

H-Net Reviews

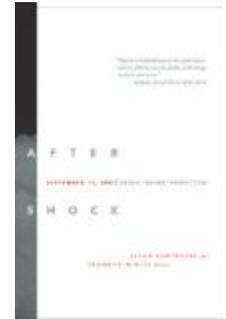
in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Susan Hawthorne, Bronwyn Winter, eds. *After Shock: September 11, 2001, Global Feminist Perspectives*. Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 2003. 557 pp. \$18.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-55192-657-5.

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In the editors' words, the book is (1) an attempt to "make feminist sense of international events," i.e., document feminist voices against the war and feminist analyses of the "masculinist" ideology behind it and (2) a call for "widespread resistance to the masculinist politics of war" (p. 15). In its first goal, the book succeeds admirably. First published in 2002 after the war in Afghanistan, it was reissued in 2003 following the war in Iraq, though without any new pieces on the new war. It is a collection of feminist voices from around the world, but primarily from the US, Western Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Australia. Visible by their absence, apart from a couple of exceptions, are feminist voices from Africa and Latin America. I mention this not to detract from the volume's contribution but to highlight the ways in which transnational feminist networks and solidarities reproduce in cyber space some of the same inequalities and absences that are visible in transnational feminist practices in general. In this case, the authors are located in the academy but have done well to include numerous non-academic feminist voices, particularly of women from the region.

The book is divided into two sections. The first includes a series of articles written by feminists in response to September 11 and the war in Afghanistan and the second section contains more analytical pieces (this is, however, a false binary as pieces in both sections contain analytical as well as personal reflections and reactions). Many articles were first written for newspapers and magazines, some for alternative media, some pieces were delivered as speeches, and others were written specifically for the book.

Taken as a whole, the pieces provide an important

corrective to views available in mainstream media. While other books and media coverage have provided a historical perspective on the role of the United States and Western European countries in the region, what *After Shock* provides is a feminist analysis of that history as well as of the contemporary wars. While it is impossible to review all the feminist contributions—the book has over 80 pieces and is 526 pages long—I highlight some of them; (1) Many pieces offer an intersectional analysis of the collusion of western patriarchy and local, tribal patriarchy along with class, ethnic, and regional differences in assessing the situation of women in Afghanistan, in particular, and the region in general, e.g., the pieces by the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) and Moghadam; (2) several pieces offer a feminist analysis of war that goes from the essentialist argument of war as masculine and peace as feminine to the impact of war on women to the gendered nature of war itself to linking the daily violence against women to war, e.g., pieces by RAWA, the GABRIELA Network, Women Living under Muslim Laws (WLUML) and McKinnon. Enloe critiques the militarized nature of foreign policy to suggest that whenever discourses become militarized, women's voices get silenced as it is seen as basically a male domain; (3) many note the global crisis of masculinity in the face of women's empowerment and men's displacement and link it to religious fundamentalism and terrorism; and finally, (4) several analysts offer a critique of feminisms, both western and indigenous, to show how feminists too can be complicit in perpetuating inequalities.

The book demonstrates how active feminists are as public intellectuals around the world; how they have contributed to our understanding of the current global situation, and insisted on peace as the only way out. Yet,

their message, along with that of other progressive movements, has not led to widespread “resistance to the masculinist politics of war,” the other aim of the authors. On the contrary, the war in Iraq continues, as does the curtailment of people’s civil liberties in the United States and other countries, justified as measures of security, and the contemplation of possible military action in Iran. There are many structural and psychological reasons for the absence of a widespread resistance that I cannot address in this review. The one reason, however, that I do want to

highlight here is the inability of feminists and other activists, to get our message across to those outside our own small, albeit ever expanding, circles. *After Shock* is an important collection that will, primarily, be read by other feminists, mostly academics, and a few other activists. Its message will not be heard by men and women around the world. How to get our message across and propose concrete alternatives is a challenge that *After Shock* does not address but that we all need to if we are to alter the masculinist politics of war and everyday life.

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