

From *Inch'Allah Dimanche* to *Sharia in Canada*:
Empire Management, Gender Representations, and
Communication Strategies in the Twenty-First Century

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Inch'Allah Dimanche (2001) and *Sharia in Canada* (2006) constitute the objects of this chapter. These films represent a particular space of cultural engagement resonating with gender conflict and militarized strategies of communication. The first, a feature length film, addresses issues of tradition versus modernity and the role of authority within an immigrant woman's displaced context. The second, a documentary, presents the debate about allowing for the cultural practice of Sharia law in Canada. Both resonate with the larger issues of cultural displacement and the ensuing struggles that immigrants from many cultures are confronted with in the process of acculturation. Our comparison illustrates the post-9/11 process by which in the West the Islamic Other has been reduced to simplified rendition of terrorist, anti-feminist, medieval, all of which are contained within the rubric of Islamofascism. We place the issues and events represented into a post-9/11 context and in doing so enter into discourse with other cultural texts that are exemplary of the cultural paradigm shift. Cinema "can" still function as a discursive space that renders public the inherit problematics of international politics as lived reality. There are rare instances, such as these two Canadian and French texts, where resistance is actively portrayed. Analyzing these two films also allows for a comparison of how cultural negotiations and the related polemics occur differently in two countries where multiculturalism is a lived reality in both but is only constitutionally mandated in one, Canada.

This Briefest Century, Bridging It

A French-Algerian feature length film and a Canadian state-sponsored National Film Board of Canada (NFB) documentary constitute the main objects of this investigation. They have come to represent a particular space of cultural engagement: one where the cultural-political tensions discursively set during the 1990s—pitting imperial visions against peripheral forms of resistance—erupted world-wide after the air attack on America's military and economic symbols, resonating with gender conflict and militarized strategies of communication.

American governmental policies since 2001 have enacted an essentialist paradigm shift toward reducing the complex reality of the Other to a marketed "essence"—terrorist, fundamentalist, Islamofascist, for example—the repercussions of which are visibly manifest throughout the globe. Yet such a specific date would still be limited to an emotional implosion—the "why do

they hate us?” refrain¹—were it not for the formidable recent, but historically grounded, build-up to the twenty-first century as America’s century and its manifold representations. Within this necessarily mediatic² overview, the First Iraq War (1991) is the rationale for the need to return and complete the mission (weapons of mass destruction notwithstanding) due to the sense of *incompleteness*. What better spiritual instrument of moral justification for America to affirm its system of world management after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989?

Given these parameters, the multiplication during the 1990s of positions of active engagement is not a surprise, considering the language and narratives generated by a belligerent right as the aggregate of various conservative and religious positions. Neoconservative think-tanks such as Project of the New American Century (PNAC) and American Enterprise Institute (AEI), and mouthpieces such as *National Review*, *The National Interest*, and *Foreign Affairs*, advocated, from different perspectives, what was ultimately seen as the necessity for America to affirm its lead in the world. These pro-active apparatuses and their politically-correct clones combined with official US policies in specific ideological constructions that revolved around two intersecting narratives, spiraling DNA-like into a biopolitical new century³ to bring to a close the material damage of the 1960s/Vietnam era. Epical narratives, much like a Homeric blinding post-modernity (*siege* mentality, and *return* as a means of completion) reverberating with the triumph of visual culture, this process took the form of Francis Fukuyama’s *The Last Man and the End of History* (1992) and Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996). Entwined, these moral stories for a new century were steeped in a culture of religious backlash, a periodic reoccurrence in America’s ongoing affirmation of identity.

At once dissipation of human hubris and punishment for multicultural capitalism (i.e. heterogeneous capitalism à la Hardt & Negri), the concrete ma-

¹ In the days following the attacks, the American domestic media replayed images of disoriented citizens wandering in the streets of New York. One perplexed woman in particular was caught on camera asking why anyone would do this to America. This particular clip was given international airtime and it had widespread resonance.

² “Mediatic,” as we define this term, references the media as the process of a specific constellation of economic, social, and political forces.

³ In this context, the biopolitical new century is a consequence of the contrast, on the one hand, of the awareness of the human body as an agent of change within a political structure, and on the other, as the direct target of institutions in the exercise of power, which brings into question such issues as surveillance, militarization of the urban space, and the construction of identity paradigms. The biopolitical new century refers to the delegitimization of the juridical self.

nifestation of the attacks on the Pentagon⁴ and Twin Towers results in a particular form of chastisement: the double combination corresponds to the religious overtones of the Tower(s) of Babel inscribed in a Pentagram. These latent, symbolic forces sustained by factual aspects—the Twin Towers were populated by people of various nationalities and languages under the directives of American neo-liberalism and sustained by military-economic strength—imploded in New York, the new world order, *caput mundi*. As such, this site became the ground zero of multiculturalism. Its destruction implied the obliteration of a fastidious multiplicity so as to turn, by reflection, the (American) world back to its happy frontier simplicity. One of the best indicators of such a shift is the most successful American television program yet, *The Sopranos*, which posits the beginning of the end to the 1950s as the Golden Age of the American Dream.⁵

The rhetoric immediately following the shake-up of America was already at hand as a simplified dichotomy that the media could continuously tune into: “you are either with us or against us.”⁶ This rhetorical strategy is best exemplified by Pope Benedict XVI and his insistence that the EU constitution be grounded in Christian roots. In America, the fanatical evangelical discourse made sure through its spokespersons (military figures, religious leaders, everyday citizens) that the war was actually a religious war. In Canada, this cultural polarization, as it diffused itself primarily across North America and Europe, brought to a close a programmed dream of state multiculturalism that lasted thirty years and was never realized. The image-aspect of multiculturalism—spectacles of folk-dancing and the consumption of exotic foods—is the mode with which neo-liberalism has been able to recuperate

⁴ An illustrative semiotic analysis that shows the entanglement of the Pentagon with the Twin Towers is provided in detail by Deems D. Morrione in ‘When Signifiers Collide: Doubling, Semiotic Black Holes, and the Destructive Remainder of the American Un/real’, *Cultural Critique* 63 (2006), pp. 157-73. Also, William Anselmi and Lise Hogan provide an extensive cultural reading of the bind between Pentagon-Twin Towers and the subsequent societal and mediatic fallout in the co-authored article ‘Scripturing the 21st Century American Ways to Empire Undone, Over’, *College Quarterly*, 7 (2004) <http://www.collegequarterly.ca/2004-vol07-num04-fall/anselmi_hogan.html> [accessed 25 May 2009].

⁵ The main protagonist of *The Sopranos*, Tony Soprano, is a mafia boss who continuously refers to the 1950s as the apex of the American Dream, and the program is an ironic reading of this cultural fantasy as mythopoiesis.

⁶ This process parallels the history of the Red Brigades versus the Italian state in the late 1970s. The state embraced the same polarizing rhetorical strategy, though a number of critical Italian intellectuals tried to position themselves according to a *third way* that saw them neither *with the state nor with the Red Brigades* (*né con lo Stato, né con le BR*). It is interesting to note that there was no attempt in the West to create a critical distance to nuance the dichotomy after 9/11.

and propagate the cannibalization of difference as a mechanism of integration.⁷ In the end, the actual project of multiculturalism as established by Prime Minister Pierre Eliot Trudeau and the Liberal government in the early 1970s, which can be interpreted as merging into *a sui generis* cosmopolitanism⁸—the integration of differences within a heterogeneous and hierarchical Canadian dream—has been vastly modified, if not ultimately abandoned. Simply put, whatever remained of Trudeau’s original vision of multiculturalism was neutralized as a public discourse by the events following September 2001.

The dream of a multicultural Canada is framed by two historically drastic events, one internal and one external: the 1970s October Crisis and 9/11. The October Crisis and the invocation of the War Measures Act in 1970 were followed by the Multiculturalism Policy a year later in October 1971.⁹ After 9/11, Canadians at large knew the pragmatic idealism associated with official multiculturalism was over when legislative practices associated with the elimination of civil rights, analogous to the War Measures Act, were implemented in the States and quickly adopted here in the form of Canada's Anti-Terrorism Laws: Bills C22, C35, C36, and C42. The legislated restrictions on civil and human rights were tagged to specific ethno-cultural groups that could be visibly identified as the enemy-other: skin color/garments being the ultimate leitmotifs.

While fighting in Iraq under the guise of implementing democracy and claiming to protect civil liberties around the world, the US government has constructed a spectapolitics¹⁰ “Iraq,”¹¹ which has been, amongst other things,

⁷ The process of the cannibalization of the Other is entertainingly parodied in Jim Jarmusch’s 1995 film *Dead Man*.

⁸ Of the various aspects of cosmopolitanism, the one that pertains to Canada has to be seen as emanating from the educational process, and this in particular relates to the negotiations between bilingualism and multiculturalism. Sheena Wilson, ‘Campus Saint-Jean’s Bilingual Writing Centre: A Portal to Multiple Cultures and Cosmopolitan Citizenship’, *CWCA Newsletter*, 2 (2009), pp. 9-12.

⁹ The implementation of the War Measure was the drastic and final answer on the part of the state to the FLQ (Front de libération du Québec) that was a revolutionary movement fighting for an independent Québec, much along the lines of similar anti-colonial insurgencies. Interestingly enough, a year later, the liberal government, under Prime Minister Trudeau attempts a manoeuvre to diffuse the malcontent through the institutionalization of multiculturalism through a bilingual framework, as a way of setting up a hierarchy of belonging.

¹⁰ Taking to heart Debord’s lesson, what we mean with the term “spectapolitics” is simply the immediate and effective political use to one’s advantage of any object and/or cultural text which has undergone a spectacularized process. A perfect example of this would be Italian Premier Berlusconi’s political use of his involvement with young would-be starlet/politician Naomi Letizia during the late spring of 2009. This event managed to capture national and in-

a powerful tool in eroding Canadian human rights. The fear component in this spectapolitical strategy has aptly legitimized the covert use on the part of the Canadian government of such things as “security certificates” to indefinitely imprison, in Canada, permanent residents or non-citizens who are targeted as possible terrorists. Strategies of this nature have been marketed as security measures, and they have led to substantial changes in Canadian legislation: changes that have resulted in the erosion of basic civil rights for all individuals, and it should be noted that there is no ongoing discussion about reinstating these rights. Such processes finally partake of an erasure of modernity by re-establishing a pre-Westphalia vision of the relationship between individuals, society, and the nation, returning the West to a medieval mentality while accusing, ironically, its present target, Muslims, of being the unenlightened masses. Such practices—the erasure of individual participation in society through restrictive state measures—have been investigated by a number of critics. Yet, Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben in his work addressing the *state of emergency* or *state of exception* provides us, in combination with his work on *homo sacer*, a set of well-honed tools for the analysis presented here, which seeks to respond to the mediatic domestication of differences and the marginalization of the Other. Using Agamben’s concepts as points of entry, we provide a cultural and political critique in the comparison of the French-Algerian feature length film *Inch’Allah Dimanche* (2001) by Yamina Benguigui with the National Film Board of Canada documentary *Sharia in Canada* (2006) directed by Dominique Cardona to demonstrate how the changes in the cultural and political sphere brought about by the 9/11 events established a polarization process that has retarded the integration of a multicultural lived reality within the greater rubric of globalization as an eco-

ternational interest absconding the general economic crises in Italy during this particular period. In so doing, since Italy was gearing up for European elections, as well as regional and municipal ones, in early June, the voting public was polarized between believing his innocence, or not, all to the detriment of an informed vote based on the actual economic conditions which Berlusconi’s government had not adequately addressed.

¹¹ Iraq was constructed as the enemy, paralleling the rhetorical strategies used to conflate the term “Muslim” with that of “terrorist.” The result is that the term Muslim now denotes a malleable category that is no longer religious but an ethno-political identity visibly manifest. Iraq, too, now has been rhetorically situated on the map of the enemy Other that posits the greatest threat to Western civilization: America. We base this reflection on a courageous and indispensable work that appeared in 2002 *Collateral Language: A User’s Guide to America’s New War*, edited by John Collins and Ross Glover. We advocate for the release of an updated version, in order to translate to the public what the eight years of the Bush administration have meant for the manipulation of language. One step in the right direction has been the acknowledgment by the Obama administration that waterboarding is actually torture.

nomic hegemony. The first film addresses issues of displacement, tradition versus modernity, and the role of authority within an immigrant woman's multiple context(s), and her autonomous rebirth. The latter re-presents the debate over allowing the practice of Sharia law in Canada alongside Canada's judicial system. These two films clearly show the changing perspectives on Islam and Islamic citizens' social participation in the West; that is, they reveal the political impact of how social narratives formulate the Other-as-enemy and erase critical paradigms that make it possible for citizens to engage politically as groups and/or as individuals. Though these two films are of different genres—feature length and documentary—they nevertheless partake of a process that reflects the cultural realities of individuals, specifically women, and communities struggling to navigate the social-political tensions and the semantic confusions of the early twenty-first century.

Cinema, no matter what television generally might show to the contrary, *can* still function as a discursive space that renders visible the problematic inherent in national and international politics as lived reality.¹² Television's omnipresence is certainly not undermined by cinema as a viewer's choice, yet the time dedicated to watching a movie has a different disposition than that spent watching television, whose main feature is a constant flow of captivating images, at best. Cinema, which also partakes of informative positioning, is a work produced over a longer period of time, and it allows for cultural reflexivity when it is not in the service of government agenda.¹³ Televi-

¹² On the ambiguous relationship between cinema and television, Alberto Abruzzese presents the clearest analysis in his seminal work *Lo splendore della TV*.

¹³ The friendship between the American government and Hollywood after 2001 has been well-established and was evidenced by the numerous patriotism-inspiring films produced at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This process was made public in the article by Andrew Gumble that had already appeared in *The Independent* on 12 November 2001, entitled 'Bush Enlists Hollywood to "help the war effort"': "The [then] President's chief political adviser, Karl Rove, has met 40 of Hollywood's top executives [. . .] Their agenda: to discuss ways in which the entertainment industry could help the war effort." Andrew Gumble, 'Bush Enlists Hollywood to "Help the War Effort"', *The Independent*, 12 November 2001 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/bush-enlists-hollywood-to-help-the-war-effort-616694.html>> [accessed 25 May 2009]. As well, the role that reality TV was playing was becoming quite evident by 2004. Francine Prose, in March 2004 in *Harper's Magazine*, illustrates the incestuous relationship between the Pentagon and the format of reality TV, specifically in relationship to the network ABC, and the fact that this type of programming is actually a form of indoctrination into the American mythos of the individual who surmounts an array of obstacles to achieve a pecuniary triumph. Francine Prose, 'Voting Democracy off the Island', *Harper's Magazine*, 308 (2004), pp. 58-64. On the one hand, cinema has illustrated the desire for the reconstitution of a community after the emotional disarray of enemy-less-ness after the fall of the Berlin Wall, compounded by the fall of the

sion, in this brief exposure, should be seen as reflecting and producing culture with an immediacy that dissipates history into consumable fragments of the ever-present day: emotive reaction in/of the moment as opposed to reflection on the flow of information. Finally, the fact that American politics has such a powerful impact on world cultures makes it more than difficult for forms of resistance to spread through the social-mediatic sphere. Nevertheless, there are instances, such as the two films up for discussion, where ideas of critical resistance, recuperating the positions of the individual within variegated communities, are actively portrayed with varying degrees of success.

Inch'Allah Dimanche

How do human subjectivities respond to what can be considered the trauma of displacement? Do we seek refuge in the world that we bring with us? Do we dare step out into the new society that surrounds us? And what about our familial connections: how do we settle into this un-familial setting? These are some of the questions that on the surface the film *Inch'Allah Dimanche* addresses quite specifically, and yet there is a deeper investigation into the effects of displacement that considers the relationship between colonized and colonizer. The irony of the film is to envisage this particular one-way relationship within the colonizer's home, so that questions pertaining to agency, empowerment, dialectics, feminism, sex, gender, anti-colonial thought, friendship, domesticity, and nomadism are all rubrics that erupt throughout the movie as a form of identity development in the main character, Zouina, a new Algerian immigrant to France. What is also interesting is the particular temporal setting that allows the director, Yamina Benguigui, to displace postmodern politics within a frame of modernity that permits the viewer to reconsider and reconstitute the filtering of the body-politic through a post-modern lens. Since the movie was released in 2001, questions that pertain to emancipation, the body politic, even displacement, would be considered from the contemporary vantage point as *démodé* and yet, through the skilful management of image narratives by Benguigui, those very rubrics are resituated in a strategy of the political subject's empowerment. Finally, what transpires in *Inch'Allah Dimanche* is the tension between the modern and the postmodern, as it is resolved through Zouina's character, given her heritage and her

Twin Towers. On the other hand, television, through reality TV, reinstates the myth of the rugged individual. This process shows that cinema and television can be used to resolve the ambiguity of a national ethos constituted by individuals all working toward the common good in contrast to the "evil-doers."

response to her new cosmopolitan space, which allows for the development of multiple identities capable of dialoguing with the precise demands of an evolving society in a global world.

Zouina, an Algerian woman, joins her husband in France by relocating there with her children and mother-in-law. Synoptically, the film is a typical case of displacement as a genre, detailing the effects of migration and the reconstitution of the family unit. What constitutes the *detournement* in this film is the genealogical theme that runs throughout, a potentially subversive element with respect to the patriarchal system that governs colonizing and colonized societies. Being forced to leave her own mother, extended family, and motherland, Zouina sees her genealogy de facto severed.

Throughout the movie the spatial axis works as a substitute for the temporal dimension since it contains the development of character: each time Zouina encounters a new experience delineated by a particular space, she undergoes a transformation that broadens her understanding of her situation in France and informs her sense of self. Zouina is systematically rendered invisible inside the home, yet she is visible and acknowledged in the wider community; such a representation runs counter-intuitively to what is expected as the norm. Not only that, but Zouina also discovers that her differences within the Algerian community in France are not strictly generational but situational and that they relate specifically to how displacement is intertwined with tradition and authority. Displacement, as represented in this film, is not simply a geographical experience but an altering of complex interconnected power-dynamics related to gender, culture, class, and identity.

Spatial Relationships to Power: Family Life

With her arrival in France, Zouina becomes subject to a very restrictive life, cloistered in her home, and controlled by her despotic mother-in-law, who partakes of the patriarchal system in order to access what limited power she can through her association with the male head of the household: her son. In France, the mother-in-law can exercise an acquired authority since the new space allows her to behave according to her relationship with the male body and claim aspects of power normally beyond her reach. It is clear that the mother-in-law and her son, Zouina's husband, are primarily interested in the progeny and that Zouina, as the wife, has little value other than to fulfill her servile role within the family structure. As the only non-blood relative to the husband and mother-in-law, Zouina is treated as Agamben's *homo sacer*, a powerless societal refuse. Upon Zouina's arrival in France, her husband does

not acknowledge her, first greeting his mother and then his children instead. Then, once established in the new house, Zouina does not partake of the meals: she stands and serves the family, which is a concrete example of her liminal existence. Her voiceless presence is foregrounded by the interlocutory exchanges that swirl around her. For example, Zouina's husband speaks to their son before leaving the house: he tells him not to let anyone in. Then, the husband speaks to his daughter after she first speaks to him. Throughout, he does not acknowledge his wife. These scenes are highly charged at the symbolic level and are proof that Zouina is, for all intents and purposes, the *homo sacer* whose life can be taken at any moment without consequence.

Navigating Private and Public Spaces

The movie director, Yamina Benguigui, manages a fundamental humanistic narrative¹⁴ aimed at Western audiences in order to frame the genealogical search of an Arabic immigrant woman—the generalized Eastern subject as opposed to the Western individual—who within the new immigrant context loses all access to power and spaces of negotiations of identity¹⁵ because of displacement. The genealogy of power-relations is altered, concretely, by space. The mother-in-law, however, prospers in this new environment since

¹⁴ We define “humanistic narrative” to be those texts where the Other has a dialogic relationship to the interlocutor and is posited as an equal participant à la Martin Buber rather than as an enemy. Yamina Benguigui succeeds at all levels in integrating within this story of displacement, which seems to naturally invoke the narrative of the voyage, a western trope that amplifies and makes recognizable to western eyes the materiality of migration. The movie's plot-line reverberates with Dante's *Divine Comedy*, just as the *Divine Comedy* resonates with the resurrection of Christ, and just as the resurrection of Christ resonates with the Bacchus celebration and reconstitution of Dionysius. In short, the movie lends itself also to the type of analysis provided by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949). Particularly interesting is the numerical symbolism of three and four, which combined equal a full week, and bring us to the seventh day of Sunday: *dimanche*. Number three becomes a multiple signifier (much like in Dante): three attempts to find her “friend, three helpers” (the French feminist, the widow, the bus-driver), three Sundays, three children. When the mother-in-law says that “we waited for you for four hours,” it signifies that the cycle is complete: four seasons, four points on the compass, four indicates a complete cycle. Zouina was gone for three Sundays, and four hours the last Sunday, and the fourth hour implies she has resurrected herself: has died and is reborn.

¹⁵ According to Richard Jenkin's cutting edge work *Social Identity* (2008), the question of identity is centered on the contested binomial identity/identification, and in this work we address the problematic according to “spaces of negotiations of identity.” Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

she actually occupies that space hierarchically and has the keys, literally, to controlling the family allocations of resources. (The keys are to the cabinet where sugar and other valuables are kept.) Within this framing narrative, Zouina is thrice exploited: as a submissive wife, as an Algerian daughter-in-law, and as a colonial subject. In this sense, then, the mother-in-law is the altered past attempting to rescind Zouina's genealogical ties to other women, which echoes the reaction she receives in her unauthorized visit to Malika, the Algerian woman Zouina searches for in her three-Sunday search. The mother-in-law, by becoming the tool of a shared system of patriarchal oppression, French as well as Algerian, constitutes the ironic representation of the bridge between modernity and France's colonial past. In fact, her presence is the ambiguity of modernity that is the simultaneity of colonial and post-colonial reality we seem unable to escape as multicultural communities. Displacement has encouraged the mother-in-law to internalize the oppressive modes she has been subject to in her own life and country, as, for example, in the use of fearful stories to scare potential friends away from her grandchildren. This extends to controlling her daughter-in-law's body and sexuality, discouraging, for example, Zouina's French friend Mademoiselle Briat from introducing make-up or the latest fashions into the household. Control without surveillance would be ineffectual as pragmatics of societal order, so reporting on Zouina for letting a man—a duplicitous vacuum salesman—into the house is simply an exercise in the ordering of the refuse whose visibility is problematic in itself and whose communications must be continuously monitored lest the possibility of identitary and genealogical manifestations occur.

Escaping to her backyard provides no refuge since it becomes an overtly public space: an area of confrontation between her family and the retired French bourgeois gardeners hoping to again win their neighbourhood horticultural prize. The hobby of gardening is a narrative expedient to show that the domestication of nature is, by extension, the domestication of the Other throughout history. Zouina, in an effort to escape the apparent banality of systematic oppression and in order to re-establish her sense of belonging in the world, escapes to nature beyond the backyard; in the film, she stealthily breaks loose from confinement through the back door to run through a field with a definite purpose in mind: finding her country woman, Malika.

Roots Extend Mostly Horizontally, Perhaps like a Rhizome

The extended climax, the recuperation of the genealogical line, which the film evokes from its inception, is presented as a broken promise of sisterhood. Seeking alliance outside the home, Zouina embarks upon a voyage of discovery in three defined stages, hoping to find complicity and companionship in another Algerian woman who she has heard lives in a neighbouring area. Zouina's three (Sun)day¹⁶ search—hence “dimanche” in the title—sees her lost on the first day in the land of the dead, at the cemetery, where she meets with the widow (of a French military man) who then becomes an ally in her quest. On the second (Sun)day, Zouina goes to the French widow's home. Sitting in the widow's library, Zouina is surrounded with the dead military husband's books, which are the repository of Western thought and images. Confronted with Algerian history from an oral French perspective as told by the widow, Zouina is placed in a context where a dialogue for negotiations of identities can begin, negotiations that can potentially reconstitute the losses associated with the severing of her genealogical line. The widow, on the other hand, has now become disengaged from the patriarchal system because of her societal condition: she is now able to empathize with Zouina's quest for agency. The film's narrative implies that in Algeria Zouina would have been able to assert her views without suffering the condemnation she faces from her Algerian family/community in France.

On the third Sunday, Zouina, with the widow's help, finally discovers Malika, the Algerian woman for whom she was searching. As part of the film's strategic narrative, Zouina's attempt to find Malika is the symbolic attempt to re-establish the genealogical line. However, the meeting is a failure, since Malika has internalized the severance of the genealogical line and looks upon her own daughters as blights, maintaining them only until they can fulfill their roles in the homes of their future husbands. Upon meeting, Zouina greets Malika lovingly as a lost-sister.¹⁷ Malika, however, rushes Zouina into the home, looking about the street, before closing the door, to identify if anyone has seen her unexpected visitor's arrival. Malika immediately quizzes Zouina about her husband, seeking to discover whether Zouina has his permission to visit her. As soon as Malika discovers that Zouina is there illicitly, Malika rejects her, throwing Zouina out of the home. Zouina

¹⁶ Zouina is able to escape the house on Sundays because it is the working man's day off, and the husband is free to take his mother out to prepare for the up-coming holiday of Eid.

¹⁷ This is Zouina's first demonstration of love, beyond duty, and the joyful smile she has when meeting Malika (her counterpart in displacement) resonates with the smile of self-cognition she gives the camera in the closing scene of the film.

cries and begs outside the house, putting her fist through the window. This becomes a defining moment of the narrative,¹⁸ since breaking the window is an attempt, an intentionally crude symbolism, at broadening Malika's horizons.¹⁹ At the same time, the shattering of the window leads the viewer to consider the camera as an optic diaphragm between the subject and viewer: a breaking of the Brechtian fourth wall, or a Pirandellian metaphysical urgency for the amalgamation of spectator and performer.

Frozen Displacement: Narcissism and the Phantom Limb

Zouina is also from another generation of immigrants than Malika (despite their similar ages), represented by the fact that Zouina is more receptive to her French environment. This indicates transformations had already taken place in Algeria in the fifteen years between Malika and Zouina's separate migrations.

The drastic generational differences in attitudes and practices concerning women's autonomy frame the very notion of modernity as we apply it in the West; finally the question is "what is modernity?" Tradition dictates that women are confined to the home, which alienates them from the public sphere. Malika has been entrenched in nostalgia for the duration of her life in France: the Algeria of her emigration has been frozen in time within the space of her home. "Negative nostalgia"²⁰ provides the invisible mirror that

¹⁸ Displacement risks fomenting oppression when patriarchal values are overdetermined in the new setting both in the relationship to Malika and the mother-in-law. In this case, Zouina, as the immigrant woman, loses the social network that situated her in Algeria and with that any possibility to negotiate her role(s). The traditional Algerian family dynamic, when transplanted to France, becomes much more oppressive because there is an entrenchment of authority and normal societal mediation is eliminated. For Zouina, Malika represents home and sisterhood, but the intended French audience will also recognize Malika as a Biblical Peter-figure when Malika throws Zouina out of the house and Zouina desperately pleads for Malika not to abandon her. When Malika rejects Zouina, it is a betrayal and a denunciation because Zouina is seen as being too westernized already. Despite the fact that Zouina has only been in France a short period of time in contrast to Malika's fifteen-year residence, Zouina has become aware of women's independence in France through her friendships with Mademoiselle Briat and what she hears on the radio regarding sex, love, and relationships.

¹⁹ When Zouina breaks the window, it is an attempt to break through Malika's narcissistic circle of affirmation, which freezes development or metamorphosis and confines her to her home, a domestic space that she can control and wherein she can maintain the culture of an imaginary Algeria.

²⁰ The term comes from a conversation between Antonino Mazza and William Anselmi, with regards to Mazza's 'Afterword: Prophecy Versus Memory: Towards a New Pre-History', in

reflects back to Malika the validation she needs to affirm the propriety of her behavior. For Malika, France is a desert of silence. She does not interact with it; the influence of radio or television in her home would infiltrate her control over the nostalgia within which she dwells. On the other hand, Zouina and Malika's daughter establish a complicity of modernity that can encompass the public space of France within which the home is situated and which, in the end, results in a form of transience and growth. There is the insinuation of recognition at a different level, through eye contact, between Zouina and Malika's daughter, who both understand French media and the parlance of feminism and sexuality. Malika's daughter is being forced by her parents' stasis into marriage with her cousin (presumably back in Algeria). The daughter seems to will Zouina to stop speaking to her mother, knowing what the end result will be. She understands that there is no possibility to penetrate the survival shield that her mother has constructed, just as Zouina's own small children later plead with her to stop begging at Malika's door, another liminal stage where sanctuary will not be accorded, and a space indicating the phantom pain of a severed genealogy. What Zouina does not yet recognize at that moment in her development is that the severing of the phantom limb is an absence which can be reconstituted and that this metamorphosis designates procreative transformation. She realizes this shortly thereafter on her symbolic voyage across the city in the bus, wherein she confirms what she already knows to be true: her sense of self as mediated through a form of French feminism can reconnect her to her extended genealogical origins, and she can affirm herself through the printed word (education) and through her connection to future generations (her children, specifically her daughter).

Claiming Space and the Autonomous-Self Assertion of Power

After putting her fist through the window and receiving no response from Malika²¹—although it should be noted that the viewer sees Malika's silent anguish and tearful breast-beating within the confines of her home—Zouina wraps her bleeding hand in the scarf she pulls from her head. She walks past

Pier Paolo Pasolini: Poetry, trans. by Antonio Mazza (Toronto: Exile Editions, 1991), pp. 133-137. Basically, "negative nostalgia" is a direct result of displacement where identity is stultified by an overpositivization of one's past experiences, which turn out to be anti-historical and solely the reconstruction of an entrenched imagination.

²¹ Malika's inability to escape from the confinement of her death-like existence in a frozen past is an allusion to the mythological figure of Eurydice, who can not be brought out of the confines of the underworld by Orpheus.

the widow who is waiting for her with a taxi; Zouina does not acknowledge her but bypasses her and boards the bus. The framing of how space can be crossed over is given by the two methods of transportation: the taxi is an individualistic enterprise, whereas the bus represents the fluid community. Yet, the bus driver commands all passengers, aside from Zouina and her children, to disembark. After the other passengers descend, the driver tells Zouina to “stay by my side.” He becomes her guide across the city, as she returns home to her new self-discovered identity that encompasses the past and the future, through culture.²² The past is her Algerian tradition; the future, through implied references to the radio and to the women she befriends, is French late-1960s feminism: transmission of knowledge from woman to woman, mother to daughter, hence the inferred meaning of the film’s final images.

The last scene is highly symbolic. Zouina’s voyage through the urban landscape inscribes her and the children within their new reality. As the bus approaches her reclaimed home, Zouina looks out the windshield and sees her waiting community: the widow, the young French feminist Mademoiselle Briat, the old couple from next door, her mother-in-law Aïcha, and her husband are standing in front of the house forming a familial tableau. The mother-in-law starts shrilly chastising Zouina for making them wait four hours. At this juncture, the husband takes control by shouting at his mother in Zouina’s defence: the mother-in-law retreats inside the home. The hierarchy is transformed, and in the final scene the male gaze of the camera is brought to bear upon s/he who gazes because the viewer is imbricated in the husband’s reaction to Zouina’s final statements. When the camera focuses on Zouina, she ends up reversing the role of the gaze as Laura Mulvey conceived of it: we as viewers become subject to her gaze. In the last scene, Zouina puts her arm around her young daughter and says to her, while looking ahead into her husband’s face, “Demain, c’est moi, je vous amène à l’école” (Tomorrow, I’m going to take you to school [referring to all three children]).

²³ The fact that Zouina sees education as an opportunity and that she reads

²² This is a symbolic reference to Ulysses’s odyssey and is evidence that Zouina is claiming belonging for all immigrant women in France. Since Ulysses in the *Odyssey* becomes everyman, he does represent humanity’s quest for a hopeful future through a regenerative process. Zouina, as the only woman on the bus, represents all women and the conquest of confined space: the liberation of all immigrant women to move freely in society, physically and metaphorically.

²³ Benguigui artfully plays with viewer expectations based on Hollywood cinema. The look between husband and wife, at first, suggests a romantic marital reconciliation of sorts—a happy ending. The words that follow, however, identify that the happy ending here actually results from a reconfiguration of family power-structures with Zouina looking to the future

and writes inscribes her into the cultural milieu. Because of the pause that follows her statement and the fact that she smiles as the film ends, the viewer understands that the husband has been receptive to this new power-shift. Furthermore, in Zouina's emancipation, she is no longer covering her hair. She has used her headscarf to bandage her bleeding hand that now rests on her daughter's shoulder: the blood signifies the continuity of the genealogy as it has re-written itself over the patterns of the page/scarf. From the traditional perspective, the fact that her hair is publicly displayed *could* symbolize her individual sexual liberation. However, from a Western perspective, the removal of the headscarf *could also* signify the re-appropriation of the body and the reconstitution of a new language to interpret the body: she can now choose whether she wants her hair to signify her sexuality, or not. The hair becomes a free-floating signifier that is no longer predetermined by men's semantics of power. The final scene heals the genealogical caesura that Zouina suffered when she was dragged onto the boat from Algeria to France by her mother-in-law at the beginning of the movie. Genealogy is re-established between Zouina, as mother, and her own daughter, within the context of French urban culture; as an Algerian she becomes integrated within a multi-cultural society that does not relegate her into a submissive space.

Transitioning to the Twenty-First Century

Inch'Allah Dimanche, released on the cusp of 9/11, indicates a hopeful paradigm for the future that cannot come to fruition based on the interpretation and the media-spin given to September 11, 2001. The dominant rhetoric thereafter fits within a discourse of Clash of Civilizations, supported by the encompassing Western rallying cry: "We are all Americans"/"We are all New Yorkers."²⁴ This cry functioned as a rhetorical strategy that endeared George W. Bush to the American people and the world, at least temporarily. At the same time, this was part of the polarization of the world into two camps: one constituting civilization and the other as a grouping of monstrous barbarians, as subtly illustrated by the 2007 movie *300*. Finally, it became an issue of the West as a site for the reaffirmation of life and the East as the location of

for herself and her children, especially the daughter who appears in the configuration of the last scene.

²⁴ In some European countries the identification was with New York, in other cases with America. Nevertheless, both slogans echoed with the 1985 song "We Are the World," America's music-world contribution to the fight against famine in Africa. Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie, 'We Are the World', USA for Africa, cond. by Quincy Jones (1985).

chaos and death, which is the reversal of the dynamic reflected in *Inch'Allah Dimanche*. This simplistic narrational dichotomy, recounted by the Western media, encapsulates a complex of issues without having to contextualize their meaning.²⁵ Power is given to a select few reoccurring and echoing images provided in the Western media. Around the time of September 11, these images included the towers collapsing, people crying and asking why anyone would attack benevolent America, and, later, clips of video-game-like night-vision footage of the War in Iraq constantly played on circuit. Over the last decade, the select images have changed, but the quintessential aspect remains the same: images of 9/11 have been consistently used to solidify a state of trauma and mourning that can be used to rally support for the invasion of Eastern countries and the illegal detainment of Muslims in the West,²⁶ as well as the steadfast erosion of civil liberties in Western nations and the reinforcement of practices against civil liberties in other countries.²⁷ A surprising element of the erosion of civil liberties throughout the West has been the attempt to implement, through this very same rubric, the notion of Sharia in Canada, specifically in Québec and Ontario. While allowing for Sharia law in Canada—something which apparently had taken place, to some degree, in Ontario, before the documentary was shot—might appear to be a progressive notion, it actually subscribes to conservative capitalist practices of domination over weak constituencies.

²⁵ *Inch'Allah Dimanche* is about women, who represent the future and the past. Men, on the other hand, have exhausted their attempts to order life, much like colonialism has consumed itself. The men are metaphorically dead: one male character has long-ago widowed his wife before the beginning of the plot; Zouina's husband himself is a metaphoric zombie; the door-to-door salesman is the trickster of capitalism telling Zouina she has won a vacuum and then setting her up on an unaffordable payment plan; the neighbour man married to the award-winning gardener represents the silent majority; and the bus driver can be interpreted as both a guide away from the underworld and guide to her *new* home.

²⁶ As we finalize this article, in late spring 2009, one of the promised and yet undelivered resolutions of the newly elected American Obama government is to close Guantanamo Bay. However, it was indicated through court proceeding in San Francisco on 9 February 2009, that the legitimacy of extraordinary rendition under the Bush government would be maintained by the Obama Administration, which adopted the same stance on state secret privilege, arguing that releasing evidence against the victims of extraordinary rendition could potentially jeopardize national state security.

²⁷ The outsourcing of torture by Western nations, to countries such as Egypt and Syria, is one example. The feature film *Rendition* (2007) with Meryl Streep and Reese Witherspoon illustrates this process for the viewing public.

Sharia in Canada/ La charia au Canada²⁸

Sharia in Canada presents us with a problematic interpretation of the process whereby certain religious leaders tried to tweak the economic agreements between provinces and the US (impacting Canadian multiculturalism) in order to legitimize Sharia mediation courts in Canada. At the time of the film's production there were unofficial mediation courts operating in Ontario, and the film tracks the subsequent debates in Québec and Ontario. The problem with the documentary is that it presents a binary set-up (us versus them), and, informed by secular humanistic principles, it argues against Sharia. In doing so, however, the documentary is unable to nuance and problematize its own position vis-à-vis the complexity of national and international interplay.

Multiculturalism in Canada is not a fixed social category; since even before its inscription into Canada's vision of itself in 1971, multiculturalism was a lived and practiced reality. With the official declaration of multiculturalism, it became even more complex as a rubric, since lived reality was not necessarily integrated into the official bilingual Canadian vision of a multicultural nation. State multiculturalism was based on the pride of one's heritage and the acceptance of specified representations such as the culinary and the performative aspects of heritage cultures.²⁹ In the end, the term multiculturalism is a contested one, since, throughout the decades, attempts by certain individuals and/or ethno-cultural groups have been made to go beyond the limits imposed by state multiculturalism in order to enter into a dialectic with political power structures, so as to acquire participatory visibility beyond the integrated spaces of performance. This process was undermined by the Meech Lake Accord, which impeded the aspirations of ethno-cultural groups

²⁸ This documentary is presented in a non-orthodox format, divided into two episodes that draw on the same interview materials edited with a different communicative strategy and audience in mind. In this article, we concentrate on the first episode entitled "Something to Fear?" because it pertains more specifically to our comparative analysis with *Inch'Allah Dimanche* and its feminist issues in a post-9/11 world. However, the reader should be aware of the existence of the second episode "The Pitfalls of Diversity" that problematizes the multicultural reality in Canada and elsewhere (France and Greece, for example) where Sharia is only one of many different issues that sustain the critical discourse about diversity, assimilation, integration, and social coexistence. The analysis of the two episodes in relationship to one another will constitute the premise for a future investigation.

²⁹ Originally formulated by William Anselmi in 'Italian Canadian as displacement poetics: context, history, and literary production', *Studi Emigrazione/Migration Studies—International Journal of Migration Studies*, XLIV (2007), pp. 369-388. The term was "integrated spaces of performance." The concept was later expanded upon to become "performative multiculturalism" in a co-authored article with Sheena Wilson: 'Performative Radicalism'.

wanting to contribute to a sense of what defines Canadian identity.³⁰ In other words, identity as a process of negotiation was once again limited by the definition of a bilingual country so that multiculturalism becomes a form of entertainment. What the film demonstrates is how the proponents of Sharia use multiculturalism as a cloaking device to demand Sharia's implementation, and by default the opposition to Sharia ends up fossilizing multiculturalism into its depoliticized spectacular representations. Because a rhetorical binary system has already been established by 9/11, any opposition to Sharia, ironically, reinforces the working script of state multiculturalism that does not permit for any critical engagement about other factors within the lived reality of multiculturalism because any other issues are already pre-established as threatening, hence the title of the episode: "Something to Fear." Despite the documentary's seemingly progressive agenda, it uses a strategy of narration that readily fits the available format in the West for how to deal with the Eastern threat to replace Western civilization with the Caliphate. Ultimately, the film terrorizes the viewer into thinking that Muslim men are the final problem: terrorists in the West, in their own communities, mosques, and families. The semantic laxity regarding the term "Sharia" demonstrates a plurality that ends up confusing, not elucidating, the issues, and as the complexity of Sharia-related issues has not been sufficiently eviscerated, the documentary clarifies nothing and relies on pre-established discourses that are regurgitated as spectacle: i.e. Eastern women to be saved by Canadian society. The viewer is left hanging. Is Sharia something to fear? If so, by whom? Seemingly, it is a problem for Muslim women and, in that scenario, what is the rhetorical goal of the documentary? Is it to spectacularize conflict within Muslim communities or is it to demand neo-colonial intervention on the part of mainstream viewers to save Muslim women? While we, the authors, do *not* think Sharia should be implemented, we also recognize that every manifestation of Muslim expression is a venue for Western siege-mentality, and this is a direct result of 9/11. The rhetorical strategy of the documentary finally capitulates to the maintenance of state multiculturalism that does not permit for any manifestation of multiculturalism beyond its performative mechanisms.

Where the film succeeds is that it does interview several people who expose a number of well-informed arguments against Sharia, while the pro-Sharia proponents undo the rationale of their own argumentation; these inter-

³⁰ For more on how the Meech Lake Accord nullified the participatory claims of ethnic minorities, please see Evelyn Kallen, 'The Meech Lake Accord: Entrenching a Pecking Order of Minority Rights', *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de Politiques* 14 (1988), pp. 107-120.

viewees provide clues to the viewer about the complexities of the issues surrounding Sharia. But the film fails on two levels: 1) it falls into recognizable tropes that identify Muslim men as a threat, this time to their own communities; and 2) in doing so, it fails to question the role of religion in secular post-9/11 Western societies. Lawyer Renée Côté from the Association nationale, Femmes et droit, Ottawa, bluntly states that religion, per se, is the issue. As a Québécoise who understands the Duplessis³¹ reign of power, she argues that it is not Islam but religious institutions in general that subject women to repressive cultural codes, from which contemporary Canadian laws protect them. Sharia cannot function in Canada for the reasons that Sharia itself partakes of multiple interpretations according to different geo-cultural/political spaces, that it is inconsistent with Canada's legal system, and that it disenfranchises Muslim women and presents a threat to other repressed groups. According to Côté and other anti-Sharia advocates in the documentary, integrating Sharia in Canada would result in the erosion of a secular society, and whatever the faith, religious institutions have a historical record of oppressing certain constituencies.

The film, responsibly, tries to present a dialectic on the issue of Sharia, with the aim of presenting an objective purview, but the narrative fails to present a cohesive argument since the anti-Sharia positions are discussed from variegated semantic perspectives: Sharia as a cultural interpretation, Sharia as a legal code, Sharia as a religious issue, and Sharia as a gender power-relation issue. The voice-over does not provide clarification of terminology or an overview of the complex and interrelated issues, so that Sharia ends up being a *passpartout* point of view. As we move away from 9/11, Canada needs to understand how the religious and the cultural have become one and how the failure to differentiate between the two is a direct result of eight years of the Bush Administration and policies, which has had fallout on other national paradigms, Canada's included.

The conflation of religious and cultural spaces is a result of debris authoritarianism³² in one of its most belligerent manifestations that allows the religious-right to claim authority within the secular world. As such, we would argue that Sharia is an entry point into the dismantling of a post-enlightenment secular society: once a group of women are disenfranchised (regardless of whether they are Muslim), this sets up a process whereby there exists the potential for other factions of society to be exploited and for syner-

³¹ An interesting reading of Maurice Duplessis's vision of grandeur can be found in Marguerite Paulin, *Maurice Duplessis: le noble, le petit roi* (Montréal: XYZ, 2002).

³² By debris authoritarianism we refer to the politically toxic fallout after the 9/11 event that took authoritarian forms and undermined the principles of a democratic society.

gistically coherent ghettos of repression to form. When one religious group oppresses women, then any other religious group can follow suit. Furthermore, allowing a minority group to integrate itself into the secular-legal realities strengthens the attempt throughout North America to institutionalize religious *modus operandi*. This process parallels the dismantling of the welfare state whereby disenfranchised groups cannot rely on the protection of the state but must find solace in charity. The dismantling of the welfare state works in tandem with the erosion of secular society: the argument is that “we” are a community, “we” don’t need the government, and the “we” aggregates around religious institutions and is sustained and nurtured by the neo-liberal laissez-faire attitude.

Rhetorical Construction of Sharia in Canada

The discourse of power in the first episode of the film is tied to the hermeneutics of divine text. Throughout this movie, the legitimacy of the printed word is framed by the way words and images have intersected in a post-9/11 world. The opening lines of the documentary are as follows:

Since September 11, 2001, a new era has begun in the West, one where battles in the name of Islam are being fought in its cities. Muslims here and elsewhere feel besieged on one side by those claiming to dictate their true faith and on the other by people who see their religion as diabolical. In this atmosphere one word strikes fear into people’s hearts: Sharia.

This narrative voice-over guides the gaze, but the visual message is a montage of images that stand in contrast to the oral message: the visual and the verbal clash. Whereas the voice seems to present the viewer with a detached analysis, the flow of images elicits particular emotional responses since the images represent people and moments that have threatened Western stability: for example, the first image is of bin Laden holding a machine gun. Since his location is unknown, he is nowhere and everywhere. The next image in the video collage is the collapsing Twin Towers; then British police officers; then what we can assume is the train bombing in Spain; followed by a machine gun mounted on a vehicle traveling through an unidentifiable urban zone; and Eastern³³ police officers—perhaps Pakistani—guarding a contain-

³³ We are aware of the changing political ideologies bound to certain identity-tags. Before 1989 “Eastern” would have dictated East of the Berlin Wall. After 9/11 this designation has shifted locality to the “Middle East,” which itself is a free-floating signifier that can encompass any politically contentious region east of Greece, à la 300.

er; wanted posters presumably representing Muslim terrorists; and, finally, images of people walking and shopping in the streets in what is presumably a Muslim area of town in a large cosmopolitan city. In this shot, some of the women are wearing headscarves, others are not, and the different dress-codes of both men and women suggest a multicultural setting. By the time we see the title “Sharia in Canada. Something to Fear?”³⁴ superimposed over a downward angled pan-shot scanning elaborately gilded books displayed on a tabletop (visual shopping), the viewer has already been spatially and temporally situated in Canada: Queen’s Park, Toronto, 8 September, 2005. The objectivity of the documentary has projected a discursive dichotomy causing tension between the aural and visual messages. It is possible, then, to deconstruct the documentary into a structure whereby the first object of our narrative analysis will be the frame.

Frame

The tone of the documentary, which is comprised of the image and the word, is paradoxical. While the images that introduce the film show moments of terrorism enacted by Muslims, the film narrative goes on to state that Muslims are “besieged on one side by those claiming to dictate their true faith, on the other by people who see their religion as diabolical.” This narrative characterizes Muslims as double-victims: victims within their own community and victims within Western society, specifically Canada. This also homogenizes Muslim Canadians: a false representation, since we are not only presented with Muslims living in two different Canadian realities—Québec and Ontario—but also with Muslims from a plethora of cultures, who have different spatial-temporal relationships to Canada.

If the clash between word and image works as a framing device that guides the viewer into the problems that the documentary is trying to present, a number of questions arise: 1) Was the image-word contrast intentional? 2) Did the contrast occur beyond the director’s intentions due to the fact that the selected images are context bound and resist inclusion in a discussion that attempts to nuance the problems of multiculturalism for citizens who wish to maintain specific cultural practices that disempower existing Canadian laws? 3) Was the conflation of images and oral narrative a process of intertextuality

³⁴ The name of the French version of the episode is “Qu’est-ce qui fait si peur?” The film is bilingual. The filmmaker interviews people in English and in French, in Ontario and in Québec (namely Toronto and Montréal), and there is both an English and French version of the film; subtitles are provided.

that escaped the consideration of the director and editors of the film, producing its own narrative? The director seems to have used certain images to create a backdrop for this intended message without sufficient awareness that the images are also creating their own narrative, equally or more powerful in the age of the image in which we live, and these two narratives contradict one another at the outset of the film. The contradiction renders the frame unstable. This documentary, therefore, has a certain merit but does not fully address its own potential. Basically, it considers the image as a tool rather than a complete system of communication that has its own grammar and syntax, as well as historical and semiotic relationships to other texts and to culture in general. Taking all of this into consideration, where does the viewer situate him/herself?

Whatever the intentionality of the film, the result is that the choice of images framing the narrative produces an historical representation reduced to a post-9/11 vision of Islam and the Eastern world. This is done to maintain influence over Muslims around the world, including those living in Canada. Within this frame, Sharia is presented as problematic because the film maintains that it is controlled by imams imported from the East to stand guard over Islam in the West, where Islam risks contamination. Imams are also portrayed as agents sent to expand the Islamic sphere of influence in the Western world. According to the documentary, those who have either sought refuge in Canadian laws or those who are enfranchised by them will find themselves again in a perilous situation.

The problematic of the film is that representing the potential threat that Sharia poses in such a polarized manner plays into post-9/11 representations of Islam as an unstable and disruptive rubric. The concern for certain groups, who are at risk of exclusion from the protection of Canadian juridical processes, is valid, yet the argument is faulty and strategically weak because it does not provide the viewer with a nuanced understanding of how women's rights are being undermined and what the far-reaching ramifications could be for any number of Canadian constituencies. The overall process of the documentary succumbs to the spectacle, which bypasses any multicultural problematic and makes only the reductive implication that the real problem is Muslim men. Fear is used here, as in the mainstream media-circuit, and this stultifies the documentary's informative potential. Polarizing an issue, as this narrative does, unifies the political spectrum into reactionary and absolutist statements. Ultimately, in this film, the threat becomes not Muslims, but Muslim men, who abuse their power whether it is in the domestic sphere or the global political arena. Muslim men are equated with fundamentalists who

are themselves reduced to the lowest common denominator: *those people, those terrorists*.

Unfortunately, despite the film's critical intentions, it cannot resist the *zeitgeist*, which reduces narratives to authoritarian visions of the world. Viewers fearful of the repercussions of the implementation of Sharia law for Muslim women in Canada, and by extension the progressive erosion of women's rights in general, are encouraged through the construction of the narrative to opt to maintain the status quo (which excludes Sharia). Those motivated by a fear of Islamic fundamentalism will also opt to maintain the status quo: the Canadian legal system. Therefore, in this context, there is only one possible development: no matter what, the maintenance of a right-wing/conservative praxis ensures that neo-liberal ideology remains unchallenged, despite the spectacle created around arguing for or against women's rights. The frame sets up a false history because it narrowly formulates the anti-Sharia argument as simply a feminist problematic without considering the broader implications, which from our point of view would have included the fact that human rights per se are at stake.

Actors

The women interviewed in the film, who represent various Islamic backgrounds—by class, education, and culture—all express their concern about the fact that Sharia mediation would disenfranchise them, because in most Islamic cultures men interpret and apply the Word. While this gendered message comes through, the women's different backgrounds and perspectives, and the information they provide, contribute to the rhetorical failings of the narrative. Upper class educated women represent Sharia as an issue of law, and middle class and working class women provide experiential testimony about the lived reality of patriarchy on the domestic sphere. In so doing, the term Sharia comes to signify a plurality of issues, for which the narrative provides no focus. Therefore, as viewers, we are made to continuously migrate between the public and the private sphere, through the various women, and this is another problem of the post-political³⁵ world that limits viewers to accepting the authority of television and cinematic rendition of complex issues, as these technologies resonate with authorial voices. In the film, the

³⁵ Post-political discourse is predominantly a rhetorical strategy that conflates the historical political dialectic, grounding itself instead in the a-historical moment within the fluidity or absence of right/left-political actions. Anselmi & Wilson, 'Performative Radicalism'.

plurality of voices is commendable, yet the plurality of voices also presents different entry points into the “problem” of Sharia – cultural, legal, religious—and the viewer is finally forced to accept the dichotomy at play: Muslim men versus Muslim women. There is no acknowledgement that the erosion of Muslim women’s rights will undermine the rights of all Canadians. The debate, for non-Muslims, is a spectacle that will not impact them. No engagement is required on the part of non-Muslim viewers. The film suggests that as a religious-cultural mandate, Muslim women would be obligated to accept Sharia mediation, as opposed to relying on Canada’s legal system. Even if both were available to them, community pressure would dictate and there would be no exception from a patriarchal implementation of Sharia. Yet, paradoxically the narrative reinforces a class structure within women’s realities, which ultimately alters and consumes genealogical continuity.

Though it claims that all oppressed voices are equal, certain upper class,³⁶ well-educated women are able to manoeuvre around the dangers of Sharia. One of these women, Fatima Houda-Pepin, is able to inform a political decision.³⁷ Houda-Pepin is of Moroccan descent, and she represents the uppermost echelon of Québec society, since she is an elected member of the Québec National Assembly. It is, in fact, due to her that Québec passed laws against Sharia, making the province appear to be more pro-active and aware of cultural complexities. Fatima Houda-Pepin is the rational Other who explains the logic of the law. The film, in its representation of this issue, favors Québec as a site of liberalism and secularism.

Amira Elias is a theologian, teacher, artist, and filmmaker from Montreal who represents herself as a religious leader, since she is studying to be a female imam. She is aware of the role that an imam should ideally play in society, and she represents the spiritually aware, socially responsible, not politically motivated leader of the community. This is in contrast to the phantasm of the male religious authority, Syed Mumtaz Ali, who never appears on screen but is represented as an authoritarian imposition on Canadians and specifically Canadian Muslim women.

Nuzhat Jafri is the third woman in this category of actors. She is from the Canadian Council of Muslim Women in Toronto, and as an activist she is particularly concerned with social issues such as *jawaz el mutaa*, marriage of pleasure. She is of Pakistani origin and feels that Canada is one of the best

³⁶ Although class in Canada is not something that is acknowledged in the same way as it is in some countries, it is a condition that is understood in relationship to people’s individual (not born) economic strata combined with education and employment status.

³⁷ Québec frames Sharia as a political issue, based on Houda-Pepin’s perspective and argument. In Ontario, with no one leading the debate, it becomes more of a social debate.

places to live in the world for Muslim women. Therefore, she is interested in protecting Muslim women's human rights, and she sees Sharia as a threat to that project. Québec lawyer Andrée Côté, who we have already mentioned, represents an intellectual sister and advocate from outside the Muslim community who is able to forge alliances in order to protect the status of all women in Canadian society. The other female characters who appear in the film illustrate by contrast the class hierarchy established through the film's narrative.

One such individual is Mounia,³⁸ who appears to be from a more working class background. She talks of a Pakistani neighbor who is still confined to an oppressive traditional system, unable to leave the house. Mounia says, "I have a neighbor from Pakistan. The wife never goes outside. I think she's been here 5 years." Mounia is important as a character, both because she has rejected the patriarchal dictate in her own life—she was married at fifteen but is now no longer with her husband and has greater aspirations for her daughter—and because she tries to foster solidarity with other Muslim women who are or have been in such circumstances. For example, she encourages her young Pakistani friend's autonomy. And yet, as we shall see in contrast to the cinematic representation of some of the other women, her visual identity is fully disclosed under the assumption that she will suffer no repercussions, despite the fact that her husband has previously threatened to kill her if she does not send her children to him in Morocco.

Bouchra,³⁹ whose voice fully represents the oppressed woman, stands as the *homo sacer* body. The camera focuses on a scar on her hand, for example, that illustrates her status as a victim of domestic violence. Bouchra embodies the working class, and she is able to talk about her past abuse directly (not mitigated by a sophisticated analysis) so that her life represents the epidermis of visible oppression. Evidence of her working class status includes the fact that her interview takes place at her kitchen table, the fact that as a young woman (likely in her late thirties) she has already birthed twelve children but seemingly has custody of none (all living with their fathers at this point), and the fact that her understanding of the failings of Sharia mediation, while valid, are drawn from an experiential understanding of law and its applicability to women's daily lives and possibilities for autonomy. Bouchra has been directly affected by the patriarchal vision of Islam promoted by an imam to

³⁸ Mounia is one of a number of mothers that echo the narrative voice-over message and legitimize the claims of the narrator and the film.

³⁹ She is a mother (married three times) that has been abused by two former husbands; she came to Canada in 1996. The film's narrator indicates that she has been living in hiding. The implication is that she is in danger.

whom she went for help when separating from her one of her husbands: she lost contact with the two children from that marriage due to the decisions of the imam. Despite the fact that Mounia says she is in hiding, the director still shows her face, as if to say that those who threaten her will not be watching National Film Board of Canada documentaries.

In contrast to the women, the men who appear in the film are not identifiably signified by class, but rather all of them maintain varying degrees of power through their roles and positions. While they promote varying political perspectives and allegiances, they still claim it as their right to speak on behalf of women and their experiences, since power is still male-centered.⁴⁰ According to this understanding of social relationships, women have no inherent right to power or autonomy, but rather, power is allocated to them by men. Apart from the lingering phantasm of Syed Mumtaz Ali who instigated the issue of Sharia mediation in Canada but never actually appears in the film, the two major male figures are Mubin Shaikh and Tarek Fatah. The latter is a media personality with his own television show, and he represents a progressive perspective. He is cast in contrast to the zealot trickster Mubin Shaikh, a born-again Muslim by his own definition. In other social circumstances, one could label him an opportunist, a hypocrite, and a would-be radical. He is in favor of Sharia mediation, which he has apparently been conducting with great results (according to his own report) for a number of years in Ontario. He is also an absolutist reader of Sharia and in one public forum argues for the punishment of adultery by stoning, if the population is in favor of such methods of social control.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Even Tarek Fatah, who is an advocate for Muslim women's rights in relationship to Sharia, still speaks in a way that reveals the patriarchal power that he holds in the mosque, power that he can relinquish to women. Although an advocate, he exposes his deeply engrained sense of gender relations. In the second episode, he says to one of his pro-Sharia adversaries:

If you wish to put women in the basements, behind barriers then you are free to do it. Don't tell me that I cannot honor my mother, my daughter, my wife. [...] I am clear with my prophet and my Allah. I don't expect any imam anywhere to come and dictate to me how to practice my faith. I am asking ordinary Canadians to give me equal rights, where they are in power. In the mosque, where I am in power, I will determine that I will give equal rights to the female gender. If they demand equal rights from Canadians and then in the mosque say "we want equal rights but we don't want to give it to women" they have a sad story ahead of them.

He reveals his belief that he holds the power and can benevolently bestow it on the women in his life.

⁴¹ Since the release of the film, Mubin Shaikh has been exposed as a police informant. As part of the "Toronto 18" he was paid \$300,000 to report to the RCMP on the activities of his co-

Most obtrusive to the viewer is Shaikh's obvious spectacularized performances honed for his various audiences: people milling about at a public venue (possibly a mosque or a university), debating at universities in Toronto and Montréal, or shouting back and forth with demonstrators in Queen's Park, Toronto, in front of the legislative grounds. Whatever the situation, Shaikh is playing to the camera.⁴² His performances are made blatant by his fluctuating dialectal inflections⁴³ that move from being more or less exotic and Eastern to mainstream Canadian English. His father was born in India and grew up in Britain, and Shaikh himself was born and raised in Canada. From where does the non-descript "Middle Eastern" accent derive? We know from his well-publicized personal history that he lives a life of extremes,⁴⁴ and playing the devout Muslim is the most profitable choice of identity for him to adopt at this particular historical juncture. The women in his community who will be subject to the political choices that he advocates, however, do not have the option to fluidly move between identities and lifestyles.

Narrative voice-over, edited dialogues, and visual montage all work together to titillate the viewer with the imminent danger of Sharia. These cinematic techniques contribute to categorize Sharia as a social-legal destabilizer in Canada.⁴⁵ Behind this representation we can extrapolate the basic tenant of the post-9/11 world: the civilized enlightened citizen besieged by classical notions of "barbarians at the gate," more contemporarily identified as Islamist⁴⁶ or Islamofascist,⁴⁷ terms that point to the semantic blurring, which are characteristic of our present political discourses.

hort. He later demanded compensation of \$2.7 million: \$3.0 million minus the \$300,000 he had already been paid. Michael Friscolanti, 'The "Toronto 18"—Two Years Later: The Suspects. The Former Suspects. And the Men who Helped Bring Them All Down', *Maclean's* 2 June 2008 <http://www.macleans.ca/article.jsp?content=20080602_121019_7492> [accessed 25 May 2009].

⁴² We have identified this type of behaviour in a previous article on Irshad Manji. Anselmi and Wilson, 'Performative Radicalism'. We refer to the performer of this behavior as the "optic personage" that is media savvy enough to ultimately bring him/herself to the centre of any debate, thereby manufacturing iconic status for the purpose of economic gain.

⁴³ Here, our term plays on the fact that Shaikh seems to espouse a dialectical process that he feels will be more authentic if he adopts an accented speech.

⁴⁴ There is biographical information available that tells of his drug-addicted, carousing past lifestyle. He makes mention of it in the film when he points out that he has five tattoos and thirteen self-inflicted cigarette burns, the residue of a wayward life that used to include "girls, drinking, drugs."

⁴⁵ The second episode demonstrates the "pitfalls" of a multicultural society that is thus destabilized.

⁴⁶ In the film, Tarek Fatah explains: "The difference between a Muslim and an Islamist is that an Islamist is a Muslim who wishes to impose a political structure that almost borders a

Post-political discourse has become a useful narrative script for politically naïve individuals, and the pro-Sharia debate is framed so as to imply that it becomes not a question of choices in this life, but choices that will impact salvation or damnation. In a 2008 article in *FrontPage Magazine*, Kathy Shaidle reports on the following comments by Syed Mumtaz Ali:

“As Canadian Muslims, you have a clear choice,” wrote the group’s president Syed Mumtaz Ali. “Do you want to govern yourself by the personal law of your own religion or do you prefer governance by secular Canadian family law? If you choose the latter, then you cannot claim that you believe in Islam as a religion and a complete code of life actualized by a prophet who you believe to be a mercy to all.”⁴⁸

In the article, Shaidle reminds us that “the punishment for apostasy under Sharia law is death.” Syed Mumtaz Ali promotes the idea that Muslims must choose between their religious identity and the full rights of Canadian citizenship. He also argues for the implementation of Sharia by claiming that Muslims in Canada deserve sovereignty as is the case for First Nations and Quebecois peoples, but in the same breath he claims that to be Canadian is to be disloyal and to become an apostate to the Islamic faith: in other words, an infidel. The navigation between the uniqueness of Muslim peoples and the expectations formed by the treatment of Others within a multicultural paradigm are conflated so as to become a sense of entitlement without responsibility to one of the constituencies: women. Tarek Fatah points to this fact when he says:

Mr. Mumtaz Ali would not take aspects of Islamic law that would be liberating, that would allow the woman to pray side-by-side with men, as in the house of God, as in the first mosque of Islam, as in the Kaaba, but he will take invocations from Iran and Saudi Arabia which will throw the women in the back of the bus. So all the things that can be beneficial for the progress of the Muslim world would not be in the Sharia.

This reference to “the back of the bus” implies an apartheid such as was the reality for Rosa Parks in 1955 and was a post-script, in that context, of slav-

fascist style of government that excludes everyone, that creates a hierarchy of the chosen and the not chosen. But a Muslim by faith would be someone who believes in the five tenets of Islam.”

⁴⁷ This is a term popularized by the Bush Administration. Cheryl Gay Stolberg, “‘Islamofascism’ Had Its Moment”, *New York Times* 24 September 2006 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/24/weekinreview/24stolberg.html?r=1&emc=eta>> [accessed 25 May 2009].

⁴⁸ Kathy Shaidle, ‘Britain’s Sharia Courts’, *FrontPage Magazine* 17 September 2008 <<http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/Read.aspx?GUID=A27F7C33-6E33-49D2-BE2F-551AC1893A87>> [accessed 25 May 2009].

ery. The limitations imposed by Sharia end up reproducing systems of control of the Other body—slavery, indentured servitude, serfdom—which have been put into practice at particular historical moments, always with the same declination: one group of people oppressing another to create a viable work-force conditioned to accept lesser pay for the work produced, to the benefit of the exploiting class. In the end, human capital is a trope: women are consumed, and imams, according to the film, are paid to collect their dues: i.e. followers.

A Contrast of Visions: Intentionality in Film as a Political Discourse

Sharia in Canada read through the perspective of *Inch'Allah Dimanche* should elicit an understanding of the cultural processes that were at work as semantic paradigms shifted after 9/11. Basically, the shift indicated a passage from the realization of a post-enlightenment political agenda (the entrenchment of civil rights, for example), to the attempts at the erasure of those societal gains through slippages (in the lingual-legalistic sphere) sustained by economic and ideological goals. Movies such as the ones that we have chosen to compare in this article are directly or indirectly informed by these political processes, since they reflect the cultural realities of individuals and communities struggling to navigate the socio-political tensions and contradictions of their respective places/nations/time periods: the cusp of 9/11 (*Inch'Allah Dimanche*) and the subsequent developments by 2006 (*Sharia in Canada*). The analysis encompasses France, the European context, and Canada, as the politics of the individual outside America have become entwined with America's foreign policy after September 11, 2001.

Sharia in Canada fails to present a coherent case because it is subject to the post-9/11 semantic confusion that has altered not only our relationship with language but also how we interpret specific facts through language, another post-political outcome resulting from the erasure of boundaries between public and private realities. As John Collins and Ross Glover state in their introduction to the insightful work *Collateral Language: A User's Guide to America's New War*:

Just as "collateral damage" describes military damage in addition to the intended targets, "collateral language" refers to the language war as a practice adds to our ongoing lexicon as well as to the additional meaning certain terms acquire during wartime. We call language a terrorist organization to illustrate the real effects of language on citizens, especially in times

of war. Language, like terrorism, targets civilians and generates fear in order to effect political change.⁴⁹

Taking into consideration the transformative effect that war has on language as well as Agamben's notion of the state of emergency, we then argue that the term "multiculturalism" has been finally voided of any positive potential. Therefore, enacting a multiculturalist point of view encompasses information that pertains to a context broader than national boundaries, in this case Canada's borders, so that when the filmmakers for *Sharia in Canada*, for example, illustrated the pro-Sharia individuals who used multiculturalism to legitimize the practice of Sharia, they needed to be aware that specific historical junctures have reset the semantic space occupied by that word as to avoid their final conclusion, which was that the threat was Muslim men. Therefore, according to the logic of the narrative, the pro-Sharia men who might potentially oppress women in a multicultural setting are de facto terrorists. In the end, multiculturalism is further undermined through this rhetorical process and becomes part of the collateral of debris authoritarianism. In other words, the imperial ambitions of America have their own perspective about what multiculturalism should or should not encompass. These ambitions, therefore, have had direct consequences on Canadian religious, political, and legal concerns. These specific positions have been determined in America; they traverse the multicultural spectrum towards a practice that supersedes any Canadian vision of multiculturalism (therefore destroying it) in the attempt to attain fundamental(ist) political right-wing control, whatever the religion may be. This process toward the integration of religion(s) within the political realm has been sustained by neo-liberalism, ironically, as an expression of individualism and democratic rights. In a nutshell, as neo-liberalism moved through the world, as the actual implementation of the imperialistic aims of the United States, what it has left in its wake is fragmentation and confusion within post-political societies. Countries such as Canada, which espouse a multicultural reality, are impacted by American imperialism, which fosters the most conservative factions of social and political life that end up dominating the media systems—what we earlier referred to as debris authoritarianism. People such as Mubin Shaikh and Syed Mumtaz Ali have taken to this post-political semantic maelstrom as fish to water.

While the film *Sharia in Canada* addresses specific issues relevant in this cultural climate, the documentary fails to negotiate clearly the rhetorical conundrums that conflate civil liberties with the economic tenets of the American

⁴⁹ John Collins and Ross Glover, *Collateral Language: A User's Guide to America's New War* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), pp. 1-2.

Dream and its underlying metaphysical shadow. Where Mumtaz Ali and his followers are able to navigate “political” parlance to recuperate what is most convenient for their interests of domination, the film is unable to de-mask these postmodern *sophists*⁵⁰ who thrive in this economic context. In so doing, *Sharia in Canada* represents the reification of ethnicity as a spectacle-commodity.

When we compare and contrast *Sharia in Canada* with *Inch'Allah Dimanche*, precisely because of their different historical contexts, it is possible to envision what has been subtracted from history in terms of progressive developments that were once part of the post-Westphalia vision of a fair and just society. *Inch'Allah* informs us as to the precise limits that are unspoken in the documentary. Zouina's success, finally, is constituted by her ability to navigate different cultural settings, while at the same time she is able to discard that which is an impediment and assume that which emancipates her from oppression. Identities are always in negotiation; without putting undue stress on France's enlightenment formation we must, however, see the results of a society that is able to criticize its own colonial subjugation of others—through postcolonial directors such as Benguigui—and out of these tensions produce critical nuances that are dissipated through the media and people, which allows Zouina to come to terms with her own displaced identity. Her liberation is the one auspicated by such thinkers as Franz Fanon, who would have supported it as a liberation that uses the body-mind as the weapon by which to achieve parity since the struggle for representation is fundamental to the present mediatic climate. *Inch'Allah Dimanche* has, from a certain perspective, a very clear narrative that brings about positive concrete realizations. It is on the cusp of 9/11, thus it can still propose that Zouina, as a displaced Muslim subjectivity, will have a home in France, that she can reformulate her identity to integrate French concepts, and that France too can be a malleable site of interaction and negotiation between immigrants who were until recently the enemy-Other and French-citizens. *Inch'Allah* allows the growth of the individual that encompasses her/his own multiplicity through the positive realizations of displacement.

The comparative analysis of these two films illustrates the semantic confusion that ensues in a post-9/11 world where terms have been altered in order to mute grounded significations and where a polarization of perspectives

⁵⁰ Here, the sophist is being invoked in its most negative connotation to indicate the rhetorician that Socrates-Plato denounced for the talent to argue anything, beyond even the confines of morality, for monetary reward. What Socrates-Plato could not know was how the media almost two millennia later would allow the sophist exponential resonance without providing any evaluative mechanism.

is used to exercise social control. In other words, certain words have lost their original meaning, and the rhetoric around certain issues is a revision of history caused by a disconnect between words, their etymologies, and the actual context for this loss. The end result can be summed up, once again, by the term post-political, that has come to identify the exact process herein delineated. Powerful images came to signify and encompass the meaning of the 9/11 event. Words have been recuperated by the images associated with specific war-spectacles, creating havoc with the correspondence between the informative aspect of language and sophist practices. The relation between signifier and signified was disconnected and reworked in favor of neo-conservative agendas of the day: changing sometimes daily in relationship to the spectacularization of reality as formulated on television.⁵¹ Alternatively, cinema re-represents television programming within a defined context.⁵² The documentary on Sharia reflects on the media and the spectacle surrounding the debate. Yet the film was unable to be critical of those television images that have been naturalized and which have become representative of the polarizing processes, i.e. the enemy Other. Television has become an electronic square for discussion without a critical frame to account for that discourse. The tangible results of this process are television-derived discourses that perform discussion but elude debate.

⁵¹ Slogans such as “shock and awe” used to identify the war in Iraq became part of an integrated sense of American morality as a pedagogy of submission: “they” were going to be taught a lesson. There was an escalation of the ease with which the spectator was made to disengage from history as it was lived on television. This reaches a pornographic climax, from our perspective, when the term “Shake ‘n Bake” is used to define “a mixture of burning white phosphorus and high explosives” used in urban warfare against Fallujah’s inhabitants. Darrin Mortenson, ‘Violence Subsides for Marines in Fallujah’, *North Country Times*, 10 April 2004 <http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2004/04/11/military/iraq/19_30_504_10_04.txt> [accessed 25 May 2009].

⁵² In reference to this, *Slumdog Millionaire* is quite successful in defining television as a communicative technological apparatus able to create a false sense of community—those individuals congregating in disparate locations and situations to watch the protagonist’s rise to fame—whose turmoil can be resolved by an heroic underdog and the celebration around his achievement of capital gain. William Anselmi and Sheena Wilson, ‘Slumdogging It: Re-branding the American Dream, New World Orders, and Neo-Colonialism’, *Film International* #37, 7 (2009), pp. 44-53 <<http://www.atypon-link.com/INT/doi/pdf/10.1386/fiin.7.1.44>> [accessed 25 May 2009].

Imagined Communities, Conclusions

The de-colonization process that ensued around the world after the Second World War, together with large migration patterns, resulted in a diversified population demographic in many countries that, if allowed to prosper, would bring to a final crisis national myths of identity and the nation-state, per se. Canada, as a nation, came to define itself in the post-Second World War era but never succeeded to differentiate itself against its American neighbour beyond tropes of mosaic versus melting pot. Multiculturalism as a lived practice in Canada was the fissure weakening the foundation of the wall of the myth of national identity. Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau attempted, in 1971, to reintegrate the crack in the wall—lived multiculturalism—as an aesthetic attribute by repositioning it through the Multicultural Policy, since the foundation of the Canadian nation-state had shifted. Decades later, the fall of the Berlin Wall⁵³ echoes the same fears of uneducated masses invading the West, which kick-starts the project of dominance and America's responsibility to govern the world, legitimized by the Fukuyama-Huntington ideological construct. This period of transition existed until 9/11, when the economic and political justification for America's assertion of dominance over the world entered in correspondence with those countries undergoing a crisis of the nation-state to re-compass themselves and reaffirm their hold on the multitudes.⁵⁴ The representations of 9/11—through both the dynamic image and the spoken word—allowed for the neutralization of the crisis of the nation-state. No longer concerned about identifying itself as the site of cohabitating ethnocultures, Canada has again become a governable binary. In France, the outcome is governed differently, since the multicultural state fails to materialize and the project of a lived multicultural reality is governed according to

⁵³ In the course of contemporary history a loss of critical analysis has occurred whereby the relationship between the two superpowers not only constituted the binary of two system—one “good” and one “evil”—but in this set-up the Soviet Union acted as a space of confinement for the fear of the invasion of the barbarian. With the fall of the Wall, the change in representational strategies of the enemy other shifts from the Rambo Soviets to the Schwarzenegger Arabs (*True Lies*). Furthermore, after 9/11, television and cinema took up the Cold War tropes of the enemy Other and replaced the communist, the KGB, the dark Soviet, with the terrorist, fanatical Muslim, etc. Finally, a possible topic for an analysis of this binary system would have to address the Soviet Union's *raison d'être* as the West's filter. Obviously, from the position espoused by Roberto Esposito, the Soviet Union as a system of containment is a given, since his work on the biopolitical is grounded in the concept of immunization.

⁵⁴ Here we use the term “multitudes” in the same capacity as Hardt & Negri, in place of “peoples,” “social groups,” etc.

two principles: the reactions to ghettoization in the banlieues and Sarkozy's successful image presentation of a unified post-political government that includes members from the left and also "ethnics." What 9/11 evidences and leaves as an unfinished project is the auspicated reality of *Inch'Allah Dimanche* as a lived reality. What the crisis of the nation-state presented was the unwillingness to negotiate a multicultural society in Canada, France, and other countries undergoing the same process that could encompass a lived multicultural reality, a fair and just society where no component would be discriminated against, no matter how large or small. The post-9/11 ideology affirmed the polarization process necessary to the containment of lived multiculturalism. The end of the Bush reign necessarily means that the wall between "us" and "them" (be it metaphorical or literal) is as tenuous as the always-on media circuit that created and fed on it: the multitudes are switching channels. Lived multiculturalism is an ongoing historical and lived reality, and as such it will continue to put pressure on and possibly create cracks in the remaining walls that position us against them.

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