INTRODUCTION

This project was not planned. The critical engagement with Islamism as a political discourse, the interrogation of global cultural practice, rethinking the Left within a global public sphere – these topics were not on my agenda before September 11, 2001. I had intended during a sabbatical leave in New York City to work on historical investigations - contributions to an "archaeology of globalization"- when the attack on the World Trade towers took place. What made it impossible to continue work, unaffected by political events, was the fact that as a US citizen I was now engaged in an unlimited war that placed civilian populations at unlimited risk, in a part of the world and from a political culture about which I was as inadequately educated as the mainstream media that informed me.

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In the Government Department where I teach, there is at present no professor specializing in the Middle East. In this major knowledge - producing institution, Islam is understood as religion, not politics, and delegated to the department of Near Eastern Studies.[1] My own field, political theory, is based on a canon of writers that as a rule does not include non-Western political philosophers.[2] I teach Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Adorno, and Benjamin to graduate students who come from Pakistan, Turkey, Israel, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and elsewhere. The imbalances in this situation suddenly seemed intolerable.

Much of my year on leave from teaching was spent reading about the various political discourses that are expressed in the shared language of Islam, and that I am describing here as the discursive field of "Islamism."[3] Although scholars and practitioners vary greatly in their interpretations and evaluations, they concur seeing this political discourse as a compelling, if troubling, critique of the way "modernity" has been experienced by millions of Muslims in the so-called Third World. Perhaps more than any other factor, this commonality of experience justifies describing the wide variety of contemporary Islamic politics as one discursive field. Islamism is not terrorism. It is the politicization of Islam in a postcolonial context, a contemporary discourse of opposition and debate, dealing with issues of social justice, legitimate power, and ethical life in a way that challenges the hegemony of Western political and cultural norms.

Like nationalism, liberalism, feminism, and socialism, lslamism frames social and political debates without preempting their content. Islamist extremists are militantly violent.[4] But Islamism in its origins is first and foremost a critical discourse articulated by intellectuals and educators, often at great personal risk, and their analytical insights merit discussion and debate within a global public sphere by non-Muslims and Muslims alike.[5]

Introduction

Social movements that express themselves within Islamist discourse are frequently in opposition to each other, as their forms of activism span the entirety of the known political spectrum- from terrorist networks, to right-wing authoritarianism, to neo-liberal centrism, to left-radicalism, to secular-state egalitarianism, to guerrilla warfare. The political impact of Islamism, far from monolithic, has been reactionary, conservative, democratic, revolutionary, conspiratorial- depending on the specific and changing national and international contexts in which Islamism has developed over a period of several generations.

One might have hoped that in the "democratic" United States the media would have educated audiences regarding Islamist discourses in all of their political variations and historical complexities. But in the heavy atmosphere of patriotism and military preparedness that was generated after the September 11 attacks, in-depth understanding was not on the national agenda. It would have entailed revisiting in more than a cursory manner the multiple cases of CIA support for violently extremist Islamist groups, as well as for paramilitary government violence in the Middle East – historical facts of US Cold-War policy that do not fit into the Bush administration's simplified scenario of good versus evil.

In Europe and elsewhere, the public has been better served. But even in the United States, alternative voices have not been silent. Noam Chomsky's book, *9-11*, which details the historical background and global context of the event, sold extensively to a media-saturated but information-starved public.[6] The internet has demonstrated its significant and salutary power to correct the distorted picture of mainstream media, making possible the circulation of work by Chomsky, Edward Said, Avraham Oz, Arundhati Roy, and many others, as well as information posted by newly established collectives throughout the world. Without such

critical media, no sane, global discussion would be possible.

This book presumes the existence of global information networks, and asks how political imagination might be effectively transformed because of them. It takes on the challenge of thinking past terror in order to engage a global public that rejects both forms of violence, terrorist and counter-terrorist alike. Those of us who count ourselves a part of this public - we are quite plausibly the majority - fit poorly into the definitions that have been offered. Against social science that allots to us the partial and self-interested role of individual "rational actors," we understand ourselves as social beings for whom reason is a normative, moral term. Against identity theories that preach the incommensurability of global publics, such moral reason is necessarily autonomous from any partial collective that holds itself superior and impervious to critique. In a global public sphere, tolerance is the first criterion: we cannot be placed on the defensive because of who we are. Freedom of dissent is the second: we need to be able to criticize power that is inhuman in its effects, regardless of the identities of those who exercise it. The third criterion defines the goal: to trust each other politically and to act together, even when the languages in which we speak our moral concerns not only differ, but seem to be in open contradiction.

What this means - and we are all still far too provincial to cope with the implications - is that democracy on a global scale necessitates producing solidarity beyond and across the discursive terrains that determine our present collective identifications. The goal is not to "understand" some "other" discourse, emanating from a "civilization" that is intrinsically different from "our own." Nor is it merely organizational, to form pragmatic, interest-driven alliances among pre-defined and self-contained groups. Much less is it to accuse a part of the polity of being backward in its political beliefs, or worse, the very embodiment of evil. Rather, what is

needed is to rethink the entire project of politics within the changed conditions of a global public sphere - and to do this democratically, as people who speak different political languages, but whose goals are nonetheless the same: global peace, economic justice, legal equality, democratic participation, individual freedom, mutual respect.

As political events unfold, the foggy term "globalization" becomes clearer. Whereas modernization as a narrative placed national units on a temporal continuum from "backward" to "advanced," globalization does not presume the historical time of Western progress. Global space entails simultaneity, overlap, coherencies incoherently superimposed. Like a photograph in multiple exposure, it makes sense only precariously, only by blocking out part of the visible field. We are capable of seeing further than is comprehended by our separate, sense-making practices, and what we see limits the legitimacy of what we do.

Some examples: As a rational Cold-War strategy, it makes sense that the US supported bin Laden's Afghan-based warriors as "freedom fighters" against the Soviet Union, exposing them to the methods of counterinsurgency - arms deals, assassinations, drug trade-routes, laundered money, false identities, secret conspiraciesthat they now use against their former benefactors. Within the imaginary terrain of global capitalism, the benefits of free trade and economic interdependence seem self-evident, but only if the environmental and social disasters that are its consequence remain out of the conceptual frame. In Muslim countries, Islamists struggle for autonomy from "Westoxification," while their economic base fuels a global economy that is toxic to us all. Western academics and policy-makers study the "exceptionalism" of the Middle East to explain why democracy fails to develop, without asking how their treatment of these nations and their citizens as less than equal players is a failure of

democracy at another level.

While each stratum of the global public sphere struggles for coherence, the whole is marked by contradictions. We coexist immanently, within the same discursive space but without mutual comprehension, lacking the shared cultural apparatus necessary to sustain sociability. We are in the same boat pulling against each other and causing enormous harm to the material shell that sustains us. But there is no Archimedean point in space at which we could station ourselves while putting the globe in dry-dock for repairs - no option, then, except the slow and painful task of a radically open communication that does not presume that we already know where we stand.

This is not to say that translation among political languages is easily accomplished. Real differences exist. But promise lies in the apparent incommensurabilities, because the attempt forces each language to extend itself creatively, becoming more than it was, producing an open space in which a new politics might take root. I have in mind the work of Talal Asad. His analysis of the Salman Rushdie Affair was unexpected.[7] As an anthropologist and a Muslim, born in the Middle East and teaching in the United States, he turned his academic attention not to the culture of the Islamic clerics who condemned this writer for blasphemy, but to the condemnation by Britain's liberal elites of its own Muslim citizenry, thereby exposing the degree to which British tolerance continues to presume the outsider status of those tolerated. He did this in no way to sanction the "shocking" *fatwa* that jeopardized Rushdie's life.[8] Rather, his implication was that cultural confrontations are not to be resolved by the triumph of a more civilized "West" over others, but by the recognition of partialities in all of our behaviors - a very different lesson, and a civilizing one. What enlightened me in reading Asad's book was coming upon the name of the intellectual who has most influenced my

work, the critical theorist Walter Benjamin, whom he cites as theoretical support for his endeavor.

A successful translation, Benjamin wrote in the 1920s when he was translating Baudelaire's poetry into German, leaves neither the original nor the receiving language unchanged. Asad comments on Benjamin's text with cultural translation in mind: "The relevant question therefore is not how tolerant an attitude the translator ought to display toward the original author (an abstract ethical dilemma) but how she can test the tolerance of her own language for assuming unaccustomed forms."[9] If we understand the task of translation as a political project, then the treatment of political languages as *mutually* open to transformation challenges the unequal arrangements of global power.[10] It is by definition a project on the Left.

In the 1970s when I was a student, Marxism in its multiple variants- Western Marxism, Marxist humanism, Trotskyism, Leninism, Maoism, Fanonism - provided the common discursive terrain in which critics of exploitation and domination could agree (often vehemently, even violently) to disagree. The secular Left throughout the Middle East was a vibrant part of that conversation. A comparison informs us as to how the discourse of the new global Left will be different from the Marxist international one, where translation occurred, but heavily in one direction. Any Leftist who lived in or visited the "undeveloped" world at that time will be aware of the degree to which the Marxist Left understood itself as an avant-garde in elite terms, rather than popular and democratic. Despite their radically critical stance, Marxists embraced a vision of modernization that had in common with capitalism and imperialism a conception of the Third World as inexorably backward and behind.[11] Part of postcolonial reality since the end of the Cold War has been the disintegration of the discursive unity provided by Marxism, for which some of us must confess feeling

not a small bit of nostalgia. What is gained, however, is more valuable. If the language of the global Left is not presumed, but struggled for in open communication, if the Leftist project is itself this struggle, then democracy defines its very core.

Critical theory and Islamism offer one nodal point for such a translation, which is a project of central concern to several of the essays in this book (Chapters 2 and 5). Addressing the critical discourses of Islamism that are unknown within the school of critical theory in which I was trained has meant confronting my own infinite ignorance when judged in a global context. I am grateful to Asad, who gave back to me Walter Benjamin, enriched by the use he made of his work, and to the great number of Muslim intellectuals writing in the United States and Europe who have been involved in the project of cultural translation for decades. Their writing made entry into the discussion possible.

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As a critical theorist, I travel in one coherent stratum of global space, centered in and dominated by the West but with outposts elsewhere- we can call it the "theoryworld." It closely resembles the now very prominent "artworld," with which it sometimes overlaps. I have been involved in the artworld for several years, recently as curator of inSITE2ooo, a site-situated art project in Tijuana and San Diego at the Mexican/United States border. The challenge in writing theory for the artworld is somehow to avoid the inevitable promotional role- theory endorsing art; art illustrating theory producing a circular coherence that insulates itself from criticism even as it enacts critique. (Artworld and theoryworld, alternative terms for cartels of symbolic capital, are examples of the cultural inequities of globalization.) It was by engaging Islamism and struggling with political translation that I

was able to find a voice outside of this circularity, one that has nothing to do with Islam, but everything to do with the possibility of a critical, global public sphere and cultural practices within it (Chapters 3 and 4). Two processes of cultural politics - escaping the gated communities of the artworld and theoryworld to address the larger public sphere, and struggling to engage a theoretical discourse, Islamism, not democratically represented within it - turned out to be part of the same intellectual endeavor.

Through working with inSITE2ooo I came to know Catherine David, the creative and socially committed curator, presently Director of Witte de With in Rotterdam, who well before September 11 had initiated an ongoing project of seminars and exhibitions called "Contemporary Arab Representations."[12] She placed me in contact with artists whose work it seemed relevant to include in this text. Several of the images reproduced here, including the remarkable cover, are from "Wonder Beirut" by Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige. This project contains a series of "postcards" – photographs subjected to the distorting heat of fire - embedded in a story, "The Novel of a Pyromaniac Photographer." Images of the city as a tourist destination are transformed into records of the devastation of Beirut during a decade of civil war (the realities of which make it clear that the massive urban devastation of September 11 was far from unique). The reconstruction of Beirut is a commercial attempt to recapture the city's tourist image and secure its economic niche in the global economy, entailing the obliteration of historical evidence of the war, images of which remain burned in the memories of the inhabitants.

I have included the intriguing work of artists Iftikhar and Elizabeth Dadi, who are part of the circle brought together by Salah Hassan, Chair of the Cornell Department of the History of Art and Visual Studies. Also included are images from

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inSITE2ooo projects by Mexican and US artists - and some "found" images as well. The images are presented in counterpoint to each other and to my text. The dialogic principle of these image-interfaces allows the superimposed truths of partial perspectives to be kept in view. Rather than forcing the homogeneity of differences under overarching rubrics of human universality or the art-idea of "the family of man," the incoherence, the ruins, the ruptures in the global terrain remain visible.

Islamism and avant-garde art: In the safe space of a book (if only there), les extrêmes se touchent. But I will not be surprised if the creativity of both artists and religious theorists flourish in an open, global public sphere, because both need freedom to work against the grain, and specifically against the preemptive exclusions of identity politics - to think, Theodor Adorno would say, the "non-identical," a process, Fazlur Rahman would say, of ijtihād (personal reasoning) that engages the "critical spirit" of "free intellectualism," which is "genuinely Islamic and creative." [13] In the religious no less than the secular realm, cultural creativity is not reducible to endorsing a political or marketing line. If we are to think our way to a future different from the insensate scenario of unlimited warfare that has been prescribed for us, then culture needs to imagine alternative forms that are not even dreams at present - produced for a public that extends beyond the initiates, and "political" in the sense of relevant to worldly affairs – with confidence that a truly unforced cultural project will be free of both the fundamentalist intolerance and the commercial libertinism that, from partial perspectives, are now so feared.

It will be evident that the global public sphere to which I allude is not that created by global media as they are now constituted. Nor do Islamist states currently in existence provide the freedom essential for a global Left. Lacking a homeland, such a project may first consist of a radically cosmopolitan republic of letters and

images, electronically connected, digitally displayed, and also circulating as books-in-translation. The contradiction of such a project, which needs to be made productive, is that it will rely on the protection of the very enclaves of freedom - academic and cultural institutions - that at present keep intellectual work isolated from political effect.

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If the political advantage of translation is the expansion of the discursive field, then the greatest gains will be had where the differences seem to be the most extreme, while problems may lie where the task of translation confronts too little resistance. As an example, "Islamic economics" has integrated itself quite completely into the global, capitalist economy. The Pakistani economist Muhammad Akram Khan writes that Islamic economic thinking, constrained by lack of "intellectual freedom" and a fear of "dissenting opinion," has been focused far too narrowly: "The entire enterprise of Islamic banking has become a doubtful proposition, more devoted to literalist or legalistic solutions, satisfying theologians but not yielding any benefit to humanity"; it is too exclusively concerned with "material betterment to the neglect of the environment and distribution of income and equity among the people."[14] Olivier Roy states bluntly: "[T]he 'Islamic bank' is a marketing tool and not a scheme for a new economic order. ... The Islamization of the economy is thus largely rhetorical."[15] This is despite the fact that, as Rahman insists: "The basic élan of the Qu'ran" is its "stress on socioeconomic justice and essential human egalitarianism."[16] A thought-experiment: What if the "Islamic economy" did not take the easy way of identity politics, defining itself as an economy belonging exclusively to Muslims, but considered its natural constituency to include the

anti-globalization movement as the most authentic, contemporary political expression of Islamic principles regarding nature, labor and economic justice? If we are to speak in terms of a global Left rather than regime-change within Muslim countries, what may be needed is not less religious reasoning, but more.

Nothing, we are told by Western hegemonic discourse, so differentiates "us" from "them" as the lack of freedom for women in Islamist societies[17] It needs to be noted, however, that far from silencing the power of women, Islamist regimes highlight it, acknowledging through severe and violent restrictions that what women do is crucial to political and social order. The argument justifying the strict codes of conduct, based on respect for women (in contrast to the "Western" commodification of women and their disparagement as sex objects), has a dialectical dynamic that can lead to its own undoing. [18] In the revolutionary context of Iran, where Islamist discourse has been hegemonic for several decades, women have called, legitimately, on the principles of Islam for support in demanding legal equality, divorce reform, reproductive rights, equality in the workforce, and social recognition as political activists, members of parliament, professionals, and producers of culture and the arts. Iranian women as the avant-garde of progressive Islamism are crucially influential in the present reformist tendency toward social liberalization. In Iran, in a revolutionarily violent fashion that one may hope does not need to be repeated elsewhere, two social elements traditionally fused in Muslim societies are being pried apart: Islam and patriarchy. By making it clear that they are not identical, the success of Islamist feminists in achieving their goals is one with the liberation of Islam from entrapment in patriarchal domination.

Nowhere is the task of translation as difficult, and as crucial, as among feminists at this time. Radical, cosmopolitan feminists - indeed, women on the Left generally - are demonstrating that it is

they who are most open to listening and communicating, expanding their language as they learn, without compromising their principles or abandoning their progressive critiques. I speak of the incomparable Zillah Eisenstein, who responded immediately to the September 11 attacks by engaging Islamist feminisms, struggling on the basis of their varied experiences to expand her understanding of feminism in its multiplicity *and* its singularity.
[19]Creative innovation based on translation also characterizes the work of Teresa Brennan, who as a Marxist economic theorist has committed the primal act of apostasy by taking religious discourse seriously in her brilliant critique of the global ecological disaster.[20] Let me acknowledge, too, the Muslim women who have responded with warmth and candor to my own project: Saba Mahmood, Haifaa G. Khalafalla, and Hanan Ibrahim, whose work and trust have been extended to me during the writing of this book.

The essays in this volume were written for specific, largely academic occasions to which I contributed during the time I was reading about the discourses of Islamism, and they took the opportunity to consider how these occasions might themselves need to be rethought. Chapter 1, written soon after the events of September 11, spoke to the political urgency of the moment by attempting to address a not-yet-existing global public sphere, against the academic expectations of the London conference sponsored by the journal

Radical Philosophy at which it was delivered. Chapter 2 began as a contribution to a New York University "reunion" of critical theorists who work in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, and was intended as a provocation in response to the question of the conference: "How Does Critical Theory Matter Now?". Chapter 3, delivered at the Museo Carrillo Gil in Mexico City, presses the social irrelevance of the artworld and theoryworld to the point of calling for a global counter-culture. Chapter 4, written

for the inSITE2ooo catalogue as a curatorial postscript, interprets artists' projects as attempts to escape from the artworld; the catalogue, or "book," is entitled *Fugitive Sites*. Chapter 5 drops the academic veil completely and speaks directly to the possibilities of a global Left. Chapter 6 is from an interview-exchange with Laura Mulvey and Marq Smith of the *Journal of Visual Culture*; it addresses the difficulties of critical theorizing as a public intellectual given the constraints of normal science in the humanities. The introduction, written just before I returned to teaching, can also be read as the book's conclusion.

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A final, biographical moment figures in the project. By coincidence, in September 2001, I was already reading about the Middle East and recent Arab intellectual history, in anticipation of contributing to a conference at Georgetown University in honor of my dissertation advisor, Hisham Sharabi. A critical and secular scholar, Sharabi's writings analyze contemporary Arab thought and society[21] but as professor of European intellectual history, he taught me the modern Western canon. A Left-Palestinian with a great appreciation for Western Marxism, he was the enthusiastic supervisor of my research on the German-Jewish Leftists Adorno, Benjamin and others of the Frankfurt Institute, who influenced a generation of cosmopolitan "critical theorists." (My dissertation defense took place in Lebanon just before the civil war, where Sharabi was on his sabbatical leave as visiting professor at the American University of Beirut.) The interruption in overseas transport caused by September 11, 2001, necessitated postponing his retirement conference until April. What would have been the first essay in this book, becomes the next-tolast.

It is increasingly plausible that the status quo of power has no

desire to see a refiguration of the old, transnational Left as a global Left, and that there will be, at least in the United States, an attempt to brand all progressive resistance to the "war on terror" as directly or indirectly on the side of the terrorists. Nothing could be further from the truth. Terrorism will disappear because non-violent ways of communication and debate are possible. The essays written here are meant to contribute to that goal.

This is a little book. It makes a very small contribution. But without the freedom and facilities of my profession even it would have been impossible. I hope that readers who have not had the time and resources available to me will find it useful.

Ithaca, New York
September, 2002

Notes

[1] Such categorization is typical in US universities, despite the fact that the majority of Muslims do not live in the Near East (four-fifths of Muslims are non-Arabs).

[2] This situation is being challenged by the salutary call for the study of "comparative political philosophy." See Roxanne Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[3] The term is itself politically charged, and its use in the literature is contested. In Western discourses it may function problematically as a new form of Orientalism, defining the political beliefs of Muslims as radically "other" than Western ideals. My argument in Chapter 5 is precisely opposed to that position. Sympathetic scholars speak of an "Islamic Revival," or use the term "political" or "politicized" Islam, out of concern that "Islamism" may reify the phenomenon in a pejorative way, giving the misimpression of a monolithic and fixed ideology. Others delimit the subject matter to focus only on Islamic "fundamentalism," suggesting

comparisons with other religious fundamentalisms worldwide. Among activists, many are comfortable defining themselves as "Islamists" (Egypt's "New Islamists," for example) while others are not, preferring terms like "progressive" or "traditional" Islam, that describe a political orientation as much as a political language. Those whom I call "Islamist" *writers* themselves express the view that their contemporary interpretation is Islam in its renewed and "authentic" form.

[4] The terrorist organization of al-Qaeda is not representative of even these extremists, the majority of whom are struggling on a national level against repressive regimes for self-determination, or simply for inclusion within the political process.

[5] Influential writers who demonstrate the diverse thinking within lslamist discourse and whose texts were (partially) available to me in English translation include: Mohammed Arkoun (Algeria/France), Rachid AIGhannouchi (Tunis/London), Imam Ruhullah ai -Musavi ai-Khomeini (Iran), Muhammad Iqbal (India/Pakistan), Sayyid Qutb (Egypt), Fazlur Rahman (Saudi Arabia/Pakistan/USA), Ali Shariati (Iran), and Mahmoud Mohamed Taha (Sudan). All of these writers were cosmopolitan in their personal lives, most were educated at least in part in the "West" (some lived there in exile), and several have been Western academics (Arkoun at the Sorbonne; Rahman at the University of Chicago).

Their fates indicate the extreme diversity of Islamist contexts: Both Qutb and Taha were executed for their political views, but Qutb was the victim of Nasser's secular-nationalist regime in Egypt, while Taha was tried and executed by Sudanese President Numeiri as part of the latter's policy of imposed Islamization; Shariati's death in London was quite possibly the act of the Iranian secret police under the Shah, while Khomeini, who spent part of his exile in Paris, became the religious head of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iqbal, who studied at Cambridge and Heidelberg, was recognized after his death as the national poet and spiritual father of Pakistan. The innovatively modern interpretations of Islam by Arkoun and Rahman were nourished by the freedom and resources of Western academic institutions; Rahman was briefly active in the government of Pakistan. Arkoun, a Berber, has been consistently an independent academic, keeping his distance from both Western Orientalism and Islamist activism. AI-Ghannouchi, educated in Cairo, Damascus and France before he returned to Tunisia as a radical activist, was imprisoned twice and sentenced thrice, before exile in London, where he

became the leader of the "Islamic Renaissance Movement." AI-Ghannouchi's influential writings argue on the basis of Islam for individual freedoms, free elections, and a multiple (including communist) party system.

[6] Noam Chomsky, *9-11* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001).

[7] Talal Asad, "Multiculturalism and British Identity," *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

[8] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, p. 239.

[9] Ibid., p. 190.

[10] "The inequality of languages is a feature of the global patterns of power created by modern imperialism and capitalism .... My argument is directed against the assumption that translation requires the adjustment of 'foreign' discourses to their new site. In my view, they should retain what may be a discomforting - even scandalous - presence within the receiving language" (ibid., p. 199)

[11] See Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 36-53.

[12] See the volume *Tamáss: Contemporary Arab Representations* (Barcelona: Fundaci6 Antoni Tapies, 2002), also the website: http://www/uia.es/artpen/world. "To escape from the patronizing and opportunistic attitude with which the works and ideas of contemporary creators linked to the Arab world are presented, is one of the most fundamental aims of this seminar. What interests us," underlines Catherine David, "is the emancipating potential of their proposals, their capacity to question from a radical and experimental perspective the social and cultural discourses that surround them. It is not a question of valuing things from an evolutionary western historicism which frequently leads to sterile formalism."

[13] Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. n, 129. For Rahman, referring specifically to Islam, "the process of questioning and changing a tradition .... can continue indefinitely." He cites al-Shatibi (d. 1388) who described consensus as not only temporary, but "*mutually*

corroborative," "adduced from places that are innumerable" and "from different kinds of sources which cannot be reduced to a single type" (al-Shatibi, cited in ibid., p. 22). The need for a creative interpretation of Islam, and hence for intellectual freedom to engage in scholarly work, is emphasized as well by Mohammed Arkoun (see *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers*, trans. And ed. Robert D. Lee (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994). Both found that freedom in Western universities, where they taught and contributed to academic culture. My use of the term "Islamist" to include their creative scholarship stresses the fact that Islamism as a critical discourse of modernity is not coterminous with any particular political unit or part of the world.

14 Muhammad Akram Khan, "Islamic Economics: The State of the Art," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences 16*, 2: 89 - 104.

15 Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 144.

16 Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, p. 19.

17 On the limits and partialities of understanding in the West-liberalvision, see Charles Hirschkind and Sa ba Mahmood, "Feminism, the Taliban, and Politics of Counter-Insurgency," *Autilropologiml Quarterly* 75, 2 (Spring 2002): 339-54.

18 Foucault's insights are relevant here: No modern political phenomenon can match Islamism for "putting into di scourse" the position of women. Women's dress has become a "technology of power," both as a statement of protest and a means of authoritarian control. Islamic law has generated a voluminous "regime of discourses" that Muslim women have learned to use to their advantage in judicial cases. Sec Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1:*An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage/Random House, 1980).

19 See Zillah Eisenstein, "Feminisms in the Aftermath of September 11," *Social Text* 72, 20, 3 (Fall 2002),79-100, and the book tentatively titled *Who is the West? Feminisms, Slaveries, Democracies, Islamisms* (London: Zed, 2004)

20 Teresa Brennan, "The Critique of Judgement" (unpublished manuscript, sent to me by the author shortly before her tragic accident, a deep loss for the global Left). Of course, religion has been crucial to Western traditions of

radical egalitarianism, from the movement to abolish slavery, to the US civil rights movement, to liberation theology in Latin America; Marxist atheism was often more apparent than real.

21 See especially Hisham Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years, 1875-1914* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970); *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); (ed.), *Theory, Politics, and the Arab World* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).