

*'Girls say yes to boys who say no':
Four Artists Refigure the Sex War
on Terror*

Siona Wilson

'Girls say yes to boys who say no': Four Artists Refigure the Sex War on Terror

Siona Wilson

1. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011011-7.html>.

2. There has been a good deal of critical writing addressed to this problematic term. Two important feminist responses are: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Terror: A Speech After 9-11', *Boundary 2*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2004, pp. 81–111 and Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York and London: Verso, 2004). Here I use the term more or less straightforwardly as a way of making reference to a range of US government policies and their ongoing international effects that have defined the post-9/11 era: the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Guantánamo Bay detention centre, the Abu Ghraib prison torture scandal, and the Patriot Act.

3. Quoted in Lila Abu-Lughod, 'Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and its Others', *American Anthropologist*, vol. 104, no. 3, 2002, p. 784.

4. For a discussion of the staging of US feminism as freedom to consume see Abu-Lughod 'Do Muslim Women', p. 789.

5. Though not specifically addressed to gender issues, Stephen Eisenman has published an excellent book that interrogates the peculiar art-historical silence regarding the images that came out of Abu Ghraib. A silence that is all the more remarkable, as Eisenman so carefully argues, given the striking familiarity that many of these images have with standard works from the western canonical tradition. Stephen Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007).

6. Retort, *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 28. In addition to Clark, the other members of Retort who were involved in writing this text are Iain Boal, Joseph Matthews, and Michael Watts.

One month after the attacks of 11 September 2001 President George W. Bush issued a White House press statement addressed to the recent United States invasion of Afghanistan in which he made passing reference to Muslim women as 'women of cover'.¹ This seemingly casual invocation of the American feminist term 'women of color' presaged what would soon become a significant mobilisation of feminism as part of the ideology of the so-called War on Terror.² A month later, and with the Afghan invasion in full swing, the First Lady Laura Bush made her first serious political speech. In a radio address to the nation, she offered feminist politics as the humanitarian alibi that accompanied the invasion of Afghanistan. 'Because of our recent military gains in much of Afghanistan', the First Lady asserted, 'women are no longer imprisoned in their homes. They can listen to music and teach their daughters without fear of punishment' and so as not to mince her words, she went on to boldly state, 'the fight against terrorism is also the fight for the rights and dignity of women'.³ The American media was soon saturated with images and accounts of 'women of cover' being liberated in the name of feminism's very first emancipatory ideals: the right to vote, to be educated, to work outside the home etc., to pursue feminism as equal rights. Not to mention the more familiar capitalist appropriation of egalitarian feminism, the all-important, all-American right to shop.⁴

While feminists were quick to respond to and critically interrogate the use of the figure of woman to oil the wheels of the War on Terror, art historians have been generally less well attuned to the specific gender dynamics operating therein.⁵ One of the most widely influential and much lauded theoretical responses to the post-9/11 era that has registered within art historical circles is the book *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* by Retort, a San Francisco-based collective that includes among its members the art historian T.J. Clark. This book, while addressed in part to the new post-9/11 visual regime, is utterly silent on the issue of gender and the immediate mobilisation of the figure of the veiled woman as armour for a new benevolent sovereignty. With an opening chapter that appeals to the Situationist-derived theoretical terrain of spectacle and image-regimes, Retort argues that the image-event of 9/11 proved that 'control over the image is now the key to social power'.⁶ While this point is powerfully and convincingly argued, Retort's analysis makes no mention of the figure of woman as the alibi par excellence of spectacle. Moreover, one of the few images reproduced in the pages of *Afflicted Powers*, though not in fact discussed, shows a New York Times photograph of a group of Iraqi women at an anti-war protest in Baghdad. The two most prominent figures in this image are wearing headscarves. But the aggressive mobilisation by the Bush administration and its allies of the image of the liberated 'woman of cover' is given no commentary by these diagnosticians

of the new post-9/11 visual regime. Instead the traditional photojournalistic image is simply offered as a silent rebuke to the Bush strategy. Retort replaces photographs of 'liberated' Afghani women with protesting Iraqi women.

Despite the lack of textual commentary, this image performs a complex task within the pages of *Afflicted Powers*. On the one hand, the image perhaps claims to reverse the distinction between emancipated white women and unfree brown women, an allegory of empire that continues in many different benevolent forms today.⁷ In a straightforward reversal of this imperialist view, the photograph asserts itself as transparent evidence of the agency of women of the global south. Nonetheless, Retort's apparently feminist gesture is undone by the way in which this image resonates with a familiar European tradition of images of militant women – from Marianne to the Situationist International's *détourned* comics and girlie pictures. The lineage of these political images of 'woman' are not connected with feminist struggles, but rather they are a powerfully affective means by which sexual difference is put to work as part of a class struggle. This is a position that is in tune with *Afflicted Powers*, given that the stake of Retort's argument is the capitalist state. But the point about the sexual identity of these protesting women is embedded in a textual silence that is articulated by means of the strategic use of a complex image, and not by recourse to an argued point of view.

One year prior to the publication of *Afflicted Powers*, the gender stakes in the debate about the value of the image and the power of the prevailing image regime were sharply raised. The war in Iraq has produced a different kind of focus on the image of woman, who is no longer presented only as the victim of draconian oppressors. American female soldiers, liberated so 'fully' that they can serve in the traditionally masculine arena of the military, now appear as the new perpetrators of shocking war atrocities. With this turn of events, the figure of woman has taken on a complex and ambivalent position, shifting uncomfortably between alibi and aggressor.⁸ Although both uses of woman have operated predominantly at a visual level, the more recent emergence of a range of startling and disturbing images of sexualised female aggression are somewhat less familiar. While there have been a number of challenging and thoughtful artistic responses to the war in Iraq, this essay is addressed to work that takes account of the centralisation of the figure of woman and the appropriation of feminism within a more broadly conceived War on Terror. Recent works by Coco Fusco, Martha Rosler, Thomas Hirschhorn, and Sharon Hayes each identify the shifting and ambivalent place of sexuality and sexual difference as a central concern. In relation to the work of Fusco, Rosler and Hirschhorn I explore the challenges this neo-imperialist appropriation of feminism poses to a feminist anti-war politics and the ways in which these artists demonstrate a profound displacement of the familiar gender tropes of an anti-war art. Rather than seeing this shift as a straightforward reversal of the more common paternalistic idea of female victims, these works reveal that the transformation in the gender politics of the War on Terror brings about a profound mutation in representations of the relationship between sex, love, and war. Two recent performances by Sharon Hayes reflect anew upon this gendered reconfiguration, and in the concluding section of the essay I suggest that this work offers an important meditation on a new feminist politics of peace. After the widely disseminated photographs of Lynndie England's sado-masochistic torture scenes, 'make love not war'

7. See Chandra Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse', *Feminist Review*, no. 30, 1988. For a historical view see Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: the Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis and London: Minnesota University Press, 1993).

8. Note that the frontispiece image for Retort's *Afflicted Powers* is the only iconic Abu Ghraib picture that *doesn't* include women soldiers, the so-called hooded figure. For an interesting discussion of this image see W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Sacred Gestures: Images from our Holy War', *Afterimage*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2006, pp. 18–23.



Fig. 1. 8:16 p.m., Oct. 24, 2003. The detainee “GUS” has a strap around his neck. The detainee is being pulled from his cell as a form of intimidation. CPL GRANER is taking the picture. SOLDIER: PFC ENGLAND, 2003, Abu Ghraib, digital photograph. (Photo: image in public domain)

9. *Trio A* was first performed in 1966.

and other such stock peace movement slogans appear in a new light, no longer seeming to have the oppositional force they once did (Fig. 1).

Coco Fusco

The 1960s rhetoric of sexual freedom as an antidote to militarism is, nonetheless, still present within today’s anti-war movement. This powerful idea is not quite so easy to cast off. Its origins are in the Vietnam era, which posited a sensual body of pleasure, a ‘liberated’ body to counteract the spectacularised bodily violence enacted overseas and ever present in the world media. Take for example, the striking comparison between the photograph documenting Yayoi Kusama’s performance *Naked Happening: Orgy and Flag Burning* (1968) and Huynh Công (Nick) Ut’s iconic image *Napalm Attack* (1972) (Figs 2 and 3). Kusama’s ‘happening’ was framed as an anti-war event, and the bodies on display assert their message of sensual freedom all the more loudly because of their ordinary appearance. The nudity of the frail young girl in Ut’s photograph, however, reinforces her vulnerability, which also serves to heighten the moral outrage that the image is designed to provoke. At the 1970 anti-war and anti-censorship event, the Judson Flag Show, Yvonne Rainer presented a non-synchronised group performance of her best known dance *Trio A*.⁹ In this performance, the disciplining of the soldier’s body found its perfect counterpart in

the male *and* female dancer's body. Rainer's performers were nude except for the presence of an American flag tied around their necks. When compared with the parade ground manoeuvres that drafted soldiers were required to learn, this version of *Trio A* demonstrates the dancers' aesthetic discipline in opposition to the military's instrumental discipline. The shared reference to the US flag only reinforces this point all the more clearly. Moreover, *Trio A* is a dance that Rainer claims she can teach anyone to perform.¹⁰

But in our present climate, Nancy Spero's *War* series (1966–1970) now seems like an uncanny prefiguration of the more recent combination of sex and violence (Fig. 4). Spero's presentation of both male and female sexuality as militarised aggression was unique for the 1960s, which is perhaps why this work has only recently begun to receive its critical due.¹¹ But the present day idea of woman as the perpetrator of spectacularised acts of aggression is so challenging to the more dominant 1960s models precisely because it mobilises a particular *feminist* politics: the politics of equal rights and emancipation.

Coco Fusco's 2006 performance *A Room of One's Own: Women and Power in the New America* astutely diagnoses our current situation. Drawing on knowledge of the actual strategies used by the military, Fusco presents a straightforward reversal of the 1960s model of liberation and puts the problem of the appropriation of feminism-as-equal-rights centre stage. This is feminism in its most familiar political form. Based on the liberal tradition of human rights, women are asserted as equal subjects before the law in economic, social, and cultural terms. The *mise-en-scène* for this performance is a 'typical military briefing', with Fusco playing the part of a military interrogator (Fig. 5).¹² As soldiers in the US military, women have the equal right to die for their country, but are also equally enabled to kill and torture.¹³ Fusco presents egalitarian feminism at its extreme and as such she highlights the dangers of such an approach. Or, put in the words of Luce Irigaray, 'women must of course continue to struggle for equal wages and social rights, against discrimination in employment and education, and so forth. But that is not enough: women merely "equal" to men would be "like them," therefore not women. Once more, the difference between the sexes would be in that way canceled out, ignored, papered over'.¹⁴ Fusco's parodic celebration of women's equality means taking on the most egregious masculine qualities, becoming 'like them' in the worst possible sense. Virginia Woolf's plea for the necessity of women's economic independence – a room of one's own – finds its monstrous form in the female torturer's cell. Or, as this female Interrogator asserts: 'The struggle for democracy is being waged by women plying their trade in rooms just as Woolf imagined'.¹⁵ Fusco stages a typical misreading of Woolf – the idea that she was arguing merely for economic equality – as informing and excusing the role of women as torturers. Fusco thereby reveals the (mis-) use of feminism by those who deploy it with insufficient imaginative reach. But more than this, at a philosophical level, this work suggests some of the underlying dangers of a feminism solely defined in egalitarian terms.

Standing at a podium Fusco – 'the Interrogator' – uses a double screen projection as visual support for her argument about the great advances that women have made in the military (Fig. 6). On one screen she runs a power-point presentation, the now conventional form for such a military briefing, and on the other screen we see live CCTV footage of a hooded



Fig. 2. Yayoi Kusama, *Anti-war Happening*, at the Brooklyn Bridge, N.Y. 1968, performance on Brooklyn Bridge, New York. (Photo: Yayoi Kusama Studio.)



Fig. 3. Huynh Công Ut *Napalm Attack*, silver gelatin print, 1972. (Photo: Nick Ut/Associated Press.)

10. Janet Biggs' recent dual-screen video installation *Performance of Desire* (2007) repeats this gesture in a more explicit way. She juxtaposes two female synchronized swimmers with two soldiers performing a dress parade. In divergence from Rainer, Biggs emphasizes the fetishistic similarity between the two kinds of gender-specific display.

11. See Mignon Nixon, 'Spero's Curses', *October*, no. 122, autumn 2007, pp. 3–30, for an excellent psychoanalytic reading of this work.

12. Coco Fusco, 'Pieces: *A Room of One's Own: Women and Power in the New America*' *TDR: The Drama Review*, vol. 52, no. 1 (spring 2008), p. 140. In addition to undertaking substantial scholarly research on recent torture and interrogation strategies, Fusco also participated in a weekend training program with Team Delta, a private interrogation-training workshop run by ex-CIA personnel. This experience is



Fig. 4. Nancy Spero *Female Bomb*, 1966, Gouache and ink on paper, 86.4 x 68.6 cm © Nancy Spero. (Photo: Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York.)

recorded in Fusco's video *Operation Atropos* (2006), and discussed in an interview with one of Team Delta's members, Mike Ritz, see Coco Fusco, 'Pieces', pp. 153–9.

13. While women soldiers are not in fact permitted to serve in combat zones, because of the situation of urban insurgent violence that has become the everyday norm in Iraq, designated areas of combat are no longer clearly demarcated. As a result the death toll of American female military personnel is significant.

14. Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithica, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 166. Also see Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithica, Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1985). For a historically informed theoretical elaboration of the pitfalls at both extremes – of women's sexual difference and sexual equality – see Julia Kristeva 'Women's Time', *Signs*, vol. 7, no. 1, autumn 1981, pp. 5–12.

15. Fusco, 'Pieces', p. 143. The full script for the performance has been published here.

16. Seymour Hersh, *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib* (New York: Harpers Collins, 2004) and Alfred McCoy, *The Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006).

17. Fusco, 'Pieces', p. 152.

18. See Barbara Finlay, *George W. Bush and the War on Women: Turning Back the Clock on Progress* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2006).

19. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the*

prisoner in a cell wearing the signature Guantánamo orange jump suit. The Interrogator recounts a narrative of the use of female sexuality as a specific strategy of interrogation, but this briefing is periodically interrupted with Fusco leaving the stage to harass the prisoner. The inclusion of CCTV footage, Fusco explains in her 'Artist's Statement', is also conventionally used by the military to showcase interrogation techniques to visitors at facilities such as Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib. Likewise the specific strategies of sexual humiliation described and illustrated in Fusco's *A Room of One's Own*, such as women interrogators removing their shirts, rubbing their breasts against prisoners, and even smearing prisoners with fake menstrual blood have all been documented as CIA approved strategies implemented in Guantánamo.¹⁶ In her juxtaposition of statements such as 'the strategic deployment of female interrogators represents a giant leap for womankind' with 'one of the principal goals in bringing democracy to Afghanistan has been to liberate Afghan women' Fusco draws an explicit connection between the female torturer and Bush's mobilisation of 'women of cover'.¹⁷ She thus highlights the underlying connection between these two different uses of egalitarian feminism as a central part of the ideology of the War on Terror.

This focus on rights for women overseas might seem to be a peculiar strategy for a regime that has instigated a massive rollback of women's rights at home and is clearly no friend to feminism.¹⁸ When viewed in light of a longer history of imperialism, however, this strategy does not seem quite so strange. Postcolonial feminists have amply documented the many instances of the uses of egalitarian feminism to further imperialist projects, thus offering a different perspective from which to question universalising appeals to women's equality. In relation to the outlawing of widow sacrifice in nineteenth-century colonial India, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has offered the pithy formula, 'white men are saving brown women from brown men'.¹⁹ But Leila Ahmed's account of early twentieth-century colonial Egypt offers a quite uncanny precedent for Bush's 'women of cover', since with this example, as with the French campaign in Algeria 50 years later, the focus is on the veil as the symbol of oppression. Like Bush with the so-called 'women of cover', the fin-de-siècle campaign to 'liberate' Egyptian women – and to morally justify the on-going British colonial project – was loudly supported by the British Consul-General to Egypt, Lord Cromer, who at the same time maintained an equally vocal opposition to women's suffrage back home.²⁰ The latest neo-imperial use of egalitarian feminism is therefore also a very old story, and not inconsistent with the sustained attack on women's rights Stateside in the eight years of the Bush administration.

In her turn to the sexual politics of interrogation Fusco marks a decisive shift away from the Vietnam-era anti-war politics that marked her generation's coming of age.²¹ In this regard *A Room of One's Own* is bitterly anti-nostalgic. Fusco reverses the terms of the widely distributed 1968 anti-war poster that gives the present essay its title (Fig. 7). It features the folk singer Joan Baez and her two sisters who declare that 'girls say yes to boys who say no'. The draft is what 'the boys' say no to, as the text along the bottom of the poster tells us. It reads: 'Proceeds from the sale of this poster go to the Draft Resistance'. This poster is emblematic of the ambivalent gender politics of the 1960s with female sexual freedom offered as a reward for peace, or at least for non-participation in war. But here women's participation in the anti-war struggle is restricted to being a



Fig. 5. Coco Fusco, *A Room of One's Own: Women and Power in the New America*, performance at P.S. 122, New York, 2006. (Photo: Eduardo Aparicio.)



Fig. 6. Coco Fusco, *A Room of One's Own: Women and Power in the New America*, performance at P.S. 122, New York, 2006. (Photo: Kambui Olumiji.)

Vanishing Present (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 284. Spivak notes the double bind in this instance – she cannot be *against* the outlawing of widow sacrifice by the colonial authorities, despite the self-consolidating paternalism that underpinned the British attitude. More recently Spivak has addressed a comparable double bind in relation to the War on Terror, see Spivak, ‘Terror’.

20. Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 144–68.

21. For a more autobiographical account of the motivations for *A Room of One's Own* with a detailed discussion of her reference to Woolf's feminist text see Coco Fusco, *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008). In addition to two essays by Fusco, this short book includes the script of the adapted version of *A Room of One's Own* given at the Museum of Modern Art's 2007 conference *Feminist Futures*, as well as reproductions of the drawings by Dan Turner of female interrogators that were presented in the performance.



Fig. 7. *Girls Say yes to Boys who Say no*, 1968, poster. (Photo: Jim Marshall.)

22. Coco Fusco, Liam Gillick, and Simon Leung made explicit reference to the nostalgic tone of the questions. But this issue also clearly underpins the responses of Claire Bishop, T.J. Demos, Hannah Feldman, and others. See *October*, no. 123, winter 2008.

sexual prize, which can be read as an inversion of the sexual violence that frequently accompanies conquering armies. As if this were a replacement for the sexual ‘rewards’ of military conquest, Baez and her sisters, on behalf of all ‘groovy chicks’, volunteer their sexual acquiescence to men who are willing to forego their military duty. (Is this so far from the Situationist *détournement* of the pin-up, putting revolutionary slogans and the promise of sexual reward onto the same plane, the silent palimpsest that permits Retort’s undiscussed reproduction of the photograph of women protesters in Baghdad?)

As Fusco’s performance imagines it, egalitarian feminism is now being mobilised as a sadistic weapon, while at the same time the defense of women remains an ongoing humanitarian alibi for American military intervention. The 1960s idea of sexual liberation – however flawed it may have been – has now been appropriated and sold back to us as a ‘sexually liberated’ militarism. This cynical appropriation of a 1960s language of peace, I argue, poses significant new challenges for artists (and activists) committed to an anti-war politics.

Martha Rosler

The spectre of the ‘political’ 1960s has for some time been a dominant reference point in contemporary art. Notable examples of artists who have evoked the 1960s since 9/11 include Sam Durant in his charcoal drawings of protest demonstrations, Sharon Hayes in her solo restaging of various protests including the Civil Rights-era sanitation worker’s strike, *In the Near Future*, *New York* (2005), Mary Kelly’s photographic re-presentation of early feminist demonstrations, *Flashing Nipple Remix* (2005), *Flashing Nipple Remix* (2005) and *WLM Demo Remix* (2005), and Harrell Fletcher’s *The American War* (2005), a photographic transplantation of the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. In the winter 2008 questionnaire format issue of the journal *October*, titled *In What Ways Have Artists, Academics, and Cultural Institutions Responded to the US-led Invasion and Occupation of Iraq?*, so many commentators challenged the nostalgia that lay behind the questionnaire’s comparison with the Vietnam-era anti-war movement that these criticisms ended up becoming a refrain.²² While the aforementioned 1960s-themed projects are certainly not all guilty of nostalgia, this has been an issue with certain responses to the war in Iraq. Rirkrit Tiravanija and Mark di Suvero’s restaging of the once controversial 1966 *Artists’ Tower Against the War in Vietnam* at the 2006 Whitney Biennial is one high profile example. This recreated protest sculpture assemblage was willingly sheltered beneath the eaves of the museum and remained unconcerned with the recent shift in the gendering of war. But the appropriation of a feminist politics of equal rights in order to oil the wheels of the War on Terror must necessarily realign any functional politics of peace. Martha Rosler’s 2004 *Bringing the War Home (House Beautiful)*, a self-referential repetition of her own 1960s work of the same title, opens out some of these problems for us.

Rosler’s original *Bringing the War Home* series of 1967–1972 roundly rejected the dominant 1960s make-love-not-war approach to anti-war imaging. This series of images directly addresses the function of representation during the Vietnam era when images of conflict saturated the media. The war was *brought home* through the use of TV propaganda. In response, Rosler deployed the early twentieth-century technique of

photomontage in order to juxtapose scenes of high-end domestic consumerism with overseas imagery of combat (Fig. 8). Attuned to questions of sexual difference the first time around, this 1960s series finds American female domesticity placed into jarring juxtaposition with the foreign female victims overseas and their male American aggressors. 'Woman' is positioned on the one hand as the victim of American male aggression and on the other as representative of the American lifestyle that is being protected. In the 2004 series, photomontage is also used and the juxtapositions presented bring together home-front consumerism with overseas conflict. But in the 2004 work female figures represent both American domesticity *and* American aggression, signifying a collapsing of the boundaries that were ideologically important in the 1960s (Fig. 9). And because of her presentation of wounded male US soldiers the category of 'victim' has also been complicated (Fig. 10). This is likewise the case with the domestic realm, which is no longer identifiably American-specific, but is a globalised space of luxury consumerism. Rosler's appropriated advertising images include catwalk models, personal accessories such as mobile phones, as well as updated versions of the luxury home furnishings of the earlier series (Fig. 11).

The artist's impetus for undertaking this series rested on a disturbing feeling of *déjà vu* about the war in Iraq. The public's apparent indifference reminded Rosler of the response to the war in Vietnam.²³ Many commentators have noted other points of repetition with these two wars, but the subject of this paper is addressed as much to the instances of reversal as to repetition and the implications of this for gender. Rosler's 2004 *Bringing the War Home* opens up this issue with the inclusion of the iconic image of Lynn die England. While these works mark the shift from the 1960s to the present, they are only able to gesture towards the complex ongoing ideological function of these new images of female aggression. Perhaps this is due to Rosler's decision to ground her sense of *déjà vu* repetition in the cut and paste technique rather than deploy new modes of image technology.²⁴ But now the function of the image seems to have changed quite significantly.

This is an issue addressed by Nicholas Mirzoeff in his recent book *Watching Babylon: The War in Iraq and Global Visual Culture* where he argues for a performative understanding of the image. Rather than adding one more voice to, as he puts it, the 'ritual "exposure" of media images of the war as unrepresentative', Mirzoeff addresses the way in which the presence of embedded media, the spectacular 'live' coverage of the 'shock and awe' bombing of Iraq, and the centralisation of Guantánamo as a state sanctioned 'wild zone' all contribute to a new 'visualized model of reactionary globalization'.²⁵ Moreover his concern is with the kinds of 'visual subjects' that this produces.²⁶ Indeed Rosler's use of the photomontage technique juxtaposes the elements of what Mirzoeff describes as the 'vernacular watching' of these events. This he defines as a kind of distracted attention, which is specifically located in the American suburban experience and that includes 'looking, not looking, listening, not listening, eating, making a phone call, working, doing laundry, child care, reading and so on'.²⁷ In Rosler's 2004 *Bringing the War Home* (Figs 9–11), note for example the excited figures holding mobile phones with 'shock and awe' footage in the background, the luxury kitchen saturated with disturbing media images, and the over-sized flat screen TV in the suburban McMansion. Moreover, when these latter two examples are seen



Fig. 8. Martha Rosler, *Bringing the War Home (Red Stripe Kitchen)*, 1967–1972, photomontage, originally disseminated in underground newspapers and flyers, variable dimensions. (Photo: Martha Rosler.)

23. Greg Cook, 'Of War and Remembrance: Martha Rosler's Montages Conjure Vietnam and Iraq', *The Boston Globe*, 11 November 2007. (http://www.boston.com/ae/theater_arts/articles/2007/11/11/of_war_and_remembrance/).

24. On the cut and paste technique see Martina Tanga, 'Martha Rosler at the Worcester Art Gallery', *Big Red and Shiny*, online journal, no. 72, 12 November 2007. http://www.bigredandshiny.com/cgi-bin/retrieve.pl?issue=issue72§ion=review&article=MARTHA_ROSLER_816914.

25. Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon: The War in Iraq and Global Visual Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), p. 3. For a further elaboration of the idea of the 'wild zone', see p. 133. Mirzoeff draws upon Giorgio Agamben's use of Carl Schmitt in Giorgio Agamben *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998). Also see Giorgio Agamben *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

26. Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 3.

27. Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 2.



Fig. 9. Martha Rosler, *Bringing the War Home, 'election (Lynndie)'*, 2004, photomontage. (Photo: Martha Rosler.)

28. Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 77.

29. Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon*, p. 77.

30. Rosler produced a second round of these photomontages that were presented in 2008 at the commercial gallery Mitchell-Innes and Nash in New York as part of a multi-media installation. The conceptual framing of this exhibition, *Great Power*, is a much more complex meditation on the kinds of mediatic shifts that a writer such as Mirzoeff is tracking. On entering the exhibit, gallery patrons were given the choice of playing the interactive video game *Dance, Dance, Revolution*, for a \$1 charge, or feeding 25 cents into a turnstile in order to enter the exhibition. (A change machine is also part of the exhibit, mounted on the wall in the

side-by-side it is remarkable how similar the excited actresses selling the latest mobile phones are to the exuberant on-screen President. But the shift in the visual regime that Mirzoeff identifies finds the 'weaponized image' of the shock and awe campaign functioning as a performative; it declares 'American victory as an image and it is done'.²⁸ Mirzoeff begins to diagnose how this performative image-event 'creates a sense of identification or disidentification'.²⁹ In his attempt to understand the identificatory connection – and not simply to consolidate the American liberal position of disidentification – this analysis takes a distance from Rosler's approach of cut and paste juxtaposition.³⁰



Fig. 10. Martha Rosler, *Bringing the War Home 'Amputee (Election II)'*, 2004, photomontage. (Photo: Martha Rosler.)



Fig. 11. Martha Rosler, *Bringing the War Home, 'cellular'*, 2004, photomontage. (Photo: Martha Rosler.)

Abu Ghraib

The photographs that appeared on the CBS news program *Sixty Minutes II* in April 2004, a few days later in *The New Yorker* magazine, and then in the blogosphere in much greater numbers were not simply documents of a systematically implemented policy of prisoner mistreatment.³¹ While these pictures indeed reveal the shocking use of sexual humiliation of male prisoners by male and female soldiers and simulated scenes of homoerotic orgies, the photographic record *itself* was an additional instrument in the prisoners' torture. The threat that such pictures would be made public to the prisoners' families and community was used as a further means of coercion and as a way of extending the psychological impact of the victims' degradation.³² Likewise, the gender of the female soldiers was also deployed as a further tool of humiliation (Figs 1, 12, and 13). This is in no way to excuse the actions of these soldiers, but evidence suggests not only a systematic use of torture but also a mobilisation of American-style egalitarian feminism as part of this violently perverse spectacle. Both the soldiers' gender and the photographic record were deployed as instruments of torture in Abu Ghraib.

The Abu Ghraib scandal hit the press during an election year in the United States, but it failed to have the expected negative impact on the outcome. There is now strong evidence to suggest that the administration was cognizant of these interrogation strategies, including the use of photography.³³ Despite the growing evidence for this back in 2004, Bush was nonetheless voted into office once again. Stephen Eisenman has diagnosed this as a form of moral blindness that he calls 'the Abu Ghraib effect'.³⁴ To develop this concept, along with his analysis of the way these images are related to and different from canonical art-historical depictions of violence and torture, he refers to the psychoanalytic concept of the uncanny. Also drawing upon psychoanalysis, Kaja Silverman has speculated on the psychical stakes in the appeal of Bush, and her suggestive political analysis offers some insight into my argument about the Abu Ghraib images. Silverman argues that America's unique model of presidential leadership has meant that there is much less of a distance between the

entrance to supply the quarters needed for either of the entertainment options). In addition to a series of haunting photomontages, a looped video, and an extensive information table of newspaper clippings, Rosler included an oversized sculpture of a single disarticulated prosthetic leg pasted with images of fashionable high-heeled women's sandals. The sculpture, *Prototype (Freedom is not Free)*, 2008 was hooked up to a slow motion hydraulic mechanism that creaked menacingly as the leg awkwardly kicked at the air. All of these elements sharpen the critical focus of the repetition-with-a-difference of Rosler's 2004 intervention in crucial ways.

31. Seymour Hersh, 'Torture at Abu Ghraib', *The New Yorker*, 10 May 2004; all of the publicly released images can be accessed at http://www.salon.com/news/abu_ghraib/2006/03/14/introduction/. Also see the report of the Detainee Abuse and Accountability Project, put together through the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice in collaboration with Human Rights Watch and Human Rights First <http://www.humanrightsfirst.info/pdf/06425-ent-by-the-numbers.pdf>.

32. For an interesting discussion of the relationship between the Abu Ghraib pictures and US images of lynching, see Dora Apel, 'Torture Culture: Lynching Photographs and the Images of Abu Ghraib', *Art Journal*, vol. 64, no. 2, summer 2005, pp. 88–100. For a compelling comparison between the Abu Ghraib images and Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò: or 120 Days of Sodom* (1975) see forthcoming Alessia Ricciardi, 'Salò for the Present'.

33. See Hersh, *Chain of Command*, pp. 1–72.

34. Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, pp. 9–10.



Fig. 12. 12:14 a.m., Nov. 8, 2003. SPC ENGLAND points to the penis of one of the detainees. SOLDIER(S): SPC ENGLAND. (Photo: Image in public domain)



Fig. 13. 11:51 p.m., Nov. 7, 2003. Detainees were placed into a human pyramid. CPL GRANER and PFC ENGLAND posed for the picture, which was taken by SPC HARMAN, 2003, Abu Ghraib, digital photograph. (Photo: Image in public domain)

35. Kaja Silverman, 'Questionnaire', *October*, no. 123, winter 2008, p. 147.

36. Silverman, 'Questionnaire', p. 147.

leader and the group. The most popular American presidents have all had the so-called 'common touch'. Identifying the two most important presidential qualities as mediocrity and narcissism, Silverman describes how 'many of our most popular presidents have been unremarkable in every way—poorly educated, unworldly, and of average or below average intelligence. They fall asleep in official meetings, are prone to malapropisms, and confuse countries with continents. Yet rather than attempting to conceal their mediocrity, they flaunt it; they show themselves to be no better than we are, and perhaps much worse'.³⁵ In order to understand the psychical appeal of this model of leadership – how it produces identification rather than the more familiar Bush-bashing disidentification – Silverman claims that '[f]rom them we learn how absurd it is to strive for perfection, and to suspend our self-love until we achieve it. There is no need to postpone narcissistic gratification, because we can be the ugliest of Americans and still dominate the world. And what could be more pleasurable?'³⁶

This might help explain how Bush could be re-elected even in the face of the prisoner abuse scandal, not because he successfully managed to distance himself from it – despite the claims that this was a case of a few bad apples – but because of his close identification with these images. The grinning idiocy combined with the thumbs up gesture that appears over and over in the Abu Ghraib images is an uncanny echo of the widely disseminated image from 1 May 2001 of Bush atop the USS Abraham Lincoln. In a spectacular display

of hubris, marking the occupation of Baghdad Bush is pictured standing beneath the slogan 'Mission Accomplished'. He gives the very same double thumbs up gesture seen three years later over and over again in photographs of the prisoner abuse scandal. The palimpsest that lies behind the all-American girl-next-door grinning at the camera in these images from Abu Ghraib is the image of the President in pantomime costume as an air force pilot.³⁷ This gives the lie to the mobilisation of egalitarian feminism in the United States, since these female soldiers are arguably all figures of 'Bush'.

Despite the proven hollowness of this 'Mission Accomplished' slogan, it was not simply for the purposes of distraction that the 2004 Republican campaign was fought, and won, on an aggressively anti-gay agenda. Lila Rajiva in her excellent study *The Language of Empire: Abu Ghraib and the American Media* has analysed the ongoing pernicious effect of the images from Abu Ghraib in relation to the ideology of the War on Terror, which speaks directly to this issue.

[These] homoerotic images [are] calculated to simultaneously evoke our homophobia and brand our enemies emasculated. They evoke egalitarian feminism, but only through an inversion of the pornography of hierarchical masculinity. In these rapid sleights of hand, the face of Jessica [Lynch] as captive femininity, which evokes patriarchal protection, is quickly shuffled under the face of Lyndie [England], the femininity that humiliates and avenges itself on the alien male. And that male himself is constructed as both the extreme of heterosexuality—oppressor of his own women—and the extreme of homosexuality—enslaved to ours.³⁸

The abjectly homophobic images from Abu Ghraib predominantly featured women soldiers. Although these images were not in fact the majority of images from the more than 200 taken, they were nonetheless the few that were made publicly available in 2004 and reproduced over and over again. By contrast, there has been a consistent wall of silence in the US press about the widespread and systematic accounts of sexual humiliation and rape against numerous Iraqi women prisoners in Abu Ghraib.³⁹ Photography was also deployed as an instrument of torture against these women prisoners in order to further their degradation and secure their silence. Unlike the images of women soldiers, these accounts of the military's use of the sexual manipulation of women tell a very old story. In fact this is the coercive inversion of the promise made by Baez and her sisters. But putting *feminism* to use as part of the practice of the War on Terror is repetition with a difference.

Thomas Hirschhorn

In his 2006 installation *Superficial Engagement*, the Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn brings a 'foreigner's' perspective to the image world of America's War on Terror. Hirschhorn is no feminist artist, but nonetheless with his address to the picturing of violence in conjunction with an ambivalent female form, *Superficial Engagement* speaks to the problematic that I am outlining here. Hirschhorn presents an architectonic installation of visual atrocity overload to compensate for the absence of such imagery in the American media (Fig. 14). Not photographs of the sexualised violence of Abu Ghraib, but bodies shattered to near unrecognisability by American bombs in Afghanistan and Iraq. Hirschhorn's images were all downloaded from specialist Internet sites that

37. For an analysis of the figure of the 'girl-next-door' in relation to the Abu Ghraib images see Kelly Oliver, *Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex, and the Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 40–45.

38. Lila Rajiva, *The Language of Empire: Abu Ghraib and the American Media* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2005), p. 145.

39. Rajiva, *The Language of Empire*, pp. 131–48. Also see the website of the Global Sisterhood Network <http://www.global-sisterhood-network.org/>.

40. See Jean Baudrillard, 'War Porn', trans. Paul Taylor, *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2005, np, available online at http://www.ubishops.ca/BaudrillardStudies/vol2_1/taylor.htm.

41. See James Aulich and Jeffrey Walsh, *Vietnam Images: War and Representation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989). Also see Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003).

42. This protest event was also aimed at the Museum of Modern Art itself. The screen-printed version of this photograph was intended for sale through the museum shop. At the last minute conservative members of the museum board intervened to stop this. A full discussion of this can be found in Francis Frascina, *Art, Politics and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 160–208.

43. See Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), pp. 98–143, for a philosophical elaboration of this concept.



Fig. 14. Thomas Hirschhorn *Superficial Engagement*, 2006, installation view, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York. (Photo: David Regen/Barbara Gladstone Gallery.)

deal in atrocity images, otherwise known as 'war porn'.⁴⁰ While images of violence were frequently shown on the US media during the Vietnam War, this has not been the strategy during the War on Terror. Through his presentation of such an abundance of horrific images, Hirschhorn's installation draws attention to the fact that one of the post-Vietnam developments in the United States has been an astonishingly tight control over war coverage.⁴¹ Hirschhorn's installation evokes memorable protests against the War in Vietnam, such as the use of Ronald Haeberle's photograph of the My Lai massacre by the Art Workers' Coalition. Standing in front of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) in the Museum of Modern Art in 1970, members of the group held up enlarged screen printed versions of Haeberle's photograph of massacred women and children printed with the textual addition 'Q: And babies? A: And babies'.⁴² In the 1960s violent images were powerfully mobilised by the peace movement as a kind of pharmakon – a small amount of poison to help with the cure.⁴³ To counteract the media exploitation of carnage, the manipulation of the American public with pictures of violent atrocities was also commonly used during the Vietnam War as a strategy for peace. Thus in addition to his use of the handcraft-cum-assemblage aesthetic, Hirschhorn's presentation of images of violence suggests the repetition of the direct-action tradition of 'political' art of the American 1960s.

In *Superficial Engagement*, these viscerally disturbing images are interspersed with predominantly female shop manikins studded with builder's nails (Fig. 15). A first encounter with this sculptural component might suggest nail bombs, especially when seen alongside the visual evidence of the corporeal effects of such weapons in the photographic images. But with images of African power objects placed alongside these figures, a quite different kind of reference is also suggested. Moreover, this traditional modernist invocation of primitivism has a western equivalent in



Fig. 15. Thomas Hirschhorn *Superficial Engagement*, 2006, installation view, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York. (Photo: David Regen/Barbara Gladstone Gallery.)



Fig. 16. Thomas Hirschhorn *Superficial Engagement*, 2006, installation view, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York. (Photo: David Regen/Barbara Gladstone Gallery.)

44. See Susan Preston Blier, *African Vodun: Art, Psychology and Power* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 23–54. The classic text on the Kongolese *minkisi*, the nail embedded objects that Hirschhorn's work makes explicit visual reference to, is Wyatt McGaffey, *Astonishment and Power: The Eyes of Understanding* (Washington and London: The Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).

45. Thomas Hirschhorn, 'Regarding "Political Correctness"', trans. David Wharry, *Thomas Hirschhorn* (London: Phaidon Press, 2004), p. 124.

46. The seriousness of Hirschhorn's attitude as an artist is clear from reading interviews with him. See for example, 'Alison Gingeras in Conversation with Thomas Hirschhorn' in *Thomas Hirschhorn* *Thomas Hirschhorn*, pp. 8–39, and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'An Interview with Thomas Hirschhorn', *October*, no. 113, summer 2005, pp. 77–100.

47. When I presented this paper at the 2008 College Art Association conference on the Radical Art Caucus panel addressed to 'Power and the Gendered Imagery of Contemporary Global Politics' the numerous questions and comments from the audience in celebration of Rosler's work were quite remarkable. Invoking Rosler in laudatory terms, one (male) audience member simply dismissed Hirschhorn's use of the female manikin as sexist. One compelling and original reappraisal of primitivism in relation to the work of Paul Gauguin is Stephen Eisenman, *Gauguin's Skirt* (New York: Thames

the figure of the outsider artist. And likewise, Hirschhorn includes facsimiles and his own recreations of works by the Swiss visionary healer painter Emma Kunz (Fig. 16).

The African power object is a cipher for power not the source of power. It is mobilised in a community setting through speech and touch – that is, through its social use as either a protective device or as part of a structure of justice and retribution. Moreover recent scholars on the topic have speculated on the relationship between the widespread reemergence of power objects as a response to colonial violence, particularly notable in Benin and Togo along the West African coast.⁴⁴ Alongside this scene of visual atrocity, Hirschhorn stages two different modes in which art is understood as curative. One, broadly speaking, is rooted in the artist's own indigenous cultural tradition – like Emma Kunz, Hirschhorn is also Swiss – and the other is central to modernism's own attempts to counteract the ill-effects of modernity with reference to the pre-modern, ideas of the primal, and by evoking forms of cultural autochthony. From Gauguin to Die Brücke, Picasso and Surrealism to Pollock, the combination of primitivism and the figure of woman remains a consistently shared reference. Hirschhorn's installation is embedded in this modernist tradition and unlike Fusco and Rosler, his political motivations are not immediately clear. Evoking primitivism in this installation without a clear gesture of critical distance opens this work to the kinds of criticisms of cultural imperialism that are now the standard textbook framings of modernism's primitivist strain. It is as if Hirschhorn were inviting such a response in his blatant flaunting of the conventions of political correctness. An unsurprising move from an artist who has recently published a 1995 statement 'Regarding "Political Correctness"', a text that could just as equally be titled '*Against Political Correctness*'.⁴⁵

Hirschhorn is no naïf, but without a trace of irony (or embarrassment), he suggests a healing process to be realised by *Superficial Engagement* that involves a passage through this installation.⁴⁶ En route the spectator is offered a task, to participate by hammering in a nail or to use the electric screwdriver to insert a bolt. We are offered something to *do* rather than something to simply look at – another 1960s gesture. When read in military terms, the title *Superficial Engagement* suggests an inconsequential skirmish, but it also suggests the idea of a shallow reading. Perhaps the artist is also declaring his work's inadequacy in face of the political stakes that he touches on. In light of the profound subject addressed in *Superficial Engagement*, the installation indeed declares its own risk – the superficiality of art's engagement. Rather than seeing this as evidence of the self-indulgent pathos of an ineffectual anti-war position, the title can be read as a declaration that – again unlike Fusco and Rosler – this work is decisively *not* offering an analysis, but the opportunity for an ethical repositioning. The political work that the installation so firmly evokes, can only suggest a completion by others and elsewhere. Political or analytical closure, Hirschhorn seems to suggest, is not the task of the work of art. Moreover, Hirschhorn's ritual of healing is presented as an element of the work, it is offered as an activity for the spectator that can only lead beyond the gallery.

The decisively gendered framing of this visual metaphor of healing is central to my analysis. Hirschhorn's use of the conjunction of woman and primitivism remains suspended in ambivalence – an ambivalence that could easily provoke, and might even invite, condemnation in the name of political correctness.⁴⁷ But rather than following this line of approach, it

is my view that his staging of this highly ambivalent modernist strategy animates the problematic place of woman within the War on Terror. Since, as we have already seen, as both alibi and aggressor, the figure of woman functions as a cipher for power. While Abu Ghraib does not figure in this installation, we are nonetheless reminded of the mediatic terrain upon which the discourse of the War on Terror is being played out. *Superficial Engagement* also includes dozens of enlarged newspaper headlines, roughly pasted up in vertical lists. The assemblage-texture of Hirschhorn installation recalls a 1960s aesthetic, but at the same time spectators are viscerally reminded of how much has changed.⁴⁸

Sharon Hayes

Fusco, Rosler, and Hirschhorn's engagement with our current condition of war is addressed to the visual register. My final example downplays the visual in favour of speech, or the staging of speech. This is speech that makes a direct appeal to the language of love, and in doing so explicitly invokes and critically redirects the now compromised 1960s slogans such as 'make love not war'. Sharon Hayes' two recent performances *Everything Else has Failed! Don't You Think it's Time for Love?* (2007) and *I March in the Parade of Liberty, but as Long as I Love You I'm not Free* (2007-8) take Hirschhorn's gesture of audience completion one step further. Hayes performs in the city street, reading out a letter addressed to an absent lover. Although the lover is staged in the text as a specific person, the structure of address interpellates the addressee as the public in general. Hayes makes an affective appeal for a response from an unknown public.

The title of *Everything Else has Failed! Don't you Think it's Time for Love?* is taken from a documentary image showing a hand-drawn 1960s placard. The vernacular source for this slogan contains a much more open-ended appeal to the idea of love as a political force than the instrumentalised, heteronormative sentiments of 'girls say yes to boys who say no'. Moreover, both performances involve reciting letters, love letters, which – as if in a direct challenge to the homophobic staging of the Abu Ghraib photographs – Hayes presents as explicitly queer. These works by Hayes are the boldest attempt I have found so far to claim back for a politics of peace the 1960s appeal to love over and against its instrumentalised appropriation. In her implicit critique of the heterosexism that anchored the original appeal Hayes appropriates the political sentiments of 'make love not war' and disentangles them from the promise that 'girls say yes to boys who say no'.

Both performances adopted a similar format. The earlier performance took place over a five-day period in front of the New York headquarters of a major downtown bank during the busy lunch hour period (Fig. 17). Each day Hayes took to the street with a microphone and handheld amplifier and recited a letter to an audience of casual passersby (along with a small, more attentive, art world contingent). She presented a different letter on Monday through Friday of the working week and each recital was repeated three consecutive times. These sentimental, but beautifully crafted love letters are addressed to an absent lover – who is suggested as a soldier in Iraq – and the relationship is explicitly staged as queer. Drawing on the thematic of unrequited love, with references that evoke romantic literature and popular music, Hayes heightens the emotional pitch of her address.



Fig. 17. Sharon Hayes *Everything Else has Failed! Don't You Think it's Time for Love?*, 2007, documentation of performance, United Bank of Switzerland, New York, 2007. (Photo: Andrea Geyer.)

and Hudson, 1997). For an excellent study of the centrality of the idea of primitivism in relation to modernist art in India, see Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1922-1947* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007).

48. For an interesting reflection on the affect of Hirschhorn's use of atrocity images, see James Westcott, 'Gut Feeling: Thomas Hirschhorn's *Superficial Engagement*', *TDR: The Drama Review*, vol. 51, no. 2, pp. 171–5. For a powerfully argued critique, see William Kaizen, 'After Shock and Awe, or, War Porn, the Plight of Images and the Pain of Others: Considering Two Recent Exhibitions by Thomas Hirschhorn', *Aftershock Magazine*, <http://aftershockmagazine.com/Kaizenwar.html>.



Fig. 18. Sharon Hayes *I March in the Parade of Liberty, But as Long as I Love You I'm not Free*, 2007–2008, performance, beginning in front of the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 2008. (Photo: Siona Wilson.)

Moreover, the fact that her lover has ceased to respond to these letters only further emphasises the performer's already plaintive tone.

A similar approach is adopted in the later *I March in the Parade of Liberty, but as Long as I Love You I'm not Free* (2007–2008). This work draws more directly upon the language of gay liberation and the microphone has been substituted with the bullhorn. The mise-en-scène of a political demonstration replaces the associations of a street performer found with the earlier work (Fig. 18). In *I March* Hayes combines her paean to lost love with protest slogans associated with gay liberation like 'Act up! Fight back!' and 'out of the closets and into the streets'. Moreover, the narrative seamlessly slides between a remembered gay pride protest '[t]he ecstasy of being gay and angry!' to 'our movement' being framed as an anti-war movement, '[w]e waited to find some mention that we had been heard, ... that everyone,

young and old, political and apolitical was prepared to talk about the war'.⁴⁹ In this performance the letter is recited repeatedly over several consecutive locations and along the way the artist gathers a following – a small band of fellow 'protesters' – as well as new unsuspecting audience members passing by at each location. As with the earlier work, Hayes reads these love letters in character and the 'you' addressed in this plea becomes the passing public in general.

The artist has discussed how these two performances were the first time that she performed 'in character' and with this approach she consciously sought to occupy a position of affect.⁵⁰ This is clear from the yearning that she introduces into her tone of address and by the fact that she consciously attempts to seek an empathetic response in the passerby through resolutely seeking eye contact even as they continue to walk away. All this contributes to her attempt to evoke an affective response. In comparison with the other works presented in this essay, Hayes' is notable for its avoidance of explicit reference to the mediatic.⁵¹ Despite the seemingly bygone format of the letter, she nonetheless manages to instill something like the effect of 'vernacular watching' that Mirzoeff describes in *Watching Babylon*. For example, to speak about my own viewing experience – more dutifully attentive than most – I listened, and chatted to my companion, glanced in shop windows (the performance skirted the edges of Soho), and at one point I was stopped by a tourist seeking directions. Rather than hushing this intruder it seemed only appropriate to suggest the best route she should take, which even involved briefly consulting with my friend. Unperturbed by this we continued to listen – until the next distraction.

Rather than an invocation of a 1960s model of love as redemptive, Hayes' affective appeal is more to a shared feeling of love lost. Moreover, the overall melancholic tone, and the fact that there is no clear narrative explanation for the lover's lack of response, suggests the possibility that this performance is a scene of mourning. We are held suspended between understanding *I March* in light of the death of a lover or as a result of the painful end of a relationship (also a cause for mourning). This ambiguity is further reinforced by the fact that Hayes begins her letter with a reference to the AIDS crisis – '[i]t is Saturday, December 1st, it's World AIDS day' – which suggests both loss and memorialisation. The combination of thwarted desire and mourning evoked by Hayes' affectively powerful appeal resonates with Judith Butler's recent speculations on possible models for a post-9/11 ethics of political collectivity. Butler's turn to feminist ethics is presented as a necessary supplementation to feminism conceived solely in egalitarian terms. Likewise, the theorist and performer are both evolving responses to the War on Terror that speculate on a possible feminist politics of peace.

'Despite our difference in location and history', Butler speculates, 'my guess is that it is possible to appeal to a "we", for all of us have some notion of what it is to have lost somebody. Loss has made a tenuous "we" of us all. And if we have lost, then it follows that we have had, that we have desired and loved, that we have struggled to find the conditions for our desire'.⁵² She challenges the view that grief is depoliticising and that it creates an individualising experience, and instead suggests that 'it furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorising fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility'.⁵³ Butler develops her proposition with full awareness that not all deaths are mourned equally. This can be easily observed with the

49. Sharon Hayes, '*I March in the Parade of Liberty, but as Long as I Love you I'm not Free*', unpublished script, pp. 1–2. Courtesy of the artist.

50. Hayes discussed this issue in an artist's talk at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York on 7 January 2008.

51. An interesting point of comparison can be found with the recent documentary film about the Abu Ghraib scandal, *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008) directed by Errol Morris. The film quotes extensively from letters sent by Sabrina Harman, one of the female soldiers who were prosecuted, to her female partner, who Harman describes as her wife. Although the letters by Harman were not publicly available when Hayes was developing her performances, nor was the lesbian relationship centralized in the media coverage, it can subsequently be understood as an interesting point of intersection with Hayes' performances.

52. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 20.

53. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 22.

54. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, pp. 20, 42.

55. Hayes, 'I March', p. 3.

coverage of the Iraq war in the simple decision not to count the Iraqi dead. Like Hayes, Butler also draws links between the War on Terror and the AIDS crisis, which she discusses in relation to her personal experience of loss. This is a shared experience that has shaped the identity of a whole community and grounded a politics. Butler argues that the experience of the AIDS crisis could enable a new understanding of the post-9/11 situation that could help to articulate a new democratic politics. Such a politics would take account of the 'social vulnerability of our bodies—as a site of desire and physical vulnerability, as a site of publicity at once assertive and exposed', and do so in order to reimagine the 'horizon of a counterimperialist egalitarianism'.⁵⁴ This embodied vulnerability is staged by Hayes in her taking to the street and through her interweaving of a language of desire inflected with the painful awareness of the lover's vulnerability: 'Love is so easily wounded . . . I feel as though a part of me had been torn away like a limb in battle'.⁵⁵

The desperate hopefulness of the 1960s slogan *Everything Else has Failed! Don't you Think it's Time for Love?* has ceded to a more explicitly ambivalent sentiment in this later performance. *I March in the Parade of Liberty*, but as *Long as I Love You I'm not Free* suggests that love is constrained because of the ethical demands that accompany it. The loving 'I' cannot be free because her love is dependent on another. Hayes' title suggests that the relation to the other interrupts the idea of an unbridled individual freedom. This oscillation between an identity-based model of rights that is interrupted by an ethical responsibility to 'the other' is particularly marked in the final section of the performance. Here Hayes breaks out into a discontinuous fragmented prose that is rendered in the script in the form of poetic verse.

I love you.

I love you entirely.

I love you so much that I cannot sleep.

A dream is a dream, reality is real, open the door to the way we feel.

The news is grave.

Love is so easily wounded.

Out of the closets and into the streets.

We will not hide our love away.

Gay Love-Gay Power

We will not be silent

An army of lovers cannot lose.

ACT UP/FIGHT BACK

I am beginning to think we speak in different tongues.

Surely you must know that desire is cruel?

I feel certain that I am going mad again.

Nothing is real but you.

I am a stranger in my own country.

I feel as though a part of me had been torn away like a limb in battle.

Nothing that has ever gone before was like this.

What do we want?

When do we want it?⁵⁶

56. Hayes, 'I March', p. 3.

57. Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 49.

Again, to read this section of Hayes' performance alongside Butler's philosophical meditation offers up striking resonances. Here Butler is speaking about an ethical responsibility that emerges from the interdependency of love, desire, and reckoning with loss. 'I cannot muster the "we" except by finding the way in which I am tied to "you", by trying to translate but finding that my own language must break up and yield if I am to know you. You are what I gain through this disorientation and loss. This is how the human comes into being, again and again, as that which we have yet to know'.⁵⁷ I conclude with these words since they bring us a long way from the recent appropriation of an egalitarian feminism as an alibi for the War on Terror. Despite the Janus-faced image of Bush's 'women of cover' and (Bush as) the girl-next-door of the Abu Ghraib photos, both Butler and Hayes suggest a feminist anti-war ethics that reclaims and redirects a 1960s language of love. Sidestepping the nostalgia of a straightforward repetition, this is a love that is animated by loss, mourning, and the vulnerability of social bodies.

I wish to extend thanks to Carol Duncan and Hannah Feldman for their comments, suggestions, and encouragement when I first developed this argument for their 2008 College Art Association panel 'Power and the Gendered Imagery of Contemporary Global Politics'. I am also grateful to William Kaizen for his comments and suggestions on a later version of the essay.