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Introduction

The work in this book has an origin that long predates my formal training. Blessed as a first-generation American, I am the daughter of parents who came from the Levant, known by some as Syria, just as or just after Greater Syria was partitioned into Lebanon and Syria and as plans for partitioning Palestine were being invented. To be raised bilingual and bicultural offered a wonderful opportunity to be privy to multiple dialogues about the meanings of Arab and American cultures. Being culturally in-between sensitized me to the sufferings of peoples I might not have heard about in American schools. I grew up knowing about the starving Armenians, the British and French colonizers, the corruption of both Arab and Western leaders, and poetic expression in both English and Arabic. I learned about the yearnings of the Pan-Arabists to model their dream after the United States of America, along with their idealization of Americans, and especially their idealization of American democracy. The indignities faced by colonized and diasporic communities, the

famous Arab leaders, especially the poets gunned down by colonialists who labeled them insurgents rather than recognizing them as nationalists, the divide and conquer tactics that pitted one religious sect against another – all of this, along with discussion of how to build a sewer system in our New England mill town, was daily conversation at our dinner table, and it instilled in me the importance of mutual respect in everyday life.

Later on, as an anthropologist, I learned about the lives of the disempowered everywhere: disinherited Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Africans, those dwelling in urban ghettos, Latin American peasants, inhabitants of refugee camps in the Middle East and elsewhere. My first dissertation fieldwork began in 1957, to study a region yet unexplored by anthropologists, the Rincon Zapotec of the Sierra Juarez in Oaxaca, Mexico. It was an initiation rite of the first order (Nader, 1970). In 1961, after completion of my dissertation, I set out from Berkeley to conduct summer fieldwork in Lebanon and begin preliminary research on Muslim village law. As I explored the question of how to find a good village, as I balanced whether it should be Shia or Sunni Muslim, I was deluged with warnings from Lebanese families and friends: I would get sick; if I worked in a Muslim village, there was no telling what they would do to me; I would not be safe, some told me, because Muslims "don't like Christians"; others said that this was nonsense and the difference in perspective coincided with individuals' political positions. The many and lengthy conversations and admonitions about the dangers of doing fieldwork did not stop. What seemed like acute paranoia was undoubtedly related to the 1958 crisis. Certainly, the fact that I was based in the Christian town of Zahle explained the reluctance of any driver to take me into the villages.

My interest in knowing to what degree formal Muslim law, a law that originated in urban centers, dominates village procedures for conflict settlement augmented my determination to work in a Muslim village. It took about two weeks of talking to people and taxiing to various villages to realize that one of the most successful ways of locating an appropriate village in Lebanon was through politicians or lawyer-politicians rather than through Lebanese social

scientists, who did not concentrate their interest in the rural areas of Lebanon. Whereas in Oaxaca the link between the cosmopolitan centers and predominantly Zapotec villages was easily made through a development commission, in Lebanon the link was best made through politicians, who often function like ward heelers and come to know the villages in the process of electioneering. Politicians and lawyer-politicians were the most knowledgeable people, for my purposes at any rate, in dealing with the village scene in Lebanon. Since I had the unusual advantage of having family living in the country, a politician who was a relative finally helped me locate a Shia Muslim village, among the poorest in Lebanon. Unlike Mexico, where my frustrations were mainly connected with the place of actual fieldwork, my difficulties in Lebanon stemmed from my inability to locate a university student who might have been able to assist me; from the ostensibly trivial problem of finding a car and driver; from the fact that there was a lawyers' strike and no court cases could be heard; and, in particular, from the problem of gathering any sort of "objective" information on a good village in which to work. Nevertheless, I found a location.

The village, Libaya, is located near Marjayoun: it was not to be found on most maps of Lebanon because the road had only recently been completed. Its population was about 1400. There were eight large families in town and some 400 houses – a homogeneous population of Shia Muslims. I collected mainly cases of *wasta* making, or the search for remedies in conflicts. Unlike the Zapotec, the Shias readily admitted to conflict and were not at all hesitant to talk about the subject. Consequently, I felt that I was moving with the stream here rather than against it. I became fascinated with the number and class of person with whom a Shia Muslim villager comes into contact when he is in trouble and has to look for a *wasta*. To whom he goes depends in part on the kind of trouble he is in and on the man who is to judge him in the civil court. Among the political elite of Lebanon there is a most incredible knowledge of interpersonal relations, so that it's a rather knowledgeable game to play – to see who can get the best connections the fastest.

Unlike my first experience among the Zapotec, the personal, managerial, and intellectual problems of fieldwork were minimal once I got to the village. I did not have the hindrance of working with a bilingual interpreter, for I could understand spoken Arabic. The fear of being rejected because of my religion proved an empty one. I was at first asked by the family with whom I stayed about my religion; when I said I was a Christian, they advised me to say that I was Muslim if asked by the other villagers. I answered simply that I was not in the habit of lying. When that story circulated about the village, I was treated with an openness and respect that I had not expected.

I was investigating a subject matter that these Shias themselves liked to talk about, and thus probably accomplished as much in those few weeks as I would have in Zapotec country in about four months. The ubiquitous use of proverbs in the Near East is often helpful in guiding the anthropologist to choose what values are important: "As you treat me so I will treat you" (usually referring to bad treatment); "As you are dressed so you are judged"; "You have to be flexible in life, or else you break"; "If you wish to move a man, send a woman after him, and if you wish to move a woman send a child after her"; "In my presence, face like a mirror, in my absence, like a shoe." If I were advising young anthropologists preparing for fieldwork in the Arab Middle East, I would strongly recommend that they become familiar with and memorize a selection of proverbs.

The negative aspects of being a woman fieldworker in the Middle East had been highly exaggerated. In my short time in the village I felt no threats; none, certainly, associated with my being a woman. Perhaps this was because I lived with a family instead of separately; this residence made me a "daughter" of the village. Or perhaps it was because the Arabs have a category of woman called "sister of men" – a natural role that a woman anthropologist could walk into, should she wish. I did exactly that.

In recent years anthropologists have focused on the empowered – government officials, the military, scientists, colonizers, marketing companies, surgeons, and others – connecting the lives of the empowered

with the peasants, workers in factories, the poor, the imprisoned, and the soldiers, and thereby clarifying how hierarchy embodies dominance. How the powerful rule is often remembered for centuries – or forgotten and then remembered again.

The Armenians who fled their genocide after World War I were taken in by Lebanon, among other countries, and remember being treated with dignity. The Ottoman Turks in Lebanon featured in well-known stories – humiliations and the taking of Lebanese harvests and other incidents are still remembered by Lebanese 90 years later. Yet today the Turkish government rallies behind the humanitarian attempts to free Gaza. That will be remembered by people of the area. Recalling the experience in Germany after World War I, anthropologists urged General MacArthur in Japan not to repeat the mistakes that were made then: "Do not humiliate the enemy," they cautioned. Human beings, probably everywhere, are sensitive to experiences of culture and dignity and easily note absences of respect. Minor humiliations add up over time, if not softened by mutual respect at other times.

Indignities

Recently I was in Brussels attending a conference on state management of diversity in Europe, a euphemism for how to deal with Islam in Europe. Distinguished lawyers representing most of the countries that make up the European Union were present. In addition, there were a few scholars from North Africa and the Levant and a handful of anthropologists of different nationalities. The subjects discussed mostly dealt with Islamic migrants from North Africa, the Middle East, and places as far away as Pakistan. This was a professional conference about a heated topic that had a passive agenda of flattening diversity. This intolerance of diversity erupted in emotional outbursts. The Spanish jurist heatedly declared, "We will not tolerate polygyny in Spain!" The anthropologist thinks, "Now what was that about?" Countries that tolerate mistresses (as with France's Mitterrand), multiple lovers (as with Italy's Berlusconi), and whatever else will not

tolerate legal Islamic plural marriage that comes with legal responsibilities? Numbers are of immediate interest. What percentage of Muslim migrants have more than one wife anyway, or could even afford the responsibilities that come with legal plural marriage? How many of these jurists understand the original logic behind the Muslim allowance of plural marriage in the context of a higher ratio of women to men because of male deaths in war, feuds, and the like? In 1961 the Shia village where I worked in south Lebanon had one case of plural marriage in a population of 1400 people – a man who had married his brother's wife after his brother died. The more the discussions continued, the more the conference began to function like a degradation ceremony for the visiting jurists from Lebanon and North Africa, as well as a reminder of European exceptionalism.

A Dutch anthropologist who had studied cultural diversity and state management issues in Peru broke down at the end of her talk, noting that a Dutch-born boy of Moroccan parents had no future in Holland. A heated discussion ensued when she was challenged by a Dutch legal colleague who had less sympathy for migrants, though they provided cheap labor in his country. I recall that the minister of immigration in Holland in the 1990s developed certain requirements for visa petitioners that included forcing them to view what some regarded as pornographic footage to determine whether they could blend in and be part of Dutch culture. The conference organizer was disturbed that I, as the chair, had allowed an argument about the pros and cons of managing migration to Holland. It was expected to be a harmonious conference. Conference discussions continued to be emotion-ridden when the question of the Muslim scarf in the context of French law surfaced. I have never understood the threat presented by covering the head with the "Muslim scarf." I recalled my field trip to Morocco in the summer of 1980. While staying in a tourist hotel with my two daughters, I watched French women in next-to-nude bathing suits, some even topless, who were totally oblivious of the incongruity of their mode of dresslessness, made the more blatant since it was in the middle of Ramadan. I heard waiters commenting in Arabic, but there were apparently no headlines in Moroccan newspapers about French nudity nor

any laws in existence forbidding it, although undoubtedly opinions were registered about shame.

It slowly occurred to me that this beautifully organized and well-funded Brussels conference, concerned with important issues regarding culture and immigration, had an unspoken agenda – the "civilizing process." It *was*, in fact, a degradation ceremony, the unstated idea being that immigrants should act like Europeans in order to be civilized. When I asked a Moroccan participant why he did not object, he responded, "Laura, we have to modernize." The other Arab guests were also polite participants, although not so acquiescent when speaking privately. However, when asked, an Egyptian judge quietly noted that legal education in Egypt entailed knowing about different legal cultures – village law, Bedouin law, customary law, religious law, along with state law – a tolerance for difference, or the importance of cultural context critical for deciding a case. His comment seemed to fall on deaf ears; it was anathema in the context of European state notions of the "rule of law." Representative legal professionals from countries who were insistent that one could not be European and Muslim at the same time were mainly from Spain, France, Belgium, Holland, and Denmark; the German and Italian jurists may have learned something from World War II about intolerance, bigotry, and genocide. Mind you, these conversations were among cosmopolitan participants, cosmopolitans who should have been sensitive to ideas of exceptionalism and the meaning of "the civilizing process." Ironically, these conversations were being conducted while Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo and bombings were ongoing background examples of humiliations emanating from the "civilized."

In the United States there was public outrage at the Abu Ghraib torture revelations at surface level, but little change followed the initial outrage. For the world-famous Colombian painter Botero it went further. He was traveling to Paris when the Abu Ghraib news appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*, and he could not shake himself of the horror in the photographs. He spent months in his Paris studio painting the horrors of Abu Ghraib. Upon completion, he could not find a single art museum in the United States that

would exhibit these works, and when, finally, the University of California at Berkeley accepted his offer, the exhibit was held not in the art museum but in the main library and solely thanks to the advocacy of two faculty members, two donors, and a head librarian who understood the importance of public viewing of torture horrors in order to diminish future possibilities for torture. Is there something about Euro–American ideas of culture and dignity that might help us understand such occurrences, or does it go beyond cultural niceties, being explicable only by ideas of cultural superiority? Is the refusal of a Botero exhibit about American denial, or about censorship, or both? Thousands of viewers came to see the exhibit and some reported that the paintings were even more powerful than the photos since Americans have become inured to violence in photographs. Perhaps the powers that be in the university art museum may have rationalized their refusal to exhibit by simply arguing that Botero's paintings were not real art.

In 2011 the United Nations authorized a no-fly zone in Libya, the American-led war in Afghanistan was in a quagmire, and the Iraq war seemed to be moving in the direction of permanent occupation with American bases and private mercenary security forces replacing American military. Meanwhile the drumbeat for war in Iran once again unleashed the old and tired words about Islamic peoples, myth-laden generalizations that have endured for centuries.

When in 2007 Columbia University president Lee C. Bollinger was faced with a speaking invitation to President Ahmadinejad of Iran (an invitation not of his making but for which he would have to account), he introduced him in a manner that violated the most basic expectations of civility – let alone dignity. Indeed, the introduction was not an introduction but an attack, a ten-minute verbal assault (Cooper, 2007). Bollinger called Ahmadinejad a petty and cruel dictator and, by the time he finished, could be seen as having contributed one more drumbeat for war in Iran. Bollinger missed an opportunity as an educator, let alone as a host. He failed to recognize injustice. He might have provided some history of the reasons Iran has had grievances against the United States, at least since the removal of Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953. He might have

mentioned the Iran–Contra affair and the taking of American hostages. He might have mentioned the American support of Iraq's war on Iran that cost the country over a million lives, and the constant threats and embargos by the United States government, often with the urgings of the Israel lobby, as any scholar, much less the president of a great university, should have done. It was political bigotry of the worst sort justified by Bollinger's support of free speech. Although Bollinger publicly upbraided the President of Iran, he had not upbraided his own warring President Bush in the name of freedom of speech and open debate. Ahmadinejad's response to these verbal attacks was dignified: in his country guests are customarily not treated in such an insulting manner by the host. "In Iran, tradition requires when we invite a person to be a speaker, we actually respect our students enough to allow them to make their own judgment, and don't think it necessary, before the speech is given even, to come in with a series of complaints to provide vaccination to the students and faculty" (Cooper, 2007). The civilized and the barbarian as public presentations.

The same year brought Islamo-Fascism Awareness Week, a nationwide event designated by the US conservative Freedom Center to "break through the barrier of politically correct doublespeak that prevails on American campuses, if you want to help our brave troops, who are fighting the Islamo-Fascists abroad" (Dowd, 2007). As part of the events, one quoted commentator upbraided feminists and Democrats: "The fact of Islamo-Fascism is indisputable; I find it tedious to detail the savagery of the enemy. . . . I want to kill them." The same commentator also said that Jews need to be "perfected" and that the country would be better off if everyone were Christian. There were also campus protests about the "demonization of Muslims," and one peace activist called the term Islamo-Fascism "beyond demagoguery," an agenda of "anti-Islamic hatred," while still others fanned the flames about the "gathering storm" of Islamic extremism and the ideology that motivates terrorist groups. By 2010 President Barack Obama was being criticized in the mainstream press for not conforming linguistically, for not using terms like Islamic Terrorism.

Introduction

The year 2010 brought yet another American public outcry in the controversy over the construction of an Islamic center and mosque near Ground Zero. Echoes of "freedom of religion" were shouted down by politicians and by those who lost relatives in the 9/11 attacks (in which Muslim lives were also lost). Republican ideologues like Newt Gingrich and Sarah Palin contributed to the bigotry. Even the academy was not immune. Harvard instructor Marty Peretz implied that Muslims were unworthy of the privileges of the First Amendment (Peretz, 2010). Hate words reappeared in populist and patriotic rhetoric. For some ground zero is a symbol of liberty – Islamophobia. Support for the proposed Islamic Center came from the Mayor of New York. In a speech on Governor's Island Michael Bloomberg called the project "as important a test of separation of church and state as any we may see in our lifetime, and it is critically important that we get it right" (Bloomberg, 2010) – a volatile situation once again indicating the ambivalence of Americans regarding our cherished ideals of diversity, tolerance, and equality.

The origin of the term Islamo-Facism is still unclear, but the most general meaning refers to the use of the faith of Islam as a cover for totalitarian ideology (Ali *et al.*, 2011). But wasn't it President George W. Bush who said in 2006 that "this nation is at war with Islamo-fascists who will use any means to destroy those of us who love freedom" (Bush, 2006)? Mind you, overthrow and imperialist invasions are in practice part of American foreign policy. Hatred is often driven by fear, real or imagined. Although this introduction is not the place to argue for any specific history of the different positions, I will mention that at least one history of the Middle East, by Robert Fisk (2007), concludes by observing that, given what the Middle East has endured from European and now Euro–American imperialism, it is astonishing just how much patience the Muslim world has had with the West.

In an astute commentary on "Colonialism East and West," Elizabeth and Robert Fernea (1997: 88–95) note differences: "Given our pride in our own colonial past, it is often difficult to relate to the Arab world's reactions to *their* colonial past: rage, shame, anger, the kinds of anger that erupted into protest marches, peasant

revolts, strikes, terrorism, and guerilla warfare, which culminated in conflicts far more violent than the struggle of colonial America in its revolution against the British." The colonialists – Ottoman, French, British, Italian, and Spanish – spoke different languages and, with the exception of the Ottomans, practiced a different religion. European missionary schools devalued indigenous institutions – law, religion, art, agriculture, and irrigation. Arabic became a liability for the upwardly mobile. Protest against the European presence continued after independence, only to increase with the American support of Israel and then wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in which religious tradition, pride in the arts and literature, and historical traditions became hallmarks in the search for dignity.

Thus, public hatred is often driven by fear, real or imagined, along with ideas of military and commercial dominance as engines of imperial wars. Some knowledge of the culture of the Other might help reduce the fear factor. Even a public intellectual like Barbara Ehrenreich in her critique of the Islamo-Fascists does not understand enough about Islamic women to be able to make her case about the status of women in Islamic countries, and writes as if no differences existed from one locale to another. Nor do such public intellectuals know much about the real place of women in the United States: just compare domestic violence statistics in the Arab world and the United States and differences evaporate. If 26% of Syrian husbands beat their wives (according to Amnesty International), it turns out that about 26% of American husbands also beat their partners (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000).

It has always interested me that comparisons with Others made by Americans, right or left, work with the assumption that conditions for American women are across the board better than in, say, the Arab world or almost anywhere else! In "Orientalism, Occidentalism, and the Control of Women" (Nader, 1989) I tried to clarify the assertions and counterassertions that have been part of East–West discourses at least since 1095 when Pope Urban II called for the crusades to liberate Jerusalem. Misleading cultural comparisons divert attention from the processes of control

in both the East and West. I wanted to identify how images of women in other societies can be prejudicial to women in one's own society. "If you think it's bad here just look at women *there*" can work in both directions. In the 1970s the US women's movement wanted at least equal pay, equal opportunity, and federally mandated maternity leave. We still don't have equal pay, although there may have been some improvement. And the same goes for the rest of our agenda. We did get sex, bare breasts, fake breasts, and bare legs along with the high rape rates in college dormitories. Or, put another way, women opted for personal and sexual rights rather than political, legal, or economic rights. Yet they are confident that American women are freer in every respect than women elsewhere, even though counterparts in the Middle East have had maternity leave and equal pay by law that I have never enjoyed.

"Orientalism, Occidentalism, and the Control of Women" extended Edward Said's observation that the Muslim world exists "for" the West to include the notion that the West also exists "for" the Islamic world, as comparing rape rates, absence of family supports, and more can serve to suggest that Islamic women are better off than their Western sisters. The contrast either way serves as an important means to restrict and control women's resistance. My conclusion noted that gender ideologies emerge not only as a product of internal debate over inequalities between males and females in a particular society, but also out of debates between the prevailing ideologies of different societies and different geographic areas. In other words, gender arrangements are complex wholes that can be related to macro-level distinctions between "us and them," often used to justify the horrors of war. The Afghan burqa was used by some pundits as "evidence" of the need to liberate Afghanistan in the buildup to the 2001 invasion.

In the West both government and business corporations have created and consolidated a cultural hegemony and disseminated it to their own population and to the Arab world by means of media, educational, and developmental organizations. During the George W. Bush era it was referred to as "winning the hearts and minds" of

Muslims, in the main through educational and job training efforts (Succarie, 2008). In the East, nationalisms and religious forces have been powerful agents in the construction of gender hegemony as well as in counterhegemonic efforts, often making things worse for women, as is presently happening in Saudi Arabia. By not discussing hegemonic systems as part of an interactive process between world areas, the Islamic world (as if it were one thing) is discriminated against by a more technologically dominant West because of the way we construct and stereotype their treatment of women. At the same time, a self-satisfied, incremental view of progress is perpetuated in the West that serves to divert attention from the varied mechanisms of gender control in Western Europe and the United States. Simply put, images of women in other societies reinforce norms of subordination of women in one's own society, as in "if you think it's bad here, look at the rape rate in the United States," or "look at honor killings in Syria" (compare those figures with husbands in the United States who kill their wives!). To understand the processes at work in acts of subordination, think about the assertions of commentators on Islamo-Fascism within this broader context. Both East and West are patriarchal; in both societies women are subordinated in different ways, irrespective of recent feminist waves that boast of progress. Some things get better (as in more women professors, doctors, lawyers) while qualitative issues may worsen (as in the high rate of rape for women on college campuses). According to Huang (2011: 1366), in 1974 the salary disparity between female and male scientists was as great as 32%, with women earning less. In 2009, statistical data from the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission showed that different minority groups and women in industry face a glass ceiling. In 2010 the UN World Bank gender index placed the United States eighty-fourth compared to other countries in a number of indices. At the recent 2011 Montreal American Anthropology meetings, Mondher Kilani (2011) pointed out that "whether uncovered in Tunisia or veiled in Bahrain, they [women] are present in the demonstrations that have shaken the Arab states from the Atlantic to the Gulf." He concluded: "All the Arab myths are in the process of collapsing."

Naturalizing Difference and the Great Transformation

One has only to think about the racial-problems and racial-solutions industries to recognize that difference is a major preoccupation of our time. Do-gooders have deeply invested in difference as a "problem." Such insistence forces me to ask, why? And when are differences not so overpowering? Some attribute the problem of difference to the development of nation-states, which also creates boundaries often defined by difference (see Norbert Elias, 1978). Along the same lines, others argue that while movement (migration) is nothing new, migration is considered a problem because of national obsessions with homogeneity; Latinos, for example, many of whom speak Spanish primarily not English, are now the largest ethnic group in California. What happens on the ground when nationals and migrants come together, especially given that European and American nationalists see themselves as by nature "tolerant"? Being "tolerant" implies that the problems must be of the migrants' making. People don't understand that industrial CEOs want these migrants because they provide cheap labor and, unlike European and US unionized workers, are comparatively acquiescent and are often hired to do work the Europeans or Americans do not want to do (*New York Times*, September 21, 2010). Furthermore, Mexican and Central Americans often migrate as the result of despotic conditions in their countries, often reinforced by US military and foreign policy.

With all this talk about difference, similarities between locals and migrants are not noticed. Both Europeans and foreigners in Europe share consumerist habits: they probably drink Coca-Cola or other soft drinks, use computers, watch TV, and follow corporate fashions. And we fail to recall that cosmopolitan centers like London have been multicultural since medieval times, before the arrival of Islam, and so have Paris, Madrid, Brussels, and other similar cities (Asad, 1990; especially notes 4–7).

Contrast Europe's contemporary problems with Islamic immigrants with the situation in the Islamic East where co-existence has

been constructed as an ideal, probably to ensure the survival of the whole (Nader, 2006). Medieval Spain is touted as a time and place where Muslims, Christians, and Jews traded and made extraordinary contributions to art and literature (Menocal, 2002; Lowney, 2005). Today, the Damascus market is divided into three sections: Muslim, Jewish, and Christian. In such contexts segregation works. Ethnic communities can and do co-exist. In the cities they co-existed in quarters designated by sect although not by class. The Ottoman Empire, which lasted 500 years, had minority self-government in areas of law and religion.

When relations get difficult, it is important to recognize the assets that migrants and intermingling bring, in aesthetic taste, culinary traditions, ideas in science and engineering. And it is useful to remember that centuries of reverse-immigration, from Europe to the Middle East, were inspired by wars, trade, colonialism, or pilgrim traffic. North African seaports had heterogeneous populations owing to the immigration of hundreds of thousands of Frenchmen, Spaniards, Italians, and Greeks. In 1907, 25% of the population of Alexandria and 28% of Port Said were foreign citizens (Issawi, 1969: 108–109). Difference became the norm.

And so it is that most Europeans, because their knowledge of such history is limited, have no sense of payback when North Africans move to European cities. And most immigrants, because *their* knowledge is limited, do not understand that Europeans themselves are coping with the European Union's erasure of differences within Europe itself. But European CEOs understand full well that "normative blindness" is congenial for the bottom line. The two conversations about difference and cultural intermingling should be intertwined in a world filled with social engineering of a neo-liberal sort – the movement of capital investment and labor across national boundaries and the concomitant creation of a pool of high youth unemployment and other issues that go beyond cultural or religious differences.

My essays are also an attempt to put on the front burner what might not be obvious, as in institutions created by corporate capitalism and religious fundamentalisms, both in the United States

and in the Arab world, where children and their parents often needlessly suffer ruptures. We call them generation gaps. Increasingly and urgently the challenge is to assess the externalities, the hidden consequences, social and environmental, of corporate capitalism, to understand what is happening in this runaway world. Corporate capitalism is a different kind of capitalism with critical and immediate impact for the intimate environment of families and children. President Wilson saw it as diplomacy. There is no such agreement by the people impacted. Assessments are needed that will reach the business world. Making connections is not just for the victims of untrammeled actions; it is for leaders as well, leaders who may recognize that they suffer from a "normative blindness" that promotes a culture of denial of the social consequences of business practices.

There is too much hubris in the world; we need more eye-to-eye exchange. Sometimes it is useful to travel back in time, to look in the mirror and see ourselves. Chapter 2 of this book, "From Rifa' ah al-Tahtawi to Edward Said: Lessons in Culture and Dignity," indicates what can be learned by adopting a frame of mutual respect. In this regard, both al-Tahtawi and Said, and other Arab thinkers that I include, reject a lens embedded in hierarchy, in positional superiority. After all, they might say, we are all humans, are we not? Both Said and al-Tahtawi rejected the idea that *ipso facto* one culture or people is better than another. Their writings challenge what was (and still is) so prevalent: nineteenth-century European unilineal evolution that ordered a staging of humankind into savagery, barbarism, and civilization, with European culture as the top stage – "civilization." No people or culture has a monopoly on wisdom, or greed, or violence, although at any one point in time some people have more *might* than others. But might need not be equated with superior or worldly possibilities, even though the uses of power, especially power backed by technological destructions, could determine the possibilities for human survival.

Although understanding difference is important, when difference is not set within overall frames of humanness it can be fraught with prejudice of a dangerous kind. Raphael Patai's book *The Arab Mind* (1973) is of particular contemporary relevance because it eschews

variation in favor of homogenous and stereotypic generalizations – a means of dehumanizing Arabs. Thus, devoid of nuance and subtlety, stereotypes about privacy and sexuality were used by the American military in training soldiers for combat in Iraq as well as for torture inside the walls of prisons like Abu Ghraib. Anthropologists like Patai have no monopoly on what amounts to racist generalizations (Gonzalez, 2010: 95–96). Historians adopt the same postures. Even *Arabs*, by Anthony Nutting (1963), as good a history as it may be, ends the story with tired words like "emotional," "irrational," and "violent," to characterize a whole people – though it notes that the Irish have similar characteristics! It does not help that Nutting adds that both peoples have charm, a sense of humor, and so forth. In times of crises like wars those adjectives go by the wayside. He could have mentioned, for example, that both Arabs and the Irish have endured colonialism, or that the Europeans managed a 100-year war from 1336 to 1453, perennially fighting with one another.

Comparison, Ethnography, and History

Comparison can become not only an overt method but also an issue to face, depending on whether it is explicit or implicit (Nader, 1994). In Chapter 2 a famous traveler is front and center of my presentation. He is Rifa' ah al-Tahtawi, a man of the first third of the nineteenth century, whose stay in Paris followed Napoleon's conquest of Egypt in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The French stay in Egypt was short, but of enormous consequence for Egyptians, who were vulnerable to the greater military might of the Europeans. As the writings of al-Tahtawi and others of his period indicate, these travelers wrote about Europe in the same way they wrote about their own and nearby Asian peoples, open to the wonders before them. The purpose of their writings was to describe what they were observing. Al-Tahtawi's book was first published in 1836, but did not appear in an English translation until 2004.

Al-Tahtawi, who spent over half a decade living with the French in Paris, tries to differentiate one French habit from another; he

comments on French cleanliness or the handling of dead bodies, noting the variations within the culture while also comparing the French with the Egyptians. But what he speaks to is the human condition – going beyond the French and the Egyptians as people to note their military organization and their developments in science as well. If we say that Arabs don't treat their women well, there is the implicit assumption that we do better, an assumption that is being challenged by both Western and Eastern scholars (Nader, 1989). If we say that Arabs are violent people, we seem to deny that the military-industrial complex in the United States is an indicator of violence, not nonviolence. For simple comparison we should encourage the "as compared to what?" question: emotional and irrational as compared with whom, or what, and under what conditions? For mutual understanding the implicit should be made explicit. This activist stance is not the same as relativism, nor does it imply that anything goes. It is simply giving recognition to the eye that sees.

Chapter 3 focuses on "Ethnography as Theory: On the Roots of Controversy in Anthropology," on the unstated rules both of the profession and of the wider society that sponsors anthropological research. The ethnographic examples selected are those of creative ethnographic works that violate one or another of the unstated consensuses that define the role of ethnography sometimes with consequences for the ethnographer. "Work within the system," "don't step on any toes," or "don't ask a novel question," and consideration of "historical realities" are among the issues oppressing those concerned with scientific creativity. What happens when unstated rules are stated and how does this affect the knowledge the readers have of other peoples? In such cases representations become a political act whether or not this is the intention of the writer. "Ethnography as Theory" addresses ethnography as something beyond "just description" or "my opinion," an anthropological method that makes possible a more or less adequate understanding of others and ourselves. Its influence on the sister disciplines of sociology, history, geography, and psychology has been stunning. Ethnography is a special kind of description and embedded in ethnographic activity is a theory of description itself. Ethnographies

are composed of more than one method, which is partly the point – we observe, we count, we analyze documents, we embed in history, we compare anything that is useful in composing an adequate theory of how the lives of people work. There has been an enormous lack of understanding about what ethnography is, both in and out of anthropology, which has been partly responsible for its fashionable and widespread acceptance not only in the social sciences but also in literary exploration. But a weekend retreat or just hanging out is not what makes an adequate ethnography, nor is just a qualitative bias, nor is counting or analyzing law cases, nor is embedding with the military. Eclecticism is at the core of ethnographic method and theory, but so is an ethical stance – to do no harm. This is the crucial question now. Do we tell it like it is, warts and all, with respect to both the weak and the empowered? To do no harm has been the basis for debate on the role of anthropologists embedded with the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan (Gonzalez, 2009). Who does the anthropologist represent? In addition, there is the unstated consensus on what constitutes harm.

In anthropology there have been varieties of ethnographies, and no one country or political context has produced a single model. Studying a people at war is not the same as studying people in a peaceful paradise or in some kind of transitional situation. However, in this period of self-consciousness, or what some call navel-gazing anthropology, there has been some recognition of the influence of colonialisms on the anthropologist in the past and present, and the same would be true for neocolonialism or neoliberalism as well. The eye that sees has come under scrutiny – the self-trained ethnographer, the museum-trained or academic university-trained ethnographer, and the British, Brazilian, American, or Japanese ethnographer all reflect a combination of personal, societal, cultural, and theoretical influences. Ethnographic theory enters in precisely because, although ethnography is the central product of the work of the sociocultural anthropologists, anthropologists themselves realize how tainted any of our methodologies will be and so the results are subject to criticism. This is a recognition that knowledge is not neutral – neither in anthropology,

nor in physics or biology. Humility must be our contribution to a world filled with hubris. Our knowledge, precious as it might be, is always partial, never complete.

Chapter 4, on the control of women in Islamic and Western patriarchies, introduces the uses that can be made of a comparative consciousness (Nader, 1994), an awareness of asking "as compared to what?" thereby expanding the context of an assertion such as "Islamic women are badly treated." The motivating question "as compared to what?" led to "Orientalism, Occidentalism and the Control of Women," which, incidentally, was accepted immediately for publication in Belgium after agonizing critiques in the United States. It was my best effort to explain the controlling dynamics of power over women in two patriarchal societies. For those who thought Islamic patriarchy's control of women was total, the Arab Spring of 2011 challenged the usual stereotypes of downtrodden Islamic women better than any academic work has been able to do.

In Chapter 5, I address "Corporate Fundamentalism: Constructing Childhood in America and Elsewhere," for what can be of greater concern to all of us than the fate of our children? I highlight connections that are seemingly hidden from public view, both in the United States, where corporate consumerist movements had their origins, and in the Arab world. In an earlier piece (Nader, 1980), I reiterated what others have said: parents who in earlier periods had both power over and responsibility for their children find themselves in a double bind with increasing responsibility and decreasing power to raise their own children.

Chapter 6, "Culture and the Seeds of Nonviolence in the Middle East," examines the various violent contexts that erupted and the techniques of conflict resolution that were invented over centuries prior to Western colonialism to deal with differences within and between religious sects, between tribes and settled people, or between urban and rural peoples. The dynamics are such that facile stereotyping is of little help in governing secular or religious states, or in predicting behavior.

Chapter 7, "Normative Blindness and Unresolved Human Rights Issues: The Hypocrisy of Our Age," and Chapter 8, "Breaking the

Silence: Politics and Professional Autonomy," on unresolved human rights issues, highlight the need for less ethnocentric dimensions in the definition of what human rights violations are. Like Chapter 4 on "Orientalism, Occidentalism, and the Control of Women," "Normative Blindness and Unresolved Human Rights Issues" was first published in Brazil owing to the very ethnocentric problem described in it. The "Breaking the Silence" chapter, written a week before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, is a continuation of the theme: what is an acceptable anthropology in a world of dominant hegemonies in the academy? The final chapter, "Lessons," indicates what might be learned about the Arab world and ourselves from applying the methods of comparison, ethnography, and history in the craft of anthropology, and suggests strategies for new directions.

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