to work outside of the framework of their faith, to give up their cultural identity in order to be truly "liberated". For mainstream feminism in the United States in the 1970's, there were few nuanced interpretations or thoughtful analysis of the social and cultural status of Muslim women. Popular in media in 1979 focused on the American hostages held by students involved in the Islamic Revolution, and the uninformed fear and mistrust of Islam was rampant. The situation is in many ways analogous to the level of fear and ignorance of Islam in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks. Though thoughtful and informed scholarship has been written about gender and Islam since 1979, the vast majority of Americans still equate Islam with veiling, and therefore with oppression of women. While

the whole history and relationship of gender and Islam has been collapsed in mainstream discourse into a single issue of veiling:

The differences in social conditions and political status enjoyed by different communities of veiled women and the many cultural variables and specificities that attend the wearing of veils are seldom the interest of those who represent veiled women to and for the West. (Donnell, 2003, p. 132)

In her essay, “We Wear the Mask,” from 1998, Coco Fusco relates a story of her encounter with European liberal feminism and the complex mixture of moral judgment and exotic fascination that was expressed about Muslim women:

I heard too many horror stories about Muslim treatment of women that often began with comments about chadors, and led to assertions that ‘traditional’ men didn’t allow their women to be feminists (European style). But in Germany I was also told that the latest craze for middle-class European women trying to ‘get in touch with their bodies’ was belly dancing class. (p. 113)

While selectively using parts of the “exotic” culture of the East, these Western “enlightened” women were denying any complexity or agency to those who practice Islam. The relationship of Western, liberal feminism to Islam is not unique; the understanding of complex cultural and social conditions of “other” women has been notoriously lacking. Postcolonial feminist critique has addressed the willed ignorance of liberal feminism to the nuanced, geographically and class specific situations of so-called Third World women. The cause of most non-white women has too often been viewed as a single issue that is of peripheral concern to the post-industrial West, or it is turned into an international cause with fleeting

obsession and media coverage that is forgotten as soon as the next cause comes into view. Despite the increasingly complex scholarship on gender and Islam, many self-declared feminists in the West still refer to practice of veiling as necessarily problematic and oppressive. The intransigence of Western simplification of such a geographically and culturally contingent form of dress is discussed in the work of transnational feminist theorists. Mohanty (2004) discusses how many Western feminist readings of the veil collapse historical and cultural context in their assertion that veiling equates with sexual control and oppression. “However, it is the analytical leap from the practice of veiling to an assertion of its general significance in controlling women that must be questioned” (p. 34).

While I have discussed the underlying historical and cultural attitudes toward veiling, the veil as an important and tenacious visual code in the representation of Muslim women deserves greater focus. In the following chapter, I trace the Western, male visual imagining of the Muslim women from the Orientalist painters of the nineteenth century to contemporary visual images of Muslim women in the Western media. The focusing of the colonial discourse on the veil was reflected in the visual representation of women and the fascination with the coding of the veil as both sensual and oppressive to varying degrees throughout the course of the visual discourse.

CHAPTER IV

(RE)VIEW

Another way to break the taboo of the veil was to go back to the studio where the photographer, using models, had the power to decide what should be exposed and what covered. (Graham-Brown, 1988, p. 135)

It may be, moreover, that in the context of Western global domination, the posture of some kinds of feminism- poised to identify, deplore, and denounce oppression- must unavoidably lend support to Western domination when it looks steadfastly past the injustice to which women are subject in Western societies and the exploitation of women perpetrated abroad by Western capitalism only to fix upon the oppressions of women perpetrated by Other men in Other societies. (Ahmed, 1992, p. 247)

Current events that are the effect of the increased movement and interaction of globalization cannot be critically examined without a historical backdrop of European colonialism and continued Western imperialism. There is a direct connection between the management of colonial power and the visualizing of difference. I am particularly interested in the visual regime of representation that can be traced from the height of European Imperialism in the 19th Century through the present that enforces imbalances of power through images of the Western/European refinement in relation to the exotic and savage Other. The combined layering and effect of the multitude of Western representation of Islam and the East produces a discourse that can be called Visual Orientalism and can be analyzed through selected representative images of

difference. The construction of the visual Orient and Oriental through colonialism's apparatus of imagination influential in the contemporary visual representation of difference and Islam in the West. Colonial power relied on the construction of European cultural superiority, visually imagined as clean, orderly, scientific, and rational. The native cultures of the colonies were variously visualized as dirty, savage, bloodthirsty, superstitious, sexual, and close to nature.

I organize this chapter through the analysis of visual images created in the West of the imagined East, particularly the Muslim woman in Western visual imagination. I argue that the repetition of visual codes within this diverse range of images is not coincidence; Western representation of the Muslim woman is a form of visual discourse that operates within a larger cultural discourse of Islam and difference. The images provide the tools for imagination and fantasy, and those fantasies in turn provide the impetus for the reproduction and repetition of predictable images and assumptions. My choice of images created of women as imagined by Western male is not meant to suggest a lack of agency or sense of resistance on the part of the women in any era. Resistance to native and colonial forms of patriarchy in subtle and more overt ways were present at the time of creation of these images. This resistance to patriarchy was not, however, part of the Western fantasy of the exotic woman of the East, and therefore was not represented in Western paintings or photographs. More recent photographs of Muslim women in resistance have been circulated in the West, but the great majority of representations and the ones that capture the popular imagination

are of powerless, oppressed women who seemingly are waiting to be uncovered and saved by the West. Even in the most recent images of the Afghan woman covered in burqa, there is a fascination with the covering of the woman's body and the possibility of revealing the hidden. There is a history of Western fascination with the exoticism of the unavailable foreign woman that extends back to the images created in the colonial era. "The popular image of slave girls, harems, and concubines nonetheless continued to horrify and titillate Western critics of the Muslim world throughout the colonial period" (Harlow, 1986, xv). The images in this chapter represent a time period from the mid-19th century to the current day; I analyze the images in terms of theoretical discussions of postcolonial criticism (Edward Said, Malek Alloula, and Leila Ahmed) and through the analysis of visual semiotic codes that represent cultural shorthand in the images. The images all play with and on the covering and uncovering of women's bodies through culturally specific dress and veiling.

The Male Gaze

The artists and photographers of these images are the producers and controllers of the gaze, a sexualized, fetishized form of looking that seeks to make available the women pictured as objects of desire. Laura Mulvey's (2003) work on the gaze is useful in understanding the sexual power of these representations. The ability to represent women in the style and dress of one's choosing is an act of power where "the actual image of woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man" (p. 52). Passivity of the female form as object is reinforced

in Western images of the veil. The underlying message of many of these images is that the male artist/viewer has the power to remove the covering and reveal what lies beneath. The creation of images of women in Muslim cultures by Western men has a long history, becoming increasingly popular with the Orientalist painting in France during the colonial era (mainly late 19th century), continuing with the advent of photography into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Since the veiling of women in public and the prohibition against revealing oneself to men outside the family were and are common cultural practices in many Muslim societies, the images are a result of fantastic imagination, monetary compensation, or negotiation with male relatives of the woman. All of the images, then, have an air of the forbidden, the coerced about them. Women made available to the gaze of Western men are forms of fantasy, of submission to the pleasure and power of the men who captured (stole?) their likenesses for Western audiences:

The dominant narrative of the Muslim woman in Western discourse from about the eighteenth century to the present basically states, often in quite sophisticated ways, that the Muslim woman is innately oppressed; it produces Muslim women who affirm this statement by being either submissive nonentities or rebellious renegades- rebellious against their own Islamic world, that is, and conforming to Western gender roles. (Kahf, 1999, p. 177)

The public veiling of women in places such as Algeria and Egypt during the colonial period was seen as both a source of wonder and frustration to the colonizer. Covering of the body hinted at the female form underneath, but did not

allow for visual access. Unveiling occurred either in the artistic imagination, the paid studio model, or the use of sheer power and force.

Situating the Visual Discourse

I examine a discourse-within-a-discourse; the layered meanings and codes of the Muslim woman as constructed through Western images within the framework of the overall formations of Islam and the Orient in European and American imagination. The larger Western (a supposedly unitary and definable geographical location) cultural discourses on the Muslim world (again, a supposedly unitary and definable geographical location) have vacillated between a sense of curiosity of its strangeness, fear, and a related need to control and exercise power over the people and territory. This larger discourse has been explored by Edward Said, who labeled the combined whole of artistic, academic and political representation and knowledge a regime of truth called Orientalism. Said's theory of the discipline of Orientalism is a theoretical lens that can illuminate the codes embedded in images created by the West to represent the Orient, the Other. Said (1978) defines Orientalism as:

A distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological historical, and philological texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made of up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of 'interests' which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains. (p. 12)

This imagined geographic space of the Orient was the projection of European ambition and fantasy that carried the weight of academic truth. The academic studies, the artistic creation, the fiction and literature created about the Orient formed a regime of truth describing an entire region of the world. Said wrote of an “imagined geography,” that was generated through the combined efforts of Orientalist scholars and artists. In the time of the Crusades, the Muslim world was a vast, powerful yet nebulous force felt to be encroaching on Europe. Fear of invasion, of a loss to Christianity, led to aggression and bloody massacres. “The Islamic lands sit adjacent to and even on top of the Biblical lands; moreover the heart of the Islamic domain has always been the region closest to Europe, what has been called the Near Orient or Near East” (Said, 1978, p. 74). For the time period between the Crusades and before the physical colonialism of Muslim territories by Europe, Islam was not forgotten in European imagination. The fear of strong empires and close geographies kept Islam and the people who followed the faith in a place of fear and uncertainty. When European powers had the physical force and political will to expand via colonial rule, countries such as Morocco, Algeria, and Egypt were under physical control and attempted control of native culture and religion. Colonial rule entailed not just physical control, but a drive to create knowledge about the controlled population. “Once again, knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control” (Said,

1978, p. 36). This was a form of regime of truth, beliefs and prejudice that were stated and willed to be fact. Colonial knowledge rested on a combination of real observation, imagined inferiority, and artistic fantasy.

Visual representations of Muslim women contain specific visual codes whose meanings for the West were solidified during the colonial era. It is useful to examine theoretical explanations for the mechanisms in which colonial power was represented in visual terms and how the legacy of colonialism and struggles for independence have used visual signs to communicate shifting relationships of power. In his essay, "Visual Regimes of Colonialism," Terry Smith (1998) writes of a three part process of visualization that colonial powers used to establish and consolidate control in a colony: calibration, obliteration, and aestheticization. The first step in establishing colonial authority is calibration, which includes, "mapping of oceans and landmasses, measurement of distances and of governmental and property boundaries, surveillance of peoples" (p. 483). Putting down official borders, creating or changing names of roads, bodies of water, and towns to colonial names, all create a grand map that is necessary to the control of land and the people who inhabit it. Obliteration is the second of Smith's stages in the visual regime of colonialism, and it involves the literal or figural destruction of native people and culture. "These practices range from actual, brutal murder to an equally potent imaginary Othering" (p. 484). The final stage, and the most purely visual, is aestheticization that involves creating a beautiful and exotic façade that covers the actual brutality of maintaining colonial power. "It spun

charming appearances as garlands over the instrumental actualities of establishing colonies in foreign climates, of creating systems of control, of building ordered socialities” (p. 484). The three stages work together to establish and normalize control, to destroy native culture and then to cover up the destruction with a benignly beautiful face. Orientalist paintings and the reproduction of sanitized versions of colonial holdings for exhibitions fall into this third stage of aestheticization. The fantasies of artists who imagined the exotic interior of the harem, or of the veiled woman coyly returning the gaze of the artist/viewer, and the photographs that allowed imagined scenes of bare-breasted women to be sent home to Europe were all a form of aesthetic façade. They projected visually what the colonial power wished its colony to be, and in doing so took the focus away from the first two stages of Smith’s visualization, where power was used to gain control and to destroy native ways of seeing and being seen.

Smith’s postcolonial theory and Said’s discourse of Orientalism are not sufficient to describe the gendered representation of Muslim women by the West; Said has been criticized for the androcentric nature of his critique. Islam and the West are both examined from a male point of view, with the complicating factors of colonial and native forms of patriarchy unexamined. Often, colonial knowledge was asserted in a power play to consolidate European control by centering native women and cultural traditions in the argument for cultural superiority. Ahmed (1992) writes that:

The Victorian colonial paternalistic establishment appropriated the language of feminism in the service of its assault on the religions and cultures of Other men, and in particular on Islam, in order to give moral justification to that assault at the very same time as it combated feminism within its own society. (p. 152)

I am reminded of the writings of Lord Cromer (described in chapter three) and his detailing of the many inferiorities of the Egyptian native population. Cromer aims his verbal attacks at the treatment of women in Islam as well:

Whereas Christianity teaches respect for women, and European men 'elevate' women because of the teachings of their religion, Islam degraded them, Cromer wrote, and it was to this degradation, most evident in the practices of veiling and segregation, that the inferiority of Muslim men could be traced. (p. 153)

This colonial obsession with the unveiling of Muslim women is not easily understood by only a desire to dominate. The images of these women, produced during and after colonial times, play on the veil as not only symbol of degradation but also as sexually inviting, a form of teasing that invites the uncovering of hidden worlds.

This tension of uncovering the secret world of the Muslim woman is the drive behind the visual discourse of Western representation. The discourse goes back as far as when the first contact between cultures occurred, but I begin when the imbalanced power of the relationship between East and West was made explicit and images of the East by the West flourished. Once colonial administrations had been set up in Muslim countries, artists traveled East under

the protection of the regimes. In colonial Algeria, for instance, French artists traveled in search of new and intriguing cultural exotica to paint for their home audience. These artists played on already formed ideas of Islam, the harem, and the veiled covering of Muslim women, and they reinforced these stereotypes through colorful, sensual Orientalist paintings.

Early Romanticism and the Muslim Woman

The first image that I would like to examine is *The Almeh (Arab Girl in a Doorway)* by French Orientalist painter Jean-Leon Gerome from 1873. The painting shows two female figures, one bathed in a soft light in the foreground of the painting and the other mostly obscured by shadow walking down the darkened entryway. The main figure is posed seductively, her head leaning against her arm in the doorway. She is partially veiled, but with sheer fabric that actually covers little; her breasts are visible beneath the sheer fabric and she is looking at the painter/viewer in a dreamy and seductive manner. The gaze of the artist and viewer is assumed to be male and Western, the woman presented in a clear sense of exotic fascination and desire. The other figure is cloaked in opaque black fabric, concealed entirely from the viewer's gaze and doubly concealed by the shadow of the inner doorway. The juxtaposition of the two female figures creates a tension of veiling and unveiling, of availability for the viewer's gaze and therefore for sexual pleasure. The reality of veiling meant that most women in public spaces were unavailable to the colonialist and Orientalist sexual gaze. The placement of the mostly uncovered woman in a doorway is an invitation for the

viewer of the piece to enter the private space of the woman where she could be entirely available for view. From the crumbling lattice work in the background of the painting, art critics have surmised that this woman is located in an unsavory part of the city, most likely she was a prostitute that was paid for her visual availability. Like many other of his paintings involving women of the East, Gerome's *Almeh* is painting in rich colors and soft, almost glowing light.

In French Orientalist painting there were three themes that were artistically reimagined through decades and movements in the depiction of women in the Orient. The themes of the odalisque, the harem, and the bath showed women in various states of undress and availability for gaze and presumed sexual pleasure. The odalisque is shown as a singular, mostly nude female figure lying prone on lavish tapestries and pillows. "Ideal figure above all others, the odalisque is the very symbol of the harem, its highest expression...She is its hidden, yet available, core, always throbbing with restrained sensuality" (Alloula, 1989, p. 74). The background sometimes features a musician or servant, but the sexually available woman, seemingly waiting to be possessed by the artist and viewer, dominates the foreground. The harem scenes involve groups of women, usually more covered than the odalisque, in private rooms engaging in social activities. The bath is a theme that again employs the uncovered woman as sexual symbol. In the paintings of baths, the seduction of the viewer is subtler because the women depicted are engaged in the activity of bathing, but this often involves physical contact with other bathing women or with servants. All of these

themes involve the artist/viewer peering into a private, forbidden space where they would not be allowed to go in real time and place.

The fantasy aspect of the scenes is made acceptable by the exotic romanticism of Orientalism, where the foreign is sensualized and the East is feminized. In her “Introduction” to the book Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age, Shohat (1998) traces the gendered history of exploration and colonialism to the new of forms in economic and cultural domination in globalization. “The ‘voyages of discovery’ initiated a process of massive movement of material resources and human labor across the Atlantic from the ‘Motherland’ to the ‘virgin land’, which required fertilization and fecundation” (p. 49). Other lands that were the focus of European expansion and colonialism were gendered as female; the constructed gender role of women in Europe placed them in need of protection and guidance from men. Referring to lands as “virgin,” and with feminine pronouns, European imagination of the foreign reinforced the need for guidance, control, and taming by the rational (i.e. male) European powers. The scenes of women are then doubly sexualized by being romantic, sensual visions of the foreign and by being female bodies in visually available images.

The Colonial Exhibition and Visualizing Difference

In the era that Gerome was creating his sexualized paintings of women in Algeria, the colonial powers were displaying their spoils in the form of the colonial exhibition. European governments wanted to parade the advantages and

exoticism of the far-flung colonies for their populations at home. The display of people in cultural institutions in the West was accompanied by the display of artifacts and goods that were the material documentation of colonialism. The combined effect of the ordering and display of the foreign objects created what Timothy Mitchell (1998) theorized as the “exhibitionary order” of colonialism (p. 495), which created a systematic visual order of objects. “What reduced the world to a system of objects was the way their careful organization enabled them to evoke some larger meaning, such as History or Empire or Progress” (p. 500). Cultural artifacts, tools, and ways of living were taken out of context and displayed for European audiences in a manner that illustrated the rightness of the colonial project. Colonial exhibits, such as the Algerian Pavilions at the Paris Colonial Exposition of 1900, constructed miniature exotic locations for the pleasure of the European spectator. The pavilion was meant to transport the French public to a reproduced version of Algeria, complete with Algerian colonial subjects roaming the sets. “Such visual and textual installations in the colonial pavilions were designed to convince spectators of the particular colony’s economic worth and potential and of the good sense of the colonial enterprise in general” (Benjamin, 2003, p. 109). No one event captured the relationship of Orientalist art to the colonial power of France more than the exhibitions that allowed the French citizens to be transported, through artistic visual facsimile, to the colony as those in power wished to imagine it.

Orientalist paintings and colonial exhibits that celebrate the exotic fantasy of difference are part of a tradition of those who have the power and resources representing all others in forms of their choosing. The history of Western popular attraction to simplified, exotic representations of difference has been explored by theorist/artist Coco Fusco (1995), English is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas. One of Fusco's theoretical contributions to the field of postcolonial visual culture is the connection between the ugly history of ethnographic display and contemporary artistic appropriation and multiculturalism. "Performance Art in the West did not begin with Dadaist 'events'. Since the early days of European 'conquest,' 'aboriginal samples' of people from Africa, Asia, and the Americas were brought to Europe for aesthetic contemplation, scientific analysis, and entertainment" (p. 41). Fusco labeled this in the title of her essay, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," referencing the cultural "borrowing" that is so prevalent in the history of Western art. Fascination with the exotic other was presented in such starkly racist terms in the colonial period and was exploited in the work of modern artists like Pablo Picasso who was fascinated by African aesthetics and appropriated forms without credit. This "intercultural performance" is still an issue in recent moves to display art from artists of color and from artists of the Third World and the East. Artists are asked to be part of exhibitions that are built around artificial ideas like the "African American Artist" or the "Muslim Woman Artist" assuming a single self-definition and unified point of view.

An American Orientalist Artist

Though the United States was not a colonial power in the early twentieth century, a few artists traveled within European colonies and created Orientalist scenes that used similar visual codes of exotic sensuality. John Singer Sargent was an American painter who traveled to Northern Africa and painted in the Orientalist tradition. His painting from 1880, *Fumée d'Ambre Gris (Smoke of Ambergris)*, shows a Muslim woman lifting her veil to inhale the smoke of burning ambergris. Ambergris is variously described as a “resinous substance found in seawater” or as the “very rare substance that occasionally turns up on beaches after having been vomited up from the intestines of sperm whales” (“Fumee d’Amber Gris”, 2006). The substance was well known to be an aphrodisiac used in Morocco at the time of this painting. It is interesting to compare other Orientalist art and Sargent’s juxtaposition of this veiled woman, covered in public (and surely not willing to unveil for a male stranger) and the idea of her lifting the veil from her face to let an aphrodisiac smoke wash over her face. Tensions of the covered yet sensual and mysterious woman are on offer in this painting, though the uncovering and sexuality are more subtly coded in the use of the ambergris. The code of the veil being lifted to reveal the sexually charged woman underneath is present in Singer Sargent’s painting. The woman is not in public, based on the walled area and the carpets beneath the figure we can assume that the painting is set in an inner courtyard. Part of the power of this painting, and others that play on the code of the removal of the veil, is the feeling

that this woman is unaware of the artist's/viewer's presence. It is a window on a private moment, captured for the Western audience. The pleasure of the voyeuristic gaze is a form of what Mulvey (2003) has named the "scopophilic instinct," which means the "pleasure in looking at another person as an erotic object" (p. 52).

The Orientalist paintings of Gerome, et al, came into being at the height of French colonial power within the exotic East. There had been a vast collection of travel and scholarly analysis of the so-called Orient prior to Gerard's *Almeh* of 1873, and it all lead to a fertile ground in Europe of an audience that had notions and beliefs of what the Orient was and how it looked. Even though conventional wisdom about the East focused on its mystery, the academic discipline of Orientalism created a will to truth for claims made about the East and reduced a large part of the world to an easily knowable mental space. In terms of imagined geography, the Orient was wholly observable and explainable, whether the imagined and real locations had much congruency was and is the subject of debate and controversy.

The production of forms of knowledge about the Orient cannot be separated from the political realities of colonialism and the need to maintain political control in the colonies. At home in Europe, the Orientalist work of writers and artists created a market for the fantasy of difference, and created a sense of affinity between the general public and the colonial enterprise in distant

but fantastical lands. Control over the method and form of representation through art is a form of control over the fear of difference:

The European representation of the Muslim, Ottoman, or Arab was always a way of controlling the redoubtable Orient, and to a certain extent the same is true of the methods of contemporary learned Orientalists, whose subject is not so much the East itself as it is the East made known, and therefore less fearsome, to the Western reading public. (Said, 1978, p. 60)

Said's theory of the imperial regime of truth that created an elaborate Other was hugely influential in the contemporary work of postcolonial visual theory. For my purposes, the weight of Oriental visual representation is vital to understanding the history of Western representation of women in Islam and how these images function as truth. The institutional and cultural support of Orientalist discourse set the stage for post-9/11 generalized images of the uniformly veiled and therefore oppressed Muslim woman in need of Western liberation:

Veiling- to *Western* eyes, the most visible marker of the differentness and inferiority of Islamic societies- became the symbol now of both the oppression of women (or, in the language of the day, Islam's degradation of women) and the backwardness of Islam, and it became the open target of colonial attack and the spearhead of the assault on Muslim societies. (Ahmed, 1992, p. 152)

Colonial administrations, from the British in Egypt to the French in Algeria, were attempting to unveil women, in order to chip away at native culture. The veiling of women's bodies and the possible concealment of weapons or subversive materials was a source of colonial fear and an additional motivator for forced or

coerced unveiling. At the same time, the veiled woman was still painted as a figure of sensuality and mystery by Western artists.

Renoir and the Allure of the East

French Impressionist painters are primarily remembered for their depiction of light. Several, most notably Pierre-Auguste Renoir, traveled to the French colony of Algeria to find new, exotic imagery to paint. As with Gerome, there is a level of enchantment with the traditions and culture of the East for Renoir. The travel of French artists to Algeria was made possible by the colonial control of the country and the imposition of French administration on the Algerian people:

In short, the colonial traveler, enjoying the fruits of his country's dominance, aestheticizes the colonized people, treats them as spectacle. That attitude returns us to Monet's construction of Algeria as a site of visual revelation and, still earlier, to Fromentin's description of the Orient as a site of 'unclassifiable' experiences." (Benjamin, 2003, p. 37)

The French artists who worked in Algeria were seeking out the exotic, the spectacle of difference. This difference was nowhere as clear as in the dress of local Algerians. The buildings and landscapes of Algeria were aesthetically pleasing to Renoir for their unique angles of the architecture and the foliage and plants that did not exist in France. In *Stairway in Algiers*, from 1882, the artist painted a stairway leading up to a mosque on a hill. The real subject of the image is the main figure seated in the central foreground of the painting and staring directly at the artist/viewer. The figure is draped entirely in white fabric, except

for her eyes and her hands. The white of the cloth in her garment is echoed in the walls of the stairway and the building in the background. The image depicts a double act of relation with the artist/viewer: acknowledgement yet denial. The white folds of the veil deny the artist's view, the access to this woman's body is made impossible. But it is this impossibility that differentiates this Algerian woman from those in France; it is proof of her authenticity and her difference. Renoir painted the woman looking back at him in a flirtatious manner, and it has been suggested that this look is an artistic invention. In earlier sketches of this scene, the main figure is engaged in activity that does not involve the artist. The acknowledgment, this stare from beneath the veil, brings a feeling of sensuality to the painting that was not present in earlier sketches of the stairway.

The depiction of veiled women is a visual code that for Renoir does not equate with oppression of women, but with the exotic and visually romantic. He composes his subjects without any reference to the French colonial project or the modern and evolving Algerian society. Even though Algiers was in the process of being remade into a French city, as traditional buildings were torn down and replaced with French imitations. "The 'exotic' was thus retreating in Algeria, where many thousands of French and other European colonists lived, where their language and their money were accepted, where the police and the army provided security" (Benjamin, 2003, p. 36). Even though it was this colonial power and protection that made the work of artists like Renoir possible, the paintings show no trace of the European.

Photography and the Staging of Desire

The use of images in the stated or implied service of colonial power continued in the 1960's, with photography replacing grand Orientalist painting as the documentary and artistic media of choice. Intimate scenes of the interior of the harem or of the lifted veil did not disappear with photographic representation. The use of photography meant that the imagination of artists had to be replaced with either staged scenes of women unveiling or with women who were uncovered through the use of force.

The debate over the veil rests on the intersecting ideas of visibility and power. A visual expression of the unequal power is the role of the gaze; part of the power of colonialism was the gaze of the colonizer. There was a specifically exoticized and sexualized gaze directed at the veiled woman during the colonial period. Malek Alloula (1986), in The Colonial Harem uses a specific example of French postcards of Algerian women to illustrate his theory of the "colonial phantasm" (p. 3). The colonial phantasm is the sexualized vision, in which the European colonialist is the definition of masculine domination looking to the feminized East for submission. He could subject the "natives" to constant scrutiny and surveillance, but he remained both central and hidden from view. There is a weakness in the inability to hide from view, to be on constant display (as in ethnographic displays of the nineteenth century). To be constantly available for the gaze of others is a form of subjugation. One way to subvert the unequal gaze is to cover oneself from view, to deny the availability of one's body

to the gaze of others. The use of the veil is a denial of unconcealed sight that reveals the flesh to the viewer, a refusal to be constantly available for visual inspection. Alloula (1986) writes of this denial:

Draped in the veil that cloaks her to her ankles, the Algerian woman discourages the *scopic desire* (the voyeurism) of the photographer. She is the concrete negation of this desire and thus brings to the photographer confirmation of a triple rejection: the rejection of his desire, of the practice of his 'art,' and of his place in a milieu that is not his own. (p. 7)

This barrier to this Western sense of sight, where women's bodies are expected to be readily available for inspection, increases the desire of the photographer/Western male to uncover and view the bodies covered by veils. Another subversion of the gaze is to return it: to reclaim the right to represent one's body and experience. The artists that I explore in chapter five are claiming the right to present their experience of the world and to return the gaze.

In the context of the postcard photograph of Algerian women, the photographer attempts to satisfy his desire through re-creation and staging. The photographs were used as images on postcards for sale to Westerners as a way to send a piece of the exotic home. Alloula reproduces many of these postcards and writes of the fabricated nature of these images in The Colonial Harem. These images, possibly more than any other, are unashamed manipulation of Western sexual fantasy with the "Femme Arabe", the covered yet sexually available woman. Here, the only parts of this woman's body available for plain view are her eyes staring at the artist/viewer and her uncovered breasts. This photograph, and

others like it, are obvious set-ups, constructed to fulfill Western fantasy. It is highly suspect that a woman who would cover her face and body in public would willingly reveal her breasts to a Western photographer. Alloula describes the fantasy of revealed bodies:

But this space, transparent now, where bodies are taken without any possibility of refusal, where they abandon themselves even more if that is possible, is the *very space of orgy*: the one that the soldier and the colonizer obsessively dream of establishing on the territory of the colony... (p. 122)

The sexual nature of colonial control, the feminization of the native, and the patriarchal fantasy of forced availability come together in photographs, like the staged images on postcards. Unlike Orientalist painting, there is no pretense of artistic mastery in these images. The colonial phantasm of the forbidden-made-available is reproduced in postcard form and sent to Europe as proof. “The postcard authorizes and ensures *the return of the repressed*; it is its ideal mediation since it does not surround it with any clandestinity; on the contrary, it displays it everywhere and draws all eyes to it” (p. 120).

French military photographer Marc Garanger was ordered to take photographs of Algerian women to create colonial identification cards that could be checked by authorities to monitor movement and activity. The acts of unveiling these women and taking their photographs were a small piece of the greater French colonial project in Algeria. In the early 1960’s organized opposition to French rule was gaining power and military strength. More than

the practical goal of controlling movement through the use of identity cards, the photographing of these women was meant to humiliate them and their families, degrade native cultural traditions, and assert French power. Traditionally veiled, the women were forcibly uncovered for their photographs by this French military photographer. Garanger was greatly disturbed by his orders and described them as, “an obscene physical attack” and he believed that “the women had been raped twice; the first time was being forced to unveil and the second was having their photographs taken” (Al-Ani, 2003, p. 103). The result is a powerful and disturbing series of images entitled *Femmes Algeriennes* from 1960. The Algerian women were veiled, unavailable to the penetrating gaze of the colonizer, refusing to submit. “The photographer will respond to this quiet and almost natural challenge by means of a double violation: he will unveil the veiled and give figural representation to the forbidden.” (Alloula, 1986, p. 14) If one did not know the story and context behind this series of photographs, they could easily be mistaken for artistically created images of exotic women for *National Geographic* or for a Western exhibit entitled, “Women of the Arab World”. The particular violence in the colonial act of unveiling, of forceful taking of the image of these women’s faces, lends a tragic undertone to the representations. And yet, the staring of the woman into the camera, the engagement with the artist/viewer is strikingly similar to the other images in this chapter.

Imagining Patriarchy

The use of images to serve colonial structures of power is not an isolated form of Western imagining the Other. Feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty works with issues of Western feminism and its role in the maintenance of biased and victimized representations of women in other cultures. In Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity, Mohanty (2004) highlights the relationship among white masculinity, colonialism, traditional forms of patriarchy, and the continuing dominance of middle-class values. She identifies three of these characteristics of colonialism:

(1) the ideological construction and consolidation of white masculinity as normative and the corresponding racialization and socialization of colonized peoples; (2) the effects of colonial institutions and policies in transforming indigenous patriarchies and consolidating hegemonic middle-class cultures in metropolitan and colonized areas; and (3) the rise of feminist politics and consciousness in this historical context within and against the framework of national liberation movements. (p. 58)

The hierarchy of race that naturalized and provided “scientific” basis for white-rule also assumed the white male as dominant with white female, native male, and finally native female on the bottom of colonial hierarchy. As I explored in the previous chapter, this hierarchy led to a collusion of colonial and native patriarchy in passing laws that controlled the movement, education, and dress of women. Artistic and media images of Muslim women have in common the normative position of the white male as controller of the gaze. This general, normal white male is the painter carefully creating the sheer fabric that falls from

a breast. He is the photographer who pulls away the veil and forces visual availability. This Western, white male is the assumed producer and consumer of these images. I extend Mohanty's work to examine how this hierarchy has been utilized in media representations of Muslim women since 9/11.

The representation of Muslim women by Western artists and journalists is located in a complex web of local patriarchy and Western patriarchal ethnocentrism. Without denying the agency and ability to resist patriarchal structures, the production and reproduction of media and artistic images that purport to represent a unified vision of Muslim womanhood have been circulated. Response or resistance to these stereotypical images has been quietly ignored. Ahmed theorizes the ways in which colonial and native forms of patriarchy functioned to center the Muslim woman's body and issues of the veil in the nationalist and colonial discourses. The oppression of women within many contemporary states that profess Islamic laws and values is a reality, patriarchy under the cover of religious law. These focused discourses on women's bodies influenced the history of Western representation of the Muslim world that created distorted scholarly and popular images of the East.

The Afghan Girl

One of the most famous Western images of a Muslim female from the past thirty years is the *National Geographic* cover image of a young Afghani girl from 1985. The image became iconic, representative of the American fascination with difference, youth, femininity, and the pain of war. The girl was photographed in a

refugee camp; an anonymous image of suffering that was lauded for its beauty. Photographer Steve McCurry gained fame and the girl in the famous image remained un-named. She became known as the “Afghan Girl,” an object of fascination and exotic mystery. The question of how the image was obtained, whether the girl knew of *National Geographic* and why this stranger was so close to her are not addressed in the magazine. Questions of the girl’s identity became a cultural obsession; interest in the individual in photograph eclipsed any interest in Afghanistan as a nation or culture. Uncomfortable questions of why the image was of particular fascination to the *National Geographic* audience were not posed. The girl is young and intense; the initial impression is of striking natural beauty. Her eyes, the most discussed part of the image, are a piercing blue-green. Were they so intriguing because they set this girl apart as more Western (there is a fetishizing of blue eyes in the United States, especially in little girls)? This was no run of the mill refugee, with brown eyes and dark skin, used to manipulate the guilt of Western privilege for charitable causes. Like many of the images I have chosen for this chapter, the girl is wearing a veil, but it was pulled away from her face, framing her hair. Was the veil pulled away by force, or is that its normal state? How did the white, male stranger convince this girl to sit for what was her first photographed image? Did the fact that this is the only, therefore special and unique, image of her add to our desire (the lack of cameras and images connects to our cultural interest in the “primitive” Other and the idea of first Western contact).

After United States military offensives made it possible, a *National Geographic* team traveled to Afghanistan and searched for this girl in the image. Intent on figuratively and literally uncovering this woman, the team took many trips to refugee camps in the war-torn country to make connections. The pseudo-scientific reputation of the magazine lent the search for the “Afghan Girl” an air of rational scientific discovery; as if the team were searching for life on Mars, or a new species of fish. Since the search was undertaken by such an esteemed publication for the public good of knowledge, the ethical implications of uncovering and exposing this woman were not debated. “*National Geographic* identifies itself as a scientific and educational institution, and it is located in a long tradition of travelogue as it sends its staff on expeditions to bring back stories of faraway people and places” (Lutz & Collins, 1993, p. 1). The expedition to track down the elusive woman was “necessary” for scientific reasons and the “unveiling” of the hidden life and identity of the girl in the photograph. Eventually tracked down to a remote village, the mostly male *National Geographic* team attempts to convince the male members of Sharbat’s family to allow the white, male stranger in to her private space to see her unveiled face. What made the American journalists feel that they had the right to demand to see this woman, stripped of her accustomed and preferred covering? The defiance in Sharbat’s eyes in both photographs, but particularly in the later image, shows a woman who is unsure of the situation she has been placed in and a possible anger at the intrusion of the stranger. In the article about the search, author David

Braun plays up the Western fascination with the veiled woman and the achievement of uncovering her and revealing the “truth”:

Because Sharbat Gula lives a traditional Muslim life behind the veil, she was not allowed to meet men outside her family... When Sharbat agreed to have her picture taken for the second time in her life, she came out from the secrecy of her veil to tell her story. (Braun, 2003)

The text plays on Western romanticism of the veil, as Gula “came out of the secrecy of her veil,” to reveal herself for the select readership of the magazine. There is a sense of victory, of taming the wild beast, of climbing Mount Everest in the magazine’s description of Gula. In taking the second photograph of the women, the magazine’s team succeeded in overcoming great odds, perilous journeys, and possible failure.

The cover image for that issue of the magazine featured Sharbat in full burqa, a mesh fabric screen covering her eyes. She is holding the image of herself as a young girl. The image forces the viewer to question how this beautiful young girl became this (obviously) oppressed woman, covered and hidden from our gaze. It promises that the mysterious woman beneath the burqa will be revealed for our inspection and curiosity in the pages of the magazine. The publicity and popularity of the Sharbat Gula photographs is representative of the image of Afghan women post-9/11.

Suddenly burqa wearing women were on the cover of magazines and newspapers around the United States, when the issue of the Taliban’s treatment of women existed for years in Western anonymity. In Inderpal Grewal’s (1998)

essay “On the New Global Feminisms and the Family of Nations” she indicts the neo-imperialism of Western feminism that uses the legacy of colonial oppression to further Western dominance over Third World women. “The dominant discourse in regard to international issues constructs U.S. feminists as saviors and rescuers of ‘oppressed women’ elsewhere within a global economy run by powerful states” (p. 511). According to Grewel, when Western feminists rally to rescue Muslim women from the oppression of the veil, they are simply playing into the discourse of American political and moral dominance. The case of Sharbat Gula illustrates the complexity of this issue; *National Geographic* believe they are doing a great service to this woman and her country by removing her veil and exposing her identity to the world. In the end, the result is that the fame of the magazine is increased and the cause of American military action is furthered. Gula is still living with her family, her male relatives making decisions for her, and her country is sliding back to the Taliban and into war.

Images Used in Service of War

United States interest and representation of Islam as a threatening, unitary force began in earnest during the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran and the ensuing hostage crises of U.S. embassy employees in Tehran. Before these events, issues of the Islamic world were confined to how our Cold War and energy interests were playing out. In *Covering Islam*, Edward Said (1981) writes of the distorted image of Islam in the United States and the relationship between academic and media representations and U.S. foreign policy interests. Said lays

out five consequences of the static and threatening image of Islam that is portrayed in the United States:

One is that a specific picture- for it is that- of Islam has been supplied. Another is that its meaning or message has on the whole continued to be circumscribed and stereotyped. A third is that a confrontational political situation has been created, pitting 'us' against 'Islam.' A fourth is that this reductive image of Islam has had ascertainable results in the world of Islam itself. A fifth is that both the media's Islam and the cultural attitude to it can tell us a great deal not only about 'Islam' but about institutions in the culture, the politics of information and knowledge, and national policy. (p. 40)

Representation of Muslims in the United States media following the hostage crisis is starkly similar to those following September 11th. Suddenly in both cases, after years of neglect from the American public, Islam and what it meant to our interests were on the center stage of television news broadcasts. In 1979, American mass media collapsed the whole of the diverse and divergent Muslim world into images of the Ayatollah Khomeini and the crowds chanting, "Death to America". Twelve years later, in 2001, American mass media collapsed the Muslim world into those who were members of terrorist groups such as al Qaeda or those who fund terror:

In no really significant way is there a direct correspondence between the 'Islam' in common Western usage and the enormously varied life that goes on within the world of Islam, with more than 800,000,000 people, its millions of square miles of territory principally in Africa and Asia, its dozens of societies, states, histories, geographies, cultures. (p. X)

Even though the number of Muslims and the diversity of geographic and cultural locations have expanded greatly since the revolution in 1979, the coverage of Islam in the popular culture of the United States is stubbornly simplistic and stereotyped.

Nicholas Mirzoeff's (2006) concept of the "image weapon" that he applies to the photos taken of prisoners in Abu Ghraib can be used to describe the images of veiled women that are used as cultural "image weapons" in the battle for the public space. The idea of the image weapon is that in the contemporary era of information overload, easily reproducible and translatable images have become tools of propaganda and support for war. The war-without-end on terror that has been waged on behalf of "freedom" has been supported and waged in the media along with the realities of bombs and ground troops. The veiled woman as image weapon is an interesting case of war mongering, in that it represents visually that which is un-representable. It is visualizing the covering of something that is implied but not seen. Mirzoeff (2006) describes the visual subject as, "a person who is both the agent of sight—regardless of his or her biological abilities to see—and an object of certain discourses of visibility" (p. 2). The veiled woman is shown as the ultimate object of the viewer's sight, reduced to an article of clothing, an inanimate object that stands in her agency or identity.

If one type of image stood in for the flattened, stereotyped image of all Muslim women post-September 11th, it would be the Afghan woman in full burqa. Although there is not one single photograph that captured the imagination of the

public in the United States, there was a flood of two types of images that either depicted groups of burqa-clad women in various situations, or a single woman removing or peering out from underneath the garment. The following two examples are samples of a multitude of images from Western news outlets. These images of floating cloth, concealing bodies underneath have become commonplace and convenient shorthand for the complicated issues of gender and the Taliban. One does not need to read the accompanying article with the image of completely covered women walking down a dirt road and a headline of “Liberty for Afghan Women”. We can assume that the very fact of their visual concealment means that liberty (as defined in the West) remains a distant reality for these women. This image from the BBC online was accompanied by a short piece written by correspondent Kate Clark (2001). She attempts to understand local women who claim that improved access to education and reduction in poverty are real advances, despite the continued covering of women in public. Clark comes to the conclusion that, “In the long run, girls' education is probably the most important freedom of all” (2001, para. 12). It is a rare moment in Western media where other forms of freedom are given precedence over the removal of the veil.

The Orientalist fantasy of the coquettish Muslim women peeking out from underneath her veil to look coyly at the artist/viewer is alive and well in more current images of fascination. An image taken from a website that details daily news reports from Afghanistan deploys this visual convention of the veil. The text that accompanies it says, “Afghanistan's educated women were the first to drop

the burqa when the Taliban were forced out and they too detest the garment but recognize that for many the time is not right to hang it up” (“Afghanistan’s Educated Women”, 2006). But the image does not seem to show a woman who detests wearing the burqa. The unnamed Afghan woman is peeking out of her covering, with a look at the photographer that is reminiscent of the Almah of Orientalist painting.

The images represent the overall message of the United States government after the terrorist attacks of September 11th: the Taliban is oppressive to women as represented by these visual barriers, these burqas, and that the American military defeat of the Taliban is symbolically removing all burqas, unveiling the beautiful faces of Afghan women. The expectation of many was that once the Taliban fell all women would drop their veils immediately and savor the freedom brought to them by the American military. Western onlookers and journalists were shocked to discover that most Afghan women stayed covered, even as they exercised newly granted rights of suffrage and education. This paradox, of remaining in burqa while at the same time experiencing greater freedom, confounded Western expectations. In an article posted on the MSNBC website, entitled “Afghan women change, but the burqa stays,” NBC News producer Kiko Itasaka (2004) expressed the general shock of the continued sight of women walking around Kabul in full covering:

Yet the status of women has improved since Taliban times. Women can walk around, unaccompanied by males, and they are allowed to work. They are free to roam in public without fear of being arrested or beaten for

wearing high heels or seeming to walk in a provocative manner. Yet the burqa still prevails and for some women, it is a form of protection. (para. 6)

When an American thinks of Muslim women, what mental image is conjured up? The academic works of Orientalist scholarship and the recent media images of the Muslim woman have created two distinct images. One is the sexualized, exotic woman of the harem who is mysterious and yet readily available for the male gaze and sexual pleasure. The barely covered sensual *Almeh* and the traditional themes of the odalisque, the harem, and the bathing in French Orientalist painting represent this category of Muslim femininity. The other image is the poor, abused victim who is forced to hide herself behind the chador and who has no sense of agency or hope for release. Both images are misrepresentations, creating caricatures of Muslim women; they are both productions of the male fantasy that construct female sexuality as dangerous, exotic, and controlled absolutely by men. Western feminism has traditionally reinforced these ideas of Muslim women, judging all women by the Western standard of liberation.

With such a complex and layered history, the visual discourse of the Muslim woman in the West forms stubborn cultural codes. The visual representation of a veil is so marked with cultural baggage that any contemporary images that involve gender and Islam are necessarily informed by the ideas of oppression and victimhood and yet an underlying sensuality and lustfulness. “How does one begin to deconstruct the barrage of mediated images and strip

away culturally reinforced prejudices?” (Bailey & Tawadros, 2003, p. 26). In the following chapter I look at four contemporary artists who have relationships to both traditionally Muslim cultures and to the West. Visual expression that is created by the object of Orientalist art, women who have cultural relationships with Islam, can create a visual form of dialogue that has the possibility of questioning the stereotypical codes. It would be a monumental task for a single artist or set of artists to be able to subvert and counteract the several-hundred-year history of Visual Orientalism, but I believe there are pieces of art that can disturb easy conclusions and pose questions about the visual equivalence of Islam and oppression.

CHAPTER V

(RE)PRESENT

It is hard for me to think about my art and political activities as clearly separated. As if there are two distinct realms they belong to, when it is not like this. (Jacir, 2004, p. 19)

The visual images of Muslim women that we have been exposed to in the West, generally, and in the United States, specifically, reinforce the flattened, one-dimensional figure that stands in for ultimate difference and ultimate victim. Most images have focused on the one article of clothing that has been the obsession of Western viewers for centuries: the veil. Whether we are shown the woman who must be imagined to exist beneath the thick head-to-toe covering of a burqa, or if we see only this woman's eyes staring back from underneath her face covering, or if we are shown the moment when the veil is pulled back to reveal the woman's face: all of these images have as their subject the woman and her veil. One does not seem to exist without the other, and the vast majority of photographs and video shown on the news in the West intensify the association. Along with the images, we have cultural codes and values that are signified through these visuals: the greater percentage of the Muslim woman's body that is hidden from view by her veiling, the more victimized and oppressed she must be. Removing or lifting the veil is assumed to be a moment of liberation, an unveiling

of not only the woman's face but also an opening of her eyes to the world of freedom that has been hidden to her.

I believe that we, in the West, need urgently to be exposed to more complex visual images of difference, specifically relating to Islam and gender. I do not assume that there is a magic bullet, an image or set of images that can, upon viewing, undo and reset all previously held ideas and images of the Muslim woman. However, there are many contemporary artists who are working with the visual codes of gender and Islam in diverse and exciting ways, and I have hope that the analysis and use of this artwork can begin to disturb current stereotypical images of difference in the United States. The Muslim woman is a complicated subject matter, written and exposed throughout recent history mainly through male imagination and terms of engagement. To use references of the veil in artistic works that question its equation to oppression, is to risk confirming already held ideas of the meaning of the veil. To discuss gender in regard to traditionally Muslim cultures without reference to the veil causes doubts about one's cultural origin and authenticity. How do artists manage to navigate stubborn cultural meanings and codes that have been layered onto the dress (and therefore identity) of women in Islam? And is it possible to create a more nuanced understanding of difference by viewing and discussing works of art when the multinational media corporations exert so much power and influence in how we all see and interact in the world?

The four artists present very unique visions of the role of the artist, the influence of culture and religion on art, and the mode of expression. The words of the artists will frame my analysis of the artistic texts. Descriptions of key works by the artists will be followed by my own interpretation of the visual texts, the artist's own descriptions for the intention of the work, and connections to feminist postcolonial theory. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's (1994) idea of a "polycentric aesthetic," is useful in theorizing about art from multiple cultural locations. The "polycentric aesthetic" de-colonizes the visual by breaking apart the myth of linear progression of art history, with Europe at the center and all others on the periphery. It opens up myriad centers of important art production and highlights artists who work at the borders of nations, discourses, and identities. Homi Bhabha's (1994) postcolonial concepts of hybridity and liminal space form connections between the artists and theory. The feminist art criticism of Fusco (1995) and Lippard (1990) to provide models of analysis and critique. They provide insight into how women are subverting the patriarchal gaze through the imagery of art. This also provides a perspective on the meaning of the postmodern in art and the place of the multicultural in the contemporary art world. How do these artists use traditional and habitual ideas of women, place, and identity in order to transform and re-present them? In what ways do the visual elements confront viewer's assumptions about difference and representation? How does the artists' position of hybridity, living between cultural frameworks, inform their work?

Theoretical Connections

The works of Neshat, Satrapi, Hatoum, and Jacir span a variety of media, artist intention, and audience reception. A constant thread in all of the art is the movement between cultures and across borders. Their work is both rooted in cultural specificity and striving to speak to the transcultural movement inherent in this era of globalization. The contemporary problem of identity formation within globalization is addressed by the work of cross-cultural artists. While the Orientalist visualizing of flattened difference encourages an exclusive national, cultural identity that fortifies the walls separating “us” from “them”, the expression of these artists can speak to a more inclusive, rooted cosmopolitanism identity. In order to make connections across the artists and pieces, I need to ground my reading of the art in the theoretical. I am interested in how the border theory of Anzaldúa (1987), Hicks (1991), and Gomez-Pena (2005) informs the physical and mental border crossing that is the backbone of the four women’s experience and expression. The feminist art criticism of Lippard (1990) and Shohat (1998) also crosses and transcends national borders in ways that can help to make sense of the possibility for artwork to create change.

Lucy Lippard’s (1990) feminist art criticism is a reconstruction of the art-world as polycentric, rebuilding the canon through multiple cultural locations of art creation. She critiques the ethnocentric American attitude toward difference:

Some of our national imperviousness can be blamed on the manic pace at which we absorb culture; on the inadequate, biased information we receive

from the trade media; and on the invisible processes of hegemony itself, which blinds us to the unfamiliar by conflating all 'otherness'. (p. 156)

The speed and bias of the presentation of information feeds this exclusive American identity, in which difference is constructed as both inferior and fearful. Lippard believes in the possibility of breaking apart this monolithic exclusive idea of American identity through contemporary art, that "this art, its layering and fragmentation, suggest the necessity to rethink the assumptions that have led us to this precarious point," (p. 245). Neshat's re-imagining of the heavily coded veil as a site of agency is one way of fragmenting assumed meanings through art. Emily Jacir's video installations that juxtapose distant geographies that appear to be the same is a form of visual collage that disrupts expectations. Once the normed, monocultural fabric of patriarchy is torn, space is created for the voices and locations that had been marginalized. The singular is replaced by the multiple, mono with poly.

I've always claimed that the collage aesthetic-also the core image of postmodernity- is particularly feminist. Collage is about gluing and ungluing. It is an aesthetic that willfully takes apart what is supposed to be and rearranges it in ways that suggest what it could be. (Lippard, 1995, p. 25)

The collage aesthetic is a visual metaphor for the crossing and mingling of cultural codes that occur in the work of the artists in this chapter. Ella Shohat (1998) also writes of a "polycentric" multiculturalism that could lead us away from placing one position as central to the creation of identity and aesthetics.

“Unlike liberal-pluralist discourse, a polycentric multiculturalism entails a profound reconceptualization and restructuring of intercommunal relations within and beyond the nation state” (p. 2).

Shohat calls for a “transnational imaginary” to add life to what she calls “inert, static maps chartered by ethnic studies, area studies, women’s studies, and gay/lesbian studies” (p. 46). The current neo-imperialism of global capital requires imaginative acts that go beyond traditional boundaries of nation, which create liminal spaces of inquiry. Artistic expression of hybrid and transnational experience functions in this borderless space created by the movement of capital and people. I am struck by the increased xenophobia and contraction that has been a response to this increased movement, and believe that those cultural producers who create across boundaries can call this fear of difference into question. “An ideological construction of ‘here’ and ‘there’ obscures the innumerable ways that women’s lives are imbricated in the forces of globalization” (p. 47). This “transnational imaginary” is a space that is created by artists who work across borders; they question the flow of capital and the Western hegemony of meaning and knowledge. Shohat writes of the effect of this slippage of certainty within the understanding of transnational identities:

Given these complexities, an anti-essentialist multicultural feminist project is obliged to formulate identities as situated in geographical space and ‘riding’ historical moment, to work through a politics whereby the decentering of identities, and the celebration of hybridities does not also mean that it is no longer possible to draw boundaries between privilege and disenfranchisement. (p. 6)

These theorists explore what it means to live, write, and create between cultural spaces. According to Emily Hicks (1991), “the border writer, as translator understands that art is not a representation of reality that lies beyond itself, but rather a nonlinear movement among the fragments that constitute it” (p. 67). The border writer of Hicks writes not to mirror any single notion of reality, but to create collaged texts that blur the Western distinction between “reality” and “magic”. In border writing, the text and reader are deterritorialized, displaced from a stable sense of identity and identification. The work of art is also deterritorialized through the relationship of art and viewer. Original intentions of the artist must be negotiated within the cultural context of the viewer and new meanings are constructed between the work and the viewer.

Guillermo Gomez-Pena’s (2005) radical performance art and personas are situated at the psychological US-Mexico border. He creates an “inverted cartography” (p. 8) and a “reverse anthropology” (p. 246) where he swaps center and margin in order to critique Eurocentric patriarchal power structures. Through performance he asks, “What if Latinos were in power and could decide the terms of the debate? What if the United States was Mexico? What if imagination was a form of political praxis?” (p. 246). Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) writes of the *mestiza* as a way of thinking that is formed through the movement across and within traditional borders, “The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity” (p. 101). A renewed transnational *mestiza* feminism has to displace the center, not to create a new

and improved center, but to expand a multiplicity of centers. The artists described in this chapter share a tolerance for the unknown, for doubt and uncertainty that can be the result of movement across psychological and physical borders.

Marco Polo Syndrome

The act of creating contemporary art that deals with specific, non-Western cultural geographies is in many ways a perilous enterprise. If one creates work that does not deal directly with cultural symbols in an expected way, then the work is deemed culturally inauthentic. If one creates work that directly relates to stereotypical or expected cultural symbols, then the work can be accused of reinforcing ethnocentric beliefs of the exoticized Other. Art critic Gerardo Mosquera (1992) coined the term “Marco Polo Syndrome” to describe these Western and Eurocentric ideals in the world of contemporary art that complicate the production and reception of art made outside of Western centers of culture. “What is monstrous about this syndrome is that it perceives whatever is different as the carrier of life-threatening viruses rather than nutritional elements” (p. 218). Within the confines of this syndrome, art created by those outside of the West (sometimes referred to as the Rest) is either disregarded as derivative of greater Western products, or is valued as exotic, “authentic,” creations of the Other. If the artist does not appropriately reference “traditional” visual codes and represent his/her culture the way that it is imagined in the West, then the artwork is deemed inauthentic and not valued in the establishment. For artists

who deal with traditionally Muslim cultures in their art, this required authenticity means that they are expected to reference symbols of Islam in their work. For women artists, it means that they are expected to reproduce the mark of difference, the veil, as the ultimate symbol of identity in their imagery. For artists such as Emily Jacir and Mona Hatoum, who do not overtly reference the veil, there are questions as to their authentic cultural affiliations.

Questions have been raised as to whether the expressions of artists who deal with issues of gender and Islam through imaging the veil function to re-inscribe Orientalist ideas of Eastern exoticism and Western superiority. In an essay, "Native Informers and the Making of the American Empire" from 2006, Hamid Dabashi accuses author Azar Nafisi (2003) of serving American foreign policy interests in her portrayal of Iranian women in Reading Lolita in Tehran. There is a vision of Iranian repression offered by Nafisi, and the only free moments are stolen while reading classic books written in Europe or the United States. The critique of Nafisi as serving neo-Orientalist causes through her text complicates my analysis of the expression and reception of art created and viewed from our current political location. It is a fine line between describing a personal experience of gender oppression and furthering the Western stereotypes of a uniformly repressive Islam. How can the artwork of the artists that I am viewing be described through this neo-Orientalist critique? The work may in fact be re-inscribing and subverting Western assumptions simultaneously in the

expression of experience. This paradox adds to the ambiguity and uncertainty present in much of the work.

Shirin Neshat: Confronting the Stereotypes

Similar claims of the re-inscription of Orientalist fantasies have been made in regard to the artwork of Shirin Neshat, whose work utilizes the visual codes of the veiled woman and gender seclusion. I do not feel that Dabashi's (2006) critiques invalidate the pedagogical possibility of the work, but it reinforces the tentative and contingent nature of creating and experiencing work that cannot be divorced from the context of artist and audience. The same author who so harshly critiques Nafisi's representation of Iranian women is one of Neshat's defenders against charges of exoticism. In an essay about her work from 2005, "Transcending the Boundaries of Imaginative Geography," Dabashi critiques Western art critics who misinterpret the work through distorted Eurocentric lenses:

Through the intermediary of a body of interpretative essays and articles, the reception of Shirin Neshat's work is today almost inseparable from *the body of work itself*- to the point where *the body of work itself* is no longer distinguishable from the way that it has been received, the interpretive apparatus that has been generated around it. (p. 33)

Much of the Western art criticism of Neshat's work displays the entrenched dichotomies of East/West, Islam/Us, Tradition/Modernity, and Repression/Liberty that are the hallmark of Orientalist myth. Grand generalizations about the repression and seclusion of Muslim women are made in

discussions of Neshat's work. The geographically complex and culturally specific relationships of gender and Islam are flattened (as they have been in mainstream American media, textbooks, etc.) into a unitary group of the repressed:

But the supposition that Iranian (or Arab or Indian or Muslim) women have sat at home and been secluded to 'feminine private' quarters, while the public domain is left to men, is an Orientalist lunacy speaking to demented sexual fantasies of those who have created them. (p. 47)

There are multiple readings and ways to decode the images I discuss, and I hope to address the complexity of readings in my analysis. Some have critiqued her work as re-inscribing Western myths and fascinations with the exoticized foreign woman. "Does she fix and formalize the litany of Islam as being innately oppressive of women? Or is she merely creating icons for voyeuristic Western audience, reinforcing their preconceived views, titillating their fashionable curiosity?" (Milani, 2001, p. 7). The answer to these questions depends on the viewer's past experience with images of Muslim women in the context of media representations and interpersonal contact. Those of us in the West who have been fed stereotypical media images, like those detailed in chapter four, have been steeped in the notion of poor, voiceless Muslim women. Muslim women have historically been made available to the gaze of Western men through fantasy, imagined as a submission to the pleasure and power of the men who see through the veil. In the Visual Orientalism of representation, the focus was on the forbidden, hidden women who are uncovered for the artist/viewer. Neshat builds upon this history, as she has been exposed to Western media representations of

Muslim women as well as being object of this gaze. This forms an ambivalent mixture of self-reflexive critique and a deepening of the Orientalist gaze. On first glance, Neshat's work can fit nicely into this prepared location of exoticized, sexualized, voiceless femininity. And, in fact, many American art critics view her work as a reinforcement of all they already "know" about the Muslim woman.

Critic Scott McDonald (2005) wrote:

The photographs [of Shirin Neshat] reflect both the repressed status of women in Iran and their power, as women and Muslims; and they depict Neshat herself as a woman caught between the freedom of expression evident in the photographs and the complex demands of her Islamic heritage, where Iranian women are expected to support and sustain a revolution that frees them from Western decadence and represses dimensions of their individuality and creativity. (cited in Dabashi, p. 61)

McDonald assumes that the Muslim, Iranian woman is a unitary subject who is acted upon rather than a driving force for action. In this quote, the West is unified as well in its modern freedom of expression and its denial of the traditional. McDonald clearly identifies with the dominant media coverage of the Islamic Revolution in the United States; his words reveal a simplified understanding of what the revolution was based upon and the complex history of Western influence and repression in Iran.

Shirin Neshat left Iran to study art in 1973 in the United States and was unable to return until 1990, due to complications that resulted from the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The years of her absence were turbulent and full of change in Iran that Neshat was forced to watch from her location in California. Neshat

viewed the years leading up to the Islamic Revolution, the hostage crisis, and the long Iranian war with Iraq through the filter of American media outlets. Neshat felt a deep rupture upon return to Iran after a long absence:

The work is neither the document of a specific reality nor the illustration of a set of ideas, but the outline of the conflict and the irresolution of the artist's obsessions and concerns in connection with the culture she confronts when she returns to Iran after sixteen years and has to come to terms with the Islamic republic and her own transcultural condition as an exile. (Zaya, 2005, p. 27)

The place of her memory did not exist and she used her artwork as a site of struggle to understand the disconnect she felt. The Islamic Revolution had transformed the land of her birth and new codes about gender were in place that seemed foreign to her memory of Iran. Her work is a product of the disconnect that she felt in moving across borders and cultures:

One might say that the artist warns us how, in the age of globalization that has now become a reality, at least at the economic and financial level, one cannot make authentic and true cultural claims except as a comparison between different positions, even to the point of bringing them into conflict. (Verzotti, 2002, p. 75)

The work that Neshat created in response to her disconnect, to the feeling of returning to a home that is newly foreign, deals with female resistance, action, and agency despite (or because of) being fully covered by long black veils.

In her early work, Neshat created large black and white photographs of women with Persian script inscribed on their skin. Her more recent work is in film; she creates moving representations of culture, gender, and humanity. The

changing lives and bodies of Iranian women has been the focus of much of her work, exploring the issues of sex segregation, veiling, and resistance without allowing for a clear or uncomplicated reading. She is the arguably most recognized (in the West) of the artists that I examine, which begs the question: why are so many in the West eager to view and discuss Neshat's work? In some ways, the work can be viewed as a reinforcement of the media images of Muslim women. Western fascination with the veil as the ultimate symbol of difference draws viewers and critics to the work of Neshat. We are familiar with the visual code of the long black veil, the starkness of the presentation allows for some to see past the underlying complexity of the work and feel their own prejudices confirmed. "Aesthetically compelling and thematically ambiguous, her work never settles on a simple or singular meaning, never provides one answer or solution" (Milani, 2001, p. 12). In choosing to focus on the veiled woman, Neshat is utilizing well-known visual codes but she is also playing with their meanings, often subverting expected readings.

One of her most famous images, *Speechless* from 1996, is a large black and white photographic portrait of a veiled woman with Farsi calligraphy inscribed over her skin and the barrel of a gun peeking out from her veil just under her right eye. The piece asks more questions than it answers and while uniquely powerful, the image has raised thorny issues over the politics of representation. Within the framework of the postcolonial pragmatic, do the photographs of Neshat create uneasy feelings of doubt in viewers, doubt of easy reliance on

stereotypical representations and established balances of power? Art critics who review her work believe in the pragmatic power of the work. “Shirin Neshat’s bordercrossing is a dialectics of defiance, a bodily resurrection against fabricated cultures and the prison house of their national identity, with the nation-state as the custodian of the power that reaps their benefit” (Dabashi, 2002, p. 44). A viewer’s knowledge of Neshat’s background, and ability to read the Farsi poems written on the photos could shift expected readings of the work. The text is from radical Iranian women poets who write of agency and resistance. When I saw the piece at the Museum of Modern Art in March 2006, I read the translated text of the poems that was printed on a plaque beside the photograph. But many of the visitors I observed that day looked briefly at the work, maybe read the artist’s name and title, then moved on to the next room. Many probably recalled the stereotypical representations of veiled, oppressed Muslim women as an essentialized, singular group, an impression that has been fed by post-September 11th media images of a mythically unified Muslim world. Were they thinking, “Oh, another oppressed Muslim woman, veiled by violence”? Does the gun barrel peeking out from underneath the veil prove that Islam is inherently violent and that terrorism in the name of religion is inextricably linked to the use of the veil?

The Farsi text also speaks to another, more subtle meaning of these photographs: the conflict of living between cultures and the impossibility of literal or easy translation of cultural forms. “It investigates the relationship between images and writing, creating a highly ambiguous text precisely because

of the difficulties of translation, and it is a troublesome ambiguity because of its implications” (Verzotti, 2002, p. 76). Those who attempt to read the piece without knowledge of Farsi or the aid of additional translated text cannot leave with a sense of completion; the question of the meaning of written text on the body leaves an incomplete reading, an opening for doubt. The photograph also recalls the revolutionary actions of women in the overthrowing of the Shah in 1979. The Women’s Organization of Iran (WOI) was active in its resistance of Shah and his government’s repressive denial of Iranian culture and traditions. WOI used the tenets of Islam to argue for greater rights and equality for women:

This approach to Islam was based on the respect for the opinion of the majority of Iranian women, including many leaders of the movement, who fervently wished to remain within the spiritual guidelines of Islam yet also allow themselves the possibility of growth, change, and progress. (Afkhami, 2004, p. 129)

The seemingly disparate elements of the veil and the gun are remnants of the struggle of the WOI for an Islamic feminism that focused on women’s agency and voice through their religion. Neshat’s photograph of the veiled woman with the gun speaks to this relatively unknown history (for the West) of revolutionary women in Iran who saw the veil as an assertion of their cultural identity.

Neshat’s work moves from the static photograph to work in lyrical films exploring in more depth the relationship of gender, Islam, and movement. Three films created in the years 1998-2000, *Turbulent*, *Rapture*, and *Fervor* directly investigate Neshat’s understanding and conflict with the representation of gender

divides and power in Islam, particularly in her homeland of Iran. To varying degrees, the films seem to subvert and reinforce stereotypical ideas of gender roles and locations within Islam. Like her still photography, the films represent the artist's struggle with her own multiple identities as an Iranian woman and as a Western artist commenting on Iranian women from the outside.

Turbulent (1998) was the first move from photographic installation to filmmaking as the medium of choice. The piece involves two separate screens that display a male and female singer. When displayed, the screens are on facing walls with the viewer placed in between, having to shift body position and gaze in order to see the action on both screens. On one screen, the male singer is dressed in a tidy white shirt and he is singing on a stage in an auditorium full of male audience members. Shoja Azari plays the character of this male performer and beautifully sings a love song by Rumi, an Iranian poet from the 13th century. On the opposing screen, the female singer is dressed in black, veiled, and singing passionately to an empty auditorium. Composer/vocalist Susan Deyhim is the mysterious female performer; her song is not made up of poetry or words.

Her song in the tapestry of voices, a mosaic of primal utterances. Now rhythmic, like the beating of a heart, now intense, like the voice of love, anger, or fear, now pleading, sobbing, and mournfully lamenting, now ecstatic and orgasmic, it is the song of a soul. (Milani, 2001, p. 8-9)

While the male singer uses words and structure, the female singer embodies her song, passionately freeform and unyielding. The two films are distinct, yet closely related; their joined separateness is a metaphor for traditionally assigned gender

roles, male in the public sphere and female within the private. The narratives of the two films merge as the passion of the female singer draws the attention of the viewer and the male audience members from the opposing screen. As the work reaches its climax, all eyes are on the lone female singer. This piece has been interpreted as a retrieval of Iranian women's public presence and voice that were regulated in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution. During that time, female singers in Iran were forced into silence or exile and physical proof of their performances were destroyed (Milani, 2001).

Turbulent could also be read as a reinforced seclusion based on gender, or as an unproblematic statement about Islam's and Iran's essential oppression and seclusion of women. In fact, many of Neshat's own comments about her work suggest a flattened stereotypical view of Iran; in interviews she has been quoted as saying that Iranian women depicted in an Iranian novel, "are all coming from oppressive backgrounds," (cited in Dabashi, 2005, p. 69). She seems to re-assert the West/Islam divide in her interviews and her belief in the freedom of expression in the West that is unavailable to artists within Iran. Dabashi (2005) writes of Neshat's statements:

These comments, whether she means them that way or not, all come together to suggest that 'traditional Islamic societies' are repressive, oppressive, inhospitable, nasty, brute, and barbaric; while 'the West' is the exact opposite of all these things, otherwise how could she have made such an illustrious career in the 'the West' while not being permitted to work in her own homeland. (p. 71)

There is a tension between the layered complexity of Neshat's visual work and the reliance on simple binaries in her statements. Her struggle to visually work through her cultural estrangement can be of great use to those of us in the West who have been exposed to verbal and visual binaries. By using visual codes of veiling and seclusion that were used by visual Orientalists, Neshat is taking the familiar and easily readable into new ambiguous territory. It is this very use of traditionally stereotyped visual codes of the Muslim woman that has attracted the level of Western interest and attention to Neshat's art. After the initial infatuation, the complexity of the visual narratives and the subversion of these familiar codes allow for possible disruption of assumed meanings.

The second film in the series, *Rapture* (1999) is another film involving separate screens facing each other with the viewer in placed in between, negotiating the literally opposing films and narratives. In this film, a large group of men (clothed in white shirts and black pants) is shown moving within a fortress. They have freedom to move within the high walls of the fortress, but they are unable to escape the confines to gain access to the open space below. On the opposite screen, a large group of women (clothed in long black robes and veils) is shown moving freely on the beach below the fortress. These women gather, disperse, some ready boats to sail away. On the surface, the films are direct subversions of stereotypical gender roles within "traditional" Muslim societies. Men are confined to walled, private space as women are free to move within the open, public sphere. Though these women are free to move, gather,

and flee, they are completely covered from view by their chadors, which has been associated in the West as innately oppressive:

If we can avoid becoming entangled in the dichotomy of the 'liberated, global' West and the 'oppressive, provincial' East, if we can resist the impulse to dismiss Neshat's women out of hand because they wear the veil, then we will discover them to be powerfully self-assertive agents. (Milani, 2001, p. 7)

Within the supposed confines of their veils, the women are imbued with greater agency and movement. While not challenging the gendered seclusion in this film, Neshat's reversal of assumed gender roles playfully gives rise to new ways of imagining agency without easy reliance on the discourse of the veil as oppressive.

The third chapter in this film series on the direct relationship of gender in Islam, *Fervor* (2000) changes the theme of separate screens and separate genders. Again, there are two screens with different but related films. On one screen, a veiled woman and a white-shirted man meet each other on an empty beach. On the opposing screen, a public meeting is taking place with men and women sitting on separate sides of a diving curtain. The women are, as in other films, dressed and covered in all black chadors, and the men are shown in white shirts emphasizing the difference of covered/uncovered and black/white. But in this film men and women, though separated, are equal in their ability to view the speaker and listen to the speech on resistance to passion. In the audience of the speech, the pair from the other screen are present, listening to the text warning against the sins of desire and sensual longing.

They steal furtive glances across the cloth divide, attempting to make contact of one form. At the climax of the story, the unnamed woman suddenly rises and runs out of the hall, followed by the man. In many ways, *Fervor* represents a global theme of forbidden passion, of the struggle to make human connections despite the socially constructed barriers that bar access to relations. The barriers to contact can be read literally, as gendered seclusion, or more metaphorically as mental and cultural barriers that Neshat has experienced living between cultures and negotiating her own complex relationship to her homeland(s).

Marjane Satrapi: Mass Produced Images of Resistance

The work of Marjane Satrapi stands in contrast to the bodies of work from Neshat, Hatoum, and Jacir; while these artists employ a variety of media, all exhibiting in prestigious international galleries and museums. Satrapi works in the “low” art form of the graphic novel; her work is mass-produced and viewed by a much wider audience than the other artists discussed in this chapter. From one perspective, the lack of variety in media used by Satrapi could be viewed as a barrier to tracking her evolution as an artist and the means of critiquing established visual codes. But her mass appeal and the intricacies of her text and images provide a different, but not less effective, way to use contemporary expression to subvert popular media images. Satrapi created the Persepolis series about her own experience as a girl living in Iran before, during, and after the Islamic revolution. In the first book, Persepolis: the story of a childhood, Satrapi

(2003) vividly depicts the rule of the Shah, the excitement and disillusionment of the revolution, and the realities of living under the strict public rules of Ayatollah Khomeini all through her own lens as a young idealistic girl. A secondary theme running throughout the book is the influence of European and American popular culture and political imperialism on life inside Iran. Satrapi's stated goal in writing of her childhood experience was to dispel negative feelings of Westerners toward Iran, and to show that there is as much complexity, expression, and resistance in Iran as there is in Europe or America. Her work shows how the official state megarethoric (Appadurai, 1996) is filtered and re-formed through the micronarrative of her adolescent imagination. Mass media and official government rhetoric in Iran were not consumed intact by passive groups; Satrapi and her family receive, interpret, and reform information and communication in multiple and unpredictable ways. The work dispels myths of unitary ways of life, expressing the fractured and collaged memories of political events enmeshed with family relationships and the tribulations of adolescence. As opposed to official megarethoric, the images and text of Satrapi show the blurring of borders between East/West, personal/political, and repressive regime/moments of creative expression.

Satrapi shows, through vignettes from her memory, the corruption and violence of the Western-supported Shah. In "The Bicycle", her parents discuss the burning of the Rex Theater in Tehran, where four hundred people were locked in the theater and burned to death as police were instructed to stand by and watch

(p. 14-5). Events like this and other abuses of power led Iranians, including Marjane's parents, to demonstrate in the streets of Tehran against the Shah. Many women protested in veils, demanding the right to expression of religion and tradition. The demonstrations were met with gunfire from the military, which only increased the revolutionary fervor. In "The Party", Satrapi's drawing of those murdered by the Shah's regime (p. 40) is a stark stacking of bodies, mouths agape, illustrating the shocking brutality that was leading toward revolution. The next drawing shows a line of the walking dead (all look eerily the same) pushing at the back of the Shah, attempting to force him, literally, out of the frame. This section of the book tells a side of Iranian history that is covered up in the West, that in fact there was good reason for unrest over the Shah's regime and its Western supporters. The images and text show that the by the elite intelligentsia (like the Satrapi's) supported the overthrowing of the Shah, and that the revolution was not made up of zealots. One powerful image of a mass of people expressing pure joy is accompanied by the text, "The day he left, the country had the biggest celebration of its entire history" (p. 42). A sense of hope for the future is portrayed in this section; in "Heroes", Satrapi writes of the 3000 political prisoners released after the Shah left power, and illustrates crimes of two prisoners who were imprisoned for being communists and revolutionaries. Unlike the Western media representation of the revolution, the goals of Iranian revolutionaries were complex: some wished to end the abusive control of the Shah to create a more open, equal society, and others blamed the abuses on the

Western “decadence” that the Shah celebrated and wished to see a society built on Islamic law. As a witness to the struggle over the ideals of the new republic, Satrapi writes of the confusion she felt as the promise of the popular revolution was turned into a power play for the creation of a religious state. She noticed that seemingly overnight the way men and women dressed became ideological identifiers. Her drawings of “The Fundamentalist Woman v. The Modern Woman” and “The Fundamentalist Man v. The Modern Man” (p. 75) illustrate how important small changes in dress were to the judgment of your values. The “Modern Woman” wore the obligatory veil, but let “a few strands of hair show” and the “Modern Man” tucked in his shirt and shaved his beard, as “Islam is more or less against shaving” (p. 75). There is an understanding by Satrapi as a young girl that the visual markers of difference had greater significance in post-revolutionary days. She attends an anti-veil demonstration with her mother and witnesses unveiled women getting attacked and beaten for their show of resistance.

Satrapi’s memories evolve from confusion over the direction of the country and lives of those in Iran, to the confusion of war. Like many wars, the one in the 1980’s between Iran and Iraq led to increased nationalism. National borders and identity were celebrated and reinforced through the chosen trauma of the Iraqi attacks on Tehran. Much like the patriotism celebrated after the attacks of 9/11, it is when the national tent is torn that societies rally around their leader and are increasingly exclusive in their definition of community (Volkan, 1997). The

Iranian regime used the trauma of war to recruit citizens to the regime's cause. Marji, who was disturbed by the religious laws put into place after the revolution, felt extremely proud to be Iranian and wished to be a fighter pilot in the military so that she could personally bomb the Iraqis. This nationalism slowly faded to exhaustion over the prolonged war, the countless deaths, and bombings on Tehran. The drawings on one page illustrate the contradictions of Satrapi's life in this time. On page 102, the larger drawing on the top of the page shows abstracted bodies, with martyr's keys to heaven around their necks, blasted and blown across the box by bombs and death. The smaller bottom box shows an adolescent Marji at a punk rock party, slam dancing joyfully with friends. The juxtaposition of bodies exploded in war and those contorted in dance provides a sense of the disparate parts of life in Tehran during this long, bloody war.

Some stories that Satrapi relates show how she had a "normal" adolescence despite the enforced veiling and the raging war around her. "The Cigarette" shows her making friends with an older group of girls who encourage her to cut class. They try to rebel and skirt the rules, at risk of detainment by the Morality Police, just as most adolescents rebel and break rules. These moments of banal humanity showcase the micronarrative that is constantly evolving and unraveling in people's lives despite the presence of major political events. But, like many of the stories in the book, this one is interrupted by political realities and Satrapi's realization that the war with Iraq was being unnecessarily drawn out in order gain support for the regime. Her drawing of the regimes call that, "to

die a martyr is to inject blood into the veins of society” (p. 115) is of the “Iranian Body” being injected with blood. She realizes that her patriotism and commitment to the war was in support of a regime she does not support.

Throughout the first book, American and European influences are portrayed as both attractive because they were forbidden, and as unwanted imperial invaders. An example of the latter is in the drawing depicting “2500 years of tyranny and submission” (p. 11) showing the long line of invaders into Persia/Iran, ending with Uncle Sam. The forbidden, and thus tempting, features of the West in the book relate to the popular culture that was deemed “decadent” by the regime. In “Kim Wilde” Satrapi’s parents go to Turkey and smuggle home posters of Western pop stars that were unavailable in Iran:

Signs of European and American influence abound throughout Persepolis-tee shirts emblazoned with the Bee Gees logo, wall sized posters of Iron Maiden, cassettes of music by Kim Wilde become key details in Satrapi's illustrations; one can see these signs as surface manifestations of complicated colonial and imperial histories, and Satrapi's representation of her own investments in these cultural icons highlights Persepolis' subtle critique of the forces that work to suppress any manifestation of pop music as well as the forces that work to cast such productions as the gold standard of cultural currency. (Tensuan, 2006, p. 947)

This ambiguous relationship of imperial Western influence and the fantasy of popular culture seem to entice Marjane in this first book, though they are mostly the abstractions of the West as seen through commercialized notions of freedom through pop culture references. The more substantive cultural negotiations occur in the second book, when Satrapi is physically confronted with the realities of

living in the West. At the end of *Persepolis*, we are left with the image of her leaving Iran and her family to live in Vienna, Austria.

Satrapi left Iran at fourteen, after being expelled from several schools in Tehran for defying the teacher's orders and slapping a principal. In leaving the morality police, the harsh regime, and the dress codes she also left her family and her childhood. *Persepolis 2: the story of a return* (2004) opens with "The Soup": Marjane is in Vienna and we see her initial excitement at the consumer goods that she could not purchase in Iran. "The first aisle I headed for was the one with scented detergents; we couldn't find them in Iran anymore" (p. 6). But, the expected sense of freedom in Vienna, her city of exile, was muted by the loneliness of displacement. At the boarding house run by Austrian nuns her roommate spoke only German; she had no friends at her new school and felt the pain of being alone and different. One day, she is reprimanded by one of the nuns for eating food out of a pot. The nun says, "It's true what they say about Iranians. They have no education." (p. 23). When she counters with "you were all prostitutes before becoming nuns," (p. 23) Satrapi is kicked out of the boarding house, in a scene very similar to her expulsion from Iranian school. It is a lesson in the limits of freedom; the rules and attitudes of those in charge can be just as nonsensical and capricious in Vienna as in Tehran.

The strain of living between cultures and struggling with her self-identity as a teenager made Satrapi's time in Vienna extremely challenging. In "The Vegetable", she illustrates her physical awkwardness and the tension of trying to

fit into her new culture while being unable to forget her home. “The harder I try to assimilate, the more I had the feeling that I was distancing myself from my culture, betraying my parents and my origins, that I was playing a game by somebody else’s rules” (p. 39). She was trying to live a double life, hiding her Iranian identity from her Austrian friends and hiding her desire to assimilate and her loneliness from her parents. The imagined freedom of living in Europe is tempered by the reality of new cultural rules and often-Eurocentric attitudes toward Iran. When her mother came to visit, she shared her feelings about traveling in Europe: “Now as soon as they learn our nationality, they go through everything, as though we were all terrorists. They treat us as though we have the plague” (p. 49). The emptiness of Satrapi’s life in Vienna overwhelms her and she ends up homeless with life-threatening bronchitis. At this point she chooses to return to her home and family, flawed and rigid as that home might be. She sums up her decision while looking at her re-veiled image in the mirror, “...and so much for my individual and social liberties...I needed so badly to go home” (p. 91). There is no easily drawn conclusion for Satrapi about her different lives in Tehran and Vienna; both offer unique forms of connection and repression, and neither completely fulfills her desire for home and an elusive sense of liberty. In her return to Tehran, Satrapi renews connections with old friends and illustrates the contradictions of having a vibrant social life within a strictly policed state. “Our behavior in public and our behavior in private were polar opposites...this disparity made us schizophrenic” (p. 151). This text is describing two large

drawings of the group of female friends dressed in black coats and veils for movement in public and then the same group relating openly without prescribed covering in private.

The two book series, viewed in the context of their publication in France during the time of the law banning the headscarf, presents a personal story of experience that is intricately connected to the greater political and cultural stories. In 2000, France passed an official ban on “obvious religious symbols” in schools, including the headscarf. President Jacques Chirac claimed that the ban was an attempt to preserve the secular nature of France and to increase national unity. The implication of this ban was that if we all dress alike, then we will all get along and share common values. Satrapi’s time spent in Vienna, without wearing a veil, illustrates how cultural prejudice transcends the wearing of “traditional” or religious symbols. While Western media outlets were showing flattened images of veiled women as victims and in need of saving, Satrapi showed the complex agency of women within Iran and the often-ambivalent relationship with Euroamerican ideals of liberty. “In Persepolis drawings of veiled women refuse that stereotype of the nondescript archetypal Muslim woman. Rather, Satrapi’s female figures are human, and full of character and individuality even with the veil” (Whitlock, G., 2006, p. 965).

The movement and negotiation of cultural locations present in the Persepolis series is related to the identity formation in Appiah’s (1998) concept of the “rooted cosmopolitanism”. Through her travel between Iran and Europe,

Satrapi gains a sense of community that is both rooted in specific geographic locations and yet not tied down to the notion of nationality. Her struggle to find herself is described as a difficult process of growth and movement. The search is challenging in different, but real, ways in Iran and Vienna. “Satrapi is just as critical of the narrow, rigid vision of the nuns in her Austrian boarding school. Her description of alienation at home and exile abroad resonates beyond her personal history” (Daftari, 2006, p. 21). Satrapi’s expression of this exile is captured in the graphic novels Persepolis and Persepolis II. The work upsets expected ideas of Western freedom, describing the nuances of transition and loss of home.

Mona Hatoum: Bodies Implied

Mona Hatoum’s work is inextricably linked to her forced exile as a child and her chosen exile as an adult to study and produce art. She lives and works within and between multiple cultural locations. Her family was forced to live on the margins of society when they were exiled from Palestine at the formation of the Israeli state; they had to create strategies for connection and survival that were defined within their identities as exiles in a strange land. When, in her career as an artist, she chose to live at the margins, able to move between margin and center, she purposely formed a counternormative identity that was oppositional to the dominant, unitary definition of self in relation to the dominant exclusive identity. Hatoum (1997) relates her childhood of exile from Palestine to Lebanon at the creation of the Israeli state and migration to London

for art school to her artwork, “It comes into my work as a feeling of unsettledness. The feeling of not being able to take anything for granted, even doubting the solidity of the ground you walk on” (p. 134). The history of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and the experience of exile are tied intimately to her family’s experience. Hatoum’s mother wrote in a letter to her (that was later part of a video piece) of the trans-generational trauma of being separated from home and the displacement of feeling like an outsider in one’s new home. “Can you imagine us having to separate from all our loved ones, leaving everything behind and starting again from scratch, our family scattered throughout the world, some of our relatives we never saw again to this day?” (cited in Ankori, 2006, p. 123). Critic Ankori uses two forms and definitions of the term “disorientation” to describe the work and the effect on viewers when experiencing Hatoum’s expression. “The first component relates to the artist’s early childhood experiences of being born to displaced and dispossessed parents, who were abruptly transformed into isolated members of a scattered and shattered community” (p. 123). In this sense, much of the work can be viewed as an attempt to create discomfort and disorientation in the viewer, through unsettling performance in which the artist’s body becomes the physical expression of psychological turmoil, or through more nuanced objects that appear familiar but are altered to create an ominous feeling of threat. The second and more theoretical use of “disorientation” that Ankori names “Dis-Orientalism” relies on the description of Orientalism by Edward Said as the form

of creation of systematic and complete knowledge of one part of the world (the Orient) by a more powerful, hegemonic part (the Occident):

The implications proposed by this neologism are intentionally multivalent. They include the suggestion that the creation and study of Palestinian art entail the dismantling of an exclusively Western perspective or 'scopic regime'...The term Dis-Orientalism also alludes to a literal (i.e. geographical) 'loss of the orient'. (p. 21-2)

Twice exiled, once forcibly out of Palestine, then by her choice to attend art school in Europe, Hatoum and her family physically "lost the orient". The first meaning of disorient is the literal loss of one's sense of direction and stability, and the second is the geographic loss of home that is theoretically based on the work of Said.

The effect of this forced exile from their home in what was Palestine is clearly seen in the work of Mona Hatoum, particularly in her earlier pieces that have a raw immediacy that is easily read. In her early performances, Hatoum literally unsettled her viewers through politically didactic messages about oppression and the ravages of war. "In her early performances Hatoum embodied the two major stereotypical roles that the West attributes to Palestinians: the role of 'terrorist' and the role of 'victim'" (Ankori, p. 126). In 1984, her work entitled *Them and Us...and Other Divisions* involved the artist dressed all in black and wearing a black hood (the type typically associated with terrorists) and crawled on her stomach through a London square, crowded at the time with professionals and passers-by. The piece ended with Hatoum scrubbing a step with blood-red

paint and setting fire to newspapers that covered a wall and revealing racist graffiti scribbled underneath. In this piece, she became the “terrorist” and “victim,” spattered with red paint and crawling through the crowded square. The onlookers were forced to acknowledge her presence and reconcile the seemingly threatening figure prostrate in front of them:

By showing how fear and xenophobia transformed human beings such as herself into homogenized, threatening ‘others’, these performances protested against the dangers of racism and questioned deeply-rooted assumptions about the very categories that divide people into ‘them and us’. (p. 127)

In several other performances from the mid-1980’s, Hatoum’s body became the ultimate symbol of suffering. *Under Siege*, from 1983, involved the artist entering a small translucent stall filled with clay and struggling with standing and falling within the stall for seven hours as gallery patrons entered and left the space, the sound of recorded war reporting and revolutionary songs filling the gallery:

As a person from the ‘Third World’, living in the West, existing on the margin of European society and alienated from my own...this action represented an act of separation...stepping out of an acquired frame of reference and into a space which acted as a point of reconnection and reconciliation with my own background and the bloody history of my own people. (Hatoum, 1997, p. 122)

Other performances from that time involved blood, entrails, and other gore that spoke to the horror of forced exile and war. *The Negotiating Table*, from 1983, might be the most extreme and most blatant critique of the Palestinian condition

and the civil war in Lebanon. In this performance, the artist covered her body in entrails, blood, and bandages; she then was wrapped from neck to toe in a plastic body bag and blindfolded. This gruesome sight was carefully placed on a formal wooden table, with empty chairs waiting to be filled. The sound tracks for this piece were “speeches of Western leaders talking about peace” (Hatoum, 1997, cited in de Zegher). The juxtaposition of the bloody body and the sterile negotiating table was an overt commentary on the violence perpetrated against innocent civilians in Lebanon and the megarethoric of leaders hallow calling for a surface peace. The piece forced viewers to question the relationship between official global relations and the bloody reality of war and globalization as it affects average citizens. It is the government’s official statements of nationalist identity that create the exclusive communities that must be purged of “outsiders”. While the leaders often fuel the flames of interethnic hatred, their hands are literally clean of blood as they negotiate at clean tables in posh hotel rooms.

Hatoum’s more recent body of work shifts from didactic performance to subtle installation or discrete object, where displacement is the product of the unexpected materials used and the openness for viewer interpretation. Two floor pieces that were created within a year of each other represent Hatoum’s shift from using her own body as vehicle for politically overt performance to the implication and assumption of a body present in seemingly everyday objects that are created with unexpected materials. *Prayer Mat* (1995) is a play on the traditional Muslim prayer mat used in five-time daily ritual prayer where the

body is facing Mecca. The intention of the mat is to provide a soft ground on which to kneel and prostrate oneself in prayer. Hatoum's version looks benign enough from a distance, but when examined more closely reveals a painful and impossible object. The mat is made entirely out of sharp pins, points facing up. Embedded within the mat of pins is a compass:

Hatoum's unadorned and ascetic carpet is a foundation that deceives the body, wounds the flesh and inflicts physical pain. It thus reflects the anguish of exile as well as the pain of realizing that although you may face the orient- you can never go home again. (Ankori, 2006, p. 125)

The use of the compass both references the directional focus of Muslim prayer and the use of a compass to "orient". Similar in design, *Doormat* (1996) looks like an ordinary mat with the word "Welcome" spelled out in large capital letters. But, like the prayer mat, this doormat is made entirely out of pins. This piece directly relates to the exile of Hatoum's family in Lebanon and her own presence in England. *Doormat* references the false welcome that is given to many exiles and refugees, an initial response of openness that is soon replaced by disregard or open hostility. Realities of entering a new place and then feeling the pain of separation, of not fitting in, of loneliness are imagined as I could not help but imagine my own bare foot stepping on that doormat. The bed of pins also is a reference to the cultural stereotype of the "Oriental" lying on the bed of nails without doing himself harm.

In *Recollection*, from 1995, Hatoum's installation consisted of the artist's hair collected over six years and hung in strands from the ceiling and rolled into

perfectly round hairballs that littered the floor. “While connoting beauty and identity, the most delicate, eroticized and lasting of human materials is also considered unclean, as ‘matter out of place’” (de Zegher, 1997, p. 93). The hair separated from the body becomes read as dirty, contaminated but is made beautiful through Hatoum’s careful preparation. A woman’s hair is fetishized in most cultures, viewed as sexually suggestive. The displacement of the viewer entering *Recollection* is a subtle, and implied form of disconnect leaving the viewer to construct meaning and reexamine beliefs.

Hatoum created other pieces using hair in discrete objects, continuing the play on Muslim and Western fascination with women’s hair as sexual symbol. “Hence many traditional patriarchal cultures require women to cut or cover their hair, as a means of repressing and controlling the female body and its sexual nature” (Ankori, 2006, p. 139). Two objects combining hair and fabric speak most directly to the specifically Arab history and representation of women and the veil. Without imaging a human figure, Hatoum implies the body through the use of long strands of (presumably) female hair. In *Keffiah*, from 1993-9, the artist appropriated a traditional headscarf worn by men in the Middle East. “The keffiah...has developed a macho aura in the Palestinian culture of political resistance” (Bhabha, 2006, p. 34). This article of clothing is a cultural symbol of the male resistance to Israeli occupation. In place of the traditional black sewn geometric pattern on the scarf, Hatoum used long strands of dark hair to sew into the fabric and create a pattern reminiscent of the original. The use of women’s

hair embroidered into this masculine symbol creates an interesting disconnect, of combining the male and female, of imagining a Palestinian man wearing this scarf with long hair falling from it. It can be read as a reclaiming of the female resistance and agency that is not the focus of Palestinian groups; it can represent a question of women's presence or absence in the mediated images of the Palestinian struggle:

The macho style is an externalized response to the powers of oppression and domination; but it is also a form of domination turned inward, within the community, poised against the presence and participation of women, whose voices are repressed or sublimated in the cause of the struggle. (p. 34)

The keffiyah is thus a symbol of male resistance to outside domination and also a macho symbol of the cultural domination of women. By feminizing this object, Hatoum is questioning the denial of women's oppression within the greater struggle for Palestinian independence.

In one of her most recent pieces, *Hair Veil*, from 2003, Hatoum most literally references the visual discourse of the veiled Muslim woman. The piece consists of a length of white cotton fabric embroidered with single, delicate strands of human hair in a grid-like pattern. In a way, this visually references her earlier work of embroidering hair in *Keffiyah*, but the hair in this piece is much more delicate and the pattern less formal. Instead of the groups of heavy black strands of hair in the earlier work, *Hair Veil* was created by intricate weaving of a single strand of hair to create an overall pattern. The visual effect seems much

more meticulous and time consuming, causing me to think of the hours Hatoum must have spent carefully threading and sewing with a single strand of hair, careful not to break the delicate human thread. Again, the body is absent in Hatoum's recent work, but is implied and represented by the hair that at one time was attached to a body. With the simplicity of *Hair Veil* Hatoum poetically questions the covering of women's hair by literally re-inscribing the forbidden hair into the cloth that is meant to cover it. The historical discourse of the veil shows that many have defended the practice for the protection of men against the overpowering sexuality of women. The hair, viewed as the cornerstone of sexual power, is covered in order to keep men's desirous feelings at bay. By weaving the sexually powerful hair into the veil, Hatoum is reclaiming the potent symbol of women's sensuality.

Emily Jacir: Longing and Return

Emily Jacir is an American-born artist living and working in multiple geographic locations, specifically New York City and Ramallah in the Palestinian territory. Born in New York, her family has geographic and familial ties to the disputed land known as Palestine. Jacir's Palestinian family origin has deeply affected her art and her sense of home. Her connection to the imagined community of Palestine can be framed by the discourse of diaspora, a way to theorize the global connection of people who share emotional and psychological ties to a region, or an adopted homeland. Though not the location of her birth,

the disputed land that lies at the center of Israeli/Palestinian conflict is the home that exists in Jacir's artwork, a mental space without geographical place:

Between the mutually perpetuating fanaticisms of the suicide bombers and the militant Israeli right, Jacir hollows a tentative aesthetic space in which it's possible to sense, without feeling obliged to make excuses for the savagery of either side, the bitterness of exile. (Breidenbach, 2003, p. 188)

The artwork is about the relationship between a traditionally Muslim culture and a Western-born woman artist. While several of the pieces deal with gender, the artist is clear in her belief that the work cannot be flattened into a commentary on women's oppression or liberty within culture or religion.

The artwork and longing of Jacir cannot be analyzed or examined separately from the history, culture, and political events of the region and the ongoing conflict that has sustained the focus of much of the world. Though the importance and history of this land traces far back, and it has importance for three major monotheistic religious traditions, I attempt to sketch a brief, non-comprehensive sequence of events that began after World War II. Of course, there are at least two sides to every historical event, and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict has proven to be particularly divisive and controversial. In writing about the conflict, I try to find the source material for the artwork of two artists who identify with Palestine and therefore focus on the issue of identity and belonging from that perspective. Since the 1947 United Nations declaration partitioning what was formerly known as Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states. Israel was created as a Jewish homeland and was intended to exist with an

independent Palestinian Arab state. Feelings of displacement and tensions over the creation of the Jewish state built after its creation and led to direct military engagement between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The Six-Day War in 1967 was a key test and victory for the Israeli military, which seized Gaza and the Sinai from Egypt and the Golan heights from Syria, engaging in pre-emptive strikes on Egyptian military targets and six days of fighting (Llewellyn, 1998, para. 12). The results of the Six-Day War left many Palestinians inside Israeli-occupied territory of the West Bank and Gaza unsure of their citizenship and status.

The 1970's and 1980's saw additional increase in tension between Israel, its neighbors and those in occupied territories and another major clash with Egypt in the Yom Kippur (or Ramadan) War of 1973. Many Palestinians felt a loss of identity, despite living in the same geographic location they were no longer allowed a national or group identity that was separate from the occupation. Beginning in 1987 and existing in varying degrees and intensity, the Intifada, or Palestinian uprising, has led been the mass response to years of uncertainty. "Palestinians are frequently under curfew and, as stateless refugees, they are often forbidden to work or travel. They are besieged, their houses demolished for the third or fourth time" (Said, 2004, p. 48). Many Palestinians have to go through Israeli checkpoints in order to get to school or work in the morning, and waiting in long lines and having personal documents examined are commonplace.

Attacks killing civilians on both the Israeli and Palestinian side have not allowed tensions to ease despite many internationally organized attempts at peace agreements. Violence or the threat of violence are real fears for many on both sides of the conflict. For many artists who have ties to the occupied territories, the creation of visual and multi-media pieces cannot be separated from the political realities of daily life under Israeli rule. “‘Palestine’ has become a worldwide metaphor for trouble, unrest, violence: for Palestinians, that combination of words evoking fact, memory, and aspiration and the images associated with them stands in for citizenship or passport” (Said, 2004, p. 47). Perhaps the most politically charged geography in the world, the land of Israel, Palestine, and the countless checkpoints and borders create opportunities for artists to create meaningful expressions that can capture the reality of living in tension.

Emily Jacir’s work is varied in its conception and form; some works are conceptually based documentation of performance, others are carefully hand-made objects that are more traditionally sculptural. The varied body of work explores the tension of the exile who has lost citizenship and cannot travel and the artist who identifies as an exile but carries an American passport. The dislocation of living between worlds, for Jacir, also includes the violence of fragmentation and lives split into pieces by the forced movement and resettlement of people. Uncertain spaces open up between traditional centers; in these spaces, postcolonial identity formation begins to occur based not on fixity

but on movement, migration, and negotiation. For artists who migrate, the lack of fixed center and the loss of home are expressed in their art as a question of mythical fixed ideas of self and other. Sets of referential codes, cultural markers that convey meaning, are deterritorialized (Hicks 1991) when physical and mental borders are crossed. Meanings from both sides of the border are fragmented and reconstructed in the border zone. Jacir's multiple border zones exist in her work as an attempt to reconstruct, or reterritorialize, meaning between cultural locations. There is a tension between the transnational artist who is defined by her movement and the subjects of her work who are defined by their confinement. Just as unequal relationships of power can be analyzed and expressed through the power to see and control who is seen, dominance can also be asserted through the ability to move and control who can and cannot move. Jacir uses mixed media, photography, video, installation, and performance that speak to her longing for a home that cannot exist in Palestine. While the postcolonial identity is predicated on movement, Jacir turns this around in her work that questions the uneven availability of movement. She creates pieces that center on the inaccessibility of the Palestinian exile to return home, on the control of movement through checkpoints, and on a longing to travel that is denied. All of the work has in common a sense of unease, of longing for something that is physically absent but present in memory, an inability to be at home and yet the inability to move.

Jacir has split her adult life living between New York and Ramallah, identifying with the Palestinian longing for home but also as an American citizen able to do what they cannot do: travel freely. In one of her stays in the occupied territory, Jacir had to pass through an Israeli military checkpoint to go work every day. "I was walking across this checkpoint every day to get to Birzeit University from my home, and I just wanted a recording of it for myself" (Jacir, 2004, p. 18). One day Israeli soldiers caught her filming and they "held me at gunpoint for three hours, they confiscated my tape, they threw my passport in the mud" (p. 18). A casual decision to record her own experiences led to this traumatizing experience and in turn led to the creation of a video installation entitled *Crossing Surda*. Jacir hid a video camera in her bag, with a hole cut for the lens. The result is a disorienting video, shot at knee-height, of the repetitive daily crossing of the checkpoint. It is the documentation of an event that is ordinary and banal to the Palestinian who walks to school or work, but it is an uncomfortable experience to witness the waiting, the crossing, the automatic weapons, and to realize that this is a lived reality. The line between the Occupied Territory and the state of Israel cannot be described as a border in the strict sense of a dividing line that separates two national groups who mutually agree upon the terms of the separation. The area is better understood in terms of the psychological border described by Irit Rogoff (2000):

This of course is an actual border, it is the boundary line of two states, it has a concrete location and a set of geographical attributes. In reality this is, however, a far more complex and nebulous entity,

traversed on both sides, a constant leakage of hostile bodies, never able to sustain the separations and protect the inhabitants in the way that its huge military mobilization set out to do. (p. 137)

While the zones of contact at checkpoints assert the legal Israeli national identity and power to enforce, they place the Palestinian in the floating identity of proving one's status as a non-entity.

In *Where We Come From* (2001-2003), the artist asked exiled Palestinians what they would do if they could return to their homeland and see their family and friends. She then visited the territories on her American passport, fulfilled the wishes of the exiles and photographed the act to exhibit. "That work is so autobiographical in the sense that it is coming from my experience of spending my whole life going back and forth between Palestine and other parts of the world" (Jacir, 2004, p. 9). The work is exhibited in pairs of objects: the first is a framed piece of text, in both English and Arabic, that describes the wish of the exiled Palestinian, and the second is a photograph of Jacir completing the wished-for task. One of the pairs displays the wish of a son separated from his mother for Jacir to visit the mother and hug and kiss her; the accompanying photograph shows the artist embracing an older woman:

Her compositions slip through the nets of bureaucracies and nonnegotiable borders, time and space, in search of not grandiose dreams or clotted fantasies, but rather humdrum objects and simple gestures like visits, hugs, watering a tree, eating a meal- the kinds of things that maybe all Palestinians will be able to do someday, when they can make their way home peacefully and without restriction. (Said, 2004, p. 49)

From Paris to Riyadh (1999, 2001) is Jacir's piece that deals most specifically with gender issues, and it does so in a subtle but haunting manner. Visually, the piece appears to consist of floating solid black shapes on a background of vellum. The description that accompanies the piece lends meaning to the black forms, "marker on vellum, documenting the illegal sections of "Vogue" magazine". After reading this, body parts start to appear, truncated pieces of arms, legs, torsos that had to be marked out in order for the French fashion magazine to be brought into Lebanon:

Most people kept interpreting it was about the repression of Middle Eastern women when it wasn't...Being back and forth between these two spaces- one of commodification and the other of banning the image of the female body- which was equally repressing and equally discomforting. (Jacir, 2004, p. 19)

It is interesting, and predictable, that Western critics and viewers of this piece would assume it be about the repression of Muslim women. That is the meaning that is appropriate to the greater cultural discourse about gender and Islam. But Jacir bristles at the uncomplicated reading of the piece, she stresses that repression cannot be so easily defined and assigned to one culture; she believes both the marketing of women's bodies for profit and the denial of the body are repressive in different ways. With this assertion of the complexity of this work, Jacir is challenging the codes of the Orientalist Visual discourse; covered body parts, blacked out with marker, are not to be equated with automatic repression. There is an ambivalence that the artist has for the use of the woman's body as

cultural code; in fact this piece is the only one that deals directly, through its covered absence, with the female body. As a woman artist who deals with issues of Palestine (traditionally Muslim), Jacir avoids being associated with the veil as the only visual cultural code available to her for the expression of difference.

In more recent work, Jacir deals directly with the question of difference and the shrinking distances of difference that are brought about through global movement. She juxtaposes daily experiences and seemingly ordinary events, crossing and blurring boundaries and binaries. *Ramallah/New York*, a video installation by Emily Jacir from 2004-5, juxtaposes everyday scenes from Palestinian communities in the two geographically distant cities that are indistinguishable. Western viewers are accustomed to being affirmed in the cultural superiority of their modern, rational societies through news media who show the foreign as generally traditional, violent, dirty, and hungry. We have the commercials for Christian Children's Fund that play on our guilt while reaffirming our ideas about how "other people" live and treat their children. When we are shown scenes from Islamic countries, the images usually support this idea of inferior difference; we see the veiled women, the faceless men bowed in ritualized prayer. When viewing this video installation that shows almost identical scenes of daily life in the United States and the Occupied Territory of Palestine, the Western viewer is not given the familiar relationship to the foreign. The lack of space between the two screens and the similarity of the action does not leave room for cultural or moral superiority. The artist is not equating

experience of the citizens but creating a loss of center in the viewer, a space of uncertainty. For Jacir, the lack of fixed center and the loss of home are expressed in her art as a question for the viewer of mythical fixed ideas of self and other. Bhabha (1994) names this space as the hybrid, the liminal, and the interstitial that break with essentialized colonial discourse. “This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (p. 5).

Deterritorialization and the Art

In viewing and writing about the art created by Neshat, Satrapi, Hatoum, and Jacir the concept of deterritorialization and the work of Emily Hicks help to frame the production and reception of the work. The concept of deterritorialization was originally used in the work of Deleuze and Guattari but it is repurposed in Hicks’ work to apply to works of creation along physical and psychological borders. The artist is a form of border writer who uses a combination of image, text, and experience to create and translate meaning. Hicks (1991) conception of the border writer is someone who is the product of two sets of referential codes, “the reader of border writing may experience the deterritorialization of signification; to read a border text is to cross over into another set of referential codes” (p. xxvi). Border artists create images/experiences that draw on the visual semiotic codes of multiple cultures. Border space exists not just at the physical, legal border between two nation-states; it is a space that exists metaphorically and culturally wherever there is an

overlap or negotiation of cultural codes. Emily Jacir's border space exists literally on the Israeli/Palestinian border, and figuratively in the meeting of American/Israeli/Palestinian codes of representation and her visual negotiation of these codes. Her work cannot be viewed as a product of any pure, distinct culture or regime of representation. It is both rooted in the distinct geography of Palestine and uprooted in the crossing of cultural borders and her own physical travel between lands. "When one leaves one's country (deterritorialization), everyday life changed. The objects that continually remind one of the past are gone. Now, the place of origin is a mental representation in memory" (Hicks, 1991, p. xxxi). This "place of origin" that exists in the memory of the border crosser is detached, fragmented and reconfigured in relation to the place of displacement. Cultural codes are both reified and deconstructed in one's memory; the fragments of origin are reassembled with fragmented cultural codes of the new location.

The reception of this border creation can also be grounded in the concept of deterritorialization. When signification and connections are drifting between geographic and cultural locations, the meaning of the work is always a negotiation between the artist, the art, and the viewer. An Iranian woman who views *Speechless* by Neshat, for example, would have very a different experience than a Western woman and would come away with meanings that could not have been intended by the artist. Cultural codes can cross borders, but they are still rooted in the specificity of location. Meaning, therefore, is subject to a process of

deterritorialization; the signification of the work is both tied to original intention of the artist and simultaneously displaced through interaction with the viewer's cultural codes and history. This concept of the deterritorialization of meaning is important in conceptualizing the move from viewing artwork to the creation of pedagogy. Every experience with text or image can be mediated through understanding the intention of the artists, but the construction of meaning is made possible through interaction with previous exposure to dominant cultural codes. The work of Neshat cannot be understood in a consequential way without acknowledging the way that the viewer understands the codes of the Muslim woman as represented in the West.

The concept of the border writer, or the border artist, relies on an understanding of physical and psychological lines of demarcation that can be crossed. Distinctions must be made between the culture, people, and beliefs that exist on differing sides of these borders. Border space is privileged in the work of Neshat, Satrapi, Hatoum, and Jacir through juxtaposition of cultural meanings and the blurring of clear, unified identities. At the same time the space where the cultural and psychological borders exist is always shifting. In place of a clear, demarcated borderline these border artists are working to create border zones where new meanings are co-constructed between artist, art, and viewer. Irit Rogoff (2000) writes of these areas:

All of these [nations and states] are countered by the zones which provide resistance through processes of disidentification: international free cities, no man's land, demilitarized zones, *cordons sanitaires*, ghettos, border

areas, etc...While a national geographic entity produces and polices identity, the notion of a 'zone' is one suspended between various identities- a site of evacuation in which the 'law' of each identity does not apply, having been supplanted by a set of contingent 'rules'. (p. 120)

Identity is contingent upon experience in these border zones, which can function as starting points for the creation of inclusive community identities and sites of pedagogy.

CHAPTER VI

(RE)NEW

Educators need to rearticulate a dialogue between the educational enterprise and the world of unequal center-periphery relations in which we live. This is the direction that postcolonial art has been pointing us in all along- toward a foundational dialogue that challenges us to remake the terms of the educative enterprise itself. (Dimitriadis & McCarthy, 2001, p. 15)

The arts are often pleasurable and entertaining, apparently unthreatening (if intimidating in certain circumstances), but they can also be redemptive and restorative, critical and empowering. (Lippard, 1990, p. 11)

Since September 11th and the continuing military offences in Afghanistan and Iraq, Americans have been besieged with news stories, images, and visions of Islam and Muslim women that are not as nuanced as the artwork created by Neshat, Satrapi, Hatoum, and Jacir. In a Washington Post poll conducted in March of 2006, fifty-eight percent of those polled felt that “there are more violent extremists within Islam than in other religions”. Forty-six percent said that they have a generally unfavorable opinion of Islam. Both of these figures increased dramatically from a similar poll taken directly after the attacks of September 11th. Media stories focusing in on terrorists, suicide bombers, and violence as the only news about Islam have played on American fears. In the vast majority of news stories and accompanying photographs, Muslims are shown to be either “terrorists intent on doing us harm” or “victims in need of our rescuing”. Both

representations are historically based ethnocentric stereotypes that need to be deconstructed and analyzed. The veil, a cultural symbol deeply embedded with stereotypical meanings, is the ultimate visual signifier of the oppression, violence, and fear that has been enacted in the Western popular imagination. In examining this unofficial curriculum based on assumptions about those who are different, I argue that our official education in classrooms needs to more fully and responsibly engage with difference in all of its complexity. My work suggests one possible form that this curriculum could take using the contemporary artwork of women who have ties both to the West and traditionally Muslim cultures.

In looking into official curricula on difference, I found current textbooks making good faith efforts at multiculturalism. A popular global studies textbook for ninth and tenth graders, World history: Patterns of interaction by Robert Beck (2005), is an example of this effort. In the two paragraphs in the entire volume devoted to the lives of women in Islam, the book attempts to show a balanced vision. For instance, Muslim women are described historically to have many rights under the Quran: “The shari’a gave Muslim women specific legal rights concerning marriage, family, and property” (p. 274). The conclusion of this short paragraph is that “Nonetheless, Muslim women were still expected to submit to men” (p. 274).

The second and final paragraph describing Muslim women brings us up to the contemporary era with this thought, “However, over time, Muslim women were forced to live increasingly isolated lives. When they did go out in public,

they were expected to be veiled” (p. 274). The text describes Muslim women as a single, unified category and implies that they share exactly the same fate regardless of geographical or cultural context. While not overtly xenophobic in tone, the global studies textbook freezes Muslim women in a nebulous past and creates a flattened picture of one, uncontested identity. If these two paragraphs are all of the information that students are receiving in their official education, then most of the ideas about difference must come from the unofficial education of the media.

I believe that a renewed, critical multicultural education is needed to support and foster the growth of an inclusive global identity, a form of rooted cosmopolitanism that centralizes the movement and interaction of difference and that focuses on the realities of unequal global relationships of power and privilege. My pedagogy is built on the theoretical work of postcolonialism, pragmatism, border theory, and critical art pedagogy. Postcolonial theory provides an analysis of global relationships of power and displaces the West as center of all knowledge and creativity. Pragmatism, as a philosophy, adds to postcolonialism an acceptance of ambiguity and a focus on learning and changing through experience. Border theory is in many ways a contemporary form of pragmatic philosophy that roots ambiguity in the traveling between cultural and geographic borders. Border theory is the connection between postcolonialism and pragmatism; it celebrates uncertainty and the doubting of assumptions that is embedded in imbalanced relationships of power and privilege. My focus on the

use of contemporary, border-crossing artists necessitates a form of critical art pedagogy that questions Eurocentric, modern myths that are entrenched in traditional art pedagogy. The combined efforts of these approaches help me to create pedagogy that can reform how we educate about difference and the way we see others and ourselves.

The Visual Orientalist discourse, which has helped to enforce the stereotypical Western views about Islam and Muslim women, can be used in conjunction with the artists from chapter five to create a form of pedagogy of difference that honestly analyzes stereotypes and works toward more complex understandings of Muslim women. Current attempts at multicultural education are flawed in their approach and produce further marginalization of difference through the structure and form of curriculum. “Indeed, multicultural education has become the new metadiscipline that is most often deployed to address the current eruption of difference and plurality in social life now invading the school” (Dimitriadis & McCarthy, 2001, p. 113). The visualizing of difference in curriculum generally relies on stock images of difference that highlight exotic location, dress, and activity. Art education, the only place in traditional curriculum where artwork is centralized, has also been guilty of marginalizing art from non-Western sources. I have identified four Eurocentric myths in art education that can be viewed within the larger framework of multicultural pedagogy. In response to the Eurocentric forms of art education, I propose using pragmatic doubt, border theory, and postcolonial pedagogy to create a

polycentric form of multicultural education; a pedagogy that breaks apart the traditional center/periphery binary in order to centralize the creative possibilities of uncertainty. I detail an extended sample lesson that is an example of how the postcolonial, pragmatic, visual pedagogy can function to shift our relationship to the representation of difference. The sample lesson that utilizes media images and artwork is meant to be taught as part of an interdisciplinary curriculum that extends the visual beyond the art classroom. This example is at the end of the chapter and applies the theoretical analysis of previous chapters into a concrete curriculum. I believe that the work in the field of Visual Culture expands the notion of the visual to include daily encounters with images and the relationship between technology, images, text, and culture. This provides motivation to expand the use of the visual into other areas of curriculum. I hope to move beyond this traditional curriculum to use critical multicultural and art pedagogies to form theoretical and practical pedagogy using the art of Neshat, Satrapi, Neshat, and Jacir as its foundation.

Problems with Multicultural Education

In the post-September 11th era, increased attention has been placed on the relationship of Islam and the West. Muslim women have been visualized in the American media as stereotypically oppressed and voiceless. Chapters three and four detail the historical construction of the veil and the Muslim woman in Western imagination. What role can education play in addressing the issues raised by the historical and cultural construction of the Muslim woman as

Western object/subject? Is there a way to create a responsible pedagogy of difference that could allay fear and avoid isolationism? Historically, American schools have been locations of nationalist indoctrination. Joel Spring (2004) emphasizes how our schools create a unified national sentiment. “In the shared experience of schooling, students engage in the rituals of statehood through flag salutes, anthems, nationalist songs, and marches” (p. 10). Schools have been the natural breeding grounds of xenophobic, nationalist feelings that are systematically reinforced through lessons on American history and geography. “Students are taught to think of those living within the territorial boundaries of their state as their *people* while all those outside the state’s boundaries are the *others* or *foreigners*” (p. 10). Exclusionary identity production was one of the more overt goals of American education for a good portion of its history. The realities of economic globalization and mass migration, along with social justice movements of the 1960’s and 70’s, have led to calls for an education that would prepare Americans to live and work with difference.

As schools are pressured to adopt “Multicultural Education,” there are several approaches to difference that are traditionally added to the existing curriculum. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) propose five frameworks for educational approaches to multiculturalism: Conservative Multiculturalism/Monoculturalism, with a focus on assimilation to the dominant culture; Liberal Multiculturalism, a focus on a bland uniformity that ignores difference and issues of privilege; Pluralist Multiculturalism, focused on

exoticized difference; Left-Essentialist Multiculturalism, where certain facets of difference and identity are essentialized; and Critical Multiculturalism, a form that studies difference in terms of power and privilege with a goal of social justice and equity. The two forms of multiculturalism that I have observed in my experience and research into curriculum are Liberal and Pluralist Multiculturalism. There is either a highlighting of difference (Pluralist) that reinforces a cultural hierarchy (by focusing on the “traditional” against our “modernity” for example) and the idea of pure, distinct cultures. Or, we erase all difference (Liberal) and claim that we are all part of a universal human family with no unique or important aspects. These attempts at “multicultural education” fail to address actual human experience of oppression, struggle, and interaction. There needs to be a move toward the Critical Multiculturalism that honestly addresses imbalances of power and wealth while not exoticizing difference. The informal education we receive from media images of the Other and the news stories of terrorist plots contribute to our dehumanizing fear. Media and political notions of the group make difference seem innate and entrenched in static cultures. The current education Americans are receiving about Islam, from the unofficial education of the media, presents a distorted image of the Muslim as backward, tribal, victimized, and violent.

Eurocentric Art Education

To better ground my creation of pedagogy in my own experience and research into how art is being used in schools to view difference, I have examined

how several art education textbooks aimed at elementary students reinforce traditional ideas of difference. The way that art is presented in these textbooks demonstrates how students are introduced to othering and exoticized difference at an early age. I believe that the art classroom is built on a foundation of Eurocentric myths of cultural superiority. There is a failure in art education to create a truly diverse multicultural curriculum, specifically regarding the treatment of non-Western artists and artwork. The philosophy behind multicultural art education is to create appreciation and understanding of difference, but the reality often results in furthering the distance between “us” and “them”. When European and American art (referred to as Western art) is presented to students the individual artist is given a prominent role; the piece of art is contextualized through historical and biographical information. When art from non-Western sources is presented in the texts, it is usually identified by country or tribe of origin and not connected to the major art movements of the West.

I consulted three texts that aim to teach art concepts to elementary students to get a concrete sense of the representation of difference in art education. I chose these textbooks because they were all used in the elementary art classroom where I taught in Burlington, North Carolina. While not comprehensive in scope, these texts provide a snapshot of the type of curriculum presented to elementary art students. The textbooks that I consulted are: Art: meaning, method and media written by Guy Hubbard and Mary J. Rouse (1981),

Art in Action by Guy Hubbard (1987), and Portfolios: state of the art program by Robyn Montana Turner (1998). These texts show that while attempts at diversity have improved in the past thirty years of art education, the grand Eurocentric myths of art education still exist. Lessons and projects are still based on the timeline of progress that foregrounds the contribution of Western artists and movements. This kind of curriculum freezes other, non-Western, cultures in a romanticized past. I propose four Eurocentric myths that are re-inscribed within many art classrooms: History as Linear Progression, Modernity as Rational Height of Progress, Artist as Individual Genius, Alone in His Studio, and Pure and Authentic Cultures, Existing on Different Levels of Progressive Timeline. These myths are synthesized from my years as an art student, art teacher, and from my reading and research into postcolonialism and art.

Myth #1: History as Linear Progression

The linear timeline of art history is an invention, created by art historians to give shape and impose an organization on artists working in similar spaces and time periods. I remember looking at art history timelines in as an art student in elementary and high school, beginning with Egyptian Pyramids and Greek marble statues, there was a large section on pre-history that included a couple of African masks and Incan clay pots. Once pre-history gave way on the timeline to history, the line was straight and Western, focusing on the individual geniuses who created great works of Art and made up the major art movements. We memorized the names of Monet, Van Gogh, Picasso, Pollock, and even O'Keefe

(the only female artist I remember having learned about). We did a few projects that were based on “African Art” or “Indian Art”, but we did not learn the names of any artists and the only timeframe we were given for the creation of the work was a nebulous time in the past. In The Predicament of Culture, James Clifford (1988) writes, “The non-Western artifacts on display are located either in a vague past...or in a purely conceptual space defined by ‘primitive’ qualities: magic, ritualism, closeness to nature, mythic or cosmological aims” (p. 201). When the pre-history of non-Western art was juxtaposed with the history of the West it was easy to believe that the only artists still creating Art in the contemporary era were privileged Westerners.

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1998), in their essay “Narrativizing Visual Culture: Towards a polycentric aesthetics”, name a Eurocentric art history that assumes a universal appeal and application of European movements and stages. “Traditional art history, in this sense, exists on a continuum with official history in general, which figures Europe as a unique source of meaning, as the world’s center of gravity, as ontological ‘reality’ to the world’s ‘shadow’” (p. 25). This continuum of art history is re-enacted in art classrooms, the art of non-Western cultures is defined in relation to the West and on the periphery of the official art timeline.

This mythic Eurocentric progression is presented as fact in the textbooks created for the elementary classroom. Even in more recent texts that make efforts to be diverse and inclusive, the force of this myth is present. In Portfolios: state of

the art program, the art textbook written in 1998, there is an art timeline that attempts to be culturally inclusive. The timeline begins with 3000 B.C., with separate colorful lines for “Ancient Egypt”, and the “Indus Civilization”, and then starting around 1500 B.C. the Chinese Dynastic eras are given a line. This global focus of the timeline starts to become overshadowed by the large “Medieval Period”, “Renaissance”, and “Enlightenment” line that begins in 400 A.D. and is three times as thick as the other global lines of art history. By 1800 A.D. all other lines drop away, and we are left with a single line that is entitled “Modern Era of European and American History”. By examining this timeline, one could conclude that all non-Western art was created before the year 1800, and the Modern Era has been a unified, uncontested progression of European and American art.

Myth #2: Modernity as Rational Height of Progress

The Eurocentric timeline of art history that presents all contemporary art as Western and all non-Western art as existing in the distant past is reinforced by the forms of art that are reproduced in art textbooks for children. Grand myths of cultural superiority focus on the West’s scientific rationality and individualism compared to the “traditional” cultures that focus on ritual, costume, and community. The art chosen for these texts follow this line of reasoning. Western Art is represented by a variety of paintings and sculptures created by the Masters: Van Gogh, Matisse, Seurat, and Kandinsky. Objects used in ritual and community gatherings represent Non-Western and Indigenous artists: masks worn for

ceremony, costume used in communal dance, and small sculptures used for religious ceremonies. Western progress is juxtaposed with non-Western “primitivism” that not-so-subtly reinforces center/periphery binaries. “Primitive” is a loaded label that carries specific connotations within the art world. Lucy Lippard writes in 1990:

It has been used historically to separate the supposedly sophisticated civilized ‘high’ art of the West from the equally sophisticated civilized art from other cultures. The term locates the latter in the past- usually the distant past- and in an early stage of ‘development’ implying simplicity on the positive side and crudity or barbarism on the negative. (p. 24)

In the art textbook by Hubbard (1987), Art in Action, there is a lesson on mask making using cardboard and found objects to create masks inspired by the two examples from Zaire and the Iroquois. The text informs students that, “Masks are very important objects in primitive cultures. Many primitive peoples believe that spirit powers dwell in all natural things. Every mask contains its own spirit” (p. 114). There are several problematic points in this lesson: re-imagining sacred masks using cardboard, the assumption that there are “primitive” cultures and people and that this concept of the primitive is universal to those not of European descent. “The value of exotic objects was their ability to testify to the concrete reality of an earlier stage of human Culture, a common past confirming Europe’s triumphant present” (Clifford, 1988, p. 228). The fetishizing of the “primitive” in non-Western works of art supports the Eurocentric hierarchy of cultures that places the West on the highest rung of an evolutionary ladder.

Myth # 3: Artist as Individual Genius, Alone in His Studio

Western ideals of rationality rest upon the celebration of individuality and the private space. When most of us think of an artist, we picture Jackson Pollock or Vincent Van Gogh. This artist is European or American, male, and a troubled genius who channels his pain through art. Disconnected from the outside world, this genius creates masterpieces alone in his studio with only his inner demons as company. This is a grand cultural myth that is reinforced by Hollywood movies about the lone male artist: *Pollock* (2000), *Lust for Life* (1956), and *Surviving Picasso* (1990). In this myth reliance upon others, showing vulnerability, and acknowledging outside inspiration are seen as weakness. Again, Clifford (1988) writes of the myth: “The European bourgeois ideal of autonomous individuality was widely believed to be the natural outcome of a long development, a process that, although threatened by various disruptions, was assumed to be the basic, progressive movement of humanity” (p. 92). Once established, the myth of the lone genius artist is reproduced within art textbooks. The genius Euro-American artist is juxtaposed against all non-Western art that is shown as created for tribal and communal purposes. This is reinforced by the caption that accompanies the artwork. Western art is generally given an exact date of production and an individual artist’s name. Non-Western art is almost always given an approximate date of production and attributed to the country or tribe as producer. The implication in this form of attribution is that those outside of Europe or the United States who create art do so only as part of larger groups.

Myth #4: Pure and Authentic Cultures, Existing on Different Levels of the Progressive Timeline

The grand myths of Eurocentric art education rely on the idea of pure, authentic, distinct societies that create art in cultural vacuums. Interactions have occurred throughout history based on movement of people on trade routes, voyages of “exploration”, European expansionist Imperialism, migration, exile, and diaspora. These layers of movement have resulted in syncretic cultural production and hybrid identities that are not easily untangled. In Eurocentric art history and education, separate chapters and lessons are based on the false assumption of discreet national cultures. The lessons and units that focus on non-Western art emphasize the oddity and difference of the art and the cultures that produced the work. In the Art in Action textbook, the heading for the section on the art from the rest of the world (outside Europe and the United States) is titled, “Voyages of Discovery” (Hubbard, 1987, p. vi), alluding quite literally to the supposed “discovery” of the Americas by European explorers. In the only lesson about non-Western art in the earliest textbook, Art: meaning, method, and media, the title is “Art from Other Lands”. The text informs students that, “Often, art from other parts of the world will look strange to you” (Hubbard & Rouse, 1981, p. 84). The work from the entire world is consolidated into a short lesson and the only description given to the work is that it “might look strange”. The rest of the book contains reproductions of art from Europe and Euro-Americans, never mentioning the influence of other art traditions. The West is normalized

and accepted to be the center of art creation, all others are different, primitive, strange, and far removed from anything modern or Western.

The only influence that is traditionally acknowledged is the “inspiration” that European modernists (specifically Picasso) “borrowed” from the abstracted aesthetics of African masks. The Modernists took what is referred to still as the “Primitive” art of Africa and elevated it to masterpiece status through their European re-imagining. The myths of multicultural art education that freeze non-Westerners in the past and reify the center/periphery binary are mirrored in the overall treatment of diversity in official school curriculum. The simplified versions of culture that are offered in schools do not reflect the hybridity of postcolonial theory and the transnational movement of globalization. I propose a new type of curriculum that is based on contemporary transnational art production, pragmatic philosophy, and postcolonial theory that I believe can break down the easy binaries and the Eurocentric myths that limit pedagogy. This is a critical art pedagogy that uses Kincheloe and Steinberg’s (1997) concept of Critical Multiculturalism to understand the social construction of power and knowledge through art with the goal of using art for a more socially just view of difference. The pedagogy can be adjusted to work for elementary aged students; the sample lesson that I have created at the end of the chapter is intended for an older audience.

Pragmatism and the Creation of Doubt

Pragmatic philosophy in its root form, as first elaborated by Charles Sanders Peirce and William James, is based on the notion that we should learn and change through acting in the world and through experience, we should then reflect upon our actions and experience and be open to doubting and changing beliefs based upon what we saw and felt. James wrote on the contingency of opinions and how humans reconcile the long held opinion with new information:

The individual has a stock of old opinions already, but he meets a new experience that puts them to a strain. Somebody contradicts them; or in a reflective moment he discovers that they contradict each other; or he hears of facts with which they are incompatible; or desires arise in him which they cease to satisfy. (1997, p. 101)

These scenarios lead us to reexamine long held opinion and alter it to accommodate new information. This process is based on a level of active reexamination of habit, where no idea is immutable and everything is in flux and open to reconsideration. Peirce also struggled with the issue of belief, and the human tendency to form an impression and hold tightly to it once formed. The exclusive, nationalistic identity is based on this hardening of belief that is antithetical to pragmatism. “The feeling of believing is a more or less sure indication of there being established in our nature some habit which will determine our actions” (1997, p. 13). Habitual thought and action lead to the hardening of belief, and Peirce advocated doubt as an “uneasy and dissatisfied state” (p. 13), an irritant to dislodge the habitual. In many ways, this notion of

doubt and the experience of exile perform the same function of interrupting the comfort and routine of daily life.

The major gap in this form of pragmatism is its lack of attention to issues of race, gender, and unequal relationships of power. Basic tenets of the philosophy can be applied to the writing and creation of contemporary artists to create a form of feminist, postcolonial pragmatism. I explore this possibility through the work these artists who address issues of gender, ethnicity, and power and frame their work within this idea of an “uneasy and dissatisfied state” of the postcolonial pragmatic. The pragmatic can be applied to the artwork of Hatoum, Jacir, Neshat, and Satrapi to create a form of feminist, postcolonial pragmatist pedagogy. Much of the provocative contemporary art created by people of color and women on the margins, provides not only a conscious aesthetic experience¹ but also a political and cultural view that can disturb dominant Western beliefs. It is pragmatic to use art as a form of experience to question the habitual and the commonplace.

John Dewey (1934) wrote in Art and Experience, “the enemies of the aesthetic are neither the practical or the intellectual. They are the humdrum; slackness of loose ends; submission to convention in practice and intellectual procedure” (p. 40). Dewey wrote on length about the ways that familiarity and habit lead to a sense of removal, of apathy, for life and experience. It is much

¹ I use the conscious aesthetic experience here to describe the formal visual appreciation of a work of art. This is based on formal elements of light, color, shape, form, space, etc.

easier to go along on a daily routine, not encountering people or things that will undermine the correctness of your beliefs. Many of us try actively to avoid experiences that would throw our ideas into question. Maxine Greene (1995) writes in Releasing the Imagination,

At the very least, participatory involvement with the many forms of art can enable us to *see* more in our experience, to *hear* more on normally unheard frequencies, to *become conscious* of what daily routines have obscured, what habit and convention have suppressed (p. 123).

Dewey, and later, Greene argue that art is one form of experience that can disrupt the habitual and cause doubts to arise about the certainty of daily life. They share a sense of pragmatic possibility for individual change through the experience of expression:

Art throws off the covers that hide the expressiveness of experienced things; it quickens us from the slackness of routine and enables us to forget ourselves by finding ourselves in the delight of experiencing the world about us in its varied qualities and forms. (Dewey, 1934, p. 104)

The aesthetic experience, then, can cause a forgetting of the self through the expression of another in art. In the modernist conception of art, this forgetting of self often involves an appropriation of the other; usurping of difference for the exotic and new. A pragmatic grounding of the aesthetic in one's own experience can balance the forgetting of the self within a framework of personal history. The aesthetic can provide a different way of seeing the world, shedding new light on parts of life usually ignored and taken for granted. In order for this to be

transformative, and not a reinforcement of assumptions, encounters with representations of difference in art must be grounded in experience.

For Dewey, and to a lesser extent for Greene, the aesthetic disruption is an individual experience with the possibility to create change in the self. This idea of the aesthetic is a modern one, lacking the political agency and social connection of contemporary postmodern art. The modernist conception of the art object is one of perfection of form; the modern artist is a solitary genius creating in a contextual vacuum of his studio. In Dewey's time, the modernist school was at its height with artists such as Pollock, deKooning, and Picasso creating masterpieces alone in their studios. As we learn from the Eurocentric myths of art education, the artist in the modern age is almost always white, male, and Western. So, while Dewey's connection of art and pragmatism links the creative with the contingent, the possibility for disruption of habit lacks involvement a bigger cultural or political possibility. I believe that artists like Neshat, Satrapi, Hatoum, and Jacir who cross borders and engage with the political can expand Dewey's (1934) notions of the aesthetic and pragmatism.

Many contemporary artists remain in the modernist paradigm, of the lone genius creating masterpieces for transcendence. But, there is a movement within the art world to include more voices from the margins of the dominant culture. Since the 1970's feminist artists and artists of color have been turning experiences of oppression and exclusion into powerful art that critiques the dominant ideas of truth, beauty, and what is considered to be "good" art. Many of

these artists intentionally use their art to question or disturb the status quo. They use the power of the aesthetic experience as a connection of the artist, art, and viewer in a visceral expression of experience. The creation and viewing of meaningful art is a bodily experience. The art that disturbs conventions and loosens the “humdrum” is often felt as a bodily revulsion, while a visually stunning piece of art might create a feeling of serenity or elation in the body. It is this embodied experience that visual art, and especially art from the margins, can add to my understanding of pragmatism. It is another vehicle for diverse experience, and another way disturb the “everydayness” of life. Lippard (1990) writes that, “If we are not moved, if we stand still, the status quo is our reward” (p. 11). She writes from the context of the postmodern, postcolonial aesthetic that includes more diverse voices and art made by those on the margins of the modern art world. From this perspective, Lippard envisions this moving experience of art differently than Dewey and Greene, for whom art moves in a lofty, transcendental way. In order to create change, contemporary art does not merely hope to inspire, it tries to push, shove, sometimes shocking one out of habits. “Yet I am inclined to welcome any approach that destabilizes, sometimes dismantles, and looks to the reconstruction or invention of an identity that is both new and ancient” (Lippard, 1995, p. 14). Here, artists are given the power not only to disturb and shake loose, but also to entirely dismantle accepted ways of thinking and being. The aesthetic is not just a way to frame experience through expression and

therefore help the artist to re-form her identity; art can affect the consumer through the upsetting of tightly held views and closely guarded identities.

While modern artists created aesthetic experiences in a decontextualized studio, contemporary artists often appropriate culturally relevant symbols or images and reinvent in way that disrupts or disturbs the originally intended meaning. This opening to other experiences and voices is a pragmatic loosening of old, stiff boundaries. Lippard (1995) writes of this unnamed pragmatism when she states that, “the power of the feminist movement lies in the fact that everything is open and possible now, that no one art can be imposed” (p. 59). Increased disruption of the accepted, the habitual, and the commonplace is directly related to increased possibility for change and openings for new forms of expression. “Breaking through the frames of presuppositions and conventions, we are enabled to recapture the processes of our becoming” (Greene, 1995, p. 130). Art that stretches the conventions to the point of rupture, causes bodily reactions and calls into question long-held beliefs. It can also create spaces of opening for even more diverse expression for others, what Greene calls the “processes of our becoming” (p. 130). Feminist art, and the feminist art criticism of Lippard effectively allow others to imagine new ways of being. I return to Dewey, “Expression is the clarification of turbid emotion; our appetites know themselves when they are reflected in the mirror of art, and as they know themselves they are transfigured” (p. 77). It is through the transformation of

emotion into art that we see what can be, and come to reform our knowledge, ideas, and beliefs based upon this expression.

What, in the end, is the force that creates in people the desire for change? If it is easier to hold onto one's beliefs and avoid growth or change, what can open them up to explore other ideas and reexamine the things they are certain of? Dewey thought that the arts were a way to transform ordinary experience into opportunity for change. Greene (1995) reminds us that, "Again, it may be the recovery of imagination that lessens social paralysis we see around us and restores the sense that something can be done in the name of what is decent and humane" (p. 35). It is creativity and imagination that can transform experience into a response in the viewer that can shake off the years of habit and unconsidered ways of being. Contemporary art from multicultural and feminist sources are posing new and uncomfortable questions about the ideas that need to be disrupted. Many of the tenets of modernity: rationality, universal truth, objectivity, and the prominence of the Western and the masculine, are critiqued and questioned in the art created by artists like Neshat, Satrapi, Hatoum, and Jacir.

Postcolonial Pedagogy

Pragmatic philosophy connects production of doubt to the possibilities of using the aesthetic to create change. The focus of this philosophy on the modern and the Western leads me to postcolonialism in order to create pedagogy that creates doubt of certainty and questions traditional hierarchies that create global

inequity. An important theoretical work in the area of postcolonial pedagogy is Reading and Teaching the Postcolonial: From Baldwin to Basquiat and Beyond by Greg Dimitriadis and Cameron McCarthy (2001). The authors create tools to identify works of postcolonial art, and use them as educational texts. In the world of art education, the recent theoretical focus has shifted to connecting the multicultural and postmodern art. Some radical art educators have been advocating a replacement of the emphasis on Western modern art created by mainly white men with multicultural postmodern art created on a more diverse and global scale. Artist and educator Amalia Mesa-Bains (1996) writes of introducing deeper engagement with multicultural art in the classroom, a “multiple aesthetic,” (p. 38) that breaks down traditional curricular boundaries. Dimitriadis and McCarthy join this call for a new engagement with colonial legacies of power, oppression, and the postcolonial through seminal works of art:

By systematically transgressing genre confinement, by contesting social and epistemological hierarchies, and by operating in a plurality of registers, postcolonial art provides a paradigm of heterogeneous knowledge building, border crossing, and thoughtful dispassion toward cultural origins that best models a pragmatics of pedagogy for our times. (Dimitriadis and McCarthy, 2001, p. 5)

The authors set up criteria for postcolonial works of art that privilege struggle and border crossing, teaching through their expression of the “postcolonial imagination” (p. 19). This theoretical connection between postcolonial art production and pedagogy is an important tool for my analysis of the work of Mona Hatoum, Marjane Satrapi, Shirin Neshat, and Emily Jacir. The diverse

origins and materials of the artists belie their common connection in using biographical expression of experience to illuminate global issues of power, and in dismantling easy assumptions:

Transcending these binary oppositions allows these artists to rework the center-versus-periphery distinction that has so undergirded the iconography and social sciences of Western intellectuals, in order to look beyond its strictures to new histories, new discourses, new ways of being. (p. 24)

A framework for how a postcolonial pragmatic can be applied to pedagogy is rooted in the work of McCarthy and Dimitriadis (2001) for education based on “the postcolonial imagination” (p. 15). The postcolonial imagination is neither a utopian denial of pain nor a backward looking laundry list of historical wrongs. It includes multiple artistic interventions and collaborations that speak to individual difference and systematic imbalances of power, while providing space for imagining change. “Educators need to rearticulate a dialogue between the educational enterprise and the world of unequal center-periphery relations in which we live” (p. 15). This is a radical re-envisioning of education that replaces standardized curricula with engagement with postcolonial works of art that express complex experiences of suffering, resistance, and resilience. Easy answers in the back of textbooks would be replaced with student-generated questions that deal with the complex messiness of daily life and do not have prescribed answers. “We see a pedagogy that is enmeshed in individual biography, exceeds concerns of particular disciplines, engages with the popular, links the local with the global,

and is intensely concerned with social change” (Dimitriadis & McCarthy, 2001, p. 48). I believe that artwork can be used in formal and informal educational settings to deconstruct habituated ways of seeing and representing other cultures. The emotional response of fear that I felt in my own body at the sight of the woman in burqa and the fear I saw in my friend’s eyes when discussing Islam needs to be counteracted by a form of education that can speak emotionally and resonate physically. As Dewey and Greene wrote of the power of the aesthetic, artwork has the ability to connect on a visceral level with the viewer, going beyond cerebral arguments. Using the art of those who inhabit multiple cultural perspectives can tear holes in the biased view of the Other that has been constructed in the American mind. It has the possibility to imagine a different way of relating to others, to create spaces for empathy and connection, and ultimately a more inclusive construction of identity.

An important aspect of a new pedagogy of difference would be to include cultural production and construction with analysis and deconstruction. McCarthy and Dimitriadis name this the “participatory model” of education that relies on acts of student creation to make meaning. “When we take such an approach, we cannot prefigure what the world will look like, and instead must engage with multiple kinds of audiences in an increasingly unpredictable public sphere” (p. 107). Life outside of the school walls would become an important source of material for classroom knowledge building. I do not believe that artistic criticism and production can be an educational panacea, but it offers a way out of the

prescribed and can provide an opening of possibility for change. Lippard (1990) writes of contemporary artists who use creation to question the current order. “Recognizing the failure of the melting pot and the stubborn survival of cultural heterogeneity, these artists are considering anew the prospect of a society that is cooperative rather than co-optive, syncretic rather than synthetic, multicultural rather than melted-down” (p. 152). Art can be a powerful form of pedagogy, a location where meanings are constructed and mixed and where identities can be expressed and questioned.

“Exposure to and understanding of difference must be allowed to expand and help rehabilitate the role of the communal imagination. We dream, we see, and only then do we think and act” (p. 244). The work of postcolonial imagination as pedagogy requires a releasing of certainty about answers and knowledge, not a loss of center but an acknowledgment of countless centers where hybridity and mixing is the rule. It involves a privileging of individual voice as part of a greater whole; a whole that is constantly changing and in need of revision. Shohat and Stam (1994) propose a “polycentric multiculturalism” to counteract the traditional center/periphery binary. “Within a polycentric vision, the world has many dynamic cultural locations, many possible vantage points. The emphasis in ‘polycentrism’ for us, is not on spatial or primary points of origin but on fields of power, energy, and struggle” (p. 48). I wish to extend this to include a polycentric pedagogy, which does not assume one or even multiple centers of knowledge production. In a polycentric pedagogy, centers and

peripheries are blurred by the validation of expression, exchange, and experience. “Within an ongoing struggle of hegemony and resistance, each act of cultural interlocution leaves both interlocutors changed” (p. 49).

Curricular Theoretical Framework

In proposing a hybrid curricular form that is based on the analysis of multiple sites of creative production, several intersecting curriculum theorists are important in my shift from the philosophical and theoretical to the realities of educational practice. Many recent and contemporary theorists working in the field of curriculum base their work in the postmodern, postcolonial, and pragmatic in their critique of Eurocentric, Enlightenment based knowledge of self and other. In addition to the work of Dimitriadis and McCarthy (2001) in the creation of postcolonial curriculum based on the analysis and study of postcolonial works of art, there are several theorists whose work informs my pedagogy.

Postmodernism

Kerry Freedman (2003) suggests “five conditions of the curricular process” that are foundational to a postmodern pedagogy and the connection of the discourse in cultural studies to education. The first condition, “curriculum is a form of representation” (p. 109), belies the fact that curriculum does not just transmit knowledge; it also represents the cultural values and beliefs that hold importance for the greater culture. When multicultural units celebrate the exotic native costume and traditional rituals of another culture, the values of American

cultural superiority and modernity are reinforced. Freedman's second condition, that "curriculum is like a collage" (p. 110) emphasizes the hybridity of knowledge formation; like cultural forms, no knowledge form is unitary and sealed off from influence. Thirdly, "curriculum is a creative production" (p. 110); even static, state-mandated curricula cannot remain unchanged and inert when implemented in unique, living educational settings. A form of postmodern curriculum would embrace the dynamic atmosphere of the living classroom and actively involve students and teachers in the analysis and production of knowledge. The fourth condition is that the curriculum and those who shape it are subjective; the Enlightenment notion of objective truth is a fallacy and needs to be honestly admitted and addressed in the postmodern curriculum. "Curriculum could be seen as a collage-like combination of information- like other aspects in life- which is necessarily ambiguous and suggestive of multiple meanings" (p. 111). This creative collage is much like the liminal spaces of ambiguity and uncertainty that postcolonial and pragmatic pedagogy suggest. Freedman's final condition is that curriculum should be "transparent" (p. 111) to those who implement it and to the students and teachers who are co-creators in the knowledge production.

Critical Theory

The work in critical pedagogy of Henry Giroux and Maxine Greene inspired me to critically examine the ideology at work in present curriculum models. Traditional lessons with Tyler-based behavioral objectives and rigid forms of assessment favor those who come to school with a certain cultural

capital. It rewards students who have money and privilege, those who can be docile and accepting. Students who act out, have emotional difficulty, or who do not have parental support at home are undervalued. Critical pedagogy exposes the value system behind our “neutral” curriculum and also helps me to realize that there is hope for change. Giroux (2001) believes that this hope could be rooted in a citizenship education with an emphasis on the values of critical thinking and democratic inquiry:

If citizenship education is to be emancipatory, it must begin with the assumption that its major aim is not ‘to fit’ students into the existing society; instead its primary purpose must be to stimulate their passions, imaginations, and intellects so that they will be moved to challenge the social, political, and economic forces that weigh so heavily upon their lives. (p.201)

The goal, then of citizenship education is not to teach students how things are, but how things might be different. It is this ability to see the world in a different way that Maxine Greene (1988) defines as necessary to achieve a freedom for inquiry and imagination:

There is an analogy here for the passivity and the disinterest that prevent discoveries in the classrooms, that discourage inquiries, that make even reading seem irrelevant. It is not simply a matter of motivation or interest. In this context, we can call it a question having to do with freedom or, perhaps, the absence of freedom in our schools. (p. 124)

The arts and humanities have the potential to show a world that might be, the possible. Specifically, the visualizing of difference in mainstream media forecloses multiple interpretations, relying on simplified binaries. Artwork used

as the foundation of a curriculum of difference highlights the multiple readings and complex interpretations.

“Transcendence distinguishes itself by its acknowledgement that the contradictory forces that steer, shape, and characterize specific historical moments and social formations must be measured against their emancipatory and repressive possibilities” (Giroux, p.16 2001). For critical theorists, education is either a repressive or emancipatory experience; it is never neutral. My pedagogical goals are to expose and analyze the biased representations of difference in order to create more nuanced readings of expression of experience.

I am interested in creating curriculum in the space where these connected theoretical ideas intersect. The focus is on using student perception to build and create meaningful knowledge that examines critically the issues of representation of difference. This sample lesson is a first step in creating pragmatic postcolonial pedagogy through postmodern, post-formal, critical, and postcolonial curricular lenses.

A Sample Lesson

In this sample of curricular material, I attempt to utilize the theoretical foundations described earlier in this chapter to create concrete educational activities. I hope to realize a pragmatic, postcolonial lesson that involves students in the questioning of assumptions and the critical analysis of Eurocentric media representations of difference. The purpose of this lesson is to increase a student’s ability to critically question and analyze stereotypical media images of difference

and to analyze contemporary works of art that subvert the stereotypical codes in order to use their understanding of visual codes to design a creative visual project that addresses the representation of difference. Though the subject for this lesson is the Western representation of Muslim women, the critical visual literacy used in this context can be applied to the visualization of difference in multiple forms.

By beginning the lesson with uncovering and analyzing stereotypical visual codes, the goal is to create a pragmatic sense of doubt and uncertainty in the truth claims of the media images. Student experience with the media and American reaction to Islam and Muslim women in the post-September 11th era is an important component of connecting the material in the lesson to the relevant extracurricular student knowledge. Students will research stereotypical images of Muslim women to critically explore how we (in the West) view them (Muslim, woman, different). In bringing up stereotypical views and deciphering the visual codes that are historically and culturally based, students will examine how they have formed their views of difference. Then we will read and view texts created by the border-crossing artists.

The curriculum is built on a foundation of visual culture; students will learn how to analyze media images of Muslim women using the visual analysis techniques based on visual semiology. They will learn to recognize visual codes that repeat in multiple images and discuss their interpretations of the meanings embedded in these codes with other students. For the media analysis I would ask students to conduct web research and watch for newspaper or magazine images

depicting Muslim women to bring into class. I would also have a collection of post-9/11 images of Muslim women in Western media to supplement student visual research. The students would have time to interpret the images and compare them with others that were brought into class. After informal discussions about trends and observations, the students would be introduced to more formal tools of visual semiotic analysis. Important theories of visual semiology and analysis can be introduced in accessible ways for high school students who already have definitions of myth and stereotype.

Stuart Hall's (1997) essay entitled "The Spectacle of the Other" builds on the use of visual codes to construct cultural myth into a discussion of visual representations of difference and stereotype. Hall extends the semiotics of cultural images to a system of representation, where meanings build and interact with other images. Hall writes,

But at the broader cultural level of how 'difference' and 'otherness' is being represented in a particular culture at any moment, we can see similar representational practices and figures being repeated, with variations, from one text or site of representation to another. (p. 232)

The play of meaning, inter-textuality, constructs what Hall names as a regime of representation. While meaning of visual signs may slip and change, the repetition of loaded markers of difference create a layering and sedimentation of meaning. Students will compare the representation of Muslim women across a variety of images and media to understand how a subject is constructed through the repetition of cultural codes. They will look for a "racialized regime of

representation” (p. 249), which is created through repetitive representation of ethnic or racial difference that serves to naturalize difference and freeze groups of people in a place of inferiority. The visual distinction of race is a signifying myth, the forms of difference in images evoking cultural concepts of superiority/inferiority. “Semiology has taught us that myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal” (Barthes, 1972, p. 142). Myth functions to turn socially and historically created classifications and difference into biological, natural fact. The myth of the victimized, oppressed Muslim woman colors any interpretation of an image of a veiled woman. Automatic assumptions about the woman are made, agency is denied and ideas about the openness and freedom of the West are reinforced. Through analyzing repetitive visual images of Muslim women, students would be encouraged to describe the Western myth of the exotic Muslim woman and how it has been constructed to appear natural and eternal.

The force of cultural myth and the regime of representation are related to an imbalance of power in discourse as theorized by Michel Foucault (1972). “Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true,” (p. 73). Those within a culture who hold positions of power have the ability to control the presentation and distribution of images. As media outlets have been consolidated in fewer and fewer hands in recent years, the number of people deciding the form of representation and the variety of representations have shrunk. The force of

ethnocentric myth is increased when the number of available images of difference declines. Those with the power of distribution have decided what it looks like to be “American,” “Muslim,” “terrorist,” and “patriot,” in our cultural imagination. Unequal global power relationships, based on historical imperialism and current American economic imperialism, allow certain cultures to “be imagined” by others, coding difference in the form of their choosing. The coding and meaning of difference combines Barthes’ theory of semiotic myth and Foucault’s theories of discourse and power to create the “regimes of representation”. Students would read about these unequal relationships of power and analyze how this power is visualized in media representations of Muslim women.

I have adapted a technique for analyzing advertising images from Gillian Rose (2001) for the decoding of media images of difference. This handout that follows is aimed at a more sophisticated high school audience, but could be simplified for younger age groups.

Decoding Media Images

Look at the images that are in front of you. Pay special attention to the person/people in the images. What is the purpose of this image, what point is it trying to illustrate? To whom?

Use this checklist of visual codes to analyze your image. Draw conclusions, write down your impressions .

1 The Representation of Bodies

* *age*: What are the ages of the figures? Babies could mean innocence, comfort, and protection. Older people could mean wisdom or senility.

- * *gender*: Are the men and women playing stereotypically masculine or feminine roles? Is the woman passive, domestic, showcasing her beauty? Is the man active, working, tough?
- * *race/ethnicity*: Is race and/or ethnic difference depicted in a stereotypical manner? Does the image seem to focus on the exotic nature of the subject?
- * *hair*: Women's hair usually symbolizes beauty, can we see the hair of the subject, or is it hidden from view?
- * *body*: Which bodies are fat (and therefore unattractive) and which are thin? Are we shown whole bodies or only parts of bodies?
- * *size*: What is most important in the image based on the size (usually subjects closer to the photographer, and therefore bigger, are the most important)?

2 Representations of Manner

- * *expression*: Who is shown as happy, sad, etc.?
- * *eye contact*: Who is looking at whom and how? Is anyone looking at the photographer directly? Are these looks submissive, confrontational, or flirty?
- * *pose*: Who is standing and who is sitting or lying down?

3 Representations of Activity

- * *touch*: Who is touching what? What is the effect of this?
- * *body movement*: Who is moving and active?
- * *position*: Is one person shown as superior or more powerful based on the position of their body?

4 Props and Settings

- * *props*: Are there any props that have special meaning, for example glasses or books can mean intelligence.
- * *settings*: Where does this image take place? Is it a normal daily activity, or a special occasion? What effect does this have on the story behind the image? Can you tell what the geographical location is in the photograph? How does that influence your interpretation of the image?

(Adapted from Rose, 2001)

This visual analysis will be accompanied by historical and cultural texts that could give context for the representation of Muslim women in the Western media. Students will learn about the basic events of European colonialism in countries such as Egypt and Algeria, including original texts by Lord Cromer describing his views of the Egyptian people. The social Darwinism of the colonial enterprise that placed Europeans at the pinnacle of evolution can be identified within these historical texts and the students would be encouraged to draw

connections to more contemporary views and representations of Islam. American foreign policy interests in the Middle East will be studied, particularly relating to the CIA's role in the overthrowing of the democratically elected leader in Iran and its support for the authoritarian Shah. The readings that will accompany the visual analysis would not attempt to construct an alternate objective "Truth" about the relationships of difference; they can reveal the multiplicity of readings of historical and cultural events and expose the bias and interests behind Western reporting about other cultures from one particular viewpoint. Hopefully, through reading texts that contextualize and complicate the relationship of the United States and the "Muslim World" students will be better able to see and analyze the repetition of certain derogatory visual codes in the media images.

At the beginning of the lesson, students will start a journal with an entry about all of the assumptions and previously held ideas they have about Muslim women and about the practice of Islam. As the process of analyzing media representations and reading historical and cross-cultural texts evolves, students will keep a daily written journal to keep track of impressions, new observations, and any alterations or doubts that they might have about their previously held views. The journal writing is to be shared in small groups of students in order to discuss similar impressions and differing interpretations of images or texts. As a class, we will create a display of the stereotypical media images that we have researched and would add to as new images are discovered. Even after the

“official” lesson is completed, the analysis and discussion of the visual codes can continue as new images and observations are brought in and posted.

Bringing in the Artwork

After the contingent historical context and stereotypical visual codes are established through analysis, readings, writings, and discussions the work of Neshat, Satrapi, Hatoum, and Jacir will be brought into the classroom to complicate the assumptions and biases that have been discovered. The class will begin the second phase of this extended lesson by reading/viewing Marjane Satrapi’s (2003) Persepolis: the story of a childhood. Students will reflect on how Iran was/is portrayed in American media as part of the “Axis of Evil” and how that compares to the story of Marji and her family. In their journals, students identify illustrations that are of particular interest or connection to the visual codes that were identified in the media images. In small discussion groups about the text, students will share the images that stood out and how the meaning of visual codes shift in this alternate perspective of Islam and Muslim women.

Throughout the time that the class takes to absorb Persepolis, I will bring in images from Shirin Neshat to compare to Satrapi’s visions of Iranian life and the roles of Iranian women. Students will view *Speechless*, write down initial reactions to the image, and then read selected critical response to the piece. The relationship between this image and the media images that show Muslim women oppressed in their veils will need to be debated. Questions that acknowledge the complexity of global power relationships will help to frame student response and

discussion. How can we read about real suppressions of women's freedoms in post-revolutionary Iran without denying agency and voice to Iranian women as a group? What is the relationship of Western colonial power in Iran to the way that the media and these artists represent Iranian women?

The next stage of this plan will shift focus from the representation of Iranian women to the issue of representing the transcultural migration and exile present in the work of Hatoum and Jacir and their relationship to Palestine and the West. After reading about and viewing the work of Satrapi and Neshat, whose work is more didactic about their relationship with Iran and the West, students will examine the visual work of artists who are more abstract in their border crossing and in their representation of women's bodies. Using Jacir's *From Paris to Riyadh* (2001-3), we will discuss the issue of commodification of women's bodies in Western fashion magazines and how that relates to the control of women's bodies in the media images of Islam. How do we in the United States define freedom and liberty? What role does appearance play in the pressures placed on women in the United States as compared to Iran or Palestine? Again, students will analyze the artwork for use of visual codes and reflect in their journals and group discussions about the connections between the media images and how the artists use the cultural codes. Mona Hatoum's *Hair Veil* (2003) will be used as a direct challenge to the prevalent visual code of the veil associated with Muslim women and its representation in the West as necessarily oppressive and problematic. Hatoum's veil is beautifully and delicately woven with human

hair, not obviously denying its oppressive associations, but subtly questioning the negative connotations and the power that has been embedded in this simple piece of fabric.

The final stage in this sample curriculum is for the students to use their journal writings and visual analysis to produce a creative visual and textual response. After analyzing images produced by mass media and by postcolonial artists, students will get involved in the production of meaning through creating their own representations. In this participatory project, students connect their personal experience of biased media to the complexity of expression of the contemporary artists. The final project is to create a poster that incorporates image and text to make a statement about the representation of Muslim women in the West. Students will use their visual research and analysis from the entire lesson to create a piece that uses the cultural codes of stereotypical images to subvert the flattened representations. Posters will be reproduced and displayed throughout the school and community in order to foster dialogue about the issue on a greater scale.

Breaking Down the Old, Building the New

As a suggestive way forward, my sample lesson is a small step towards what I believe can be a responsible pedagogy of difference. Real student engagement with expressions of diverse experience can have the pragmatic power to dislodge, or at least to shake, the firm assumptions set up and reinforced by stereotypical cultural and media images of those who are different. The formation

of exclusive or inclusive identity in this era of globalization can be influenced by the level of dialogue around how we determine community connection and how we determine who is inside our defined community. Nationalist and patriotic rhetoric that are part of the schooling process encourage the exclusive identity that establishes firm boundaries between Americans (special, entitled, free) and everyone else (different, lacking, jealous of our freedom). Certain forms of difference are seen as particularly suspect or dangerous: Mexicans are threatening because they want to sneak through our borders and steal our jobs and prosperity; Muslims or Arabs (conflated in U.S. media representations) are menacing because they hate American freedom and want to destroy us. These cultural myths of difference are unchallenged in the current multicultural tolerance model.

Traditional multicultural education re-inscribes the center/periphery binary by celebrating a bland tolerance to the exoticized visions of difference. We are encouraged to “deal with” and “learn to live with” those who are culturally different as long as they are kept outside of the privileged center of knowledge and power. Honest conversations about the unequal global relationships of power, the legacy of Western colonialism, and the economic imperialism of the United States do not occur when tolerance is the goal of multiculturalism. Instead of confronting the issues of power that determine the flow of money, information, and people, tolerance encourages a forgetting, a white-washing of unpleasant realities in service of the phrase, “why can’t we all just get along?” A postcolonial

pragmatic pedagogy must engage with the thorny issues of cultural stereotyping, imbalances of power, and the critical analysis of biased representation.

The West has represented Muslim women historically as either exotic, sexualized objects of desire or exotic, covered objects of pity. The veil has been, and continues to be, the central visual code that carries the meaning of this exoticized difference; it is the piece of cloth that separates and marks the unbridgeable divide between “us” and “them”. With renewed focus on everything Muslim since the attacks of September 11th, there is an urgent need for a postcolonial pragmatic pedagogy that can honestly address the relationship between stereotypical, biased media images of difference and the exclusionary feelings of fear that have controlled the popular discourse on Islam in the United States. Students need to engage with difficult questions about why the vast majority of media images of Muslim women involve the same visual codes and the same underlying theme of voiceless oppression. Using visual and media literacy tools of analysis, students can critically analyze the dominant media discourse that creates the object of our fears and pity.

Once identified, the flattened visual images of the Muslim woman in the West need to be countered with more complex images of experience created by artists who travel between borders and cultures. The artwork of Neshat, Satrapi, Hatoum, and Jacir can open up new, uncertain, hybrid spaces for students to think about identity. Their art is not a panacea, and cannot change behavior or perceptions without analysis and discussion. My hope, in using contemporary art

as pedagogy, is to provide the seeds of doubt and uncertainty about assumptions that lead students to a curiosity about the representation of difference and the formation of identity. Viewing and analyzing a work of art is a form of experience, of seeing multiple perspectives that can challenge and break apart the assumed, Western media image of what it means to be a Muslim woman and what it means to be in our own cultural location as well.

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