

## *Book Reviews*

### **After Shock: September 11, 2001 – Global Feminist Perspectives**

*Susan Hawthorne and Brownwyn Winter, eds.  
Toronto: Raincoast Books, 2003. 557 pages.*

This anthology, a feminist standpoint on the 9/11 terrorist attacks, engages critical feminist voices to counteract the United States' specious justifications of hatred, violence, and vengeance against Afghanistan and Muslims in general following the tragedy. The authors relate the preeminence and politics of the West to violence in the Middle East, parts of Asia, Africa, and South and Central America. Their objective is to deconstruct the hypocrisy entangled in the West's politics, particularly the Bush administration's unilateral, patriarchal, misogynist, and masculinist foreign policies and actions that help create and sustain terrorism. The authors also seek to show that 9/11 is not the only act of terrorism; rather, there are different acts of terror inflicted on innocent people globally.

While many writings have condemned 9/11, only a few depict women's perspectives. Much of the literature focuses on men's views about the war. Moreover, non-western women have hardly written anything that could be said to document feminist viewpoints on the war. *After Shock: September 11, 2001 – Global Feminist Perspectives* reveals the invisibility of women's voices in condemning terrorism and in formulating responses to the terrorist attacks. The anthology utilizes the voices of women from different nationalities, professions, and cultural backgrounds, and thus fills a significant gap: feminist voices on terror and war. This book is one of the most welcome developments in voicing women's perspectives on terrorism.

The anthology is divided into two parts. Part 1, "Reactions," has three sections framed by three questions: "Whose Terrorism? 12 September to 7 October; Whose War? 8 October to 13 November; and Whose Peace? 14 November to 8 March." Captivating pieces in the first section include Robin

Morgan's "New York City: The Day After," which connects 9/11 to the negation of voices, generational sufferings, and patriarchy (p. 36). In "Afghani Women's Resistance Organization: Bin Laden is not Afghanistan," the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan [RAWA] criticize the bombing of Afghanistan and advocate peaceful resolutions. RAWA emphasizes that the United States should differentiate between the "terrorist Jihadi and Talibans" and the poor, innocent, and devastated people of Afghanistan.

In "Transnational Feminist Practices against War," the authors link contemporary global problems to gendered and racialized nationalism, religious and ethnic fundamentalism, capitalism, and globalization. They conclude that terror roams the world in many guises and that feminists should stand against American militarism and patriarchal fundamentalism (p. 90). Sunera Thobani's "It's Bloody Thirsty Vengeance" shows how the West continues to colonize and exploit the Third World economically. Globalization continues to be rooted in the colonization of Aboriginal and Third World peoples and spawn immeasurable injustice and inequality. According to Thobani, the so-called "new war" against terrorism is nothing new. The West is cognizant of whom the fight is against – Muslims – and targets them.

The essays in the second section unearth the United States' violation of human rights and undemocratic behaviour. Barbara Kingsolver's "No Glory in Unjust War on the Weak" analyses the Afghan bombings and asserts that "we can't beat cancer by killing every cell in the body" (p. 136). The United States should use the law to bring criminals to justice. Vandana Shiva's "Globalisation and Talibanisation" examines how 9/11 has been used to validate the demonization of Islam. Shiva explains that terrorism is a global problem and not specific to any religion. Given that terrorism and fundamentalism are rooted in undemocratic and unjust societal systems, ending terrorism requires addressing the lack of democracy. In her "Is This a Feminist War?" Jennie Ruby rebuffs the idea that bombing Afghanistan is a war to empower Afghan women by calling it a war against fundamentalist patriarchy and American capitalist patriarchy (p. 178).

The third section analyzes the global marginalization, tokenization, and silencing of women in politics, economics, peace negotiations, and international relations. Anuradha Chenoy's "Forever Victims" reviews the token inclusion of women in Afghanistan's interim government. She reiterates that peace, like war, is not gender-neutral and has interests that affect men and women differently. Chenoy advocates for women's inclusion in

peace processes (p. 229). In related contexts, Bat Shalom's piece, "Declaration on the Occasion of International Women's Day 2002," calls for an end to the Israel military occupation of Palestinian land as a prerequisite to securing peace (p. 256).

Part 2, "Reflections," advances the reactions and experiences documented in the first part. The authors connect war and violence to global capitalism and to the West's politics. Valentine Moghadam, author of "Women, the Taliban, and the Politics of Public Space in Afghanistan," examines masculinism and feminist resistances in Afghanistan. She analyzes constraints to Afghani women's rights, calls for investing in Afghan women and girls, and institutionalizing their civil, political and social rights in the post-Taliban government. Karen Talbot's "Afghanistan, Central Asia, Georgia: Key to Oil Profits" underscores the United States' imperialist military actions in Afghanistan. She asserts that the war in Afghanistan is key to reaping oil profits from the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

In her "The Algebra of Infinite Justice," Arundhati Roy discusses the American war rhetoric of "protecting their freedom" (p. 364). She parallels terrorism to American militarism and globalization, endeavors that seek to amass wealth for the West. She argues that this presumptuous arrogance is not a choice that people need to make (p. 372). Susan Hawthorne's reflection on "Fundamentalism, Violence, and Disconnection" reviews questions of identity, violence, fundamentalism, power, and masculinity in a globalized world. She interrogates the accountability of American actions, which are driven by false options, and calls for strategies to counter war.

Nahla Abdo, author of "Eurocentrism, Orientalism, and Essentialism: Some Reflections on September 11 and Beyond," draws connections between 9/11 and the Middle East crisis. She stresses that the West, and especially North American imperialist, racist, and hate-based policies toward the Middle East, are not new; rather, they represent a renaissance of the West's strategic needs and interests in the region. Abdo also examines the inflated Eurocentric and Oriental essentialization of Muslims, Arabs, and Middle Easterners after 9/11. In discussing alternative feminism to emancipate Muslim women, the author challenges Orientalism and Eurocentrism's "reactive" approaches, which serve to maintain and reproduce stereotypes against Muslim women.

Evelyn Accad's "The Phallus of September 11" assesses the degenerating state of affairs in the Middle East as a result of 9/11. Accad argues for a discourse on sexuality when formulating a revolutionary feminist theory. The last essay in the book, "If Women Really Mattered . . .," discusses the

devastating condition of women and children in Afghanistan. Bronwyn Winter argues that the United States has no particular interest in addressing the domination of women. In contrast, it has vested interests in maintaining it and supporting those who use and abuse women (p. 519).

This book provides an important political and academic forum for the inclusion of women's otherwise marginalized voices in all discussions surrounding the current context of war, globalization, imperialism, and neo-Orientalism, all of which are shaping the post-9/11 world order.

Bathseba M. Opini

Ph.D. Candidate (Education), Dept. of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada