How Does Critical Theory Matter Now?

How Does Critical Theory Matter Now?

Susan Buck-Morss

Académie
de la Latinité

Lisbonne, 2003

Publié par
Educam – *Editora Universitária Candido Mendes*
Rua 1º de Março, 101, Sala 26, Centro
Cep 20010-010 – Rio de Janeiro – RJ – Brasil

Coordination Editoriale
Hamilton Magalhães Neto

Révision
Annie Davée

Couverture
Paulo Verardo

Composition
Textos & Formas Ltda.
(21) 2516-7997

Académie de la latinité – Siège Amérique latine
Secrétariat général
Rua da Assembléia, 10, 42° andar, Centro, Rio de Janeiro
Tél.: 55.21.531-2310; Fax: 55.21.533-4782
Page WEB: www.alati.org
E-mail: alati@alati.org

Secrétariat exécutif à Paris
25 rue Château Landon 75010 Paris. Tél./Fax: 33.1.40.35.08.20
E-mail: nelson.vallejo-gomez@wanadoo.fr

It is with deep respect for my colleagues and friends here today that I speak not about a past theoretical tradition, but about the present historical situation. I am aware that we may not share the same political sensitivities at the moment, sensitivities that run very deep. No one knows the future implications of what is now in process in the world. When it comes to history, we have no predictive science. This is as it should be, because the very concept of history asserts that human beings have agency, hence the possibility that human development is not pre-determined – not by nature, nor by God, nor by the totality of history itself.

Freedom, the condition of possibility of history, demands that we act despite imperfect knowledge, without, as Adorno said, a safety net. As critical intellectuals, our role at this moment is to refuse to be intimidated by the patriotic majority, to think and write as truthfully as we can in multiple ways, against the grain of the forces that are now riding the tide of history. We have that privilege and that responsi-

---

Note: This essay is revised and expanded, based on a talk presented at the conference: "How Does Critical Theory Matter Now," organized by Professor Helmut Dubiel at New York University, December 7-8, 2001. I am especially grateful for the challenging criticisms of Seyla Benhabib and Saba Mahmood.

bility as a consequence of the division of labor in society. While most working people must accept the given world in order to get on with their daily business (and for tens of thousands, that business now is war) intellectuals serve society best by stepping back from the world long enough to question the hegemonic discourses that justify it. This is the essence of all variants of "critical theory." They provide cognitive experience at a level of reflection (let us call it knowledge rather than mere information) that has the power to dispel the illusion of the inevitability of events by demonstrating that it is how we grasp them that gives them their aura of fate.

As one such gesture of critical reflection, I want to speak today about Islam – not its ancient heritage, not its golden medieval times, not its folkloric customs, but its modernity, precisely the modern, politicized Islam that George W. Bush wants to tell us this crisis is "not about." By attempting to silence Islam as a political discourse, by reducing it to a religious practice, Bush is in effect closing off public discussion of how the many varieties of Islamism are challenging and extending the discursive field of political resistance. Such a discussion is there to be engaged within the *global* public sphere as opposed to our own provincial one, however, and there is urgency to do so. But this urgent task requires, paradoxically, taking time, the time to read not only news reports and journalistic comments that record and react to the kaleidoscope of daily events, but scholarly articles and books, whole books, written (no less) by theorists, critical theorists like Akbar Ahmed, Leila Ahmed, Mohammed Arkoun, Talal Asad, Ahmet Davutoglu, Saba

Mahmood, Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Abdelwahab El-Messiri, Ali Mirsepassi, Ali Moussalli, Bobby Sayyid, Hisham Sharabi, Azzam Tamini, Bassam Tibi. These scholars (who in no way speak with one voice) have been trained in the West where many are citizens; most live and teach there.[1] They are fluent in the traditions of Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenology, Foucault's analyses of power and truth, Gramsci's work on organic intellectuals, Derrida on deconstruction, the radical democracy of Leclau and Mouffe, the cultural studies of the Birmingham school, the post-colonialism of Spivak and Bhabha, and the critical theories of Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin, and Habermas. They have been writing for Western audiences for at least the past decade,[2] engaged in the crucial task making clear how Western phenomena such as secularization, modernization, and nationalism change, not their *conceptual* meaning as they move from the West to non-West, but their material referent, and with it, their political value. We might, using Adorno's language of non-identity, say that these writers demonstrate how the object (the contextualized referent) does not go into its concept without leaving a remainder: how lived experience escapes the names we attach to it – how, for example, "progress" as actually lived by the Muslim world has not been progressive; how Afghanistan's so-called "backward" condition is precisely an effect of global modernity; how the alliance of Arab regimes with the "democratic" West has worked to repress democracy. These writers place a modern value on what can be called "Islamism," to be compared with liberalism, Marxism, nationalism, Pan-Arabism – even postmodernism. Islamism is not a

religious discourse, but a political one.[3] It is a debate about modernity, expressed in multiple voices, encompassing varied and conflicting theoretical positions that are meant to have practical, political effects.

Recognizing Islamism as a modern discourse hardly places it beyond criticism. That is not the point. None of these writers are apologists for fundamentalism in its violently terrorist or socially brutal forms, and some are critical even of its moderate manifestations. Their work, rather, demonstrates that because Islamism is not derivative of Western discourse, it raises the political issues of modernity in a different way, one that changes the parameters of the theoretical discussion set by the West. In a sense, the very existence of Islamism displaces the critique of modernity from the Western *cul de sac* of the "totally administered world" that Adorno and Horkheimer deplored as the negative consequence of the dialectic of the European enlightenment. Engaging in dialogue with this difference gives us the barest glimmer of a possible, not-yet-existing alternative to *both* self-congratulatory scenarios: the distorted economic development that Western hubris posits as the end-goal of history, and the violent destruction that religious extremists sanctify as virtue.

Mediating between critical discourses, the writers named above hold us fast to the true meaning of democracy by demonstrating that Islamist discourse cannot be excluded from the global discussion merely because its premises are non-Western. Their arguments are subtle because they are specific, and I apologize in advance for the inadequate and partial representation of this rich literature in the brief com-

ments that follow. But by critically engaging only a very small part of the discussion of Islamism, I hope at least to gesture toward the cognitive experience of the non-identical that their theoretical accounts provide.

Modernization has been for the Muslim world a task of cultural submission.[4] This is of course true generally for postcolonial societies, but if we follow the argument of Bobby Sayyid, what distinguishes the Muslim experience is that at its Anatolian center, the great modernizer Mustafa Kemal, "father" (*Atatürk*) of the Turkish secular nation, himself so thoroughly relegated Islam to the dustbin of history that no modern political project could henceforth evoke its name.[5] Kemal insisted on adopting not only the political forms but the cultural signs of the West by secularizing education, outlawing Muslim dress and "uncivilized" headgear, and even inventing a Turkish national opera that mimicked European style.[6] Under the influence of Kemalism, Islam, that for centuries had been for the Muslim world what Sayyid (following Horkheimer) calls its "ideological cement," was "de-sedimented" (Husserl) from the "life-world" of ordinary people. Islamic belief, while remaining the matrix of meaning in everyday life, became, schizophrenically, the "constitutive outside" (Derrida) of Turkish national identity, marking its limit, and thereby its extent.[7] As an indigenously-produced "Orientalist" (Said) discourse, Kemalism became the lingua franca for secularizing, Westernizing development throughout the Muslim world.

Paradoxically (dialectically?), once Islam was free from traditional institutional arrangements, emptied of any political use yet still widely dispersed within cultural life, it be-

came available for articulations of political resistance to the post-colonial order. As a counter-hegemonic discursive field it became not simply a vehicle through which secular demands of dissatisfied classes were expressed (Sayyid explicitly rejects a Marxist analytical frame), but as a "means by which interests and identities [were] formed."[8]

Precisely because it was not allowed to do so, Islam became a "master signifier" (Lacan) that knit together the polysemic political debates of the Muslim world. It is (here Sayyid draws on Richard Rorty) the "thinnest of phrases in Muslims' final vocabulary. It is this thinness which makes it difficult to contest. Ultimately, for Muslims, Islam is another word for 'Goodness incarnate.'"[9] Thus, when Islamists claim that the best government is an Islamic government, they are stating a minimal, indeed, tautological truth.

Now, good government is precisely what the Western-oriented states of the Muslim world have insufficiently provided. Kemalist-inspired "secular" rule has too often meant dictatorship, the abrogation of civil liberties, and the violation of human rights. This is not to say that the revolutionary fundamentalist Islamic states have protected such rights. Iran is the prime example. Both the Western-backed Pahlavi monarchy of Iran under Shah Mohammad Reza, and the Revolutionary Republic of Iran under the *faqih* (spiritual guidance) of Ayatollah Ruhalla Khomeini were regimes that practiced state terror.[10] Again, this is not Sayyid's point (although it must be ours). Rather it is to recognize that Iran's Islamist revolution "constituted a new Muslim subjectivity," one that is indisputably modern and just as indisputably non-Western, providing a blow to Kemalism's

monopoly of legitimation, and affirming the Islamic daily world in which the majority of the population actually conduct their lives.

What is involved here is not freedom but dignity. And in a postcolonial context, dignity matters. Better put, dignity *is* freedom in a different sense, as liberation from Western hegemony. This is where the "colonial difference" matters:[11] if the adoption of Western-defined freedom brings with it submission to Western power, the purported goal is undermined by the self-alienating means.

But we need to be careful here. It is the intellectually critical and socially accountable power of Islamism that deserves our respect, not its instrumentalized uses by groups in power to garner unquestioning support, and to silence internal opposition. The colonial difference is not a license for abuses of power by Islamist regimes. If Al Banna and Sayyid Qutb of the Muslim Brotherhood were victims of the Egyptian state, this does not justify the Muslim Brotherhood's acquiescence to state terror against Mahmoud Mohamed Taha in Sudan, or the killing of 10,231 individuals of the secular Left by the regime of the Revolutionary Republic of Iran in the early 1980s. State terror does not change its name when it is implemented by clerics.[12]

We are engaging with discourse here, not the violence that silences speech. As a discourse of political opposition, Islam is capable of playing the role that "reason" does in the Western discourse of the Frankfurt School, so that statements such as "the Islam of al Qaeda, or the Taliban in Afghanistan, or Khomeini in Iran, or Numieri in the Sudan is unIslamic" become critically meaningful in ways that call-

ing the same phenomena "backward" or "religiously fanatic" surely does not.[13] Just as in Western critical theory the great defenders of reason are those who criticize the rationalization of society in reason's name, so today's progressive Muslims are able use Islam as an immanent, critical criterion against its own practice, with similar effect. So long as state regimes that claim not to have abandoned indigenous, Islamic values in fact violate them at every turn, so long as they are composed of corrupt power elites, nominally Muslim but ardently Western-materialist in their personal consumption, catering to foreign interests over domestic needs despite the growing gap between rich and poor, Islamism will continue to have genuine popular appeal.

Islamic feminisms (and they are multiple) can be interpreted in this context. When educated women defy norms by choosing to wear the burqa, they are refusing visual identification with the Westernized elite whom they are expected to join. Far from slipping back to the archaic past, these women may be seen as expressing democratic solidarity with the non-elite Muslim men and women whom the material benefits of modernity Western style have never reached – at the same time performing their own feminist critique of the culture industry's reification of women's bodies.[14]

When a young Islamist lectures to her religiously ignorant father that "when it was necessary, our prophet undertook his own tasks and helped his wife; he swept the house," she is challenging Muslim patriarchy from within, by its very means of legitimation.[15] As Ibrahim Kaya insists, in the

case of Turkey, "veiled women are highly militant political actors," whose appropriation of tradition in defiance of Kemalist norms is producing "a new identity formation" as decisively modern as it is non-Western.[16] This does not justify Islamists dictating from above *the* path for Muslim women; but it does suggest that dictating such a path from outside, according to Western notions, misses an opportunity to expand the discourse of feminism, and also its power.

Ziba Mir-Hosseini's interviews in her native Iran with clerics who hold varying positions on women's rights – from traditionalist to modernist – exposes the vast terrain of discursive struggle that has developed among interpreters of Islam in response to feminist concerns of Iranian women within the revolutionary Islamic Republic.[17] Saba Mahmood describes her fieldwork in Cairo among women in the mosque movement who have mobilized independently, against the male monopoly of exegetical practice, to teach each other Islamic doctrine, "thereby altering the historically male-centered character of mosques as well as Islamic pedagogy" in their *actions*, even as they uphold as *theory* a discursive tradition that seems to affirm women's subordination. Their practice leads Mahmood to insist that the "desire for freedom and liberation is a historically situated desire whose motivational force cannot be assumed *a priori*" – hence what constitutes women's agency needs to be thought in expanded terms, and not exclusively according to the western model.[18] When Leila Ahmed describes from her childhood the experience of two Islams, one of men, official and textual, the other of women, non-dogmatic and customary, she identifies Islamic feminism as a process whereby women sort out the meaning of

their lives.[19] The western feminist, Zillah Eisenstein affirms that the politicization of Muslim women in their struggle for rights is "on their own terms, from their own understandings of what Islam means. They do not need 'the' west for an assist"; at the same time, she observes that the separation of gender roles in the present crisis is impossible to deny, as is the negative impact of militarized masculinity on *both* sides.[20]

Feminist solidarities across religious and cultural differences are crucial in the current political struggle, due to the absolute centrality of issues of women and sexuality in the debates. Patriarchy is not, as the old Marxist Left would have it, a secondary contradiction subordinate to class.[21] Islam is not, as the Taliban ruled, a justification for women's inequality, or for the entrenchment of neopartriarchal, social forms. But just as certainly: liberation is not, as the Bush regime advertises, a matter of assimilating Muslim women into the truncated agenda of women's rights endorsed by the Republican administration.[22] Eisenstein, whose response to September 11 has been exemplary for feminists, protests with abundant clarity: "It is unforgivable to use women's rights as a pawn in war to rally global forces for war (…) and (…) it is unconscionable to wrap U.S. bombs in women's rights discourse."[23]

We, as critical theorists, need to make Western audiences aware that Islamism as a political discourse embraces far more than the dogmatic fundamentalism and terrorist violence that dominates in the Western press. It also is a powerful source of critical debate in the struggle against the undemocratic imposition of a new world order by the

United States, and against the economic and ecological violence of neoliberalism, the fundamentalist orthodoxies of which fuel the growing divide between rich and poor – this is to say that secularization is no guarantee against dogmatic beliefs, and that even religious foundational texts are open to multiple interpretations. Islamism has become a site within civil society of social movements that struggle in the most diverse ways to come to grips with the inequities of modern life, which have developed within the period of dominance by the West – a West that for Islamists includes the atheistic, materialistic Soviet Union that so faithfully mimicked the model of Western modernization, along with the Western-Orientalist judgement of Islam as an irredeemable obstruction to historical progress.

Since the 1970s, Islamist organizations have proliferated within civil society, providing social services for the community (*umma*) that neither secular nor Muslim governments have delivered. *Jihad* means struggle on three levels, only one of which – a last resort, least pleasing to God – is violent. On the community level, it means to fight with full moral force for economic justice, equality, and social harmony – not only for the nation, but the entire Islamic world. We can appreciate the supranational appeal of such a pan-Islamic identity, which *could* become the basis not only for political alliances but for a regional economy, eschewing usury and redistributing wealth, reflecting Islam's tenets of social justice, to which today's Muslim financial regimes give little more than lip service. We can also recognize how threatening such an economic union, were it to seriously challenge the orthodoxy of a "free" market, would

be to the hegemony of neoliberalism within the global economy.[24]

Tolerance is an Islamic virtue, based not on a discourse of rights but one of norms. It is no accident that Jews, expelled from Europe at the beginning of its modern era and violently persecuted at its end, survived in the Ottoman Empire, where, like Christians, they were respected as "people of the Book." Racism is rejected unconditionally by Islamic doctrine (if not practice). At the same time, the extensive sense of community and brotherhood has limits as to what or who will be tolerated that critical theorists cannot possibly defend. "There is no compulsion in religion," states the Qu'ran, unequivocably. And yet, in practice, Islamist protection of dissenters and non-believers still falls far short of the genuinely cosmopolitan tolerance that our new, global reality demands. Political pluralism stops short of participation by polytheist or atheist parties, who are harshly excluded; sexual practices are brutally punished if they violate the Qu'ran; religious law (*shari'a*) is not open to revision by democratic vote (although critical interpretation – *ijithad* – of the *shari'a* functions very much like western judicial review, and continues to undergo significant historical transformation). Given the ambivalent record of Islamic regimes now in existence, we must admire the cosmopolitan sophistication of the Indonesian Islamic leader, Abdurrahman Wahid, whose *secular* vision of democracy was *religiously* motivated, to protect the rights of Indonesia's religiously diverse populations as is required by the Islamic idea of tolerance. Wahid was strongly influenced by Latin American liberation theology, as was *al-Shari'ati*, whose lectures in

the 1970s influenced the more tolerant forces of the Iranian Revolution, and also the Egyptian Islamist and anti-Marxist, Hasan Hanafi, who admired the Western philosophers, Fichte, Spinoza and Kierkegaard, and whose political positions reflected those of the Muslim Brotherhood during one point in this organization's multiple histories of struggle.

Not all Islamist movements or positions need to be defended in order to acknowledge that Islamism enables political discourses that are modern in their own terms, rather than as a failed mimicry of the West. Within the postcolonial context, this is its critical appeal. The vast discursive terrain of Islamism is a creative space for political articulations of protest against present inequities of power, from which we western critical theorists have some things to learn – and to which we can fruitfully contribute within a global public sphere, so long as we recognize that even among critics of power, western hegemony has been problematic.

The dialectic of Enlightenment has morphed out of recognition from its original, post-World War II articulation. The new global context necessarily alters conceptions – even critical ones – that have been definitive for comprehending the modern age. Under these changed conditions, those of us for whom democracy and human rights are fundamental values have no more legitimacy in *imposing* our values on others than do Islamists. Democracy means treating people democratically. If we in the West find that under present economic, political and cultural arrangements of power we cannot do this without danger to our own existence, then the defense of democracy demands not military

force, but a radical questioning of these power arrangements.

Notas

1. At the time of publication of the studies consulted for this paper, A. Ahmed (from Pakistan) was at the University of Cambridge; L. Ahmed (from Egypt) was at University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Arkoun (from Algeria) was Professor Emeritus at the Sorbonne; Asad (from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan) was at University of Chicago; Davutoglu (from Turkey) was at Marmara University, Istanbul; Mahmood (from Pakistan) was at the University of Chicago; Mir-Hosseini (from Iran) was at Cambridge University; El-Messiri (from Egypt?) was at Ein Shams University in Cairo; Mirsepassi (from Iran?) was at Hampshire College; Moussalli (from Egypt) was at the American University of Beirut; Sayyid (from Britain?) was at the University of Manchester; Sharabi (from Palestine) was at Georgetown University; Tamini (from Palestine) was Director of the Institute of Islamic Political Thought in London; Tibi (from Syria) was at Göttingen and Harvard Universities.
2. The European context for their work was shaped in part by, in France, the debate over students wearing the veil in public schools in France, and in England the Rushdie Affair. Despite (because of?) the American-Iraqi Gulf War, there was much less of a public discussion of Islamism in the U.S. in the 1990s, where ignorance of this intellectual movement is far greater, and with the events of September 11, arguably more problematic.
3. Islamism is "theological" in the sense that politics is discussed in a religious idiom, and the difference, particularly, between Sunni and Shi'ite Islam has had repercussions not only for the discourse, but for the politics that emerges from it (most profoundly in the Iran-Iraq War). But Islamist politics increasingly transcends theological splits, centrally in the support for Palestine (by Shi'ites *and* Sunnis, Iran and Iraq).

4. Edward Said's book, *Orientalism* (New York, Pantheon, 1978), is a foundational text for this discussion, as is Bryan S. Turner's *Marx and the End of Orientalism* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1978) that criticizes the Eurocentricity of the Marxist concept of oriental despotism. On the wider issue of cultural submission in the colonies, see also the work of Spivak, Prakash, Chatterjee, and Chakrabarty on South Asia; the work of Dussel, Mignolo, and Quijano on Latin America, and generally the discussions of post-colonialism and Subaltern Studies, and the Birmingham School.
5. Bobby S. Sayyid, *Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism* (London, Zed Books, 1997). Sayyid, a former student of Ernesto LaClau at Birmingham who came to age in the climate of postmodernism, is one of the most diligent in mediating between Islamism and Western theory, which is why I have cited his book here. He is heavily indebted to predecessors, including the work of many of the scholars I have mentioned above.
6. Kutlug Ataman (b. Istambul, 1961, studied film in the United States, lives and works in London) has produced a brilliant documentary on Semiha Berksoy, the original Turkish opera star, *Semiah B. Unplugged* (1997). Humorous and critical, the film is sympathetic to the star's struggle for personal freedom, while satirizing Kemalist Turkey's mimicking of the West.
7. Sayyid, *Fundamental Fear*, p. 81n.
8. Sayyid, *Fundamental Fear*, p. 38.
9. *Ibid*., p. 48.
10. Increasingly in the 1970s, "the shah turned to SAVAK (State Security and Information Agency), his CIA – and MOSSAD (Israeli) – trained secret police to repress the opposition: liberal secular and religious nationalists as well as Marxists (…) As James Bill has noted, the shah 'abandoned his past policy of balancing coercion with cooptation (…) The new policy resulted in a reign of terror'" [John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 55]. But the establishment of the Islamic Republic after 1979 did not eliminate state terror, as purges and repressions occurred in the early 1980s and again late in the de-

cade, now in the name of "Islamic justice": "A 'royal reign of terror' was replaced by a 'clerical reign of terror'; only the political actors or players changed, not the practices. Imprisonment, arbitrary trial, torture, censorship, and monitoring by security forces continued. If the notorious and dreaded Evin prison was emptied of its Pahlavi prisoners, it was filled again by those of the Islamic Republic. SAVAK was renamed SAVAMA (…) Amnesty International reported that, in 1993, 'Political arrests, torture, unfair trials, and summary executions were reported throughout the country'" (*ibid*., p. 70-1).

11. This is Walter Mignolo's term for the mediation between historical experiences of (post-) colonial countries and the Western terms used to describe them. See Mignolo, *The Dark Side of the Renaissance*.
12. On the deaths of the secular Left in Iran, see Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 159-79. The radically egalitarian Islamist Mahmoud Mohamed Taha was executed in the Sudan, January 20, 1985, charged by the regime President Numeiri with apostacy, an allegation to which the Muslim Brotherhood at the time acquiesced.
13. Similarly, when the Teheran Militant Clergy Association affirms that Iran's newly constituted Islamic Republic has "presented a new definition of democracy," then that republic needs to be held accountable in terms of its own constitution – what the Frankfurt School called "immanent criticism" – by arguing that, as observers of revolutionary Iran have noted, the "practice of the regime in a number of areas is not in accord with its own affirmations of freedom and constitutional rights" (Esposito and Voll, *Islam and Democracy*, p. 77).
14. The issue is whether women *choose* the veil, or if it is imposed [see Miriam Cooke, "Multiple Critique: The Weight of the Veil," *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism through Literature* (New York, Routledge, 2001); also Leila Ahmed, "The Discourse of the Veil," *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots*

of a Modern Debate (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992)]. See also Ali Shariati's famous lectures on Muslim women in Iran in the 1970s, trans. and ed. Laleh Bakhtiar, *Shariati on Shariati and the Muslim Woman* (Chicago, Kazi/ABC International, 1996).

15. This example is cited in Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 104.
16. Ibrahim Kaya, "Modernity and Veiled Women," *European Journal of Social Theory* 3(2):195-214, p. 205 and 208. Kaya is rereading Göle's book (see note 15) and reinterpreting the data it contains.
17. See the insightful and informative study by Ziba Mir-Hosseini, *Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999).
18. Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival," *Cultural Anthropology* 16(2):202-36, p. 203 and 223. On the issue of Third World feminisms and women's agency, see the seminal text of Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1991).
19. Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*. Her perspective has been seen as dichotomizing women's and men's Islam, dismissing too completely Islamic Family Law as a rigid and quintessentially patriarchal institution; women have also used this law in daily practice to their advantage [see Annelies Moors, "Debating Islamic Family Law," in *Social History of Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East*, eds. Margaret L. Meriwether and Judith E. Tucker (Boulder, Westview Press, 1999), p. 143].
20. Zillah Eisenstein, "Feminisms in the Aftermath of September 11" *Social Text 72*, 20(3):79-100 (Fall 2002).
21. See here the pathbreaking work of Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1988).

22. The Islamic Republic of Iran has provided more reproductive freedom for women than is endorsed by the conservative wing of the U.S. Republican Party. See Esposito and Voll, *Islam and Democracy*.
23. Zillah Eisenstein, ""Not In Our Name," November 29, 2001, unpublished op-ed piece for the *New York Times*. Eisenstein's current writing on feminisms in various cultural-political contexts supports differences in feminist practices while remaining uncompromising in its radical vision of women's equality.
24. Nationalist politics have hindered regional economic unity in the Middle East, despite repeated attempts [see Michael C. Hudson, ed., *Middle East Dilemma: The Politics and Economics of Arab Integration* (New York, Columbia University, 1999)]. It would appear to be in the interest of other actors – the United States the European Union, foreign transnationals – to keep the region fragmented. If economic policy were politicized through Islamism as a transnational force, the effectiveness of these actors in the region would be seriously challenged.